



Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review
of European Early Childhood Education and Care



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CARE

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**D4.3: Overview of quality monitoring systems and results of
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Executive Summary

This report includes a comparative review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) quality monitoring and assurance systems in 11 European countries. As differences in quality monitoring and assurance across Europe exist, the study examines the links between European countries' systems of ECEC provision and quality monitoring and assurance, and possible consequences for the effects of ECEC on child development.

The report is part of the project Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (CARE), funded by the European Union's 7th Framework program (THEME [SSH.2013.3.2-2] Early childhood education and care: promoting quality for individual, social and economic benefits). The task reported on here is part of work package four (WP4), entitled Impact of ECEC in short, medium and long-term. Within WP4, this deliverable (D4.3) entails a comparative review of quality monitoring and assurance systems across Europe.

The comparative review resulted in a typology focusing on four different main aspects: ECEC system characteristics (such as governance structure, funding system and legal framework), curriculum, staff and monitoring. The typology is grounded on theoretically founded assumptions and empirical evidence regarding effects on process quality. In line with other reports emerging from the CARE project, and with the common research practice, we adopted a structural-processual understanding of quality in ECEC. The report synthesizes findings regarding ECEC quality monitoring and assurance systems by pointing out the specific links between ECEC system characteristics, curriculum, staff and monitoring, and indicating connections between these four main aspects of ECEC and ECEC process quality.

Besides the typology, the report also contains detailed case studies for four countries: Germany, England, Greece and Norway. With the help of the case studies, the different aspects of the typology will be described in an interrelated way.

ECEC can only reach its goal to promote development and well-being in children, and contribute towards more equal chances and opportunities in society, if participation in ECEC and good quality of ECEC are assured. This report aims to contribute towards a better understanding of how ECEC systems in Europe currently work towards ensuring accessible good quality early childhood education and care and what could be improved to ensure that ECEC can reach its potential.

ECEC System Characteristics

From a policy perspective, an important question is how to set-up an ECEC system that ensures access and good quality for all children. In the European countries taking part in this study, we see high variation between types of ECEC services that exist alongside each other, with separate organisation and management systems, differences in terms of their emphasis on care or education, the levels of staff qualification, the age groups served, as well as opening times, and costs to parents. While it can be argued that variation across the type of services provided is better suited to meet the different needs and preferences of families, high variation also has disadvantages which relate to issues of quality and access.

High variation between services makes it more difficult to support and ensure good quality of ECEC experience for all children. Complex systems, with services that work in many different ways, risk more division in their understandings of the values and practices in ECEC. Research evidence has shown that quality varies between different types of providers (e.g. Mathers, Sylva, & Joshi, 2007; Slot et al., 2015a). Most of the research on the benefits of ECEC for children's development stems from centre based provision. However, in some countries in Europe, home-based care arrangements, and informal care arrangements are very common, particularly for the under-threes. Research evidence on the quality or effects of these types of providers is mixed, but it is certainly true that they are less-well regulated and supported.

In addition, many children access multiple care and education arrangements over the period of their preschool years, often consecutively, but they can also have more than one childcare arrangement in place simultaneously

(for example, a mix of informal and formal arrangements to reduce costs or cover long working hours). This affects the continuity of children's experiences. So far, little research exists about the effects of multiple education and care arrangements for young children, but some studies indicate that there are risks for children's development and wellbeing (e.g. Bowes & Wales, 2009; Tran & Weintraub, 2006; Cryer, et al., 2005; De Schipper, Tavecchio, Van IJzendoorn, & Linting, 2003). While more needs to be known about children's participation patterns in ECEC services, we can recommend here, that it is essential to put mechanisms in place to ensure continuity and good quality across *all* types of providers (e.g. minimum quality standards, common curriculum frameworks, educator training, and monitoring systems).

Parental leave policies are another way to support the continuity of good quality care for children, if there is no gap between parental leave and access to formal ECEC for babies and toddlers (see Naumann, McLean, & Lloyd, 2013). In many of the European countries we studied, this gap exists because legal entitlements to ECEC under the age of three are relatively rare, and do not link up with parental leave policies. Where parental leave policies are more generous and flexible, this means little demand for ECEC for children under a certain age – for example, for under-ones. Considering higher costs of ECEC for infants and more challenges in providing good quality group care for this age range, it seems essential to ensure good parental leave policies so that the use of childcare for families with infants is not mainly motivated by the need to cover (long) parent working hours.

Legal entitlements do not necessarily mean that access to ECEC is free. Unconditional free access is not usually given to children under the age of three, and usually relates to a part-time place (between 10 and 28 hours). Thus, parents are expected to contribute towards the costs. In the countries taking part in this study we found marked differences in terms of public expenditure on ECEC, and relatedly, differences in terms of parental costs. Public expenditure and parental costs also vary within countries between different types of providers, with private provision and ECEC for the younger age groups relating to higher costs for parents.

Differences in costs to parents mean that access to ECEC, or to certain types of ECEC providers, is restricted to certain populations. This is a matter of concern because it risks participation, and more segregation. Participation and enrolment are crucial issues to ECEC policy. The success of ECEC provision depends on its availability, and on the participation of children, in particular those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Participation rates for under threes vary greatly in CARE project countries, with some countries having very low rates. Even though government investment in social inclusion and priority education programmes is increasing, relatively little information on variation in participation rates between children with diverse socio-economic, lingual, and ethnic backgrounds can currently be found in international reports. Based on available information however, children with more disadvantaged backgrounds have lower participation rates (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). Recognising the need for good quality ECEC, particularly for the more vulnerable families, Europe increasingly puts policies in place to reduce costs for those families in need.

Targeted entitlement is one important mechanism that supports ECEC participation for more disadvantaged populations. Where targeted offers are made however, systems need to ensure that funded children are not separated from children whose parents are paying, for example, by having access to different types of provisions. Risks are high that there might be a division between private and public providers, and those offering full-time programmes (for working parents) and part-time programmes (for funded children). Segregation across ECEC services reduces the likelihood of providing the degree of social mix that is beneficial to children and their development (e.g. Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, Elliot, 2003b; Schechter & Bye, 2007; de Haan, Elbers, Hoofs, & Leseman, 2013). In addition, it challenges the provision of good process quality in those groups with a high percentage of disadvantaged children (e.g. Early et al., 2010; Kuger & Klucznoik, 2008; Toyan & Howes, 2003; Slot et al., 2015a). To address issues of segregation across ECEC services, it needs to be documented more explicitly which children participate in which type of ECEC.

Participation rates have to be assessed in relation to the sufficiency of ECEC provision. Demand seems higher than supply in many countries for the younger age-group (under-threes), and shortages can be higher in some regions (e.g., rural areas). Thus, while access to ECEC has been improved in many ways over the last decades, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. However, strategies that increase access and availability need to go

hand-in-hand with measures that ensure quality. To ensure a more even level of quality across providers, minimum standards and regulations concerning the provision of ECEC, are put into place.

Ratios, but also group sizes and space, are commonly addressed by regulations. While there is variation on those regulations between countries, there is a general trend to increase ratios and group sizes with the ages of the children in a group. Group sizes and ratios have an impact on pedagogical practice and need to be considered as one mechanism to support good quality. However, a closer look at recent studies shows no clear effects of group size and teacher-child ratio on child outcomes, particularly across European countries (see review by Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2015). It has been argued that inconsistency in results may occur from differing structural quality characteristics across countries and contexts (e.g. Slot et al., 2015a). We found that different types of ECEC providers and systems operate widely differing combinations of qualifications, ratios, and operational structures in many countries, and those different features of early childhood provision interact with each other, influencing process quality and child development in combination, rather than as individual characteristics. Policy-makers need to consider the system as a whole when developing policy solutions.

Regulations on support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most countries. Strategies to support access to ECEC services commonly involve lowering costs for parents. Removing financial barriers for more disadvantaged families is an important measure to ensure universal ECEC systems that facilitate equality in access to services. However, language barriers, knowledge of procedures, waiting lists, or differences in values and beliefs are other issues which are related to lower participation rates that need to be addressed (Eurofound, 2012).

Above all, access to good quality care and education matters, and it matters to all. In universal ECEC provision, good quality for all means that those in need can receive more support. If ECEC is to help to close the education gap between more disadvantaged and affluent families, a curriculum may need to put extra support mechanisms into place which assure pre-academic skill development for those at risk of falling behind, and language development for migrant and ethnic minority children (Leseman & Slot, 2014). Regulations for support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most of the countries in our study; they often address language learning, and other learning/development support measures. These support measures are important. However, little is yet known of how to best design such support measures, and how to integrate targeted measures of support in everyday practice of universal ECEC services.

Curriculum and Process Quality

Another key factor influencing process quality is curriculum. Curriculum frameworks aim to support curriculum implementation to facilitate coherent pedagogical approaches and assure more even quality of ECEC for all children, thereby maximizing gains from ECEC attendance (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). The picture of curriculum frameworks in the European CARE project countries is complex (Sylva, Ereky-Stevens, Aricescu, 2015). While there is a trend towards a more integrated system, with a common standard curriculum for all types of provision, this is not yet realised in many countries, and splits exist between frameworks for different age-groups and different types of providers. Where there are gaps in curriculum frameworks, these usually concern the younger groups (Sylva et al., 2015). One of the challenges of curriculum development is finding a balance between a curriculum for the younger children that harmonises with the framework with older children in bringing together diverse perspectives and methods of both, while remaining sensitive to the characteristics of babies and toddlers.

The lack of a shared conceptual framework for the younger age-group goes hand in hand with a lack of clarity (and more divergent views) on the way learning is conceptualised, especially in relation to intellectual goals (e.g. Broekhuizen, Leseman, Moser, & van Trijp, 2015; Slot et al., 2015a). Despite the broad agreement on the value of a balanced approach where sensitive, responsive interactions are combined with a focus on learning and intentional pedagogical strategies, CARE observed a lack of clarity in how to best implement this balanced approach (e.g. Slot et al., 2016; Sylva et al., 2015). In addition, and relatedly, there are differences in the focus

that is given to the learning of skills in pre-academic/academic subject areas. This tension becomes particularly apparent when we think about a good curriculum for children with more disadvantaged backgrounds. Early informal learning is related to pre-academic skills, and therefore an important factor in preparing children for their later learning in school (e.g. Brooks-Gun, & Markman, 2005; Scheele, Leseman, Mayo, & Elbers, 2012). Families differ strongly in how much they support young children in their development of pre-academic skills. Thus, early childhood provision has an important role to play in reducing the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. More needs to be done to address this task in a balanced way.

Finally, curricular frameworks are constructed to be open and flexible enough to adapt to each context, and the individual child. In their daily practice, educators are required to apply the general guidelines provided, using their knowledge and analysis of the local context and the specific situation. Partnerships with parents and the wider community, observations and documentation of children's experiences and learning, and continuous evaluation of practice are commonly stressed as important elements supporting practice that is in tune with children's interests and needs, the specific situation, and the context. Thus, curriculum implementation is a complex task, that requires a knowledgeable and skilled workforce, that is well supported. An ECEC system that wants to assure good quality implementation (and thus good process quality) needs to put in place systems that support educators and local providers in their curriculum implementation.

ECEC Staff

As stated above, staff working in ECEC constitute a crucial aspect of high quality ECEC. Hence, this report provides information on important indicators describing the ECEC workforce in the different countries.

The first indicator concerns the main categories of staff in the 11 countries. Three main staff groups are distinguished (according to European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014) to facilitate comparison between countries: educational, care, and auxiliary staff. Educational staff usually have the highest qualification requirements (most often at tertiary level), while care staff are usually trained at upper secondary level, and auxiliary staff are mostly not formally qualified at all. In general, there is a trend for ECEC becoming more academic in Europe. Although in most of the countries, younger and older children are cared for by educational staff, in a few countries, there is a strict division between the age groups, with the younger children being attended by care staff only. Since the importance of the first years in life for later learning and development is widely acknowledged, providing high quality ECEC to this age group should be a major goal. Furthermore, there is evidence for the positive impact of higher qualified staff on ECEC process quality (e.g. Mathers et al., 2007; Melhuish et al., 2010). Hence, strong efforts should be made to align the required staff qualification for both age groups at a tertiary level.

While there are clear qualification requirements for staff working in centre-based care throughout all the countries, initial qualification requirements for childminders working in home-based care are lower and, in the case of Norway, not stipulated at all. This is contradictory to the fact that home-based care plays a very important role in most European countries especially for children under three year-olds. If home-based care is treated as an equivalent alternative for centre-based care in Europe, there is an urgent need for higher standards regarding staff qualification or training.

Heads of centres often need to fulfil at least the minimum required qualification for educational staff working with older children, which usually means a bachelor degree in half of the countries. For younger children, in some countries, an upper secondary level education is sufficient. In contrast, Portugal and Italy (with regional differences for the younger children) require centre heads to hold a Master degree. In the majority of the countries, headship training as an additional requirement is not stipulated, pointing to a lack of understanding for the specific tasks of centre heads and the specific competencies they require. Research from England and Germany has drawn the attention to the importance of a high qualification and headship training for centre heads (e.g. Ballaschk & Anders, 2015; Mathers et al., 2007; Melhuish et al., 2010).

ECEC teachers' statutory salaries generally depend on the amount of training, as well as the length of work experience. They vary greatly between the 11 countries included in this report and generally increase with work experience, although the rate of the increase varies widely between countries, as well. In most of the countries in which a university degree is required for preschool teachers, they also earn the same amount as primary school teachers.

Salaries of staff working in ECEC are often associated to the discussion about gender balance in ECEC. One idea is that increasing the average salary levels in the field and making it more lucrative for potential workers will help draw more male professionals into ECEC. However until now, there is no empirical evidence supporting this hypothesis. A German study has shown that the share of male students in newly introduced university bachelor courses is the same as in traditional vocational schools for ECEC staff (Keil et al., 2013; Rohrmann, 2012). The information collected for this report shows that the goal of increasing the percentage of male workforce to 20% for European countries set by the European Commission Network on Childcare in 1996 (Peeters, 2007) is far from reached. Despite minor differences between countries, ECEC remains a field with predominantly female workforce.

In terms of continuous professional development, detailed and insightful work has already emerged from the CARE project report "Comparative review of professional development approaches" (Jensen et al., 2015). The authors describe two opposing approaches to continuing professional development. Within the first approach, the responsibility for continuing professional development lies with the individual in rather decentralised systems with little or no regulation. The second approach, on the contrary, gives responsibility to national or local authorities in the countries where systems of continuing professional development were identified. In the report at hand, the degree to which professional development is compulsory for staff in ECEC was considered to characterize continuing professional development in different countries. In most of the countries in our sample, continuing professional development is compulsory to some degree (i.e. required by the law or defined as professional duty in steering documents such as curricula, frameworks or working contracts) for lots of ECEC workers. However, Finland is the only country where it is compulsory (by law) for both educational and care staff, as well as for childminders working in home-based provision.

Highly unregulated and decentralized ECEC systems are among the numerous challenges for monitoring within this field.

ECEC Monitoring Systems

As monitoring constitutes a fundamental dimension for promoting quality in ECEC services, one purpose of this report was to present and reveal critical parameters of the 11 countries' monitoring systems that participate in the CARE project. Particular reference is made to the processes that refer to selected quality indicators described and analysed in the next sections.

To elaborate on the monitoring system of each country, several questions guide data collection on the basic aspects of the monitoring system, namely: (a) regulation and organization, (b) objectives, (c) frequency, (d) methods and practices, (e) use of results and consequences of monitoring processes in each country.

For the countries selected as case studies, some additional questions concern: (a) arrangements for disadvantaged groups (cultural and linguistic background), (b) challenges and priorities/future goals, (c) basic developments in the last 3-5 years and (d) evidence linking monitoring results with process quality or/and children outcomes. Information on these aspects is included in the presentation of the case studies.

With regard to the selected indicators, the dimensions specified were: (A) System: basic regulations about teacher-children ratio, group size and space considerations, (B) Curriculum and Pedagogy: curriculum implementation, pedagogical interactions, children's outcomes and parental involvement and (C) Staff Development: staff qualifications, in-service training and composition of the working group.

A number of inconsistencies among the different sources, the fragmentary information provided in some texts, the absence of data for some countries etc., were corrected based on the up-to-date information provided by the CARE project partners through relevant templates. Still, with regard to the French and the German Communities of Belgium there were very few data that could be confirmed and only the information for the Flemish Community was included in the chapter concerning monitoring systems. Moreover, it should be noted that at the time of data collection, ECEC in some countries such as Italy, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Poland, underwent new developments due to changes in legislation, so information provided about monitoring reflects this transition phase.

Information is organized in two chapters, the first is concentrated on the basic characteristics of the monitoring systems and the second on the monitoring processes that concern the selected quality indicators in each of the CARE countries. A careful examination of the ECEC monitoring systems revealed that countries seemed to employ different systems of monitoring, indicative of different levels of centralization/ decentralization of governance and supervision even within the same country, which was particularly evident in countries with a “split system” of ECEC provisions (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014).

ECEC services in Belgium, Greece, Italy, Poland and Portugal are representative cases of a “split system”, with regard to provisions being delivered in separate settings for younger and older children (usually 0 to 3 or 4 and 3 or 4 to 6) while the responsibility for governance, regulation and funding is divided between different authorities (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). Greece, Italy and Poland are the most representative countries of this model, since different processes are employed for the childcare sector (for younger children) which is highly decentralized with local authorities having a critical role and the preschool education provision, which is governed and supervised centrally by national authorities under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In Portugal, although there are different supervising bodies for childcare and preschool education provision, monitoring is regulated, organized and funded nationally for both sectors by the corresponding authorities, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education respectively.

Finland and Norway employ a “unitary system” where ECEC provision for all 0-6 years old children is delivered in settings that provide care and education services which are regulated, funded and supervised by the Ministry of Education. Whereas, in Finland, quality is monitored at a regional/municipal only, rather than a national level; in Norway monitoring is regulated at national, regional and local level. In both countries there are national guidelines and regulations, as well as national monitoring agencies that organize and supervise monitoring processes at all levels.

The development of networks among providers is typical in Finland, Norway and Denmark, a type of system that supports the establishment of common quality standards among settings and facilitates comparison and dissemination of the results of self-monitoring to various stakeholders. Still, networks are organized centrally and are partly financed by national authorities in Norway, whereas in Finland and Denmark they are organized and supported by each local authority.

Denmark, England, Germany and the Netherlands have a mixed model of “both unitary and separate provisions” (although the authority that is responsible for ECEC settings management is the same, the regulations concerning the provision for younger and older children may differ in terms of staff qualifications, curricula and funding arrangements). Among the four mentioned countries, England seems to have the most centralized monitoring system as it is nationally regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED). In Germany, monitoring is regulated at national and federal level. The Netherlands seem to follow the patterns employed by countries representative of a “split model” since monitoring is delivered by local authorities (municipalities) for the childcare provisions and by the Educational Inspectorate for the providers with educational programmes.

Regarding the objectives of monitoring, the majority of the CARE countries seem to focus on: accountability, quality assurance, improvement of ECEC services and ensuring compliance with regulations. Promotion of compatibility between national standards and local recommendations and implementations, seemed important for

Italy. Informing policy makers and guiding decision-making seemed critical for the Flemish Community of Belgium, Norway and Finland. A shared understanding of ECEC among different stakeholders was reported for Finland. England also seemed to give emphasis to parents' participation in evaluation of quality and ensuring the safety of children, among other objectives. Italy, Portugal and the Netherlands give emphasis on improvement of pedagogical and/or educational quality, while the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands on the promotion of professional development. Finally, Germany focused on the importance of monitoring for maintaining subsidies.

With reference to the monitoring methods and practices, there is a mixture of internal and external processes, mainly depending on the quality dimension/indicator specified.

Monitoring of the basic regulations concerning structural features (e.g. teacher-children ratio, group size, space etc.) is conducted mostly by external agencies/organisations. Typical examples are Denmark, England, Germany and Norway. In most countries there are also internal evaluative procedures conducted by educational/pedagogical/care staff or heads. Evaluations are usually applied during the registration period and within the general framework of monitoring in each country.

Monitoring of quality of pedagogical/educational activities and work (curriculum implementation, pedagogical interactions and children's outcomes) is mostly carried out internally, especially for the childcare provisions in all countries. Greece could be considered an exception since supervising of the pedagogical work in child care centres is only regulated for the private sector. In Italy, monitoring of pedagogical quality in childcare provisions is not mandated but there are continuous internal participatory processes on evaluation that engage different stakeholders. For the preschool services, monitoring is mandated but still internal using self-evaluations.

For the preschool settings and those providers with educational programmes external evaluations are usually applied, except Italy and Germany where in some cases it is not mandated but recommended. In Greece, there are no official assessments on pedagogical quality in kindergartens but School Advisors have the responsibility to supervise pedagogical work. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Poland there are both internal and external checks.

In the Netherlands, mandated monitoring processes exist only with reference to targeted educational programmes and are carried out by external organisations. Monitoring of children's outcomes and pedagogical interactions is not specified in Poland. In Finland, apart from monitoring of curriculum implementation, which is officially regulated for the preschool services, the evaluation of other indicators of pedagogical quality is suggested rather than mandated. With regard to parental involvement in Poland, it is neither regulated nor monitored for the childcare sector. In Finland, although evaluation of parents' engagement is not obligatory it is encouraged.

In most countries staff development is monitored externally. There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of professional development in Italy, though. Qualifications are checked usually during recruitment. In Greece, kindergarten teachers should pass national examinations carried out by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (A.S.E.P.) to enter the profession. A similar procedure is also applied in Denmark. In Germany, monitoring staff qualifications and composition of the working team is mandatory. In the Netherlands, staff training is not mandatory but monitoring staff qualifications and composition of the working team is. In Poland, monitoring of preschool teachers' professional development is mandatory. In Portugal, training courses and workshops are accredited by a national organization after checks. In Finland, although monitoring of in-service training is not mandated, the government established centres of excellence on social welfare in 2002, to convey expertise to municipalities on this topic and ensure that training content is consistent and relevant. In Greece there are some centrally organised in-service programmes for the kindergarten teachers but there are no evaluation processes mandated.

With reference to the use of valid and reliable tools in the monitoring processes, some countries have developed their own instruments for either external or internal processes, such as the Flemish community of Belgium, England, Italy and Poland. In England, some providers use ready-made tools such as ECERS and ECERS-R,

while other countries, such as Italy and the Netherlands, have developed variations of these well-known instruments. In Italy, these adaptations were produced in collaboration with universities and researchers. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a short version of the CLASS scales (Toddlers/Infant) is included in the new “pedagogical framework” of evaluations.

Frequency of monitoring is dependent on the indicators of quality under examination and local decisions in the decentralised systems. In most cases, there are annual external evaluations and continuous processes for the internal evaluations. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, there are a number of not formerly announced evaluations, while inspections are conducted once every 3 years; whenever there is a need, or according to previous results. In the Netherlands, evaluations are conducted annually, based on self-reports by providers. Observation-based inspections are also applied in cases where there are indications of insufficient performance, or after demand for provisions with educational programmes.

The results of monitoring are used in different ways. Most countries use data to inform different stakeholders, encourage discussions, guide policymaking and promote quality and improvement in the specified areas. In the Flemish Community of Belgium and in some areas in Germany, monitoring is linked to distribution of subsidies. In Portugal, there is emphasis on suggestions to address shortcomings. The closing down of the ECEC setting is an option in cases of extreme violations in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Norway, England and the Netherlands. In Denmark, the main consequence of poor evaluation outcomes seems to be parental decision to move to another provision.

It could be argued that the examination of the monitoring systems of the 11 CARE countries identified different trends and positions concerning quality and quality assurance. Describing monitoring processes at the organizational level, and with regard to specific indicators of quality, revealed that in most countries, even if the organization of ECEC was similar, there were different approaches to monitoring and especially regarding indicators. This may be explained by policy-making giving priority to different aspects of quality, and having different orientations toward provisions, care or/and education.

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1 . I N T R O D U C T I O N

This report includes a comparative review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) quality monitoring and assurance systems. Based on broad research evidence, highlighting the overall importance of high quality ECEC for children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, we want to explore the nature of ECEC systems of European countries and how system characteristics influence pedagogical quality. As differences in quality monitoring and assurance across Europe exist, the study examines the links between European countries' systems of ECEC provision and quality monitoring and assurance, and possible consequences for the effects of ECEC on child development. The comparative review resulted in a typology focusing on four different main aspects: ECEC system characteristics (such as governance structure, funding system and legal framework), curriculum, staff and monitoring. The choice of aspects included in the typology is grounded on theoretically-founded assumptions and empirical evidence regarding effects on process quality. The different countries in this report will be discussed against this background. Besides the typology, the report also contains detailed case studies for the four countries: Germany, England, Greece and Norway. With the help of the case studies, the different aspects of the typology will be described in an interrelated way. In so doing, the aim is to point out the main characteristics of ECEC systems that influence the overall organization of the field. The four countries have been selected as case studies because they represent contrasting examples and therefore are well suited to reveal the complexity of the overall topic. The studies also include information on access to ECEC for different sectors of the population, including the disadvantaged. The report is part of the project Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (CARE), funded by the European Union's 7th Framework program (THEME [SSH.2013.3.2-2] Early childhood education and care: promoting quality for individual, social and economic benefits). The task reported on here is part of work package four (WP4), entitled Impact of ECEC in short, medium and long-term.

Our objectives relate directly to the CARE project's overall aim of working towards an evidence-based, comprehensive and culturally sensitive European framework for evaluating and monitoring ECEC quality and child wellbeing, including indicators of ECEC quality and child wellbeing for use in policy making. Within the CARE project, WP4 specifically focuses on assessing the impact of ECEC on children's outcomes on several time scales, identifying potential moderators of this impact, and examining the potential links between children's outcomes and countries' monitoring and quality assurance systems. The tasks of WP 4 comprise: (1) an updated review of research into the impact of ECEC on child development (completed: Melhuish et al., 2015; deliverable D4.1), (2) a meta-analysis of European studies on the impact of ECEC on child development (completed: Ulferts & Anders, 2015; deliverable D4.2) and (3) a comparative review of quality monitoring and assurance systems across Europe (deliverable D4.3).

This report synthesizes findings of a comparative review of ECEC quality monitoring and assurance systems by pointing out the specific links between ECEC system characteristics, curriculum, staff and monitoring and indicating connections between these four main aspects of ECEC and ECEC process quality. Information on different indicators is given on all eleven countries taking part in the CARE project and is complemented by four detailed case studies.

1.1 THE TYPOLOGY GUIDING THE ANALYSIS

For the typology, we identified indicators that are - theoretically or empirically - supposed to be related to process quality. With this in mind, we conducted a review of existing literature as a base for developing the typology. The specific focus on quality monitoring and assurance systems published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been particularly relevant as they report on European countries in a comparable way for various topics. In addition, reports published by the European Commission, as well as reviews written by other scientists, have been very helpful resources. For instance, the following publications were taken into account when developing the typology (the list only shows a selection of the applied resources):

- OECD. (2015b). *Starting Strong IV. Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD. (2012). *Starting Strong III*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD. (2012, 2013, 2014). *Social Expenditure database*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe. 2014 Edition*. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Anders, Y. (2014). *Literature Review on Pedagogy, Literature Review for the OECD*, OECD, Paris.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015c). *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Review. Norway*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Other reports that have emerged from the CARE project (e.g. Sylva et al., 2015 and Jensen et al., 2015)

In general, the OECD reports and publications by the European Commission provided very important and useful information on the systems of ECEC in different European countries. Recognizing this, our task was to identify relevant information from different resources and bring them together in a meaningful context. By doing this, we add to the existing literature as we specifically focus on describing indicators that are supposed to be related to process quality and therefore relevant for children's development. Additionally, we collect information for countries that were not included in the available publications, but which are part of the CARE project.

Other useful resources have been the publications that have already emerged from the CARE project. For instance, the "Overview of European ECEC curricula and curriculum template" (Sylva et al., 2015) as well as the "Comparative review of professional development approaches" (Jensen et al., 2015) which have been relevant sources for our research project. While these reports deal in depth for each country with one major topic, the present report integrates information on the four different areas of system characteristics, curriculum, staff and monitoring. Hence, the present report focuses much more on the comparison between countries regarding various different facets. This enables the possibility to identify different "types" of countries and their commonalities and differences.

With regard to monitoring, it is a part of the typology that, on one hand, constitutes a system per se within every ECEC system with certain organization and character and, on the other takes into account other aspects of quality such as, children outcomes, staff in-service training, curriculum implementation, and aspects that are included in the other parts of typology, namely the ECEC system, curriculum and staff development. Consequently, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the different monitoring systems in the eleven CARE countries, two chapters were included in the report: one about the monitoring system organization and the other about monitoring processes concerning the specific quality indicators. Moreover, there were some challenges concerning information collection and synthesis that made it necessary to combine different methodological approaches. The first challenge concerned the qualitative and descriptive nature of monitoring information that made comparisons between countries relatively difficult. Apart from the fact that not all of the eleven CARE project countries were included in these international reports, a number of inconsistencies were found among different sources, mainly due to the different time of publication. The information provided did not always give a clear picture of how monitoring system worked in each country. In many reports broader dimensions of quality were addressed; for example, the OECD work on monitoring, which focuses on service, staff and child development quality, provided no clear distinctions among these conceptualizations. There were recent developments in some of the CARE project countries' ECEC systems that were not presented/addressed in formerly published literature. In this sense, contribution from CARE partners was valuable to present reliable, valid and comprehensive information. Taking into account the unique character of monitoring systems, the qualitative nature of the information collected and the lack of reviews concerning this aspect of ECEC, the two chapters that describe monitoring organization and processes are mostly descriptive. The basic purpose is to

elaborate on how the different monitoring systems work to assess, evaluate and assure quality and to provide some comparisons between countries.

The typology was presented to an expert panel. Important feedback further shaped the typology. Following up on this, the information on the indicators was collected and aggregated. CARE partners from different countries provided continuous feedback on the process and expanded on the given information.

Within the present report, and with regards to chapters two and three, we mainly use table format in order to provide the information given for the different indicators of the typology. The presentation in table format allows for a quick comparative overview of the countries' systems. Every table is labelled with its original resource. However, we changed the data in the tables when we were given updated information by the CARE partners, or when reports emerged from the CARE project that provided more recent information. The tables are either placed within the chapter or in the appendix. They are also accompanied by a descriptive summary pointing out the main findings for each table. More in depth information can be found in the comparative case studies for Germany, England, Greece and Norway. These countries represent very different system types. Within chapters four and five we synthesize and compare information collected in order to elaborate on the way monitoring systems operate within and across the eleven CARE project countries. Chapter 4 describes how monitoring systems are regulated and organised in the eleven CARE countries with reference to some basic criteria (governance, funding, authorities responsible for implementation, objectives and frequency of monitoring, use of results) that provide insight into the monitoring processes applied in each country so as to better understand how monitoring operates with reference to the selected indicators, which is the focus of the Chapter 5.

The typology was developed with the aim of describing indicators that are supposed to have an important impact on ECEC quality. In the following chapter we therefore draw on the underlying concept of quality as a basic theoretical framework. Following this, we give empirical evidence on the four main areas of the typology (ECEC system characteristics, curriculum, staff, monitoring) and their relationship to process quality. After that, each indicator of the typology is presented with regards to all eleven countries taking part in the CARE project. The following case studies take up indicator-related information again and present them in a coherent way. The report concludes with an overall discussion of the findings revealed by the comparative review of ECEC quality monitoring and assurance systems and recommendations based on the study.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPT OF QUALITY

Research has consistently shown that early childhood education and care (ECEC), and in particular high quality ECEC, can have long lasting benefits for children in terms of their cognitive and early academic development (e.g., Anders, 2013; Camilli, Vargas, Ryan & Barnett, 2010, Gorey, 2001; Nores & Barnett, 2010; Ulferts & Anders, 2015; Melhuish et al., 2015). It also represents an effective antidote against social inequalities (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Burger, 2010; Heckman, 2006; Melhuish et al., 2015). Hence, over the last two decades many countries all around the world have increased investments in expansion and quality enhancement of ECEC provision (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013; 2015a).

In European countries ECEC today represents an almost universal experience with enrolment rates of 91% (OECD, 2015a). In most countries, guidelines or curricula specify developmental goals or areas of experiences children need to acquire (OECD, 2011; Sylva, Ereky-Stevens, & Ariescu, 2015). These guidelines, as well as their implementation, differ across and within countries in terms of pedagogical approaches, levels of qualification and training of professionals, structural arrangements in centres, duration and intensity of services and monitoring practices (OECD, 2013; 2015a, 2015b).

Due to the positive findings on potential benefits of ECEC and close to universal coverage, the most promising direction for achieving the full potential of ECEC systems is through increasing the quality of provision (Dalli et al., 2011; OECD, 2006, 2013; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). Policies aimed at enhancing quality, among others, include subsidisation and regulation of aspects of ECEC systems, such as teacher-child ratios or staff qualification and training levels, implementation and revision of curricula or guidelines, and introduction of regular inspection or monitoring systems for internal or external evaluation of quality and child outcomes.

Quality refers to how children experience ECEC. Within the CARE project, major efforts have already been made regarding the description of an ECEC quality model (Slot, Lerkkanen & Leseman, 2015; Ulferts & Anders, 2015). We expand on these findings and briefly introduce the model.

Though there are different conceptualizations of quality, a structural-processual understanding is common (Pianta et al., 2005; Kluczniok & Roßbach, 2014). Structural quality of ECEC refers, among other aspects, to the qualification and training of staff, group size, staff-child ratio, provided materials and available space per child. Generally, aspects of structural quality can be influenced by policies and regulations established by local and national governments. Process quality refers to the nature of interactions and pedagogical practices. Interactions may take place between preschool staff and children, among children, and between children and the provided space, as well as materials. Process quality can be further classified into global and domain-specific aspects. Global process quality refers to global aspects of interactions, such as the responsiveness of the caregiver, or a warm climate (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998), whereas domain-specific quality refers to the extent of promotion and stimulation in various developmental domains, such as literacy, mathematics and science (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2003). Theory and evidence suggest that process quality is directly related to child outcomes, whereas structural aspects are indirectly related through their influence on process quality. Some conceptualizations of ECEC quality also highlight the importance of certain educational beliefs and orientations of ECEC staff, such as their perception of the child and educational aspirations and goals. Educational beliefs and orientations are expected to have a direct impact on process quality and indirect effects on children's development.

It is widely accepted that process quality can be assessed with observational measures. In order to investigate preschool quality and its effects on children's development, standardized observational instruments have been developed and used within different research studies. Well established observational measures are, for instance, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R; Harms et al., 1998), its extension (ECERS-E; Sylva et al., 2003) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008). These instruments focus on emotional and educational classroom quality, and include ratings of the material surroundings as well as of the teacher-child interactions (with different emphasis on each). Research in different European countries revealed only low to moderate levels of quality (Kuger & Kluczniok, 2008; Slot, Lerkkanen & Leseman, 2015) and an insufficient promotion and stimulation in specific learning domains. Also, findings of the parental survey study of the CARE project shed light on parents' educational beliefs, values and concerns in nine European countries and showed that most parents find the promotion of under three-year-old children's (pre)academic skills as not as important as for over three-year-olds. Thus, it is important to create a stronger shared understanding of younger children's early development and education regarding different learning areas (Broekhuizen et al., 2015).

1.3 EVIDENCE ON TYPOLOGY INDICATORS AND PROCESS QUALITY

In the following, we relate the chosen indicators and concepts to research evidence. The main indicators we want to reflect on are ECEC system characteristics (such as governance structure, funding systems and legal framework), curriculum, staff and monitoring.

1.3.1 ECEC SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS AND PROCESS QUALITY

From a policy perspective, an important question is how to set-up an ECEC system that ensures access and good quality for all children, particularly for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. ECEC provisions can vary in many ways. Many different arrangements of early childhood education and care provision exist in countries, from public to private, from semi-informal markets, to informal arrangements. Importantly, high variation between different types of services can make it difficult to assure an even level of quality.

First, complex systems of ECEC provision with different types of providers for different age groups, and with different opening times and costs, affect the continuity of children's experience in ECEC. Reviews on the quality of ECEC for young children name continuity and stability of care arrangements as core factors contributing to good quality care (e.g. Huntsman, 2008; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2009; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011; Whitebook, Gombo, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009). Despite widespread recognition of the importance of the stability and continuity of relationships and experiences for young children, many children experience changes in their care arrangements, and/or multiple forms of non-parental care and education, simultaneously (e.g. Bowes, Harrison, Sweller, Taylor & Neilsen-Hewett, 2009; Bowes, Harrison, Ungerer, Wise, Sanson & Watson, 2004; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). However, caregivers who have a good knowledge of the developmental stage and the needs of a child, are more able to support their learning effectively (e.g. Melhuish, 2004); stability of staff and care arrangements have been found to be associated with more appropriate, attentive and engaged adult-child interactions, and more secure adult-child attachment in ECEC (e.g. Barnas & Cummings, 1994; Howes & Hamilton, 1992, 1993; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1998; Raikes, 1993). Studies that relate instability of care arrangements to child outcomes are rare; however, certain forms of unstable care arrangements have been found to impact on children's language and literacy development (e.g. Bowes & Wales, 2009; Tran & Weintraub, 2006); and the experience of multiple care arrangements has been found to have negative effects on child well-being (Cryer, et al., 2005; De Schipper, Tavecchio, Van IJzendoorn, & Linting, 2003).

For children in their first year, parental leave policies are one way to support continuity of good quality care for children of all ages, where there is no gap between parental leave and access to ECEC for babies and toddlers (see Naumann, McLean, & Lloyd, 2013).

Another important aspect is, that where types of providers vary in their opening times and costs, this can mean that certain types of providers can be accessible only to certain types of populations. Full-time services might be affordable to only those families with higher incomes, and part-time services might not be accessible to them because of their restricted opening times. Where targeted entitlements are provided on a part-time basis, providers with part-time opening times will be more accessible to those taking up entitlements. This is a matter of concern because it risks more segregation. Importantly, research evidence has shown that quality varies between different types of providers (Mathers, Sylva, & Joshi, 2007; Slot et al., 2015) and that a good social mix among children in preschool is particularly beneficial to children from more disadvantaged backgrounds, while posing no negative impacts on the wider group of children (Melhuish et al., 2008; Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart et al., 2003a; Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, Elliot, 2003b; Schechter & Bye, 2007; de Haan, Elbers, Hoofs, & Leseman, 2013). A high percentage of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in one group on the other hand, can be negatively associated with process and curriculum quality (Early et al., 2010; Kuger & Klucznoik, 2008; Tonyan & Howes, 2003; Slot et al., 2015a).

Parental costs can also impact the quality of ECEC children receive. On the one hand, parents who invest more into ECEC might try to find the best quality for their money. However, costs can be too demanding to parents, and in order to stay affordable, ECEC providers may feel much pressure to offer cheaper provisions, thus negatively impacting on the quality they can provide. Private providers, even if publicly subsidised, tend to be higher in costs to parents (Akgunduz et al., 2015); yet they have been shown to be lower in the quality they can offer (e.g. Slot et al., 2015). In England, for example, it was found that in the private sector, staff qualifications are lower, and so is the process quality (Sylva et al., 2004; Mathers et al., 2007). However, empirical evidence

linking issues of privatisation or market competition to the quality of ECEC provision is rather lacking (see Akgunduz, Unver, Plantega, & Nicaise, 2015). On the basis of existing evidence it has been concluded that for disadvantaged children, market-based ECEC has negative impacts on ECEC quality (Noailly and Visser 2009).

