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THEMATIC REVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE
POLICY: DRAFT COMPARATIVE REPORT

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(Note by the Secretariat)

1. This draft Comparative Report is the main output of the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy that was launched by the Education Committee in March 1998. The draft report is based on Background Reports, Country Notes, commissioned papers, and other materials collected during review visits. It provides an analysis of the major trends and policy issues in the 12 countries participating in the project, and suggests policy recommendations that can be adapted to different country contexts.
2. In preparing this draft report, the Secretariat also has drawn upon the suggestions and recommendations from a meeting of national representatives and invited experts, which was held at the OECD, on 28-29 September, 2000. The meeting was attended by 40 participants from 15 Member countries.
3. After incorporating oral and written comments from Education Committee delegates, the revised Comparative Report will be published in May 2001, and widely disseminated thereafter.
4. The Education Committee is invited to:
 - i) **COMMENT** on the content and structure of the draft Comparative Report.
 - ii) **AGREE** to send written comments to the Secretariat by 8 December 2000.
 - iii) **AGREE** to the publication of the report after it is revised in light of the Committee's comments.
 - iv) **NOTE** the announcement of an international conference on ECEC policy to be hosted by the Sweden in June 2001.
 - v) **INDICATE** their country's interest in participating in any follow-up activities to the thematic review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education and care has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries over the past decade. Policy makers have recognised that equitable access to quality early childhood education and care can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families. There is a need to strengthen knowledge of the range of approaches adopted by different countries, along with the successes and challenges encountered. Recognising that this cross-national information and analysis can contribute to the improvement of policy development, the Education Committee launched the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in 1998.

Twelve countries volunteered to participate in the review: Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the UK, and the USA. The review has taken a broad and holistic approach that considers how policies, services, families, and communities can support young children's early development and learning. The term *early childhood education and care* (ECEC) includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content. The methodology of the study consists of four elements: (1) preparation by participating countries of the Background Report; (2) review team visits to participating countries; (3) preparation of the Country Note; and (4) preparation of the Comparative Report.

2. CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING ECEC POLICY

The first part of this chapter reviews the main contextual trends and developments that have shaped ECEC policy and provision. The second part of the chapter explores how these contextual issues have shaped different understandings of early childhood, the roles of families, and the purposes of ECEC, and in turn, how these understandings have shaped policy and practice.

2.1 Demographic, economic, and social trends and developments

- Ageing populations, declining fertility rates, and a greater proportion of children living in lone-parent families are part of the changing demographic landscape. Countries with the highest female employment rates are those with higher fertility rates, which suggests that female employment and childrearing are complementary activities;
- The sharp increase in dual-earner households, spurred by increased female labour force participation, makes ECEC and parental leave policies more important for the well-being of families. Women are more likely than men to work in non-standard employment which carry lower economic and social status;
- Paid and job protected maternity and family leave policies are widely accepted in almost all participating countries as an essential strategy to help working parents reconcile work and family life and to promote gender equity. The length, flexibility, level of payment and take-up by men and women vary across countries; and
- While taxes and transfers can help redistribute income to families with young children, in a few countries more than 20% of children still live in relative poverty. Income support, measures to improve parent employability and targeted early interventions may improve children's life-course chances and promote social cohesion.

2.2 Recognising diverse understandings of children and the purposes of ECEC

- The reasons for investing in ECEC policy and provision are embedded in cultural and social beliefs about young children, the roles of families and government, and the purposes of ECEC in within and across countries.
- In many countries, the education and care of young children is shifting from the private to the public domain, with much attention to the complementary roles of families and ECEC institutions in young children's early development and learning.
- Many countries are seeking to balance views of the 'here and now' of childhood and an investment with the future adult in mind. These diverse understandings have important implications for the organisation of policy and provision in different countries.

3. MAIN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES

Drawing on the Background Reports, Country Notes, and other materials collected during the review process, this chapter explores seven current cross-national policy trends: (1) expanding provision toward universal access; (2) raising the quality of provision; (3) promoting coherence and co-ordination of policy and services; (4) exploring strategies to ensure adequate investment in the system; (5) improving staff training and work conditions; (6) developing appropriate pedagogical frameworks for young children; and (7) engaging parents, families, and communities in early childhood education and care.

