
This article is based on a verbal presentation given to the Quality of Childhood Group in the European Parliament. Notes taken during the presentation were formulated into the article below, which has been checked and approved by Professor Peter Moss.

"Young Children and Their Services: Developing a European Approach" or "Beyond the Barcelona Targets."

By Peter Moss

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SUMMARY

- *Children in Europe is a multi-national and multi-lingual magazine produced by a network of national magazines devoted to early childhood.*
- *The editorial board of Children in Europe believes that a European approach is needed that goes beyond the flawed approach of the Barcelona targets.*
 - *The Barcelona targets are purely quantitative.*
 - *The Barcelona targets focus narrowly on childcare and on meeting the needs of working parents.*
 - *The Barcelona targets do not take into account previous work and past projects.*
 - *What does Children in Europe mean by a 'European Approach?'*
 - *Creating a common framework of objectives, principle and entitlements while still recognizing and valuing national and local diversity*
 - *Why do we need a 'European Approach?'*
 - *European Union (EU) policies affect children and the EU has committed to children's rights and best interests*
 - *There is an equity issue: key entitlements and benefits should not depend on where a child is born*
 - *A European approach gives added value, for example, in terms of exchange and learning.*
 - *How do we create a 'European Approach?'*
 - *Build on strong foundations of previous European and international work, for example, the 1992 Childcare Recommendation, EC Childcare Network's 40 Quality Targets, OECD*

Starting Strong

- *Key Themes*
 - *Not dividing ages 0-6 or 'care' and 'education'*
 - *The need for a professional workforce*
 - *The image or social construction of the child*
 - *The relationship between early childhood and compulsory schooling*
 - *Democracy and citizenship*
- *What is Children in Europe's 'European Approach?'*
 - A shared image of the child – the 'rich' child*
 - A shared image of the EC services*
 - 10 common principles – goals to phase in by 2020*

Introduction to Children in Europe magazine

Children in Europe is a multi-national, multi-lingual magazine, a unique and important European project, which receives no funding from the European Union. It is produced by a network of national magazines and is published twice a year in the languages of the magazines; currently it is available in 16 countries (all but one member state) and in 14 languages, from the UK to Romania and from Denmark to Croatia. Each edition has a theme and original material is commissioned from across Europe (and occasionally beyond); recent themes include children's rights, young children and science, the workforce and multi-lingualism. Professor Moss explained that Children in Europe had its origins in the EC Childcare Network, which he coordinated, and which ran for 10 years until 1996. At that time, some members thought it was a great shame to lose their accumulated experience of networking, and this led to establishing Children in Europe, with the first issue in 2002.

The magazine's intended audience is everybody working with children from birth to ten years old. Each issue provides a mix of theoretical articles and local experiences from all over Europe.

Introduction to the theme: Young Children and their Services: Developing a European Approach

Professor Moss and the editorial board of *Children in Europe* believe that Europe, the European Union, has responsibility for its youngest citizens and that a European approach is needed to provide services for young children, which goes beyond the flawed approach of the Barcelona targets.

The Barcelona targets: "*Member States [should strive] to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age ... in line with [national] patterns of provision.*" These targets, set at the European level, were limited by only one qualification, namely that they need to be interpreted in line with national patterns of provision. This qualification remains undefined.

"Why do we think that the Barcelona targets are flawed?" "Why are we unhappy?" "Why do we want to go beyond Barcelona?" Firstly, the Barcelona targets have a narrow, quantitative focus. Qualitative issues must be included. In focusing on quantity, the EU has forgotten what it has said about quality (for example, the 1992 Council Recommendation on Childcare). Secondly, the targets focus narrowly on childcare. The time has come to say farewell to the term "childcare". Nobody can question the need for childcare for working parents. However, there is more to early childcare services than simply meeting the needs of working parents, they can serve many functions and purposes. 'Childcare' is just one function or purpose of these services, it should not be an organizing principle (schools serve a 'childcare' purpose – but they are not called or thought of as 'childcare' services).

The European Commission needs to adopt a more holistic approach, similar to the approaches adopted by the OECD, by UNESCO, and UNICEF. These organisations have adopted terms such as "early childhood education and care" which recognize a broader role for early childhood services. If we think about early childhood services as "a common good" for all children, all parents and all families, irrespective of parents' employment, then we can begin to have a much richer discussion.

