

 <p>Education and Culture Lifelong Learning Programme GRUNDTVIG</p>	<p>Grundtvig Learning Partnership The Grassroots Women's International Academy a Peer Learning Strategy applied to the Mother Centers Movement</p> <p>Lernpartnerschaft zwischen dem Mütterforum und dem Dachverband der unabhängigen österreichischen Eltern-Kind-Zentren</p>
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28 to 30 October 2008

Exchange visit to Centers associated to the Mother's Forum, Baden-Württemberg e.V., Mother Centers Association, Family Centers and Multi-Generational Homes

- Center for Parents and Children (Eltern-Kind-Zentrum, EkiZ) / Stuttgart-West Multi-Generational Home in the city of Stuttgart
- Family Center / Multi-Generational home in Freudenstadt, Black Forest
- Esslingen Mother Center, in the district of Esslingen

Participants from the Region of Catalonia, Spain

Office for Promoció de Polítiques d'Igualtat Dona-Home
(Office for the promotion of policies of equality between women and men in Catalonia)
Espai Francesca Bonnemaison, Barcelona

Anna Cabó i Cardona, Director of Centro Francesca Bonnemaison
Carmen Galbaldón, Head of Women's Centers network for the Province and member of the support and consultancy team for the municipal government
Mercè Martin, Specialist in *Gender-based Violence* and member of the consultancy and support team for the municipal government

Participants from Germany

Forum of Mothers of Baden-Württemberg e.V, Petra Renz, Director
Elke Arenskrieger, Manager of Multi-generational Home/Center for Parents and Children (EkiZ) in Stuttgart-West
Marianne Reißing, Freudenstadt Family Center / Multi-Generational home
Board of Directors and Founding Committee
Julian Osswald, Lord Mayor of Capital of Freudenstadt District
Susanne Ferront, Board of Directors of Esslingen Mother Center
Beate Latendorf, Women's commissioner for the city of Esslingen

Participants from Europe

Mine e.V. Mothercenter international network of empowerment
Andrea Laux, Board of Directors

1. Tuesday, 28 October. Mayor's Office of Federal State capital of Stuttgart.

MINUTES

17:00 to 19:00 **Presentation and discussion on gender policies in the city of Stuttgart**

Discussion chaired by: Dr. Ursula Matschke,
Director of the equal opportunities department for the State Capital of Stuttgart.

Other participants: Andrea Laux (Director of EKIZ Center) and collaborators from the Center.

The Stuttgart department for Equal Opportunities

Dr. Matschke explained that in the year 1987, a project-study was conducted, called "the City needs Women". They found that mothers/housewives were the ones who were most involved, and that there was a great distance between them and women at university. She then worked on a European project with Finland and Norway; she saw that women had to be considered a resource, and not individuals that needed assistance. She was elected in the 2001 municipal elections and now works with a team of six people, under the auspices of the Mayor's Office. The unit was initially called the Women's Department, and was later changed to the Department for Gender Equality, finally becoming the Department for Equal Opportunities. This latter name is one they feel more comfortable with and better reflects individualities. Greater inequality has been detected in key areas: work and the balance of working life and family life. They are currently undertaking a *gender mainstreaming* project, working in all areas to detect various problems among women. One of the lines of study was to break down certain negative stereotypes of women working in City Council; namely regarding the idea of higher work absenteeism: the stereotypes here were proven to be untrue and economic aid was sought to solve practical issues such as child nurseries and take-away food, among others. She has also seen how important planning is. To be able to offer services where they are needed, it's important to bear in mind various parameters (where people reside, where they work, where they commute to...). Creativity is also important. For example, opening nurseries where people work, making use of existing services such as mother centers, making the most of spaces and professionals in order to provide better services and to take full advantage of them.

In the field of Gender-based Violence, they are currently working on the STOP Project, a network or circuit where all agents involved in these issues work together. In general, they try to work with the entire family.

The Justice Department plays an important part, establishing necessary measures such as requiring men with a history of violence to attend therapy whenever a 14-day restraining order is issued. The therapy consists of 10 individual sessions and 3 months of group sessions. Therapy continues even if the couple in question resumes living together. Our estimated results show that only 2% of men recidivate after the therapy. They are starting to work with male immigrants, especially those of Turkish nationality, by placing professionals in various centers within the community—places such as Mosques and recreational centers, among others.