3.1 Expanding provision toward universal access

- The age at which children typically make the transition to primary education ranges from four to seven, meaning that in some countries, children may spend *at least* three years in ECEC, while in others, they will spend *at most* three years prior to beginning primary school.
- In several countries, access to ECEC is a statutory right from age three (or even younger). The trend in all countries is toward full coverage of the three- to six-year-old age group, aiming to give all children at least two years of free publicly-funded provision before beginning compulsory schooling;
- Out-of-school provision for children of working parents has not been a policy priority in most countries in the review. Yet, demand is high, which suggests the need for attention to the concept, organisation, funding, and staffing of this form of provision;
- Policy for the under threes is closely linked with the nature of available parental leave arrangements and social views about caring. While there have been government efforts toward expanding provision and increasing the educational focus, there is still differential access and quality for this age group;
- Countries are trying to develop (a) more flexible and diverse arrangements while addressing the regional and local variation in access and (b) strategies to include children in need of special support.

3.2 Raising the quality of provision

- There are many common elements in quality definitions across countries, especially for provision for children from the age of three. Most countries focus on similar structural aspects of quality (e.g., staff-child ratios, group size, facility conditions, staff training), which tend to be weaker for infant/toddler provision;

- In some countries, standardised observation scales and child assessment measures are used widely to measure the quality of ECEC settings, while other countries favour co-constructing the programme aims and objectives at local level;
- The responsibility for quality assurance tends to be shared by external inspectors, pedagogical advisors, staff, and parents (and occasionally children). There is a trend toward externally-validated self-evaluation to promote ongoing reflection and quality improvement;
- Major quality concerns that emerged during the review include: lack of a coherence and co-ordination for ECEC policy and provision; the low status and training of staff in the social welfare sector; the lower standards of provision for children under three; and the tendency for children from low-income families to receive inferior services; and
- Governments promote quality improvement through: framework documents and goals-led steering; voluntary standards and accreditation; dissemination of research and information; judicious use of special funding; technical support to local management; raising the training and status of staff; encouraging self-evaluation and action-practitioner research; and establishing a system of democratic checks and balances, which includes parents.

3.3 Promoting coherence and co-ordination of policy and services

- Unified administrative auspices can help promote coherence for children. In addition, several countries have adopted mechanisms to increase co-ordination for children across departments and sectors. In particular, there is increasing trend toward co-ordination with the educational sector to facilitate children's transition from ECEC to primary school.
- The trend toward decentralisation of responsibility for ECEC has brought diversification of services to meet local needs and preferences. The challenge is for central government to balance local decisionmaking with the need to limit variation in access and quality.
- At the local level, many countries have recognised the importance of integrating services to meet the needs of children and families in a holistic manner. Services integration has taken many forms, including teamwork among staff with different professional backgrounds.

3.4 Exploring strategies to ensure adequate investment in the system

- In almost all countries in the review, governments pay the largest share of costs, with parents covering 25%-30%;
- Direct provision through services and schools makes up the bulk of government assistance in most countries. Even when the mix of public and private providers is great, a high percentage of services receive direct or indirect public funding;
- Countries have adopted a range of financing mechanisms to improve affordability including: direct funding, fee subsidies, tax relief, and employer contributions. Affordability remains a barrier to equitable access, particularly in systems where the cost burden falls on parents;
- While most countries seek to expand supply through direct subsidies to providers, a few countries favour indirect demand-driven subsidies – fee subsidies and tax relief. In both cases, there are equity concerns about access to and quality of provision; and
- Regardless of the financing strategy adopted, it is clear that substantial *public* investment is necessary for the development of an equitable and well-resourced *system* of quality ECEC.

3.5 Improving staff training and work conditions

- Countries have adopted two main approaches to staffing: a split regime with a group of teachers working with children over three and lower-trained workers in other services; or a pedagogue working with children from birth to six, and sometimes older in a range of settings. There is a cross-national trend toward at least a three-year tertiary degree for ECEC staff with the main responsibility for children;
- While the degree of early childhood specialisation and the balance between theory and practice varies across countries, there appear to be training gaps in the following areas: work with parents, bilingual/multi-cultural and special education, and research and evaluation;
- Opportunities to participate in continuous training and professional development are uneven. Staff with the lowest levels of initial training tend to have the least access;
- Low pay, status, poor working conditions, limited access to in-service training and limited career mobility are a concern, particularly for staff working with the young children in infant-toddler, out-of-school, and family day care settings; and
- As ECEC provision expands, recruitment and retention are major challenges for the field. Many countries are seeking to attract a diverse workforce to reflect the children in ECEC. Another major issue is whether a more gender-mixed workforce is desirable, and if so how.

