



Co-operation between Social Service Providers – a Comparison between Germany and Greece

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The aim of this article is to provide an understanding of the co-operation between social service providers, delivering personal social services for the family as target group, in two municipalities in Germany and Greece. Based on a cross-national comparison between Germany and Greece, patterns of co-operation, and the influence of the socio-political context in terms of the respective legal framework, and the socio-cultural context in terms of the attitudes trust and solidarity will be explored. As methods, both analytical literature research and quantitative instruments, in particular a semi-structured self-completion mail questionnaire, were employed. As the German and Greek case shows, patterns of co-operation between social providers do not exclusively depend on the former stipulation by legal regulations. As in the Greek case, the existence of a wide range of forms and contents does not mean that there are a lot of linkages between the providers, and furthermore, that co-operation is frequent. As the Greek case shows, informal agreements as basis for co-operation implicate voluntary co-operation. Although the latter may be related to motivations of solidarity or contrary self-interest, they indicate stronger involvement in co-operation, and thus more action in terms of linkages and frequency.

Introduction

Today social services represent an important part of welfare provision in Europe. The former are essential elements of the social protection and social security systems in Europe (Alber 1995; Anttonen and Sipilä 1996; Jarré 2000). The integration and development processes in the European Union influences the public welfare systems of each member state, and more so, the latter are asked to explore and improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness of their social service systems. One area of concern is the current lack of co-operation and coordination in the delivery of social services. Ways of improving coordination and cooperation across providers are debated both on the national and European level (Albers and Weigel 2001; Bailey and McNalley Koney 1996; Council of Europe 2002). At the same time, there are big differences between Member States with regard to models, concepts and forms for the delivery of social services, due to varying socio-political, historical, institutional, and cultural factors (Bahle 2003; Council of Europe 2002; Munday 2002). It is argued that comparisons between different welfare states must be extended to include their underlying foundations in informal structures and cultures. Nevertheless, as Anheier (2003, p. 433) states: “ ... cross-national understanding of social services in Europe, i.e. the comparative advantages and disadvantages associated with particular ... delivery systems, and the policy implications they entail, remains incomplete”.

In this context it is assumed, that the “reality” of co-operation between social service providers in Germany and Greece shows different patterns with regard to the actors, the process, the purpose, and the basis of co-operation due to different socio-political and socio-

cultural influences. The respective national social-political context, in terms of the particular social-political legislation, includes legal provisions that determine: the structure of the social service provision system, the responsibilities of the public authorities involved, the provision of personal social services as such, the actors involved in the provision process, and finally the relation between the public and non-public bodies (Alber 1995; Bahle 2003). The respective socio-cultural context refers to generalized trust and solidarity as societal attitudes (Bahle 2003). Considering, that co-operation is based on a certain relationship between the organizations, as well as the individuals involved in the delivering process, solidarity and trust are regarded as main shaping factors concerning this relationship (Bronstein 2003; Hegyesi 2003; Stathopoulos 1999).

The intention of this article is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the actual performance of the delivery of social services in a European context. Within, it seeks to further the understanding of the context and determinants of different welfare outcomes. As a consequence, findings may have on the one hand applications for the development of an supportive socio-political framework for the co-operation between social service providers on the local level. On the other hand, the findings may have also applications for furthering socio-cultural considerations and understanding in the context of policy development. Both, on the national and the European level (Hantrais and Mangen 1996).

Theoretical Framework

Clarification of Terms

Co-operation within this research is understood as the “process of working together” (Netlexikon 2004a). It is considered as the pooling of actions of two or more actors for a certain purpose, in such a way that the effects result in an outcome, aiming at the benefit for all actors involved (Schweitzer 1998). The actors are social service providers, which are commonly distinguished with regard to their affiliation to four particular sectors that form together the welfare mix of each community and their sharing in providing (personal) social services: the public or state sector, the voluntary/ non-profit sector, the private for-profit sector and the informal or self-help sector (Abrahamson 1999; Bahle 2003; Evers and Olk 1996; Wuthnow 1991). A commonly accepted definition of the term „*personal social services*“ neither does exist in Germany, nor in Greece (Alfredson, Anheier and Kumar 2003; Amitsis 2001). Within this research personal social services are understood and characterized as follows: personal social services

- form the third pillar of the social welfare system, supplementing benefits in kinds and financial benefits (Amitsis 2001).
- “...fulfil personal social rather than physical or intellectual needs” (Bahle 2003, p.7).
- “... are performed by persons on persons in direct social interactions” (Bahle 2003, p.7).
- are delivered by professionals and paid employees in social service occupations, as well as volunteers, in an organizational context (Müller 1998; Thimmel 2003).
- comprise the areas of prevention, diagnosis, social and occupational rehabilitation (Stathopoulos 1999).

