

TOWARDS A PUBLIC SERVICE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD FACILITIES

ESEC OPINION – MARCH 2022

Today, the number of childcare places available in France for children under 3 is estimated at **59.8 places per 100 children** (ONAPE, 2021). This lack of availability is not new and the many plans to create new places do not address parents' difficulties. Worse still, there are currently real social inequalities between parents in accessing childcare. They are reinforced by a system that is not sufficiently transparent or intelligible.

Despite the strong investment of municipalities and the funding provided by the family branch of the social security and by government, the childcare policy for young children is far from meeting the requirements of **equality, unconditional access, country-wide provision** and **adaptation to needs** that we are entitled to expect from a public service.



40% OF CHILDREN
do not benefit from any
form of childcare

**How can we make
childcare a real
public service?**

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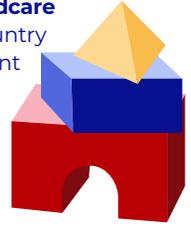
The ESEC has made **15 recommendations** in order to make early childhood services a real public service and a universal right.



THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING TOWARDS A PUBLIC SERVICE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD:

1 ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO CHILDCARE IF THEIR PARENTS SO WISH

- **Expand the role of the *Relais Petite Enfance*** [early childhood centres] and develop them throughout France, to make them a one-stop shop. This will ensure that parents have access to comprehensive information on the childcare available and will enable parents and professionals to liaise.
- Rethink the **way in which the supplement is calculated** for childcare in order to balance family life and work life and reduce the amount payable for families, particularly the lowest-income groups.
- Enhance the status of the jobs of **early childhood professionals** by acting on the following priorities: salaries, training, career prospects, enhancement of skills and diversity.
- **Consolidate the group childcare offering** throughout the country in the next CNAF/Government targets and management agreement [*Convention d'objectifs et de gestion*].



2 PROVIDE A PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN THAT PROMOTES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Structure post-natal maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave** to enable parents, if they so wish, to stay with their child until their first birthday. To do this, provide for shorter and better compensated parental leave: it could be paid, as it is in Sweden, at 75% of professional income with a cap to be determined.
- Provide **training for professionals** to care for children with disabilities or chronic illnesses.
- Support care for children from **vulnerable families** by ensuring that the cost can be covered for the family, and through a partnership strengthened by the facility with the parents.
- Make it compulsory to monitor the quality of childcare in facilities and to determine a **policy for preventing, identifying and combatting abuse**.



3 BETTER DEFINE THE PLACE OF EACH ACTOR IN THE GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

- **Strengthen, without delay, dialogue with local and regional authorities** in order to set objectives for the care of young children based on local needs.
- **Assign responsibility for early childhood services to municipal and inter-municipal authorities**, developing various forms of childcare while ensuring access for all.

This responsibility will have to be coordinated with the department particularly within the context of its authority in terms of maternal and child welfare.