3.6 Developing appropriate pedagogical frameworks for young children

- Pedagogical frameworks promote an even level of quality across age groups and provision, help guide and support professional staff in their practice, and facilitate communication between staff, parents, and children;
- There is a trend toward frameworks which cover a broad age span and diverse forms of settings to support continuity in children's learning;
- For the most part, these frameworks focus broadly on children's holistic development and well-being, rather than on narrow literacy and numeracy objectives;
- Flexible curricula developed in co-operation with staff, parents, and children, allow practitioners to experiment with different methodological and pedagogical approaches and adapt overall goals for ECEC to local needs and circumstances; and
- Successful implementation of frameworks requires investment for staff support, including in-service training and pedagogical guidance, as well as favourable structural conditions (e.g., ratios, group size, etc.).

3.7 Engaging parents, families, and communities in early childhood education and care

- Parent engagement seeks to: (a) build on parents' unique knowledge about their children (b) promote positive attitudes and behaviour toward children's learning; (c) provide parents with information and referrals to other services; (d) support parent and community empowerment;
- The extent to which parents are engaged in their children's ECEC varies on a continuum from marginal engagement to full participatory and managerial engagement. Several formal and informal mechanisms foster strong parental, family, and community engagement; and
- Some of the challenges to strong engagement include, cultural, attitudinal, linguistic, and logistical barriers (i.e., lack of time). It is particularly difficult to ensure representation and participation from across families from diverse backgrounds.

4. POLICY LESSONS FROM THE THEMATIC REVIEW

The report identifies eight key elements of policy which promotes equitable access to quality ECEC. The elements presented are intended to be broad and inclusive so that they can be considered in the light of diverse country contexts and circumstances, values, and beliefs. They should form a part of a wider multi-stakeholder effort to reduce child poverty, promote gender equity, value diversity, and increase the quality of life for parents and children. The eight key elements are:

- Systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- Strong and equal partnership with the education system
- Universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
- Participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systematic attention to monitoring and data collection
- Stable research framework and long-term research and evaluation agenda.

Countries that have adopted some or all of these elements of successful policy share a strong public commitment to young children and their families. In different ways, these countries have made efforts to ensure that access is inclusive of all children, and have initiated special efforts for those in need of special support. Quality is high on the agenda as a means to ensure that children not only have equal opportunities to participate in ECEC but also to benefit from these experiences in ways that promote their development and learning. While remarkable efforts in policy development and implementation have been achieved in recent years, there are still several challenges remaining. It is hoped that this report will contribute to future policy improvement efforts in the field.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Why are countries interested in a thematic review of early childhood education and care policy?

1. Early childhood education and care has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries over the past decade. In part, policy interest has been motivated by research showing the importance of quality early experiences to children's short-term cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as to their long-term success in school and later life. In addition, equity concerns have led policymakers to focus on how access to quality early childhood services can mediate some of the negative effects of disadvantage and contribute to social integration. At the same time, most governments have acknowledged the need for affordable and reliable early childhood and child care provision to promote equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market and to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. In sum, policy makers have recognised that equitable access to quality early childhood education and care can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families.

2. Today, most children living in OECD countries will spend at least two years in early childhood education and care settings before beginning primary school (OECD, 2000a). As participation becomes an important part of children's lives internationally, the focus of the debate has shifted from whether governments should be involved in early childhood education and care to how they should organise policy and provision to benefit children and their parents. As decision makers consider various policy options, there is a need to strengthen knowledge of the range of approaches adopted by different countries, along with the successes and challenges encountered. Recognising that such cross-national information and analysis can contribute to the improvement of policy development in the field, the OECD Education Committee launched the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in 1998. The main purposes of the project are to:

- Document the range of policy approaches to early childhood education and care;
- Analyse major policy issues and concerns;
- Propose feasible policy suggestions suited to different contexts;
- Highlight particularly innovative policies and practices; and
- Identify the types of data and instruments needed to support policy making and development.