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The third reason that we consider the Barcelona targets to be flawed is that the European Commission and Union seem to have forgotten previous European work on early childhood services, to which no reference is made. This is too bad because there is a tremendous wealth of material, and we forget it at our peril.

Identifying the above flaws in the Barcelona Targets led Professor Moss and his organization, *Children in Europe*, to produce a policy paper. The remainder of this article will revolve around the following five questions:

1. What does Children in Europe mean by a "European Approach"?
2. Why do we need a European Approach?
3. How do we create a European Approach?
4. What is Children in Europe's European Approach?
5. What next?

Having worked for twenty years in the European context Peter Moss is firmly convinced that, through the democratic process, it is possible to agree upon significant positions, not just grand expressions or small targets. He has worked with people from many countries and has been impressed at the levels of agreement achieved. But agreement is not everything: agreeing to disagree with a colleague, for example, from Italy or Romania, and understanding the basis for that disagreement is also important. His message is therefore one of hope that advances can be made, even while sometimes disagreeing with others working toward the same ends.

What do we mean by "an approach to European services for young children"? It is the idea of a common framework of shared objectives, shared principles, and shared entitlements, while at the same time recognizing, valuing and creating national and local diversity. The relationship between coherence and diversity is always in tension and never finally resolvable, but it is possible to agree provisional and productive relationships.

Children in Europe defines young children as aged 0 to 6, which is when most children in Europe enter compulsory schooling. What is the rationale for having a European approach? Firstly, the European Union has a responsibility to act, because its policies affect children. They have affected children since the Treaty of Rome. Only recently has the EU begun to recognize how its policies affect children. For example, increased employment and gender equality have profound effects on the lives of children. They not only change women's positions, they perhaps more importantly, also change men's positions. To give another example: the European Commission and EU have already made a commitment to children's rights and best interests.

Both the Charter of Fundamental Rights and now the Lisbon Treaty talk about the child's best interests. In addition, three years ago, the Commission proposed establishing a comprehensive EU strategy to promote and safeguard the rights of the child in the EU's internal and external policies. This was a very strong statement confirming that children's rights are a priority for the EU. Unfortunately, the accompanying document said nothing about early childhood services. It said nothing about the Barcelona targets. Nonetheless, the EU has always had a responsibility for children and now it knows that it does.

As citizens of Europe children should expect certain common entitlements and shared benefits. Their parents have common entitlements to maternity leave, parental leave and other benefits. Whether you are a child in Brussels, Birmingham, Barcelona, Berlin or Bucharest, there are things that children, as European citizens, have a right to expect, just as their parents do. One's entitlements and benefits should not depend on where you are born, if "Europe" has a meaning.

The third reason for advocating a European approach is that it gives great added value: the exchange, the dialogue, the arguments, and the learning with others. As Europe probably has the richest tradition of early childhood care and education in the world, not to use that incredible richness is a tremendous waste.

How do we set about doing this? We do not have to start from the beginning. We already have strong European and international foundations. These have been worked on by capable individuals and organizations, giving us powerful ideas for discussion. To give four examples:

The Council of Ministers recommendation on childcare

In 1992 the Council of Ministers adopted a recommendation on childcare. It set out broad goals and principles for 'childcare' services. Interestingly, this agreement has been airbrushed out of later documents; it is not referred to in the Barcelona targets. Yet, it is still on the table and should be guiding ministers, governments and the European Commission. Although the language of the recommendation is vague and broad, it is

substantive. For example, it includes broad but useful principles such as: "Services should combine reliable care, with a general upbringing and a pedagogical approach." Here a holistic approach is advocated, addressing not only childcare, but also upbringing and education. This is similar to what northern European countries call the social pedagogical approach.

The Childcare Network – 40 targets

The second example is an important document produced by the EC Childcare Network. 'Quality Targets for Services for Young Children' sets out 40 targets that would implement the broad principles and objectives set out in the EC Childcare Recommendation. It shows how substantive progress could be made over a 10 year period. .

