



EASI - EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME

VOUCHERS FOR THE PROVISION OF FLEXIBLE CHILDMINDERS SERVICE TO WORKERS WITH NON-STANDARD WORK SCHEDULES

INNOVATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- Flexible childcare arrangements for enterprises with non-standard work schedules
- Model and intersectoral cooperation new to the country, contributing to improving families' financial and social well-being through new relationships between employers, employees and childcare practitioners

SCALE AND TYPE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

- Incremental and Service Innovation

CALL NAME

Social Policy Innovations supporting reforms in Social Services

COUNTRY

Latvia

POLICY AREAS

Promotion of equality between women and men
Promotion of a high level of quality and sustainable employment

TARGET GROUPS

National, regional and local authorities
Social partners
NGOs
Experts in evaluation and impact assessment
Media
Others

COORDINATOR

Ministry of Welfare of the Latvian Republic

EU CONTRIBUTION

€ 708,642.92 (77.96% of total costs)

TOTAL COSTS

€ 908,947.75

DURATION

August 2015 – July 2018

SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The project, developed by the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, aims to promote the family and professional well-being of the citizens working on non-standard hours by finding an optimal model for the **provision of childcare support**. The actions focused on childcare, as this was one of the **primary concerns of employees with special working hours**, for whom the typical option of a kindergarten is less feasible.

A voucher, supported by public and private entities, was proposed as a possible solution to address the adversities. The experimented **model for the reconciliation of work and family** was structured around the concept of flexible childcare arrangements for Latvian enterprises with non-standard work schedules, in which employees could count on the support of specially provided childminders or other authorised caregivers.

*Keywords: **childcare services, work and family balance, non-standard working schedules, vouchers, tailored assistance, cross-sectoral cooperation***

Over the years, the Latvian Ministry of Welfare has introduced reforms on the country's day care system to ensure greater adaptation and accommodation of the services to the needs of employees in general. However, some **specific needs** of the working community with **non-standard schedules**, which represents 35% to 40% of the labour market, had still not been fully addressed by the system.

Facing the challenge of securing childcare services during their working hours and hiring nannies, these citizens and families see both their well-being and motivation at work affected, and therefore, their productivity. The problem extends to employers, as it influences **absenteeism, employee turnover rate and voluntary dismissals**.

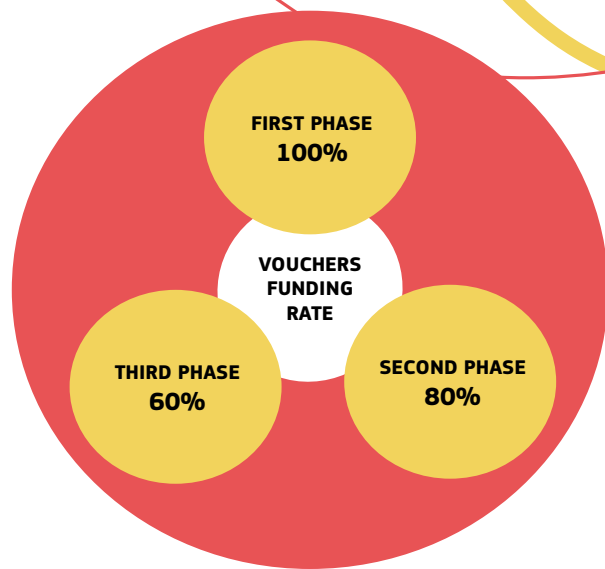
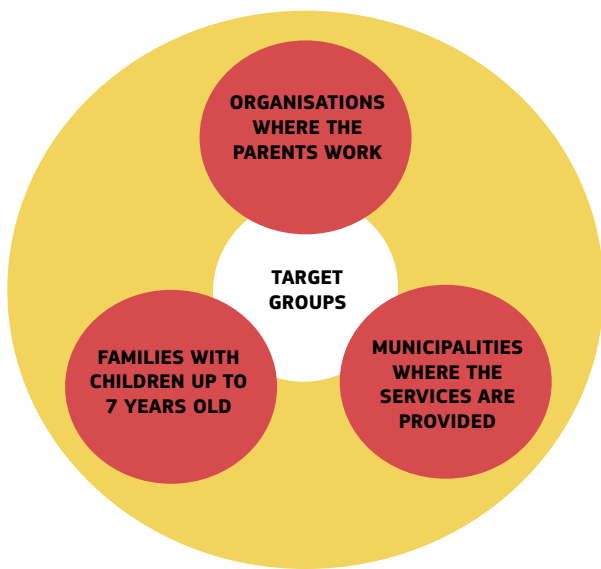
The direct target group of the project were the families with children aged up to 7 years old, whose parents are working non-standard hours, and companies and organisations where parents work. The indirect target groups of the project were the municipalities where subsidised childcare services were provided.

“ 35-40% of the parents in Latvia worked on non-standard working schedules, hence addressing their needs was very important. The idea was to expand to new targets the subsidies that were available for parents who worked in normal working hours.”

OBJECTIVES

- 01 • Find an optimal childcare arrangement for workers with non-standard working schedules
- 02 • Identify the optimal conditions for intersectoral partnership and self-regulation practices
- 03 • Establish a long-term model for subsidies and flexible childcare services

CONTEXT AND NEEDS



The programme was piloted between **2015 and 2018 in three municipalities in Latvia**. A comparative experimental design was used, with a control sample (**150 participants in the intervention group**, directly using the service; and 150 participants in the control group, not using the service). The experimentation was divided into three phases: 1) the vouchers were 100% financed by the initiative during four months; 2) the vouchers were co-funded on 80% during two months and remaining investment was expected from the employers/recipients of the service; 3) co-funding was reduced to 60% during four months. At the end of the process, several surveys were carried out to perceive the impacts of the programme.

RESULTS

Participants involved in the experimentation were satisfied and considered to have **improved both their organisation of family life and their quality of life**. Levels of job satisfaction were higher in participants directly benefitting from the services, who were also more motivated to co-funding the measures, when compared to the control group.

“The project helped to improve the knowledge and raise the degree of awareness of the employers and other stakeholders about work-family initiatives, potential benefits and necessary investments.”

“The service was most needed in families where both parents worked non-standard working hours and single-parent families.”

“One of the good practices was the development of an integrated tool of family-friendly childcare arrangements in the workplace for workers with non-standard work schedules.”

Although already used in the other EU Member States, the model and the strategy of intersectoral collaboration between the public and commercial sectors were **new to the Baltic area and the Latvian context**. A social innovation key feature of the project was related to its achievements in enhancing families' social and financial well-being by forming new social ties between employers, employees and childcare practitioners.

TRANSFERABILITY AND UPSCALING

The Ministry of Welfare is attempting to **mainstream the concept of vouchers** at the national level. A report is being prepared by the government on the introduction of the service, including changes to the legal framework enabling the **reduction of Personal Income Tax** on the employer's support for these services. In addition, **several municipalities in Latvia** are trying to expand the range of childcare offers, adjusting them to workers with non-standard working hours.

Moreover, the project's assessment methodology has been transferred and is **currently being used by the Institute of Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (InCSR)** to evaluate family-friendly childcare arrangements for workers with non-standard work schedules.



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PROJECT CANVA



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