3. ***Policy areas examined by the review:*** Over the past two years, the thematic review has investigated different policy approaches to improving the *quality* of and *access* to early childhood education and care. The review has accorded particular attention to six key areas of policy development: governance; regulation; staffing; programme content and implementation; family engagement and support; and funding and financing. Using the information collected, the review has analysed why similarities and differences may occur across countries. In particular, the review has explored how the unique contexts of

countries have shaped the development of policy approaches and the implementation of such policy approaches at the programme level. The review also has sought to understand how diverse policy approaches relate to diverse understandings of young children and to the purposes and organisation of early childhood education and care in different societies. Potential implications of this analysis have been articulated to inform and strengthen policy development in all OECD countries.

What do we mean by *Early Childhood Education and Care*?

4. The review has taken a broad and holistic approach that considers how policies, services, families, and communities can support young children's early development and learning. The term 'early childhood education and care' (ECEC) includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content. The early childhood period is commonly defined as birth to age eight. It was felt, however, that this review could not comprehensively cover both policy and provision for children below school age and primary education. While a more limited age range has been covered, attention has been accorded to issues concerning children's transition to compulsory school (which usually occurs at age six) and out-of-school provision.¹ At the other end of the age spectrum, it was deemed important to include policies and provision concerning children under age three, a group often neglected in discussions in the educational sphere. In addition, consideration has been given to links between ECEC and family support, health, lifelong learning, employment, and social integration policies.

5. This framework reflects the growing consensus in OECD countries that 'care' and 'education' are inseparable concepts and that quality services for children necessarily provide both. Some countries make a distinction between 'child care' to look after children while their parents are at work and 'early education' to enhance child development and prepare children for formal schooling. In practice, the division is not clear, as there are opportunities to learn in settings labelled 'care,' and 'educational' settings provide care for children. Such terms reinforce a split and incoherent approach to services based on separate systems of 'care' and 'education' that has led to disjointed policymaking and service delivery in some countries. Alternatively, the use of the term ECEC supports an integrated and coherent approach to policy and provision which is inclusive of *all* children and *all* parents, regardless of their employment status. This approach recognises also that such arrangements may fulfil a wide range of objectives, including care, learning, and social support.

6. Within this broad scope, the review has focused on organised ECEC provision in centres and in group settings (including schools) and family day care (individuals who provide care to non-related children in the carer's home). The review has concentrated to a lesser extent on carers who work in children's homes and less formal arrangements involving relatives and friends, who provide important supports for children and families, because there is little available information on them. However, the review has looked at the roles of families and communities in supporting the informal early learning that takes place within the home and through children's interactions with the world around them. We also have investigated the roles of parental leave policies and flexible, part-time community-based services in fostering children's informal learning.

¹ While compulsory school age ranges from age five to seven in OECD countries, six is the most common age for children to begin primary school (OECD, 1996).

Which countries took part in the thematic review?

7. Twelve countries volunteered to participate in the review: Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.² These countries provide a diverse range of social, economic and political contexts, as well as varied policy approaches to the education and care of young children. In addition, the participating countries differ greatly in terms of population size, geographical area, and forms of government. They include large, sparsely populated countries, such as Australia, and small, densely populated countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition, three countries have federal systems of government (Australia, Belgium, and the USA). The review also benefits from the participation of the Czech Republic as a representative of the economies in transition, many of which have well-established ECEC systems that have experienced recent social and economic pressures to change. This group allows for rich comparisons across very different countries, as well within groups of apparently similar countries. Table A2.1. summarises some general demographic, economic, and social indicators for the 12 countries.

8. While the set of participating countries is rich and varied, the inclusion of five (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the UK) out of 12 countries which have adopted, or are moving toward, integrated early childhood systems under unified administrative auspices overstates the prevalence of this approach. In addition, there are a few countries that could have enriched the analysis had they taken part in the review. For example, although New Zealand and Spain did not participate in the project, their experiences moving toward an integrated early childhood system under education auspices may be of cross-national interest. France, another country absent from the review, represents a long-established early childhood system that is divided between education and welfare. Finally, the review would have benefited from the participation of Japan and Korea to provide more comprehensive coverage of the range of contexts and policies in OECD Member countries.

