



# COMPENDIUM OF GOOD PRACTICES RELATING TO ECEC SERVICES WITHIN CO-WORKING SPACES



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the pressure for adopting green practices has mounted, not only at the corporate but also at the individual level. Businesses and people are seeking more sustainable ways to live and work. Within this context, we have witnessed the rise of the sharing economy across a wide range of industries, including the proliferation of a number of shared office spaces in and around cities. Co-working spaces (CWSs) have emerged as a distinctive phenomenon in the sharing economy. They are collaborative environments that feed innovation and creativity under the slogan “working alone together”.

While this trend was almost unheard in the early 2000s, the Global Coworking Survey elaborated by DeskMag<sup>1</sup> indicated that by the end of 2019, 2.2 million people were working in 22,000 co-working spaces around the world. One of the main drivers for this growth has been the rise of a new generation of workers – mainly entrepreneurs and freelancers – who are disrupting the traditional way of how and where to work, by breaking down corporate hierarchies, dismantling mentalities, redefining social norms, and increasingly experimenting with new work practices and unconventional offices.

Data shows that the number of US workers who work remotely at least sometimes has reached 43% in 2016 (Mann and Adkins, 2017). With similar numbers springing up in the European Union, flexible work arrangements are shown to have a handful of positive aspects including increased productivity, freedom of time management, and balancing work-life aspects (Hayman, 2009). On the other hand, **work flexibility may cause difficulties when combining work and childcare** (Oldenkamp et al., 2018), and thus become the source of work-family conflicts (Allen et al., 2013 in Orel).<sup>2</sup> While the overlapping nature of work-life tasks may represent an obstacle to flourish professionally, nonstandard work schedules – sometimes also addressed as the autonomy paradox (Shevchuk et al., 2018) – may also negatively affect life satisfaction and work-family balance (Davis and Tuttle, 2017). **Parents who are struggling to balance entrepreneurial activities with their family duties and/or live in countries with low ECEC provision** tend to seek better conditions that assist them in tackling conflictual situations and in addition, enhances their social lives to create further career opportunities. **Family-friendly co-working spaces are emerging as a possible alternative to this situation, as an innovative way to reconcile work and family life.**

Both policy makers and scholars are optimistic about the role of CWSs in feeding innovation and creativity, promoting entrepreneurial endeavours and urban revitalisation. Likewise, CWSs have a huge potential to support environmental sustainability and may become a sustainable future, not only they are less harming to the environment but they also create a sense of community, family and friendship, a characteristic that drives people to commit to a change.

## 1.1. WORK AND PLAY: THE RISE OF CHILD-FRIENDLY CO-WORKING SPACES

In recent years, coworking spaces also started to take different shapes by addressing varied target groups. Individuals can find their workspace set-ups in makerspaces or hackerspaces (Merkel, 2015), creative centres (Rus and Orel, 2015) and other curated third places (Brown, 2017), or hybrid mixtures of different workspace types (Foth et al., 2018; Marchegiani and Arcese, 2018) where they can fulfil their work and life goals. It seems that highly skilled, multi-location workers are not solely using only laptops to perform their work tasks (Ojala and Pyöriä, 2018), as the demand for using tools such as 3d printers and other crafting

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.deskmag.com/en/>.

<sup>2</sup> Orel, M. (2019/forthcoming). Supporting work-life balance with the use of coworking spaces. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal.

appliances has also increased (Kianian et al., 2015). From respecting gender equality (Intaratat, 2018) to supporting family life (Schuermann, 2014), the coworking spaces facilitate its users through the pitfalls of independent and flexible work.

Given the increasing demand, the coworking industry has taken its turn to change. New, structurally characterised entrepreneurial systems have started to emerge. **Particular coworking offices around the globe offer partial or full childcare services and other related support services.** For example, the London-based coworking space Third Door, a collaborative workspace which offers its childcare centre, has been running for almost a decade and providing support to the creation of healthy and balanced lives for flexible workers (Johnson, 2018). A few coworking spaces with similar professional childcare services could be found in other major cities around the globe - Trehaus has opened its doors in Singapore, Collab and Play in Los Angeles, and Easy Busy in Berlin (Blokland, 2018). It seems that the community-oriented nature of coworking spaces has sparked the availability of non-formal childcare from which working parents could derive advantage. **Nevertheless, in Europe most coworking spaces are still “unfit” for working parents with kids.** 40% of coworking spaces allow dogs during the whole working day, a quarter also allow children. 2% of coworking spaces offer childcare<sup>3</sup>.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN EUROPE RELATING TO ECEC SERVICES WITHIN CO-WORKING SPACES**

All this has led to a growing interest in co-working spaces, also within academic community, which didn't pay much attention to the phenomenon of CWSs before 2010s. Despite the increase of academic articles researching the field<sup>4</sup> and in the rise of child-friendly coworking spaces, our desk research revealed that there is an **evident lack of work-life balance topics within the research on CWSs.** This means that **Co-baby project addresses** an important void in otherwise increasing knowledge on CWSs.

This handbook/compendium<sup>5</sup> as one of the main results of *Co-baby project* presents examples of good and inspiring practices related to child-friendly CWSs offering ECEC services in their spaces and addresses the importance of this topic. **Good/inspiring practices in Europe related to ECEC services within co-working spaces have been identified and collected** on the basis of established criteria and methods (see chapter Methodology), which will be very helpful for early childhood professionals and educators (*belonging to cultural organizations, associations, libraries that offer playful/educational paths and activities, co-babies, baby parking, playrooms, baby spaces, childminders, educational farms, family centers*), co-working managers and parents as the activity is aimed at raising awareness of the importance of the development and innovation within ECEC.

**In particular, examples of good practices and collection of child-friendly CWSs will contribute to:**

- fill in the information gap of the main stakeholders of the project about the need for and importance of adopting new service delivery methodologies that are responsive to the need for innovation and development of work-life balance approaches at all levels and in all European regions;

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<sup>3</sup> Global Coworking Survey 2018

<sup>4</sup> Berbegal-Mirabent, J. What Do We Know about Co-Working Spaces? Trends and Challenges Ahead. Sustainability 2021, 13, 1416. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031416>.

<sup>5</sup> **The result of the activity will be the elaboration of a compendium of good practices relating to ECEC services within co-working spaces.** The compendium will be prepared in English by Mala Ulica Public Institute, on the basis of the contributions of all partners and it will be translated into Italian, Dutch and Slovenian in order to make it accessible at the different national levels by the stakeholders of the project. The compendium will be licensed under the Open Creative Commons.

- strengthen co-working managers' awareness and knowledge about the opportunities to develop their own organisations;
- create synergies between the realities that desire to pilot co-working/co-baby experimentation with those already consolidated and identified, for a fruitful exchange of knowledge and experience;
- raise awareness of the diversity and variety of approaches in the ECEC framework.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN ECEC

Over the last decade, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has gained increased attention in research, policies and pedagogical debates both at EU and at national level across the world. In part, policy interest has been motivated by research showing the **importance of quality early experiences to children's short-term cognitive, social, and emotional development**, as well as to their long-term success in school and later life. In addition, equity concerns have led policymakers to focus on how access to quality early childhood services can mediate some of the negative effects of disadvantage and **contribute to social integration in inclusion**. This is particularly true for children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, because they often have fewer opportunities to develop these abilities in their home learning environments. At the same time, most governments have acknowledged the need for affordable and reliable early childhood and childcare provision to **promote equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market** and to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. In sum, policy makers have recognized that equitable access to quality ECEC can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families (OECD, 2001). Public sector support for the ECEC sector is a social investment which brings multiple returns for individuals, society and the economy as a whole. Investment in ECEC has also significant job creation potential. Recent research from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows that investing 1.1% of GDP in ECEC and 1.8% of GDP in long-term care each year would create an additional 26.7 million jobs in Europe by 2035.

Such evidence has prompted policy makers to design early interventions, to take initiatives that aim to enhance the quality of ECEC services and improve the equity of access to ECEC settings, lower the starting age of compulsory education, and rethink education spending patterns to gain "value for money". Despite these general trends, there are substantial differences across European countries in the quality of ECEC services provided to young children, the types of ECEC services available and the number of hours per week children usually attend. Although the Barcelona targets were on average reached at EU level, some Member States are significantly lagging behind, and differences persist in particular for children from lower income households and for the youngest group of children. With this in mind, the European Commission proposed to revise<sup>6</sup> the Barcelona targets to create new momentum for fostering further upwards convergence among Member States of children's participation in ECEC<sup>7</sup> and thus help increase women's labour-market participation and close the **gender employment gap**<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The revision was first announced in the [2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy](#), [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), as well as in the [European Pillar of Social Rights \(EPSR\) Action Plan](#). It was adopted by European Commission on 7 September 2022 alongside a [European Care Strategy](#). The Council of the European Union adopted the Recommendation on 8 December 2022. The text was published in the Official Journal on 20 December 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025', COM(2020) 152 final.