There is strong evidence of the potential of centre-based programmes to offer good quality to children that benefits their development. Research evidence on the quality of home-based or informal types of care arrangements is more mixed. Some studies have found that levels of process quality in home-based care can be as high as to those in centre-based ECEC, particularly for children under three (Barnes et al., 2010; Dowsett et al., 2008; Groeneveld et al., 2010; Leach et al., 2008; Tietze et al., 2013). Whilst some research suggests that both types of ECEC can be beneficial for young children's language and education outcomes (Lekhal et al., 2011; Votruba-Drzal, Coley, Koury, & Miller., 2013), the evidence overwhelmingly suggests no strong positive impacts of home-based care attendance on child outcomes (see review Melhuish et al., 2015). In terms of informal care arrangements, some studies have found no benefits on child outcomes (e.g Sylva et al., 2011; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2004), others have found that care provided by relatives can be beneficial for young children's language development (e.g. Coley et al., 2013; Hansen & Hawkes, 2009; Sammons et al., 2007). Few studies have assessed whether associations between type of care and children's outcomes change depending on their age, but some of the NICHD findings suggest that home-based care during the infant-toddler period, and centre-based care afterwards could be most beneficial (Morrissey, 2010; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2003a).

Participation and enrolment are crucial issues for ECEC policy. The success of ECEC provision depends on its availability, and on the participation of children, in particular those with more disadvantaged backgrounds. However, strategies that increase access and availability need to go hand-in-hand with measures that ensure quality. One strategy that is commonly put into place to ensure more even levels of quality, are minimum standards and regulations concerning structural aspects such as adult-child ratios or group sizes, or space and equipment. Less favourable group sizes and ratios can mean higher noise levels, more peers and adults to relate to, and less time for one-to-one interactions. There is considerable evidence that more favourable adult-child ratios provide conditions which promote higher process quality (see recent reviews by Bradley & Vandell, 2007; Dalli et al., 2011; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011). Evidence for direct links between group size (number of children in a group) and process quality is less clear, but still evident (Munton et al., 2002). Most research focuses primarily on centre-based care. However, the NICHD SECCYD study found that across all non-maternal settings, more favourable child-adult ratios and group sizes were the best predictors of positive infant caregiving (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000).

However, a closer look at recent studies shows no clear effects of group size and teacher-child ratio on child outcomes, particularly across European countries (see review by Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2015). It has been argued that inconsistency in results may occur due to differing structural quality characteristics across countries and contexts (Slot et al., 2015). For example, group size is likely to be greater in some countries, and group size or ratios can depend on other structural variables such as staff education and training, or organisational characteristics of the setting (e.g. in the UK, settings with higher qualified staff allow high child-adult ratios). In addition, child-adult ratio may well co-vary with group size.

A factor that is not usually considered is that the organisation of activities *within* a group relates strongly to pedagogical practice in a classroom. Ratios and group sizes by themselves provide a limited picture of children's experience in classrooms. Case studies show that the structure of the grouping within a classroom (small-group activities) is an important variable to consider when providing good quality early childhood education and care (Slot et al., 2016).

The physical environment of ECEC settings is considered to be one of the structural factors that facilitate good quality care and education. Most countries have regulations on minimum indoor and/or outdoor space per child, or equipment. Space and the availability of equipment and learning materials can impact on children's learning opportunities, their physical activity, and their health and safety. It is argued that appropriate environments have

to match each stage of development: children should have spaces big enough for their needs, materials should be stored accessibly and learning areas should be organised to stimulate engagement with materials. The Importance of natural materials and outdoor areas has also been highlighted as promoting quality learning and development (e.g. Dalli, & Rockel, 2012; Expert Advisory Panel on Quality Early Childhood Education and CARE, 2009). Evidence on links between the quality of the physical environment and young children's development is limited, but some studies have shown that aspects of the physical environment can relate to child outcomes, including cognitive and language development, the complexity of play, or social behaviour (e.g. Kowalski et al., 2005; Montie et al., 2006; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2003b; Skalicka, Belsky, Stenseng, & Wichstrøm, 2015). Relevant to children's health, physical well-being and motor development, children in ECEC have been found to be most physically active when playing outside (Brown et al., 2009).

Little research evidence exists on how these structural features relate to process quality. Nevertheless, conceptually these issues relate directly to process quality, because educators organise space and environment in order to provide activities and learning experiences to children. Importantly, knowledge about the provision of space or equipment by itself is not sufficient – the way space is pedagogically used is essential.

1.3.2 CURRICULUM AND PROCESS QUALITY

Another key factor influencing process quality is curriculum. Curriculum frameworks aim to support curriculum implementation to facilitate coherent pedagogical approaches, assure equal quality of ECEC for all children, and thereby maximizing gains from ECEC attendance (European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014). There is an agreement in Europe that a curriculum framework should make explicit the common purpose, goals or objectives of provision for children at all age groups, and thus provide a direction for children's learning. The current trend in Europe is to recommend one integrated standard curriculum framework that applies to all ECEC services, to facilitate shared understanding and common approaches, and thus continuity of learning experiences for young children.

Increasingly, curriculum frameworks in Europe recommend a balanced approach bringing together diverse perspectives and methods of a more academic and holistic approach. However, creating a balanced approach needs more than implementing an eclectic mix of pedagogical strategies from both approaches, it means *integrating* diverse strategies from more academic and more holistic approaches – a complex task that can create tensions. Research evidence suggests that a social-constructivist approach, where playful activities include adult scaffolding to facilitate learning, and where language is used to collaboratively create ideas and common knowledge, may have the best long-term effects on children's outcomes (see review Melhuish et al., 2015).

Attention to those tensions between approaches seems particularly relevant when thinking about a good curriculum for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Early informal learning is related to pre-academic skills as an important factor in preparing children for their later learning in school (see Evangelou et al., 2009). Families differ strongly in how much they support young children in their development of pre-academic skills. Thus, ECEC has an important role to play in reducing the education gap; first, in supporting children from disadvantaged families in their development of pre-academic skills, and second in providing family support that facilitates learning at home. For families with immigrant backgrounds, a good quality curriculum will also need to address language support – both in terms of first- and second language learning (see Leseman & Slot, 2014).

Finally, a balance is required between the definitions of common objectives and principles on the one hand, and support for diversity between ECEC services which are responsive to the individual context and specific situation, on the other hand. A curricular framework needs to be open and flexible enough to adapt to each context and thus, in many respects, it can only provide certain directions. In their daily practice, educators are required to apply the general guidelines they are provided with in relation to their knowledge and analysis of the

local context and the specific situation. An important aspect of the curriculum is to consider the different contexts of child development and to recognise differences and support common grounds between the values, beliefs and interests of different stakeholders (Oberhummer, 2005). Thus, curriculum implementation always relies on local traditions and the strengths of individual providers, and on partnerships with parents, families, and the wider community. Curriculum implementation is a complex task. An ECEC system that wants to assure good quality implementation (and thus good process quality) needs to put those systems in place that support educators and local providers in their curriculum implementation. This should include, for example, a strong emphasis and investment into professional development, preparation/planning, documentation and reflection, and into issues of leadership and teamwork.

1.3.3 STAFF AND PROCESS QUALITY

Staff qualification is an aspect of structural quality, and as such is considered to have an impact on children's outcomes through its influence on the quality of the pedagogical interactions (process quality). The evidence for this relationship is, however, mixed. For example, looking at staff's initial pre-service education, two large longitudinal studies from England have found positive relationships between the mean qualification level of staff and process quality in the classrooms (Mathers et al, 2007; Melhuish, Belsky, MacPherson & Cullis, 2010). Both studies showed that the strongest relationship was between staff qualifications and domain-specific process quality measures in areas of language and literacy, suggesting that higher qualified staff provides a more encouraging environment for the development of children's communication skills (Mathers et al., 2007). Previous reviews and meta-analyses also showed that the qualification degree of staff is related to child outcomes (Fukkink & Lont, 2007; Whitebook, 2003; Kelley & Camilli, 2007). Just recently, Ulferts and Anders (2015) revealed that a teacher's initial qualification was the only structural aspect with consistent and high developmental impact on children's progress on outcomes in literacy and mathematics.

However, other studies report no consistent relationship between staff's formal education and realized process quality (Early et al., 2006). It has been argued that reaching a particular minimum level of education (e.g. a degree above the Bachelor level) may be crucial for process quality, meaning that differences in qualification below Bachelor level do not make a difference. Discussions on these results also include questions concerning selection effects (highly qualified staff moving towards Primary Schools) and questions concerning the quality of pre-service training with respect to its curriculum. Furthermore, an ongoing subject of discussion relates to insufficient practical working experience that students usually gain during their academic education.

Besides teacher's initial education – and as another aspect of structural quality – continuing professional development has been identified as an important predictor of process quality in various studies. Increasing research evidence indicates that continuing professional development has a positive influence on process quality (Burchinal et al., 2002; Domitrovich et al., 2009). Recent findings from Germany (Anders et al., 2015) also refer to the importance of professional exchange within the team. Team meetings about language education on a regular basis, as well as regulations for transferring knowledge within the team, have shown a significant impact on the development of process quality of language education in daycare settings. Within this context, the head of the ECEC centre appears as a key person by implementing such processes within the institution. Therefore, he or she has to carry out not only the role of a manager, but also of a pedagogical leader.

The concept of pedagogical leadership in the early years has been widely debated in some countries (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014; Whalley, 2011). Research from England revealed a positive relationship between the qualification of the centre-head and the observed process quality (Mathers et al, 2007, Melhuish et al, 2010). Aspects like providing a vision and motivating the team are described as essential for the professional and organisational development of the ECEC centre. The concept of leadership has been transferred successfully to other national contexts such as in Germany, highlighting a necessity of leadership training for German centre heads (Ballaschk & Anders, 2015).

Next to the role of the centre manager, the composition of the team at group level has been subject to discussion. The findings from England indicate that lower qualified staff may benefit from better qualified staff when working together in one team. Concerning the shortage of staff in many countries, these findings gain additional value. A model project in Germany showed that another way of effectively enhancing process quality is by the co-teaching of pre- and primary school teachers (Sechtig et al., 2012). Looking at the team on a centre level, other research evidence from Germany (Anders et al., 2015; Anders & Ballaschk, 2014) shows that such approaches may be relevant where staff members are adjudged specific themes (e.g. language education or science) and are encouraged to spread these themes within the whole team, as well as during the work with parents. In order to fulfill this multi-faceted role adequately, thematic experts should be provided with sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge. The idea behind this approach is not to create experts for only single thematic areas, but to equip other staff members, in addition to the centre head, with the necessary skills to be able to train team members on the job, and to give support in accordance with the concept of pedagogical leadership.

Empirical evidence on the relationship between staff and process quality reported so far has mainly focused on staff working in centre-based ECEC settings. However, ECEC in home-based settings plays an important role in many European countries, and childminders are not to be forgotten, though they have been addressed less extensively within research studies so far. Analyses within an English study (Otero & Melhuish, 2015) revealed three factors associated with process quality in childminder settings: the adult-to-child ratio, the frequency of training and Quality Improvement Programme or Quality Assurance Scheme support, and the years of experience as a childminder.

With regard to home-based, as well as centre-based ECEC provision, the proportion of women working in this field is extremely high. It has been argued that gender distribution may also impact the pedagogical quality of the settings, as “female” activities may be dominant in ECEC settings, and boys in particular may suffer from the lack of male role models. However, empirical findings on whether increasing the number of male ECEC staff will lead to more diversity in pedagogical activities, is heterogeneous. Kuger and others (2011) showed, for example, that the pedagogical activities offered to children are dependent on the gender of the child, irrespective of the gender of the staff.

Besides staff qualification and the gender of staff, it is questioned if other aspects such as salaries and work benefits may influence the working environment, job satisfaction and turnover rates of staff. All of these aspects are known to contribute, in a highly interrelated nature, to the quality of ECEC services and children’s outcomes (OECD, 2012). However, research on the relationship between teacher salaries and process quality has yet to be done.

1.3.4 MONITORING AND PROCESS QUALITY

Monitoring in ECEC refers to each country's ongoing tracking and evaluation procedures of ECEC system performance, rating programme quality and quality assurance, for accountability and/or for improvement purposes, policy design, highlighting trends in the ECEC sector, as well as contributing to parental choice (OECD, 2006). To assure quality, it is important to monitor a programme's structural and procedural quality characteristics, evaluate programmes systematically and regularly (e.g., annually), to assess whether they meet statutory (nationally or locally) quality standards, and to support the use of valid data to inform ongoing decisions about programmes, teaching and learning (Fowler et al., 2008). According to Barnett et al. (2010) the purposes and uses of monitoring data are derived from the relevant welfare and educational policy questions, and may refer to the identification of needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, evidence for corrective action or sanctions, funding decisions about programmes or guarantees, adjustments to curricula, technical assistance and mentoring of staff, and changes to preschool policy.

Although monitoring quality is considered crucial for improving ECEC services, it is argued that there are two main barriers that hinder its implementation (Perlman, 2010). The first concerns the “cost”. However, taking

into account the current and projected investments in ECEC programmes, the issue of “cost” may be minimal compared to the multiple benefits that the appropriate use of monitoring results may have to different stakeholders. Based on the international research, the UNICEF report (2008) emphasised that “improving the quality of early childhood education and care remains the most potent of all available opportunities for resisting the entrenchment of disadvantage.” The report concluded by stressing the importance of measuring progress toward the goal of improved quality in ECEC and the need for monitoring to inform evidence-based policy, effective advocacy and public accountability. The second barrier refers to “culture” in terms of openness, support and accountability as prerequisites to embrace and implement a monitoring system.

Monitoring quality standards provides the means to understand the current state of the ECEC sector and, at the same time, provides insights into how quality is conceptualized and understood. The engagement of different stakeholders in the process of defining and assuring quality, apart from contributing to a shared understanding of quality, may result in a general consensus about the need and relevance of standards, as well as the necessity of their evaluation (OECD, 2006). To be effective, monitoring should also be systematic, continuous, and provide appropriate information and feedback at the relevant local, regional or national level. Some basic criteria for the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation can be identified, such as: a. the information collected at a provider level is aligned with the information collected at a municipal, regional and system level, b. processes and decisions are for the best interest of the children and families, and c. results are used for the benefit of all stakeholders involved: children, families, professionals and communities. Consistent national data may provide services and families with a deeper understanding of key elements of a quality service, equipping them to make informed choices and decisions.

Several studies have found that the collection and monitoring of quality data can lead to increased programme quality, as reflected by the adoption of higher standards, improved classroom environment ratings and more credentialed teachers (Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2010; Rand, 2008). Monitoring data using different methods and practices can provide evidence on the strengths of programmes and at the same time help to identify areas of improvement, which is particularly helpful for policy makers to have information to ensure and enhance quality (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald & Squires, 2012). Financial tracking and monitoring can help inform planning, contributing to more efficient resource allocation and increase cost-effectiveness (Bennett, 2002). For example, they could identify service characteristics, trends, strengths and opportunities for improvement, and use the data to target future public investment. In addition, it has important implications for equity as it has the potential to identify variations in provision for different socio-economic population groups (UNICEF, 2012).

Research evidence also suggests that the use of quality measurements at the setting level allows practitioners and the management to improve their practices with significant effects on children’s skills (Frede et al., 2007, Frede et al., 2011). To better comprehend under what conditions ECEC staff are working, how different factors impact, for instance, turn-over rates, and whether work conditions meet regulations, it is important to collect data and monitor them over time. Monitoring curriculum implementation might give insights into what can be improved in curriculum and pedagogical practices, or training for curriculum, which can enhance quality and child outcomes. Furthermore, family satisfaction is often monitored through the use of, for instance, surveys. All the above confirms OECD Deputy Director for Education and Skills Montserrat Gomendio's comment that "Without monitoring and evaluation, there can be no guarantee that early childhood education and care services meet the expected standards, aims and goals for quality and early learning”.

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2 . E C E C S Y S T E M S I N 1 1 E U R O P E A N C O U N T R I E S T A K I N G P A R T I N T H E C A R E P R O J E C T

2.1 THE STRUCTURE OF ECEC SYSTEMS

The types of ECEC settings in a country affect how ECEC provisions are structured. Several types of providers exist in all countries, resulting in a complex picture of ECEC provision. In terms of the **age range** provided for, only in a few countries do ECEC types cater for the complete age range of children before compulsory ECEC- or primary school age (Norway, Finland, Denmark). In most other countries, ECEC types are split between over- and under-threes (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Italy), and others again split in a different way – for example separating somewhat more structured and education-oriented ECEC provision for older pre-schoolers from more care-oriented ECEC provision for younger ones (e.g. Netherlands, England). Compulsory ECEC provision is usually separated from non-compulsory ECEC (e.g. Denmark, Finland). Some countries have a mix of all of these types of provisions. Increasingly, ECEC is **compulsory** from the age of 5 (e.g. Belgium, Greece, England, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland); in Finland ECEC is compulsory from the age of 6. Usual starting age of primary school is 6, with exceptions (Denmark, Finland – age 7; England, some regions in Germany – age 5+).

ECEC provision for mixed ages within groups that cater for children under- and over the age of three are relatively rare in Europe. Germany is an exception with a relatively large proportion of providers structured by those kind of groups. The idea is that mixed age-groups provide opportunities for elder children to take responsibility for younger children, and opportunities for younger children to learn from their elder peers. In this sense, pre-school groups are considered to work like families.

Integration of education and care is increasingly becoming the norm. Yet in quite a few countries, ECEC provision for younger children is defined in terms of childcare only (e.g. Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal), and ECEC provision for older pre-schoolers is defined in terms of education only (e.g. Belgium, Greece, Netherlands, Italy, Poland). With very few exceptions, there is agreement that all types of providers across all age groups should provide education and care. However, this distinction between ‘education’ and ‘care’ does not mean the equal provision across providers, for in reality, differences in structural characteristics are evident i.e. centre requirements for teacher training and so on.

All types of provision are usually registered/accredited, and **registration/accreditation** happens at varying levels – local, regional, and national, often existing alongside each other (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014; OECD, 2015). Centralised procedures exist in some countries (e.g. England), and clearly local procedures exist in others (e.g. Denmark, Norway, Poland and Portugal).

In terms of **governance**, ECEC provision can be integrated with one authority in charge for the complete range of ECEC providers, or split with different authorities in charge (see OECD, 2006, 2015; Utrecht presentation, 2014; Curriculum Conference presentation, 2014). This is the case in **Belgium (Fr)**, where both the *accueillante d’enfants* and *crèche* are supervised by the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family (Agency Child and Family), and the *École maternelle* to the Ministry of Education; in **Belgium (Fl) where** home-based settings (known as *Onthaalouders*) and Centre-based settings (known as *Kinderdagverblijf*) answer to the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family, whereas the *Kleuterschool* reports to the Minister of Education, Culture and Childhood. In the case of a split, the authority in charge for the older age group (but not the younger age-group) is usually the Ministry of Education (e.g. Belgium – French community, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal). In case of an integrated system of governance, the Ministry of Education is usually in charge. Exceptions here are Denmark and Germany, where ECEC is part of the child and youth welfare system. Germany has a complex system with differences in governance structures between Laender. Where the highest level of authority is at the central level, the system can be decentralised on other levels, e.g. at the level of the funding- or monitoring systems.

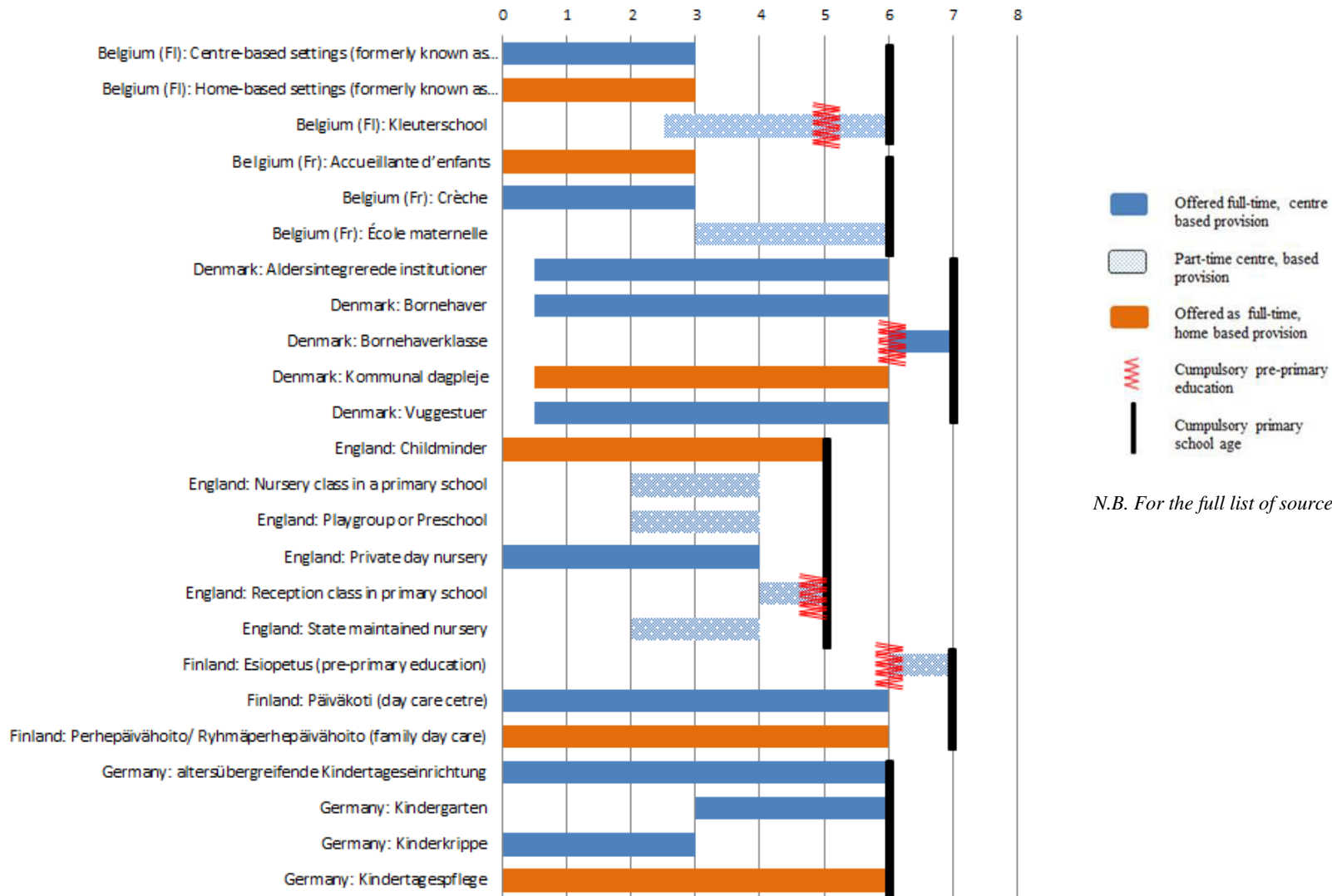
The location of ECEC provision is also known to vary, whether home, or centre based. **Centre based care** can either be located in a stand alone centre, or on the site of a primary school, as for example in the Kleuterschool (Belgium), reception classrooms and nursery classes (England) and the Esiopetus (Finland).

Most countries also offer **home-based care** as one type of registered ECEC provision. Exceptions are Greece and Italy. Home-based care providers sometimes cater for the youngest age group only (e.g. Belgium, Norway, Poland, Portugal), and sometimes for the whole age range of pre-schoolers (as well as offering out-of-school care for older children). In terms of duration of care, not all ECEC providers offer **full-time care**, but full-time options are the norm. Sessional ECEC provision (~3 hours per day) exist only in England and the Netherlands. ECEC for the younger age group is usually provided full-time (i.e. 8-10 hours per day to cover the needs of working parents), while compulsory ECEC provision or more structured and education-oriented ECEC provision can sometimes be offered part-time. Part-time provision is available in many different formats across countries and in many cases after wraparound provision such as after school clubs are available. This is the case in Belgium where both the école maternelle (French Community) and the klueterschool (Flemish Community) offer 7/7.5 hours provision; Regardless of most klueterschools being located on primary school sites the uptake of each provision is approx 30%.

In Portugal and the Netherlands, care is intentionally provided to cater for the working hours of parents, even though typical attendance of the kindergarten (the Netherlands) and the Jardim de infância (Portugal) is approx to 4-6 hours per day, Children requiring additional hours of supervision can attend the peuterspeelzalen or 'care' service through kinderopvang. In Portugal wrap around care is offered but this service comes at the expense of parents; while the taught element of provision closes for three months over the summer period municipalities and parents associations provide care over the summer months. This revised style of summer provision is also noted in Italy where crèches (the nidi dell'infanzia) are open from September until the end of June, with municipal and private settings then offering ECEC as 'summer centres'; maintaining the usual hours of provision for full time service from 7.30am – 18/18.30pm five days a week (for further detail please refer to OECD, 2015; Utrecht presentation, 2014).

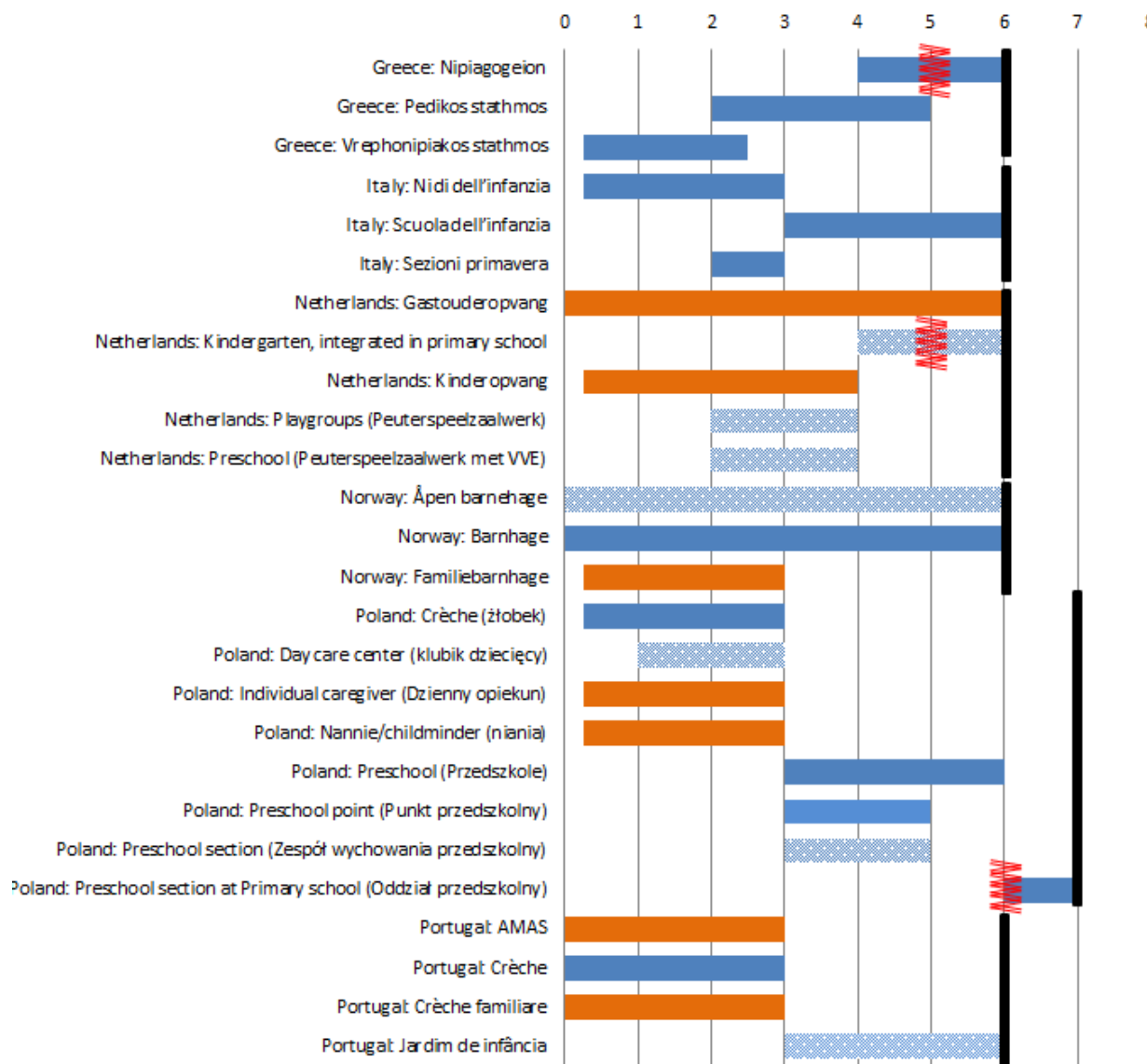
It was the intention to collect data on whether these types of provision were available all year 'round or during term-time only, however, this data remains patchy. Reports from Italy, Norway and Portugal suggest the availability of all types of provision throughout the year. Whereas, in England, Finland and The Netherlands some types of provision (playgroup, nursery and pre-primary) were offered during term times only. Figure 1. provides a pictorial representation of these mixed systems. Using colour blocks, the figure highlights the location of ECEC services (whether home or centre-based) and details attendance stipulations (full/part-time) and also highlights the time point when pre-primary and primary school education and care become compulsory. While the duration of part-time hours has not been stipulated by all countries, the sessional form of care on offer is available less than eight hours per day.

Figure 1: ECEC structure overview 1 - Names and types of providers for the 11 CARE countries



N.B. For the full list of sources please see the next page.

Figure 1 cont.: ECEC structure overview 1 - Names and types of providers for the 11 CARE countries



Age range source: Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal: OECD (2006). Greece, Netherlands, Poland: Utrecht presentation (2014). Norway: OECD Family Database. Note: information for type of providers reported up to school starting age. Some types of providers also provide for children after school starting age.

Type of setting sources: Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), Finland: OECD (2015). Denmark, England: (OECD, 2014). Germany, Italy, Portugal: OECD (2006). Greece, Netherlands, Poland: Utrecht presentation (2014). Norway: OECD Family Database.

Full time/ part-time source: Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal: OECD (2006). Denmark, Greece, Poland: OECD (2014). Full time provision is considered able to cater for the needs of working parents, where as part-time care is more commonly regarded as sessional and <8 hours per day.

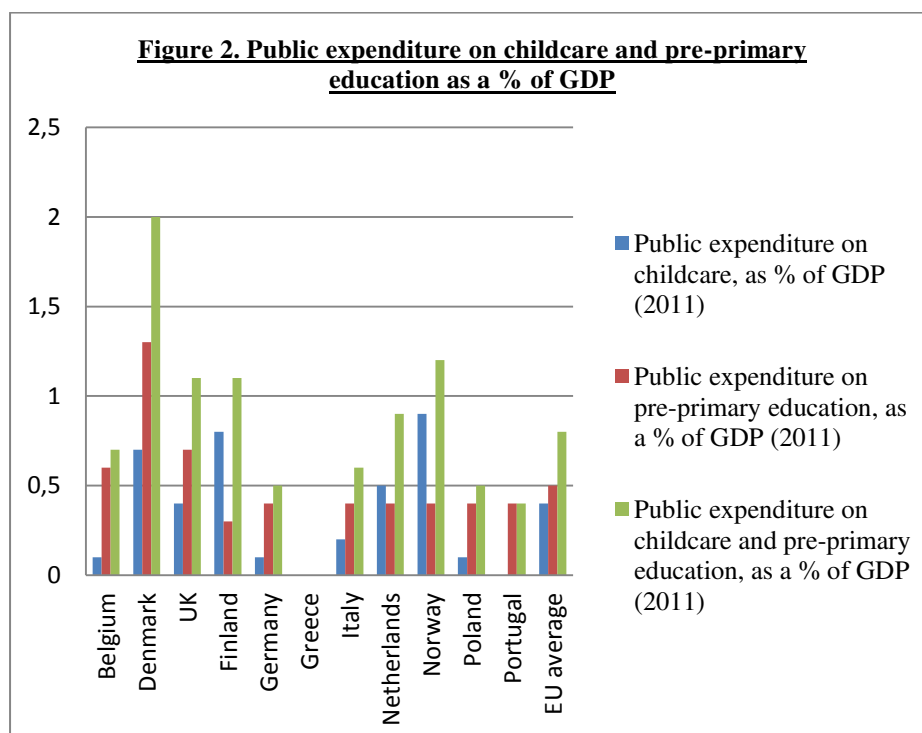
Cumpulsory pre-primary education and primary education source: Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014). Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, Norway, Poland, Portugal: OECD Family Database. Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal: OECD (2006). Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland: OECD (2014). Poland: Utrecht presentation (2014).

Note: in Belgium (Flemish Community) the new childcare Act took effect from April 2014, outdating previously published information on provision for under 3-year-olds (2.5). Information here relates to personal communication with CARE members.

2.2 ECEC FUNDING SYSTEMS

The funding systems of ECEC provision are complex (see OECD, 2006, Danish Ministry for children, education and gender quality website, n.d; Utrecht presentation, 2014; Centro Nazionale di Documentazione e analisi per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, 2014). Within each type of provision, **public and private providers** can exist alongside each other. Private providers can draw their funds from private sources, or receive some public funding. They can be profit-oriented, or run as charitable organisations. Public funding comes mostly from the national level, but may countries complement this with local funding. In most countries, public funding covers the majority of ECEC costs (for pre-primary and educational insitiutions), and the remaining share is paid for by parents (see Table 4). In some countries, home-based provision is offered in private homes, but still subsidised by public authorities (e.g. Germany, Belgium – French community); public home-based provision is prevalent in Belgium (Flemish community) Denmark, and Finland (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.77).

It is difficult to compare **public expenditure on ECEC** across different countries. The common measure is to report expenditure as a percentage of GDP in order to show a country's commitment in this area. There are two issues with this, first variations as a result of fluctuations in GDP, second the very different GDP in different countries (a small proportion of ECEC expenditure in a country with a high GDP might still mean a relatively high investment in absolute terms) (see also European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.79). OECD data from 2011 shows marked differences between the countries in our sample, with some countries clearly above the EU average of 0.80%.



Source: OECD Social Expenditure database 2014; OECD Education database; Eurostat for Non-OECD countries (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF3.1 Public spending on childcare and early education, Data Chart PF3.1.A

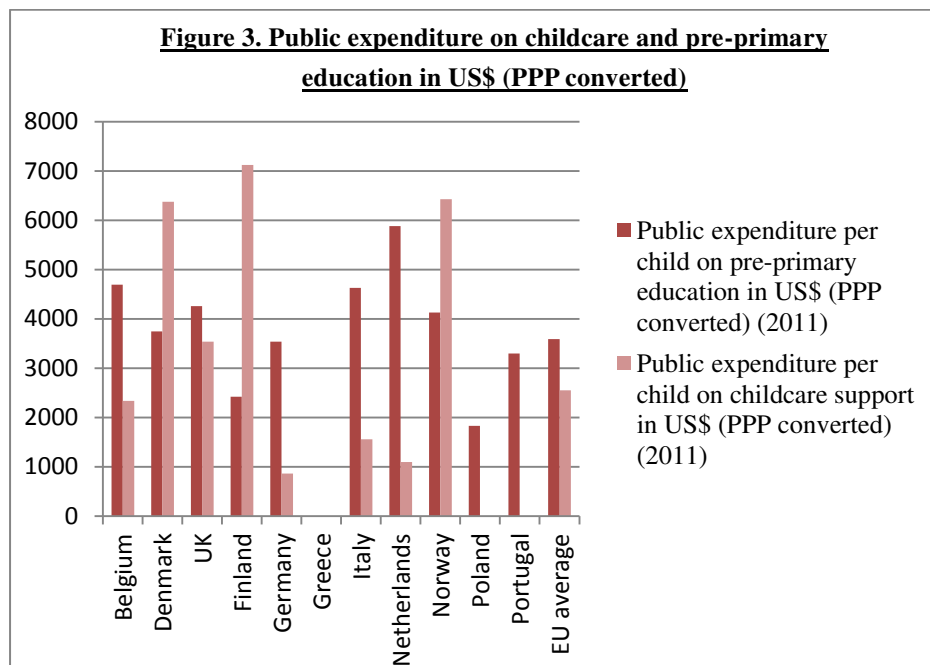
Note: Data for Greece missing

Country Specific Notes:

In Italy, public expenditure on crèches was about 1 billion and 567 million Euros. 19% of this expenditure is represented by fees paid by families, the remaining part - about 1 billion and 263 million Euros - represents expenditure of municipalities. Between 2004 and 2012, costs had an overall increase of 49%. In the same period, the number of children enrolled in municipal crèches or subsidized by municipalities, increased by 32% (about 47,000 units) (ISTAT (2012/2013)). **Norway**: From 2000 to 2013, public expenditure on the ECEC

sector increased from 0.5 percent GDP to 1.3 percent. (Source: OECD, 2014; Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Norway.

Another way to compare ECEC expenditure between countries is to examine annual public expenditure per child. Values are reported in PPP, an ‘artificial’ currency unit that takes account of differences in living standards and price levels. Looking at it this way, expenditure on pre-primary education is clearly highest in the Netherlands, followed by Belgium and Italy, and lowest in Poland and Finland.

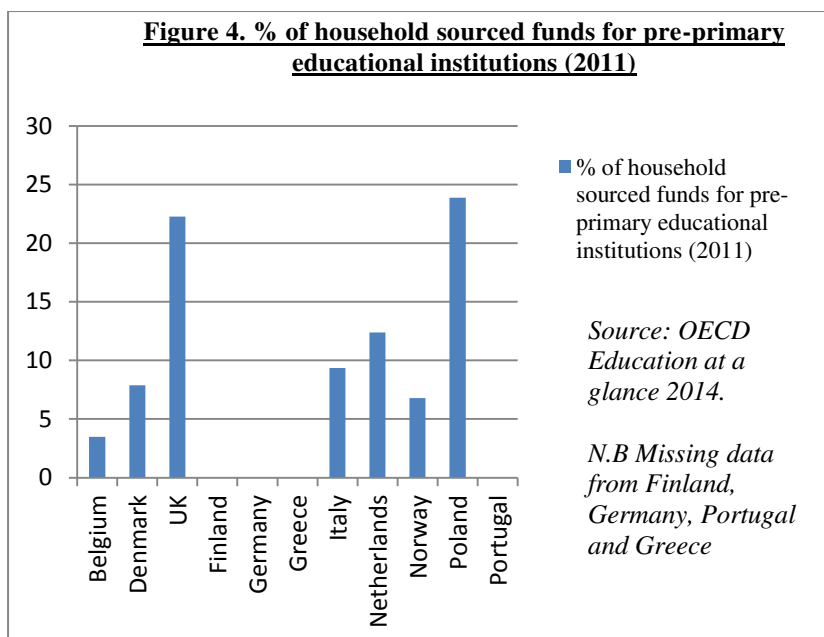


Source: OECD Social Expenditure database 2013; OECD Education database; Eurostat for Non-OECD countries (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF3.1 Public spending on childcare and early education, Data Chart PF3.1.B)

Note: Data for Greece missing

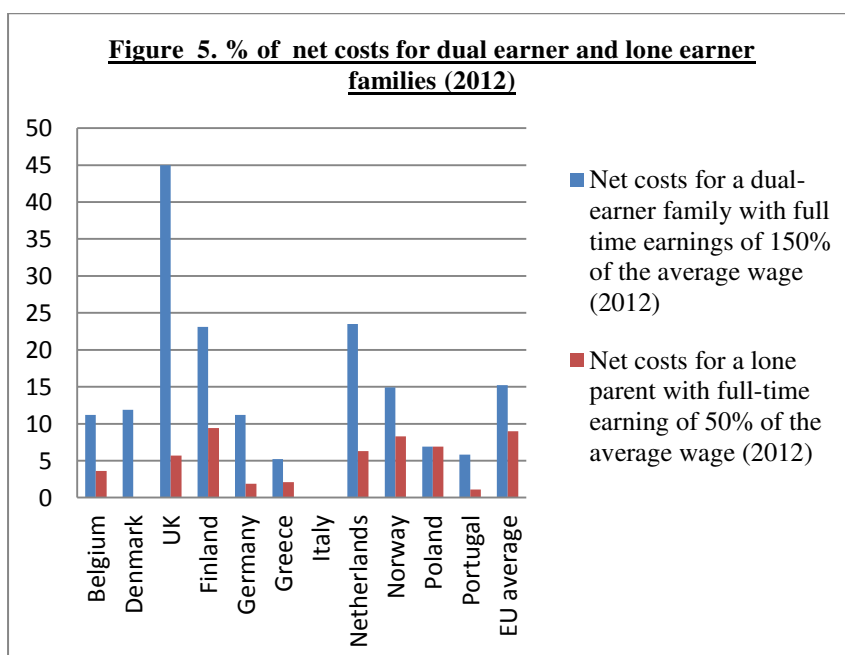
Parental costs are an important aspect of access to ECEC, and in 1996 the European Network on childcare made a recommendation to the European Union that the charges to parents for ECEC services should not exceed 15% of a family’s net monthly income (see Naumann et al., 2013)¹. However, as Figure 4, demonstrates this is not the case in either the UK or Poland.