How was the thematic review conducted?

9. In the early stages of the project, representatives of the 12 participating countries reached agreement concerning the framework, scope and process of the review, and identified the major policy issues for investigation (OECD, 1998). The methodology of the study entails the investigation, within a comparative framework, of country-specific issues and policy approaches to ECEC. The review process has consisted of four main elements: (1) preparation by participating countries of the Background Report; (2) review team visits to participating countries; (3) preparation of the Country Note; and (4) preparation of the Comparative Report.³

10. **Background Report:** Guided by a common framework and questionnaire (Appendix 3), each participating country has drafted a *Background Report* that provides a concise overview of the country context, current ECEC policy and provision, major issues and concerns, and available evaluation data. The preparation of the Background Report was managed by a national co-ordinator and guided by a steering committee. The reports were either written by government officials or by commissioned scholars/policy advisors. By providing a state-of-the-art overview and analysis of policy and provision in each participating country, the Background Reports have been important outputs of the review process. In

² Switzerland withdrew from the project in September, 1999. A Background Report was commissioned by the Swiss authorities and submitted to the OECD in June, 2000.

³ This is the third thematic review conducted by the Education Committee. Its methodology was informed by the successes and challenges of past thematic reviews on tertiary education and on the transition from initial education to working life.

several countries, it was the first time that such information had been collected or brought together in one comprehensive document. The main purpose of the Background Reports has been to brief the expert reviewers prior to conducting the country visit. They also have been used as reference material in parliamentary hearings, university courses, research, and media outlets.

11. **Review team visit:** After preparing the Background Report, each participating country hosted a multi-national team of OECD Secretariat members and three reviewers (including a Rapporteur) with diverse policy and analytical backgrounds for 10- to 12-day *review visit*. The visits were organised by government officials, in co-operation with the Secretariat, and consisted of meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, including: senior policy makers and officials in education, employment, health, and social affairs; representatives of training institutions, trade unions, professional associations, and non-governmental organisations; and members of the research community. The teams also observed a range of typical and innovative examples of ECEC provision in both urban and more rural settings, and held discussions with programme administrators, staff, parents, and children. A total of 39 external experts from 16 OECD countries and four members of the Secretariat have taken part in the 12 review visits. This wide range of participants has added a rich set of perspectives with which to analyse countries' experiences, while also facilitating cross-national discussions of policy lessons. For consistency purposes, one member of the Secretariat participated in all 12 visits. The details of the National Co-ordinators and members of the review teams are provided in Appendix 4.

12. **Country Note:** After each visit, the review team has prepared a *Country Note* that draws together observations and analyses of country-specific policy issues. The qualitative assessments of the review teams have been supplemented by statistics and documents both supplied by participating countries and from the OECD and other sources. Through this process some of the limitations of the available cross-national data on ECEC have come to light. The *Country Notes* provide insights into current ECEC policy context, identify the major issues arising from the visit, and propose suggestions to improve policy and practice. In addition, each report highlights examples of innovative approaches with the goal of promoting cross-national exchange of good practice. An extensive consultation process with country authorities has helped to minimise the potential for factual error or misinterpretations in the reports.

13. **Comparative Report:** As the main output of the project, this publication provides a comparative review and analysis of ECEC policy in all 12 participating countries, with policy lessons for OECD Member countries. Using the information collected in the Background Reports, Country Notes, review visits, and expert meetings, this *Comparative Report* documents the range of existing ECEC policies and provision cross-nationally and draws out common themes and issues for comparative analysis. In order to respect the diversity of policy approaches to ECEC, this report does *not* attempt to compare countries in terms of better or worse, or right or wrong, or to rank countries in a league table. Instead, the report seeks to analyse the nature of and reasons for similarities and differences in policy approaches across participating countries and to identify some of the possible implications of the analysis for policymakers.