To illustrate:

Target 16: "All collective services for young children 0-6...should have coherent values and objectives included a stated and explicit educational philosophy". Thus, the age range of 0 to 6 should be seen as a unity and should be approached holistically; earlier targets call for a 0-6 policy and one department in government responsible for implementation.

Target 26: "A minimum of 60% of staff...(should have) a basic training of at least 3 years at a post-18 level (Target 26)...(The wage rate for qualified staff) should be comparable to that of teachers" This addresses one of the biggest problems in Europe, the low level of qualifications of many workers in early childhood services.

Target 25: "The wage rate for qualified staff should be comparable to that of school teachers." Parity should exist for those working with children of all ages.

OECD reports – Starting Strong I and II

The third example are the important reports *Starting Strong I and II* which arose from the very important cross-national study of early childhood policies in 21 countries conducted by OECD. These reports are full of wisdom and come to bold, sage conclusions.

Starting Strong I, published in 2001, offers eight key policy proposals. One is the need for a strong and equal partnership between early childhood and the education system, which would mean going beyond the idea that early childhood services simply prepare children for school.

Then, in OECD's Starting Strong II, published in 2006, ten policy areas have been outlined. For example, developing early childhood systems that support learning in its broadest sense, participation and democracy.

4. The Rosa Sensat Institute – recommendations for a new public education system

In 2005 a report was produced by this Catalan centre for teachers in Barcelona, the Rosa Sensat Institute. They produced a nice, short document "For a New Public Education System" which set out ten points on the purposes and practices of education from 0 to 18. They talk about their image or idea of the school: "a new public education system requires a new concept of schooling. Education in the most global, holistic sense, the school as a public meeting place in the physical, social, cultural, and political sense... the new public education system organizes its content on the basis of what is absolutely necessary for a person to exercise citizenship." This, again, is founding education in democracy and seeing the school not as a factory for producing narrow competencies and skills, but as a public meeting place, capable of many purposes and possibilities.

Some key themes in Children in Europe's policy approach

Not dividing the 0 – 6 age group

From these and other documents, key themes emerge. Firstly, we should not divide the age group from birth to six. This has been a real problem for 150 years, or more. At present in many countries we have separate services for children under and over three years. There is also, in many countries, a split between 'childcare' and 'education' services. There is a need for 0-6 services that combine care and education, and here the Continental tradition of social pedagogy, with its holistic approach, is very important

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The need for a professional workforce

The second theme is the need for a professional workforce. Just because children are young does not mean that they deserve an underprepared, poorly educated workforce.

The image – the social construction – of the child, the service, the workforce

The third important theme is the image or social construction of the child, the services and the worker. All the technical discussion counts for nothing unless one begins with the question of "What is your image of the Child?" There is a place for technical practice and technical questions, but we always must return to the political, ethical questions of how we understand the child, the nursery, and the educator.

Early childhood and compulsory schooling

The fourth theme is the relationship between Early Childhood and compulsory schooling. We need a lot more debate of the issue.

Democracy and citizenship

What is the approach of *Children in Europe*? Peter Moss cited the world-famous pedagogical work in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia, where the city has been developing a local, cultural project of childhood for over 40 years in its 'municipal schools' for children from 0 to 6 years. The question "What is your image of the child?" has been at the core of all they have done. Everything follows from that question. *Children in Europe*, too, thinks it is important to start by discussing the image of the child.

The image of the child held by the editorial board of *Children in Europe* is:

- a child born with great potential that can be expressed in a hundred languages
- an active learner seeking the meaning of the world from birth,
- a co-creator of knowledge, identity, culture and values;
- a child that is actively involved in making sense, making meaning;
- a child that can live, learn, listen and communicate, always in relationship with others (the autonomous child is not really autonomous but is still an individual, always in relationship with others);
- an individual whose individuality and autonomy depend on interdependence;
- and a citizen with a place in society, a subject of rights.

This can be summed up in the words of Loris Malaguzzi, the first director of Reggio Emilia's schools and one of the greatest pedagogical figures of the last century: "*Our image of the child is not as a subject of needs but a subject of rights. ...the rich child.*" He did not mean "rich" in terms of money, but in terms of potential and capabilities. Everyone needs to begin by discussing this political and ethical question (i.e. What is your image of the child?). There is far too much emphasis on technical practice in education today, for example, what works, evidence based policy, and not nearly enough political and ethical practice. The technical should always follow from the political and ethical.