<sup>8</sup> The gender employment gap means the percentage point difference between male and female employment rates.

## 2.1. BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WORKING PARENTS

The availability, accessibility and affordability of high-quality childcare facilities are crucial for enabling women, and men, with caring responsibilities, to participate in the labour market<sup>9</sup>. Affordable and high-quality childcare services do not only help **reconciliation of work with family life**, conducive to labour market participation of women and strengthening gender equality but also help children integrate socio-economically and develop their skills from an early age. As far back as 2002, the Barcelona European Council recognised this situation and set objectives with regard to the availability of high quality and affordable childcare facilities for pre-school children, through two targets, i.e., 90 % of children from age 3 until mandatory school age and 33 % of children under 3. Although since then the provision of ECEC services in Europe increased, work-life balance remains a great challenge for many parents, in particular women.

While women across the European Union are increasingly well qualified and tend to outperform men in terms of educational achievement their participation in the labour market, and hence their economic independence, remains considerably lower than that of men. **The underrepresentation of women is one of the most persistent problems affecting the labour market in all European Union (EU) Member States.** Despite some improvements, the gender employment gap is still significant and stands at a wide 10.8 percentage points in 2021<sup>10</sup>, meaning that the proportion of men of working age in employment exceeded that of women by 10.8 pp.

The gender employment gap varies significantly across EU Member States. In 2021, the lowest gap was reported in Lithuania (1.4 pp), followed by Finland (2.0 pp), Estonia (3.7 pp) and Latvia (4.8 pp). These four were the only EU Member States with a gender employment gap not exceeding 5 pp. At the other end of the scale, five Member States recorded a gap above or equal to 15 pp, namely Czechia (15.4 pp), Malta (16.4 pp), Italy (19.2 pp), Greece (19.8 pp) and Romania (20.1 pp). This is due to the lower participation of women in the labour market in these countries<sup>11</sup>.

The resulting economic loss amounts to 320 billion euro a year. Most of this amount consists of earnings and welfare contributions lost to the economy due to women not taking part in employment<sup>12</sup>. One of the main drivers for the employment gap is the **unequal distribution of caring responsibilities** between women and men. The gender employment gap widens substantially once families have children, reflecting the difficulty for women to reconcile child-raising and care responsibilities with their work. While both men and women increase their unpaid working hours when they have children, the proportion of housework done and care given by each is far from equal. Women are still widely expected to provide unpaid care to a greater extent than men, even within dual-earner families and remain the primary caregivers to children and adults in need of care and bear the main responsibility for household chores. This imbalance limits the possibility for them to participate in and allocate time to paid work. **Current demographic and labour market patterns are therefore a further motivation for governments to take ECEC provision seriously.**

Balancing work and parenting obligations became relatively more difficult for women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early data collected on work-life balance of fathers and mothers during the pandemic indicates that women likely faced more difficulties in combining work with private life. For example, in spring 2020,

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<sup>9</sup> Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016/-2019.

<sup>10</sup> [Statistics | Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1).

<sup>11</sup> Eurostat (2023): Gender statistics.

<sup>12</sup> Eurofound (2020): 'Women and labour market equality: Has COVID-19 rolled back recent gains?' Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

20% of working mothers, against 13% of working fathers, reported finding it difficult to concentrate on their work due to family responsibilities always or most of the time. By contrast, this figure was only 4% of working mothers, and 3% of working fathers, in 2015. In some Member States (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Estonia), more than one-fifth of working parents reported issues with this. The situation improved over the course of the pandemic, but women still face greater difficulties<sup>13</sup>.

### 2.1.1. The availability of ECEC services as a key driver of women's labour market participation

The availability of quality ECEC services and other work-family provision give women greater opportunities to enter employment and start a family. A study conducted in 2017 analysing country statistics in the OECD database<sup>14</sup> found a **correlation between the availability of childcare and higher employment rates for mothers**. In reviewing policy outcomes of ECEC, the researchers showed that the proportions of children enrolled in formal childcare were highest in countries where labour market participation rates for mothers were also highest. The correlation between mothers' labour market participation and enrolment rates in ECEC is particularly strong for mothers whose youngest child is under 3 years old. The countries with the highest labour market participation rates (full time and part time) among mothers of young children, such as Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Switzerland, also have a high proportion of young children enrolled in ECEC (Figure 2). There is a similar correlation for mothers whose youngest child is between 3 and 5 years old, but it is weaker than for mothers of younger children.

In countries with low ECEC provision, such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy and Poland, the lack of availability of ECEC for the youngest children is compensated for by extensive use of informal childcare arrangements. These services are generally unregulated care arranged by the child's parent either in the child's home or elsewhere, provided by relatives, friends, neighbours, babysitters or nannies. With the exception of the Czech Republic, these countries also have above average employment rates of mothers. However, the quality of these services is subject to debate because carers may lack professional knowledge in some cases and because these childcare arrangements may not necessarily offer children enough opportunities for social interaction with other children (OECD, 2011).

The **unequal role of women as caretakers is reinforced by the insufficient provision of accessible and affordable high-quality childcare for children under 3**. The European NGO on family organisations, COFACE<sup>15</sup> highlights the importance of this, suggesting three ways of helping women achieve a work-life balance: (1) financial resources to assist parents in various ways; (2) family-friendly working arrangements; (3) accessible, high quality, affordable childcare services.

The lack of available childcare facilities determines to a great extent whether women with children can continue working<sup>16</sup>. A recent study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) confirms the key **link between childcare and female labour market participation**:

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<sup>13</sup> PROPOSAL FOR A JOINT EMPLOYMENT REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION AND THE COUNCIL (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Building a better understanding of the impact of Early Childhood Education and Care on medium- and longterm educational and labour market outcomes in Europe.

<sup>15</sup> COFACE (2017), Who cares? A study on the challenges and needs of family carers in Europe.

<sup>16</sup> Esping-Andersen outlined in 2009 that the lack of services to help women achieve a work-life balance would either lead to a 'childless low fertility equilibrium' or a 'low income-low employment equilibrium'. De Heneu, Meulders and O'Dorchai (2010), who analysed the effect of various public policies aimed at dual earner couples with children in 15 EU Member States, including childcare provision, child-related leave and tax and cash benefits, concluded that public childcare provision had the strongest impact on female labour market participation. In 2013, Ehrel and Guergoat-Larivière studied the effect of individual and institutional factors on female



*'Affordable and high quality ECEC with an adequate number of hours per week can contribute to an increase in the participation of women in the labour force. Working parents, mothers in particular, are more likely to drop out of the labour market or work fewer hours to take up childcare duties, especially when children are young. Therefore, women need high quality, affordable Early Childhood Education and Care to be able to return to work with confidence that their children are well cared for, and in order to achieve a better work-life balance'.<sup>17</sup>*

**As we see, the gender employment gap is closely related to caring responsibilities.** In 2021<sup>18</sup>, 27.9% of women aged 25–49 outside the labour force indicated that looking after children or adults in need of care was the main reason for not seeking employment, compared to only 8.0% of men. In pre-pandemic 2019, these figures stood at 32.6% and 7.6% respectively<sup>19</sup>. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) indicates that caregiving responsibilities keep 7.7 million women in Europe out of the labour market and constrain many women to work only part-time: 29% of women working part-time cited care duties as the main reason for doing so, compared to only 6% of men<sup>20</sup>. **Overall, comparing men and women, the gender employment gap reached 4 pp among people without children and 18 pp among those with children. Gender employment gap is therefore larger for parents, especially for mothers.**

Even if in most Member States the dual earner model (both partners working full-time) or the modified breadwinner model (one partner working part-time and the other one full-time), have replaced the male breadwinner model, the gender gap in terms of inactivity and part-time work remains significant - 31 % of women work part-time, compared to 8 % of men. The Netherlands has the highest rate of part-time workers with 76.4 % of women and 26.2 % of men working part time. **To narrow the gender employment gap, it is crucial that the provision of formal childcare is compatible with full-time work.** This prevents that one parent, usually the mother, is compelled to work part-time, with negative consequences on labour market outcomes, and adequacy of earnings and pensions.

The difficulty of balancing work and care responsibilities is a major obstacle that contributes to the underrepresentation of women in the labour market.

While the benefits of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services to better learning are now widely acknowledged, a widespread and accessible provision for these services also helps support gender equality in the workforce. In particular, the availability, intensity, reliability and affordability of ECEC play an important role in engaging women full time in the labour market. Adequate work-life balance policies, such as flexible (family-friendly) working arrangements and family-related leaves, also play an important role in reducing obstacles to the labour market participation of people with caring responsibilities. If used in a balanced way by women and men, they can also contribute to reducing gender gaps in employment<sup>21</sup>.

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employment rates in 22 Member States and found that formal childcare (childminder or public childcare) and part-time work have a positive effect on female employment.