14. **The descriptions and analyses included in this publication draw heavily upon the Country Notes prepared by the review teams, and the national Background Reports. Although these reports are not individually cited in the text, they can be found on the OECD web site.⁴ The full reports offer rich contextual material on each of the countries, with the Country Notes providing the review teams' assessments and policy suggestions.**

15. **Strengths and limitations of the methodology:** The comparative methodology has encouraged those charged with making decisions regarding ECEC to reflect upon their own policy approaches and to be informed of successful policy initiatives in other countries. It is a collaborative process that has engaged

⁴ The web site for the review is <http://www.oecd.org/els/edu/ecec>.

a wide range of stakeholders in the review and analysis and has encouraged knowledge and data sharing amongst all participants. In particular, the tasks of preparing the Background Reports and the review visits have given different government departments and ministries with responsibility for young children and families the opportunity to work together and exchange knowledge and perspectives. It also has promoted collaboration and consultation between policy officials and other stakeholders in the field. The Secretariat has worked closely with country authorities during the course of the review in preparing the reports, selecting the members of review teams, and developing the programmes for the review visits.

16. The decision to cover a large group of countries over a short time-period has called for a balance between breadth and depth. Given the limited time available to visit each country, and the potentially broad range of topics to be reviewed, there has been a risk of providing only a cursory review and analysis of complex issues. However, the intention has not been to provide carefully controlled data for in depth research or for representative samples of ideas or activities, but to provide illustrative material and insights into policy issues and trends identified in country reports and other sources. One advantage of adopting a short-time frame has been that sufficient cross-national data can be collected to make useful comparative assessment, allowing lessons from country experiences to be considered before national circumstances have changed. The short time frame, however, was not sufficient to address rather spectacular policy changes that occurred after the visits in some of the participating countries, particularly those visited toward the beginning of the review process. These major policy changes show the more recent political recognition of the importance of ECEC in some of the participating countries and the possible contribution of the visit of the OECD review team to moving the policy agenda forward. To the extent possible, the Secretariat has worked with participating countries so that these post-visit changes are reflected in the Comparative Report.

17. Participating countries have been given substantial ownership over the process and have been encouraged to tailor the review to their foremost policy concerns. As a result, there has been a trade-off between country-specific perspectives and cross-national consistency. The selection of issues addressed in-depth in the Background Reports and Country Notes reflect those of greatest interest to the countries concerned. This has led to some loss of comparability and variation in the degree to which particular issues are covered from country to country. In addition, there have been limitations to the strategy of using open-ended interviews and observations without a structured protocol. On the other hand, the flexibility and informality of the sessions have been conducive to in-depth discussions about the issues and concerns that matter most to country correspondents. Thus, the process has ensured that the review has focused upon issues that are of real current interest to policy makers *and* to those working in the early childhood field.

The structure of the report

18. The report begins, in *Chapter 2*, with a discussion of the main demographic, economic, political, and social trends and issues that have shaped the development of current ECEC policy. The chapter examines how these contextual issues have influenced the structure of the early childhood system, as well as how they have shaped the need, demand, and use of ECEC services. It also includes a discussion on different understandings of early childhood and the purposes of early childhood institutions. The following chapter, *Chapter 3*, explores the main policy developments and issues concerning ECEC that have emerged throughout the review and highlights innovative approaches to address policymakers' concerns. Drawing on this analysis, *Chapter 4* identifies the major policy lessons from the review. It focuses on the key features of policy that promotes equitable access to quality ECEC. The report concludes with a discussion of key policy challenges and directions for the future. *Appendix 1* provides an overview of the ECEC systems in each of the 12 participating countries.

Terminology and conventions used in the report

19. Age ranges are mentioned frequently in the report. This report follows the conventions adopted by the EC Childcare Network (1996b) as illustrated by the following two examples: ‘children aged 0-3 years’ covers children from birth up to 36 months, i.e. up to their third birthday, but does not include three-year-olds. ‘Children aged 3-6’ covers children from 36 to 72 months i.e. up to their sixth birthday, but does not include six-year-olds.