For women, there are Shelters (2 state-run and 1 private in the Region of Stuttgart, with a population of 1,200,000), which allow stays of up to one year. No other resources were specified. They are also increasingly trying to work on a preventative level.

Currently the City Council has presented a DAPHNE Project to work with male aggressors. They will soon know if this Project is to be awarded to them; new partners will be possible.



The EkiZ Mother Center

Ms. Laux explained that the Mother Centers are places where family problems, including family violence, are prevented and detected. They also offer a space where women can learn empowerment. Associations that are small and show little hierarchy can provide a quick and efficient response to new social realities. Centers for mothers respond to one such reality: that

children under 3 years of age are not entitled to nursery care. The socially accepted norm is that the mother must stay with the child at least until the age of 3. In 2013, a new law will entitle children to nursery care from the age of 1; they are now working on creating nurseries. Associations place pressure on the Administration to offer more services. Another example of this is the space for children available in the Stuttgart City Hall. Staff can leave their children here whenever they need to attend meetings or a public event. This was achieved 23 years ago when proponents of Mother Center attended meetings accompanied by their children.

Lastly, the Mother Center is currently working on a new project called "Children's Hotel". This space will be open 24 hours per day, 365 days per year and will allow parents to drop their children off even overnight and at weekends, allowing them to fulfil other obligations; or at least provide them with another recreational space. This idea came from their experience at the Mother Center over the last few years. Many companies advocate this flexible nursery project, in order to support employees that work nights and/or weekends. The project also receives support from Dr. Matschke, director of the Department for Equal Opportunities.

Ideas and learning

- Women must be considered resources and not people that need assistance.
- Importance in planning: study necessities and act accordingly. It's important to be creative, to take advantage of and make the most of existing services, such as centers for mothers.
- To work on the issue of violence, one needs to work with the entire family. Therapy is provided for men and results are positive.
- There is an increasing interest in "flexible nurseries" that adapt to different needs and cover all schedules. This idea comes from the reality observed in recent years, and is supported by both the Administration and companies.

2. Wednesday, 29 October Stuttgart-West Multi-Generational Home/Mother Center (EkiZ)

MINUTES

**9:00 – 10:30 Guided visit to Stuttgart-West Multi-Generational Home/Mother Center (EkiZ), under the motto:
"Families regaining public space"**

Guided visit to the EkiZ Center: the space

The initiative for the creation of a Mother Center in Stuttgart arose from a meeting of mothers that took place in 1986. In 1993, the EkiZ Center advocate association was founded. Many women

participated in this initiative, which exerted pressure on the Administration. In 1999, the Youth "Department" granted the EkiZ Center the right to receive funding. In 2001 the Center moved to a new space, bequeathed by City Council (donated by Rudolf and Herman Schmid brothers), in order to offer various services. This is when the Multi-generational Home was created. Located in a 5-storey building, the Center includes:

- EkiZ Mother Center
- City Children's Nursery
- Shared apartments for seniors.

The building also includes a health space: these offer massage and chromotherapy, among other services, and a classroom for dressmaking theory and practice.

The managers of the EkiZ Mother Center would have preferred to not offer this combination of services, yet they are satisfied. Moreover, their greater participation has given them a greater awareness of the entire functioning of the building.

The EkiZ Center occupies the entire ground floor and a large portion of the first. The space is a fundamental part of the center; as it has been conceived as an "informal meeting place for the exchange of ideas, opinions and experience, as well as information of all types, for women in similar situations. It must allow for activities for children, mothers, mothers and children together, as well as the organisation of seminars and talks of interest".



The center has the following facilities:

- **Reception-Cafeteria:** The reception area is also a cafeteria that is visible from the street by way of large windows. The cafeteria is inviting and acts as a place for meeting and information. The kitchen is located behind this area.
- **Kitchen-eating hall-catering area:** the kitchen is run by female volunteers. There is a manager and expert in nutrition, hygiene, etc. Some volunteers have managed to find employment thanks to their learning experience in the kitchen. Moreover, some young mothers and fathers learn how to cook and prepare balanced meals.

The kitchen serves 70 meals per day. The meals are vegetarian-ecological; they thereby avoid having to prepare special meals for religious or other reasons. 10 of the 70 meals are free or very economical for people or families that cannot cover the price. Next to the kitchen there is a room that serves as an eating hall. This can also be used for other activities.