<sup>17</sup> OECD (2017), Starting Strong, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/starting-strong-2017-9789264276116-en.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Labour Force Survey (LFS) for the EU-27.

<sup>19</sup> EIGE, Research note on gender equality and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, (2021), p. 15, Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu).

<sup>20</sup> COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the Revision of the Barcelona Targets on early childhood education and care.

<sup>21</sup> OECD (2018): How does access to early childhood services affect the participation of women in the labour market?

### 3. STATE OF PLAY OF ECEC IN EUROPE

In Europe, most children start primary education around age 6. Currently, 31 million children under this age live in the European Union and are potential users of ECEC. However, not all of them are able to access this provision as there are significant differences in the age at which children qualify for a guaranteed ECEC place (see Figure 1). **Availability of ECEC is low for children under age 3.** On average, 34 % or approximately 5 million children under age 3 attend ECEC. Only eight European countries (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway)<sup>22</sup>, guarantee a place in ECEC for each child soon after its birth (from 6 to 18 months), often immediately after the end of childcare leave. **Accessibility is considerably better for older children.** Almost half of European countries guarantee a place in ECEC from age 3<sup>23</sup>, with a growing number of countries making attendance compulsory during the last year(s) of ECEC. Consequently, the Education and Training (ET 2020) benchmark<sup>24</sup> whereby at least 95 % of children should participate in early childhood education as of age 4 has now been reached. However, it also shows that the participation rates for children under 3 are still below 33 % in half of the EU countries.

Clear educational content for all children, delivered by highly qualified staff and supported by consistent policies is mostly found in the Nordic, Baltic, and Balkan regions. These countries provide integrated ECEC services for all children under primary school age. Nevertheless, some of them still struggle to guarantee access for every child and have low participation rates<sup>25</sup>. Among the EU countries, the lowest participation rates among children aged 4 and over were registered in Greece (68.8%), Slovakia (77.8%), Romania (78.6%), Croatia (79.4%) and Bulgaria (79.9%). On average, children at risk of poverty or social exclusion have participation rates that are much lower than those of their peers from more affluent families<sup>26</sup>.

We refer to ECEC, as defined by the European Commission, as any regulated arrangement providing education and care for children from birth up to compulsory primary schooling age. This includes centre-based and family-day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school and pre-primary provision.

Universal access and high quality of ECEC services have not yet been achieved in many European countries, especially **good quality ECEC for children under age 3 is not yet available in many European countries.**

<sup>22</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2019): Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

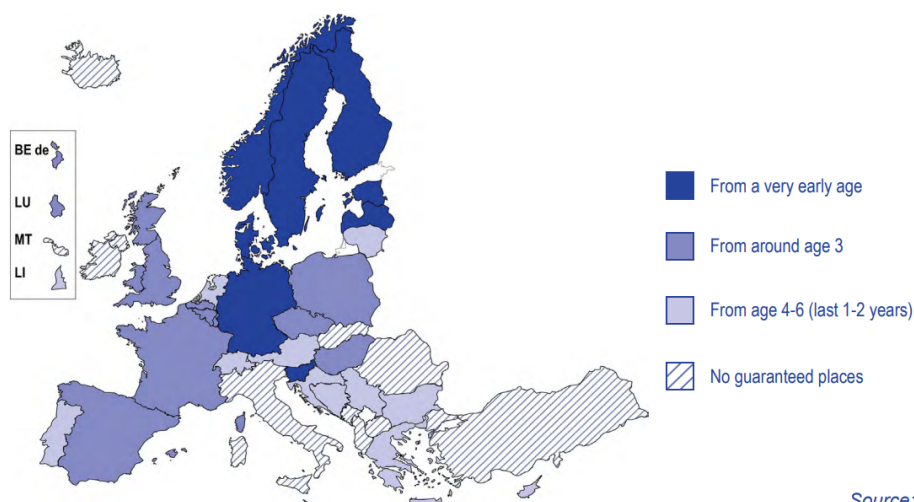
<sup>23</sup> A place in publicly subsidised ECEC is guaranteed from the age of 3 or a little earlier in the three Communities of Belgium, as well as in Czechia, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland). Around a quarter of European education systems provide guaranteed places from age 4, 5 or 6 for the last 1-2 years of ECEC. Often, this provision is explicitly directed at preparation for primary education and is compulsory.

<sup>24</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2-10.

<sup>25</sup> Early childhood education and care arrangements for younger children vary in different countries and it is difficult to provide meaningful international comparisons of participation rates.

<sup>26</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2022) Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe.

<sup>27</sup> Most European countries have committed themselves to guaranteeing an ECEC place for all children, either by establishing a legal entitlement to participate in ECEC, or by making participation compulsory. Each approach requires public authorities to commit to guaranteeing a place in ECEC. However, there are some fundamental differences. A legal entitlement means a child has a right to ECEC, but when it is compulsory, a child has a legal obligation to attend. The nature of the place guarantee therefore differs. In either case, parents are guaranteed a place for their child. **However, there are significant differences in the age at which children qualify for a guaranteed ECEC place.**



Source: Eurydice.

### 3.1. CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EU

There is a substantial variation among EU countries in the duration of children’s participation in formal ECEC as well as the extent of informal (family) care between ages 3 and the start of formal schooling (see Figure 2)<sup>28</sup>. In Slovenia, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, Estonia and Lithuania over 80 % of children are engaged in organized formal learning and care for 30 hours or more per week. Conversely, only about 15 % of children in Switzerland, 24 % in the Netherlands, Austria 25 % and 11 % in Romania participate in structured formal programmes of the same duration and at the same age. But the comparison is more nuanced given the actual balance between different types of care within the countries. In some countries, such as Denmark, Slovenia, Portugal and Belgium there is a predominantly full-time use (over 30 hours per week) of formal childcare provision, whereas in the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Switzerland parents mostly use childcare part-time (under 30 hours per week). The reasons for low participation in formal care could be in barriers to access but also in expressed preferences. Parents and carers might choose to use their own time resources, extended family or informal network to meet childcare demands.

#### Which type of childcare prevails?<sup>29</sup>

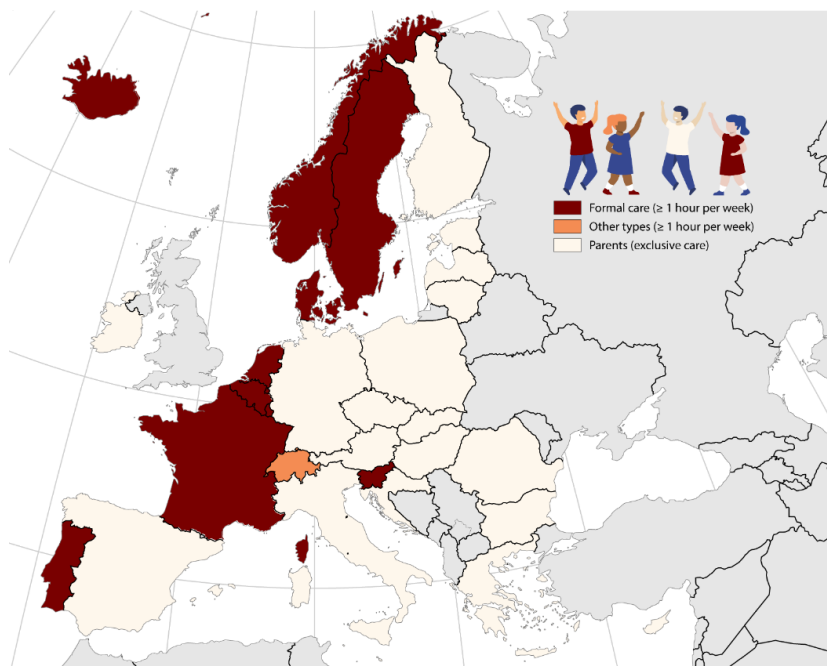
In 2020, more than half (53.4%) of all the children aged less than three years in the EU were cared for exclusively by their parents, a 13.4% increase compared with 2019. On the other hand, **almost one third (32.3%) of children aged less than 3 were in formal care** for at least one hour per week (-8.5% compared with 2019), and one fifth (20.9%) were cared for by their grandparents, other relatives or professional childminders for at least one hour per week (-19.3% compared with 2019). These changes reflect the impact of COVID-19 measures adopted by the EU Member States to control the spread of the virus. By contrast, 80.5 % and 95.3 % of children aged respectively from three years until minimum compulsory school age and between minimum compulsory school age and 12 years received formal childcare.

The share of children under three years of age cared for by only their parents varied considerably across the EU Member States, from a low of 21.9% in the Netherlands and Portugal, and 29.1% in Denmark, up to over 65.0% in Czechia (66.3%), Lithuania (69.5%) and Bulgaria (71.8%), reaching its peak in Germany with 80.2%.

<sup>28</sup> Eurostat 2020. Children in formal childcare or education by age group and duration - % over the population of each age group - EU-SILC survey.