¹ European Commission Network on Childcare, Quality targets in services for young children. Brussels: European Quality Opportunities Unit, 1996. These recommendations were not officially adopted by the European Commission.



There is huge variation in childcare fees across European countries, with a good proportion of countries above the suggested 15%. England and Poland are the countries with the highest proportions of ECEC costs covered by household expenditure, and thus the highest childcare **fees for parents**, taking the highest % of a (dual-earner) family. However, childcare costs vary with family situation and earnings level.

Childcare fees are often reduced for families in particular circumstances (such as single parents, low income and children with special needs) and these reductions can be both substantial and widespread. In addition, countries provide a range of cash benefits, rebates and tax reductions aimed at helping parents reduce the net cost of purchased childcare. Compared to dual-earner families, sole parents have significantly lower net childcare costs in most countries.

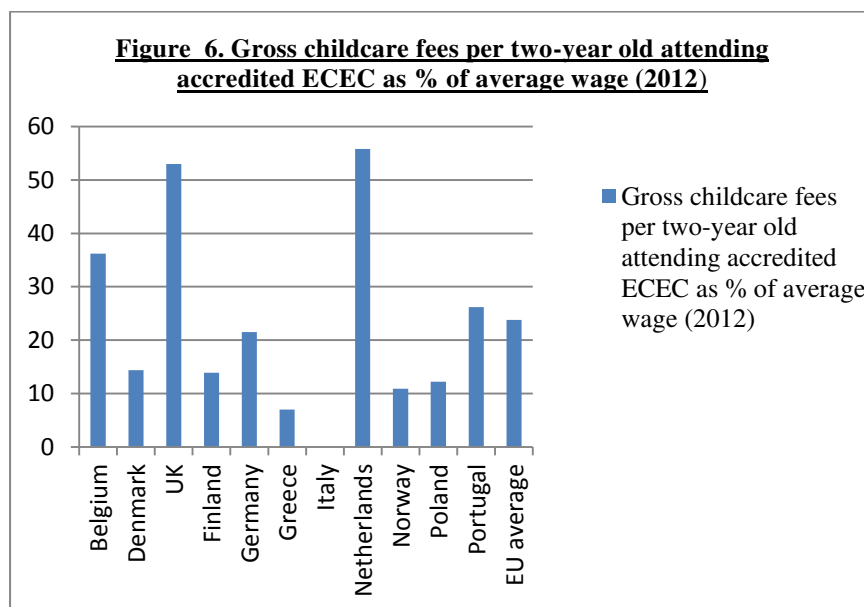


Source: OECD tax-benefit model, 2014 (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF3.4 Childcare support, Data Chart PF3.4.A, PF3.4.B, PF3.4.C)

Note: Data for Italy missing

In both England and Poland, significant reduction exists for the more disadvantaged families – and for example in terms of lone-parent families, net-costs and proportion of family income spent on ECEC, costs are not above (and are in some cases even below) other European countries.

Parental costs also greatly influence the use of non-compulsory ECEC. Recognising the need for good quality ECEC particularly for the more vulnerable families, Europe increasingly puts policies in place to reduce costs for those families in need. Family income is one basis for fee reduction (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.87) in all CARE countries with central regulations on fee reduction. Family status (single parent, looked-after children) and number of children in the family, are other possible factors influencing fees. Italy, Poland and England have no central regulations on fee reductions in place; decisions are taken at the local level.



Source: OECD tax-benefit model, 2014 (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF3.4 Childcare support, Data Chart PF3.4.A, PF3.4.B, PF3.4.C)

Note: Data for Italy missing

Explanatory Notes:

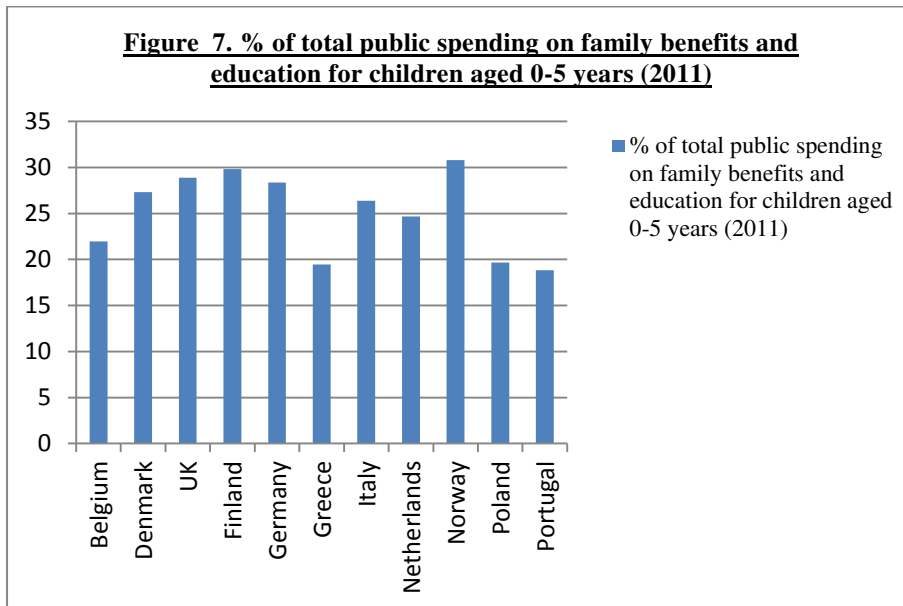
All costs refer to the amount payable for a two-year-old and a three-year-old in full-time care in a typical childcare centre. In a number of countries, available fee information related to a particular region or municipality: Belgium (Wallonia), UK (England), Finland (Helsinki), Germany (Hamburg) and Poland (Warsaw). Net childcare costs as defined here include fees minus cash benefits, rebates and tax concessions, and other relevant benefits.

Tax relief has been introduced as a common measure to provide financial support to families with young children in ECEC (e.g Portugal, England, Norway, Belgium, Italy). For families with very low incomes, this may mean little, because they might not pay tax in the first place. Few countries offer special allowances or grants for families with children in ECEC (Greece, Finland). Some countries offer childcare vouchers for families with children in ECEC. England for example, gives employers the possibility to offer childcare vouchers to employees. In Belgium (Flemish community) and Portugal, low-income families can apply for an extra allowance based on a child's enrolment in pre-primary education. Some countries offer several of these measures: England and most regions in Germany for example offer vouchers as well as tax relief.

Some countries offer cash payments to parents who do not use childcare services (Belgium, Germany, Norway, Finland, Denmark – some municipalities). These compensation schemes usually apply to under three-year-olds only, and are of relatively low value (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.93). Support for families with childcare costs can be provided in two different ways – demand-side funding (funding provided directly to families) and supply-side funding (funding provided directly to settings).

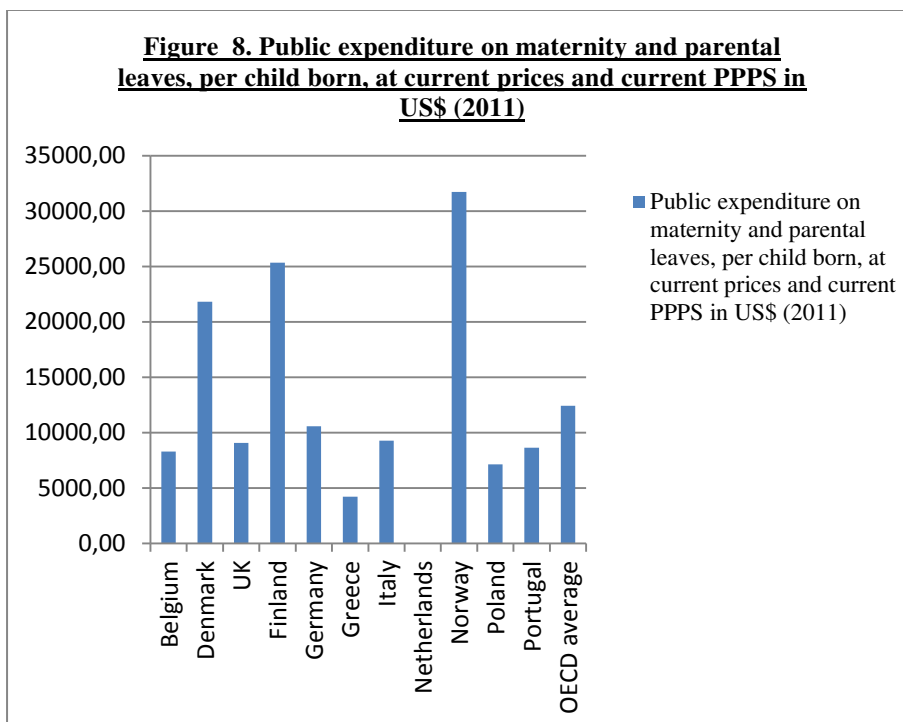
OECD data allows a comparison of public spending on childcare support, and family benefits and education between most of the CARE countries. In 2011, public expenditure per child on childcare support varied greatly between the CARE countries, with Finland, Norway and Denmark leading (all more than double the EU

average), and Germany, the Netherlands below half of the EU average. The proportion of total public spending on family benefits and education for children aged 0-5 is relatively similar and close to 30% in many of the CARE countries (Norway, Finland, UK, Germany leading), but clearly lowest in Portugal, Poland and Greece (all just below 20%). (Figure 7).



Source: OECD Social Expenditure database 2012; OECD Education database 2012 (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF1.6 Public spending by age of children, Data Chart PF1.6.B)

Finally, public expenditure on ECEC also has to be viewed in relation to how it links to the wider socio-economic and policy context in a country. One of the important aspects to consider is **parental leave policies**. These vary hugely across countries in terms of length and public expenditure. Expenditure is clearly highest in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, and lowest in Greece, followed by Poland and Portugal.



Source: OECD Social Expenditure database (see OECD Family Database 2014, PF2.1 Key characteristics of parental leave systems, Data)

Country Specific Notes:

Netherlands: Data on public spending on maternity and parental leave is missing. Maternity leave is paid through a specific fund that is financed by employer premiums and does not involve public spending.

Countries with the longest duration of paid maternity leave usually have a lower average payment rate for an individual on national average earnings (Greece, England with 43 and 39 weeks, but only 53.9 and 31.3 payment rate). Poland has the longest duration of paid leave (26 weeks) with a 100% average payment rate. In countries with more generous and flexible parental leave policies this means little demand for ECEC for children under a certain age – for example for under-ones.

2.3 ECEC ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

All European countries in our sample offer a universal **legal entitlement** to a place in ECEC at least for the year before the start of primary school, and often longer. In some countries, the universal entitlement to ECEC applies to children over the age of 3 (or 2.5) only (Belgium, Italy, Poland), or to children in compulsory ECEC, or is available the year before school starting age (England, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal). With the exceptions of Italy and Portugal, which offer entitlements to full-time ECEC, entitlements in the countries listed above are part-time (ranging from just over 20 hours to 30 hours/week). Only some countries stipulate a legal universal entitlement to ECEC for the younger age group too (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway). Here, the entitlement is usually for a full-time place.

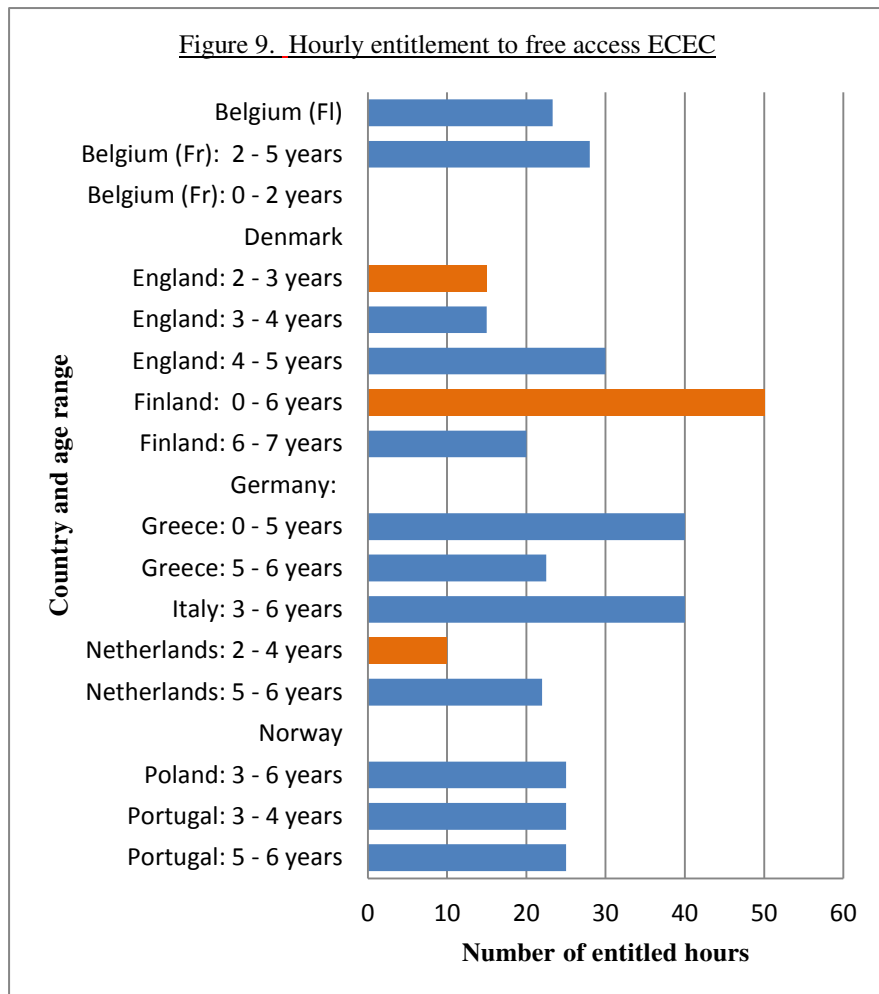
Legal entitlement does not necessarily mean that access to ECEC is free. Usually parents are expected to contribute to costs. **Unconditional free access** is not usually given to children under the age of three. For the older age group (over-threes) access is free and unconditional in Belgium, England, Italy and Portugal. Usually this entitlement refers to a part-time ECEC place only (between 15 and 28 hours), and Italy is the only country in our sample that offers free and unconditional access for a full-time place. Free and unconditional access is common for children in compulsory ECEC or the year before school starting age (England, Finland, Greece, Netherlands, Poland), usually part-time (between 20 and 30 hours). **Targeted free access** for the younger age groups are given in Belgium (French community), England (2-3 year-olds), Finland, and the Netherlands (0-4 year-olds), usually part-time (with the exception of full-time ECEC in Finland)

Figure 9, highlights differences between countries in terms of conditional/unconditional provision. Conditional provision is often linked to legal residence, low income or asylum seeker status, however variation is also noted between municipalities. The conditional/unconditional provision available in Germany differs across Laender and as such could not be represented in this figure.² It is important to note, that there may also be variation in municipalities definitions of targeted groups, as is the case in the Netherlands. In general, definitions are based on parental education level, and some municipalities also include children's home language and/or non-western minority status or having a developmental delay.

In the Netherlands, there is an intention to provide 8 hours/week of ECEC provision for 2-4 year old children to which parents/children have a legal right, although it is not clear when this will be enforced. Currently, targeted entitlements for access for 2-4 year olds are income dependent, with fees varying by level of disadvantage (free for the most disadvantaged, small fees for others eligible). Economic cut backs in Finland have meant that as of August 2016, provision for the 0-6 year old children in centre based services will be reduced to 20 hours per week (from 50 hours) (Ministry of Education and Care in Finland, 2016).

² Information concerning the 16 Laender can be found in Bock-Famulla & Lange (2013).

Figure 9. Hourly entitlement to free access ECEC



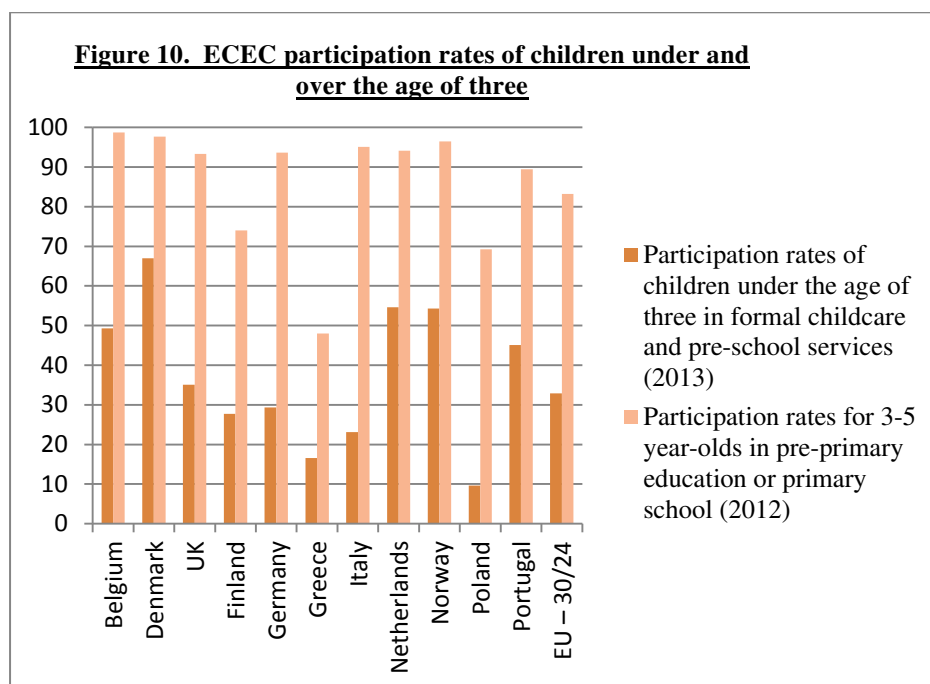
■ Unconditional provision
■ Conditional provision

Sources: Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal: Engle (2015). Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal: OECD (2015). Denmark, Greece, Poland: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014).

N.B. In Germany, provision on offer varies across Laender and therefore could not be represented in this figure.

Missing data for Denmark.

Participation rates for >3s vary strongly in Europe with 10% for (Poland) and 67% for (Denmark), and the countries with free entitlements are not consistently in the higher range, indicating that entitlements by themselves are not sufficient to ensure ECEC participation, and have to be assessed in relation to other factors e.g. ECEC costs, sufficiency of ECEC provision etc). Participation rates for the over-threes are high in our sample, with only few countries clearly not meeting the target of a 90% participation rate for this age group. Finland with 74% and Poland with 69% of 3-5 year-olds in ECEC are the countries with the lowest rates.



Sources: Denmark, Finland, Norway: NOSOSCO Social Protection in the Nordic Countries. Germany: Destatis. Belgium, UK, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, EU-30/24: EU SILC. (OECD Family Database).

Source: Finland: NOSOSCO Social Protection in the Nordic Countries, for all other countries OECD Education Database (OECD Family Database)

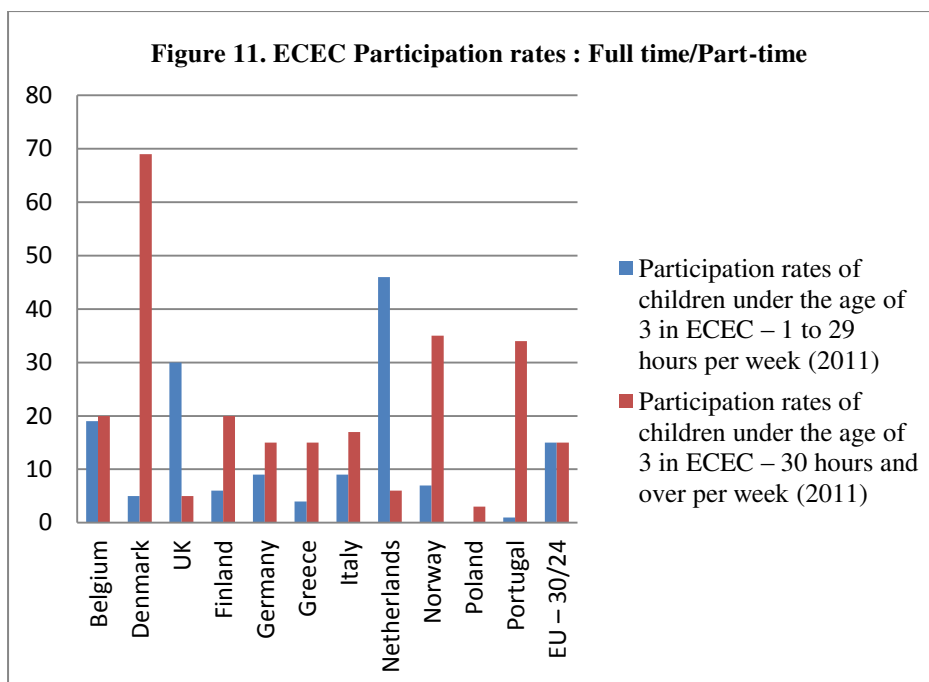
Explanatory Note:

Data generally include children in centre-based services, organised day care and pre-school (both public and private) and those who are cared for by a professional childminder, and exclude informal services provided by relatives, friends and neighbours. Data also reflect children in pre-primary education (both public and private), but also children enrolled in compulsory primary education in some countries.

Country Specific Notes:

Norway: Participation rates of children under the age of three in formal childcare and pre-school services (2013) 70.8%. The participation for children aged 1-2 years has more than doubled, from 37 percent in 2000 to around 80 percent in 2013 (Source: OECD, 2014; Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Norway, p.69). **Finland:** Participation rates of children under the age of three (1–2-year olds) in formal childcare and pre-school services (2014) 35.4 – 40.7 %. Number of 3–5-year olds in formal childcare and pre-school service in 2014 73.6 % (Source: Statistical information on welfare and health in Finland, updated by the National Institute of Welfare and Health. Lasten päivähoido 2014 [*Children’s day care 2014*]. The National Institute of Welfare and Health). **Poland:** in 2014 participation rates were 7,1% for <3s, 3 year-olds in pre-schools 57,5%, 3-5 year-olds 74.1%, and 5 year-olds 93.6% and 6 year-olds almost 100% (Central Statistics Office 2013/2014 p.62).

In terms of intensity, most of the CARE countries are in the range of close to 30 **hours/week attendance** (close to the EU average), with the UK and the Netherlands clearly lower – here a higher percentage of children under three attend for less than 30 hours/week (these are also the countries which offer sessional ECEC).



Sources:
Denmark, Finland, Norway: NOSOSCO Social Protection in the Nordic Countries. Germany: Destatis. Belgium, UK, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, EU-30/24: EU SILC. (OECD Family Database).

Source: Eurostat (European Commission/EAC EA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014.)

Explanatory Note:

Data generally include children in centre-based services, organised day care and pre-school (both public and private) and those who are cared for by a professional childminder, and exclude informal services provided by relatives, friends and neighbours. Data also reflect children in pre-primary education (both public and private), but also children enrolled in compulsory primary education in some countries.

Hours spent per week in ECEC are in the higher 20s and lower 30s for most countries in our sample, again with England and the Netherlands clearly lower (around 20) and Portugal the highest (above 38).

Even though regulated home-based provision exists in most European countries, data on participation in regulated home-based provision is not usually reported separately in international reports. The Eurydice report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014) states that in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and the UK, a significant proportion of children access home-based ECEC.

Use of **informal childcare**³ arrangements varies hugely between the CARE countries, with highest rates and intensity (hours/week) in countries further South or East in Europe (Greece, Italy, Poland, and Portugal) and lowest rates and intensity further north (Denmark, Netherlands, Norway). Finland, Germany and Poland are the countries with the highest proportion of **children cared for only by their parents** under the age of three. Poland and Finland are the only countries with a substantial proportion (>20%) of children cared for only by their parents over the age of three. For these children, the mean average of hours spent in informal care (for those under the age of 3) was highest in Greece (30 hours), Portugal (29 hours) and Poland (27 hours) and lowest in Netherlands, with average of 9.8 hours accessed per week. The EU average of time spent in informal childcare is 19.9 hours (OECD Family Database; PF3.3 Informal childcare arrangements, Chart PF3.3.A). While a marginally higher proportion of children between the ages of three and five are reported to use informal childcare per week (29%), the European average of 15.9 hours of uptake is lower.

³ Informal childcare here refers to unpaid care outside of any formal structure or institution, usually by a grandparent of the child or by other relatives, friends or neighbours. It excludes care that is paid for regardless of whoever is providing the paid-for care.

Countries accessing informal services, for 3 – 5 year olds follows a similar pattern of uptake to that of formal care arrangements. Families in Poland (23.5 hours) access the most informal care, followed by Greece (20.7 hours) and Portugal (18.7 hours). Again, the Netherlands was the country accessing the least childcare provision (OECD Family Database; PF3.3 Informal childcare arrangements, Chart PF3.3.A).

Eurydice (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014) reports that almost all European countries have put systems in place that allow monitoring of the **sufficiency of ECEC supply**. Demand seems higher than supply in most places, for the younger age-group (under-threes). Denmark, Finland, and Norway do not report this tension – there seems to be a balance between demand and supply for under-threes. Poland and Italy reported shortages of ECEC places for over-threes, as well as under-threes. In some countries, shortages of places are bigger in rural areas (Portugal) or there is a significant difference between regions in general (Germany).

If children are not legally entitled to ECEC, and when demand is higher than supply, countries list **central recommendations for the allocation of places** in centre-based ECEC. If no central recommendations for the allocation of ECEC places exist, criteria for the allocation of places are defined either by local authorities or directly by heads of ECEC settings. If central criteria for the allocation of places are defined, they are usually recommendations, not regulations. Local authorities or heads of ECEC settings have significant autonomy when taking decisions.

With reference to the employment status of parents, working parents and those actively seeking employment or in training/education, are given priority. With reference to family status, those children from single-parent families, or larger families, or with siblings in the ECEC setting, and ‘looked-after’ children, receive priority. If age is a named criteria, older children get priority. Other criteria could be: prioritising children with special needs or health problems or those with specific family needs (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.41f).

Even though government investment in social inclusion and priority education programmes is increasing, relatively little information about variation in **participation rates between children with varying socio-economic, lingual, and ethnic backgrounds**, can be found in international reports. Using OECD PISA data, the recent Eurydice report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014) showed differences in ECEC attendance rates between 15-year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds. While the results suggest that disadvantaged students were less likely to have accessed ECEC for over one year, they also highlighted that uptake of ECEC (across Europe) was 12% lower for students coming from populations of combined disadvantage. CARE countries considered to have the highest differences in terms of combined disadvantage and parent education, are reported for Poland, Portugal, and Finland. The smallest was noted for Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. Differences in terms of immigrant status are highest in Italy, closely followed by a number of countries (Greece, Denmark, Belgium – Flemish, Norway, England, Germany) – all well above the EU average difference.

Discussion related to the quality of settings alongside participation rates are scarce. Based on available information however, it has been concluded that children from families with more disadvantaged backgrounds, including immigrant children enrolled in mainstream ECEC and schools, are proportionally displaced into centres of lower quality (SOFRECO, 2012; Lazzari and Vandenbroeck 2012; Vandenbroeck and Lazzari, 2014). It has been pointed out that not enough is done in ‘the Europe 2020’ process to address issues of child poverty and access for at-risk children to early childhood services (SOFRECO, 2012, p.6). Concern for the accessibility of ECEC services for children from low income families, with ethnic and bilingual backgrounds (including immigrants), and/or disabilities has been expressed in international policy documents and reports (e.g European Commission, 2011; Naudeau et al., 2011; OECD 2006, 2012b; Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, 2008 cited Vandenbroeck and Lazzari, 2014). This is supported by research in European countries that indicates that low income and immigrant families have less access to ECEC (Kruger and Kluczniok, 2008; Leu & Schell, 2009; SOFRECO, 2012; Sylva et al., 2007; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; cited in Leseman & Slot, 2014). International

data regarding the participation of children in ECEC from disadvantaged backgrounds is scarce. Comparisons are challenging due to differing definitions of disadvantage, and there is a tendency to focus on the participation of Roma children and/or disadvantage mainly based on income to the neglect of other socioeconomic indicators (SOFRECO, 2012).

Enrolment rates between native and migrant children compare differently across countries in Europe. Where data is available, and where countries have high participation rates in ECEC, **children with immigrant backgrounds** enrol equally in ECEC as native children (e.g. Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK). In some countries however, immigrant children with parents who were born abroad, are more likely to enrol in ECEC (e.g. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Portugal), and in others the pattern is the other way around (e.g. Austria, Cyprus, Italy). Thus, patterns of differences seem dependent on the tradition of ECEC in each country and their efforts to include immigrant children, but also cultural child-rearing beliefs of parents, and the socio-economic situation in the host country (necessity and availability of employment, availability of informal care arrangements, often grandparent care) (see SOFRECO, 2012).

When it comes to ECEC **participation rates for asylum seekers and refugees** in Europe, the picture becomes very unclear. Commonly there are no official statistics that report on the ECEC coverage for children of asylum seekers and refugees. This year, the countries of the Nordic Network for ECEC have reported some information. Entitlements to ECEC don't necessarily apply to families as soon as they enter the country, but may only apply once they have been granted asylum, and/or have received a residence permit. Municipalities commonly take on responsibilities for the organisation of ECEC for these groups, and access depends on the availability of places and the motivation of families to participate in ECEC. With the numbers of asylum seekers in Europe rising, the issue of access to ECEC for this population becomes pressing.

Due to high levels of poverty, the indigenous **Roma population** in Europe is particularly at risk. While it is difficult to obtain accurate information on ECEC access for this group, existing data suggests participation rates that are far beyond average. In addition, where Roma families access ECEC, issues of segregation and poor quality are commonly observed (Eurofound, 2015).

The main barriers to accessing services are well reported (e.g. cost, availability, physical access, and quality; Eurofound, 2012). Recent strategies to support access to ECEC services have led to significant increases in the participation of disadvantaged groups in ECEC (e.g. Belgium, England, Finland, Norway). Social integration programmes and weighting of educational components vary across Europe. Strategies to support the integration of low-income and immigrant populations commonly involve subsidy schemes. In some countries, additional funding is offered to providers who manage a certain percentage of children from lower SES or from ethnic minority groups to recruit additional staff/lower group sizes or ensure specialist assistance (e.g. Belgium, England, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands). In others, integrated centres which offer ECEC in combination with family support for families with young children, have been set-up specifically targeting disadvantaged areas (e.g. England, Germany). Other schemes support access to ECEC for disadvantaged families by national subsidy schemes which lower ECEC costs for parents, or give them free access to free ECEC.

2.4 MINIMUM STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Minimum standards for quality vary between different types of ECEC provision in different countries. The minimum **ratio of children to adults** is usually, but not always, regulated. There are no regulations in Norway and Denmark, and in Belgium (Flemish community) and Poland for the over-threes. If no regulations are in place, actual practiced ratios will vary strongly between provisions. However, on average, practiced ratios seem to be close to the OECD average, except for Denmark with excellent ratios despite no regulations in place (OECD, 2006).

Regulations vary by region in Germany and Italy, but are otherwise centrally stipulated. The number of children per adult is usually lower for younger children (e.g. under-threes). Regulations on **group sizes** are rare. Portugal and Greece have regulations for all age groups, Poland and Italy for the over-threes, and England for 4-5 year-olds only. Again, group sizes are usually smaller for younger children, with around 12 for two-year-olds and 25 for over-threes.

Staffing affects group sizes, and sometimes regulations also stipulate the presence of more than one adult (with varying degrees of training) (e.g. Italy, Germany); In addition, some countries have stipulated a maximum number of children per group and/or suggested a preference for practised group sizes. Again, this variation depends on the age of the children for whom the provision serves. In Belgium (Fl), Belgium (Fr), Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway, there are no group size regulations. Examples of regulations sizes span from 12 for 1-2 year olds in Greece to 26 in Italy. Poland, Portugal and Greece have regulated that groups for 5-6 year olds do not exceed 25, whereas this reaches 30 in England.

Group composition has to be considered when deciding on structural features. Regulations on group sizes or ratios that take account of the inclusion of children with additional needs and/or from disadvantaged populations, are rare. Eurydice (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014) reports these considerations are in place in Belgium (French Community), Greece (>3s), Portugal, and Italy (>3s). More common are regulations addressing teacher training in the presence of SEN/disadvantaged children in the classroom.

Most countries have regulations on **minimum space** per child. Where regulation data is available, there is variation between countries, with the smallest indoor space requirements for under-threes in Poland, Portugal, the Netherlands and England, in the range of 2.5-3.5m², and Norway, Italy, Finland and Belgium, it is much higher (between 5-7m²). For over-threes, regulations across Europe seem closer to the EU-average of around 3m². There is very little information available which documents regulations of minimum outdoor space. Where known, this ranges from 2m² per child <3 in Italy to 3m² per child in <3 Belgium (Fr) and the Netherlands, to 'twice the size of the classroom' in Portugal (OECD, 2012b).

Regulations for support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most countries and have been reported recently in the Eurydice report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014): **Identification** of the children who are in need of these support measures can happen on an individual basis (rare, only Italy in our case), or group basis (common: Belgium, England, Norway, Poland), or a combination of both (common: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Portugal).

Cultural and/or linguistic criteria apply in most European countries. About half of European countries implement socio-economic criteria in order to identify children with potential additional needs, and sometimes geographical criteria apply, which refer to economically and socially disadvantaged areas within a town/city or region where children may be at risk of poor educational outcomes or social exclusion. Where an individual approach is adopted, the assessment of a child's needs generally focuses on a child's general progress and development (e.g. Finland); language needs, in the case of migrant children or children from ethnic minorities (e.g. in Germany); and social and family environment (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.142).

Programmes or other measures are usually established at a central level to provide identified groups of children with support tailored to their needs. Most common is **support for language development** (for migrant and ethnic minority children to learn the language of instruction; for minorities and migrants to consolidate learning of their mother tongue; and support for any child with speech and language difficulties). Support for learning the language of instruction in compulsory schooling is intended to help children adjust and integrate into school life, and also to enable them to access the wider curriculum.

Other learning/development support measures are intended to reduce the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage and promote equity and social inclusion from an early age. Specific, long-term objectives often

refer to improving academic outcomes and prevent early school-leaving. The core target group is generally children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Learning and attainment measures or programmes are, in some cases, directed at disadvantaged children within a specific geographic area (for more information in European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, pp.144-146).

Around half of European countries have designed special **financial** measures to enable ECEC settings to provide specific support for children with additional needs, especially those from low socioeconomic groups and who are at risk of social exclusion. These measures are often translated into subsidies or lump sums paid to settings, if they meet specific conditions or run particular educational programmes. Additional funding can also be addressed to the local authorities responsible for ECEC services (e.g. Finland and Norway) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014).

2.5 CURRICULUM

Curriculum is one of the key factors influencing pedagogical practice. Curriculum frameworks aim to support curriculum implementation in order to assure more even quality of ECEC for all children, thereby maximizing gains from ECEC attendance (European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014). There is an agreement in Europe that a curriculum framework should make explicit the common purpose, goals or objectives of ECEC provision for all children, and thus provide a direction for children's learning. Due to different visions of stakeholders on what the curriculum should include and aim to achieve, defining common goals and content is a challenge in many countries. However, it is widely recognised that the common aims of ECEC curriculum must be broad, contribute to the child's overall development and wellbeing, and include a focus on values and norms.

As part of the CARE project (WP2, D2.1) Sylva, Ereky-Stevens, & Aricescu (2015) studied curricula in 11 countries taking part in a CARE survey. Here, we summarise some of the main findings, and examine the interaction between curriculum, pedagogy and quality characteristics.

2.5.1 CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

Legal status and governance. All countries issue official guidelines for ECEC providers, with significant variation between these documents in terms of their legal status. ECEC curriculum frameworks can be found at national, regional, and local levels. Some have statutory (legal) force, while others exist as agreed guidelines for action. Depending on how formal or binding frameworks are, they allow for varying degrees of flexibility in the way in which they are applied in the ECEC settings. On a higher level (national, regional), curriculum frameworks can consist of a set of general guidelines for ECEC, and these serve as a basis for producing frameworks at a lower (regional, local) level or within ECEC settings. On a national level, the responsible body for curriculum frameworks is typically the Ministry of Education, with only few exceptions (e.g. Denmark, Germany) (see also Sylva et al., 2015).

Table 1: summarises the curriculum guidelines/frameworks across different ECEC providers in the eleven CARE countries, stating the age range and informing document title.