20. As forms of ECEC provision and professional profiles have developed from the specific traditions and contexts of individual countries, similar terms and labels sometimes express quite different concepts from country to country (e.g., kindergarten, day care, pre-school, nursery). Translations often neglect the nuances in the original language that are important to understanding policy. In order to avoid misunderstandings, original language terms referring to specific forms of ECEC services and staff are used in this report. The key terms for provision are found in Table A1.1., and the key terms for staffing are presented in Table 3.1. In addition, we use the following English terms in the report:

- *ECEC centres*: provision for children under three (*infant-toddler centre*), for children from three- to six-year-olds (*kindergartens*), and children from birth to compulsory school age and sometimes school-aged children (*age-integrated centres*), usually within the social welfare system.
- *Pre-primary schooling*: school-based provision for children below compulsory school age within the education system.⁵
- *Primary schooling*: provision for children of compulsory school age within the education system.
- *Out-of-school provision*: centre-based or school-based services outside regular school hours for children in pre-primary and primary schooling, either within the education or social welfare system.
- *Family day care*: individuals who provide care for non-related children in the carer’s own home. *Organised* family day care refers to providers who are recruited, employed, and supported by a public authority or publicly-funded private organisation. Alternatively, family day care providers are self-employed and make private arrangements directly with parents.

21. *Public provision* refers to services that are publicly-managed (e.g. by a municipality) and publicly-funded, but may charge user fees. *Private provision* include for-profit and non-profit services that are managed by an individual or private organisation. *Private for-profit* provision includes owner-operators running a single centre or commercial providers running a number of centres as profit-making businesses. Self-employed family day care providers also may be considered as part of the for-profit sector. *Private non-profit* providers include voluntary or community groups (e.g., parent co-operatives) with the legal status of charities or other non-profit organisations. Private provision may be fully or partly publicly-funded (private, subsidised) or entirely privately-funded (private, non-subsidised). The extent to which the private sector is regulated or allowed to operate within free-market conditions differs across countries. These distinctions in management, funding, and regulation of public and private ECEC are important for understanding issues concerning quality and access in different countries and are explored in the report.

⁵ In 1986, kindergarten (for four and five year olds) and primary school were integrated into the Dutch *basischool* which now covers children from age four to 12. Since the focus of the review has been children under six, we refer to the first two years of the *basischool* as school-based ECEC provision, though we recognise that they form a part of an integrated and continuous educational process.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING ECEC POLICY

Introduction

22. Over the past decade, the context for ECEC policy has been shaped by a number of important demographic, economic, and social changes. The most dramatic development over the past decade has been the increase in female labour market participation. Most women are forced to juggle household and family demands with involvement in paid work structures that, for the most part, are designed to fit male employment patterns. The availability and affordability of ECEC and other work-family provisions for temporary withdrawal from the labour market through parental leave have a great influence on whether mothers are required to make a choice between labour market participation and childrearing (OECD, 1999a). In recent years, more attention and government expenditure has been given to increasing ECEC opportunities. Some countries have shown increasing policy sophistication in the way they deal with the work-family interface, while others just are beginning to address the issue. There also have been widespread demographic, economic, and social changes in OECD countries that have influenced child and family well-being. In the first part of this chapter, we review the main contextual trends and developments that have shaped ECEC policy and provision. In the second part of the chapter, we explore how these contextual issues have shaped different understandings of early childhood, the roles of families, and the purposes of ECEC, and in turn, how these understandings have shaped policy and practice.

2.1 Demographic, economic, and social trends and developments

Key points

23. This section discusses the main demographic, economic, and social trends and developments over the past decade, which are essential for understanding the context of current ECEC policy. The section examines how these contextual issues have influenced the structure of the early childhood system, as well as how they shape the need, demand, and use of ECEC services.

- Ageing populations, declining fertility rates, and a greater proportion of children living in lone-parent families are part of the changing demographic landscape. Countries with the highest female employment rates are those with higher competed fertility rates, which suggests that female employment and childrearing are complementary activities;
- The sharp increase in dual-earner households, spurred by increased female labour force participation, makes ECEC and parental leave policies more important for the well-being of families. Women are more likely than men to work in non-standard employment which carry lower economic and social status;
- Paid and job protected maternity and family leave policies are widely accepted in almost all participating countries as an essential strategy to help working parents reconcile work and

family life and to promote gender equity. The length, flexibility, level of payment and take-up by men and women vary across countries; and

- While taxes and transfers can help redistribute income to families with young children, in a few countries more than 20% of children still live in relative poverty. Income support, measures to improve parent employability and targeted early interventions may improve children's life-course chances and promote social cohesion.