Directed at the family as target group, personal social services include all those measures which aim to support the family as an entity: support for the family in single matters (e.g. marriage), or in situations comprising complex problem areas. Generalized trust as an attitude expresses itself in the general tendency to be ready to rely to the actions and information of others, and within this, implies a sentiment of openness and the willingness of 'letting oneself in for the other' (Platzkoster 1990; Putnam 2000; Wels and van Loon 1999). Generalized solidarity as an attitude expresses itself in the general tendency to be ready for mutual help and support, and within this, implies sentiments of togetherness, as well as 'co-humanity' (Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1994; Lilli and Luber 2001; Net-lexikon 2004b).

Perspectives from the literature

On the socio-political level, co-operation of social providers is highlighted with regard to discussed reforms of the welfare state (Hegyesi 2003). Social providers are asked for co-operation and coordination among them, in order to deal with common challenges as economic restraints and demographic changes (Albers and Weigel 2001; Anheier 2003; Hegyesi 2003).

In the context of social work practice, co-operation is referred to in the sense of inter-agency or inter-organizational collaboration, inter-agency networking, partnership and interdisciplinary social work. It is argued that the provision of high quality care requires that providers cooperate and coordinate their efforts (Amir and Auslander 2003; Bailey and McNally Koney 1996; Bronstein 2002; Stathopoulos 2000; Trevillion 1992).

In this context, different factors are discussed, which influence and shape co-operation processes. As Hegyesi (2003, p.21) states, co-operation depend on "... historical, social, cultural, legal, ideological and political circumstances which determine the way of co-operation". More so, he claims that co-operation, depends and is shaped by factors as 'interest' and 'values', 'economics', 'human resources' (including interpersonal trust), 'organizational structures' (shaping trust as condition for partnership), as well as 'culture and morality' (being important for building or destroying trust). Throughout the literature especially trust is highlighted as being a crucial shaping factor for co-operation, in particular it is stated that without trust no forms of co-operation as collaboration or partnership exist (Bronstein 2003; Farmakopoulou 2002; Hegyesi 2003; Stathopoulos 2000; Taylor and Hoggett 1994). Solidarity, as an important factor for the success of co-operation in the context of service delivery, is highlighted by Trevillion (1996). He states that collaboration is based on commitments to social integration and principles of inclusiveness, which are inherent in the idea of social solidarity.

However, in practice difficulties and disagreements characterize the inter-professional, as well as inter-organizational relationships (Amir and Auslander 2003; Farmakopoulou 2002). Also, problems arise both at the level of planning and in the delivery of services (Farmakopoulou 2002; Melvyn 2001; Tsantilas 2003).

Research Design

Within this comparative cross-national research, Germany and Greece form the unit of analysis in order to find out how socio-political and socio-cultural factors are related to the co-operation between social service providers on the local level.

The focus of this research is on comparing similarities and differences between the German and the Greek "way" of co-operation. It is not about valuing the latter, which is true in

particular with regard to cultural differences, since existing values, norms and attitudes reflect different approaches to deal with life circumstances in a specific time and place (Guirdham 1999). As Przeworski (1987, p.35) states: "... The general purpose of cross-national research is to understand which characteristics of the particular cultures, societies, economies or political systems affect patterns of behaviour within them".

The methodological approach of this research comprises both analytical literature research and quantitative instruments. Semi-structured self-completion mail questionnaires comprised the key research questions for identifying co-operation patterns between the social service providers, and additionally to identify the existence of trust and solidarity in the co-operation relationship.

Due to the "limits" of this research, the former methods were seen as most appropriate and functional in order to come to somewhat fruitful research results.

The research population includes social service providers, which are delivering personal social services for the family as target group. In particular, regarded are the representatives of these providers, which are involved in the co-operation between the providers. Furthermore, those social service providers are included, which belong either to the public sector, or to the voluntary/ non-profit sector, and may be active in the social, health or education system. Due to the specific aim of the dissertation and the factor of time limit, the research is a small-scale analysis. Both municipalities chosen show similar characteristics with regard to their location (seaside and surrounded by an agricultural shaped landscape), demographics (e.g. total population of the both municipalities about 56,000), as well as their economics (tourism and agriculture). Whereas, initially twelve German and fifteen Greek providers formed the exact research population, finally eight German and fifteen Greek providers were included, due to negative responses.