From here they also run a successful catering service with a professional chef and a group of young people (minors) undergoing social and employment insertion.

- **Lobby:** The lobby is spacious and can be used for various activities; it is a meeting place and provides access to the other areas of the building. There are wide ramps for baby strollers. There are ample notice boards with offers of employment, services and all types of information.
- **Multi-use rooms:** All rooms are multi-use and open-concept; they are used as sitting areas that facilitate exchange and interaction. All rooms are accessed from the lobby and open out onto the garden/terrace which gets much use in the summer. The multi-use rooms are available for loan to neighbourhood associations for ceremonies and meetings.
- **Library:** a free space for reading and book lending (unsupervised), with a cot for babies.
- **Second-hand shop** Accessed both from street and lobby. Clothing sold here comes from donations, or people drop things off to be sold. EkiZ keeps 50% of the profits. A business women's group ("the lioness' club") provides high-quality clothing in addition to donations in the form of money.
- **Stroller parking:** much needed and used.
- **Gymnasium:** A gymnasium for exercise, dance, etc.
- **"Said and done" Service:** This is a networking service for home repairs, babysitting, private classes, etc. It consists of a large database containing the contact information of people in the neighbourhood that offer services. To sign up, the person who offers the service must pay a small fee (5 euros?). The price of the service is agreed upon by the parties in question.

- **Room with carers:** parents can stay here and play with their children or drop them off for a few hours whenever they need to run errands. There is always a carer available. The prices are economical and if parents stay with their children, then it is free.
- **Nursery:** There are running costs but it is offered free thanks to support from the public and companies which provide this service for their employees. Next to the nursery there are rooms where children can sleep.
- **Offices:** Administrative areas.



EKiZ Center: Management

The association has 700 members, the second largest of the neighbourhood. The center's structure is organised into various parts: Executive committee, management, team coordinators and teams. Everyone works as a volunteer, but they receive 6 euros per hour. They believe that this pay is necessary to compensate expenses, and overall to put a value on the work done by volunteers. This also gives them a feeling of empowerment for women.¹ Moreover, the managers

¹ Empowerment means allowing women to access resources and decision-making, both individually and collectively, and to ensure that they see themselves as capable and valid to participate in decision-making

recognise that one paid hour is equivalent to four additional hours of unpaid work, owing to the high degree of involvement required by the Center.

The center is run based on the self-management model; activity and cooperation are its basic principles. The aim is to provide a quick and non-bureaucratic solution to needs. Among the mothers, assistance is seen as "helping themselves" more than just giving and receiving help.

The Center has an enormous capacity for promoting training courses, according to demand (needs or interests shown by parents) and supply (what women know how to do and can offer). Courses are about breastfeeding, nutrition, infant health...

There is always a German as a second language course offered, once a week. Knowledge of the language, they feel, is indispensable for the integration of immigrants.

The Center runs on a budget of €89,000.

51% is subsidised by city council.

€20,000 from the Nursery (revenue)

€35,000 in expenses for people working at the center; there is no permanent job position.

To use the center's facilities, it is not necessary to be a member. Individual membership is €26 per year and family membership is €33. Members are offered services at a discount.

The fees constitute 2% of the revenue, that is, about €2,000 per year.

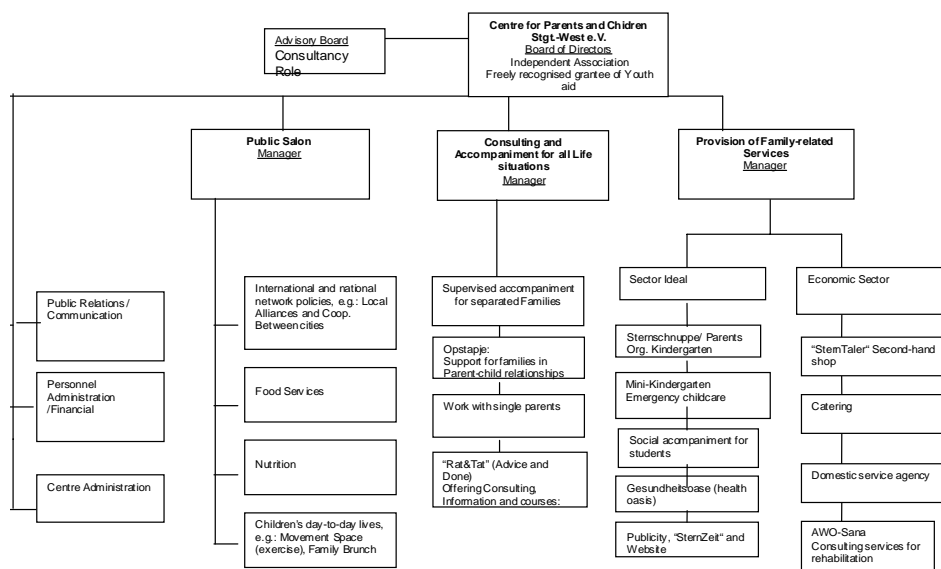
A portion of the funding for EkiZ comes from companies which provide funding for specific projects.