<u>Name of Provider</u>	<u>Age Range¹</u>	<u>Name (Date of last revision)</u>
Belgium - French Community		
Accueillante d'enfants	0-3 years	Pedagogical framework
Crèche	0-3 years	
École maternelle	3-6 years	
Belgium – Flemish Community		
Home-based settings (formerly known as Onthaalouders)	0-2.5/3 years	Het pedagogische raamwerk voor de Kinderopvang van baby's en peuters (a pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers)
Centre-based settings (formerly known as Kinderdagverblijf)	0-2.5/3 years	Het pedagogische raamwerk voor de Kinderopvang van baby's en peuters (a pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers)
Kleuterschool	2.5/3-6 years	Ontwikkelingsdoelen = developmental goals
Denmark		
Kommunal dagpleje	6 months – 6 years	Daycare Act (2013) (which includes curriculum guidelines)
Vuggestuer	6 months – 6 years	
Bornehaver	6 months – 6 years	
Aldersintegrerede institutioner	6 months – 6 years	
Bornehaverklasse	6-7 years	
England		
Childminder	0-5 years	Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five (2012)
Private day nursery	0-4 years	
Playgroup or Preschool	2- 4 years	
State maintained nursery	2- 4 years	
Nursery class in a primary school	2-4 years	
Reception classroom in a primary school	4-5 years	
Finland		

Perhepäivähoito/ Ryhmäperhepäivähoito	0 – 6 years	National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2005)
Päiväkoti	0 – 6 years	
Esiopetus	6 – 7 years	National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2005) + National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2010)
Germany		
Kindertagespflege	0 – 6 years	Each federal state has its own curriculum document (covering all age groups and types of settings), see four examples below:
Kinderkrippe	0 – 3 years	
Kindergarten	3 – 6 years	
altersübergreifende Kindertageseinrichtung Baden-Württemberg	0-6 years	
Hessen		Orientation Plan for Care and Education (2011)
Hessen		Education/Learning right from the start. Curriculum framework for children aged zero-to-ten (2014)
Berlin		Berlin Curriculum-Programme for centre-based and home-based care and education (2014)
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern		Conception of Education for zero-to-ten-year-old children (2011)
Greece		
Vrephonipiakos stathmos	2/3 months-2/2.5 years	
Pedikos stathmos	2/2.5-4/5 years	“Basic Regulations of Operation” offers some broad principles, goals and guidelines and a timetable for activities for the public sector.
Nipiagogeion	4-6 years	Cross-Thematic Curriculum (2003) mandated Kindergarten Curriculum (2011) released electronically, not mandated
Italy		
Nidi dell’infanzia	3 months -3 years	
Scuola dell’infanzia	3-6 years	National Guidelines for the Curriculum of pre-primary education and first school course/cycle (2012)
Netherlands		
Gastouderopvang	0 months – 6 years	Pedagogical framework gastouderopvang (2013)
Kinderopvang	3 months – 4	Pedagogical framework kinderopvang (2009)

	years	OKE Act (2010) (in Dutch: Ontwikkelingskansen door Kwaliteit en Educatie Wet, in English: Developmental Opportunities through Quality and Education Act)
Peuterspeelzaalwerk	2/2.5-4 years	OKE Act (2010) Accredited Education Programmes
Preschool (=Peuterspeelzaalwerk met VV??)	2-4 years	OKE Act (2010) Accredited Education Programmes
Kindergarten	4-6 years	Primary Education Act/Intermediate goals
Norway		
Familiebarnhage	20weeks-3years	Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (2011)
Barnhage	birth-6years	
Åpen barnehage	birth-6years	
Poland		
Different forms of educare: Crèche, care centres (kids' clubs), individual caregivers, nannies	20weeks-3years	Steering document <i>Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children under the age of 3</i> , provides very general guideline concerning goals of the provision, and conditions of their realization.
Different forms of pre-school educare: preschools, preschool sections at primary schools (zerówka), preschool points/sections	3-6 years	Regulation of the Minister of the National Education (2014) National curriculum framework integrated in the School Regulation Act. <i>(ROZPORZĄDZENIE MINISTRA EDUKACJI NARODOWEJ z dnia 30 maja 2014 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół).</i>
Portugal		
Crèche familiare	0-3years	Curriculum guidelines for pre-school education
Crèche	0-3years	
Jardim de infância	3-6 years	

Country Specific Notes:

Belgium – French Community: The pedagogical framework specifies the Quality Code (structural, pedagogical and process indicators).

Belgium – Flemish Community: The pedagogical framework for childcare of babies and toddlers is a concise vision text on quality childcare. It describes pedagogical quality, and developmental goals, and acts as a source of inspiration for all practitioners working in childcare settings for babies and toddlers. It serves as a guideline and not as a manual (<http://www.kindengezin.be/img/pedagogische-raamwerk-engelseversie.pdf>).

Finland: The national core curriculum was reformed in 2014. New local curricula will be applied from the beginning of August 2016.

Germany: Between federal states, curricula differ markedly in terms of length, emphasis of educational areas, link to primary school and control of implementation.

Greece: Regulations and minimal standards exist for ECEC provision 0-5, but the document does not include curriculum guidelines and is therefore not listed here.

Italy: Standard regulations, minimum standards and curriculum guidelines for the age group 0-3 are currently under preparation. Currently, guidelines exist only in some regions and cities, and existing local documents generally refer to European recommendations or documents. National guidelines for the 3-6 age group exist since 2007 and the idea of a curriculum has been accepted with ambivalence in ECEC. With the approval of Law 107/2015 - art. 181 – an authorizing law is underway for the definition of the integrated system 0-6 that will bring crèches under the management of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, enabling an ECEC system that shares one educational curriculum for all all under 6 services.

Netherlands: The OKE Act 2010 puts more emphasis on the educational function of day care, and strives for more harmony between different types of providers serving children up to the age of four. The pedagogical framework elaborates on the global goals of the Child Care Act 2005 with regard to emotional security and stimulation of development in all domains. The pedagogical framework is a lengthy document, with both theoretical grounding and examples of implementation. It has no official (legal) status, and it is unknown if settings refer to the guidelines, or to what extent the guidelines are implemented in daily practice. However, the framework was developed in interaction with the field and is strongly connected with daily practice. There is no explicit national curriculum, but receiving subsidy in preschool and playgroups is conditional upon the use of an officially accredited comprehensive education programme. The most currently used educational programmes are Piramide, Ko-Totaal, Startblokken, Kaleidoscoop. For kindergartens receiving extra funding to support educationally disadvantaged children, there is the demand to use one of accredited education programmes and to implement the kindergarten part of these programmes.

Norway: The Kindergarten Act and therefore also the Framework plan, only applies for kindergartens approved by the municipality or subject to approval by the Kindergarten Act § 6.

Poland: Regulations and minimal standards exist for ECEC provision 0-3, but the document does not include curriculum guidelines and is therefore not listed here.

Portugal: Regulations and minimal standards exist for ECEC provision 0-3, but the document does not include curriculum guidelines and is therefore not listed here. Curriculum Guidelines for the age group 0-3 are under preparation. Curriculum guidelines for the age group 3-6 are currently under revision; new guidelines are likely to be published later this year (2016).

Coverage of age-range. Some countries specify a unitary curriculum framework which covers the entire age-range of children at pre-school stage (e.g. Denmark, England, Estonia, Germany, Norway), others specify different frameworks for different age groups (split system), e.g. pre-school and pre-primary school (e.g. Finland, the Netherlands). Countries with a split system between over- and under-threes have usually only established a standard curriculum framework for the older age group only (e.g. Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal). In those countries, settings are required to draw up their own education and care plan for the younger age group. For example, in *Greece* in childcare centres, there is an absence of any nationally or locally based pedagogical/educational or curricular framework. The “Basic Regulations of Operation” for the public sector day care centres provides briefly general principles, goals and guidelines along with a timetable for activities outlining basic context for pedagogical work. In *the Netherlands*, there is no explicit national curriculum for the 0-4 group. However, recently, extensive guidelines (pedagogical framework) were developed for this age group in daycare. These guidelines are strongly connected to daily practice; however, they have no official status and it is unknown how many settings actually use these guidelines and to what extent. The situation is different for settings that accommodate the 2-4 age group, where a specific curriculum programme is chosen from a set of accredited programmes. In *Portugal*, the Ministry of Education has recently put together a comprehensive working group with the purpose of proposing pedagogical guidelines for settings that target children up to the age of three. In *Italy*, for children aged 0-3 (*Nido*), curriculum has only this year become part of the discourse and no national guidelines exist. Early childhood pedagogy is strongly grounded on local experiences and conceptions of the child or childhood. In *Poland*, there are no specific legislated regulations for ECEC provision for under-threes in terms of a curriculum, and individual settings develop internal documents.

Curriculum frameworks can apply to centre-based care only, or they can apply to home-based care, or other community-based activities. Curriculum guidelines in our sample which address both centre-based *as well as* home-based care and education can be found in *Denmark, England, Finland and Germany (and Belgium – French Community)*.

Local ECEC plans. Curriculum frameworks vary considerably in their length and therefore in content and detail. In our sample, we had documents with fewer than ten pages and other documents with several hundred pages. In many European countries requirements to develop local frameworks exist. National curriculum guidelines provide the basis for:

- ECEC plans drawn by local municipalities (e.g. Finland);
- unit-specific ECEC plans drawn by ECEC settings (e.g. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway);
- individual ECEC plans drawn for each child (e.g. Finland).

Only some countries in our sample require settings to draw up those plans in a written format (e.g. Belgium – French Community, Denmark, Finland, Germany). However, in practice, unit-specific education and care plans are common in Europe. Such documents outline for example, proposed pedagogical activities, the education and support provided for children, or specific guidelines for co-operation with parents or the community and schools. *Italy* has a strong tradition to view local communities as the context for developing curriculum, because a curriculum has to allow for the development of the individual child, and thus has to start in the community where a child grows up. In *Germany*, the different regions (16 federal states) design their own curriculum frameworks which are in line with broad curriculum guidelines offered by the national documents. Those regional curriculum frameworks that are legislated cover the entire pre-school age range, and in comparison to other European curriculum documents are extensive and detailed. For the purpose of the CARE review, we chose to describe curriculum frameworks in 4 federal states that differ markedly with regard to central characteristics of ECEC. Two of those are located in the Western part of Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Hessen), and two in the Eastern part (Berlin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). The four examples were chosen to present the variety of frameworks in Germany, they are not representative for all of Germany.

2.5.2 GOALS AND EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The goals of ECEC, as defined by European curriculum frameworks, reflect an image of children as unique, curious, active, social, and competent. The aims of ECEC are often described as those that support and strengthen those competences. Many countries specifically refer to children's autonomy, confidence, curiosity, activity, resilience, sense of identity, self-expression, and sense of belonging. Thus, we found a strong common socio-emotional orientation of ECEC in Europe, combined with an emphasis on learning-related skills. There is a large degree of consensus on the domains that need to be addressed, including personal and social/emotional development, language and communication, knowledge and understanding of the surrounding world, creative expression, physical development and movement, and ethical, religious, and philosophical orientation and responsibility. Differences exist between countries on the focus that is given to the learning of skills in pre-academic/academic subject areas.

Different ways to view and address learning in content areas relates strongly to curriculum implementation. We found a stronger focus on learning processes in some countries or areas, and more focus on learning outcomes in others. This tension is also expressed in the discussion with regards to the question of whether observation (or other more formal assessment processes) should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching by documenting the achievement of children in certain areas, or whether the aim is much more to document learning processes in all domains.

Across the countries in our sample, curriculum frameworks are eclectic and implicitly influenced by a number of pedagogical and psychological theories. With very few exceptions, frameworks do not explicitly refer to theoretical models of child development and learning. Generally, frameworks do not name specific philosophical or pedagogical traditions. Educators are encouraged to develop their own curriculum, based on an eclectic approach, and within the principles of their national curriculum framework. In most countries, only a small minority of ECEC settings are based on a unique curricular/pedagogical approach.

Across all countries in our sample however, we find a shared understanding of the child as unique, active and competent. The cultural values and the wider understanding of childhood differ across the countries in our sample, and between regions or settings. Yet, in relation to a shared image of the child, frameworks in our sample reflect a broad consensus of those pedagogical principles which underpin good quality early childhood practice. There is a strong general consensus that child development and learning should be viewed and addressed in a holistic way. Children's learning is seen as multi-dimensional. Connections between different domains of development and experience are emphasised.

Curricular documents share the principle of child-centred education. In terms of its implementation, a child-centred approach to education broadly means that educational and care practices are responsive to each child's unique needs, abilities, and interests – these inform the activities and support that is offered to young children. In line with this principle, frameworks in European countries recommend that every child's individual needs and capabilities should be at the centre of planning and decision-making in all early years settings. This philosophy, which focuses on the individual child, is in accordance with human rights principles that privilege the uniqueness of each person. In all countries in this review, there was a policy of full inclusion of children with special needs within mainstream early years provision wherever possible.

Our review found that the CARE countries in Europe share a socio-emotional orientation and a strong individualistic viewpoint, where each child's unique needs, abilities, and interests inform educational and care practices – the activities and support that is on offer to young children. This coincides with a pedagogy that focuses strongly on relationships and the emotional aspects of interactional quality. Children are viewed as learning best within positive and stable relationships that provide security, pleasure and closeness through interactions with caregivers who are available, familiar, sensitive, and warm. Continuity and stability are emphasised as a means to enable educators to get to know and understand the individual child. An understanding of the child as an individual, with respect for the child's ways of communicating, their needs, interests and ways of learning, are seen as the core base that enables educators to appropriately respond and

interact. Partnerships with parents are seen as essential in ensuring educators' understanding of individual children.

Respect for the individual ways in which children learn means leaving room for children to explore, and to encourage play and self-exploration. There is a shared understanding of play as a particularly important avenue to stimulate children's enquiry and experimentation, and thus a fruitful way to enhance language development, personal/social/emotional development and motor skills. There is general agreement that experiences and learning activities in ECEC have to relate to children's real life experiences and guidelines often support project-based learning activities that encourage children to explore phenomena in their environment over an extended period of time. Talk and narrative during one-to-one conversational interactions are viewed as essential components that foster children's learning.

The adult role is seen in guiding, supporting, scaffolding, and facilitating while offering experiences and learning activities in ECEC. A balanced approach is recommended: educators should offer experiences in all learning areas while giving enough room for the child's choice and interest; they should find the right balance between adult and child-led activities. Where separate frameworks for the older age groups in ECEC are developed (pre-primary education), a gradual shift can be observed towards a clearer focus on providing a direction to children's learning, and on initiating activities that are rich in content and stimulation.

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3 . INFORMATION ABOUT STAFF IN 11 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TAKING PART IN THE CARE PROJECT

3.1 INTRODUCTION ON STAFF

The following section covers the topic of staff in ECEC. It has been argued that staff qualification is an important predictor for maintaining high process quality, thus also for supporting the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Against this background, staff plays an important role in the typology underlying this report and therefore will be discussed in terms of its different facets. After defining main categories of staff working in centre-based ECEC settings, we examine the main initial qualification requirements for ECEC staff. Taking into consideration that, in addition to centre-based ECEC provision, home-based childcare plays an increasing role in most of the countries, we describe both types with regard to their official staff requirements. Similarly, as heads of centre-based ECEC settings have been ascribed major attention in recent research, we inspect qualification requirements necessary for leading and managing an ECEC institution. After that, we provide information on salaries for one staff-category, the ECEC educators (educational staff). Following a description of staff's pre-service training, we also examine in-service training in terms of continuing professional development. Finally, we elaborate on one particular aspect of the working environment of ECEC staff, the gender distribution.

3.2 DEFINING MAIN CATEGORIES OF STAFF IN CENTRE-BASED ECEC SETTINGS

The roles of centre-based ECEC staff differ among and within countries; making a direct comparison based on country-specific job titles difficult. According to Eurydice (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014), based on their responsibilities, the ECEC staff can be classified in three groups: educational, care and auxiliary staff. Educational staff usually have the highest qualification requirements (most often at tertiary level; see Tables 2 and 3), and hold a main role in ECEC. They are responsible for organizing and delivering developmentally appropriate activities according to curricula or guidelines. Generally, most children in centre-based ECEC settings are cared for by educational and other staff. This is true for older children (above the age of three) in all of the countries, and younger children in most countries. The clearest split between education and care is seen in Belgium where older children are exclusively cared for by educational staff and younger children are exclusively taken care of by care staff; the same is true for Poland. Care staff are usually trained at upper secondary level. In countries such as Belgium and Poland, care staff are in charge of identifying and catering to the learning and developmental needs of young children. In other countries, such as Finland, Germany and Netherlands, care staff either work in teams with educational staff, or take more of a supporting role alongside educational staff. This arrangement is more commonly found in settings for younger children. Care staff are only present in settings for older children in England and Germany, as well as in Finland where the system is not split by age. Generally, there are two countries doubting the sense of separating care and educational staff. In Poland and Finland the tasks of caring and educating are adjudged to all staff avoiding a strict division; Interestingly, the qualification requirements for educational and care staff differ in both these countries as well as others. About half of the countries also employ auxiliary/assistant staff. Assistants most often implement planned activities, arrange daily routines and craft activities, and assist children in completing them. In Italy, auxiliary staff are only responsible for cleaning activities or preparing meals; they don't assist educators in educational activities. Most commonly, assistants work together with educational staff, equally often in settings with younger and with older children. Of the countries included in this report, it is only in England that care and auxiliary staff are in charge of younger children, while older children are taken care of by all three types of staff working together.

Table 1: Main categories of staff in centre-based ECEC settings

	Provision for younger children			Provision for older children		
	Educational staff	Care staff	Auxiliary staff	Educational staff	Care staff	Auxiliary staff
Belgium (Fl.)		X		X		
Belgium (Fr.)		X		X		
Denmark	X		X	X		X
England		X	X	X	X	X
Finland	X	X		X	X	
Germany	X	X		X	X	
Greece	X		X	X		X
Italy	X		X	X		X
Netherlands	X	X		X		X
Norway	X		X	X		X
Poland		X		X		
Portugal	X		X	X		X

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat.. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostart report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 97f.

Country Specific Notes:

England: Separate settings for older children may operate without education staff but with a lower children/care staff ratio.

Finland: Separation to care and educational staff does not fully apply to ECEC staff in Finland as day care nurses (practical nurses) also conduct educational activities to a certain extent. ECEC is implemented via principles of multiprofessional collaboration.

Greece: For older children, the table represents the provision for childcare centres (*paidikos stathmos*). In pre-primary schools (*nipiagogeio*), no assistants are provided.

Italy: In settings for younger children, the provision of educators and auxiliary staff (educatore and operatore) is regulated at regional level; in settings for older children, it is regulated at central or local level. The table shows the most widespread situation. The auxiliary staff in infant/toddler centres and preschool services takes care of cleaning the classrooms and bathrooms, tidying up the materials in the classrooms, preparing lunch and helping the teachers when necessary. They are not assistants and therefore do not assist teachers in educational activities. The local and regional norms regarding services for children under the age of three define the number of auxiliary figures according to the number of children in each class; regarding pre-schools, the number is decided according to the national norms for state schools whereas for municipal schools this is decided by the local legislation.

Poland: According to the steering documents of the ECEC sector, caregivers and educators are to provide care, upbringing and education to children. None of the functions is superior to others. It might not be justified limiting the practitioner's role to one of the functions.

3.3 QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR STAFF WORKING IN ECEC SETTINGS

3.3.1 STAFF WORKING IN CENTRE-BASED ECEC SETTINGS

On average the minimum required length of initial education/training among countries is 3 years, for both educational and care staff (Tables 2 and 3). Educational staff are most commonly required to hold a Bachelor's degree. Exceptions are Germany and settings for younger children in the Netherlands, where educational staff need to complete 3 years of post-secondary non-tertiary education, and Portugal, where they are required to have a 4 year Master's degree. In the Netherlands, in addition to a 4 year Bachelor degree, educators need to complete in-service specialized training in order to work with older children, as the settings for children over 4 are integrated with primary schools and follow a nationally accredited educational program. In Italy, educators working with older children need to complete 5 years of schooling, leading to a Master's degree. To work with younger children, education at upper secondary level is required in Italy; however, the general trend is to employ applicants with tertiary education, and a law is currently being considered that would make tertiary education a requirement. In contrast, in private settings in Greece, where there is a lack of candidates with the required Bachelor's degree, applicants with upper secondary vocational education are accepted for educational posts. In all of the countries that employ care personnel, the employees are required to have qualifications at upper secondary level, gained through 2 or 3 year long programmes. Some exceptions are Finland, where in daycare centres at least one in three employees also has to have a tertiary degree, and Poland, where, should a nursery group have more than 20 children, a nurse with a Bachelor's degree must also be employed. Auxiliary staff are most often exempt from initial education requirements. Exceptions are Portugal, the Netherlands and Greece, where the applicants are required to have completed education at upper secondary level. In Denmark an upper secondary vocational training for pedagogical assistants is available, but it is not a requirement for employment, while in Norway about one third of assistants have pedagogical education at secondary level.

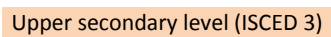
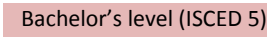
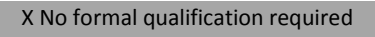


In most countries the initial required qualifications for ECEC staff are specific for preschool education; however some countries, such as Italy and Poland, require the same training for ECEC and lower primary school staff (Table 4). Italy, however, is currently considering introducing a separate three year Bachelor degree programme that would qualify one to work with both younger and older children, but not in primary schools. In the Netherlands, due to integration of preschool and primary school provision for children aged 4-12 (*Basisschool*), qualification requirements are also the same for this age range. In two countries (England and Portugal) joint training programmes are one option to choose by the students. In Portugal, the pre-primary educator training can be shorter version of the training for primary school educators, which if completed in full, leads to qualification for both. However, normally a Bachelor degree in Basic Education allows educators in Portugal to proceed to Master-level training in both preschool education and primary school education. The question of a combined initial qualification is discussed with regard to connecting early learning processes throughout pre-primary and primary education. For instance, benefits are seen in a smoother transition of the child from one educational institution to the other. In addition, many countries move towards earlier school starting ages. Until recently, joint training programmes have been atypical for teacher training throughout European countries.

The initial requirements are however sometimes difficult to uphold within different countries, whereby there may be an initial lack of qualified applicants or in case of those already employed, existing staff may not comply with newly instated requirements. Hence, in addition to regular pathways, more than half of the countries in the underlying sample also offer alternative pathways to ECEC staff qualification (Table 5). The most common type of alternative qualification pathways are based on acquired experiences. These include employment-based trainings and/or recognition of past relevant work experience. The available training

programmes differ across countries. Sometimes they are tailored to individual workers, based on their prior education and experience; such is the case in England and in Finland for care staff (daycare nurses). In Germany, workers who are already employed are offered the opportunity to complete shortened versions of standard qualification programmes, while in Norway assistants can receive an upper secondary level certificate as childcare and youth workers after working in ECEC for 5 years, without attending upper secondary school. Another option in Norway, as well as in the Netherlands and Belgian Flemish community, is employment-based, part-time training programmes leading to the minimum required level qualification. The second type of alternative qualification includes special pathways for educators and graduates in education, humanities or social sciences. For instance, in the Belgian Flemish community, it is also possible for graduates from other disciplines to receive waivers for certain courses based on previously acquired knowledge, and to complete a shortened Bachelor's degree programme in pre-primary education. This is also true for Poland. In the Netherlands, Bachelor or Master degree holders in the above mentioned subjects may apply for a place in a two-year part-time program leading to a Bachelor degree in Primary Education.

Table 2: Minimum required level and minimum length of initial education for staff working with younger children in centre-based ECEC settings

	Educational staff					Care staff					Auxiliary Staff							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5	0	1	2	3	4	5
Belgium (Fl.)																		
Belgium (Fr.)																		
Denmark			3,5											X				
England														X				
Finland																		
Germany																		
Greece																		
Italy														X				
Netherlands																		
Norway														X				
Poland																		
Portugal																		

 Upper secondary level (ISCED 3)	 Bachelor's level (ISCED 5)	 X No formal qualification required
 Post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4)	 Master's level (ISCED 5)	

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostat report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 100.

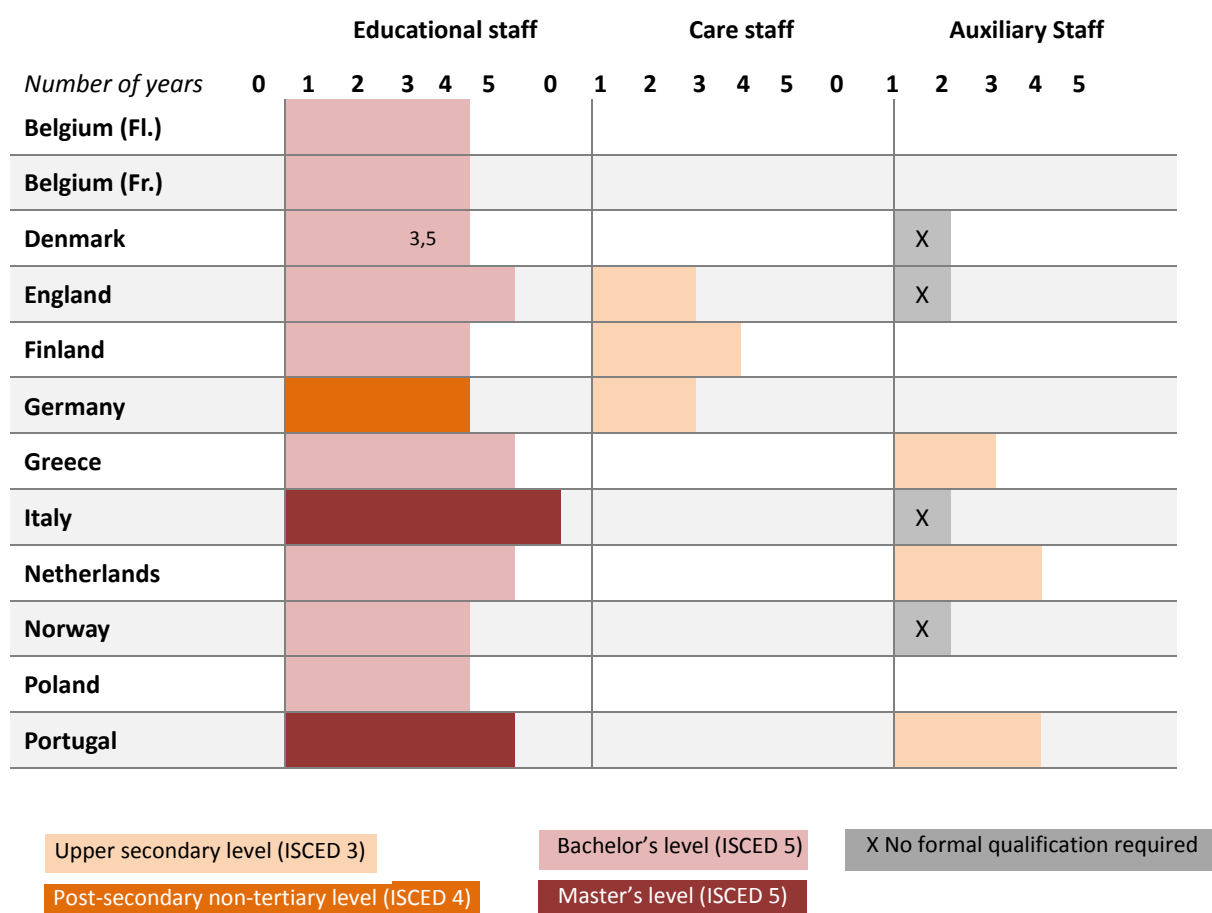
Country Specific Notes:

Belgium (BE FL): Qualification required for child workers (*Kinderbegeleider*) in the public sector: a specific vocational secondary school programme with an option in childcare. Students can choose this option in the 3rd grade (5-6th year) of secondary school or in an additional year to secondary education. There used to be major differences between funded and independent, non-funded provision. Whereas, in subsidized provision strict regulations regarding the required training for ECEC staff had been obtained, the private ECEC sector did not have formal qualification requirements (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p. 36). The situation has changed since the implementation of the New Parliament Act on April 1st, 2014. There is no distinction anymore concerning the conditions valid for public and private provision. The minimal level of qualification requires an upper secondary level in every provision (also home-based). However, a transition period from the old to the new situation is foreseen until 2024.

Italy: Despite the fact that the minimum qualification requirement for educational staff working with younger children is set at upper secondary (ISCED 3) level in some regions, the general trend is to employ educators (*educatore dell'infanzia*) with tertiary education degrees. With regards to infant toddler centre educators, almost all local and regional norms provide for a three-year university degree in Human Science of Education, as well as a high school degree. The government is currently discussing a law (*disegno di legge 2656*) that may establish at a national level the need for a University degree in order to become a socio-pedagogic professional educator. In settings for younger children, the provision for auxiliary staff (*operatore*) including their prerequisite qualifications are foreseen in the regional regulations. In public settings, auxiliary staff may also qualify through specific vocational courses organised at regional level. No formal qualification is required in private settings.

Poland: The length of the specialist course refers to hours not years (280 hours of training prior to employment). The pre-service preparation for the profession of a caregiver may be the bachelor program, such as preschool educator (3 years), nevertheless it is not the minimum length training.

Table 3: Minimum required level and minimum length of initial qualification for staff working with older children in centre- based ECEC settings



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostat report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 101 f.

Explantaory Notes:

Additional or specialist staff for special educational needs and/or disadvantaged children are not considered in the Figure.

Country Specific Notes:

Denmark: Qualification as a pedagogical assistant is part of the upper-secondary vocational education and training system, but qualification as a pedagogical assistant is not mandatory for employment in an assistant position. There are no qualification requirements for assistants (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 30f.).

England: For settings with older children, the Figure reflects the minimum qualification requirement for separate settings. In unitary settings, the requirements for qualification of staff working with older children is the same as for younger children.

Finland: In day-care centres, at least a vocational qualification in the field of social welfare and health care is required (ISCED 3). One in three staff must have a tertiary level degree. In pre-primary classes (6-7), if the

group includes both pre-primary and primary pupils, the educator needs to be a qualified class teacher (Master's degree), otherwise Bachelor's degree is required.

Greece: Where there is a lack of candidates with a Bachelor's degree for an educational post in a private setting (except pre-primary schools: nipiagogeio), the holders of an upper secondary vocational education certificate or of a certificate from a private school (with a relevant specialisation) can be accepted. Early childhood educator assistants earn a two-year degree from a private or public vocational/technological college.

Italy: In settings for older children, the provision of auxiliary staff is regulated at central level and since 2010 (L.249/2010) the national law has provided for a five-year university degree in Human Science of Primary Education in order to teach in primary schools. The government is currently discussing a law (disegno di legge 2656) that may establish at national level the need for a three year education degree in order to become a socio-pedagogic professional educator, both in preschools and infant toddler centres.

Netherlands: The provided information applies to teachers and teaching-assistants in primary school, in which kindergarten (4-6 years) is integrated. Educators working with younger children only need to have a low to moderately specialized vocational education. Preschool educators in addition need in-service specialized training for working with a nationally accredited education program.

Norway: Auxiliary staff, in Norway called assistants. Approx. one third of the 36.000 assistants (11.600) have pedagogical education on a secondary level.

Poland: Nurses (pielęgniarka) with a Bachelor's degree must be employed in nurseries (żłobek) where the number of children in groups is greater than 20.

Table 4: Similar training programme for kindergarten educators and primary school teachers

	Yes	No	Joint training programmes are one of several options
Belgium (Fl.)		X	
Belgium (Fr.)		X	
Denmark		X	
England			X
Finland		X	
Germany		X	
Greece		X	
Italy	X		
Netherlands	X		
Norway		X	
Poland	X		
Portugal			X

Source: Own presentation.

Country Specific Notes:

Italy: Since 2010 educators at scuola dell’infanzia have been required to earn a five-year university degree (Scienze della Formazione Primaria) that qualifies them for teaching both in scuola dell’infanzia and primary schools, thus for children aged three to 11 (Jensen et al., 2015, p.79).

Netherlands: Pre-primary provision for 4 to 5 year olds is integrated into primary school (Basisschool). Training as a Basisschool educators qualifies for the age-group 4 to 12 years, but students specialise either for working with children 4 to 8 years or 9 to 12 years. However, they are qualified to work with both age groups. ECEC workers are responsible for children 0 to 4 years old (Oberhuemer et al., 2010, p.319.).

Poland: Candidates for educators’ education and qualification are prepared simultaneously to be kindergarten educators (ECEC for children between the ages of three and five/six) and lower primary school teachers (grades 1 to 3 of primary school)” (Jensen et al., 2015, p.113).

Portugal: Preschool teaching programmes last between four and four-and-a-half years (graduates of the longer programme are eligible to teach both in preschools and primary schools) (Jensen et al., 2015, p.125). Normally, bachelor degrees (lasting 6 semesters) in Basic Education allow educators to proceed to master-level training in both preschool education and primary school.

Table 5: Alternative pathways into ECEC careers, in centre-based ECEC setting

Main types of alternative pathways, when existing:

	Exist	Do not exist	Employment-based training/qualification and/or recognition of past experience	Specific pathways for educators and graduates in education, humanities or social sciences
Belgium (Fl.)	X		In Belgium (Flemish Community), unqualified staff already working in centre-based and home-based provision can follow a special training course provided by the Centre for Adult Education to obtain a qualification as a ECEC worker (Kinderbegeleider).	In Belgium (Flemish Community), Bachelor's degree holders in other subjects may apply for a place on a short programme leading to the Bachelor's degree in pre-primary education. In some cases, waivers for certain subjects are allowed on the basis of recognition of prior learning.
Belgium (Fr.)		X		
Denmark		X		
England	X		In the United Kingdom (England), different training programmes have been introduced, depending on the applicant's previous qualifications and experience, leading to Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), replaced by Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) as of 2013.	
Finland	X		In Finland, for day care nurses (practical nurses) the competence-based qualification system offers a way to recognise an individual's vocational competences regardless of how they have been acquired (work experience, studies or other activities). Individual study plans are prepared for each student taking a competence-based qualification. Thus, adults may, for instance, acquire the necessary qualification to work either in regulated home-based provision or as care staff in centre-based	

ECEC settings. This type of alternative pathway into ECEC career is not possible for kindergarten educators.

Germany	X	In certain German Länder, it is possible to become an educator (Erzieher/in) or a childcarer (Kinderpfleger/in) by following shortened programmes (sometimes two years instead of three or four) via employment-based training programmes. In one region (Brandenburg), these programmes are targeted particularly at long-term unemployed men.	
Greece			X
Italy			X
Netherlands	X	In the Netherlands, a kinderopvang/preschool teacher qualification can also be acquired via employment-based training programmes on a part-time basis. This 3 to 4 year program focuses on the whole 0-12 range (kinderopvang, preschool, and out-of-school care).	In the Netherlands, Bachelor or Master degree holders in the above mentioned subjects may apply for a place in a two-year part-time program leading to a Bachelor degree in Primary education.
Norway	X	In Norway, a kindergarten teacher qualification can also be acquired via employment-based training programmes on a part-time basis, leading to the same level of qualification. Assistants who have worked in pre-school centres for at least five years can get an upper secondary level certificate as childcare and youth workers without attending upper secondary school.	
Poland	X	For care staff, the following regulations are implemented: Individuals must complete compulsory education and 1) a minimum of two years' experience of working with children under the age of three; or 2) have 280 hours of	In Poland, Bachelor's degree holders in other subjects may apply for a place on a post graduate, or master degree programmes leading to the degree in pre-primary education. In some cases, waivers for certain subjects are

training prior to employment (of which at least 80 hours are to hold in practice supervised by a fully qualified personnel). allowed on the basis of recognition of prior learning.

Portugal

X

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostart report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 107.

Explanatory note:

Alternative pathways: Flexible, mostly employment-based training programmes leading to a qualification required for employment in ECEC. They are normally shorter than traditional programmes and are often introduced to attract new people into the profession. Achieving an ECEC qualification through the validation of non-formal and informal learning is also considered as an alternative pathway to ECEC profession.

Country specific note:

Belgium (Fl.): Regarding the qualification of staff already working with babies and toddlers the New Parliament Act (April 1, 2014) stated that everyone should be qualified by the year 2024. Accordingly, there will be a transition phase of 10 years giving staff sufficient time to get qualified.

3.3.2 STAFF WORKING IN HOME-BASED ECEC SETTINGS

Providing ECEC in home-based settings plays an increasing role in a lot of European countries. In Germany, for example, home-based provision is seen as an equivalent alternative to centre-based provision. In only one country of the underlying sample (Greece), there is no regulated home-based provision. Hence, an important question is, to what extent do childminders have to be qualified in the different countries. In most of the countries (Belgium – French part, Denmark – depending on the region, England, Finland, Germany, Poland and Portugal), qualification requirements for childminders include a (short) specific training, but no minimum level of qualification. The training programmes show great variance in length and content; training hours (provided for four countries) vary a lot. Childminders in Belgium have to attend 128 hours of training, whereas their colleagues in Poland have to attend 160 hours. Even within one country, the requirements may be different. In Germany, required training hours may vary between 30 and 160 hours according to Länder (federal states). However, a childminder's training of 160 hours is more common. In Finland, the competence-based further qualification for childminders (ISCED 3) is recommended, but the education provider may also accept other suitable training courses that vary in length between 150 and 250 hours and end with a family day care certificate (Oberhuemer et al., 2010). There are three countries (Belgium – Flemish part, Italy and Netherlands) where childminders are required to hold a similar qualification as for main staff in centre-based provision for younger children (see Table 2). In Norway, by contrast, childminders in home-based settings are not required to have any formal qualification or special training. This might also be true for regions in Denmark as local authorities decide whether special training is required.

Table 6: Qualification requirements for childminders in regulated home-based provision

	Similar qualification requirements as for main staff in centre-based provision for younger children	Specific training required (hours)	No formal qualification, no special training required	No regulation at central level	Regulated home-based provision does not exist
Belgium (Fl.)	X				
Belgium (Fr.)		X (128)			
Denmark		X (local differences, number of hours is not stipulated)	X (local differences)		
England		X (number of hours is not stipulated)			
Finland		X (150-250)			
Germany		X (30-160)			
Greece					X
Italy	X			X	
Netherlands	X				
Norway			X		
Poland		X (160)			
Portugal		X (number of hours is not stipulated)			

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostart report. European

Commission: Brussels, p. 103 f.

Explanatory Note:

First-aid training on its own is not considered to be 'specific training' for childcarers in home-based provision.

Country specific notes:

Denmark: There are no mandatory national qualification standards, although local authorities may require the completion of various courses (Jensen et al., 2015).

England: Childminders (family day care workers) must be registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency, and are required to complete training in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) implementation. In addition, they are responsible for their assistants and their competences in ECEC (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 42). No minimum length of the training is specified. Childminders are required to obtain and maintain training in core areas including first aid, health and safety, and to have an understanding of how to set up a home based childcare business.

Finland: The competence-based Further Qualification for Childminders (ISCED 3, 72 credits) is recommended, but not compulsory. In addition, a day care nurse's (practical nurse) qualification is suitable for childcare workers in home-based care. Other forms of training may also be accepted by the education provider and be provided by the municipalities and adult education institutes.

Germany: Childminders in home-based settings have to attend a qualification course for family daycare. The content and scope of these courses vary across Länder. Several Länder have adopted a curriculum which has been developed by the German Youth Institute (DJI) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and which comprises 160 hours. Others only require a 30-hour course and first-aid course.

Italy: Home-based settings (asilo familiare) are regulated at local and regional levels. For home-based settings, educators are required to have the same educational training (upper secondary level, three-year Bachelor's level or five-year University level in Human science of Education) as local day-care educators. Centres for children under the age of three observe the regional and local norms.

Netherlands: In general, the same qualifications as for Kinderopvang teachers are needed; however, there are some additional qualifications which are sufficient to work as a childminder.

Norway: There must be one educated kindergarten teacher per 30 children in family kindergartens. These teachers supervise the staff in family

kindergartens.

Poland: As an alternative, formally qualified persons (i.e. nurse, midwife, childminder, kindergarten teacher, lower primary school teacher or school counselor) can complete 40 hours of supplemental training.

Portugal: Childminders (amas) have to meet some personal, family and housing criteria. They also need to attend some training sessions organised by the social security services of the Ministry for Solidarity, Employment and Social Security and by publicly subsidised private institutions. No minimum length of the training is specified.

3.3.3 HEADS OF CENTRE-BASED ECEC SETTINGS

Heads of centre-based ECEC settings often need to fulfil at least the minimum required qualification for educational staff working with older children (see Table 3), which means a Bachelor degree in the countries of Belgium (for settings with more than 18 places), Finland, Greece, Netherlands, Norway and Poland. In Poland, this is only true for settings for older children; heads of settings for younger children only require an upper secondary level. There are two countries (Portugal and Italy) where heads of centre-based ECEC settings have to hold a Master's degree. However, similar to Poland, Italy has implemented different regulations for settings catering to younger children. Depending on the region, heads in Italy have to hold either a Master's degree, a Bachelor's degree or an upper secondary level degree. England and Germany are the two countries requiring an upper secondary level. There is only one country (Denmark) where no official formal qualification requirements have been stipulated. However, the Danish legislation states that local authorities have to ensure that heads have the necessary competences to manage and lead ECEC settings.