Germany and Greece in Comparison

The Welfare Mix

As the research reveals, the German welfare system of social services is characterized by its' institutional fragmentation and the dominance of the family as the genuine provider of services. Individual services are highly heterogeneous and are targeted at various social groups in diverse life situations. Furthermore, it is characterized by the priority of voluntary welfare organisations in service provision, in particular the six big German welfare organizations¹ (Pfennig and Bahle 2002). Also, the Greek system of social services is considered as being fragmented and emphasizing the role of the family as most important provider of social care. Nevertheless, the Greek system is much less developed than the German system and public bodies are dominating the welfare mix, together with those arrangements by the Orthodox Church (Alfredson, Anheier and Kumar 2003).

In Germany, both the public and in particular the voluntary / non-profit organizations are addressing social needs of all kinds. While the public sector is first of all engaged in child and

¹ Deutscher Caritasverband (Roman Catholic German Welfare Organization), Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant German Welfare Organization), Zentrale Wohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (Jewish Welfare), Arbeiterwohlfahrt (Workers Welfare), Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (umbrella group for nondenominational and non-political organisations), Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross)

youth welfare, the voluntary/ non-profit sector provides a wide spectrum of personal support services from family advice centres to all kinds of part-time and residential care services all over the entire federal territory (Jeffries and Müller 1997).

It can be said that in Greece the voluntary sector supplements the supply of the existing local social services, but over and above that, they provide specialized services for certain groups of the population which are not covered by the public services (Amitsis 2001). Social services in Greece are traditionally focused on children and their families, elderly people and people with disabilities (Munday and Ely 1996). Due to developments on the level of the European Union, there have been efforts in providing social services also for individuals or groups at high risk of social exclusion, e.g. refugees.

In Germany, mainly local authorities finance social services, followed by the States contributing with about 34% of the expenditures and the Federal State with only 1% (Thimmel 2003). On the contrary, social services in Greece are mainly financed by the central government. According to the Social Budget of 2001, 65,5% of the public and private institutions expenditure was covered by state subsidies (Economou 2003).

Finally, in Germany, developments in the area of social service provision are related mainly to increasing economical pressures. There have been new financing arrangements between the public and non-public sector, in terms of contracting, which forces the latter into task-linked and time-limited arrangements with the public bodies (Bode and Evers 2004). Additionally, in recent years more and more smaller organisations, independent unions, projects and initiatives, as well as private commercial providers have 'joined' local state authorities and the big welfare organizations, undermining the latter's privileged position (Thimmel 2003).

With regard to the area of social services, the Greek system is in a period of transition, which is characterized by the decentralization of responsibilities on the local level, and furthermore the try to regulate the relations between the central administration and private or voluntary services (Amitsis 2001). Furthermore, personal social services in Greece has been provided in the past mostly in closed care facilities, which has been changed in the recent years within developments towards the opening up of institutional arrangements (Stathopoulos 1999).

The socio-political context

The way social service provider co-operate, the content and form of co-operation depend to a great extent on the social-political framework, in which they are embedded.

Responsibilities for the provision of social services

Whereas the German system of social service provision is highly decentralized, but also highly bureaucratically and legally structured, the Greek national organization of services is highly centralized and hierarchical. The German federal state and its' political decision-making system is characterized by a wide distribution of power in a federal and pluralistic structure. Contrary, the Hellenic Republic is a centralized state, but there are tendencies towards decentralization concerning the strengthening of local governments' competences (Munday and Ely 1996).

In Germany the main responsibility for the planning, financing and provision of social services, in particular with regard to the family as target group, have the local authorities in the framework of their statutory tasks. They may also take on voluntary tasks, and generally,

they have much freedom in priority setting and organisation of tasks assigned to them. The Federal level is mainly responsible for guaranteeing the social service system, including the formulation of general objectives, conditions and standards for social service provision. In particular, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens Woman and Youth is involved in the arrangement of political issues, and in the support of social service providers on the federal level with regard to methods, working forms, contents and value-orientations. The German States are mainly responsible for the provision of necessary means for the local communities and non-public voluntary organizations in order to carry out their legal tasks. Also, they have to take care for the regular establishment of institutions and services and the supply of social services covering regional demands. Additionally, the States are involved in carrying-out federal state supervision functions (BMFSFJ 2004; BMGS 2004; Deutsche Bundesregierung 2004; Sozialgesetzbuch 2004).

Contrary, in Greece the central governmental level, in particular the Ministry for Health and Welfare is responsible for planning, development, organization, regulation, co-ordination and financing of social services. Within, the Department for the Protection of the Family is responsible for the establishment of National Social Welfare Programmes targeting at the family. The Regional level is mainly responsible for the co-ordination of the public and non-public bodies belonging to their respective area of authority and in carrying-out National Social Welfare Programmes. Responsible for the protection of the family and the provision of social services for the latter are mainly the self-administered prefectures. Services are most of all provided by the respective Social Welfare Departments and other public bodies installed by the prefectures. The latter are also responsible for the administration of the public bodies and the certification process of those non-profit welfare organizations, which are part of the National Social Care System. The main tasks of the local administration, is the development and carrying-out of preventive and therapeutically social care programmes, and such aimed at providing immediate help (Amitsis 2001; Hellenic Republic Ministry of Health and Welfare 2004; Stathopoulos 1999).