<sup>29</sup> Eurostat 2020. Living conditions in Europe - childcare arrangements.

**Figure 2: Type of childcare, Children aged less than 3 years old, 2020**



Source: Eurostat, 2020

### **Almost one-third of children aged less than 3 is in formal childcare**

When children are not cared for exclusively by their parents, they may receive formal childcare, such as daycare centres or preschool. Almost one-third of children (32.3%) in the EU were enrolled in formal childcare for at least one hour per week, 60% of them for more than 30h per week and the rest 40% for less than 30h per week. Among the EU Member States, Denmark recorded the highest share of children receiving at least one hour of formal childcare per week with two-thirds (67.7%), followed by the Netherlands (67.6%), Luxembourg (63.2%) and France (57.2%).

At the other end of the scale, the lowest share of children receiving formal childcare was found in Czechia and Slovakia (4.8%), followed by Romania (6.8%), Hungary (10.5%) and Poland (11.2%).

### **Around one-fifth of children aged less than 3 received other types of care**

Other types of childcare include care by a professional childminder or by grandparents, other household members (excluding parents), other relatives, friends or neighbours. Just 5.8% of children under the age of three in the EU were in this type of care for a minimum of 30 hours per week, and an additional 15.1% of children for less than 30h per week.

### **Inequalities in the use of formal ECEC by very young children**

As we can see the use of formal ECEC is not evenly spread across all groups of children. Data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) Survey reveal that there are statistically significant differences in participation in ECEC in half of all EU countries for children experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in terms of household income, maternal education, risk of poverty or social exclusion (Flisi and Blasko, 2019). In many OECD countries, **children are more likely to use ECEC when they come from relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds**, while children from disadvantaged families – often those who stand to gain the most from participating in formal ECEC – are disproportionately likely to miss

out. This applies to children both above and below pre-primary school age (three to five, inclusive), but gaps are often particularly large for very young children below age three<sup>30</sup>.

On average across European OECD countries, 0–2-year-olds in low-income households were one-third less likely to participate in ECEC (centre-based, home-based and organised family child care) than those in high-income households in 2017. In some countries, such as France and Ireland, the difference in participation rates between children from high- and low-income families exceeds 40 percentage points. This is highly concerning since inequitable access to ECE may then mean that development gaps between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and others are widened even before the start of primary school, as these can persist and even worsen as children advance through school (OECD, 2017). In contrast, in Denmark, there is a high participation rate of young children in ECEC regardless of parents' income level (OECD, 2020)<sup>31</sup>.

### 3.2. CHILDCARE GAP

In most – but not all – EU Member States, there is a period in which families with young children are unable to benefit from well-compensated childcare leave or a guaranteed (or otherwise state-supported) place in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)<sup>32</sup>. We refer to this period as the **childcare gap**. There is wide variation between EU Member States, from no childcare gap (in Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden, Norway, and by some estimates Estonia and Malta, see Figure 2) to five to six years (in Lithuania, Ireland, Italy and Romania). The gap between childcare leave and ECEC matters because it shapes parents' options, which – without state support – could be limited to private care (for those who can afford it) and/or informal care (if available). Families with young children struggling to secure a place in subsidised ECEC may opt for informal arrangements, such as with babysitters, nannies, relatives or other adults. Home-based ECEC is widespread at this stage; however, no internationally comparable statistics are available on how many children are taken care of by childminders. Parents for whom these options are unaffordable or inaccessible could be forced to drop out of the labour market. Women are more often affected than men, since they are more likely to drop out of the labour market or reduce their working hours when they become parents<sup>33</sup>.

A childcare gap indicator shows that families in the majority of European countries face a lengthy period without adequately paid childcare leave and no place guarantee in ECEC.

In families with several young children, a long childcare gap with under-developed public ECEC services may lead to one parent (usually the mother) being obliged to drop out of the labour market to take care of the child(ren) without adequate compensation. Figure 2<sup>34</sup> shows the difference between the end of the maximum 'adequately compensated' childcare leave (later in text 'childcare leave') and the earliest start of the universal place guarantee in ECEC. The European countries are listed according to the length of the childcare gap. At the left side, where no gap is indicated, are the countries with well-coordinated childcare leave and ECEC policies. All of these even have some overlap when parents are still entitled to some weeks of childcare leave, but a place in publicly subsidised ECEC provision is already guaranteed. The overlap appears if both the mother and, especially, the father take the maximum length of leave. Countries with no childcare gap grant

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<sup>30</sup> Who uses childcare? Background brief on inequalities in the use of formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) among very young children

<sup>31</sup> Indicator B2. How do early childhood education systems differ around the world?

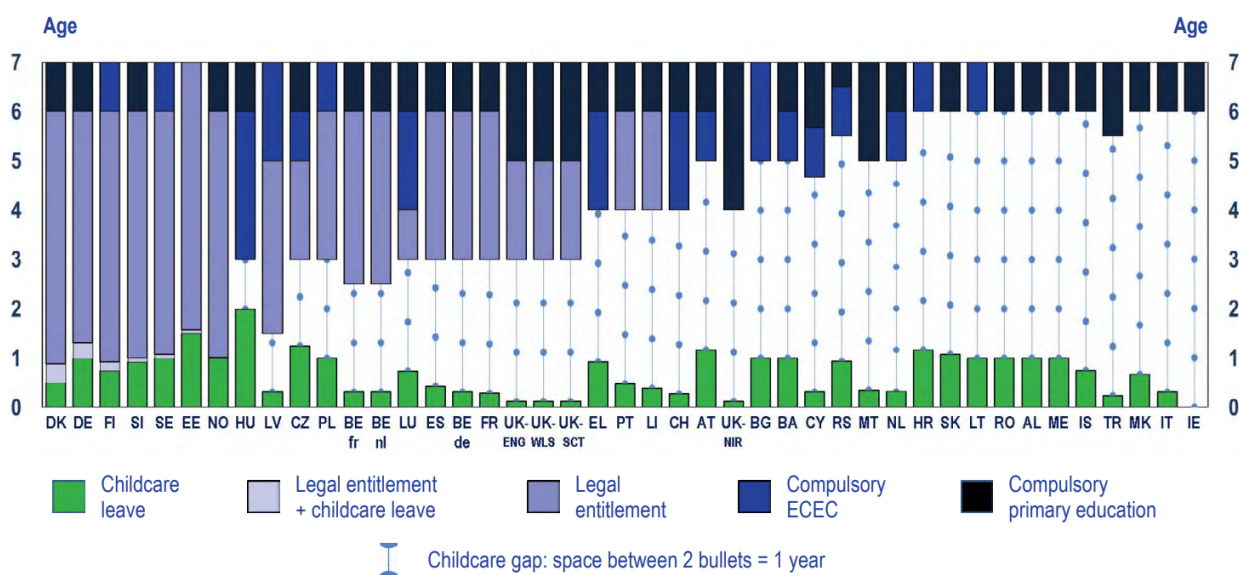
<sup>32</sup> Madeline Nightingale and Barbara Janta (2020): The childcare gap in EU Member States. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Produced for the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC).

<sup>33</sup> Grunow, D. and Evertsson, M. (Eds). 2016. Couples' transitions to parenthood: Analysing gender and work in Europe. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 52.

long childcare leave (minimum 10 months) and have unitary ECEC systems providing a legal right to a subsidised, but not free place.

**Figure 3: Childcare gap, 2018/19**



Childcare gap indicates the amount of time a child is not covered either by childcare leave or a guaranteed place in ECEC. This is the period when families with young children have to make difficult decisions about whether to stay at home, whether to try to get a place in a high-demand public ECEC facility, or whether and how to pay for an expensive, private ECEC setting.

### 3.3. NON-FORMAL ECEC SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

ECEC services may be provided in formal settings, such as day care centres, preschools and kindergartens and primary schools, in non-formal settings, or informal settings, including homes<sup>35</sup>. While formal ECEC settings are being an important part of children’s holistic development, with a focus on academic skills, and with predetermined and normative outcomes, the importance of non-formal ECEC for the lives of children and their families is growing and remain relevant as never before.

Young children in general and those from vulnerable background especially, are particularly exposed to marginalisation and exclusion from formal education as in many countries, education becomes compulsory only at the age of 3, or even later at the age of 6. In this context, the availability and quality of non-formal ECEC services and programmes often supplement or even act as substitutes for formal learning opportunities to satisfy the needs overlooked by formal education, especially for the most marginalized children, such as migrant and displaced children (UIS, 2022b). As such, they represent an important bridge from home to formal schooling and a key support to the integration of all children<sup>36</sup>. Non-formal education institutions can allow people from different layers of society to participate in a more interactive and casual setting compared to formal education, better integrating the element of socialisation. Non-formal and informal ECEC settings

<sup>35</sup> The distinction between these three approaches to education is largely administrative. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organisations; and informal covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues.