Besides a necessary minimum level of qualification, countries' central recommendations often describe additional requirements to become a head of centre-based ECEC settings. In settings for older children in the French community in Belgium, the candidates need to have some professional experience working in ECEC and must complete a 120-140 hours of training for headship, in addition to academic qualifications. In Germany and Poland, the requirements are similar: in addition to minimum educational level, candidates need to have previous experience working in ECEC and have to complete headship training, the duration of which is dependent on regions. The training is completed after the initial educator education, either before applying for a headship position or immediately after being appointed to one. It does not fall under the regular professional development and its duration varies from country to country. In Poland, it lasts for 280 hours, whereas in Germany the duration varies between Länder, as does the amount of required professional experience. In Poland, the candidates are required to have 2 to 5 years of experience in order to lead the settings, catering to younger children, and at least 5 years, as well as some administrative experience, to lead those with older children. Depending on the regions and settings, Italian regulations state the necessity for headship training and professional experience as well. In the Netherlands, in addition to minimum required qualifications (Bachelor's degree), centre heads have to complete an additional training of one year for settings with younger children, and 1.5 years for settings with older children. In England and Greece, the minimum required qualification level for educators and professional experience are required and sufficient; there is no specific training for headship. For England, two years of professional experience is required. There is no specific information on the amount of years of professional experience for Greece.

Table 7: Minimum level of qualification required for employment as a head of centre-based ECEC setting

	Provision for younger children				Provision for older children			
	Master's level (ISCED 5)	Bachelor's level (ISCED 5)	Upper secondary level (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4)	No formal qualification	Master's level (ISCED 5)	Bachelor's level (ISCED 5)	Upper secondary level (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4)	No formal qualification
Belgium (Fl.)		X (>18 places)	X (≤18 places)			X (>18 places)	X (≤18 places)	
Belgium (Fr.)		X			X			
Denmark				X				X
England			X				X	
Finland		X			X			
Germany			X				X	
Greece		X			X			
Italy	X	X	X		X			
Netherlands		X			X			
Norway		X			X			
Poland			X		X			
Portugal	X				X			

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostart report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 110 f.

Country specific notes:

Belgium (Fr.): The table refers only to public and publicly subsidised settings.

Belgium (Fl.): According to the New Parliament Act, in the case of more than 18 places a bachelor's degree is needed. In the case of 18 places or less, heads are required to have an upper secondary level degree.

Denmark: In Denmark, regulations do not set out any official requirements for the initial qualification of heads in ECEC. However, Denmark has formal competence requirements for this role: the legislation states that local authorities have to ensure that ECEC staff have the necessary competences to perform this job.

England: The minimum requirements for centre managers include an Early Years Educator qualification denoted by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, general certificate of secondary education with good marks in English and Mathematics, and two years of ECEC or other relevant working experience.

Germany: The minimum level of qualification required to be a head is ISCED 4, but some ECEC settings employ as managers pedagogues/early childhood pedagogues/social pedagogues qualified with Bachelors' or Masters' degrees.

Italy: The minimum level of qualification for heads in settings for younger children is defined at regional level (from ISCED 3 to ISCED 5 Master's degree). For example, for the Veneto region, the level of qualification for the Pedagogical Coordinator is a Bachelor's level (ISCED 5) with specific pedagogical training (both first and second level). A Master's level (ISCED 5) is also considered valid for Pedagogical Coordination and Educational Counseling for ECEC services, with a minimum of 60 educational credits. The Tuscany legislation (n.32/2014) allows people who have achieved a three or five-year Bachelor's level (ISCED 5) with a pedagogical or psychological university path, or who have achieved an equivalent degree accepted by the Ministry of Education (MIUR), in order to become a Pedagogical Coordinator.

Netherlands: Directors of Primary Schools need an additional post-graduate qualification which often takes 1.5 years.

Poland: Pre-school classes (oddziały przedszkolne) are managed by heads of primary schools.

Table 8: Additional requirements to become a head of centre-based ECEC settings, as laid down in central recommendations

	Provision for younger children					Provision for older children				
	Training for headship (duration)	Professional experience in ECEC (Minimum number of years)	Administrative experience	Only minimum level ECEC qualification	No experience or formal qualification required	Training for headship (duration)	Professional experience in ECEC (Minimum number of years)	Administrative experience	Only minimum level ECEC qualification	No experience or formal qualification required
Belgium (Fl.)				X					X	
Belgium (Fr.)				X		X (120-140 h)	X			
Denmark					X					X
England		X (2)					X (2)			
Finland				X					X	
Germany	X (Depends on Länder)	X (2/depends on Länder)				X (Depends on Länder)	X (2/depends on Länder)			
Greece		X (not stipulated)					X (not stipulated)			
Italy	X (Depends on region)			X (Depends on region)		X (Depends on region)	X (Depends on region)			
Netherlands	X (1 year)					X (1,5 years)				

Norway			X						X
Poland	X (280 h)	X (3-5)		X (9 months, 210 h)	X (5)		X		
Portugal			X						

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat. (2014). *Key data on early education and care. Eurydice and Eurostart report. European Commission: Brussels, p. 113 f.*

Explanatory notes:

Specific training for headship takes place subsequent to initial education and qualification of ECEC staff. Depending on the circumstances, training may be provided either prior to the application or recruitment procedures for headship, or during the year or two immediately after taking up the post. Its aim is to equip future heads in ECEC with the skills required to carry out their new duties. It is not to be confused with continuing professional development.

Professional experience in ECEC: Time spent working professionally in ECEC. The period and type of professional experience required is often specified when recruiting staff to senior positions in ECEC.

Administrative experience: Experience acquired in the administration and management of an ECEC setting or school, for example, through holding the post of deputy head.

Country specific notes:

Belgium (Fl.): In settings with more than 18 places, an additional certificate is mandatory that demonstrates that the person is competent in leading the centre and is able to deal with financial aspects. However, the additional training needed is not specific for heads of ECEC settings. The offer is there for anyone who wants to start a business, no matter what kind of business.

England: For settings with older children, the Figure represents the situation in day nurseries/children centres for older children and pre-schools/nursery schools. When nursery schools/nursery classes/reception classes (3-5) are integrated in primary schools they are supervised by the school head. The National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership is available for practicing heads of day nurseries/children centres (0-5), but is not compulsory. In England, this programme ceased to be available in July 2014.

Finland: Table 8 only shows the situation for heads in day-care centres who are required to have appropriate leadership skills in addition to their initial qualification. For pre-primary classes, school heads (principals) must have the appropriate work experience and sufficient knowledge of education administration or have obtained the Certificate in Educational Administration in addition to teacher qualification.

Greece: Table 8 refers to infant/child centres (vrefonipiakos stathmos and paidikos stathmos). In pre-primary schools (nipiagogeio), in addition to professional experience, administrative experience and training gained before an appointment to headship, are required.

Italy: With regards to infant toddler centres, the appointment of coordinator is regulated by local and regional laws. Regarding preschool supervisors, the situation is different. If he/she manages a State school, he/she is appointed as Dirigente dell'Istituto Onnicomprensivo, which is a manager of a set of schools (preschool, primary and secondary school). A municipal director, instead, must refer to the local law, even for the required qualification. In some case, such as in Milan, the municipal director is responsible both for preschools and for infant toddler centres. In other cities, the norms provide that preschools and day-care Pedagogical Coordinators must be different people. In this last case, each of them is managed by different central organizations. The coordinators follow more than one service.

Poland: Pre-school classes (oddział przedszkolny) are supervised by heads of primary schools. Article 13 of the Act of 4 February 2011, on the care for children under the age of 3, states that the head of the setting may be a person 1) With higher education and min 3 years of experience of work with children, or 2) At least upper-secondary education and 5 years of work experience with children.

Portugal: Public ECEC settings for older children (jardins de infância) are integrated in school clusters and supervised by school heads. Regulations apply to the “technical direction” of the centre and specify that it should preferably be an ECEC teacher but it can also be performed by staff with a degree in social and human sciences or other areas of the educational sciences.

3.4. TEACHERS' STATUTORY SALARIES

Current average salaries in the field generally depend on the amount of training, as well as the length of work experience. Table 9 presents the average annual statutory salaries for educational staff in public institutions, expressed in USD and converted from local currencies using purchasing power parity exchange rates, which take into consideration different price levels in different countries. However, it is important to keep in mind that different countries have different levels of taxation and social benefit reductions. Statutory salaries also do not include bonuses and allowances, which in some countries make up a sizable share of the teachers' incomes.

On average, pre-primary teachers earn about 75 percent of what full-year full-time tertiary-educated workers aged 25 to 64 earn generally (OECD, 2014). Starting salaries for workers fulfilling minimum required qualifications are on average around 30,000 USD across all countries, and range from just over 11,000 USD per year in Poland to over 42,000 USD in Denmark. This amount generally increases with work experience, but the rate of the increase differs between countries, from as little as under 10% after 15 years in Denmark and Finland, up to over 70% in Belgium and 90% in Greece.

In most of the countries in which a university degree is required for preschool teachers, they also earn the same amount as primary school teachers. Exceptions are the Scandinavian countries, where, in addition to limited increase in pay with experience, pre-primary teachers also earn between 3% (Norway) and 18% (Finland) less than their primary school colleagues.

Table 9: Teachers' statutory salaries at different points in their careers

(Annual salaries in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for private consumption, reference year: 2012)

	Starting salary, minimum training	Salary at top of scale, minimum training
Belgium (Fl.)	33 667	58 340
Belgium (Fr.)	33 109	57 042
Denmark	42 230	46 037
England	28 321	41 393
Finland	27 443	29 638
Germany	m	m
Greece	18 718	35 503
Italy	27 786	40 851
Netherlands	37 104	54 865
Norway	33 816	39 235
Poland	11 388	18 925
Portugal	29 151	48 321

Source: OECD. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, p. 467. Data for Germany is missing.

Explanatory notes:

Salaries generally refer to educational staff and mostly to staff working with children over three years of age.

Starting salaries refer to the average scheduled gross salary per year for a full-time teacher with the minimum training necessary to be fully qualified at the beginning of the teaching career.

Maximum salaries refers to the maximum annual salary (top of the salary scale) for a full-time classroom teacher with the maximum qualifications recognised for compensation.

3.5 REGULATIONS REGARDING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In terms of continuous professional development, detailed and insightful work has already emerged from the CARE project. The report “Comparative review of professional development approaches” (Jensen et al., 2015) recently investigated questions of pre-service and in-service professional development⁴ in the field of early childhood education and care. Data were collected across 10 European countries⁵ with the help of a questionnaire using an open answer format. Thematically, the working group was interested in current resources, practices, policies, standards and innovative approaches undertaken in each country.

Besides major general differences in terms of resources and regulation, the authors report on two opposing approaches to continuing professional development that have emerged from the country analysis. Within the first approach, the responsibility for continuing professional development lies with the individual in rather decentralised systems with little or no regulation. The second approach, on the contrary, gives responsibility to national or local authorities in the countries where systems of continuing professional development were identified. These systems show different degrees of transparency and regulation and provide “some degree of support and resources” (Jensen et al., 2015, p.5).

The countries following the first approach include Poland, England, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands (Jensen et al., 2015, p.134). Training systems are described as largely self-organised with limited time and financial resources (Denmark). There might be a broad range of possibilities for in-service training, as found in Poland, but these are seldom regulated. In Germany and the Netherlands, there is a growing number of private and semi-private continuing professional development programmes. In England, professional associations have begun to provide continuing professional development courses, however only limited grants are available.

Following the second approach, countries such as Norway, Finland, Greece, Portugal and Italy mandate continuing professional development to a broader extent. Nevertheless, it is stated that opportunities are uneven and that they differ regarding to financial resources and educational priorities. Norway is one example showing large government investment into training within the last couple of years (from approximately 1 million Euro in 2005 to 12 million Euro in 2013). In Finland, ECEC staff has the legal entitlement to take up continuing professional development courses for between three and ten days per year (Children’s Day Care Act, 1973; Social Welfare Act 50/2005). Mandatory in-service training provided by national bodies is free. Greek ECEC teachers in kindergarten have the obligation to take part in continuing professional development courses when

⁴ The report “Comparative review of professional development approaches” (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 21) provides the following definition for professional development: “Professional development in ECEC takes place as such to accomplish two primary objectives: 1) It is anticipated that professional development will advance the knowledge, skills and dispositions by early years professionals through pre-service education and, thereby, improve the practices in ECEC, leading to higher quality, improved child wellbeing, and better child outcomes. 2) Professional development also aims at promoting a culture of ongoing professional growth of individual professionals and of the ECEC systems in which they work. This aspect is sometimes referred to as continuous professional development and includes a cyclic dynamism (with recurrent cycles of planning, observing, evaluating, reflecting, and changing) that moves practice towards higher quality”.

⁵ The contributing countries had been Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal.

the policies change or new practices in the field occur. In Greece, as well as in Portugal and Italy, the individual municipalities are responsible for the organization of in-service training according to their particular needs. In reality, opportunities can be rare – in Greece for example they depend on the municipality's fiscal conditions.

Another conclusion of the report is a general decrease in financial resources for continuing professional development (except Norway). Decreased public funding is often accompanied by increased private and semi-private market activity.

The authors have come to the overall conclusion, that “the potential benefits of a more systematic approach to in-service professional development, and of establishing strong links between pre-service and in-service professional development, remain largely unexplored and unexploited” (Jensen et al., 2015, p.5).

Additional insights which have emerged from the previous analysis of the country reports include, an emerging focus on including reflection in the practices of ECEC staff within in-service training, and an increased importance of communities of practice. As defined by the authors, “Communities of practice are where groups of educators exchange ideas, reflect and support each other in order to develop and improve their practices through knowledge-sharing and translating knowledge into practice, forming a learning community” (Jensen et al., 2015, p.150).

Another way to characterize continuing professional development options is as compulsory (i.e. required by the law or defined as professional duty in steering documents such as curricula, frameworks or working contracts) or voluntary. In most of the countries in our sample, continuing professional development is compulsory to some degree for lots of ECEC workers. However, Finland is the only country where it is compulsory (in the meaning of required by law) for both educational and care staff, as well as for childminders working in home-based provision. In the Netherlands, Primary School teachers in charge of children over the age of four, are required to complete 166 hours of professional development per year. Otherwise, professional development is voluntary for educational staff catering for children from zero to four. In Italy, educational staff have compulsory training hours included in their contracts; the exact number is regulated at local or regional level. The requirements for professional development in Poland are not clearly formulated at the legislative level. However, steering documents for provision for all children include professional development requirements, and in the settings catering for older children, professional development is a prerequisite for promotion. In line with these countries, Belgium, England and Germany support professional development for care, as well as educational, staff. In Portugal, some mandatory in-service training is required for preschool teachers which is necessary for progressing in the teaching career. This is also true for staff working in Greek kindergartens, where nationally organized in-service training programmes can be taken into account for promotion. Other in-service training options are organized locally and can either be mandatory or voluntary. However, in Greece there is no organized in-service training for staff working in day-care centres. On the other hand, Denmark and Norway offer professional development for educational staff on a voluntary basis. A predominant result is that childminders working in home-based provision are not required to participate in continuing professional development in all countries (except Finland).

Table 10: Regulations regarding continuing professional development

	Care Staff		Educational Staff		Childminders working in home-based provision	
	Compulsory	Voluntary	Compulsory	Voluntary	Compulsory	Voluntary
Belgium (Fl.)	X		X			X
Belgium (Fr.)	X		X			X
Denmark	<i>Not applicable</i>			X		X
England	X		X			X
Finland	X		X		X	
Germany	X		X			X
Greece	<i>Not applicable</i>		X (for those working in kindergarten)			X
Italy	<i>Not applicable</i>		X			X
Netherlands		X	X (kindergarten, 4-6)	X (kinderopvang & preschools, 0-4)		X
Norway	<i>Not applicable</i>			X		X
Poland		X	X			X
Portugal	<i>Not applicable</i>		X			X

Source: Own presentation.

Explanatory notes:

Compulsory CPD: CPD is either mandatory (by law) or a professional duty (professional duty means a task described as such in working regulations/ contracts/ legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.105).

Country specific notes:

Belgium: Since the implementation of the New Parliament Act the word “childminder” is not used anymore. Every person working with children is called “kinderbegeleider” or childcare worker. Before the implementation of the New Parliament Act, childminders (onthaalouders) were obliged to follow a minimal number of training hours each year. After the implementation, the responsibility for providing continuing professional development (duration and content) lies with the provider.

Germany: Professional Development may be required by the provider of the ECEC setting.

Greece: For staff working in a kindergarten (both public and private schools): There are some national, organized in-service training programmes on specific areas, such as ICT, which are voluntary but are taken into

account for promotions. Seminars and other in-service options are organized locally by school advisors or local educational authorities. They can be either compulsory or voluntary. For the newly appointed teachers, there is an initial in-service programme that is compulsory. For staff working in day-care centres there is no organized in-service training.

Italy: The local and regional norms establish the number of in-service training hours (mandatory training that concerns security norms and some hours for pedagogical education). These hours are provided in the contract as well.

Netherlands: Primary School teachers have 166 hours per year of compulsory professional development (50% team-based, 50% personal)

Poland: Even though the detailed regulations concerning CPD are not formulated (frequency, length etc.), steering documents of 0-3 and 3-6 years old children provision oblige practitioners to actions in this respect. Additionally, for the teachers working with older children, funding for this purpose is secured; CPD is required for the promotion, and the director is obliged to monitor the CPD of teachers etc. For educational staff, CPD is compulsory.

3.6 ECEC – A FEMALE WORKFORCE

It is well known that ECEC is a field with a predominately female workforce. The European Commission Network on Childcare in 1996, set a goal of increasing the percentage of male workforce to 20% for European countries (Peeters, 2007). Our sample shows that this goal is still far from reached. Men make up on average only 3% of the workforce in the eleven countries. This percentage goes down as low as 1% in Greece, Portugal and Italy, and 2% in Poland and England. Norway has the highest proportion of male workforce at around 9%, followed by the Netherlands (5%) and Finland (4%). In Norway there are specific measures put in place in order to increase the proportion of male teachers. These include preferential acceptance of male candidates in the case of equal qualifications, as well as the development of male workers' network, organization of conferences, and targeted recruiting (OECD, 1999; 2015). These measures have produced a steady increase since the beginning of the 2000s; however, it is still far from the 20% goal.

Table 11: Gender distribution of teachers (2012)

	Percentage of women
Belgium (all communities)	97
Denmark	m
Finland	96
Germany	97
Greece	99
Italy	99
Netherlands	95
Norway	91
Poland	98
Portugal	99
England	98

Source: OECD. (2014). Education at a glance 2014. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, p. 495. Data for Denmark is missing.

Country specific notes:

Netherlands: For primary school teachers (4-12 years) the proportion of women is 86%.

3.7 GLOSSARY

Assistant/auxiliary staff: individuals who support educational or care staff (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.96).

ECEC institutions may employ auxiliary staff/assistants to provide support to qualified education and care staff, in both settings for younger and older children. In some countries, the minimum level of initial qualification required is also upper secondary. In others, no formal qualification is needed. Assistants usually implement activity programmes designed for children, prepare craft materials and assist children to use them. They may also arrange daily routines such as, preparing and serving meals, organising changeovers such as lunch breaks and rest periods, and guide children in their activities.

Care staff: childminders/childcare workers/child carers/nursery nurses and/or nurses are responsible for providing care and support to children (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p.96).

In most countries, childcare workers are trained at upper secondary level. The role of care staff varies between settings. There are two main models: Care staff working independently in some settings for younger children only. They identify and meet the care, support and learning needs of children, including developing and delivering learning activities. They may be supported by auxiliary staff or assistants. The second model: Care staff working in a team with educational staff, where they tend to provide support to educational staff. This type of staff structure can be found both in separate and unitary ECEC systems. Different types of care workers may be employed in ECEC settings, but always alongside educational staff. In Germany and Finland, childcare staff work in teams with educational staff, and may perform more than a purely supportive role. Care staff are more often employed in settings for younger children.

Educational staff: teachers (pre-primary, pre-school, kindergarten)/pedagogues/educators (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014, p. 95f).

Educational staff usually have a tertiary qualification in education; they have the main responsibility for the education and care of a group of children in an ECEC setting. Their duties usually include designing and delivering safe and developmentally appropriate activities in accordance with all relevant programmes/curricula. They provide opportunities for creative expression through art, drama, play and music. In some countries, staff in this category may apply for senior positions as managers/coordinators/heads of setting. In some countries, two different titles are used to distinguish between similar staff working in different settings: 'educators' is often the term used for those working with the younger age group in day-care settings, while the term 'teachers' is used in pre-primary settings; this is the case in Greece and Italy. However, whereas in Greece the duration of initial education for educators and teachers is the same (with different content), in Italy the requirements for the teacher's qualification are higher.

Older children

The term older children refers to children over three, and up to around six years of age.

Statutory salaries refer to scheduled salaries according to official pay scales. The salaries reported are gross (total sum paid by the employer), less the employer's contribution to social security and pension, according to existing salary scales. Salaries are "before tax", i.e. before deductions for income tax.

Salaries are adjusted according to PPPs. **Purchasing power parity exchange rates (PPP)** are the currency exchange rates that equalise the purchasing power of different currencies. PPPs are the rates of currency conversion which eliminate the differences in price levels among countries. Thus, when expenditure on GDP for different countries is converted into a common currency by means of PPPs, it is, in effect, expressed at the same set of international prices so that comparisons between countries reflect only differences in the volume of goods and services purchased.

Younger children

The term younger children refers to children under the age of three years.

3.8 REFERENCES

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4 . D E S C R I P T I O N O F T H E E C E C M O N I T O R I N G S Y S T E M S I N T H E E L E V E N C A R E P R O J E C T C O U N T R I E S

As monitoring constitutes a basic parameter for promoting quality in ECEC services, one of the purposes of this report was to present and highlight critical parameters of the 11 countries' monitoring systems that participated in the CARE project, with particular reference to the processes that refer to the selected quality indicators described and analyzed in chapters 2 and 3. However, it should be noted that there are basic differences concerning a. the nature of monitoring as part of the typology, as it was briefly explained in the introduction of the report; b. the amount and type of information collected to describe monitoring regulation, organization and implementation, and c. the methodology followed, that differentiate the way chapters 4 and 5 are developed.

Taking into account the inclusive character of monitoring, as it actually refers to all the ECEC quality processes and indicators described and analysed in the previous chapters, and the fact that it constitutes a unique system/organization itself within the ECEC system, it was considered useful to describe first the basic organization and characteristics of the countries monitoring systems in chapter 4, and then specify the way the selected quality indicators are assessed and evaluated within each monitoring system in chapter 5. Describing basic parameters of the monitoring systems was regarded as critical with a view to better understanding differences and similarities of the monitoring processes relating to the selected indicators, which is the focus of the next chapter.

As this chapter elaborates on the monitoring system of each country, a number of questions were set to guide the data collection process:

- How is monitoring regulated and organized?
- What are the main objectives for conducting monitoring?
- What is the frequency of monitoring processes?
- What are the practices used?
- How are monitoring results used?
- What are the consequences?

These questions refer to some basic criteria that highlight the way monitoring systems are regulated, governed, organized and how they operate to provide evaluation and assurance ECEC.

To answer these questions the following steps were followed: (a) reviewing relevant literature (international and European reports, papers, essays and documents), (b) developing a template for each country where data were organized to answer the guiding questions, (c) sending the templates to CARE partners to check information and provide feedback, (d) produce a descriptive text using information which was again sent to partners for review and, (e) synthesizing and comparing information/data to show patterns, differences and similarities, and identify themes that seemed to play a significant role in the discussions among stakeholders to promote quality.

There were some basic methodological problems/challenges during the process of information collection through the literature. At first, a number of inconsistencies were found among different sources, mainly due to the different time of publication. The information provided did not always give a clear picture of how monitoring systems worked in each country. For some of the CARE countries, there was very limited information. In many international reports broader dimensions of quality were addressed; for example, the OECD work on monitoring which focuses on service, staff and child development quality provided no clear distinctions among these conceptualizations. There were recent developments in some of the CARE project countries' ECEC systems that were not presented/addressed in formerly published literature. In this sense, contribution from CARE partners was valuable to present reliable, valid and comprehensive information. Still, as for the **French and German Communities of Belgium** there were very few data that could not be checked, it was decided that in the chapters concerning monitoring, only those provided for the **Flemish Community** would be included.

Taking into account the aforementioned methodological challenges and processes, the purpose of the two chapters was twofold. On the one hand, the focus was on similarities and differences across countries' monitoring systems and practices, and on the other the presentation of a concise picture of how monitoring works in each country to assess and assure quality. Consequently, a more descriptive structure is followed in the following two chapters.

4.1 BASIC SYSTEM OF REGULATION-ORGANIZATION OF MONITORING

The way an ECEC system is generally organized, the level of centralization, the differences of investment between the private and public sector, and basically the distinction between Care and Education provisions for the younger (0-3/4) and the older (3/4-6) children, seem to play an important role in how monitoring systems are regulated and organized in the eleven Care project countries. Different criteria and processes for assessment and evaluation are followed across the countries regarding the types of provision and group of children, showing that quality has not a common understanding, even within the same monitoring system, for the majority of countries.

Countries with a split system

ECEC services in **Belgium, Greece, Italy, Poland** and **Portugal** employ a “split system”, with regard to provisions that are delivered in separate settings for younger and older children (usually 0 to 3/4 and 3/4 to 6), while the responsibility for governance, regulation and funding is divided between different authorities (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). **Greece, Italy** and **Poland** are the most representative of this model. The ECEC sector (for younger children) is highly decentralized as processes are decided at the local and setting level. The preschool education provisions, on the other hand, are governed and supervised centrally by national authorities under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Still, in **Italy**, inspectors of the Regional Scholastic Offices (USR – the local authority representing the Ministry of Education at a regional and provincial level) decide their own procedures locally. With reference to the ECEC provisions, School Coordinators play a central role as mediators between national guidelines and local implementations (CARE, 2014). A similar role is attributed to Preschool Advisors in **Greece** who have the pedagogical responsibility of the schools under their authority. However, in **Greece**, there are not any mandated monitoring procedures concerning the quality of the pedagogical and educational services offered, either in childcare or kindergartens/preschool settings, at the moment. Although over the past few years, decisions have been made by policy makers, in promoting quality assurance in preschool and school settings (compulsory education), a new law (2013) has established a framework for the Evaluation of Education Practice (EEP). The relevant processes have been inactive following the 2015 elections, although the new government is working on the improvement of the evaluation framework, with an aim to put it into effect again. In **Portugal** and the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, monitoring is regulated, organized and funded nationally for both sectors by the corresponding authorities, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education, respectively. In **Portugal**, there is also a framework for self-assessments for the entire ECEC system (European Commission, 2011).

It should be noted that in **Italy** a new law (107/2015) introduced integration of ECEC services for children 0-6 under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. However, relevant developments are expected to be finalized by 2017, when the regulation will commence. Consequently, information presented herewith describes the current transition phase of the Italian ECEC system. Similarly, the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, has recently (2014) introduced an integrated monitoring system of ECEC services. There is a governmental organization responsible for monitoring and assessing quality in the ECEC sector, named *Kind en Gezin*⁶ (Child

⁶**Kind en Gezin**, introduced in 1984, is responsible for implementing the policy laid down by the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family and agreed up on by the Flemish government, both for the childcare of babies and toddlers (0 to starting pre-primary school) and the care of school children from pre-

and Family). The Flemish Care Inspectorate Agency inspects all settings and informs the *Kind en Gezin* of the visits. The results of the monitoring are to be used in introducing interventions and informing policy making. Accordingly, the *Educational Inspectorate* of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, the professional body of external supervision for elementary education, part of which are the pre-primary schools, does not simply administer sanctions, but encourages good performance (OECD, 2015) and has a counselling role. To serve this purpose, it consists of a team of inspectors with certain specializations so as to administer both tasks, the quality control and the provision of focused feedback to preschools.

In **Poland**, a basic characteristic of the monitoring system for both sectors (childcare and preschool education) is that there is a division of responsibilities in different national and local (at the municipality level) organizations for different dimensions of ECEC quality. Only working conditions and hygiene and nutrition quality are monitored by a single authority for all providers, the District Inspectorate and the Sanitary and Epidemiological Inspector. Accordingly, funding is provided by central or local budgets. There is also a lack of a homogeneous quality framework for ECEC services but requirements are scattered over different legal instruments. This is also true for **Greece**, especially for the preschool/kindergarten regulations.

Countries with a unitary system

In some countries ECEC provision for all preschoolers is characterised by a continuity between institutions until children start primary school. Principally, the Ministry of Education is responsible for ECEC governance, regulation and funding. All care and education for young children is considered to be part of 'early education' services, and educational guidelines cover the entire ECEC phase (European Commission, 2011). However, not all systems fit exactly with this model and some variations exist. This type of ECEC organization prevails in **Finland**, and **Norway**.

While in **Finland** quality is monitored at regional level by municipalities, in **Norway** monitoring is regulated at national, regional and local level. In **Finland** the aspects monitored are determined by on municipalities' independent decisions, but objectives for early education and pre-primary education are found in the curriculum documents. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE: is under the Ministry of Education and Culture) is a national expert agency of ECEC, whose responsibility is to develop and monitor the organization of ECEC. In **Norway**, the municipalities, as local authorities, are legally obliged to provide guidance and ensure that kindergartens (both municipal and non-municipal) are operated in accordance with not only the current principles in official national documents (e.g. *Kindergarten Act*, 2005 and its secondary legislation (regulations), including the *Framework Plan*), but also according to the local guidelines and plans. A combination of funding from municipalities and kindergartens' own budget for carrying out self-assessment is used (Taguma et al., 2013). At national level, evaluation of the quality framework is commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research and monitoring is conducted by the Office of the Auditor General. The county governor, operating at regional level, supervises that the municipality carries out the responsibilities imposed on it as the local authority for kindergartens, but in some cases also inspects individual kindergartens to monitor that municipalities are fulfilling their legal role (e.g. CARE, 2014; Taguma et al., 2013).

primary and primary school (2.5 or 3 until 12 years) before and after school hours and during school holidays and tasks are:

- i. Checking compliance with the requirements for starting a quality childcare setting (and thus for obtaining a licence, an accreditation or a certificate), in terms of safety and hygiene, as well as regards to the number and training of the employees.
- ii. Granting a licence, an accreditation or a certificate.
- iii. Monitoring, supporting and enforcing the activities of the setting and ensuring the payment of subsidies to childcare providers.
- iv. Monitoring and promoting the quality of formal childcare and advising the Flemish Government on the qualifications and competences for people working in formal childcare.

Another critical characteristic that supports reference to common quality standards and facilitates a comparison and dissemination of the results of self-monitoring to various stakeholders, since basic monitoring processes are decided at the local level, is that both countries apply a network approach. In **Norway**, the project by Storbymnettverket (a network of large cities) is partly funded by national authorities and set quality standards that some municipalities use as a fare of reference (CARE, 2014, 2015). In **Finland**, networks are organized locally with the support of each municipality, though, which is also applied in **Denmark**, a country that has a system of both unitary and separate provisions.

Countries with a mixed model of ECEC provisions

In other countries, ECEC services can usually be delivered either in separate settings for younger and older children, or in unitary settings catering for all age groups, such as in **Denmark, England, Germany** and the **Netherlands**. In most cases, while the management authority is the same, the provision for younger and older children may differ in terms of staff qualifications, curricula and funding arrangements (European Commission, 2011). With reference to monitoring, four countries employ quite different systems, with **Denmark** having the most decentralized processes, and **England** the most centralized ones.

In **Denmark**, local authorities (municipalities) are involved in direct provision of services, approval and supervision of private centres, referring children to private childminders and delivering subsidies to providers. They also ensure that providers meet the national legislation requirements, as well as the level of service of the municipality (Naumann, McLean, Koslowski, Tisdall, & Lloyd, 2013). Parents' boards and heads of the day-care centres are key aspects of quality assurance. However, systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge, as well as evaluation within the field of day care for national and local interest, are delivered by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). In **England**, monitoring is centrally regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED). Providers and educators may also provide their judgements in internal evaluation processes, which are decided by local authorities and settings. In **Germany**, monitoring is regulated at federal level and conducted by local youth welfare offices and service providers (Gerstein, 2013; Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 2009), while in Berlin there is also an institute monitoring and ensuring quality development in daycare centres (Bock-Famulla, Lange, & Strunz, 2015). Costs are covered by local/municipal public funding for childminders (0-3/5) and service providers' own budgets for the crèche /preschool daycare centre (all ages).

The **Netherlands** does not employ a unitary system of quality monitoring. Processes differ on the basis of the distinction between childcare and educational provisions, as in the "split model". Childcare provision (centre-based daycare, non-familial home care, playgroups without an education program) is inspected by the municipal (or regional, in the case of smaller towns and rural areas) public Health Authority (*Gemeentelijke Geneeskundige en Gezondheidsdienst*; GGD). Early education is inspected by the Inspectorate of Education which, since 2010, also inspects the quality of preschool education provided in daycare centres and preschools (Naumann, McLean, Koslowski, Tisdall, & Lloyd, 2013). The Netherlands Consortium for Day Care Quality (*Nederlands Consortium Kwaliteit Kinderopvang*: NCKO), is an independent organization that also conducts assessments commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Accordingly, funding may be covered by money granted by the government (a lump sum for welfare and social-cultural work allocated to municipalities), parents' payment of income-dependent fee, supply-funding and subsidies by the Ministry of Education for early education provisions.

4.2 OBJECTIVES FOR MONITORING

The majority of the eleven CARE project countries seem to focus on: accountability, quality assurance, improvement of ECEC services, and ensuring compliance with regulations. Promotion of continuity between national standards and local recommendations, and implementations to guarantee the quality of children's experiences (Musatti & Picchio, 2010), seemed to also be important for **Italy** and **Poland**. Informing policy

makers and guiding decision-making seemed critical for the **Flemish Community of Belgium, Norway and Finland**. A shared understanding of ECEC among different stakeholders was reported by **Finland, England** also seemed to give emphasis to parents' participation in evaluation of quality and ensuring the safety of children, among other objectives. The **Flemish Community of Belgium, Italy, Portugal** and the **Netherlands** seem to put emphasis on improvement of pedagogical and/or educational quality. Promotion of professional development, by encouraging good performance and identifying childcare and preschool staff learning needs to organize appropriate in-service training, was indicated by the **Flemish Community of Belgium** and the **Netherlands**. Finally, subsidy granting was reported by **Germany**.

In **Greece**, the only official processes concerning monitoring (with particular emphasis on structural aspects) of ECEC services, which are activated during registration and licensing, especially for the private sector, aim principally at examining the compliance with regulations and managing operation of the schools. In **Finland**, one of the basic objectives of monitoring ECEC quality is to ensure equal accessibility to ECEC and pre-primary education. Results are mainly used within individual settings to gain insight into the children's experiences and a shared understanding of ECEC among different stakeholders (e.g. parents, children and teachers) and also guide local level decision-making. In **Norway**, monitoring is conducted not only for accountability reasons and ensuring compliance with regulations, but also to identify areas in need of improvement that may lead to actual progress in provisions (Taguma, 2013), to inform policy makers and also the general public (Taguma et al., 2013).

For **England**, of high importance is the safety of children (e.g. a safe environment; suitable staff that meets, and will continue to meet, the requirements for registration), parents' participation in providing independent assessment judgments of provision, and accountability (inform Secretary of State about provision). In **Germany**, the safety of the children, maintaining subsidies for crèches and preschool daycare centres and ensuring admission for the childminders (0-3/5) are important.

4.3 MONITORING PROCESSES, PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In most countries, external and internal monitoring processes produce results that are used in combination to evaluate and ensure ECEC quality. This approach is used in the **Flemish Community of Belgium** where internal evaluations and actions that intend to improve quality are recorded in a "quality assurance manual", which is reviewed by the Inspector and can be taken into consideration, along with the staff's self-evaluations, in the next inspection. However, this is not applicable to all countries. For example in **Poland**, monitoring of preschool provisions is applied through both internal and external practices depending on the aspects evaluated, but with little interconnection between them. Additionally, in **Italy** the results of self-evaluations are not necessarily used when these settings are inspected (OECD, 2015).

Structural aspects of quality (e.g. basic regulations and staff development) are basically monitored externally. **Italy** could be regarded as an exception, as compliance with standards is included in the general Self-evaluation Framework for each setting, proposed by the National Evaluation Institution (INVALSI) (DPR 80/2013, Reg.n reg. 72/2013). Evaluations of structural indicators are usually applied during the registration period and within the general framework of monitoring in each country. Process quality is mainly assessed internally for the childcare sector, and externally for the preschools and those settings with educational or targeted programmes (for example, in the **Netherlands**) or with combined methods (e.g. the **Flemish Community of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Poland**). In **Germany**, there is also a combination of external and internal processes, depending on the quality dimension evaluated and the provider. For self-evaluations, there are often recommended tools but usually they can be chosen by service providers. It should be noted though that Germany monitors mainly structures, and not processes.

Self-evaluations are implemented in all CARE countries. Some monitoring systems provide certain valid and standardised self-assessment tools, mainly developed in collaboration with researchers and Universities. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, service providers use a self-assessment tool focusing on child experiences in

the settings and involve different stakeholders, known as SiCs (European Commission, 2011). There are also new monitoring instruments that have been developed within the context of MeMoQ⁷. In **Italy**, there are local versions of well-known research tools, such as ITERS-ECERS scale (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1990; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). Although both adaptations are consistent with Italy's split ECEC system (OECD, 2015), it is argued that they neglect several elements which were considered crucial in the Italian ECEC culture, such as parents' participation (Musatti & Picchio, 2010). In the **Netherlands**, NCKO implements an observation system derived from the ECERS-R, CIS, ITERS and M-ORCE. Preschool settings in **Poland** use an observational measure, *Skala Gotowości Szkolnej*, which records children's outcomes. In **England**, there is an optional self-evaluation tool for providers on the Early Years Register, developed by OFSTED⁸, while settings may also choose to develop their own tools or use ready-made instruments such as ECERS and ECERS-R. Within the *Desenvolvendo a Qualidade em Parcerias (DQP)* project in **Portugal**, the Adult Engagement Scale is used by preschool teachers to evaluate their own practices and monitor process quality, especially regarding teacher-children interactions (CARE, 2014). In **Portugal**, home-based care is also subject to self-assessments (OECD, 2015). In other countries, for example **Norway** and **Denmark**, there are no specific regulations for the use of specific monitoring tools in settings.

Parents seem to be considered as principal informants of children's experiences and functioning within ECEC services for most countries and their views are surveyed either by internal or external agencies. Parent surveys (e.g. **Italy**, **Norway**), discussions (e.g. **Poland**) and interviews are among the practices reported. Systematic parent complaint arrangements/mechanisms exist in **Denmark** and **Portugal**. The involvement of different stakeholders in the evaluation processes is mandated or encouraged in many countries. **Italy** is an characteristic example of this participatory approach. The participatory evaluation system was designed by the National Research Council of Italy and has been implemented by several regional and local authorities. This process includes the production and analysis of documentation of children's and parents' daily experiences in each ECEC service. All stakeholders participate in the evaluation process and discuss the quality of ECEC service from their perspective as professionals, parents, or managers. Evaluation of the ECEC quality is based on comparing results with the educational goals and objectives of the local ECEC provision, as defined in formal Acts. A service Dossier keeps a detailed record of the whole evaluation process (CARE, 2014). Documentation is also applied in **Poland** and **Norway**. The children and their family are also participants in the implementation and evaluation of the quality tools in **Portugal** (European Commission, 2011). Children's views are also taken into account during evaluations in **Denmark**.