Personal social services for the family

The National German constitution explicitly stipulates a right for the receipt of social services, and the national law particularly protects the family (Deutsche Bundesregierung 2004; Sozialgesetzbuch 2004). In the Greek constitution, there does not exist explicitly a right for the receipt of social services, but the Greek constitution stipulates that the family is protected by the state (Hellenic Republic 2004). In Germany, the German Social Security Code regulates personal social services. The latter refers to personal social services as “personal help” and “educational help” (BMFSFJ 2004; BMGS 2004; Deutsche Bundesregierung 2004; Sozialgesetzbuch 2004).

In the Greek legislation personal social services are regulated by the Law 2646/ 1998. Neither does the latter explicitly refer to personal social services, nor to the latter content. Instead, the Law differentiates between the facilities in which services are provided, and the groups at which they are targeted (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Health and Welfare 2004).

Social Service providers

Both the German and Greek legal framework comprises two groups of actors for the provision of social services, including the family as target group, the public and non-public bodies.

According to the German Social Security Code, the public bodies constitute all legal persons of the public law. With regard to the non-public sector, it is differentiated between voluntary/non-profit organizations that are belonging to the associations of the 'Freie Wohlfahrtspflege' and other organizations. The organizations of the non-profit/voluntary sector may have the legal form of registered associations, non-profit foundations of the civil law, non-profit private limited companies and non-profit co-operatives (BMFSFJ 2004; BMGS 2004; Deutsche Bundesregierung 2004; Pfennig and Bahle 2002; Sozialgesetzbuch 2004).

The Greek legal framework for the National Social Care System stipulates as bodies of the public sector legal persons of the public and civil law. To the non-public sector are belonging private non-profit organizations and voluntary/non-profit organizations, which are including charity associations, non-profit institutions and civil non-profit corporations. All of them do have the legal form of a legal person of the civil law. An exception constitutes the Orthodox Church of Greece, which is a public organization, but has the legal right to form voluntary Human Services and non-profit philanthropic Foundations by official decree of the Holy Synod of the Bishops (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Health and Welfare 2004; Vayas 2004).

Relations between the public and the voluntary/non-profit sector

In the Greek social legislation there is no regulation corresponding with the German social legislation, which determines the precedence of the voluntary/non-profit bodies over the public bodies.

German public regulation, based on the so-called Subsidiarity Principle, stipulates that the local authority can only set up a social service, if no other non-public organization aims to do so. Recent legal revisions changed the contractual relations between the state and social service providers, replacing the principle of prime costs reimbursement by the establishment of performance-orientated compensations. Nevertheless, non-public bodies that are providing social services for the family, either acting on behalf of the public sector state, or independently, get material and/or immaterial support on behalf of the local authorities and the States (Sozialgesetzbuch 2004).

The participation of the voluntary sector in the provision of social services is protected by the Greek constitution (Amitsis 2001). While the public bodies are integrated into the system by rights, the non-public bodies need a special certification processes (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Health and Welfare 2004). Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and Welfare gets the possibility to conclude agreements for the execution of National Social Welfare Programmes. These agreements may be concluded with municipal bodies or non-public organizations, and the participating organizations may be financial supported (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Health and Welfare 2004).

The German federal state has no direct control over the supply of social services being provided by legally recognized bodies of the non-profit/voluntary sector (Bahle 2003). According to the German Social Security Code, the local authorities have to respect the independence of these bodies concerning the setting of objectives, carrying out the tasks and arrangement of their organizational structure. However, the local authorities have the right to examine the appropriate use of public means employed by the latter (Sozialgesetzbuch 2004). Instead, in Greece the regulatory and supervisory role of state authorities on the national and regional level got strengthened by the Law 2646/ 1998 with regard to the voluntary/non-profit sector. The Ministry of Health and Welfare together with the prefectures are responsible

for monitoring the activities, staff policies and finances of the legally recognized voluntary non-profit organizations. Generally, the prefectures are the auditing authorities (Amitsis 2001; Vayas 2000).