<sup>36</sup> ICDI. (2022). Play for Inclusion: A handbook for non-formal services supporting young refugee children and families. Leiden: International Child Development Initiatives.

are therefore important parts of any community, providing a safe space for play, learning, interaction and communication between all members of a community.

Non-formal ECEC services may take various forms in different institutions and locations (public libraries, playgrounds, family centres, mother centres, play buses, sports clubs), depending on the local context, e.g. playgroups, community hubs, Play Hubs etc.

## 4. COLLECTION OF INSPIRING PRACTICES IN EUROPE RELATED TO ECEC SERVICES WITHIN CO-WORKING SPACES

### 4.1. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES

The existent literature on CWS (or on child friendly CWSs) does not provide us with a list of criteria upon which the friendliness of particular CWS would be evaluated. The below model is based on various literature sources and represents a starting point in designing the selection criteria.

#### 1. high degree of community engagement

- a. active role of community manager (or community hosts)
  - using different mechanisms to mediate relationships between workspace users
  - networking activities in order to enhance collaboration (and potential support for working parents)
  - informal occurrences for enhancing social relations (and potential emotional support for working parents)
  - engaging other users to participate in informal child care
  - ensure behavioural & cultural fit (socio-mapping)
  - understand the needs and expectations of all users (analyse requests, complaints, conduct short surveys)
- b. Active role of working parents in self-organisation of daily child
  - using different informal mechanisms to mediate relationships between workspace users who are parents
  - organising informal childcare within co-working space
  - encouraging other users to engage with children

#### 2. special (spatial) characteristics

- a. sitting arrangements accelerating interactivity
- b. organising activity-based zones
- c. provision of separate spaces for children's specific facilities/amenities

## 4.2. METHODOLOGY

**Framework of analysis and research questions.** The analysis uses qualitative and quantitative research methods. The following research activities have been conducted to answer the research questions and listed criteria for selection of good practices:

**Research activity 1 - Gathering data and desk research of documents related to CWSs** (online sources, reports, publications etc.): The aim of this research activity was to have a clear idea on the broad state-of-play of ECEC policies throughout the EU and existing child-friendly co-working spaces. Such studies provide crucial insights in the comparative development of ECEC services within co-working spaces across the EU. For collecting good practices Mala Ulica Public Institute prepared a shared Excel document in the Google Drive platform for all partners to be filled out. Partner organisations identified good practices in line with the selected and described selection criteria and filled out the prepared template grid prepared by Mala Ulica Public Institute, which included:

- Name of the organisation/good practice
- Contact of an identified person who will fill out the online questionnaire for CWSs managers/community managers
- Type of organisation
- Financing
- Approach to users and their preferences
- Employees professional profile/background
- Working hours
- Provision of ECEC services
- Number of children reached (per day on average)
- Space(s) characteristics
- Specific amenities
- 

The partner organisation tried to identify the following number of good practices by suggested division of geographical areas:

- **Mala Ulica** (5 from central Europe),
- **The Apartment** (10 from Southern Europe),
- **ISSA** (15 from Northern Europe).

**Research activity 2 - Online survey (questionnaire for management and/or community managers of each selected CWS):** The aim of this research activity was to gain additional insight and more of a “frog-view” perspective on the topic of child-friendly CWSs. This method allowed additional clarification and more in-depth understanding of the issues that came up in desk research.

### **Questionnaire for managers and/or community managers**

An online questionnaire has been developed as part of the *methodology of the selection criteria and modalities to identify and collect good practices in the field of child-friendly CWSs (for details see the questionnaire in the appendix)*. The aim of the questionnaire and subsequent online survey was to answer the following research question:

- What are the main factors/criteria for turning a CWS into a child friendly organisation?



In order to answer this seemingly simple question, a short questionnaire has been designed taking into account the already developed and agreed upon criteria based on literature review and discussions with project partners. The questionnaire focuses on two main topics related to child-friendliness of CWSs with the main goal of determining the most important factor for successful introduction of child-friendly elements into CWSs (according to respondents):

1. Degree of community engagement (the main focus here was to measure the importance of an active role of community managers in establishing child-friendly CWS in comparison to active role of working parents in self-organising child care within the CWS).
2. The importance of special spatial characteristics of CWS enabling child care arrangements within the CWS.

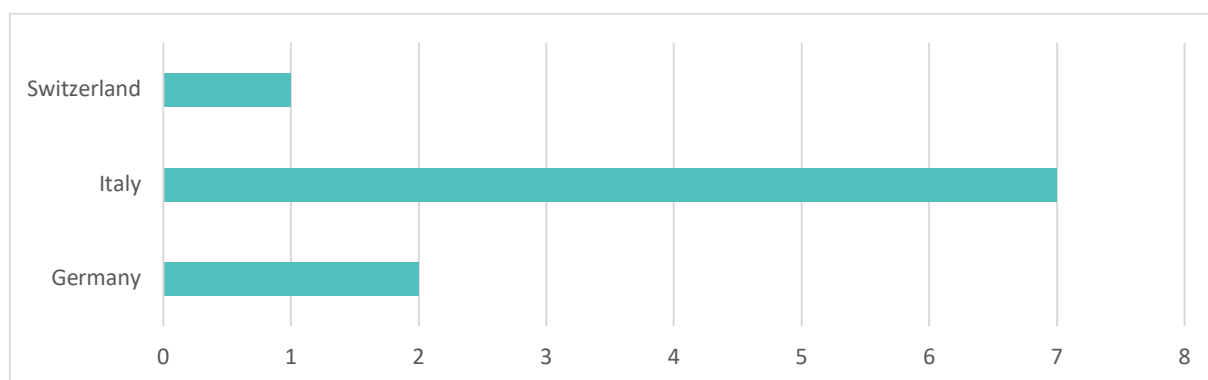
The questionnaire has been developed in English language and translated into Italian.

### Survey

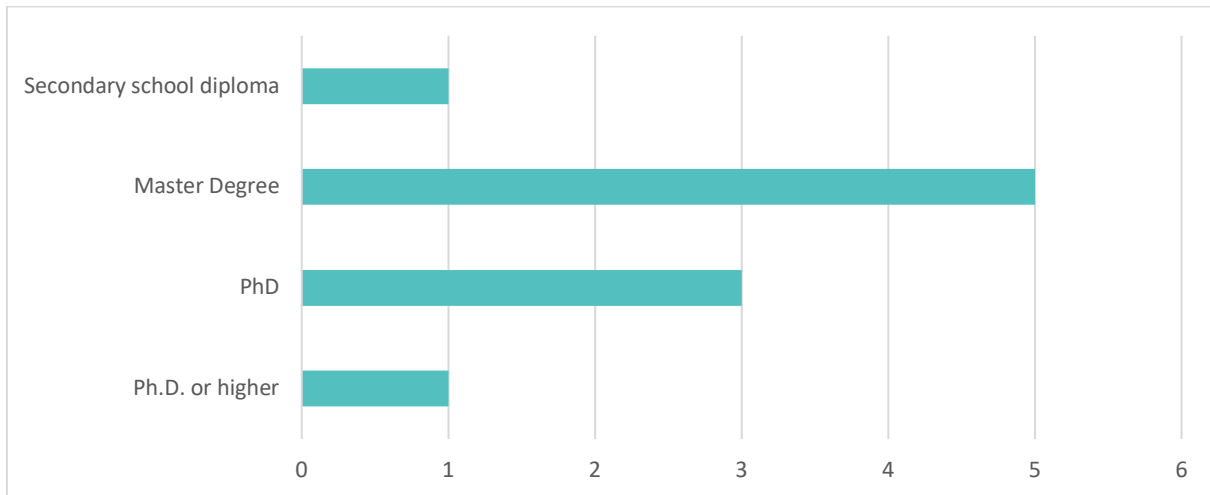
An online survey has been designed in google sheets and sent to partners. A strategy to motivate the potential respondents has been agreed with partners. This strategy relied heavily on activating the social networks of Co-baby partners and their partner organisations (other CWSs) in various countries. The link to the survey has been in Mala ulica and ISSA sent to 26 addresses, from the following countries: Switzerland, Germany, Slovakia, England, Portugal, Austria, Northern Ireland, USA and Singapore. In Italy the link has been circulated to 15 addresses, also through Facebook. Although this part was very important for our research as it provided us with valuable information and data about the strengths, weaknesses, priorities and enhancements related to innovation and cooperation in the field of co-working spaces with childcare, the participation from the respondents was very low. From 17<sup>th</sup> August when we sent questionnaires till the end of September 2022, we got only **10 responses**, namely from **Switzerland and Germany and Italy**.

Bellow you can find basic information on our respondents. It is meant as a basic overview of information gathered about the respondents and organisations they represent. This overview has to be taken into account when interpreting the results as it shows who our respondents were. Annex includes a more detailed list of respondent's institutions.