Those discussions led Professor Moss and his group to explore their image of the early childhood centre, or service. A common image today is the early childhood center as a factory, a place for applying 'human technologies' to produce predetermined outcomes. There is a list of outcomes and early learning goals, and the job of the centre is to produce these. England, for example, has 69 early learning goals.

Another increasingly common image is the early childhood centre as a business. Its purpose is to sell a product to the consumer/parents market. Even though Peter rejects those images, he believes that they should be debated. *Children in Europe* envisions the early childhood centre as a social, cultural, and political meeting place for citizens – children and adults – where they can dialogue, listen, and discuss to share meanings: a public space, the agora, and the forum. This public space has a vast range of cultural, linguistic, social, aesthetic, ethical, political and economic possibilities – it can produce

many projects. It is a public responsibility and a right for citizens from birth.

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Centres understood in this way are not just for education, or even for education and childcare. They can have many purposes and produce many projects. Peter Moss gave just some examples of these possibilities, but there are many more:

- Co-constructing knowledge, values and identities (education in its broadest sense)
- Researching, for example. children's learning processes
- Building solidarities, offering support
- Sustaining cultures and languages
- Developing economy (including 'childcare')
- Promoting gender and other equalities
- Practicing democracy and active citizenship (John Dewey said: "*Democracy has to be reborn in every generation, and education is the midwife.*")

Based on the image of the child and the centre, Children in Europe has proposed ten common principles that they would like to see phased in by 2020.

Principle one: access. We propose early childhood services as an entitlement for all children from birth. This is voluntary, not compulsory. There is a growing debate in Europe about children being required to go to preschools. Professor Moss disagreed with this. Where good, affordable early childhood services are available, people use them. If you force attendance, there is little incentive to make services responsive to children and families. If there are good parental leave systems, especially for the first year, and good early childhood services, parents choose to send their children to an early childhood center after about twelve to fifteen months of age.

Principle two: affordability. These centres should be free of charge and tax-funded.

Principle three: holistic and multi-purpose services. They need to get beyond childcare, and to be places for the whole society. We should think of them as collective workshops, where children and adults come together to develop a wide range of projects.

Principle four: Participation, meaning democracy and social inclusion. Democracy, as the Swedish curriculum for the pre-school says, is a fundamental value.

Principle five: coherence in key areas. There should be one system of access, funding,

workforce and regulation for children from 0 to 6 years. While you do not treat 3-month olds the same way as 6 year olds, some aspects of the system should be the same.

Principle six: diversity. This means recognizing and valuing diversity of people, theories and practices. Today, in a neo-liberal time, we talk a lot about choice and diversity. However, education is becoming more standardized and controlled. We need to deliberately promote and encourage experimentation, people working with different theories and different perspectives.

Principle seven: evaluation that is participatory, democratic and transparent methods should be used. Peter spoke by way of example of pedagogical documentation, which has spread from Reggio Emilia throughout Europe and beyond. He offered it as an important example of democratic, transparent, participative evaluation.

Principle eight: valuing the work. Children in Europe argues for a profession specializing in 0 to 6 education and having parity with school teachers. We must challenge the insidious idea that if you work with children under three, you do not require the same level of education and the same competencies as people who work with older children. The best countries in Europe threw away that idea long ago.

Principle nine: a strong, equal partnership with schools. This is discussed in a Swedish document ('Preschool and school: two traditions and the vision of a meeting place' by Gunilla Dahlberg and Hillevi Lenz Taguchi) which talks about creating pedagogical meeting places. There, people from early childhood and from schools can together address common ways of thinking and working.

Principle ten: cross-national partnership working. There is so much more to learn by working with other countries.

What is to be done?

What is to be done? Children in Europe is developing 6-to-8 page dossiers on each principle and discussing the meaning of each one in more detail. They are assessing the current situation, as well as looking at countries which already work with the principle. They are also examining the issues involved.

