



## PRESS RELEASE

### What Matters to Mothers in Europe

Brussels - **03 May 2011** - The European delegation of the Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM Europe), a Brussels-based NGO announces the results of the 2011 "Survey of Mothers in Europe." The survey spells out the concerns of 11.000 mothers in 16 European countries, their priorities and recommendations regarding their wellbeing and that of their family.

#### Summary

The concluding report of this survey named "**What Matters to Mothers in Europe**", sheds light on some revealing facts about European mothers:

1. Becoming a mother is such a change of priorities that mothers **wish to speak in their name, as mothers.**
2. There is an impressive **cohesion in the opinions of the mothers of Europe**, from London to Budapest and Stockholm to Madrid!
3. The opposition between "mother at home" and "employed mother" seems outdated. It is the same woman who **wishes to both be active on the labor market and have time for her children.**

#### 1. Speaking in their own names

Although they represent **76% of women over 18 years in Europe**<sup>1</sup>, mothers are hardly recognized by their Government as a separate target with specific function and identity. More rarely still do they have the opportunity to talk about their priorities concerning essential political subjects which have a direct impact on them and their families.

The investigation of MMM Europe gave European mothers the opportunity to express themselves. Thousands responded. The depth of their messages prompt reflection and must be heard across Europe. MMM Europe asks European politicians to create dialogue opportunities with mothers, and Governments to take into account the views of mothers by creating social policies beneficial to parents<sup>2</sup>, children and society in general.

#### 2. Cohesion of points of view: three major topics emerge:

**Time:** Respondents ask that their Governments take measures that will help mothers control and improve the balance between employment and family life.

- ❖ Prioritizing time to spend time with their children (especially those still at home)
- ❖ Providing more flexible daycare solutions, including company daycare centers at work sites
- ❖ Offering more flexibility in work schedules to reflect school hours and holidays
- ❖ Providing more part-time employment opportunities
- ❖ Emphasizing family-friendly companies
- ❖ Increasing the length of maternity/parental leaves

**Choice:** Surveyed mothers want more official recognition of those parents who **stay at home** (part or full time) to take care of their children. They would like more benefits and to have economically feasible options, including an outsourced care solution or an in-family care solution.

**Recognition:** Respondents request more recognition of the **importance of "family care"** and of the roles of mother and father in society. They also request that families be recognized as a major resource for the entire society and as a source of social cohesion. By raising their children, mothers and fathers are working for the future of our society.

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<sup>1</sup> Source Eurofound, EQLS 2009

<sup>2</sup> All measures may also apply to fathers. MMM supports the active involvement of fathers in the care and education of their children.

### Mothers' messages to policy makers

At the end of the survey, mothers were given the option of writing a message to policymakers emphasizing their concerns and recommendations. More than 7.500 mothers filled in the optional responses. These messages represent the perspectives and concerns of mothers across Europe. There are great commonalities among these messages. Some examples:

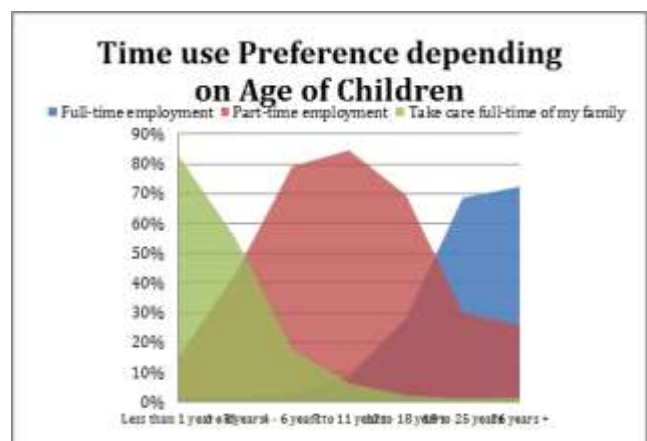
« In a time of demographic ageing when children should be our future, having children feels frightening to me, or like a punishment. Nowadays I give birth to children who must be raised by others. Maternity leave is too short, space in a daycare center is hard to find, work hours and school hours do not correspond, and what to do with children in the summer while parents work? Give mothers a reasonable status, so that those who choose maternity don't have to opt between over-tiredness (burn-out) and poverty. »

“Make family work part of the GNP”; “Education is the best investment”; “Provide parents with financial help to share their time with their children”; “Human balance is the key to successful generations”; “Do not saw off the branch on which you are sitting”; “Make fathers more responsible at home, women have more equal rights at work, but once at home, another day starts”; “Allow parents to stop work for a while whilst keeping the same standard of living”; “Family = productive economic unit in society”; “Financial allowance for a mother wanting to stay at home with her young children”; “Be more human at work”; “Family is the anchor to any society, protect it”; “Delegated day care for children is helpful but short-sighted”; “Make part time work a new way of life for mothers”; “Help independent workers go on maternity leave – provide them with decent financial support”....