**Figure 4: Number of respondents by country**



**Figure 5: Respondents and their highest education level**



**Figure 6: The role of the respondent in the organisation**

Role in the organization?	Count of role in the organization?
CEO	1
Ceo - Incubation Project Manager	1
co-founder and manager	1
Co-founder and coordinator of the baby space	1
Coordinator	1
Director and Coordinator	1
Founder and Manager	1
Founder and partner	1
Kwbaby Pedagogist	1
President of the Cooperative	1

**Figure 7: Some characteristics of the participating organisations**

Name of the organization	Type of organization	Staff involved	How many children use your organization's services per day (on average)?	How many users work/visit your organization per day (on average)?
<b>Associazione Co-Cò/CO-STANZA cooperativa</b>	Private organization	19	2	60
<b>juggleHUB Coworking</b>	Private organisation	10	6	25
<b>Kwbaby</b>	Private organization	5	7	500
<b>Nest creative innovation factory srl</b>	Private organization	11	30	80
<b>Oblò srls</b>	Private organization	1	12	8
<b>Qf srl</b>	Private organization	4	20	1
<b>Sumo societa cooperativa sociale/progetto Lab Altobello</b>	Private organization	8	12	10
<b>The Magic Barn</b>	Private organization	6	30	10
<b>The Village Coworking</b>	Private organisation	1	6	5
<b>Work'n'Kid - Coworking mit Kind</b>	Private organisation	5	5	10

The main users of child-friendly workspaces are families, parents and entrepreneurs, and last but not least, anyone looking for community-friendly spaces. Some are looking for comfortable and well-equipped spaces (e.g., with Wi-Fi) where they can work with others and network. Some benefit from services for cohabiting with children and playrooms for their children.

- Parents who want to start working;
- Employees who have the opportunity to work outside the company office;
- Employed and self-employed mothers and fathers on parental leave;
- Parents whose children attend nursery school but need after-school care or help with breaks in nursery school, etc.;
- Founders and start-up teams with children;
- Participants who want or need to bring their children.

8 organisations that responded to the questionnaire (see Figure 8) offer ECEC services<sup>37</sup> in order to be more child-friendly for their users. They largely offer/provide **traditional day-care model** (professional childcare – 4 respondents), **different childcare packages** (daily, hourly high-quality childcare along with part-time and full-day options – 1 respondent), **babysitting** (1 respondent) and **other related support services** as: experimental service for children and toy library based on the regional legislation of VENETO for the age group 0-3 years old, summer centre services and holidays, experimental educational services for 0-6 years old. Other services may be also related to homework help or provided by various professionals such as speech and language therapists, neuro-psychomotor therapists, pedagogues, educators and school guidance counsellors. In addition, some also offer home-based childcare and various courses (languages, artistic groups). Childcare services are not provided by Oblò srls, which deals only with coworking, but by APS CROT Varia Umanità which is located inside the coworking. The Association provides a parental educational service for children aged 10 months to 6 years.

Organisations differ in their approach towards their users. For example, Sumo societa cooperativa sociale/progetto Lab Altobello through its services addresses different needs of individuals, especially parents who want to re-enter the labour market. The Magic Barn has always followed the Montessori approach in its work with children, but it does not apply the same philosophy with a single approach and tries to take inspiration from different pedagogical models (Munari, Malaguzzi, Lodi, Delway, etc.). Kwbaby follows the principles of outdoor and nature education in offering its services to children from 0 to 6 years old.



Source: Kw-baby from Italy

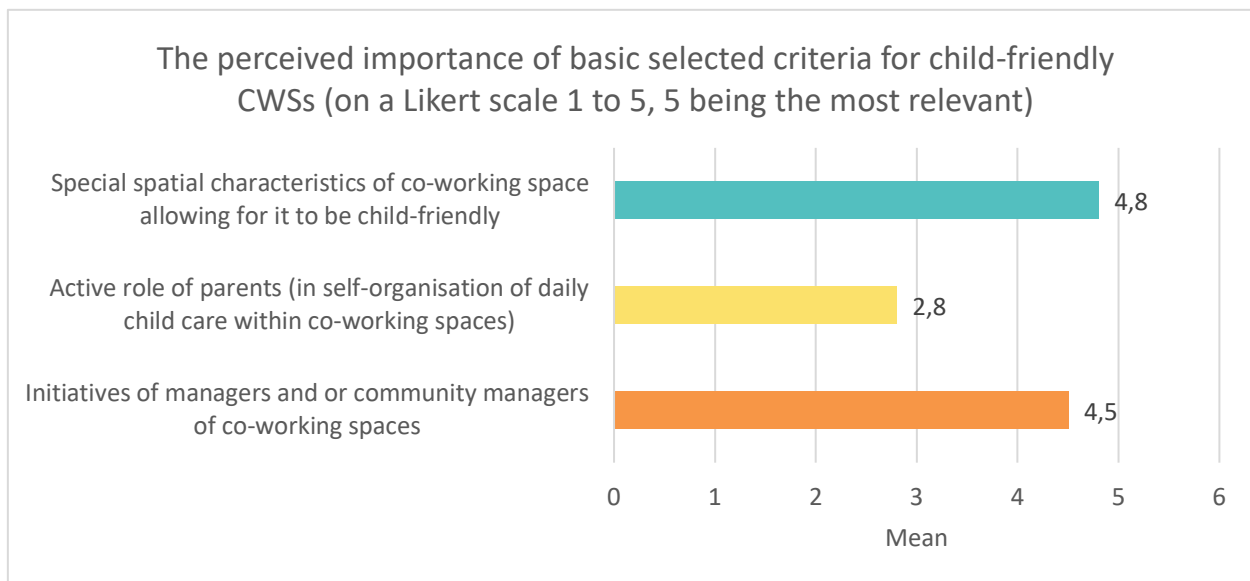
<sup>37</sup> Participation and access to ECEC varies widely among European countries for a number of reasons. Common definition is: Early childhood education and care refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age.

**Figure 8: Some other characteristics of the participating organisations**

Name of the organization	What kind of skills, professional qualifications do the employees have (occupational profile of employees)?	Who are your primary users and what drives them to work in a co-working space?	Does your organization deliver ECEC services to better fit the needs of working parents?	How many children use your organization's services per day (on average)?
<b>Associazione Co-Cò/CO-STANZA cooperativa</b>	There are no employees. The system, as designed, sees all self-employed workers or freelance with a VAT number (including the founding members) who allow continuous in-out over time and space. There are project management figures, specialists in gender issues and equal opportunities, welfare community managers, educators, psychotherapists, counsellors, artists, pedagogues, speech therapists.	Specialist professionals who work in the social field.	yes	2
<b>juggleHUB Coworking</b>	Various levels, but we care more about people skills, curiosity and a willingness to learn.	All sorts, probably a lot of parents but not only, looking for community, a friendly place and childcare.	no	6
<b>Kwbaby</b>	1 pedagogist, 2 educators, 1 management coordinator, 1 auxiliary.	The users of Kwbaby are families, those of coworking deal with various sectors and being freelancers, they look for a shared space to cut costs, create networks and shared and supportive projects.	yes	7
<b>Nest creative innovation factory srl</b>	Educators, Engineering and Management.	Freelancers, digital nomads, StartUps, SmartWorking company employees.	yes	30
<b>Oblò srls</b>	No employees, only freelancers or voluntary or project collaborators.	Freelancers who deal with education, growth or psycho-physical well-being, health and non-health professionals.	yes	12
<b>Qf srl</b>	Professional educators.	Parents or freelancers who want a welcoming and flexible place to suit their needs.	yes	20
<b>Sumo società cooperativa sociale/progetto Lab Altobello</b>	Psychologists/educators/labour market operators/trainers.	Freelancers, employees of other companies far from their workplace. They look for comfortable spaces, equipped with Wi-Fi and where it is possible to socialize with others and network. Some benefit from co-baby	yes	12

		services and playrooms for their children.		
<b>The Magic Barn</b>	Pedagogists and professionals in the field of education.	Parents, close to their children, bright spaces.	yes	30
<b>The Village Coworking</b>	Communication and planification.	They have a child take care of by the professional childcare school.	yes	6
<b>Work'n'Kid - Coworking mit Kind</b>	Childcare experienced.	Parents with need of (flexible) childcare.	no	5

**Figure 9: Main criteria for child-friendly CWS**



**Special spatial characteristics of co-working spaces** allowing for it to be child-friendly are (by respondent's opinion) seen as one of the most important criteria for establishing child-friendly co-working spaces. Provision of **special facilities/amenities** that are different from a normal coworking space (fresh and tasty meals, etc.) and provision of **separate spaces for children** were highlighted/identified as the most important special spatial characteristics of co-working spaces with childcare. This reflects an awareness of the importance of services which should provide a safe, nurturing and caring environment with a variety of opportunities for children to develop their potential<sup>38</sup>. **Healthy, safe and enabling environment** provides for the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children under three years old and are essential for delivering high-quality ECEC, especially when it<sup>39</sup>:

- promotes each child's safety and emotional well-being;
- is welcoming, accessible, comfortable and creates a sense of belonging;
- stimulates the child's play, exploration, autonomy and initiative;
- offer materials that can provide meaningful experiences to extend the child's skills and encourage play and exploration.
- supports (including modelling) healthy eating habits for young children; ensures that healthy, age-appropriate food choices are offered that are culturally and regionally appropriate;

<sup>38</sup> COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems.