Children in Europe wants to facilitate a politics of early childhood, a democratic dialogue about the need for and constituents of a European Approach. This should take place in many fora and at many levels, e.g. in the European parliament, in national and regional parliaments, in trade unions, with employers etc.

Peter would like to see the European Commission develop a coherent voice on early

childhood, bringing together "childcare", "early education" and "children's rights." Peter is concerned that the European Commission is creating a split approach, replicating the situation in many countries. Directorate-General Social Affairs does childcare; Directorate-General Education is increasingly active in early education; and Directorate-General Justice is doing children's rights. We do not know how much these three are engaging with each other. The challenge for the EU is to develop a holistic approach.

Appendix A:

Here is a complete list of the 40 targets (put together by the Childcare Network):

I. TARGETS FOR THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Target 1: Governments should draw on professional and public opinion to provide a published and coherent statement of intent for care and education services to young children from 0-6, in the public and in the private sector, at national and at regional/local level. This policy should set out principles, specify objectives and define priorities, and explain how such initiatives will be coordinated between relevant departments.

Target 2: At national level, one department should be nominated to take responsibility for implementing the policy whether it does so directly or through an agency: at a regional/local level there should be a similar designation of responsibility, whether services are directly administered by the regional/local authority or whether contracted out to other providers.

Target 3: Governments should draw up a programme to implement the policy which outlines strategies for implementation, sets targets, and specifies resources. At a regional/local level, the department or agency responsible should similarly draw up a programme for implementing policy and developing practice.

Target 4: Legislative frameworks should be created to ensure that the targets are fully met within specified time limits and reviewed regularly, and which should outline the competencies of regional and/or local government in fulfilling the targets.

Target 5: The government department or agency responsible at national level should set up an infrastructure, with parallel structures at local level, for planning, monitoring, review, support, training, research and service development.

Target 6: The planning and monitoring system should include measures of supply, demand and need covering all services for young children at national, regional and/or local level.

II. FINANCIAL TARGETS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Target 7: Public expenditure on services for young children (in this case defined as children aged 5 years and under) should be not less than 1% of GDP in order to meet targets set for services, both for children under three and over three.

Target 8: A proportion of this budget should be allocated to develop the infrastructure for services. This should include at least 5% spent on support and advisory services including continuous or in-service training and at least 1% for research and monitoring.

Target 9: There should be a capital-spending programme for building and renovations linked

to the environmental and health targets.

Target 10: Where parents pay for publicly funded services, the charges should not exceed, and may well be less than, 15% of net monthly household income. The charges should take into account per capita income, family size and other relevant circumstances.

III. TARGETS FOR LEVELS AND TYPES OF SERVICES TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Target 11: Publicly funded services should offer full time equivalent places for

- At least 90% of children aged 3-6 years; and
- At least 15% of children under three years

Target 12: Services should offer flexibility of hours and attendance including coverage for working hours and a working year if parents require it.

Target 13: There should be a range of services offering parents choice.

Target 14: All services should positively assert the value of diversity and make provision both for children and adults which acknowledges and supports diversity of language, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypes.

Target 15: All children with disabilities should have a right of access to the same services as other children with appropriate staffing assistance and specialist help.

IV. EDUCATION TARGETS

Target 16: All collective services for young children 0 – 6 whether in the public or private sector should have coherent values and objectives including a stated and explicit educational philosophy.

Target 17: The educational philosophy should be drawn up and developed by parents, staff and other interested groups.

Target 18: The educational philosophy should be broad and include and promote inter alia:

- The child's autonomy and concept of self
- Convivial social relationships between children, and children and adults
- A zest for learning
- Linguistic and oral skills including linguistic diversity
- Mathematical, biological, scientific, technical and environmental concepts
- Musical expression and aesthetic skills
- Drama, puppetry and mime
- Muscular co-ordination and bodily control
- Health, hygiene, food and nutrition
- Awareness of local community

Target 19: The way in which the educational philosophy is put into practice should be stated and explicit. Services should have a programme of organization covering all their activities including the pedagogical approach, deployment of staff, grouping of children, training profiles for staff, use of space, and the way in which financial resources are used to implement the programme.