The City Council also subsidises the nursery and covers all costs associated with maintenance: electricity, water, heating, cleaning, etc. This accounts for €800 per month.

The remainder is covered through membership fees, cafeteria revenue, restaurant, store, etc.

and problem-solving, to make changes and to organise activities with other people to achieve a common goal.

Organisation Chart



Ideas and learning

- The Mother Centers fulfil or are able to fulfil various functions:
 - The Center acts as a bridge that makes the most of women's potential, and to raise public awareness of feminine knowledge.
 - It is a relaxed and enabling setting.
 - The Center must be flexible to be able to respond to any new needs that arise.
 - The “miracle” of EkiZ is diversity; this is what provides wealth in exchanges and for women to learn from one another.

It also fulfils some specific functions such as:

- Functioning as a place for community service, as an alternative to prison or other sanctions.
- A meeting place for parents and children to carry out visitation privileges. A shared and pleasant space where parents and children can interact in an
- We must always ask ourselves if what we are doing is absolutely necessary (an example: requesting an excess of information for everything)
- For things to change, people must be part of the solution (a participative process can result in the creation of one or several services). The greater the feeling of involvement in planning and creation of a service, the greater the responsibility taken on by participants in caring for and maintaining it.
- Everybody has skills; qualifications are not needed to prove it.

11:00 Visit to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Baden-Württemberg

Discussion chaired by: Mr. Thomas Halder, director of social services and Dr. Christiane Hug-von-Lieven, Women's policy, equal opportunity for men and women and demographic development.

Mr. Thomas Halder welcomed us and explained some of the features of his organisation and territory. Baden-Württemberg has 11 million inhabitants.

Mr. Halder then went on to present his team: head of women's policy and equal opportunity, the head of Family and Social Affairs and the head of Justice and International Relations.

Dr. Christiane Hug-von-Lieven, head of Women's policy and equal opportunity for men and women, then took the floor. She explained that women's rights and gender transversality are the main lines of work. Their key issues being: Violence against women, women's participation at all levels, increasing women's presence in decision-making positions, reconciling working life and family life (bearing in mind the significant increase of dependent persons), and promoting equality from childhood.

A meeting of all equality ministers of Germany (16) takes place annually. This year the meeting dealt with Equal Opportunity in Education and Training. Here, they have seen the importance of getting more young men involved in nurseries and schools. They also publish a monthly magazine; this month it focused on the fact that women are increasingly faced with having to balance working, family and personal lives. A new project has been launched with regard to the above issue; the creation of a skills center for the balancing of working and personal lives. It will be part of a Network of Centers which will provide information for companies about issues regarding work life and family life balance.

"STRENGTH" is another important project which departs from the idea that in order to promote equality, it is important to start with boys and girls as soon as they are born, and to also involve men. The project focuses on two lines of work: 1) New parents are given a coupon for €40 towards parenting skills courses. 2) at-home support provided for families with special needs (5 visits). This project also results in associated benefits for the Mother Centers which provide the courses as well as the at-home support.



12:30 Lunch hosted by Social Affairs Ministry
Mr. Thomas Halder, Ministerial Director, representing Minister
Dr. Monika Stolz

14:30 **Discussion at the Multi-generational Home/EkiZ, Stuttgart-West**
Topic: “What is integration in the public space?”
From cultural interest to successful integration
Participants: Women from various cultural spheres

A collaborator at the EkiZ Center made a presentation showing the features of the Center in more detail.

Mothers that come to EkiZ have needs that can be identified as follows:

- To define and find themselves within their new role as mothers
- To learn how to better manage their daily lives in their role as mother, including a public social life.
- How to raise and care for children (nutrition, health, education...).

