

Box 16**“Third way” for care provision: the not-for-profit sector and the case of care cooperatives in Italy**

Cooperatives are member-owned organizations that are guided by the principles of voluntary and open membership, democracy and concern for the community (ILO, 2015k). Cooperatives have served as vehicles for workers’ rights, allowing workers jointly to negotiate for better wages, contracts, working conditions and employment protection. In addition, cooperatives provide many services to their members, including employment services, training, education, financial services, social services and care services (ILO, 2014k). In Italy, social cooperatives and enterprises provide social, health and educational services through community centres for children and the elderly, health-care facilities and home care for the elderly. For example, the PAN consortium, which provides services for children, brings together three large consortiums of Italian social enterprises and a bank with the aim of creating and strengthening childcare services that are of high standards and at ethical and sustainable prices. The quality of services is ensured by specialists in the field and a scientific committee that periodically publishes research and trains teachers. The quality trademark is registered by the European Union. In 10 years, more than 460 nurseries have been affiliated with the PAN consortium, resulting in the creation of 13,000 new nursery places. Despite the financial crisis, PAN has created more than 3,000 jobs. The cooperative approach also puts emphasis on training on the job, by involving families (who may be members of the cooperative), in addition to matching the schedules of working parents. Because the cooperative provides quality services at an affordable price, children from lower-income families across all regions of the country, including rural areas in the south of Italy, are able to take advantage of this service.

Source: Fiaschi and Carabini, 2015.

Even though some families may receive childcare subsidies, the cost of childcare is much higher for children with disabilities. For example, in the United Kingdom, the costs of childcare are eight times higher for families with children with disabilities than for other families. Consequently, 72 per cent of mothers reported cutting back on work hours or leaving work to provide childcare. Even if families are able to pay for childcare, the staff may not necessarily have the necessary training or experience in providing care to children with disabilities. To address this challenge, the Government plans to increase financial help to these families through a new tax-free childcare scheme, starting in 2017. Under the scheme, parents will pay for childcare via online childcare accounts. For every 80p that parents pay into their childcare account, the Government will contribute a top-up payment of 20p, with a cap of £10,000 per year. The Government will double its top-up payments to families with a disabled child under 17 years on childcare, covering a total of £20,000 a year (£16,000 from parents plus £4,000 in government top-up payments) (Cafamily, 2015).

An increasing number of countries are offering childcare services as a way to support women’s participation in the labour force and access to formal jobs, with a focus on the needs of low-income families. Some programmes have begun taking on board the issue of the unequal distribution of care responsibilities between women and men (box 17).

Box 17**Early childhood education can also improve the share of unpaid care work between women and men**

A review of 263 policies on early childhood care and education shows that only 40 recognize the breadwinning role of women and take into account the gender-based division of unpaid care responsibilities at home. Early childhood care and education programmes often rely heavily on mothers to ensure that children attend pre-school and health centres, which, in addition to regular family duties, might challenge women’s participation in the labour force. Some programmes, however, have integrated the reduction of women’s unpaid care into their mandate and try to promote women’s economic empowerment and children’s welfare at the same time. In Albania, the “Gardens of Mothers and Children” is an affordable community-based centre that provides children with pre-school education, offers training to mothers and encourages men to take on more care responsibilities. The centre hosts fathers’ gatherings, at which men can get together and discuss child health and development, children’s rights, nutrition and play. Similarly in Chile, the “Chile Crece Contigo” (“Chile Grows With You”) programme combines childcare with support for fathers’ roles in care and promoting women’s access to paid work. Some programmes, which are tied to early childhood policies, offer ways for fathers to be involved with childcare. In Jordan, fathers help with childcare by preparing meals and spending time in play. In Ukraine, fathers attend special courses and receive training which combats gender stereotypes and promotes men’s involvement in early childhood development.

Source: IDS, 2014.