Target 20: *The education and learning environment should reflect and value each child's family, home, language, cultural heritage, beliefs, religion and gender.*

V. TARGETS FOR STAFF CHILD RATIOS

Target 21: *Staff ratios for collective care should reflect the objectives of the service and their wider context and be directly related to group age and group size. They should usually be more than but should not be less than:*

- 1 adult: 4 places for children under 12 months
- 1 adult: 6 places for children aged 12-23 months
- 1 adult: 8 places for children aged 24-35 months
- 1 adult: 15 places for children aged 36-71 months.

Ratios in family day care should not be less than 1 adult: 4 places for children under compulsory school age, and the ratio should include the family day caregiver's own children.

Target 22: *At least one tenth of the working week should be non-contact time allocated to preparation and continuous training.*

Target 23: *Adequate supply cover should always be available to maintain the ratios.*

Target 24: *Administrative, domestic, janitorial work should be allocated staff time in addition to those hours spent with children.*

VI. TARGETS FOR STAFF EMPLOYMENT

Target 25: *All qualified staff employed in services should be paid at not less than a nationally or locally agreed wage rate, which for staff who are fully trained should be comparable to that of teachers.*

Target 26: *A minimum of 60% of staff working directly with children in collective services should have a grant eligible basic training of at least three years at a post-18 level, which incorporates both the theory and practice of pedagogy and child development. All training should be modular. All staff in services (both collective and family day care) who are not trained to this level should have right of access to such training including on an in-service basis.*

Target 27: *All staff in services working with children (in both collective and family day care) should have the right to continuous in-service training.*

Target 28: *All staff, whether in the public or the private sector, shall have the right to trade union affiliation.*

Target 29: *20% of staff employed in collective services should be men.*

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH TARGETS

Target 30: *All services, whether in the private or the public sector, should meet national and local health and safety requirements.*

Target 31: *The planning of the environment and its spatial organization, including the layout of the buildings, the furnishings and equipment should reflect the educational philosophy of the service and take account of the views of parents, staff and other interested parties.*

Target 32: There should normally be sufficient space, inside and out, to enable children to play, sleep and use bathroom facilities, and to meet the needs of parents and staff. This should normal mean:

- Internal space of at least 6 square metres for each child under three years and of at least 4 square metres for each child of 3-6 years (excluding storage and corridor or through-way space)
- Direct access to external space of a least 6 sq metres per child
- An additional 5% of internal space for adult use.

Target 33: Food preparation facilities should be available on the premises and nutritional and culturally appropriate food should be provided.

Target 34: Parents are collaborators and participants in early years services. As such they have a right to give and receive information and the right to express their views both formally and informally. The decision-making processes of the services should be fully participative, involving parents, all staff, and where possible, children.

Target 35: Services should have formal and informal links with the local community, communities or district.

Target 36: Services should adopt employment procedures which emphasize the importance of recruiting employees who reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community.

VIII. PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Target 37: Services should demonstrate how they are fulfilling their aims and objectives and how they have spent their budget, through an annual report or by other means.

Target 38: In all services, children's progress should be regularly assessed.

Target 39: The views of parents and the wider community should be an integral part of the assessment process.

Target 40: Staff should regularly assess their performance, using both objective methods and self-evaluation.



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Professor Peter Moss works at the Thomas Coram Research Institute, Institute of Education at the University of London and has been there for several years. He is one of the key children's advocates in the European Union. From 1988 until 1996 he was the Coordinator of the Childcare Network in the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate-General within the European Commission. This Network produced for use within the European Commission a report entitled 'Quality Targets for Young Children'. This report can still be considered as a landmark publication in this area. Because of certain political developments the Childcare Network was dissolved in 1996, but Peter Moss and the other Network Partners decided to continue on their own. In 2001 they succeeded in creating an international magazine called *Children in Europe* which is published in thirteen languages and in fifteen countries in Europe. Peter Moss is the editor of this magazine.

His interest is in childhood services, including a lot of cross-national work. He has a particular interest in the children's workforce, in the people who work with children and in the young people themselves. He recently completed an EU funded project called *Care Work in Europe*.

Professor Moss is also interested in "leave" policy, such as maternity, parental and paternal leave. He has worked with a Belgian colleague in coordinating a vigorous, extensive network on leave policy and research. It includes an annual seminar and review of leave policies.