According to the German Social Security Code, the public bodies are obliged to complement effectively by co-operating with the non-public bodies. Also, the Law explicitly mentions, that co-operation should be based on partnership. The issue of co-ordination of social services is only generally mentioned in the respective welfare laws (Sozialgesetzbuch 2004). Generally, on the local level there are several committees and so-called round tables in all fields of social services, aiming at bringing together the respective social service providers (Pfennig and Bahle 2002). Furthermore, the big German welfare organizations are by law involved in national decision-making and law-making processes. Here, they have to be consulted in governmental decision-making in all issues touching the area of social services (Pfennig and Bahle 2002).

In Greece a uniform planning mechanism, which regulates the relations between the bodies being responsible for the planning, and those, being responsible for the provision of social services, does not exist. (Amitsis 2001). Nevertheless, with regard to responsibilities for social service provision in the region, the welfare services of the local administration and the self-administered prefectures are supposed to co-operate with each other, and furthermore with the Ministry of Health and Welfare (Amitsis 2001). However, voluntary non-profit welfare organizations have almost no responsibilities with regard to consultation, policy planning or decision-making (Vayas 2000). An exception is the participation of representatives of voluntary non-profit welfare organizations in the National Social Welfare Council, which is an advisory and expert instrument for the development and the functioning of the National Social Care System (Charalambos 2000).

The socio-cultural context

Generalized trust and solidarity are seen as necessary conditions for co-operation because the existence of both only enables the providers to engage in the co-operation relationship, as well as to maintain the latter (Dahme 2000; Heinze 2000; Schweer 2001; Wels and van Loon 1999). Culture, as key concept in understanding behavioural differences resulting from differences of background, delivers the frame for exploring the particular attitudes in the German and Greek society (Guirdham 1999). Subjective culture may be defined as "... shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values found among speakers of a particular language who live during the same historical period in a specified geographic region" (Triandis 1995, p. 6). Nevertheless, it has to be considered that the national culture may be differentiated in subcultures, including among others regional, occupational, and organizational ones (Gudykunst and Kim 1997; Hofstede 2001). Furthermore, individuals themselves are 'unique' and 'self-directing', so that they may accept, select or even reject cultural influences (Kim, Triandis, Kagitçibasi, Choi and Yoon 1994, p. 5). As the mayor dimension of cultural variability, individualism/ collectivism is widely seen to explain differences and similarities in social behaviour and interaction (Gudykunst and Kim 1997). The dimension individualism / collectivism describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given culture, and within existing levels of trust and solidarity (Triandis 1994b). However, the former dimensions are cultural-level dimensions based on nation means, and are used to compare central tendencies on the national, and not on the individual level (Hofstede 1997).

Both Germany and Greece show features of individualistic and collectivistic cultures. According to Hofstede's research on work values of IBM-employees in about 66 countries, the individualism value of Greece is 35, whereas for Germany 67. However, on the one hand it is said that Greece in traditional "times" has been very collectivistic, but nowadays is a moderately collectivist culture (Adamopoulos 1999; Hofstede 2001; Triandis 1995). On the other hand, the Greek culture is characterized as individualistic, being referred to as 'free-rider individualism' (Getimis and Grigoriadou 2002; Tsoukalas 1993). Germany is widely said to be an individualistic culture (Hofstede 2001; Schwartz 1994). Nevertheless, other research on German students and conscripts showed that East Germans and West Germans with regard to the dimension individualism-collectivism seem to be in the middle area (Piontkowski, Rohmann and Dohmen 1994). With respect to the German municipality, it may be said that it is an agricultural shaped town, which may be an indication for collectivistic traits. Nevertheless, the town is also influenced by a metropolis near by, as well as by the historic time of English occupation, all of them constituting strong influential factors towards individualism. Thus, we may say that the region of the German municipality and its' society, may be regarded as overall individualistic with collectivistic traits. With regard to the Greek municipality it may be said, that the town is not only agricultural shaped, but also very much by its' long history of foreign occupation and external threats, that strengthened collectivistic traits in the region. However, the municipality has been and still is in an ongoing period of socio-cultural transition with a tendency towards more individualistic traits. Nevertheless, the society of Greek municipality and its' region may be considered overall as collectivistic with individualistic traits.

Individualism in the German society has both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, it is connected with selfish, consumerist, egoistic and narcissistic behaviour that undermines solidarity in the society. On the other hand, individualism is also associated with freedom, a fundamental, positive value, and furthermore with communitarian individualism, where the individual's goals are integrated with the goals of the community (Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1994; Miegel and Wahl 1993; Oinonen 2000; Triandis 1995). More so, processes of self-realization and individual self-determination do not necessarily lead to the disappearance of solidarity. Rather, new forms occur which are characterized by the freedom of choice and voluntariness (Lilli and Lubert 2001). The latter is opposite to solidarity based on group affiliation, which is characteristic for a collectivistic society. Thus, the individual is less guided by tradition and traditional institutions such as church and the family, which no longer legitimate individual moral choices to the same extent (Oinonen 2000). Moreover, the new forms of solidarity are not (exclusively) directed at the members of the own group. Solidarity is rather a universal fundamental orientation/ attitude, than an obligation in certain situations (Lilli and Lubert 2001).

