

“National Programme in Support of Motherhood”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	NATIONAL PROGRAMME IN SUPPORT OF MOTHERHOOD
Location	Bulgaria, nation-wide
Main theme	Young parenthood
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Equal opportunities, work-family balance, individual childcare
Summary of programme/ practice	The programme aims to meet the growing demand for childcare facilities (due to the diminishing number of places in public crèches and kindergartens and a slight growth in fertility) while at the same time it gives equal opportunities for labour market participation to women and men and to parents and those without parental responsibilities. It provides support for working parents while ensuring individual childcare at the child’s home.
Target	Target groups/issues/problems addressed: The main target groups are: persons registered as unemployed in the Labour Offices, mothers or adopters who have a maternity leave for raising a small child. Employers in the project are The Agencies of Social Assistance in Bulgaria.
Objectives of programme/ practice	The main goal of the project is to create conditions for improving the employment prospects and career development of mothers of young children by providing individual childcare from a registered unemployed person for the period of the maternity leave. When the mother has a job and is willing to return to it before the end of the

	maternity leave her child can be taken care of by an unemployed person. The maternity leave benefits are paid to the carer while the mother receives her salary. The objectives include: - creating conditions for a smooth transition to the work life after a maternity leave, birth or adoption - achieving a better balance between work and family life for working parents - creating new job offers for unemployed women in childcare - providing quality childcare and encouraging positive demographic trends.
Content of programme/ practice	Main actions/ steps: The project includes the following activities: - Information campaign - Identification of the target groups - Motivating of unemployed women for active job search - Forming of implementation teams - Recruiting of participants - Financial support to the employers - Control and monitoring. When an unemployed person takes care for a child according to this project the mother of the child does not get maternity benefits. This aims to improve the economic activity of women.
Time scale	Duration/Sustainability: The project runs from 2007 till 2009.

Programme/ practice design	Development of programme/practice: This programme builds upon the experiences from the project 'Back to work'. Decision-making actors and process: National Agency of Social Assistance Management and leadership of programme: National Agency of Social Assistance and National Labour Office Implementation: Institutions implementing the project are: - The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - National, Regional and Local Labour Offices - Employment Commissions (social partners in the municipalities) - National, Regional and Local Agencies for Social Assistance - National Social Security Institute - 'Current and Future Mothers Association' Legal framework: The programme covers the territory of the whole country. The major condition for taking part in the project is that the mother/adopter should have the right to maternity leave benefits. The mother has the right to choose by herself the unemployed person who will take care of her child. The unemployed person should not suffer from any psychiatric diseases. The basic principles of the project are: conformity with the law, resource funding from the national budget, EU principles of economic growth and employment which includes taking actions for raising women's participation in the labor market and reducing the differences between male and female employment, collaboration in the implementation of the project between the different national and regional institutions.
Resources involved	The funding for the project comes from the state budget in accordance with the Law for Encouraging of Employment and the National Action Plan. The policy context is a growing awareness of the large differences between women and men in the labour market. Women continue to outnumber men in the unemployment registers with more than one half of the unemployed women being long-term unemployed. In 2006 men's employment rate was 52.9% with 41.1% of women's rate. Despite the measures of the National Action Plans significant discrepancies remain in the payment of both genders (over 20%). The government attributes this to women's greater engagement with child caring and the lack of balance between work and family life when they are in paid employment.

	During the past several years we observe positive trends in the market development of our country and the number of new born children is rising. This demographic process implies some actions for developing the social infrastructure because of the insufficient number of child care facilities. The taxes of the childcare facilities seem to be too high for some categories of parents such as those living below the poverty line. The project is part of the national policy strategy for encouraging women's participation on labor market and providing quality care for children aged under 2 years. It is based on the following documents: - The European employment strategy for the 2004-2010 that has as its priority the ensuring of gender equality - The National strategy for demographic development 2006-2020 which main goal is to encourage the employment of women and to achieve a better balance between work and family life during the maternity period.
Evaluation	Evaluation process: Not yet
	Results / impact of programme: This programme has the widest coverage of the three projects targeting young parents. For the first two years (2007 and 2008) there were 4640 mothers who participated in the programme and 4640 persons were employed. Of these only 174 returned back to the unemployment register. 412 long-term unemployed profited from employment in the programme. The Ministry invested 3736407 BGN in the first two years of the programme.
	Difficulties encountered: No information.
	Assessment of programme/ action/ practice in terms of sustainability: No official evaluation is available but in our view the programme is the most popular from the programmes targeting young parents in Bulgaria.
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	This is the only project which involves a non-governmental organization in its implementation – 'Current and Future Mothers Association' which in our view is one of the factors for its wider spread and greater transparency.
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	http://www.mlsp.government.bg www.az.government.bg www.asp.government.bg http://www.snbm.org/