### 3. Reconciliation between “employed mother” and “mother at home”:

1. Far from the former opposition between “employed mothers” and “stay-at-home mothers”, a majority of responding mothers want to be **both active on the labor market and to have time to care** for their children particularly when they are under school-age.

2. **Mothers' preference in time use is linked to the age of children** (see graph<sup>3</sup>): When child(ren) are under school age, the vast majority prefer to care full-time for them. When child(ren) are at obligatory school age (6 to 18 years old), they favour part-time work. And when child(ren) are more than 18, they desire to work full-time.



3. The **number of children** in a family is an important factor in mothers' time management. The **threshold** seems to be when passing from **2 to 3 children**.

4. Mothers across Europe share the same priorities about the well being of their family: they emphasize the need for **healthy relationships** (violence free) **and time** optimization to meet their family's needs.

5. Mothers express the frustration of not being **recognized** by society as a specific group of women in general - with different needs and responsibilities.

6. They see themselves as important **actors of social cohesion in the community**.

### Background and Methodology

This survey was made after MMM Europe was invited to be a partner in the European Commission's Seventh Framework Family Platform project ([www.familyplatform.eu](http://www.familyplatform.eu)). Among its assignments, MMM Europe wrote a report on the “Realities of Mothers in Europe” and critically reviewed research on families from the mothers' point of view. For more details on results and methodology, please consult the brochure “**What Matters to Mothers in Europe**” as well as “**Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011**”. [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org)

### Quotes

Florence von Erb, President of MMM, comments: " True to its mission to listen to and make the voice of mothers heard, the MMM is proud to present the study conducted by the MMM Europe team, entitled "What Matters to

<sup>3</sup> Question asked only to “adaptive” mothers who prefer a combination of part-time employment and family care duties.

*Mothers in Europe". It is the first time that such an opinion survey on the difficulties and needs of mothers, pillars of our societies is conducted in our countries. We hope that this careful work, done by our volunteers, is rewarded by the true listening and the willingness of public authorities to implement social policies more suited to the reality of European mothers. I thank Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of MMM Europe, and her team for this great work and tireless dedication to the cause of mothers."*

For Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of MMM Europe, the survey simply had to be done. *"These new findings and statistics provide an opportunity to European policy makers to respond with appropriate legislation in favour of families and parents. The commonalities among mothers' responses are striking in terms of challenges and priorities. This usually silent majority has to be listened to. I am grateful to the volunteers involved in this major opinion survey. It counts thousands of hours spent in research, consulting, responses, translation and analysis. My gratitude also goes to those who will relay the collected messages of mothers",* she said.

**Jérôme Vignon**, former director at the European Commission, in charge of European protection and social inclusion added: *«Conducted with thoroughness, benefiting from the assistance of specialists in social sciences, the European survey, led by the Mouvement Mondial des Mères Europe with the participation of over 11 000 mothers and complemented by research, should attract the attention of the different European actors concerned by the problem of equality of opportunities to all citizens."*

### **About MMM**

The **"Mouvement Mondial des Mères" (MMM)**, led by Florence von Erb based in New York, was created in 1947. MMM raises awareness of society and policy makers on the vital role of mothers for promoting peace and on their contribution to social, economic and cultural progress. MMM is an international, apolitical and non-denominational NGO. It holds a general consultative status at the United Nations. The MMM network unites associations in 40 countries and represents more than 6 million mothers in the world.

MMM has representative offices in Brussels, New York and Paris to ensure that the voice of mothers and those of their member associations are heard at all levels of international institutions. The General Secretariat of the MMM is in Paris.

The European delegation of MMM has the mission of voicing European mothers' priorities and concerns to policy makers and institutions of the European Union regarding the impact of mothers on the educational, cultural, and economic development of their country.

MMM Europe also recognizes the role of fathers as essential in child rearing. It supports measures encouraging fathers to be actively involved in the care and education of their children. Its future projects for 2011 and 2012 include:

- To continue the dialogue with the mothers initiated by this survey and increase the number of contributing mothers.
- Research project and pilot program around mothers re-entering the labor market after having taken a break for family care reasons
- Pilot program involving family-friendly working environments
- Possibly investigate "what matters to fathers in Europe" and their views, priorities, and concerns on their wellbeing and their family, in order to complement this report

**Contact details:** For more information (Brochure **"What Matters to Mothers in Europe"**, full report **"Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe"**, and high resolution copyright free images),

please refer to the press section of: [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org)

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