Also, collectivism in the Greek society is associated with positive and negative meanings. On the one hand, collectivism is linked to a "... set of feelings, beliefs, behavioural intentions and behaviour related to solidarity and concern for others" (Hui 1988, p.17), and more so attitudes that reflect sociability, ... interdependence, ... and family integrity ..." (Triandis 1995, p. 73). On the other hand, collectivism is particularistic: "Commitments of individuals are personal, responsibilities and values relate primarily to solidarity between family members and relatives" (Panagiotopoulou 2004). The Greek family nowadays is still a more or less closely-knit unit, functioning within a broad network of relatives, and supporting one another in a variety of reciprocal ways (Stathopoulos 1996). Strong family cohesion serves the protection from general insecurity in social relations, and the almost non-existing

support on behalf of a relatively weak state (Lyberaki and Tsakalotos 2002; Mouzelis 1995). As a result, egoistical behavioural tendencies got strengthened without taking into account the collective interest (Panagiotopoulou 2004; Petmesidou 1996). Thus, solidarity rarely expresses itself in the public sphere. And, in spite of societal transformation processes, the Greek society did not yet develop collective solidarities (Papadopoulos 1996; Petmesidou 1996).

According to the European Social Survey, a comparative public opinion research on 19 European Member States in 2003, social trust in the German society is somewhat higher than in the Greek one. People were asked to value the statements “You can’t be too careful or most people can be trusted” and “Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair” on a scale from zero to ten. With regard to the first statement, the German median value is 4,78 compared to the Greek one being 3,44, and concerning the second statement the German value is 5,80, whereas the Greek one is 3,53 (European Social Survey 2004).

Trust in the German society is basically related to the “general other”. Thus, trust is more universalistic, so that the distinction whom may be trusted and whom not, does not depend exclusively on the group membership (Guirdham 1999; Triandis 1995). As a result, in Germany people generally trust out-groups more than in Greece (Triandis 1994a). The existence of trust in the German society is on the one hand very much related to existing networks of civil engagement, such as numerous voluntary associations. As Putnam (1993, pp.89-90) states, “... associations instil their members habits of ... public spiritedness and social trust”. On the other hand, a stable German democracy after the Second World War allowed social trust to get fostered and to develop, by supporting participation on behalf of the people (Greiffenhagen and Greiffenhagen 1999).

On the contrary, trust in the Greek society is still primarily related to the very in-groups, in particular to the family, and may be characterized as ‘relationship trust’ (Guirdham 1999; Triandis 1995). As Hofstede (2001, p. 238) states, “In collectivist cultures one does not trust just anybody – one trusts only “one of us”. This also implies, that “... only natural persons are worthy of trust, and via these persons their friends and colleagues, but not impersonal legal entities ... “ (Hofstede 2001, p.239). Nevertheless, it is said, that in Greece mutual trust and trust related resources are lacking (Getimis and Grigoriadou 2002; Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos 2002; Schmitter 2002). Reasons are claimed to be traditional and still persisting hierarchical clientelistic networks, and moreover the ‘lack of credibility and impartiality from the part of the state’. Thus, until now a general social trust could not sufficiently develop in the Greek society (Christoforou 2002, p.4; Lyberaki and Tsakalotos 2002).

The Findings

The presentation and discussion of the findings focuses on three issues of co-operation between social service providers: existing patterns of co-operation, the influence of the attitudes trust and solidarity on co-operation, and the influence of the legal framework on co-operation. The linking of the latter is seen particularly relevant for the understanding of the actual delivering practice of social service providers on a local level in Germany and Greece.

Patterns of co-operation

The empirical research findings showed, that different patterns of co-operation in Germany and Greece exist. The German pattern is characterized by a low density in the “co-operation – net”, a relatively low frequency of contacts, a wide range of contents and forms of co-

operation, by the mix of legal regulations, formal (contractual) and informal agreements, and by the dominance of voluntary/ non-profit providers as actors. Contrary, the Greek pattern is characterized by a high density in the “co-operation – net”, a relatively medium frequency of contacts, a relatively restricted range of contents and forms of co-operation, by the exclusive basis of informal agreements, and by the dominance of public bodies as actors.