The Center's main asset is that it includes so many diverse elements: people of a variety of backgrounds, religions and academic levels. People are free to come and go whenever they want. The Center's doors are always open. People who use the center are under no obligation to become members.

A communicative and support method is used: each person has their say and each voice is has a value. Everyday language is used.

A group dynamic was established, the counsellor posing questions and the group making its contributions.

1st question: What the Center means to each person.

The majority answered the following: the Center is like a family, it offers them unlimited possibilities and the opportunity to be creative, it is a "gift", it offers security, makes them feel at home, it allows them to just be themselves, it teaches them to learn and to give, to feel useful and to participate actively in political issues...

2nd question: How the Center facilitates integration.

The majority answered the following: the center gives everybody the opportunity to contribute something, and this is very important to immigrants (who want to give and not only receive), the center allows them to learn about and connect with other cultures, beliefs and traditions, study German and learn about German society, its minimal bureaucracy facilitates access and integration, the center makes them feel useful and their children also see how their mothers do things and take on different roles. Moreover the children grow up surer of themselves and learn how to better relate to others.



19:00 The afternoon session is closed with an exclusive vegetarian dinner.
Catering and youth project offered by EkiZ

3. Thursday, 30 October. Multi-generational Home, Family Center of Freudenstadt, capital of Black Forest District.

8:18 – 9:41 Departure from Stuttgart to Freudenstadt.

10:00 – 14:00 **Visit to Family Center and Multi-generational Home of Freudenstadt.**

Marianne Reißing, Honorary Director of the Multi-generational Home and member of the Board of Directors and Founding Committee.

We are welcomed by Ms. Marianne Reißing, who shows us the Home and explains some of the activities that are organised there. The Center has problems with space, and is currently awaiting larger premises. The present building is paid for by City Council. They do not receive any other financial aid. 100% of the work is conducted on a volunteer basis. Many celebrations are held there, which serve to strengthen the bonds between associations. An enormous amount of creative work is carried out, and with very little money. Despite this, it is considered to be a model among similar centers, receiving many outside workers who come for new ideas. They are aware of the need to serve new models of family; it is a political task that is not presently being undertaken. They try to adapt to changing needs, constantly modifying the services they offer. For example, they are currently observing the need to cover school holidays, in addition to taking on a supporting role in the integration of immigrant women. They have a public hall that welcomes people of all ages and nationalities. They also work on multi-generational projects (i.e. projects that seek out grandparents for families, or organise meetings between youth and seniors, etc.). They also offer courses for young people, parent groups for information exchange and reading groups among others. These groups provide future workers that will run the center.

Since 1998, the center offers a nursery service for children aged 15 months to 3 years, 7 days a week. They do not have many vacancies and so are obligated to distribute the children over various timetables. Worthy of mention is the fact that the Center is located in a rural setting lacking in other nurseries or services for children younger than 3 years of age. It is commonly accepted that mothers are to take care of their children until the age of 3, but economic difficulties do not often permit this. The director of the Center claims that this situation will not change until women play a greater role in politics.

The Center does not handle cases of domestic violence, women with work problems or multi-problematic families. They try to work closely with people, making use of social networks to find solutions to various types of problems.

The Center is well-known and an important part of the city (20,000 inhabitants), yet, apart from the rent and subsidies covering some nursery vacancies, it does not receive any funding from the City Council or any other institution. The director affirms that many necessary projects die due to lack of funding.



Before sitting down to a lunch prepared at the Center, we visited the Freudenstadt Mayor's office.

11.00 - 11.30 Visit to Mayor's Office: Idea exchange session with Lord Mayor Julian Osswald

Accompanied by a group of women and their children, we meet with Lord Mayor Julian Osswald to exchange impressions about the functions that the Center fulfils in this city. The Mayor acknowledges the important function fulfilled by the Center—the reason why City Council provides funding for the premises and some nursery vacancies. The mayor mentions that they are currently working to expand the center, but he also explains that there are difficulties in allocating funding to the project as there are many other priorities. There is also a problem

involving competences: the Center attends to a great diversity of issues that involve different levels of government. The center therefore must “negotiate” with the various levels of government—a complex process. The director of the Center deals directly with the Mayor, as no department pertaining to equality exists.