<sup>39</sup> Ionescu M. and Tankersley D. (2016): A QUALITY FRAMEWORK for Early Childhood Practice in Services for Children under Three Years of Age. ISSA – International Step by Step Association.

- provides and promotes (along with other key adults) meals that meet children’s individual dietary requirements (including allergies to foods);
- follows and promotes hygienic procedures for storing, preparing and serving food;
- understands and appreciates the diversity that exists among children, families and communities.

Such spaces or environments allow children to actively participate in their own learning in order to acquire and master new skills, self-confidence, independence and a sense of belonging. Equally important, however, is to scaffold their development and expand their emerging skills and abilities by talking with them, reading to them, allowing them to explore and experiment, engaging in playful interactions and building up their achievements throughout the day, including routines (like feeding, bathing, preparing to sleep), and transitioning from one moment or activity to another. Playful interactions and play promote the child’s exploration of ideas and experiences, and are an effective way to support learning. Children under three



Source: Public Institute Mala Ulica  
 Author: Klemen Skubic

years old experience life in a holistic way. This is why ECEC services should provide a wide range of developmental experiences and balanced learning opportunities in ways that seamlessly integrate children into caring routines and play. This is also echoed by respondents who identified **activity-based zones** as one of important features of child-friendly coworking spaces.

**Respondents consider the following services/opportunities to be important for better work-life balance of parents working in co-working spaces:**

*“It is always good to have fresh meals, parenting activities and special care for mothers.”*

*“A place to have lunch together, a place for parents to work close to their kids while the kids are getting adjusted.”*

*“Separate room for kids (including for napping, changing etc.) with separate exit door.”*

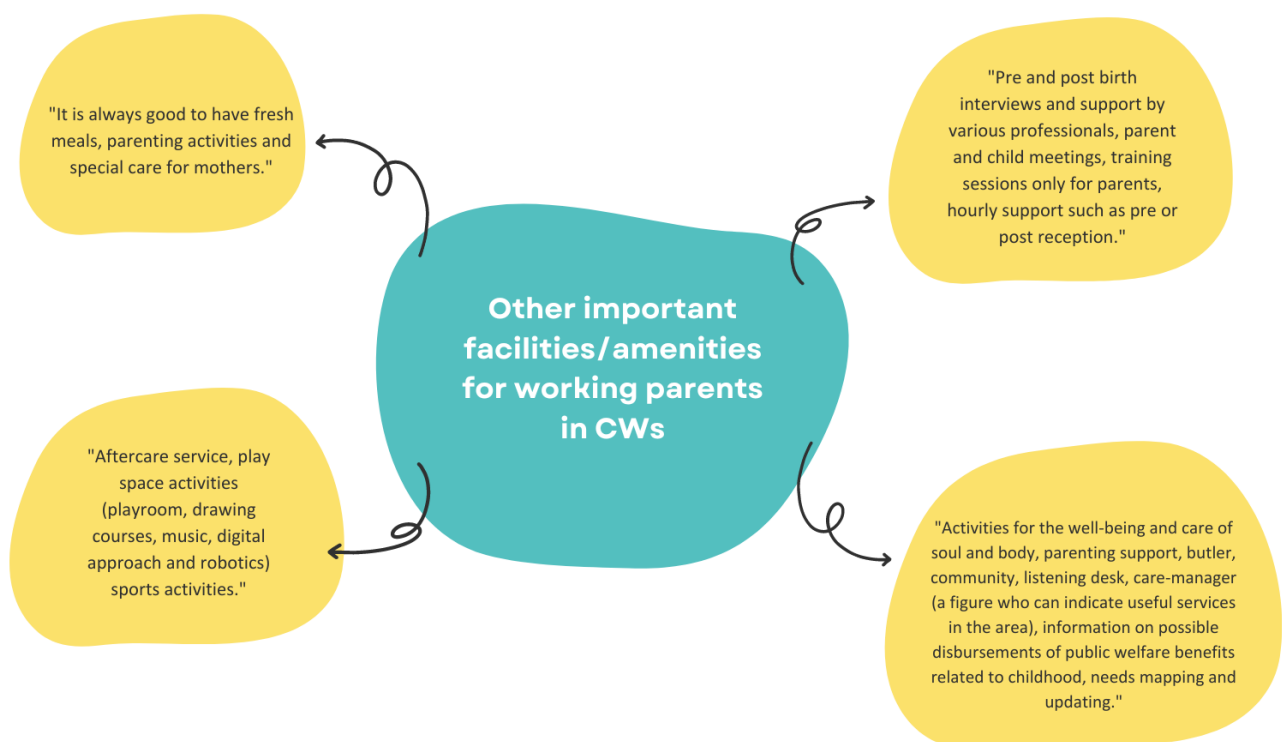
*“If you mean those provided by us are services managed by educational staff not by parents. We offer different services for various age groups. Experimental service for children 12/36 months, afternoon playroom with some evening events, after-school activities for middle schools, summer camps for 6/12 years, etc. open to citizens.”*

*"Pre and post birth interviews and support by various professionals, parent and child meetings, training sessions only for parents, hourly support such as pre or post reception."*

*"Discounts, meetings with experts, space equipped with games, cultural activities, proximity, immersion in nature."*

*"Aftercare service, play space activities (playroom, drawing courses, music, digital approach and robotics) sports activities."*

*"Activities for the well-being and care of soul and body, parenting support, butler, community, listening desk, care-manager (a figure who can indicate useful services in the area), information on possible disbursements of public welfare benefits related to childhood, needs mapping and updating."*



Co-working spaces are known for their high level of community involvement. Community managers play an important role in this as they can promote a range of activities for parents to help them balance work and family commitments. **Initiatives of managers and/or community managers of CWs** are (by respondent's opinion) seen as the second most important criteria for establishing child-friendly co-working spaces. The following initiatives were particularly highly rated:

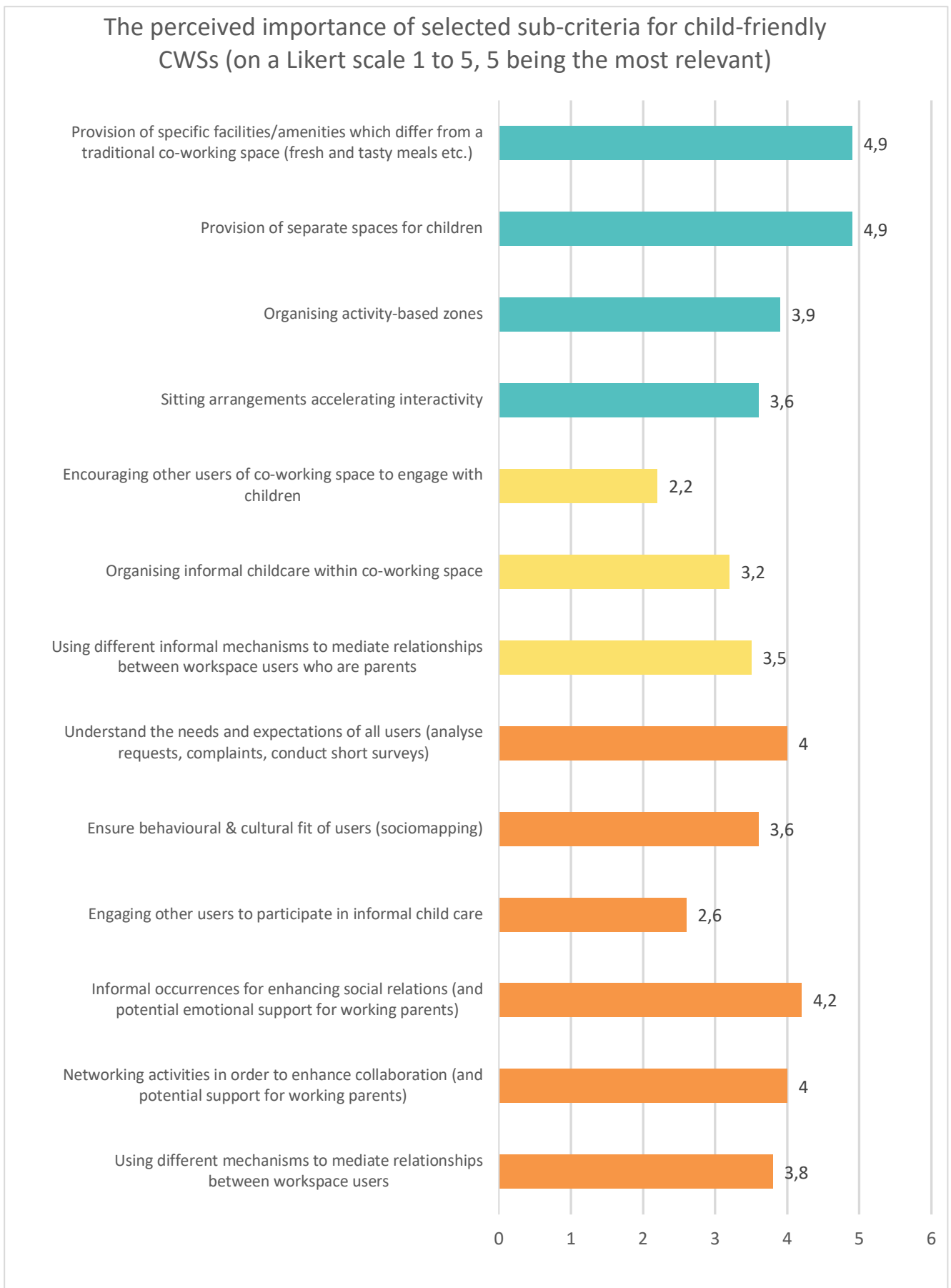
- Organising informal events for enhancing social relations (and potential emotional support for working parents).
- The desire to understand the needs and expectations of all users (analyse requests, complaints, conduct short surveys).
- Carrying out various networking activities to strengthen collaboration (and possibly support for working parents).