As the findings show, a low density characterizes the German „co-operation – net“. There exist few mutual linkages between the providers in general, but in particular few linkages between the voluntary/ non-profit and the public sector. Contrary, a relatively high density characterizes the Greek „co-operation net“, being approximately three times higher than the German one. Many mutual linkages exist between the public social service providers, and there are more linkages between the sectors than in the in the German co-operation framework.

Furthermore, the questionnaire findings showed that contacts between the German providers are not very frequent, taking place a few times a year and to a fewer extent monthly. Also, communication is mostly facilitated by the means of the telephone, followed by letter/ memo/ reports and personal contact. In the Greek co-operation framework the frequency of contact is to a somewhat great extent higher than in the German one, contacts taking place also on a weekly basis. More important, communication is mainly realized both by the telephone, and personnel contact as medium.

Nevertheless, the contents of co-operation in the German municipality comprise a wide range, such as information and knowledge exchange, as well as collective planning, collective decision-making and collective action. This is reflected also in the form of co-operation, including consultations, conferences and working groups. Contrary, in the Greek municipality the contents of co-operation are almost only focussed on information exchange, followed by knowledge exchange and collective action. Furthermore, forms of co-operation mainly include consultations. In this context, the findings showed, that the basis for co-operation in the German municipality are on the one hand legal regulations and contractual/ formal agreements, and on the other hand, informal agreements. Instead, co-operation between the Greek providers is only based on informal agreements.

About two third of the German providers of the "co-operation-net" delivering social services for the family belong to the voluntary/ non-profit, and only one third to the public sector. On the contrary, in the Greek municipality, about two third are public, and one third are voluntary/ non-profit bodies. Social services offered by the Greek providers are not directed exclusively at the family as target group, and services are not specialized on family matters. Instead, services for the family are widely distributed among different providers. Contrary, the German sample also includes providers that are offering social services solely at the family as target group, in terms of an integrated approach.

Influence of trust and solidarity on co-operation

It may be said that both in Germany and Greece, co-operation is influenced by trust and solidarity. The questionnaire findings show that trust and solidarity exist to a somewhat great extent on behalf of the German and Greek respondents in co-operating with other social service providers. Nevertheless, it cannot be said definitely to what extent and degree.

According to the findings of the questionnaire, the German respondents strongly agree that mutual trust is important in co-operating. More so, most of them agree, that they can trust the

other providers, and, that they can rely on the latter. Nevertheless, in the Greek co-operation framework, the level of trust seems to be higher to a somewhat great extent than in Germany. Nearly all Greek respondents strongly agree that mutual trust is important in co-operating and, that they trust the other providers. Furthermore, most of the providers agreed, that they also rely on the other providers in the co-operation framework.

Whereas reciprocity in terms of mutual exchanges on behalf of the German providers exists, mutuality, in terms of equal efforts, seems to be more or less non-existent. However, the existence of solidarity in the co-operation framework is also supported by existing contributions on behalf of the providers in form of personnel and material resources. Another indicator may be a relatively high client participation in the co-operation process, comprising the participation in planning, arrangement and decision-making processes. Furthermore, existent solidarity is indicated by the providers' motivation for co-operation being mainly related to the idea that co-operation improves the situation of the family. But, the providers' motivation also indicates the non-existence of solidarity, being more so related to the idea that co-operation facilitates to improve the status of the provider. With regard to the existence of solidarity in the Greek co-operation framework, the findings show not a very clear picture. Whereas equal efforts and mutual exchanges exist, there almost do not exist contributions on behalf of the providers in co-operating. Moreover, the client participation in the co-operation process is very low. Also, the providers' motivation for co-operation is not only highly related to the improvement of the situation of the family and the community as life world of the family, but contrary, also to the improvement of the providers' status and resources.

Finally, the questionnaires showed that satisfaction with the co-operation outcomes both on behalf of the German and Greek respondents is relatively high, which may indicate the existence of both trust and solidarity in the co-operation framework.

Influence of the legal framework on co-operation

Concerning the influence of the respective German and Greek legal framework on co-operation between social service providers on the local level, it can be said that clear correlations exist. In particular, the influence is visible both in the German and Greek co-operation context with regard to the participation of public respectively voluntary / non-profit organizations in co-operation, contents and forms of co-operation, as well as the basis for co-operation.

The actors

The dominance of voluntary/ non-profit providers as actors in the German co-operation framework is highly related to the support for the latter on behalf of the state by ascribing them a privileged role in social service provision by the so-called Subsidiarity Principle. Thus, the local authority can only set up a social service, if no other non-public organization aims to do so. Also, non-public bodies providing social services for the family, get material and/ or immaterial support on behalf of the local authorities and the States. In Greece, the dominance of the public sector is clearly related to the weak position of the voluntary/ non-profit organizations in the welfare mix. On behalf of the state, the support for voluntary/ non-profit organizations was and still is relatively weak. While the public bodies are integrated into the system by rights, the non-public bodies need a special certification process. Furthermore, only non-public organizations participating in the execution of National Social Welfare Programmes may get financial support from the state.