In **Greece**, for the preschools/kindergartens, the Primary Education Directors are responsible for the management and supervision of the corresponding schools (Government Gazette 1340/2002 - FEK .353.1/324/105657/Δ1/2002). Evaluations basically concern reviewing the reports and data submitted by schools. In some cases, usually when a need arises or after complaints, school visits can be applied. Internal processes are implemented in preschools/kindergartens especially with reference to the evaluation of children's progress using authentic forms of assessment (e.g. portfolios), but they are neither mandated nor monitored. In **Poland**, external monitoring processes concern mainly evaluation of the documents provided by the director/head of the setting and inspections by the local authorities and the Educational Superintendents.

⁷Three monitoring instruments are being developed within the context of MeMoQ, a study commissioned by *Kind en Gezin*, to measure quality in the entire childcare sector based on staff, parents and children engagement (Aarssen, & Studulski, 2013) that corresponds to the "pedagogical framework" and addresses different aspects of quality: (i) a *scientific instrument* that records the current status of the pedagogical quality in childcare settings for babies and toddlers in Flanders, (ii) a *self-evaluation instrument*, as a tool to guide and support practitioners working in individual settings to improve quality of their work and (iii) a *monitoring instrument*, as a tool for regular inspection.

⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-online-self-evaluation-form-sef-and-guidance-for-providers-delivering-the-early-years-foundation-stage>

4.4 FREQUENCY OF MONITORING

Frequency of monitoring is dependent mainly on the indicators selected for quality aspect under examination and the local decisions in the decentralised systems (e.g. **Italy**, **Portugal** and **Denmark**). In most cases there are annual external evaluations and continuous/regular processes for the internal evaluations (e.g. **Finland**). In **Italy**, for the state preschools and the volunteer non-state providers, there is an annual self-evaluation framework on an experimental basis since 2016. Inspections are also conducted though not regularly, or are on an *ad hoc* basis, especially if there are complaints concerning a setting or staff. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium** there are a number of not formerly scheduled and announced evaluations, while inspections are conducted once every three years or whenever there is a need (e.g. a parent complaint) or according to previous results. In the **Netherlands**, evaluations are conducted annually based on reports by providers. Observation-based inspections are also applied in cases where insufficient performance is indicated, or after demand for provisions with educational programmes.

In **Poland**, the frequency of monitoring childcare services' compliance with basic regulations is not mandated, while for the preschool settings evaluations take place at least once a year, usually before the beginning of the school year. For the preschool settings, in **Portugal**, there are annual external evaluations on a sample basis that concern the public settings and since 2013 also the private non-profit providers. In **England**, external monitoring processes take place at least once every four years and more often if an inspection concludes that improvements are required, or if concerns about a provision are raised. For internal assessments and evaluations, the recommendation is to be conducted at least once a year. In **Germany**, there are regular evaluations, especially when there are changes in the structural aspects. In Berlin there are additional external evaluations every five (5) years. Self-evaluation processes depend on Länder. In the **Netherlands**, evaluations are conducted annually, based on reports by providers. Observation-based inspections also take place in cases where there are indications of insufficient performance, or after demand for those provisions with educational programmes.

4.5 USE AND CONSEQUENCES OF MONITORING RESULTS

The results of monitoring are used in different ways. Most countries use data to inform different stakeholders, encourage discussions, guide policymaking and promoting quality and improvement in the specified areas. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium** and in some areas in **Germany**, monitoring is linked to distribution of subsidies. In **Portugal** there is emphasis on recommended interventions to address shortcomings. The closure of the ECEC setting is an option in cases of extreme violations in the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, **Norway**, **England** and the **Netherlands**. In **Denmark** the main consequence of poor evaluation outcomes seems to be parental decision to move to another provision.

For most countries, publication of results depends on the aspects being monitored and/or the processes that were applied, as well as the position of a country towards transparency. For **Denmark**, transparency is assured by the responsibility of the local authorities to publish monitoring and evaluation results on the homepage of the municipality. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, results from on-site visits are not publicly available but they are upon demand. Results of the self-evaluation instrument are only for internal use of the settings (e.g. in the context of on-site visits of inspectors from the Care Inspectorate Agency). In **Italy**, the publication of results is not mandatory. In **Poland**, ECEC providers' evaluation reports on quality are available to the public. In **Norway**, results of external evaluations are usually made available on request, while results of internal evaluations are shared between stakeholders in the setting (Taguma et al., 2013). In **Finland**, there are no regulations governing publication of monitoring results, but monitoring results are usually published. Consequences of monitoring are not set at the national level and municipalities can determine which consequences are attached to monitoring results (OECD, 2015). In **England** there are consequences for non-compliance with official standards and conditions imposed, which can lead to a conviction of a fine, more regular inspection or even immediate closure. OFSTED reports can be accessed online without restrictions. Monitoring results in **Germany** are not usually made public but some anonymous data can be used for statistical

purposes, while publication of data concerning welfare endangerments depends on Länder. In the **Netherlands**, the inspection reports, both at the level of the ECEC provider and the local authority, are publicly available.

In **Portugal**, external monitoring processes in ECEC provisions seem to serve mainly bureaucratic purposes to check quality criteria for licensing. On the other hand, assessments applied in preschool institutions have a more formative character, as inspections include suggestions for interventions that focus on identified⁹ issues and provide a basis for a continuous dialogue among stakeholders to improve practices and the quality of the pedagogical work. In **Norway**, feedback to the service providers may be in the form of “deviations”, if the kindergarten’s practice is in direct violation of laws and regulations, or in the form of a “notice”, where a more subjective assessment is made of the kindergarten’s practice as being “inadequate”. In **Germany**, monitoring and evaluation processes determine admission for childminders, licensing and subsidies for crèche and preschool daycare provisions. In some cases, non-compliance with recommendations may result in sanctions such as in the case of Berlin, where no public funding is provided if curriculum is not implemented at the conception. In **Greece**, the absence of official and systematic monitoring processes reflects, among others, the lack of organization, continuity and investment in ECEC. The limited external evaluations are mainly conducted for bureaucratic purposes and to ensure compliance with regulations. Internal self-evaluation processes, suggested but not mandated or monitored, aim to improve the organization of the pedagogical and educational program following children’s needs and ideas. In the **Netherlands**, non-compliance with regulations may lead to the withdrawal of extra subsidy for working with disadvantaged children or even withdrawal of the license. Any adjustment of the quality standards is through a social dialogue as part of a ‘covenant’ which informs the national debate. The covenant is a "gentlemen’s agreement" and the outcomes of the discussions are presented to the National Government. The public administration accepts the outcomes of social dialogue by putting them into regulations. It is rare for the national government to introduce regulations which have not been discussed by the covenant (European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014).

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5 . I N D I C A T O R - S P E C I F I C I N F O R M A T I O N A B O U T M O N I T O R I N G E C E C Q U A L I T Y I N T H E E L E V E N C A R E P R O J E C T C O U N T R I E S

With regard to the selected indicators, not all aspects presented in the previous corresponding chapters (two and three) were taken into consideration relating to the underlying monitoring and evaluation processes. The dimensions specified were: (A) *System*: basic regulations about teacher-children ratio, group size and space considerations, (B) *Pedagogical quality*: curriculum implementation, pedagogical interactions, children's outcomes and parental involvement, and (C) *Staff Development*: staff qualifications, in-service training and composition of the working group. Monitoring processes regarding these selected indicators are described with reference to the basic parameters that were discussed in the previous chapter concerning: monitoring regulation, frequency, objectives, external vs internal processes, practices and tools, consequences and use of results. Information is presented for each country with the aim of gaining insight into its ECEC monitoring system, as well as to allow for similarities and differences to become apparent.

Information is presented for each country, and with particular focus on the Pedagogical quality indicators, without actually comparing the different systems and practices, as this unit concerns a number of processual aspects that are differently understood, assessed and evaluated in each ECEC system. Moreover, information about monitoring processes were not available for each one of these aspects as, in some systems, curriculum implementation is evaluated in a holistic way and there are no separate procedures for each indicator.

5.1 BASIC REGULATIONS (TEACHER-CHILD RATIO, GROUP SIZE AND SPACE)

For the basic structural aspects of quality that were taken into account in this report, namely teacher/educator-child ratio, group size and space standards, monitoring is mandatory in most countries. In **Germany**, there are no specific mandates concerning teacher-child ratios; evaluations concern group size and number of employees. These indicators are evaluated mainly during the registration period and within the general framework of monitoring applied in each country (e.g. **Italy**). Monitoring is mostly conducted by external agencies/organisations. Typical examples are **Denmark, England, Germany** and **Norway**. In **Norway**, settings that do not meet the regulatory minimum quality standards can lose funding, or have to reimburse at least some of the public funding received (OECD, 2015). There are no specific mandates concerning the frequency of inspections. In **Germany**, monitoring is mandatory for group size and number of employees, as well space criteria. Inspections concern providing licencing for crèches and preschool day centres, as well as admission for childminders (with periodical re-evaluations), focusing on structural aspects of quality.

In most countries there are also internal evaluative procedures conducted by educational/pedagogical/care staff or heads that seem to have the basic responsibility to evaluate and ensure compliance with regulations (e.g. **Poland, Greece**). The **Flemish Community of Belgium** places particular emphasis on regulations provided by legislation¹⁰ for the ECEC provisions as a means of quality assurance. Compliance with these regulations is evaluated during both unscheduled and previously announced visits by the Care Inspectorate Agency inspectors, and within internal evaluations in the context of MeMoQ. Even in ECEC systems with a tradition of internal evaluations, external processes are applied for those settings offering educational programmes (e.g. **Italy**). In **Italy**, for state preschools, compliance with regulations is monitored both internally, within the new National School-Evaluation System-RAV, and externally by inspections on a sample or *ad hoc* basis (after complaints). In some cases the responsibility of monitoring is distributed to different authorities at the local and national level, depending on the focus of evaluation on specific indicators. This is typical in **Finland**, where teacher-children

¹⁰Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 22 november 2013 houdende de vergunningsvoorwaarden en het kwaliteitsbeleid voor gezinsopvang en groepsopvang van baby's en peuters en Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 22 november 2013) houdende de subsidies en de eraan gekoppelde voorwaarden voor de realisatie van specifieke dienstverlening door gezinsopvang en groepsopvang van baby's en peuters.

ratios and group sizes are evaluated by local administration and ECEC settings, while monitoring of space standards also fall within national administration responsibility. In **Denmark**, monitoring is basically external or combined (also in **England**). Methods and frequency are decided locally, by the municipalities.

In **Greece**, for ECEC facilities these aspects are monitored usually during registration, but the private sector is also subjected to periodical evaluations that focus on compliance with regulations. There are no statutory processes to regulate and evaluate basic structural aspects in Greek kindergartens. In 2013, a new network database platform called “My School” was implemented by the Ministry of Education (Circular 42456/Δ1) integrating all related digital platforms with an aim to record basic structural characteristics concerning the operation of all school units, so as to organize and facilitate administration. Head teachers are responsible for recording and updating (every 15 days) data in the platform, which is accessible individually through personal key-codes. Although “My School” was not introduced for monitoring reasons, it allowed authorities, for the first time, to have a very specific and clear picture of the real situation in schools, which resulted in the elimination of recording false data due to the fact that comparisons between schools (and data from different school years) could be made at the central level. Schools have access only to information concerning the specific school unit. Data are not publicly available, not even for research purposes.

In **Portugal**, evaluation of structural aspects of ECEC provisions is usually conducted during the registration period by the General Inspectors. For the preschool settings, inspections are conducted by the General Inspectorate of Education on a sample basis, and annually for the public and private non-profit settings. In the **Netherlands**, monitoring is mandatory and is delivered annually either by providers that submit relevant reports, or by inspectors who conduct observations on the basis of signaling. Additionally, every 5 years, a sample-based structural and process quality monitoring is conducted by NCKO. Results may lead to license withdrawal.

5.2 CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION, PEDAGOGY AND CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES

This section focuses on process quality regarding monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation, pedagogical interactions in the classroom, and children's outcomes. In most countries these indicators are evaluated within the same monitoring framework with the use of different methods and practices. In order to gain insight into how each monitoring system works concerning processual quality, the focus of this unit is to present and discuss monitoring processes about the selected indicators in each country and not the comparison between countries. Still, it should be noted that in most countries monitoring processes concerning processual aspects of quality are not mandated but recommended, which is particularly evidenced for the ECEC provisions, while mostly internal processes are followed. Self-evaluation is a common practice, while in some cases there is use of standardised or well-known instruments. Relationships and outcomes are basically evaluated through ongoing observations and recordings, and in most countries the focus is on the whole group development and not the individual child. However, in some countries there are specific assessments concerning each child, such as in **England** and **Poland**. Participatory processes are used in some countries, for example in **Italy**. The participation of different stakeholders is encouraged in most countries. The main objective for monitoring and evaluation of process quality seems to be the improvement of pedagogical work and giving feedback to parents. In a number of countries the existence of a national official framework, basically for the provisions with educational programmes, that provides standards, principles and guidance, in some cases described as curriculum, is considered a basic criterion for assurance of process quality. In **Greece**, the national kindergarten curricula are described as “vehicles” to qualitative educational provisions, offering balanced children's outcomes since they provide a combination of content, goals and pedagogical practices appropriate for all the students. These frameworks or curricula are mainly used as guidelines for staff to plan their own program and activities addressing the local and individual needs. In some countries, these individual programmes or plans are evaluated either internally (**Germany**) or externally by local or national authorities, or in combination (e.g. the **Flemish Community of Belgium, Poland, Portugal, England** and **Norway**), while in other countries external evaluations are mostly recommended or suggested (e.g. **Greece**). It should be noted that for the childcare sector

from the eleven CARE project countries, only the **Flemish Community of Belgium** and **Finland** have national curricula to guide pedagogical work in their provisions.

In **Germany**, curriculum monitoring is partially mandatory for the providers to get licensed. In some cases it is mandatory after recommendations, such as in Berlin. However, these mostly internal evaluations might focus on service quality rather than curriculum implementation. The focus of evaluations depends on Länder and although there are some recommended tools, service providers generally have the freedom to choose how to assess quality. Results are not usually made public. In some cases there are sanctions attached, for example loss of funding in Berlin. Internal evaluations are recommended, by curriculum, with reference to recording children's competence (depending on Länder) through the use of observations and documentation of children's development, but they are not mandatory. Results are discussed with parents and may be used to promote children's progress. Pedagogical interactions are evaluated in case there are certain recommendations, and mostly internally through self-evaluations, but in some cases it is mandated to be monitored (e.g. in Berlin). Similarly, self-evaluation processes depend on Länder, and data are not usually publicly available.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, within the project of Measuring and Monitoring Quality (MeMoQ) the "Pedagogical Framework" serves as a guideline for providers and educators to organize ECEC practice and as a document that provides assurance of process quality in the ECEC settings, especially with regard to informing families. Staff has to conduct self-evaluations using the *New Self-evaluation Instrument*, while inspectors use the *New Monitoring Instrument*. For some providers (according to the number of settings they own), it is mandated to record planning, pedagogical practices and evaluation of children's experiences (not measurable learning goals but mainly well-being and involvement) in the *Quality Assurance Manual*, which is reviewed and evaluated during inspections (stipulated for all providers, within a cycle of 5 years), and conducted by the Care Inspectorate Agency. The tools provided, apart from evaluating settings compliance with the "Pedagogical Framework", also assist providers and staff in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of process quality in individual ECEC settings. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, pre-primary institutions are supervised by the Educational Inspectorate on a regular basis to ensure that their specific educational programmes meet the "developmental goals", as defined by law. "Developmental goals" are the minimum objectives in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that children must pursue (Aarssen, & Studulski, 2013). If deficiencies are noted, the primary concern is to ensure that the quality of preschools reaches the desired level (OECD, 2015).

In **Finland**, although monitoring curriculum implementation is not mandated for day-care centres and family day-care homes, there is a continuous evaluation process over the course of the year by staff. This is achieved through discussions with parents (and sometimes children), to ensure that the unit-specific curriculum/program prepared by staff, is consistent with National Curriculum Guidelines, and to also evaluate the implementation. Parents/guardians may also take part in curriculum development of their child's day-care centre; (European Commission, 2011; Taguma, 2013). Parent surveys are an important tool to assess and monitor the curriculum implementation, among other things. Parents/guardians may be asked, e.g., how they consider that the core goals of curriculum are met in daily life in their child's ECEC setting. Usually these surveys are conducted within all ECEC settings in the municipality or within individual ECEC settings. For the pre-primary education, the National Core Curriculum (initiated in 2010 and completed in 2014) provides the legal basis and the general framework for schools to develop their own curricula. Evaluations focus on the extent to which these curricula succeed in marrying the national guidelines with the children's local/individual needs. Formative assessments are applied during the school year and evaluations involve parents and children in open dialogues. The focus of these evaluations is the child's growth and learning, rather than mere achievement of objectives. Pre-schools also take part in the external evaluation of the pre-primary education. Monitoring of children's outcomes is not mandated but it is strongly encouraged. There are mostly internal observations. No standardized tools/methods of monitoring are systematically used (some ECEC settings may apply external school readiness testing). Teachers monitor children's work, behavior and learning in different knowledge and skill areas. Follow up is based on continuous observations and multifaceted documentation. Evaluation of pedagogical interactions is also recommended. It is usually conducted in the setting level within the process of monitoring the overall service quality. The focus is on the educator-child relationship and climate in the ECEC group; how the child's

individual needs are met in daily activities; how broader goals, as stated in national curriculum guidelines, are met in daily activities. There are no specific methods and usually evaluation practices are agreed by each local area (e.g., municipality). There is a parents/guardians' feedback questionnaire, in which they are asked to evaluate the pedagogical interactions.

In **Poland**, preschool teachers have to submit, in June, the next school program/curriculum which is evaluated for its quality and congruence with the Core Curriculum/ National Curriculum Framework¹¹ by the pedagogical board and head teacher. Sometimes the head teacher may ask an expert opinion concerning the curriculum (an experienced teacher or a representative of one of the supervising institutions). The new monitoring system concerning preschools (introduced in 2009), mandated external evaluations which are conducted by the local educational authorities. In the preschool provisions, for over 3s, monitoring of children's outcomes is mandatory. Evaluation of children's progress has two objectives. The first is to record children's readiness and inform parents. Monitoring in this case is conducted by professionals in the setting, with the participation of psychologists in some cases, using a standardized tool: *Skala Gotowości Szkolnej*. Monitoring results are not available to public. The second refers to the continuous monitoring of children's development, examining if children are active and acquiring knowledge and skills, with an aim to individualize the pedagogical work in the classroom. It is conducted through observations or/and evaluations of children's progress using worksheets. This task is supervised by the director/head of the setting. Results, again, are not made public.

In **Greece**, kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the school year have to develop a detailed educational program that reflects the principles and suggestions of the national curriculum, taking into account the characteristics and the needs of the group of children. These programmes should, in some cases, be reorganized or corrected after being evaluated by the Preschool Advisors. The "Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework", mandated since 2003, describes assessment as a continuous process that basically targets the feedback of educational process with a view to the improvement of educational provision. Within this line of thought, monitoring children's outcomes is interwoven in the instructional context and the daily activities and should take into account personal differences, their family and social background, as well as their cultural heritage and specific educational needs. It focuses on whole child development and every aspect of children's experiences in the setting. It is particularly stressed that traditional methods of assessment do not have a place in the kindergarten, but only alternative processes such as (i) evaluation of the process and products of projects, (ii) evaluation of group work by the children, (iii) record-keeping from children's works and (iv) children's portfolios. Parents usually participate in giving information about children's experiences and progress. Regulations also stipulate a framework for teacher-parent communication and collaboration, but there are not any evaluations concerning parental involvement.

In **Portugal**, for the preschool settings, the General Inspectorate of Education conducts evaluations within the model of *Desenvolvendo a Qualidade em Parcerias* (DQP), an annual sample based evaluation that regards all public settings, and since 2013 also the non-profit private providers, by using interviews, questionnaires and observations. Inspections and evaluations include suggestions for interventions to address weaknesses identified. Preschool teachers should also evaluate their own practices, and monitor process quality of their colleagues in peer reviews. Ministry of Education and Science has set "Learning Outcomes" for preschool education (three to six-year-olds). Learning outcomes are acknowledged as an evidence of child performance and they are defined in terms of child outcomes. They can be used as tools supporting teachers in their everyday work. Although the implementation of the "outcomes" will not be mandatory, it is expected that teachers, children, students and families will start using the "outcomes" and regard them as a useful tool in curriculum implementation and early development (Taguma et al., 2012). The use of "Learning Outcomes" is expected to maintain on-going dialogues with parents, and takes account of parental viewpoints and helps to inform parents of the development of the child on a sound and scientific basis (Taguma et al., 2012).

¹¹ National Curriculum Framework of Preschool Education of the 23rd December 2008.

In **England**, inspection evaluates how well providers and practitioners assess and plan for the progress that children in their care make towards early learning goals; if curriculum has suitable breadth, depth and relevance so that it meets statutory requirements, as well as the needs and interests of children. Inspectors also judge whether adults have appropriate expectations for children, and whether children are performing at typical levels of performance. Supervising, caring and motivating children are among the basic criteria concerning adult interaction. Judging the quality of pedagogical interactions is an important aspect of inspection, and focus is also on relationships and the interactions between staff and children, sensitivity (warmth, attentiveness) and responsiveness to children's individual needs (OECD, 2015, p. 148). Internal monitoring practices vary across local authorities and settings. Especially concerning monitoring of child outcomes, direct observations are conducted by Inspectors, along with other methods/practices at least once every four years focusing on the level of achievement, interests and learning styles in all 7 learning areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile EYFS (Standards & Testing Agency, 2015). Internal processes include ongoing formative assessments with an aim to help parents, carers and practitioners recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and plan activities and support. In this way, services could adapt learning experiences in tune with learning styles and interests, and level of achievement. Assessment processes involve practitioners observing children as well as taking account of parental reports.

In **Norway**, there are annual internal and external assessments of the individual pedagogical plans that kindergartens have to submit with information on how: (a) the kindergarten will work on the care, formation, play and learning of the children and (b) stipulation of the Kindergarten Act on how its content will be followed up, documented and assessed in the individual plans. Often, municipalities set out a common template for preparing such plans. Kindergartens have free choice in defining the scope and actual monitoring practices for internal assessments, which are usually based on local circumstances and needs. Children's views should be taken into account according to the Framework Plan (European Commission, 2011; Taguma et al., 2013). Municipal authorities conduct annual inspections. Monitoring of child development and well-being is usually done on a regular basis through continuous observations and assessments, albeit not in a nationally prescribed manner. It is usually only conducted internally and there are no specific tools required nationally for this purpose. Some examples of the methods used are: observations, portfolios, interviews with children, a tool called ALLE MED (Everybody In). Teachers give informal evaluations to parents once or twice a year (Aarssen & Studulski, 2013) but results are not publicly available. Pedagogical interactions constitute a theme of reflection and analysis among the staff. Evaluations are determined locally, by each setting or owner. According to the Framework Plan, they should be continuous and aim to provide feedback to parents and improve quality of interactions.

In other countries, there is an absence of systematic national frameworks or curricula, especially for the childcare sector. In most cases, settings/staffs had to prepare a plan of pedagogical work or program that is evaluated either internally, and usually by the heads/staff (**Portugal**) or with participatory processes that involve different stakeholders (**Italy**) and/or externally (**Denmark**). In some countries, there is an absence of any officially determined evaluation processes (**Greece** and **Poland**).

In **Portugal**, a quality assessment model for crèches was developed by ISS, IP (Social Welfare Institute) to monitor the pedagogical program, the practices to implement this program, the pedagogical interactions and parental engagement. This model involves internal processes through self-evaluations. Great variation exists on the way these evaluations are organized and conducted in each setting, thus no national data are available. Analysis of these assessments is supposed to facilitate discussions among colleagues to improve pedagogical practices.

In **Italy**, for children 0-3 yrs and for private non-profit 0-6 yrs ECEC providers, although there are individual pedagogical programmes reflecting different local traditions and regulations, there are not any mandatory, centrally regulated monitoring processes. Still, these programmes are evaluated within the participatory system of documentation on children's and parents' daily experiences, to provide the basis for discussion and evaluation with the participation of different stakeholders. Documentation, observations, standard evaluations in some cases, self-evaluations and customer satisfaction's questionnaires are among practices used to provide insight

into the children's processes of learning and their understanding (or misunderstanding) of rules, objectives, and learning targets (CARE, 2015), to improve pedagogical work and children's out of home institutional experiences, as well as to support innovative practices (Musatti & Picchio, 2010). For the state preschools, it is mandatory to fill in the Self-Evaluation Format, nationally proposed by the National Evaluation Institution (INVALSI), in collaboration with the primary school they are connected to, every year. There are 3 areas of evaluation: (a) children outcomes, (b) educational and teaching practices and (c) continuity, orientation and management.

In **Denmark**, the Daycare Act (2013) includes some curriculum guidelines. Settings should submit individual curricula to municipal authorities for evaluation (CARE, 2015) bi-annually, which are evaluated at least every two years by the management of the day care setting, and every two years by the municipality (CARE, 2014). Inspections are implemented by municipal authorities. The actual responsibility for the compilation and quality assurance of the educational curriculum belongs to the manager of the individual day care facility and the municipality as well. The municipality also supports and monitors pedagogical interactions according to the legislation, taking into account children's and parents' perspectives. At the institutional level, this is the responsibility of the day care manager. Parents are engaged in the compilation and evaluation of educational curriculum, including any follow-up activities resulting from the evaluation, through representation in the parents' committees. Children's outcomes are evaluated both internally and externally. The curricula encourage evaluation of children's learning outcomes but not focusing on the individual child. Outcomes are evaluated through assessing pedagogical practice at the facility, and focusing on the impact that it has on the well-being, learning and development of the group of children. The results are then dealt in conjunction with municipal inspections. Since 2007, local authorities must offer a language assessment to three-year-olds if there are linguistic, behavioural or other factors suggesting that the child may be in need of language stimulation. Additionally, all children who are not attending a day care facility must receive a language assessment (Naumann, McLean, Koslowski, Tisdall, & Lloyd, 2013).

In **Greece** some general principles and a thematic timetable for pedagogical activities are included in the "Basic Regulations of Operation" only for the public day care centres (Government Gazette, 497/ 16065/22.4.2002), but there are no mandates concerning either the evaluation of educators' plans (if any) and pedagogical work or children's progress/experiences. Moreover, although the "Basic Regulations of Operation" refers to educators' responsibility to inform parents about children's progress, on a monthly basis, it does not include any references concerning monitoring processes or criteria for children's outcome assessment. Educators, though, usually observe children's behavior, keep records of their works (drawings, crafts) and for the older children they also use worksheets to evaluate their progress.

In **Poland**, it is mandated (according to the 2011 Act, Art. 11.1) that ECEC services prepare "Status", a document that summarizes the pedagogical work in the setting specifying a general framework of goals, practices and their implementation. In this sense it could be considered as a form of curriculum. However, as the criteria for the development of "Status" are not nationally determined, there is great variation and in some cases it is too limited or too general. Monitoring is also not mandated, but some settings apply support to other professionals (mainly psychologists) to get advice on the plan of work and may design monthly pedagogical work plans. In many ECEC settings providers use questionnaires addressed to parents whose children leave the centre to record their views about the quality of children's overall experience in the setting (e.g. were the children happily going to the crèche) (CARE, 2014). As monitoring of pedagogical interactions is not explicitly stated in the regulations for the Polish ECEC provisions, orientation and processes vary among settings and different providers.

In the **Netherlands**, no curriculum requirements exist beyond what is included in general quality regulations. However, for those daycare centres that serve disadvantaged children and receive subsidy for implementing targeted education programmes as in preschools, the Inspectorate of Education conducts intensive (observation-based) inspection annually or on demand. Inspectors use extensive checklists and observation categories regarding educational quality and educational program implementation focusing on four developmental areas: language, math, motor skills and social emotional competence. In case of non-compliance with standards extra

subsidy for working with disadvantaged children can be withdrawn. Results are publicly available to stakeholders, service providers and local government and they may stimulate practice and policy improvement. Additionally, for the kindergartens (4-6) apart from the aforementioned checks concerning targeted programmes, the Inspectorate conducts inspections every year based on reports to evaluate pedagogical work and instructional quality towards intermediate literacy and math goals (in Dutch ‘tussendoelen’), as related to the 18 core goals of primary education. These checks follow the National monitoring framework of the Inspectorate regarding legal issues, structural and instructional quality. Recommendations and instructions to improve aspects of practice are compulsory. Apart from the targeted educational programmes, it is not mandatory to assess children’s outcomes. Kindergartens that are part of primary schools may use a student monitoring system developed by national educational testing service, CITO, applying observation, as well as test-based assessments, but still monitoring is not mandatory. During inspections, schools may be asked to provide access to these data. There are some self-evaluation instruments to assess the pedagogical climate in ECEC services for children under 4, in which at least the staff are involved (CARE, 2014). Results are used to improve process quality by specifying new standards (Aarssen & Studulski, 2013).

In most countries staff development is monitored externally. There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of professional development in **Italy**, though. Qualifications are checked usually during recruitment. In **Greece**, day care staff qualifications are checked at recruitment. For public centres, recruitment follows certain criteria with emphasis on the pedagogical working experience and qualifications [described in certain Presidential Degrees 37a/87, 22/90, 50/2001 (Government Gazette: 11/A/87, 7/A/90, 39/A/01)] delivered through the Supreme Employee Selection Board and carried out by municipalities. Kindergarten teachers should pass demanding national examinations carried out by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (A.S.E.P.) to enter the profession. A similar procedure is also applied in **Denmark** (Taguma, 2013). In **Italy**, for the state-run pre-primary schools staff qualifications are checked at the time of employment, while for non-state-run pre-primary schools, staff qualifications are checked during the monitoring process, which takes place when accreditation is granted (OECD, 2015).

In **Germany**, monitoring staff qualifications and composition of the working team, as well as staff training, are mandatory. In **the Netherlands**, monitoring staff qualifications and composition of the working team are mandatory, while staff training is not. The Day Care Act (2005) specifies the education requirements of the staff. The number of trained professionals per group is also usually checked (Aarssen & Studulski, 2013). In **Poland**, monitoring of preschool teachers’ professional development is mandatory. Regulations concerning assurance of staff qualifications are similar for both the childcare and preschool provisions. Internal control takes place at the recruitment level, while external controls are by the municipality. The composition of the working group is neither regulated nor monitored in some countries. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, though, this aspect of structural quality is assessed during visits by the Care Inspectorate Agency. In **England**, monitoring of staff development is mandatory only with reference to external checks. Self-evaluation processes are also decided in the local and individual setting level. In **Germany**, internal and external processes are applied before registration and on an annual basis.

In **Portugal**, training courses and workshops are accredited by a national organization, the Scientific-Pedagogical Council on Professional Development, after checks. Quality tools include staff requirements comprising compulsory in-service training (European Commission, 2011). All in-service training programmes are regulated at the national level, but the topics target local needs as well as national ones, at all different grade levels (CARE, 2015). Training courses and workshops can be planned by single organisations or several settings working together. Monitoring of these training programmes is mandatory at the entry/accreditation of the programme. Professional development is evaluated externally with visits, mostly through observations and monitoring the educational activities (CARE, 2015). The General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC) is responsible for evaluating all professional development efforts. The Decree-Law that establishes the general performance profile of preschool teachers, specifically states that the framework for the recognition of the appropriateness of teacher training programmes includes, among other specifications, the Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (CARE, 2014).

In **Finland**, although monitoring of in-service training is not mandated, the government established centres of excellence on social welfare in 2002, to convey expertise to municipalities on this topic and ensure that training content is consistent and relevant. In **Greece** there are some centrally organised in-service programmes for the kindergarten teachers, but there are no evaluation processes which are mandated. In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, inspections concern the evaluation of the measures undertaken by the providers with regard to staff training and the provision of pedagogical support through partnerships with professionals and organizations, funded by the Flemish Government. In **Poland**, accreditation procedures for institutions providing in-service training for ECEC staff who care for children over the age of three, is governed by the regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport (Act of 20th of December 2003 concerning accreditation of entities providing in-service). Accreditation is granted by Superintendents (voivodship level), after a positive evaluation of training provision is submitted.

There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of professional development in **Italy**, and no research is being conducted on how professional development impacts ECEC. It is common that local governments turn to research agencies and universities to guarantee in-service training for their personnel. In-service training depends on local resources. The coordinator of the centre also has the role of pedagogical supervisor. Evaluation processes using pedagogical documentation is carried out in the framework of in-service training, as the *educatrici* and *coordinatori* are the principal evaluators, and the evaluation activities are considered an important component of the professional practice of ECEC personnel. During evaluative discussions, the improvement of educational practices and supporting innovative approaches are main themes (Musatti & Picchio, 2010). In cases where professional development is based on special projects, evaluation is required. In some places with strong traditions in ECEC investment, municipalities may entrust ECEC services to external services, often educational cooperatives, which guarantee between two and five hours per week for continuing professional development.

Norway regularly collects data on ECEC sector staff, working conditions and workforce supply. Additionally, standardized annual reports from all kindergartens indicate their number of staff and their qualifications. Inspections are conducted every year. Based on the collected information, policy areas in need of improvement or challenges in the ECEC sector are identified. In **Denmark**, municipalities are required to ensure that day care staff has the “necessary” qualifications regarding ECEC provisions as part of the task of quality assurance and monitoring, but these requirements are not stipulated beyond this, and they are the responsibility of each Danish municipality (Naumann, McLean, Koslowski, Tisdall, & Lloyd, 2013). Among the criteria of the relevant internal and external evaluations is knowledge on curriculum subjects. No regulations or quality mechanisms for in-service professional development provisions exist. In-service training is also often broadly self-organised with access to some form of subsidy, however this is not guaranteed (CARE, 2015).

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6 . C A S E S T U D I E S

6.1 GERMANY

Two striking principles: Socio-pedagogical tradition and high autonomy

There are two principle characteristics constituting the German ECEC system. Firstly, in contrast to other countries such as England, ECEC services in Germany are not located within the public education system but within the child and youth welfare sector and, as a consequence, follow a strong socio-pedagogical tradition. As such, ECEC services were initially constituted as services for families. Secondly, Germany is divided into 16 federal states and the regulation of ECEC in Germany is based on the principles of federalism and subsidiarity, resulting in a highly decentralized system giving high autonomy, not only to the federal states and providers, but also to even the smallest unit in the system, the single ECEC setting and professional. The underlying assumption is that there are substantial differences between regions and social environments. Hence, it is a common opinion that quality cannot be defined on a higher level, but only by the setting or the ECEC professionals who know the specific local situation and are directly in contact with the children and families, and hence know their individual needs and demands. This strong orientation towards the social environment reflects the socio-pedagogical tradition. The mentioned characteristics are reflected in all the aspects of ECEC governance and quality management dealt with in this report, namely organization and regulation, curriculum, staff and monitoring of ECEC.

High diversity in providers and pedagogical approaches

Looking at the regulation of ECEC, there are three levels of policy: the federal ministry, the Länder (federal states) and the municipalities. Although the municipalities are responsible for planning and ensuring ECEC provision, the principle of subsidiarity states that societal tasks should be undertaken by the smallest possible unit. Consequently, municipalities only provide ECEC services in case non-profit organizations and churches do not provide enough places. As a result, numerous small, non-statutory, non-profit providers allocate a large share of ECEC places and there is a high diversity in pedagogical approaches. This variety is explicitly intended in order to make it possible for parents to choose according to their preferences and orientations. Since the churches provide a considerable proportion of services, especially in the Western part of Germany, the influence of the Christian churches on pedagogy in ECEC is comparatively high. With particular regard to the considerable and growing proportion of children with other cultural and religious backgrounds, whose families would prefer that their children did not attend ECEC of a Christian orientation, this might also be viewed critically as it can increase segregation of children from minority backgrounds.

West and East: Two different ECEC traditions

Another striking particularity of ECEC in Germany are the differences between the former Western and Eastern federal states, which are still existent as a consequence of the division of Germany. Large differences emerge, for instance, in the provision of places and attendance rates for under-threes: Participation in ECEC of children under the age of three has a long tradition in the former Eastern federal states. In contrast, in the former Western federal states, the proportion of children of this age group who are enrolled in ECEC was traditionally much lower. As a consequence of the legal entitlement to a place in ECEC for one and two-year-olds in 2013, it has been continually rising, and tripled to 24 % between 2006 and 2013. However, it is still nowhere near the level of the former Eastern federal states (50 % in 2013) (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2014).

Implementation of curricular frameworks in a system without controlling institutions

The strong decentralization and division into federal states also affects ECEC in Germany with respect to curricula and pedagogical approaches. In general, Germany strongly prioritizes a child-centred pedagogy with high appreciation of unguided free play. The promotion of learning and development in academic areas such as language, literacy, early mathematics and science, has been highlighted recently as a field of ECEC, whereas before there was a strong focus on the promotion of the socio-emotional development and personal values only.

In other countries, ECEC staff also make use of teacher-directed and instructional means and have worked towards the promotion of early academic development for much longer. As has been shown in several studies, domain-specific promotion of early academic skills is still rare in German ECEC. Although there are no separated academic learning sessions on specific subjects, play-oriented activities may also foster learning across different subjects (e.g. Smidt et al., 2012; Lehl et al., 2014).

Between 2003 and 2007, official curricular guidelines were introduced in all 16 federal states of Germany. The introduction of ECEC curricula has happened later in Germany compared to other countries and was associated with great concerns regarding the stronger consideration of early academic and cognitive learning areas. In 2004, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany agreed on basic principles for the ECEC curricula of all federal states (JMK & KMK, 2004). They include general assumptions about the view of the child and the role of teachers in ECEC and give examples of learning areas. The agreement has a stimulatory role, which means that the basic principles were meant to be elaborated further and adapted for the individual curricular frameworks of the federal states. All curricular frameworks define learning areas, but not learning goals. Although all federal states developed a curriculum, there are big differences regarding their binding characteristics, their understanding of children's learning processes (e.g. see the discussion on learning as self-education and co-construction), as well as the contents/learning areas prioritized in each curriculum. This has strong implications for ECEC policy, given that regulation on a higher level of other aspects than only structural, is hardly possible. This also plays an important role with regard to monitoring practices in Germany (see below).

The situation-oriented approach

Promoting early academic skills and defining learning goals has been challenged with perceived inconsistency with the pedagogical approach that has been the "roof" of the German kindergarten system until now. The situation-oriented approach was developed within the 1970s and is the most common pedagogical approach in Germany (Oertel, 1984). Even though different variations of the situation-oriented approach exist, overarching facets can be identified. It is child-centred and sees any learning as taking place and embedded into social situations emerging from children's play (Preissing, 2007; Zimmer, 2007). Hence, pedagogical strategies and actions should be based on children's interests and daily experiences. After its implementation in practice, the overall understanding was that the focus of ECEC should lie on children's social-emotional behaviour, neglecting a cognitive orientation or support of pre-academic skills. The situation-oriented approach has been strongly criticised due to its content-wise arbitrariness and insufficient didactical concept (Roßbach, 2004), leading towards a more curriculum-oriented approach. However, the historical roots and legal framework conditions still have a powerful influence on the present situation regarding the understanding and existence of ECEC in Germany.