We make a brief presentation on Centers in Catalonia. Finally, a question and answer session is opened, and some of the mothers participate by presenting some of their needs before the Mayor.



14:19 – 16:04 Taking the road to Stuttgart, we depart for Esslingen.

**Starting at
16:15**

Esslingen Family Center: Presentation.

Susan Ferront, Board of Directors

Feedback on the day, accompanied by Tea and Cake.

Visit to the DICK shopping and cultural center, welcomed by Beate Latendorf, commissioner for women for the city of Esslingen.

The Esslingen Family Center is located in the DICK shopping center, on the second floor. The center is run by the City Council. The shopping center management previously covered the salary of one carer. The Board of Directors is composed of volunteers.

Parents pay for some of the services. There are also some free activities. The center accepts children aged 1 month to two years.

Planning is conducted quarterly. The center offers services/activities such as infant massage, food, international breakfasts, how to manage “mourning” losses... There is also a hair salon and

Turkish classes. The Center opens from 9:30 to 12:00 in the afternoon, and from 15:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. There is no meal service. There is a cafeteria available for breakfast. During the summer when schools are closed, the center organises activities.

The city of Esslingen has another institution that also organises activities for families (birthing classes, among others). The town school also offers a space for women (a community school offering various partially-subsidised courses. These include theatre, culture, etc.).

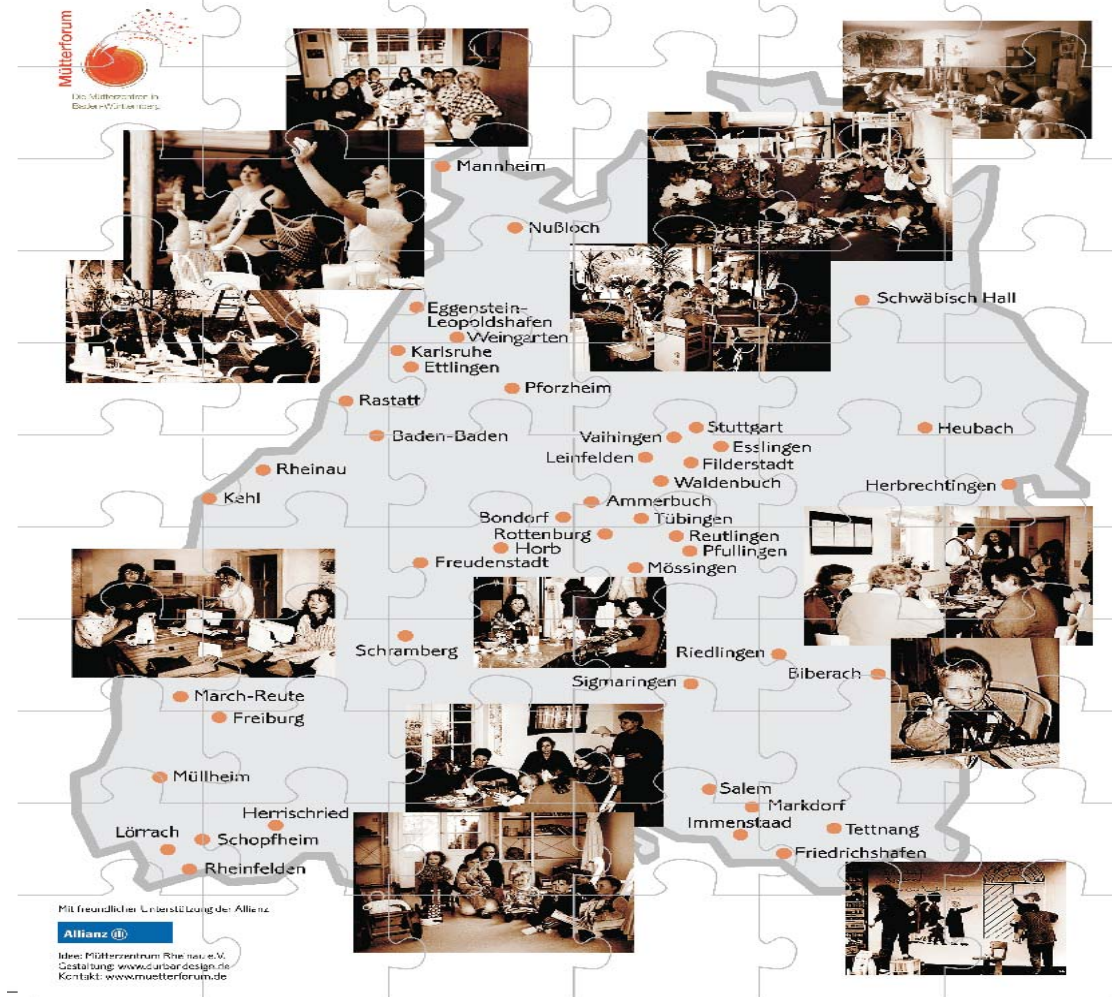
There is a women's council in Esslingen which is made up of representatives from all associations existing in the city (including the mother center). It is actively involved in city-level politics. At present, they are conducting negotiations with the Ministry of Labour to deal with the cuts in funding for social aid for unemployed persons, women who have separated from their spouses, etc. This council was formed in 1992 during municipal elections, when a group of women from the city granted their support to the Mayor on the condition that a Women's Council would be created for the city. Since then, there is a technician that coordinates the various areas and puts into effect a network that comprises different groups and programmes:

- Meetings with women from different political groups
- Women's Council
- Businesswomen
- Adopt-a-senior programme
- Equal opportunities in schools
- Single mothers
- Immigrant women
- Women who want to share flats without shared services
- Self-help groups
- Groups of adolescent girls
- Preparation of the Women's Council annual report (3 published to date)
- Female Business Leaders (mentorships)

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG FORUM OF CENTERS FOR MOTHERS

Before ending our visit to the Stuttgart region, the head of the Forum of Centers for Mothers, Petra Renz, briefly explained their network of centers. There are 50 centers in the Baden-Württemberg region which meet 2-3 times per year to exchange information on the general state of the Centers and to discuss new projects. Along with Bavaria, this region of 11 million inhabitants is one of the most active. This forum is run by a team composed of 5 female volunteers (their transportation expenses are covered) who work at the Network Office. They are in charge of coordination and support for the various centers. Twice yearly, they publish a magazine called "Future Visions" which includes activities, best practices, coverage of international visits, etc. Petra is in charge of ensuring that the Centers receive visibility; she also prepares an electronic newsletter and handles any press conferences. Petra recognises that international projects like this one also confer value to the Centers.

Mütterzentren in Baden-Württemberg



ASSESSMENT OF THE VISIT AND CONCLUSIONS

The visit was a very enriching experience which has given us the opportunity to see the Centers up-close and feel the energy and strength that the women lend to these spaces. Active civic participation is, without a doubt, key to the success of these Centers.

The choice of these particular centers for the visit was appropriate as they were all located in different settings (urban, suburban, and rural) which offered us an ample and diverse vision. Although these differences were seen above all in the spaces, they all share a common characteristic: each one is a space that fosters informal gatherings and exchange mainly between women (yet are open to the entire family), with an aim to strengthen their self-assurance, self-confidence and improve their ability to manage their day-to-day lives; this is known as “empowerment”. This empowerment can be seen at different levels; it enables female immigrants

that are new to German society to integrate and even acts as a springboard to political action for many women.

The main functions of these Centers are:

- to allow women to teach and learn
- to help them discover their own strengths and to not have to excuse themselves for their weaknesses.

- to help them to learn to defend their own interests
- they provide a space that is open that provides advice; no appointment is necessary
- they facilitate assistance in an immediate manner
- they allow for expansion of social networks
- they help people to take control of their lives
- they help people to overcome their prejudices
- they facilitate generational exchange
- they help people take responsibility for community development

These Centers revitalise neighbourhoods and local culture. They create a fertile setting for informal learning. They also foster leadership in local and community councils. Politicians often consult with the Center regarding certain proposals.

Worth noting are the public living rooms of the Mother Centers, which offer the opportunity to break with hierarchies; they also foster participation of men as well as transparency with regard to family issues within the community. In this way, they become a convincing method in the nurturing of gender equality and stimulating changes in power roles.

The Centers reintegrate women into the public sphere, creating channels, visibility, validation and equality for women who work within the family, encouraging their participation in community processes. Mother Centers empower women to change their environment.

Lastly, we'd like to highlight the importance of International Projects such as the Grundtvig Project. Not only do they give value to the Centers, but they also open doors and establish channels of cooperation between Centers and public administration.