Involving other users in informal childcare was the least important initiative. This is perhaps not surprising, as parents primarily want to work and finish their work commitments that day.

**Active role of parents** (*in terms of self-organisation of daily childcare within CWSs*) is identified as the least important criteria for establishing child-friendly co-working spaces. In this context, respondents rated the use of different informal mechanisms to mediate relationships between workspace users who are parents as most important, while encouraging other users of the CWSs to engage with children was identified as least important. This is in line with the previous finding that involving other users in informal childcare is perceived as a less important initiative.

**Figure 10: Specific criteria for child-friendly CWS**



## 5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In the European Union ECEC has been a growing priority in many Member States. Whereas education has long been high on the policy agenda, ECEC has only started to receive attention more recently. This interest in the early years is inspired by a rapidly expanding body of scientific research in different disciplines that points to substantial economic, social, educational, and developmental benefits of participating in high-quality ECEC. These benefits are not limited to the children involved, but extend to society at large. At the level of the individual, participation in high-quality ECEC is associated with higher earnings, greater educational attainment, improved social integration and better health, among other advantages. According to the Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care systems, ECEC participation can be an effective tool for achieving educational equity for children in disadvantaged situations, such as children with disabilities or with special educational needs, children within households at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including single-parent households, children with a migrant background, refugee children, Roma children and children from other minority groups, children living in rural and remote areas with inadequate care infrastructure and children in alternative care.

Moreover, for parents, it is found to **encourage labour market participation, especially of mothers**, in addition to educational and other impacts. At the societal level, there are ample potential benefits as well, ranging from reduced spending on welfare and lower crime rates to higher tax revenues and improved social cohesion. In other words, the benefits are both widespread and long-lasting.

Although the Barcelona targets were on average reached at EU level, some Member States are significantly lagging, and differences persist in particular for children from lower income households. There are also **substantial differences across European countries in the quality of ECEC services** provided to young children, the types of ECEC services available and the number of hours per week children usually attend. In many countries families with young children struggling to secure a place in subsidised ECEC may opt for informal arrangements, such as with babysitters, nannies, relatives, or other adults. Parents for whom these options are unaffordable or inaccessible could be forced to drop out of the labour market. Women are more often affected than men, since they are more likely to drop out of the labour market or reduce their working hours when they become parents. On the other hand, **increasingly widespread flexible working arrangements may also cause difficulties when combining work and childcare. Parents who are struggling to balance entrepreneurial activities with their family duties and/or live in countries with low ECEC provision** tend to seek better conditions that assist them in tackling conflictual situations and in addition, enhances their social lives to create further career opportunities. **Family-friendly co-working spaces are emerging as a possible alternative to this situation, as an innovative way to reconcile work and family life.** In such environments/spaces, the need for non-formal ECEC services is increasing, especially as the availability and quality of non-formal ECEC programmes is often supplement for formal learning opportunities and a key support to the integration of all children.

All this has led to an increased interest and growth of a child-friendly co-working spaces. Nevertheless, our research revealed that there is an **evident lack of work-life balance topics within the research on CWSs**. Due to this void in otherwise increasing importance and knowledge on co-working spaces and non-formal ECEC services, we wanted to collect and present examples of an inspiring practices related to child friendly CWSs.

In this compendium, we present and highlight important findings from our research in which we have established methodology of the selection criteria to identify and collect good and inspiring practices in the field of child friendly CWSs. As part of the methodology an online questionnaire has been developed and sent to identified 26 addresses (co-working spaces with childcare) from the following countries: Switzerland,

Germany, Slovakia, England, Portugal, Austria, Northern Ireland, USA, and Singapore. In Italy the link has been circulated to 15 addresses, also through Facebook. Although this part was very important for our research as it provided us with valuable information and data about the strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and enhancements related to innovation and cooperation in the field of co-working spaces with childcare, the participation from the respondents was very low. Nevertheless, we have gained valuable information that will help us to understand and **establish alternative solutions for the delivery of non-formal and high-quality ECEC services** within **child-friendly co-working spaces**.

We found out that respondent's organisations largely provide **traditional day-care model** (professional childcare – 4 respondents), **different childcare packages** (daily, hourly high-quality childcare along with part-time and full-day options – 1 respondent), **babysitting** (1 respondent) and **other related support services** (4 respondents). Provision of **separate spaces for children** and **special amenities** (fresh and tasty meals, etc.) was identified as the most important special spatial characteristics of co-working spaces with childcare. This reflects an awareness of the importance of services which should provide a safe, nurturing, and caring environment with a variety of opportunities for children to develop their potential. **Activity-based areas** were also identified as one of the important features of child-friendly coworking spaces. Providing range of developmental experiences and balanced learning opportunities are therefore crucial for the smooth integration of children into caring routines and play.

**Initiatives of managers and/or community managers of CWSs** were by respondent's opinion seen as the second most important criteria for establishing child-friendly co-working spaces as they can promote a range of activities for parents to help them balance work and family commitments. Their initiatives were particularly highly rated in relation to organising informal events for enhancing social relations, desire to understand the needs and expectations of all users and carrying out various networking activities to strengthen collaboration. **On the other hand, active role of parents** was highlighted as the least important criteria.

**Lessons learnt** and examples of good practices of child friendly CWSs will help to raise awareness of the diversity and variety of approaches within ECEC services and strengthen co-working managers' awareness and knowledge about the opportunities how to upgrade and develop their own organisations. This is particularly important in a context of complex multi-diverse societies in which we live. To ensure ECEC services are accessible to all children and their families (public or private, formal, informal, or non-formal), it is necessary that services are designed and provided with respect for the unique individual needs of each child. In high quality ECEC programmes, all children have opportunities to develop their language, social, physical, and cognitive abilities, and feel respected and inspired. The European Commission proposed to revise the Barcelona targets to create new momentum for fostering further upwards convergence among Member States of children's participation in ECEC and thus help increase women's labour-market participation and close the gender employment gap.

The **Co-baby project** is one of the possible solutions in addressing those challenges faced by children and their parents, in accessing appropriate ECEC services by ensuring sufficient territorial coverage of ECEC provision. By doing so, it is important that childcare is fully compatible with the child's well-being and specific needs of working parents and their need to reconcile work, family, and private life.

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## 7. ANNEX

### **CO-STANZA**

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32/38 Rosso – 50144 Firenze  
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Website: <https://www.co-stanza.it/>

### **Kwbaby**

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40136, Bologna  
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Website: <https://kilowatt.bo.it/>

### **Nest creative innovation factory srl**

Via Sterpulino 11, Pisa, PI 56121  
Italy  
Website: <https://nest2hub.com/>

### **Oblò srls**

c/o Casa Giacomuzzi Moore  
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Italy  
Website: <https://www.spaziooblo.it/>

### **Qf srl**

Via Giulio Cesare Procaccini, 11  
20154 Milano MI  
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Website: [www.qf11.it](http://www.qf11.it)

### **Sumo societa cooperativa sociale/progetto Lab**

#### **Altobello**

Via Altobello 9C, Mestre-Venezia  
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Italy  
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### **The Magic Barn**

Via Illirico 6A  
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Website: <https://www.themagicbarn.it/>

### **The Village Coworking**

The Village Coworking @ l'écoline  
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### **Work'n'Kid - Coworking mit Kind**

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