The socio-pedagogical tradition and the qualification of staff in German ECEC

The socio-pedagogical tradition of ECEC in Germany is also reflected in the qualification of staff in this field. The vast majority of staff completed a three year post-secondary vocational training programme (ISCED level 4). This training qualifies for a broad spectrum of work within the sector of youth welfare (not necessarily early childhood education) and refers to shared principles of ECEC, as proposed by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK, 2010). In terms of pedagogy, this entails that training emphasises the co-constructive, child-centred and play-based approaches mostly found in practice. Since 2003, a fast-growing number of university courses in early childhood pedagogy have become available. However, staff with a university degree is still the exception (around 5%). In contrast, the training of primary school teachers takes place at universities. Also, the view on appropriate pedagogy for primary school teachers is different, meaning that pedagogical practices in preschool and primary schools are not aligned. Moreover, in the German ECEC system, a skills shortage is discussed. Critics of the traditional training point out that there is an insufficient focus on scientific and research-based knowledge.

Autonomy and monitoring of ECEC regulations

The federally organized and highly decentralized character of the German ECEC system, as well as the autonomy given to providers and professionals, constitute a constant challenge for the monitoring of different

aspects of ECEC. Regulations and minimum standards (staff-child-ratio, group size, etc.) are different in each of the 16 federal states. The same applies, as stated earlier, to the ECEC curriculum: Each federal state issued its own curriculum. Since the curricula often also includes remarks on monitoring, the monitoring practices differ according to the underlying curricula. Furthermore, considering the variety of providers, the diversity of monitoring practices is even growing. The child and youth welfare act (TAG § 22a) only states that ECEC providers have to assure and monitor quality. It does not stipulate the frequency, nor the way in which monitoring should be conducted, or what aspects should be monitored. A number of quality management systems are used. Although external evaluation exists, Germany relies mainly on internal evaluation. Quality assurance strategies focus on the quality of the institution, rather than on the learning achievements of children. Normally, the results of regular monitoring do not have any consequences. Apart from a situation in which the children's wellbeing is endangered, consequences are not regulated and results are usually not published.

Current challenges and debates

The German ECEC system is challenged by a number of developments shaping the recent public and political discussion.

The still on-going expansion of the ECEC system – especially for children under three – remains a challenge for ECEC in Germany in different ways. Although policy succeeded in expanding the system considerably, there are still not enough places provided. This resulted in a much more important role of childminders as providers of places for children under three that should be an equal alternative to centre daycare. With this in mind, it seems problematic that home-based care is still rather unregulated and that not all childminders are professionally qualified. Another problem resulting from the expansion is staff shortage. Against this background, there is an on-going discussion about a necessity to improve working conditions of ECEC professionals, for instance by raising their salaries or stipulating a better staff-child-ratio. The fact that the expansion involves especially places for children under three, also resulted in concerns about the qualification of staff working with children of this age. Although this topic is an integral part of initial training now, older staff still working in the field of ECEC completed initial training when children younger than three years were still not a major topic. Furthermore, there are still discussions about curricular aspects with regards to children under three. For instance, the acceptance for promoting children's (pre)academic skills and setting learning goals is already low for children older than three years, not to mention the under three year-olds.

The expansion raises another concern: Since different studies have shown that ECEC quality is mediocre and needs improving, many researchers but also practitioners, warn about putting too many efforts into quantitative expansion, while neglecting the need for at least maintaining or better developing ECEC quality. Different players in Germany (union of education and science, two political parties, several stakeholder groups) addressed this problem by claiming the introduction of a federal law of quality in ECEC. Among other things, the law was supposed to include regulations concerning staff-child-ratios, a fixed amount of time allocated for preparation and follow-up, higher salaries for staff working in ECEC and better working conditions for centre heads by releasing them from direct work with the children. Considering the federalized character of the German ECEC system and the above mentioned autonomy of providers and professionals, the decision for a federal quality law is not easy to achieve since the responsibility for regulations of many indicators addressed by a possible quality law lies at Länder level. In May 2015, the German federal parliament rejected motions for a federal quality law from two political parties. However, the discussion about a necessity of a quality law is still on-going.

Considering the fact that Germany has a comparably high percentage of foreign-born population (there are big regional differences), an important topic of ECEC policy is the participation and promotion of children from immigrant families in ECEC. Children with an immigrant background still show disadvantages with regard to their school careers and this may be linked to the fact that they represent lower participation in ECEC than children without immigrant background of their age: Only 17 percent of the 0-2-year-olds with an immigrant background participate in ECEC, compared to 35 percent of the children without an immigrant background. In the age range from 3-5 years, 85 percent of children with, and 98 percent of children without immigrant backgrounds attend ECEC (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). Although attendance rates of children with and without an immigrant background have both been rising, differences in attendance rates between these groups

have increased. ECEC is seen as a major advantage, especially with regard to opportunities for reducing immigrant children's difficulties with the German language. As a result of this, several programmes have been initiated within the last decade that have a focus on language education for children with immigrant backgrounds and socio-economically disadvantaged children. One recent national example is the federal programme "Core Daycare Centres for Language & Integration": From 2011 until 2015, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth invested 500 million Euros to expand 4,000 daycare centres throughout Germany into so-called "core daycare centres for language & integration" to support them in realizing high quality language education integrated into the daily routines. Participating daycare centres received additional financial as well as staff resources. The programme was particularly targeted at children under three, children from families with an immigrant background, and children from socio-economically disadvantaged families. It reflects the considerable financial efforts made within the last few years to create equal chances through high quality ECEC. The federal programme was well accepted by practitioners, politicians and the scientific community. As a result, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth initiated a new federal programme which was developed based on the experiences gained so far. The programme "Language Daycare Centres" runs from January 2015 until December 2019 and is again supported by huge financial investments (400 million Euros). Besides this programme, there are various other initiatives developing and implementing child-oriented concepts to foster domain-specific competencies within the daily routines of ECEC. One example is the national programme initiated by the non-profit Foundation "Haus der kleinen Forscher" (Little Scientists' House), aiming to support the professional development of early childhood educators and primary school teachers to anchor everyday encounters with science, mathematics, and technology permanently and sustainably in all early childhood education and care centres.

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The last 20 years have brought expansion and improvements in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) in England. ECEC has been an important issue on the policy agenda, with the introduction of a national curriculum (Early Years Foundation Stage) from birth to 5, a monitoring system for all ECEC providers, free entitlements to ECEC for all children between age 3 and school entry, and the establishment of integrated education and care services for all children (Sylva & Pugh, 2005; Gambaro, Stewart, & Waldfogel, 2014; Melhuish, in press). Even though the government is currently reducing public spending on services for children under five, there is still a commitment to make ECEC available to all children, and to increase its quality, thus maximising the positive impact of ECEC attendance on child outcomes. This commitment is part of the wider national policy agenda to reduce poverty and increase social mobility, as well as a wider EU co-operation on addressing access and quality of ECEC in Europe (Gambaro et al., 2014; Mathers, Eisenstadt, Sylva, Soukakou, & Ereky-Stevens, 2014; Nauman, McLean, Koslowski, Tisdall, & Lloyd, 2013). It is interesting that research evidence has played a significant role in the changes in early years policy in England in recent decades (Melhuish, in press), as it is rare for policy-makers to actively use research evidence.

In England, three main factors unify the ECEC system, and thus help towards a well-coordinated and integrated policy and practice in early childhood education and care: the organisation of ECEC under an integrated system – the Ministry of Education, a national curriculum framework which applies to all types of registered providers and age groups – the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum – EYFS (DfE, 2014), and a strong monitoring system that applies to all types of provision and is carried out by an independent agency – OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services, and Skills). On the other hand, system splits can be found in England on a number of levels, in particular related to a mixed system of public/private provision and the diversity of workforce training and support.

A common national curriculum framework

The English Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS, DfE, 2014) was introduced in 2008, and reviewed and implemented in its revised version in 2012. The framework is highly valued by educators across the sector; it received widespread support as a document grounded in developmentally appropriate play-based practice (Nutbrown, 2012). The EYFS is intended to promote good quality with consistency across all early years settings in England, so that *all* children are well supported in their learning, get equal opportunities and get a good foundation for their later education.

The EYFS requires educators to offer activities and experiences in seven areas of learning and development: Three prime areas – communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development extend from birth to school entry with particular emphasis on 0-3 years. From 3-6 years, four new areas of development are added (literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, expressive arts and design). The EYFS defines goals for each area of learning and development, and learning achievements are documented, shared and reflected on in two summary reports at age 2/3 years, and at the end of the foundation stage (age 5+). Educators are required to carry out ongoing formative assessment through observations to assess learning and to plan development opportunities that reflect the developmental stages, needs, interests and learning styles of each individual child. The main characteristics of effective learning and teaching are described as *playing and exploring*, *active learning*, and *creating and thinking critically*. The importance of purposeful play and a good balance between child-led and adult-initiated activities is emphasised for curriculum implementation. Positive

relationships and enabling environments are seen as the basis of child well-being and development and the importance of partnerships with parents is underlined.

Other than specifying the main principles of pedagogical practice, the EYFS does not provide educators with more specific guidance on methods to support each area of children's learning and development. Some critics argue that standards need to reflect more explicitly the key dimensions of good practice, in particular for working with the younger age-group, in supporting peer relations and interactions, and communication before children start formal speech (Mathers et al., 2014). Nevertheless, as pedagogical principles are part of the EYFS and obligatory, it has been argued that the curriculum framework in England has comparatively strong impact on pedagogy (Anders, 2014).

The pedagogy put forward by the EYFS has been described as one that embraces different pedagogical practices 'which are sensitive to the curriculum concept being discussed' (Siraj-Blachford & Nah, 2014). It has been described as child-centred on the one hand, emphasising the importance of individualized practice, child-initiative, play, and opportunities for holistic development. It has also been described as having its roots in Vygotsky's sociocultural constructivism (Siraj-Blachford & Manni, 2008) because it also encourages purposeful adult involvement, that involves scaffolding and sustained shared thinking, and adults taking the lead as well (especially towards the later preschool years) (see also in Anders, 2014; Wall, Litjens, & Taguma, 2015).

A strong centralised monitoring system

In order to ensure curriculum implementation and good quality in ECEC, all registered Early Years providers are inspected by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services, and Skills). Inspection takes place at least once every four years and assesses if providers meet the statutory requirements on learning and development, child assessment, staff qualifications, ratios and other criteria concerning the suitability of environment and staff. The inspection lasts between 3 and 6 hours depending on the size and opening times of the setting. The majority of the time, inspectors are observing children and staff in learning activities, play and daily routines. They will also talk to children and staff, view the schools' documentation, and speak to any parents available. In group settings, the inspection will include a meeting with the provider and/or manager. Following inspection, grades are awarded across a variety of items on a four-point scale ranging from outstanding (1) to inadequate (4). Written reports are produced and publicly available on the internet, as are the inspection frameworks that specify the criteria that inspectors use. If judged as inadequate, this can lead to immediate closure of the setting, but usually providers are given help to improve, and such improvement is monitored by more frequent inspection (OFSTED 2015b).

Until recently, municipal authorities had quality improvement responsibilities, but currently we observe a shift in England to make individual providers responsible for identifying and funding suitable training and support for improvement. This has received criticism; it has been argued that taking away the municipal authorities' responsibility to support provider improvement will lead to a fragmented, patchy, and inefficient ECEC system (Mathers et al., 2014).

Today, there are calls to avoid using the OFSTED rating as the sole assessor of quality (e.g. Gambaro et al., 2014). It is a cause for concern that some research found that OFSTED scores correlate only moderately with research-validated instruments, such as the Infant/toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Mathers et al., 2012), and that they predict children's outcomes poorly (Hopkin et al., 2010). Also, OFSTED judgements were found to be sensitive to the intake of children: in settings with higher % of children with disadvantaged backgrounds, OFSTED's quality judgements were lower (Gambaro et al., 2013).

Despite these limitations OFSTED inspection is rigorous and what stands out in England is the clear link to the national curriculum frameworks and the aim to get a comprehensive picture of the quality of provision by focusing on many aspects. How well a provider complies with welfare requirements and regulations, is taken into consideration during inspection, as well as curriculum implementation, pedagogical quality of interactions, the level and quality of partnerships with parents, and the effectiveness of staff support (see OFSTED 2015b). Importantly, the views of the workforce are also taken into account. The government provides on their website an optional self-evaluation tool for providers on the Early Years Register (developed by OFSTED, 2015d). The tool was developed having in mind the curriculum framework (DfE 2012, 2013) and the OFSTED inspection framework (OFSTED 2015b, c). OFSTED inspectors use the self-evaluation form to plan for inspection. It is used as evidence of the quality of provision, detailing the main strengths and areas for improvements identified by the provision/setting, and also how well the provider uses self-reflection as part of continuous improvement. During the inspection, the inspector considers how the setting/provision evaluates the service it offers to children, and how compatible the provider's views are with the judgements OFSTED inspectors make.

Complex system of providers: Mixed provision, with variations in access and quality

Whilst having a common curriculum framework and monitoring system, England also has a complex system with different types of ECEC provisions that vary in many ways, including differences in their focus on care or education, variations in opening times, and the source of finance. ECEC services in England are partly financed by the state and partly financed by private individuals and organisations. Funded early education places have been available to all 4-year-olds in England since 1998, and to all three-year-olds since 2004 (DfE, 2015). In addition, a targeted entitlement to free ECEC to 15 hours/week for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds has been introduced in 2013 and was extended to 40% of the population in 2014. Outside the free entitlements, parents carry the costs of ECEC. Costs per hour for parents are comparatively high in England, with fees rising faster than the average increase in wage (Daycare Trust, 2011; DfE, 2012). In 2008, it was estimated that in a two-parent family with both parents earning average wage, net childcare costs (after benefits) made up 27% of a family income (OECD, 2011). Parental costs vary by type of providers, with profit-making providers offering full-time care being the most expensive. High parental costs, and the fact that some providers do not offer sufficient hours of care to cover a full working day, affect continuity and stability of care arrangements.

Attendance at ECEC on only certain days/week is common in England, and so is simultaneous use of multiple care arrangements with a mix of informal and formal care, centre-based and home-based care, and also full-day care and sessional care arrangements. The government is currently trying to increase the availability of 'wrap-around-care' in part-time provisions so that ECEC (particularly in state settings) becomes more accessible to working parents and the spilt between different populations accessing different type of provision can be reduced.

Importantly, not only access but quality has been found to vary between types of providers. Research has previously found that quality as measured by the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) was highest in maintained settings, and lowest in the non-public sector in (Sylva et al., 2004; Mathers et al., 2007; Slot, Lerkkannen, Leseman, 2015). Those differences may be due to differences in educators' level of training, which currently remains lower in the non-public sector. Research supports this interpretation – there is strong evidence in England that higher qualifications relate to higher process quality, and to better child outcomes (e.g. Sylva et al., 2004; Mathers, Singler, & Karemaker, 2007; Ranns et al., 2011).

High diversity in training and working conditions

Differences between regulations on educator training by age group and type of provisions further split the English ECEC system. English regulations mean that there are hardly any requirements for staff working with the younger age group in ECEC (Gambaro et al., 2014). Higher levels of training can be found for the maintained sector for children above the age of three. Where public ECEC is located on school premises, the presence of educators trained at level 6 or graduate-level (teacher) is high, in other types it is less common (Brind et al., 2011). In the final year of the Foundation Stage (reception classrooms), qualification requirements and salaries are high – one educator has to have teacher qualification at graduate level, and is usually supplemented by a teaching assistant (no formal qualification required).

Recently, the Government introduced new accreditation and training programmes to address the issue of uneven qualification levels across ECEC services, particularly the low levels in the non-public sector (Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Programme). However, pay in the Early Years sector is low, with little incentives for educators to raise their education levels. For example, educators trained to the new graduate-level Early Years Teacher, are not eligible for teachers' pay commensurate with that of primary school teachers (Mathers et al., 2014; Naumann, et al., 2013).

Working conditions also vary across ECEC sectors, and depend on the training level of educators. Teacher status comes along with some paid time for planning, preparation and follow-up, which is not regulated for the workforce in the early years sector otherwise. Higher trained educators are more likely to work for state providers located in schools or children's centres; these offer more professional support than settings in the non-public sector. Despite Government commitment to improve the workforce in the Early Years sector, issues around pay, qualification levels and continuing professional development and support remain challenge in England. Structural aspects of ECEC vary across different types of providers, affecting pedagogical practice and levels of process quality.

Equality in ECEC: a remaining challenge

Over recent years, a number of measures were put into place to support ECEC equality within the UK. As a result, there was a steep increase in the uptake of ECEC places throughout the UK, particularly for sessional ECEC provision for two, three, and four year olds (through the funded places), and to a lesser extent for the uptake of full-day care provisions (Brind, McGinigal, Lewis, & Ghezelayagh, 2014). The take-up of services in disadvantaged areas recently improved significantly. Despite this, for those without free early education eligibility the cost of childcare is an ongoing problem. Within the UK, childcare costs have continued to rise above the rate of inflation. National reports also suggest that there are difficulties in providing places for families living in poor, rural or marginalised areas, for parents with atypical work-patterns and for those with children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (Dickens, Wollny and Ireland, 2012; Rutter, 2015; SENDirect, 2016), and for children where no adult is in paid employment (Kazimirski *et al* 2008b, cited Coghlan, 2010, p.35). It has been found that current childcare options and work incentives are not proving sufficient to enable some families in the lowest income groups to move back into work (Rutter, 2015).

The Department for Education (DfE, 2015) reports that 98% of 4-year-olds and 92% of 3-year-olds, but only 58% of 2-year-olds who are eligible to a funded place in ECEC, were actually taking up their free place. Thus, the offer of free early education fails to reach a substantial number of families with 2-year-olds in need. A number of factors can affect uptake and need to be addressed to ensure more equality. These include entitlement awareness, lack of access to transport, knowledge of services and how to access them, cultural beliefs of the

family, experience of language barriers, and they have all been discussed as barriers to participation in ECEC in Europe (Lazzari and Vandebroek, 2012). Additionally, some data indicates that the socio-economic status of families affects the uptake of free entitlements (Speight *et al* 2009 cited Coghlan, 2010, p.35).

The sufficiency of ECEC provision is an important factor for accessibility. The 2006 Childcare Act states that municipal authorities throughout the UK must ensure that there is adequate provision for working parents. Yet despite this, recent data gathered for the 2015 Childcare Costs Survey report (Rutter, 2015) found that less than half of the local authorities on England reported sufficient childcare for working parents. Recent reports have commented on a mismatch between supply and demand, in particular in rural or deprived areas, where early education can be more expensive to deliver and government subsidies are unable to cover the costs of a centre (Rutter, 2015). The current funding structure is one aspect affecting the sufficiency of ECEC provision in England. ECEC providers are required to keep their costs down in order to stay affordable, and thus often work with tight margins (Rutter, 2015). If there is not enough demand, or where early education is more expensive to deliver, child care costs rise and centres operate at a loss (Brind *et al.*, 2014). Thus, there is pressure to concentrate on provision with high demand; in addition, there is a growing number of centres offering only part-time sessional care, which may be effective at reaching non-working parents but combined with the down-turn in full-time places may exclude equally needy working parents (Gambaro *et al.*, 2014). From an equality perspective however, in England, disadvantaged three and four-year-olds are more likely to access ECEC in the state sector, which overall shows higher quality (Gambaro *et al.*, 2014).

Nevertheless, not all children live in areas where maintained ECEC places are available, and in addition the expansion of ECEC places for younger children relies heavily on the non-public sector. Thus, there are calls for the expansion of the maintained ECEC provision in England, both in terms of the number of places available, as well in terms of the hours on offer, so that access by different types of population can be facilitated.

Conclusion

England has a common curriculum and inspection framework, intended to ensure continuity and high quality of ECEC experience for all children. The good news is that both of these aspects can directly have an impact on process quality, and thus ensure well-being and positive development for all children. On the other hand, important structural aspects of the ECEC systems are less well-regulated, in particular qualification and support of the workforce (Gambaro *et al.*, 2014). In the light of English research findings on associations between structural aspects and process quality (and also child outcomes) this causes concern. Thus, ECEC policy in England currently faces two main challenges – first, investments into structural aspects to support curriculum implementation as well as process quality; and second a continuing focus and investment into ECEC provision that ensures equal access and participation.

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A typical case of ECEC “split model”

The variety of early child care and education arrangements is rather limited compared to other European countries. Relatives and grandparents in particular, remain by far the most common form of alternative "low or at no cost" in-home care. There are two potential alternatives for parents: “babysitting”/“child-sitting” in the child's own home or out-of-home, group-based forms of care and education, such as day care centres/nurseries and kindergartens/pre-primary schools. The former can be difficult and frustrating because it is temporary, changeable, and expensive with no officially approved or registered babysitters. Many of them are unskilled, most of the time, low-paid immigrant women who are hired to combine informal children's care with the performance of domestic chores (Bagavos, 2004). No other forms of child care (e.g. childminders or family day care, au pairs, playgroups, or organized family care etc.) exist on any significant scale.

With regard to the formal ECEC system in Greece, it is typical of a “split model” (divisional system), either within private or public sector, involving two parallel and distinct structures, with a different profile in terms of governance, funding, priorities, orientations and missions (Petrogiannis, 2010), as it seems to be the case for the majority of European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). The first structure concerns the Early Childhood Care [and informally] Education (ECC/E), provided in Child (*Paidikoi Stathmoi*) and Infant/Toddler Centres (*Vrefonipiakoi Stathmoi*) for children from as young as 2-3 months (or 7 months for the broader public sector nurseries) up to 5 years of age. They are under the direct authority of municipalities and the indirect auspices of either the Ministry of Interior (for public centres) or the Ministry of Employment, Social Security and Social Solidarity (for private centres) from 2015 (formerly under the Ministry of Health and Welfare).

Enrolment in municipalities' nurseries is based on economic, employment and social criteria; priority is given to working mothers and socio-economically disadvantaged families (e.g., single-parent families, families with a disabled parent, large families, immigrant families etc.). The subsidies provided by the Ministry of the Interior cover only basic operational costs and there is a considerable variation in pricing policies among the local authorities in the country, leading inevitably to inequalities and contradictions (KEDKE, 2004).

The second structure, the Early Childhood Education (ECE), which is the first formal pre-primary educational stage for older children (4 yrs up to compulsory school age, i.e. 6 yrs), is represented by kindergartens/pre-primary schools (*Nipiagogeion*) supervised by the Ministry of Education. Kindergartens can be housed independently or together with primary schools, and they are all-day (or daylong) or ordinary program kindergartens. Since 2006, pre-primary school attendance is compulsory for the age group 5-6 for all children regardless of the residence status of their parents, promoting in this way better inclusion to the educational system and preparation for the primary school (Economidis, 2009, 2010).

Basic procedures for quality assurance in a system with no explicit notions of quality

One of the characteristics of the Greek ECEC system is the lack of explicit notions of quality in the steering documents, as well as the lack of any official monitoring procedures regarding the assessment and evaluation of early childhood environments or the evaluation of kindergarten teachers and caregivers (Gregoriadis et al., 2014; Rentzou, 2011). It could be argued, though, that there are some basic mechanisms for the assurance of quality provision in the Greek ECEC system that concern: (i) investment in early childhood teachers and educators' qualifications, (ii) national, demanding processes for their recruitment, at least in the public sector, (iii) provision of updated official national kindergarten curricula and accompanying guides for the teachers and parents, (iv) the prominent role these curricula give to teachers for the design, organization and implementation of the educational program, (v) the responsibility of educators to develop daily programmes for the ECEC settings and to update their knowledge and skills, overtaking the lack of any official curricula for the day care centres and the lack of in-service training, (vi) the role of school advisors to support teachers' pedagogical work, (vii) deep

centralization of governance for the pre-school education provisions and (viii) governance and management of the public day-care centres by local authorities and the administrative councils at the setting level.

A deeply centralized system with many inconsistencies

Despite the subsequent reforms of the last three decades, the Greek education system has remained highly centralized with the Ministry of Education, through prefectural or local offices, having the overall authority and supervision of the entire education system. The governance forms a complex and bureaucratic managerial profile without much consistency among the different political forces at the helm of the state governance. For the pre-school education/kindergartens, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the curriculum, the basic regulations and functioning of the schools, and the employment and training of the teachers.

Since 2004, all public nurseries were transferred from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to local authorities (municipalities) in an attempt to decentralize the administrative system and engage local communities. However, this shift has resulted in heterogeneity in provision of public ECEC with local discrepancies in the level of fees, the conditions of access and the quality of services provided by publicly-funded ECEC structures (Petrogiannis, 2010).

One of the discontinuities of the system concerns the regulation and monitoring of the private and the public provisions for both day care centres and kindergartens. For both the private day care centres and kindergartens, there are certain regulations concerning eligibility criteria for the infrastructure, regulating indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as safety and sanitary provisions, while there are no such mandates for the public sector. Due to this inconsistency and ambiguity in the legislation, there is great variation in the content and quality of pedagogical work within and among settings in private and public ECC sector. On the other hand, there is a common national curriculum for all kindergartens.

In kindergartens, teachers are expected to organize challenging learning environments and activities based on (a) the “Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework” (CTCF) mandated in 2003, which specifies the key content principles per subject/area, the general education goals (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values), and the indicative basic concepts of the cross-thematic approach and (b) the Kindergarten Curriculum, released electronically by the Ministry of Education and Pedagogical Institution in 2011, but not mandated, following also recommendations and directions offered in the accompanying Guides (in 2006, 2008 and 2011). Both Curricula recognise the prominent role kindergarten teachers have in ECE provision since they are those who determine the educational program and what is going to be implemented in the classroom (Sofou & Tsafos, 2010).

Regarding day care centres, there is no formal statutory curricular framework for any type's or sector's child care centres. Since 2002, the “Basic Regulation of Operation” is the only formal document providing an indicative daily schedule/program that describes different types of creative daily activities for infants/toddlers and young children, as well as a description of basic structural aspects of quality, such as group size, children-teacher ratio, feeding requirements, hygiene conditions and staff qualifications and tasks. Taking into account the fact that there is no official curriculum, apart from some general pedagogical principles and objectives, it is clear that the system recognizes a central role of educators in shaping the quality of care provisions (Doliopoulou, 2006).

The fact that kindergarten programmes are supported by a national curriculum that provides specific guidelines for the overall programme structure, while the childcare centres do not have such support, may have an impact in the childcare and educational provisions in these two preschool environments, was highlighted in a recent national study focusing on two aspects of process quality, “activity” and “programme structure” (Gregoriadis, Tsigilis, Grammatikopoulos, & Kouli, 2015) using the corresponding subscales of ECERS-R. However, although differences in the educational orientation, supervision and financing between the two settings should also be taken into consideration when interpreting these results, it is evidenced that there is a need for a “strong and equal partnership in the Greek early childhood education system” to address the issue of equity in quality provisions.

Pedagogical and theoretical underpinnings of the curricula

The Greek ECEC does not have an official curriculum, neither in a national nor a regional level, and activities are scheduled only in each centre's level. It is not compulsory for the centres to report these activities in written form. Still, basic pedagogical principles are provided in the "Basic Regulation of Operation". It is stated that the Centres are places offering agoge (a term meaning value-based nurturing process) and safe accommodation to preschool children. The basic purpose is to unify preschool education according to the latest scientific data that aims to assist children's overall development (physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially). The program should help preschoolers' smooth transition from the family to the school environment. Apart from eliminating, as far as possible, the differences that may arise from cultural, economic and educational level of parents, centres should provide guidance to parents and assist them to raise awareness on issues of modern pedagogy and psychology.

The kindergarten official/national curriculum is based on contemporary theories concerning young children's development and learning, taking into account the needs of the society in its local, national and global perspective, as well as the challenges of the contemporary lifestyle. The new preschool curriculum was part of a three-volume national Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework Syllabus Design for all grades and subject areas of the compulsory education (up to 3 years of high school). By being included in the unified planning of the curriculum, early childhood education was granted equal status with the other levels of the educational system (Sofou & Tsafos, 2010). The Cross-Thematic Curriculum for the Kindergarten was described as an organized system that delineates what children should learn, the processes that lead to fulfillment of program objectives, as well as the context of teaching and learning. The cross-thematic approach, together with the project method, was proposed as the basic methodological approaches in educational program development. Cultural and other differences should be taken into account and addressed through a social skills development perspective. There are no official curricular/pedagogical guidelines, neither in a national nor a regional level, and activities are scheduled only in each centre's level. It is not compulsory for the centres to report these activities in written form.

Emphasis on kindergarten teachers and caregivers/early childhood educators' qualifications and training

A four-year bachelor degree is required from the early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers, which is delivered by higher Technological Educational Institute's (TEI) Department of Early Childhood Education and Care and University Departments of Preschool Education (they may be entitled Departments of Early Childhood Education), respectively.

Recruitment of the pedagogical staff in the public day care centres and kindergartens follows certain criteria, with emphasis on the pedagogical working experience and qualifications delivered through the Supreme Employee Selection Board (ASEP). Early childhood educators' assistants in day care centres should hold a diploma or certificate from a post-secondary technical/vocational college.

Nursery educators have very limited opportunities for in-service training and no relevant plan organised centrally. It depends on the municipality's policy or the employer of private nurseries to cover the fees for the participation of the early childhood educators in workshops and seminars, which are organized sporadically by scientific or professional bodies. On the other hand, kindergarten teachers have opportunities to attend seminars organised by the central authorities, or locally by the Preschool Advisors and local educational authorities, which are free of charge for the teachers. However, there is a lack of coordination, evaluation and central planning concerning teacher development. Relevant research to inform educational policies is limited. Finally, the fact that the introduction of new curricula for the kindergarten was not accompanied by the relevant training for the whole educational personnel has resulted in problems with their implementation.

A new 2010 law considers staff qualifications, such as postgraduate educational expertise, in-service training and specialization, as well as certified skills in ICT, among the criteria for advancement in educational hierarchy and assignment to administrative positions, instead of the years of in-service experience and seniority alone.

Lack of monitoring mechanisms and the issue of questionable quality

The lack of available information on the quality of ECEC services in Greece has been widely documented (Papathanassiou, 1997; Papaprokopiou, 2003; Petrogiannis, 1995, 2001; Mantziou, 2001; Municipality of Athens, 1998). The relevant research remains an underdeveloped area receiving neither adequate encouragement nor support. According to Petrogiannis and Melhuish (2001), the lack of control and quality monitoring for child care centres may be attributed to the lack of inspection mechanisms and welfare services, whether at the state or local (municipal) government levels. In addition, the lack of evaluative procedures could be attributed to the dichotomy between care and education that contributes to the confusion of responsibilities between services (Rentzou, 2015).

No official processes exist to regulate and evaluate basic structural aspects in the Greek kindergarten. In 2013, a new information system called “My School” was initiated by the Ministry of Education, integrating all relating digital platforms with an aim to record the basic structural characteristics of all school units, so as to organize and facilitate administration.

In the public day care centres, each educator is responsible for the design and organization of the daily activities. However, the lack of a comprehensive curriculum, the fact that the only official guidelines concerning the purposes and principles of public ECEC as described in the “Basic regulations” do not seem to meet basic requirements of contemporary pedagogy (Rentzou, 2014), and the absence of monitoring mechanisms, are basic reasons to question the quality of children’s daily activities. In the private sector, educators are under the supervision of the head teachers and owners and, according to legislation, they should implement the program of the setting. No data are available concerning the quality of the provided services, though.

Pre-school Advisors have an important role in supervising and guiding kindergarten teachers’ pedagogical work. However, the advisory character of their role, the fact that they have a great number of schools and kindergarten teachers under their responsibility, along with the fact that they are not accountable to a higher authority, result in restricted involvement in educational planning, limited observation of the teachers and restricted opportunities for providing actual guidance and support. Some researchers argue that only a limited number of preschool teachers actually implemented the curricular mandates, and in a way that it may not always conform to the explicit goals and intentions described in the curricular texts (Kavalari, Kakana, & Christidou, 2012; Sofou & Tsafos, 2010).

Although the “Basic Regulations of Operation” for the public day care centres describes educators’ obligation to inform parents about children’s progress, it does not include any references concerning monitoring processes or criteria for children’s outcome assessments. No systematic assessment occurs. Educators observe children’s behavior informally, keep records of their works (drawings, crafts), and for the older children they also use worksheets to evaluate their progress.

In kindergartens, the “Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework” describes assessment as a continuous process that basically targets the feedback of educational process with a view to the improvement of educational provision. Within this line of thought, monitoring children’s outcomes is interwoven in the instructional context and the daily activities and should take into account personal differences, their family and social background, as well as their cultural heritage and specific educational needs. It focuses on whole child development and every aspect of children’s experiences in the setting. The Kindergarten Curriculum indicates that children’s self-assessments and dialogues are amongst the proposed methods, while a portfolio is recognized as a basic assessment tool.

Challenges

Despite the fact that the former government established the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE) in 2013, an autonomous, administrative institution for the evaluation of educational work supervised by the Ministry of Education, and that there was a relevant law concerning evaluation procedures, these were only operated in a pilot stage for a 2-year period. Following which, they then remained inactive due to strong reactions from teachers' unions. The main criticism focused on the controlling nature of the proposed evaluation system, which connected the results of the evaluations with teachers' salaries and professional development. However, the mandates for teachers' evaluation and promotion have again been set in the political agenda with a new wave of reactions from teacher unions attributing a controlling and punitive nature to the proposed type of evaluation. The unions declare their fears that these processes will result in layoffs, and that they are directly related to the economic crisis cutbacks (Lakasas, 2016).

Turning to early childhood educators working in infant/child centres, research data suggest that they are both reluctant to evaluation processes and that they tend to over-evaluate the quality of services they provide (Rentzou, 2011).

Issues for consideration

Despite the lack of official monitoring and evaluation processes in the Greek ECEC, research studies over the last few years have provided some evidence about aspects of quality in different settings. Researchers have used a variety of methodological procedures and instruments to capture the reality in childcare and education environments. Although there are limitations in many of these studies, they have raised certain issues for consideration for all stakeholders in order to improve quality in ECEC services:

- a) The use of well-known instruments such as ECERS and ITERS has provided evidence that can be comparable across studies and with international data and standards. Still, all researchers have noted the existence of cultural differences that necessitate for adaptations concerning the applicability of the scales into the Greek context and interpretations that take into account the cultural background.
- b) Stakeholders' belief systems play a critical role in the way they interact with curricula and legislations. The Greek ECEC split system, with different missions and orientations, the one year compulsory education in the kindergartens, and the completely different profile of primary education, are basic factors among others that render long-term intervention programmes impossible to be organized and implemented, with an aim to ensure quality and continuity in children's institutionalized care and educational experiences.
- c) Teachers/educators are key contributors in ECEC quality. Investment in their qualifications, although a powerful asset, could not counterpoise for the minimum quality standards set by legislations, the lack of resources, the minimum training opportunities, the limited professional development opportunities, and all the other factors that seem to hinder the quality of ECEC provision in Greece.
- d) Lack of a national curriculum for the childcare provisions and appropriate monitoring and support for curriculum implementation in the preschool education settings are basic factors, among others, that account for the low quality of ECEC pedagogical and educational provisions, identified in many studies. The gap between formal and actual curricula seems to relate to lack of: quality training, evaluation processes, pedagogical support and low standards in basic regulations.
- e) With regard to parental involvement, evidence from research indicates the need for: (i) a clear and shared understanding among practitioners of parental involvement that addresses issues of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, (ii) concrete programmes based on specific and consistent goals concerning home-school communication, (iii) relevant teacher pre-service and in-service training, (iv) parents' support and consultation, (v) more emphasis in home-based involvement and power sharing and, (vi) large-scale national research programmes on parental involvement in preschool settings.

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A recent publication (OECD, 2015) has provided a thorough overview of the ECEC system in Norway. This case study summarises some of the information presented there in order to provide a short overview of some of the key elements of the Norwegian ECEC system, with a focus on the main factors that support good quality, as well as current challenges Norway faces in ensuring good quality ECEC for all children.

Financing, access and participation

Over the last decade, Norway's ECEC system has been strongly expanded. Norway is among the OECD countries with the highest share of public expenditure on ECEC (OECD Family Database, 2014) and public funding for this sector has strongly increased over the past years (ibid.). Parental fees are comparatively low, and have seen a significant decrease, related to the introduction of a maximum parental fee in 2004, and subsidy schemes for low income families. Families pay a maximum of 6% of their income¹² for a place in ECEC, and for three-, four- and five-year-old children in low income families access is free for 20 hours per week. Since 2009, all children aged 1¹³-6 have a right for a full-time place in ECEC. Correspondingly, participation rates are high even at younger ages, with an exception of the child's first year where ECEC participation is very low due to generous public expenditure on family benefits and maternity/paternity arrangements. Despite high levels of ECEC participation, there is regional variation in participation rates, and rates are generally lower for children with a disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those with an immigrant background. To tackle lower ECEC participation of families with low income and/or minority language background, municipalities in Norway have this year been granted means to improve outreach to those families, for instance by providing services tailored to their needs, and by informing families better about ECEC, for example through communication in different languages.

High levels of integration and local governance

Norway's ECEC system is characterized by high levels of integration with respect to different indicators. To ensure greater coherence between educational institutions and to point out the role of kindergarten as first stage in the process of life-long learning, responsibility for ECEC was moved from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and is since 2006 with the Ministry of Education and Research. The responsibility for monitoring and supervision of the sector lies with the Directorate for Education and Training. Municipalities play a key role in policy implementation and can adapt kindergarten provision to local needs. They own more than 50% of ECEC services and monitor all services in their districts. Due to the local autonomy of municipalities the national government is faced with a great challenge ensuring equal service provision. Corresponding to Norway's holistic approach to ECEC, all ECEC providers can serve the complete age range of children before compulsory school. The requirements on educator training are relatively high and apply to under as well as over three year-old children. The continuity between different age groups is further facilitated by a comprehensive curriculum framework¹⁴ (Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2006) across all age groups and providers of ECEC which was decided and implemented in 2006. The ECEC curriculum is also linked to the primary school curriculum, focusing on the same values and similar learning areas (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015).

¹² 2015

¹³ For 1-year olds: Children that turn one year before the end of October.

¹⁴ a revised version of the first curriculum framework implemented in 1996

Staff in Norwegian ECEC – Strengths and challenges

Staff's professional and personal competence is seen the most important resource in the kindergarten and a prerequisite to ensure that the kindergarten is a good arena for care, play, learning and social cohesion. Norway's good staff-child-ratio, qualification levels and diversity of pedagogical staff can be considered particular strengths of its ECEC system. In 2012, the ministry established a new framework for the Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education and Care. The previous preschool teacher education was revised and renamed kindergarten teacher education. A new national strategy for raising the competence in the sector 2014 – 2020 was launched by the Ministry of Education and Research in August 2013. It aims to design a systematic plan for raising the formal competence of all staff. The government has allocated 410 million NOK in the budget for 2016 for raising quality in the sector, and this includes a focus on raising competence. This more than doubles the investment in quality in the sector in the last three years. Although considerably reduced within the last years, shortage of qualified staff connected to insufficient pay, status and career options in this field still poses a major challenge. Although qualification requirements for educational staff are rather high (Bachelor's level), there is no formal qualification required for auxiliary staff (assistants) and only one third of the assistants have pedagogical education on a secondary level. Since assistants pose a considerable proportion of staff, there should be mandatory minimum qualification levels for all staff working in ECEC (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2016). This recommendation becomes even more important considering that exceptions from the requirement of at least one third of staff in a setting with Bachelor degree are common practice (ibid.). Several national strategies have been developed in the past decade to address the problem of underqualified staff, including new models that combine work and studies or encourage staff already employed in the sector to increase their qualifications. In addition, mentoring for new kindergarten teachers in their first year in their profession was introduced in 2009 as a strategy for easing the transition between studies and work. According to this strategy, the kindergarten owners are responsible for offering mentoring to new teachers, for which they receive support from the Ministry. This strategy has yet to be officially evaluated in December of 2016.