Density

A relatively low density in the German “co-operation – net” is somehow surprising, considering the legally determined co-operation of the voluntary / non-profit and the public sector, and the legal stipulation of local and regional coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, there is no such stipulation that strengthens co-operation between providers of the voluntary/ non-profit sector, in particular concerning the actual delivery process of social services. Also, a relatively high density in the Greek “co-operation – net” seems to be a surprise, because no concrete legal framework for the co-operation between the public bodies, or even between the latter and the voluntary/ non-profit sector do exist. There is no public support infrastructure for co-operation on the local level, and furthermore, actions on the local level depend more or less on the actions of the central administration.

Contents and forms of co-operation

In the German municipality, the German legal framework supports existing forms of co-operation such as consultations, conferences and working groups. The latter stipulates the co-operation of public and non-public bodies in carrying out legal tasks, and is thus creating implicitly directions for the co-operation of voluntary/ non-profit organizations. As a result, the contents of co-operation do not only include information and knowledge exchange, but also collective planning, collective decision-making and collective action processes. The Greek legal framework does not stipulate any specific co-operation between the providers, so that the arrangement of co-operation is mainly based on the initiative and input of the involved providers. Thus, as a result not many (different) forms and contents of co-operation exist, focussing mainly on information exchange and consultations.

Basis of co-operation

Most existing co-operation between the providers in Germany is based on informal agreements, but is also to a somewhat great extent regulated by contracts/ formal agreements between the providers, and by legal regulations of the German Social Security Code. The latter gives the conditions for the contractual relations between the providers providing family services on behalf of the state. Instead, exclusive basis for co-operation between the Greek providers are informal agreements. Although, municipal bodies or non-public organizations may be contracted by the central level for the execution of National Social Welfare Programmes, co-operation between the particular bodies neither is legally stipulated, nor is fixed by contractual agreements on the local level.

Conclusions

As the German and Greek case shows, patterns of co-operation between social providers do not exclusively depend on the former stipulation by legal regulations. The latter may support co-operation, in particular with regard to forms and contents. However, as the German case shows, the existence of a wide range of forms and contents does not mean that there are a lot of linkages between the providers, and furthermore, that co-operation is frequent. As in the Greek case, informal agreements as basis for co-operation implicate voluntary co-operation. Although the latter may be related to motivations of solidarity or contrary self-interest, they indicate stronger involvement in co-operation, and thus more action in terms of linkages and frequency. Furthermore, in Germany the legally supported “welfare mix” in providing social services may lead to higher competition between the voluntary/ non-profit providers, and thus to less willingness for co-operation. As opposite in the Greek case, there is no need for competition for the public bodies due to the centralized directions. Also, the Greek public

bodies may have a somewhat similar mentality concerning working and organizational processes, which may support and make co-operation easier. Contrary, the German voluntary/non-profit organizations may have to come to terms to a greater extent with differences in organizational views and structures, thus, hindering co-operation. Additionally, the German voluntary / non-profit providers may decide themselves what kind of service they provide bringing forth more integrated offers in nature and thus, less need for co-operation. Instead, in Greece the services are much more spread over single providers due to the lack of regulations for specific family oriented offers. Thus, co-operation is needed in order to match the specific needs.

More so, the more personnel and frequent the contact, as in the Greek case, the more trust and solidarity may be facilitated, and as a result, the more linkages between the providers exist. In particular, in the Greek case personal contact and within trust, seems to be a prerequisite for “successful” co-operation, having in mind that Greek relations are “personnel” relations. Although locations for fostering trust and solidarity are very wide in the German case, the former do not support frequent co-operation and linkages for co-operation. Considering that in the German society trust and solidarity are generally bound to the individuals’ decision and willingness, it cannot be said explicitly that trust and solidarity are essential for co-operation in the German case.

As a final comment, it has to be said that further research would be necessary in order to draw a closer picture on the “reality” of co-operation between social service providers delivering personal social services on the German and Greek local level. Factors such as organizational cultures, infrastructures and resources on behalf of the providers should be included in order to classify the influence of socio-political legislation and the attitudes trust and solidarity more precisely. Therefore, it would be useful to employ also qualitative instruments, which would allow to “look” much more behind the scenery and to include individual opinions and sentiments. Nevertheless, this research is regarded as a starting-point for further research by already delivering some useful results and indications.

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