Child-centred pedagogy and focus on children's rights

The Norwegian curriculum framework has its roots in the Nordic pedagogical tradition. It is based on a holistic approach to childcare and learning, as well as respect for the value of childhood itself. Practices in ECEC Services work in accordance to different approaches, for instance Froebel, Bruner and Freire but also Montessori and Waldorf as the two most common distinct pedagogical alternatives. The broad ECEC goals refer to the promotion of human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and an appreciation of sustainable development. In terms of children's development and learning, the goals refer to the task to nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to learn, as well as giving children basic knowledge of central and topical fields. Staff are required to address seven learning areas: 1) Communication language and text, 2) body, movement and health, 3) art, culture and creativity, 4) nature, environment and technology, 5) ethics, religion and philosophy, 6) local community and society, and 7) numbers, spaces and shapes. Although there are goals for the work within each learning area, the emphasis is on children's experiences in subject areas rather than on the operationalisation of developmental goals. There is no assessment of achievements in learning areas. The curriculum framework lays emphasis on children expressing their views as well as children's right to participation, which requires time and space for listening and talking, and responsible adults who take the whole group into consideration. Adults are expected to facilitate meaningful, challenging experiences based on the children's interests, skills and knowledge using their knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children (Moser, 2014).

Revised curriculum framework plan

In the past years there has been criticism towards the current Framework. Quality of Norwegian ECEC services has been found to vary greatly across providers, and increasingly doubts have been raised about its suitability to sufficiently ensure provision of high quality for all children. Calls for an improved framework want to see progression from age 1 to 6 better ensured, and transition between kindergarten and primary school improved.

There are calls for better clarification of goals and standards for pedagogical practice, and better clarification of staff responsibilities. Hence, in 2014, a working group was set up by the Ministry to submit its proposal for a revised framework plan which is to be implemented in 2017 (Nordic Network for ECEC, 2016). The new plan aims at ensuring high quality in all kindergartens. The White paper to the parliament on the revision was heavily debated in the field, and there has been reactions indicating that some feel there is a shift towards a "readiness-for-school-approach" with an emphasis on learning and child outcomes. In fact, comparing children's abilities and competencies with outer criteria is explicitly unwanted within the Norwegian ECEC curriculum whereas a pedagogic documentation inspired by Reggio Pedagogy is desired. Also, given the high importance of children's rights and among these the right for privacy, a systematic documentation of children's development is criticized by some groups, including practitioners. This regards in particular the provision of these data to schools. The answer from the government has been that the kindergartens still will build on a Nordic tradition with protection of children's right to privacy and a holistic view on learning that acknowledges the intrinsic value of childhood, while at the same time increasing the emphasis on learning. A proposed regulation on documentation and assessment in ECEC was sent back to the ministry after a discussion in the parliament in 2015.

Monitoring and quality assurance

As pointed out earlier, the Norwegian ECEC system can be considered as highly integrated. Also, there are strong regulations on different structural quality aspects. These conditions facilitate quality assessment and monitoring, and in fact there are national inspection guidelines and local monitoring practices in place. Importantly, there is no national Inspectorate in Norway specifically established for quality assessments in ECEC. Responsibility is with the municipalities as local authorities that are legally obliged to provide guidance and ensure that kindergartens are operated in accordance with current rules. The county governor, operating at regional level, has the task to supervise that the municipality carries out the responsibilities imposed on it as the local authority for kindergartens. Criticism has pointed out a conflict of interest inherent in the monitoring system, with the municipalities being the owners of public kindergartens and at the same time functioning as inspectors for all services, including private kindergartens. It has therefore been argued that the scope of monitoring as well as the roles of stakeholders in this process are not well defined. This can be seen as a call for clarification of the purpose of inspections. While in Norway a number of structural quality standards are very well defined and monitored, staff quality and process quality are not. The individual kindergarten settings and staff have a great deal of freedom in translating the curriculum and expectations into practice and adapting it to the specific circumstances of the setting and the individual child. In theory, this allows individual development and the adaptation of learning opportunities for individual children. However, it needs highly qualified staff to create high-quality learning opportunities this way. As the qualifications of a considerable share of staff are low, this free approach poses a significant challenge for achieving good or best practice. Thus, some argue that regulations regarding the development and assurance of staff and process quality are all the more important to support staff with its challenging tasks. In addition, thorough documentation of children's development and learning is seen by some as another important tool in assuring high quality ECEC. However, in light of the high importance of children's rights and the strongly child-centered pedagogy, this meets with strong criticism in Norway with many warnings against the development of a new practice of detailed assessment and documentation.

Current challenges and debates

The Norwegian ECEC system faces a number of challenges. As pointed out above, the first relates to the provision of good quality across all providers. In Norway, there are a lot of small municipalities. While this enables the adaption of ECEC provision to local needs, it also leads to challenges regarding the implementation of national policy initiatives and the inspection with respect to national regulations. Small municipalities often lack the necessary staff and resources for these tasks. County governors are responsible for monitoring the municipalities' compliance with national regulations but often do not have sufficient capacities for it. One

suggestion to improve the structure of organisation is to provide financial incentives to municipalities to form clusters or federations of ECEC services (OECD, 2015).

The second challenge relates to participation. Although the ECEC system has been strongly expanded and affordability of kindergarten increased significantly, participation of disadvantaged families and especially ethnic minorities is still lower than average, with gaps being particularly high for the youngest children. Affordability continues to be an issue despite the fact that parental fees are linked to family income, and 20 free hours of ECEC per week are offered for disadvantaged for four and five year-old children. Besides discouraging participation, parental costs for ECEC (and this includes for instance additional fees for meals) can lead to or increase segregation by sorting parents by income among programmes. Hence, fees for attendance are not the only costs to be considered when talking about increasing affordability and lowering segregation.

A third challenge relates to access. Criticism has been raised that the admission system in Norway is too inflexible: children reaching the age of one have a right to ECEC, but commonly there is only one cut-off point for enrollment per year, and children turning one shortly after the autumn cut-off can have to wait for up to one year for their enrollment. This is problematic in two ways, first because it leads to the child being denied the possible benefits from ECEC participation within this year, and second because it also means one extra year out of the labour force for one of the parents. Similar or even longer waiting times are the case for families moving to another location. Encouragingly, in 2015 an additional block funding of NOK 333 million was admitted to municipalities to increase flexibility of admission, so changes might be visible soon (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015). In addition, the cut-off point has been moved to 1st of November in 2016 by a decision in the Parliament.

A fourth challenge relates to monitoring. An important precondition for quality improvement is a thorough quality monitoring. Although strong regulations on different structural quality aspects facilitate quality monitoring, and there are several national inspection guidelines and local monitoring practices in place, these do not seem to be well suited to maintain and develop process quality. In fact, monitoring mainly focusses on structural quality, the purpose and content of ECEC as well as children's and parents' involvement (Haugset et al., 2016). In addition, criticism towards monitoring points out a lack of shared understanding regarding the goals and contents as well as the procedures and frequency of monitoring. No minimum training is required for municipal external inspectors; thus there are calls for a minimum training requirement to ensure sufficient expertise of inspectors. Finally, another important condition for successful quality development in Norway is seen in the development and use of valid and reliable instruments for the assessment of process quality which ensure comparability between different services.

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7 . C O N C L U S I O N S

The extensive review of the eleven countries' ECEC systems revealed differences between countries, but also common trends and challenges. This section will discuss the findings of this study for the four main areas ECEC system characteristics (such as governance structure, funding systems and legal framework), curricula, staff and monitoring, and draw conclusions regarding possible implications for European ECEC policy and practice.

7.1 ECEC SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

How ECEC is provided through different types of services is an important aspect to consider, as it relates to issues of quality and access. High variation between different types of services that exist alongside each other was found in European countries taking part in this study, in terms of emphasis on care or education, the age groups served, opening times, and costs to parents.

While it can be argued that variation across the type of services provided is better suited to meet the different needs and preferences of families, high variation also has disadvantages which relate to issues of quality and access. First, high variation between services makes it more difficult to support and ensure good quality of ECEC experience for all children. Importantly, quality has been found to vary depending on the type of provision, with the more education oriented providers showing higher quality (Mathers, Sylva, & Joshi, 2007; Slot, Lerkkanen, & Leseman, 2015).

Second, the complex structure of ECEC provision can also impact the continuity of children's experience. Over the period of their preschool years, children experience multiple-care arrangements (consecutively, but also simultaneously). So far, little is known about the effects of multiple education and care arrangements for young children's development, but there is no question that they affect continuity in many ways. For the child, it may limit opportunities to build strong relationships with caregivers and peers. In addition, little continuity in daily practice and varying expectations in different provisions, might challenge and exhaust young children. For the educator, the reality of looking after many children with multiple care arrangements and limited time in their care, may limit opportunities to get a deep understanding of the interests, strengths and needs of each individual child or even the specific group of children with which they are working.

Third, differences in opening-times and costs to parents mean that certain types of providers can be accessible only to certain populations. This is a matter of concern because it risks more segregation which challenges the the provision of good process quality in those groups with a high percentage of disadvantaged children, and because it reduces the likelihood of providing the degree of social mix that is beneficial to children and their development.

We found that public and private providers usually exist alongside each other. While private providers can receive their funds from public sources, they usually draw at least some of their funds from parental fees. There were marked differences in our sample in terms of public expenditure on ECEC, and relatedly in terms of parental costs. International databases do not report on how public funding of ECEC is distributed between cost factors (e.g. staff training and support, salaries, facilities and equipment) – and these decisions are often taken on a local level. This limits conclusions on how public funding relates to pedagogical practice. However, low public spending usually relates to higher parental costs.

We found that parental costs vary greatly between countries in Europe, but also between ECEC in different types of providers, and for different age groups. Parental costs can also impact the quality of ECEC that children receive, particularly where costs become too demanding for families, and providers have to work to keep their costs down. Thus, wherever parental costs and competitiveness in the market are important factors, it is essential

to put mechanisms in place to ensure good quality (e.g. minimum quality standards, common curriculum frameworks, educator training, and monitoring systems).

Recognising the need for good quality ECEC, particularly for the more vulnerable families, Europe increasingly puts policies in place to reduce costs for those families in need. Childcare fees are often reduced for disadvantaged families. In addition, countries provide a range of cash benefits, rebates and tax reductions aimed at helping parents reduce the net cost of purchased childcare. Support to families for childcare costs can be provided in two different ways – demand-side funding (funding provided directly to families) and supply-side funding (funding provided directly to settings). It has been argued that the first is hard to control (and it is not easy to link funding directly to provider costs or quality of provision), while the latter can be more easily linked to, and made contingent upon quality criteria, such as improved qualifications (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2013; in Mathers et al., 2014).

Finally, public expenditure on ECEC also has to be viewed in relation to how it links to the wider socio-economic and policy context in a country. Important aspects to consider are parental leave policies. These vary hugely across European countries in our study in terms of length and public expenditure. In countries with more generous and flexible parental leave policies, this means little demand for ECEC for children under a certain age – for example for under-ones. While research on ECEC interventions shows the effectiveness of programmes starting early in children’s lives, there is also some evidence that extensive hours of ECEC in infancy can have negative effects on children’s development (see Melhuish et al., 2015). Considering higher costs of ECEC for infants and more challenges in providing good quality group care for this age range, it seems essential to ensure good parental leave policies so that the use of childcare for families with infants is not mainly motivated by the need to cover (long) parent working hours.

In addition, parental leave policies are one way to support the continuity of good quality care for children of all ages, if there is no gap between parental leave and access to ECEC for babies and toddlers (see Naumann, McLean, & Lloyd, 2013). In many of the countries in Europe that we studied, this gap exists. While the European countries in our sample offer a universal legal entitlement to a place in ECEC, at least for the year before the start of primary school (and often longer), only some countries stipulate a legal, universal entitlement to ECEC for children under the age of three. Legal entitlements do not necessarily mean that access to ECEC is free. Usually parents are expected to contribute towards the costs. Unconditional free access is not usually given to children under the age of three, and usually relates to a part-time place (between 10 and 28 hours). Free and unconditional access of 20-30 hours/week can be found for children in compulsory ECEC or the year before school starting age. Targeted free access for the younger age groups is currently given in only some of the CARE countries, and it is usually part-time.

Where universal entitlement is not feasible, targeted entitlement is an important mechanism that supports ECEC participation for more disadvantaged populations. Yet, where targeted offers are made, systems should ensure that funded children are not separated from children whose parents are paying, for example, by having access to different types of provisions. Risks are high that there might be a division between private and public providers, and those offering full-time programmes (for working parents) and part-time programmes (for funded children). This separation hinders a good social mixture in ECEC classrooms, and works against inclusiveness in society.

Participation and enrolment are crucial issues to ECEC policy. The success of ECEC provision depends on its availability, and on the participation of the children, in particular those with more disadvantaged backgrounds. Participation rates for under threes vary greatly in CARE project countries, with some countries having very low rates. Participation rates have to be assessed in relation to the sufficiency of ECEC provision. Demand seems higher than supply in many countries for the younger age group (under-threes), and shortages can be higher in some regions (e.g., rural areas). While participation rates for the over-threes are high in most countries in our sample, three countries in our sample are still significantly below the target of a 90% participation rate for this age group.

To conclude, international data currently presents a clear picture of the average participation rates (per age group) and the quantity of ECEC that children access. Next, it will be important to consider participation patterns: In some countries, children attend ECEC only for some days/week, rather than more regularly and they can have more than one childcare arrangement in place simultaneously (for example a mix of informal and formal arrangements to reduce costs or cover long working hours). Currently, research on effects of participation rates is scarce. However, the few available studies suggest that more stability in grouping patterns and daily staffing, and regularity in attendance relate to children's wellbeing and social skills (see reviews by Mathers et al., 2014; Melhuish et al., 2015). This is an important issue to attend to when making decisions on ECEC policy. Policies aimed at reducing child poverty need to make sure childcare arrangements can be flexible enough to support working parents. This, however, can reduce the stability and regularity of children's ECEC experience, impacting child wellbeing and ECEC quality, and in turn limiting the effectiveness of ECEC in improving developmental outcomes (see also Mathers et al., 2014).

It will also be important to document more explicitly which children participate in which type of ECEC. The question of which children attend which provision relates to the issue of inclusiveness in a more complex way. Is there segregation between population groups because they attend different types of provisions? In addition, and even though government investment in social inclusion and priority education programmes is increasing, relatively little information on variation in participation rates between children with varying socio-economic, lingual, and ethnic backgrounds can currently be found in international reports. Based on available information however, children with more disadvantaged backgrounds have lower participation rates. The main barriers to accessing services are well reported (cost, availability, physical access, and quality) (Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). Strategies to support access to ECEC services commonly involve subsidy schemes, and targeted free entitlements. However, language barriers, knowledge of procedures, waiting lists, or differences in values and beliefs are other issues related to lower participation rates that need to be addressed (Eurofound, 2012).

To ensure a more even level of quality across providers, minimum standards and regulations concerning the provision of ECEC are put into place. Ratios, but also group sizes and space, are commonly addressed by regulations. While there is variation on those regulations between countries, there is a general trend to increase ratios and group sizes with the ages of the children in a group. Group sizes and ratios have an impact on pedagogical practice and need to be considered as one mechanism to support good quality. Larger group sizes might present challenges to small children in particular because of higher noise levels, or because more peers and educators to relate to are present. Higher ratios, with more children per adult, mean less time for individual attention and one-to-one interactions. However, how structural factors influence process quality is a complex issue and structural features have to be assessed in relation to each other. Staffing affects group sizes, and sometimes regulations on the presence of more than one adult (with varying degrees of training) are stipulated.

How group size relates to pedagogical practice in a classroom is linked with the organisation of activities within a group. Where more than one adult is present, groups with smaller numbers of children are often created. In addition, quality in ECEC is not only determined by the frequency and quality of one-to-one interactions – how educators interact with and support groups of children is often overlooked. Thus, ratios and group sizes by themselves provide a limited picture of children's experience in classrooms.

Most countries have regulations on minimum space per child. Again, in order to ensure good quality, the provision of space by itself is not sufficient – how space is used is essential. While we can learn more about regulations on equipment and facilities from international reports (e.g. European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014), little is known about how educators and children make the best use of space and equipment in their everyday practice, and how this can be best supported in order to ensure good process quality.

The composition of the group also has to be considered when deciding on structural features. Regulations on group sizes or ratios that take account of the inclusion of children with additional needs or disadvantaged populations are rare. Other regulations on support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most countries. These measures are important in order to ensure universal ECEC systems that enable all children to access services which provide good quality care and education for all. In universal ECEC provision, good quality for all

means that those in need can receive more support. Little is yet known of how to best design such support measures and how to integrate targeted measures of support in everyday practice of universal ECEC services.

7.2 ECEC CURRICULUM

Curriculum is one of the key factors influencing pedagogical practice. Curriculum frameworks aim to support curriculum implementation in order to facilitate coherent pedagogical approaches and assure good quality of ECEC for all children, thereby maximizing gains from ECEC attendance (European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014). There is an agreement in Europe that a curriculum framework should make explicit the common purpose, goals or objectives of ECEC provision for all children and thus provide a direction for children's learning. Due to different visions of stakeholders on what the curriculum should include and aim to achieve, defining common goals and content is a challenge in many countries.

The picture of curriculum frameworks in the European CARE project countries is complex (Sylva, Ereky-Stevens, Aricescu, 2015). While there is a trend towards a more integrated system, with a common standard curriculum for all types of provision, this is not yet realised in many countries, and splits exist between frameworks for different age-groups and different types of providers. A split in the system often means that well developed, common frameworks only exist for the older age-groups and/or (public) centre-based care provision. This limits the possibility of shared understanding and coherent pedagogical approaches across age groups that recognise the value of both – education and care. Where there are gaps, curriculum framework development relies strongly on local traditions and the strength of individual providers. Since a common curriculum framework aims to support high quality ECEC experiences for all children, fragmented systems risk more variation and uneven ECEC quality across local areas or types of providers, and are less able to ensure that all children are well supported in their learning and development.

We found that where there are gaps in curriculum frameworks, these usually concern the younger group (Sylva et al., 2015). The lack of a shared conceptual framework for the younger age group goes hand in hand with a lack of clarity (and more divergent views) on the way learning is conceptualised, especially in relation to intellectual goals (e.g. Broekhuizen, Leseman, Moser, & van Trijp, 2015; Slot et al., 2016). One of the challenges of curriculum development is finding a balance between a curriculum for the younger children that harmonises with the framework with older children in bringing together diverse perspectives and methods of both, while remaining sensitive to the characteristics of babies and toddlers.

Increasingly, curriculum frameworks are more aligned in terms of broad goals of ECEC, and domains of development. There is a clear movement towards goals for ECEC that are both nurturing and stimulating, with a focus on socio-emotional development, and a commitment to strive towards fulfilling intellectual goals. Thus, today there is less of a divergence between an 'academic' or 'school readiness' approach and a 'holistic' or 'social pedagogy approach', which has previously been reported for Europe. A balanced approach is recommended: educators should offer experiences in all learning areas while giving enough room for the child's choice and interest; they should find the right balance between adult and child-led activities, and they should combine sensitive, responsive interactions on one hand, with a focus on learning and intentional pedagogical strategies on the other hand. This is a challenging task that creates tensions (Sylva, Ereky-Stevens, Pastori, Slot, & Lerkkanen, 2016). We found in CARE, that despite the broad agreement on the value of learning in ECEC, CARE observed challenges relating to the issue of facilitating learning, and a lack in clarity in how to best implement the playful child-centred approach while achieving complex learning in all domains (Slot et al., 2016; Sylva et al., 2015).

Curriculum quality has to consider the needs of each population. If ECEC is to help to close the education gap between more disadvantaged and affluent families, a curriculum may need to put extra support mechanisms into place which assure pre-academic skill development for those at risk of falling behind, and language development for migrant and ethnic minority children (Leseman & Slot, 2014). Yet, there are tensions here – while we found

growing agreement between countries on the domains of development that an early years curriculum has to address, there were differences in the focus that is given to learning of skills in pre-academic/academic subject areas. Regulations for support measures for disadvantaged children exist in most of the countries in our study. Identification mechanisms for those that need extra support vary, and so do support programmes. Language support programmes, and learning/development support are commonly named, but not enough is known about their effectiveness.

Our review found that the CARE countries in Europe share a socio-emotional orientation and a strong individualistic viewpoint, where each child's unique needs, abilities, and interests inform educational and care practices – the activities and support that is on offer to young children. Curricular frameworks are constructed to be open and flexible enough to adapt to each context, and the individual child. In their daily practice, educators are required to apply the general guidelines provided, using their knowledge and analysis of the local context and the specific situation. Partnerships with parents and the wider community, observations and documentation of children's experiences and learning, and continuous evaluation of practice are commonly stressed as important elements supporting practice that is in tune with children's interests and needs, the specific situation, and the context.

Thus, curriculum implementation is a complex task, that requires a knowledgeable and skilled workforce, that is well supported. An ECEC system that wants to assure good quality implementation (and thus good process quality) needs to put in place systems that support educators and local providers in their curriculum implementation. This should include, for example, a strong emphasis and investment into professional development, preparation/planning, documentation and reflection, and into issues of leadership and teamwork.

7.3 ECEC STAFF

High staff qualification is seen as one important means to assure and promote high pedagogical process quality in ECEC. The comparison across European countries illustrates that European countries choose different ways to qualify their staff. However, we also identified trends and developments that were observed in most of the countries. Moreover, certain challenges play an important role in most countries and ask for policy solutions. These topics are highlighted here.

There is a general trend of ECEC becoming more academic in Europe. Educational staff holds a Bachelor Degree in most of the countries included in this report. Anyhow, in many countries younger children are still attended by either a team of educational and care staff or even care staff only. Since care staff is always qualified on upper secondary education level (ISCED 3) only, this means that children under the age of three are usually still not educated by highly qualified staff, as it is normally the case for children over three years. This seems to reflect the assumption that pedagogical work with children younger than three years is not as professionally demanding as the one with children over three, because it is primarily about care, not about education.

This is in line with the opinion of many European parents. Findings of the parental survey study of the CARE project shed light on parents' educational beliefs, values and concerns in nine European countries and showed that most parents find the promotion of under three year-old children's (pre)academic skills not as important as for over three year-olds (Broekhuizen et al., 2015). The majority of the European countries state that professionals working in ECEC with children under and over three years share mostly the same tasks, which include education and care for both age groups. Furthermore, many countries chose to have common curricula for the two age groups and defined educational areas also for children under three years within the curriculum. This is in contradiction to the fact that in most countries staff working with under three-year-olds is still less qualified than staff working with children older than three years. Some countries try to assure staff quality by stipulating that at least one employee per group must hold a tertiary degree. It is worthy of discussion if one staff member qualified on a higher level can compensate for other staff members with a lower qualification. It is widely acknowledged that children under the age of three are in an important phase of their development,

making it important for them to receive high quality ECEC. Moreover, research has shown a positive impact of higher qualified staff on ECEC process quality (Mathers et al, 2007; Melhuish, Belsky, MacPherson & Cullis, 2010). Hence, there should be strong efforts to align the required staff qualification for both age groups at a tertiary level.

Not only the level of education but also the contents provided within pre-service training influence whether ECEC professionals are prepared for their work. The education and care of children under three years is still a topic that is not in all the countries primarily or sufficiently addressed as part of pre-service training. Research in England showed that less than half of the participating educators felt that they were well prepared by their initial training for working with two-year-olds specifically (Georgeson et al., 2014, Mathers et al., 2014). Given the strong expansion of the ECEC system for children under three years, this topic is also raises concerns in Germany: Although the work with children from zero to three is an integral part of initial training now, older staff still working in the field of ECEC completed initial training when children younger than three years were still not a major topic. In the light of the increasing importance of ECEC for the younger children throughout Europe, integrating this topic into initial education and providing professional development opportunities on this topic for older professionals, is an important condition for providing high quality ECEC to infants and toddlers.

Apart from providing ECEC staff with the qualification they need to do good work and to meet the expectations put on them, a higher qualification should also lead to higher salaries and to a higher social esteem of the job, ensuring that qualified and capable teachers enter the workforce and stay in it. Increase in earnings over time provides an incentive to stay in the field, decreasing turnover rates. However, it can be argued that too high of a difference in earnings between staff members holding the same positions could also lead to less harmonious working environments (OECD, 2014). While in most of the countries pre-primary teachers working with children older than three years receive similar salaries to primary school teachers, salaries of staff working with children under three are – corresponding to their lower qualification – mostly much lower. This influences how willing young people are to pursue careers in ECEC.

Salaries of staff working in ECEC are often brought up over the course of the discussion about gender balance in ECEC. One hypothesis is that higher qualifications and salaries make the field more attractive to men. But for the time being, there is no empirical evidence confirming this hypothesis. A German study has shown that the share of male students in newly introduced university bachelor courses is the same like in traditional vocational schools for ECEC staff (Keil, Pasternack, & Thielemann, 2013; Rohrmann, 2012). There are only minor differences regarding the share of men among ECEC staff in different countries and ECEC remains a field with predominantly female workforce. It is debated that the gender distribution may also impact the pedagogical quality of the settings, as “female” activities may be predominant in ECEC settings, and boys especially may suffer from the lack of male role models. While diversity in the workspace is generally considered positive, empirical findings on whether increasing the number of male ECEC staff will also lead to more diversity in pedagogical activities is heterogeneous. Kuger and others (2011) showed, for example, that the pedagogical activities offered to children are dependent on the gender of the child, irrespective of the gender of the staff.

In light of the fact that home-based care plays an increasing role in most European countries, especially for under three year-olds, it is all the more worrying that the qualification requirements are still much lower than for staff working with children in centre-based care and that childminders working in home-based provision are usually not required to participate in continuing professional development. Although passing some form of training programme is required for working in home-based care in most of the countries, length as well as contents of these programmes vary greatly. If home-based care is treated as an equivalent alternative for centre-based care in Europe, there is an urgent need for higher standards regarding staff qualification.

Within the last years, in some countries, leadership has been acknowledged as an important aspect of ECEC (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014; Whalley, 2011) while other countries are not yet concerned with the topic. Research from England has shown that the qualification of centre heads is positively related to process quality (Mathers et al., 2007; Melhuish et al., 2010). Furthermore, recent research from Germany points to the changing and rising expectations on ECEC, postulating the necessity of leadership trainings for Heads of centre-based

ECEC settings (Ballaschk & Anders, 2015). In Germany, first theoretical conceptualizations on how to develop ECEC settings in Germany focus strongly on management and hardly discuss any leadership approaches (Erath & Sandner, 2007; Strehmel & Ulber, 2014; Volkert, 2008). However, especially in providing a vision and motivating the team, centre heads are essential for the professional and organisational development of their organisation (Ballaschk & Anders, 2015). Looking at the European countries addressed in this report, there seems to be an awareness for the necessity of training in the field of ECEC in general, as well as work experience in this field, but not of headship training. In most of the countries no headship training is required whatsoever, in a few countries like Italy there are regionally different regulations. This illustrates clearly that there is not yet an understanding for the specific tasks of centre heads and the specific competencies they require. Professional experience is a requirement for attaining a position as a centre head in some countries. Although it is apparent that professional experience is of advantage for centre heads, this requirement seems to interfere with the present trend of ECEC becoming more academic. Bachelor as well as Master students of early childhood pedagogy usually have little opportunity to gain practical work experience. On the other hand, with regard to the shortage of ECEC staff as seen for instance in Germany and other countries currently expanding their ECEC system, academically qualified staff are expected to work in the position of heads right after finishing initial education.

The changing expectations on ECEC do not only put demands on centre heads. They make professional development important for all staff working in ECEC. Anyhow, the current status concerning regulations in this area differs strongly between countries. The CARE project report “Comparative review of professional development approaches” (Jensen et al., 2015) points out two opposing approaches to continuing professional development: Within the first approach, the responsibility for continuing professional development lies with the individual in rather decentralised systems with little or no regulation. The second approach, on the contrary, gives responsibility to national or local authorities in the countries where systems of continuing professional development were identified. These systems show different degrees of transparency and regulation and provide a certain degree of support. The current report focussed on another characteristic of continuing professional development systems, namely whether professional development is compulsory (required either by law or seen as a professional duty) or voluntary. Although in most of the countries reported on here, continuing professional development is to some degree compulsory, Finland is the only country where it is compulsory in the meaning of required by law for both educational and care staff, as well as for childminders. In some countries (for instance Poland), professional development is compulsory for educational but not for care staff.

Differences between these two groups of the workforce are also present with respect to time for preparation and follow-up. For example in Finland, kindergarten teachers can use 8% of their working time for duties other than teaching. In contrast, for care staff there is no time allocated for preparation and follow-up. These differences again reflect a very unequal view of over and under three year-old children’s needs.

Unequal conditions regarding different groups of the workforce, differences in ECEC curricula for younger and older children and decentralized ECEC systems, are a few among numerous challenges for monitoring within this field.

7.4 MONITORING ECEC

In chapters four and five the monitoring systems in the eleven CARE project countries were presented and compared. The aim was to identify similarities and differences with reference to selected indicators, representative of process and structural aspects of quality, that seem to play a critical role for the countries' ECEC quality status either on a national, local, or setting level. Although the relation between process and structural quality has not been established yet (Slot, Lerkkanen, & Leseman, 2015) it is argued that equal importance should be placed on both, as they play important roles for the cost efficiency of ECEC (NICHD ECCRN, 2002).

For the majority of the CARE countries, one way to ensure quality seems to be by providing: (a) national and/or local official standards and regulations for structural aspects of quality such as child-teacher ratio, group size, spaces, staff qualification, in-service training and working conditions, and (b) an official pedagogical framework or curriculum to provide principles, goals, practices and guidelines to regulate aspects of process quality. With particular reference to curriculum, it should be noted that although the pedagogical plan or curriculum is considered an aspect of structural quality, the way this plan or curriculum is implemented can be considered an aspect of process quality (Slot, Lerkkanen, & Leseman., 2015). This report gave emphasis on both dimensions, by examining if and how local/individual pedagogical plans/curricula are evaluated and how their implementation is monitored focusing on pedagogical interactions, children's outcomes and parental participation.

Another way to ensure quality is by monitoring and evaluating to what extent these official standards, regulations and guidelines are followed. However, not all countries seem to share a common understanding of the necessity of monitoring standards and regulations, as it was evident that in some ECEC systems and regarding specific indicators there were not any official evaluation processes. This is, for example, evidenced regarding in-service training. Absence of monitoring and evaluation may be explained in different ways: (a) lack of investment on the specific indicator, (b) giving priority to other indicators, especially due to cutbacks, for example by focusing on teachers'/educators' qualifications before recruitment, (c) limited value placed on monitoring and evaluation in general, (d) especially for the decentralized systems, it would be problematic for the local authorities that are responsible for the ECEC provisions to monitor their own work. This is noticed, for example, in cases where the local authorities do not monitor public settings but only private. For reasons of equity, regulations need to apply to all settings whether they are publicly or privately operated (OECD, 2011). To address this issue some countries either collaborate with external organizations to conduct evaluations or establish specialized local offices for these procedures.

One of the differences among the monitoring systems of the CARE countries was that structural aspects of quality were assessed mainly by external agencies or/and internal procedures in some countries, while process quality was mainly evaluated internally and in other countries by using a combination of internal and external evaluations, especially with reference to the preschools or the provisions with educational programmes. However, even in cases where a combination of external and internal monitoring processes was applied, not all monitoring systems seemed to integrate results so as the evaluations take the different perspectives into account. It is argued though that monitoring and evaluation are more effective when the information collected at a provider level is aligned with the information collected at a municipal, regional and national level (European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014). Moreover, this variation in evaluation processes between childcare and preschool provisions is indicative of the different importance placed on the children's institutionalized experiences for the different age groups. However, as Geinger et al. (2015) stated, for early childhood development, quality at the system level implies provisions that are integrated and aligned across different sectors, to provide services seamlessly and consistently and to respond more effectively to social problems and the complex needs of families and communities. The long tradition in quality monitoring of the ECEC sector in the Flemish Community of Belgium, under the responsibility of a strong and effective governmental organization that has the responsibility to organize monitoring for all provisions, in contrast with many other countries, is considered an asset, making integration in the educational sector a more obvious solution (Aarssen, & Studulski, 2013).

Almost all countries that have official national or local curricula provide staff the opportunity to develop their own plans so as to "individualize" curriculum guidelines with local needs. However, in most countries (but not all of them) there are monitoring processes to evaluate whether these plans manage to harmonize official regulations with local needs and how well these regulations are understood and implemented by educational/pedagogical staff. In some countries where decisions upon curricular guidelines are made by the local authorities, networking is used to provide a basis for more consistent quality criteria and better dissemination of results. Transparency also seems to be a key issue. For the system to be more transparent many countries make results available to the public. This is also helpful to better inform stakeholders so as to make

informed decisions and promote a shared understanding of the quality. In this way an open dialogue is promoted with an aim to improve ECEC quality.

Measures of quality should take into account the multiple strengths and needs of young children, their families and their communities. Quality services are those that are ‘child- and family-centred’, not ‘provider-centred’ (Tankerslay et al., 2015). Children’s and parents’ views are taken into account in the majority of the CARE countries, mostly during internal but in some cases external evaluations as well. More participatory processes on quality assessment were also applied in some countries that consider quality a dynamic and negotiable construct determined by parents, childcare workers, children, and the management board of centres (Peeters, 2008). These processes are very helpful to individualize monitoring practices and gain insight into different stakeholders’ perspectives but are rather subjective. Consequently, in some countries apart from documentation other methods and practices are used in combination to evaluate quality.

Some countries use well-known standardized, mainly observation-based instruments to evaluate aspects of process quality. The use of these international instruments provides reliable and valid results and a good basis for comparisons among countries, areas and settings to better understand the situation in ECEC provisions. However, it could be argued that they do not always correspond to local conditions. To address this issue, some systems have developed local variations. Moreover, some others have developed their own monitoring tools. In both cases, collaboration with universities and researchers was essential for the quality of the new instruments.

The emphasis on the so-called ‘iron-triangle’ of structural quality: children-to-teacher ratio, group size and teacher formal pre-service education (Phillipsen et al., 1997) is indicative on the importance these aspects have for the majority of the countries. Especially, regarding staff qualifications, in some countries there are demanding exams or recruitment processes to ensure high standards. However, if teachers and educators do not update their skills and knowledge, if they are poorly paid and their work is neither supported nor evaluated, it would be difficult to be motivated to improve their pedagogical and educational work.

It is stated that there are five basic criteria that shape the character of a good monitoring system: (1) quality standards, (2) a process for monitoring and evaluating standards, (3) a process for supporting quality improvement, (4) provision of financial incentives, and (5) dissemination of information to parents and the public about program quality. In some countries the objective to improve ECEC quality (with a particular emphasis on the pedagogical and educational practices) is not only explicitly stated but also it is interwoven in the process of monitoring either within the internal or/and the external evaluation processes.

Some countries place particular emphasis on the qualifications and competences of the heads of the provisions that have the responsibility not only to monitor and evaluate the pedagogical work but also to provide support and guidance to the staff to improve their work. In some systems, providers or local authorities have an additional responsibility to use monitoring results so as to provide the appropriate in-service training. However, as most facilities and authorities do not have the specialization to accomplish this task, these efforts have questionable effectiveness, especially taking into account that there is usually an absence of standards to evaluate the in-service programmes and monitoring is not mandated. In Finland, there is a new development to address the issue. Although monitoring of in-service training is not mandated the government established centres of excellence on social welfare in 2002, to convey expertise to municipalities on this topic and ensure that training content is consistent and relevant. In other countries, inspection authorities also provide consultation that is delivered by a team of inspectors with different fields of specialization. In some others, there are pedagogical heads or advisors responsible to evaluate pedagogical/educational work in a number of settings, provide support and supervise and consult improvement efforts.

The issue of “cost” seems to be a difficult parameter to handle for most countries, as cutbacks seem to be a basic concern that hinders efforts to promote ECEC quality.

Although it seems undeniable that each indicator and in combination function to promote ECEC quality, differences regarding the focus, organization and methods of monitoring regarding different quality indicators,

identified even within the same monitoring system, may be attributed to the fact that systems do not have a consistent idea/view about quality. Comparing the way different systems work may be critical for stakeholders to better understand the situation in their country, identify strong and weak points and share ideas and practices to improve ECEC quality.

7.5 REFERENCES

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8 . R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

This report includes a comparative review of ECEC quality monitoring and assurance systems. The aim of the study was to point out the specific links between ECEC system characteristics, curriculum, staff and monitoring and indicate their connections to process quality. Based on the findings of this study several recommendations can be concluded:

- Availability, access and affordability of ECEC provision needs to be increased for under-threes, and those families from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The provision of good quality universal ECEC provision that ensures a good social mix, needs to be combined with good quality targeted support for those children at risk of not fulfilling their potential.
- The dependency of ECEC provision on parental fees needs to be reduced. Wherever parental costs and competitiveness in the market are important factors, mechanisms need to be in place which to ensure good quality (e.g. minimum quality standards, common curriculum frameworks, educator training, and monitoring systems).
- Where universal entitlement is not feasible, targeted entitlement needs to be considered as an important mechanism that supports ECEC participation for more disadvantaged populations. Yet, where targeted offers are made, systems need to ensure that funded children are not separated from children whose parents are paying, for example, by having access to different types of provisions.
- Efforts need to be made to provide a structure of provision that ensures the continuity of children's experience.
- Curriculum frameworks need to provide a direction to children's learning that moves beyond a dichotomy between an academic model (with its main focus on cognitive aims for school preparation) and a comprehensive model (with its main focus on holistic development and wellbeing). There needs to be a balance between cognitive/linguistic learning and social-emotional development.
- The curriculum needs to make explicit pedagogical principles which guide curriculum implementation.
- Strong efforts should be made to align the required staff qualification for both age groups (under and over three years) at a tertiary level. This requires a common understanding of important developmental areas and learning goals for the younger children.
- Work with children under three years should be a main topic of initial education. Professional development opportunities on this topic should be provided to enable older staff in ECEC to increase their competencies within this area of work.
- If home-based care is treated as an equivalent alternative for centre-based care in Europe, there is an urgent need for higher standards regarding staff qualification.
- There needs to be an awareness and understanding for the specific tasks of centre heads and the specific competencies they need to require. This leads to higher qualification requirements for centre heads.
- It is important to apply monitoring and evaluation to all provisions regardless the type of providers (public/private) and the age range (for younger and older children) and promote a shared understanding of ECEC quality.

- Monitoring and evaluation processes should integrate local, regional and national perspectives.
- Monitoring and evaluation practices should use a variety of methods and instruments and involve all stakeholders so as to integrate different views through subjective and objective measurements that capture the full spectrum of experiences in ECEC. In this way commonalities and particularities could be better identified and addressed.
- Transparency in monitoring practices and use of results should be an important consideration to facilitate informed decisions by all stakeholders.
- Monitoring and evaluations should have a formative character so as to promote improvement of ECEC quality.