Demographic trends: Fertility rates, family formation, and diversity

24. The demographic landscape for families has changed dramatically over the past decades. Declining fertility rates, combined with longer life expectancies at birth and declining mortality rates, have contributed to the shift in the age structure of the population in OECD countries. As a result, the percentage of children as a proportion of the population (currently at 5.8-8.6% in countries participating in the review) has decreased and is expected to decline further in coming decades, while the proportion of the elderly has increased. Within countries, the general ageing of the population is more marked in rural and remote areas as younger workers seeking employment opportunities migrate toward urban areas. Fertility rates – average number of children per women aged 15-49 – have fallen dramatically and are below replacement in all countries in the review, with the exception of the USA. At the same time, female labour force participation rates have increased substantially in most countries. Labour market developments appear to strongly influence family formation. Young people are waiting to get married and have children until they have completed more education and when one or both parents are more securely established in their careers, which is a longer process than in the past (OECD, 1999a). This is seen for example in the increasing age at first marriage and at first childbirth. The average age of women at first childbirth is above 25 in all participating countries, except for the Czech Republic.

25. In some countries (e.g., Australia, Czech Republic, Italy), declining birthrates cause concern, while other countries seem to be less affected or experience increasing birth rates (e.g., the Netherlands). Countries with the highest rates of female labour participation rates tend to have higher completed fertility rates. This suggests that childrearing and paid work are *complementary*, rather than *alternative* activities (OECD, 1999a). It is not clear whether policies to increase female labour force participation will increase fertility rates, but it is interesting to note that fall in fertility in Sweden followed a rise in unemployment. Declining fertility rates have wide social, economic, and educational consequences. While the demand for services for children is likely to decrease, the demand for care services will continue to increase with more and more elderly people living alone. On the other hand, smaller family sizes mean that many children are growing up in families with few or no siblings. Informal opportunities for socialisation – in both rural and urban areas – are becoming more rare, leading to greater demand for early childhood settings where young children can interact with other children and adults.

26. The populations of OECD countries also are becoming increasingly heterogeneous as a result of immigration from former colonies, the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers, and economic migrants seeking work in countries with labour shortages. These minority groups tend to have more children, earlier in life than the rest of the population. As a result, the share of ethnic minority children is growing more rapidly than the ethnic majority population in countries such as the Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and the Netherlands, although data in this area is incomplete. The diversification of the population and increasing cultural pluralism of society has an impact on educational, including ECEC, provision. In several countries (e.g., Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden), policies to expand access to early childhood services for immigrant and ethnic minority groups have been pursued in order to expose children and families to the language and traditions of mainstream society, and provide opportunities for parents to establish social contacts and networks. Countries with indigenous populations

(Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, USA) are seeking to preserve traditional language and cultures, while seeking to empower families within mainstream society. The need for early childhood staff and provision to value and respond to the needs of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families remains a challenge in many countries.

27. Another trend is the growing population of children living with only one parent, and a growing number of women acting as the only, or main, responsible parent for both childrearing and income support. National rates of lone parenthood vary; for example, children in Great Britain, Sweden, and the USA are much more likely to be in lone-parent families, than those in Italy or Portugal. Table 2.1 shows that the proportion of lone-parent families of total families is 20% or more in many countries. These trends are linked to the increase in divorce and separation and to a lesser extent a rise in births outside of marriage. The number of children born to unmarried mothers has increased substantially in most countries, particularly, in Ireland, the UK, the USA. The figures also are high in the Nordic countries, though a substantial proportion are born to stable cohabiting couples. The likelihood of lone parenthood is linked to early childbearing, whether in or out of marriage. Lone-parents face many challenges:

Lone mothers must carry the dual responsibility of being the main breadwinner and the main carer wishing to enter the labour market where caring responsibilities may not be recognised, and in the face of social arrangements which often continue to take for granted the flexibility of a mother's time (e.g., the time schedule of schools, the offer of child care services, the opening hours of shops, public offices, etc.) (OECD, 1999a, p. 16).

28. The consequences for ECEC policy are many. In order for lone mothers to enter and remain in the labour market, there is a need for greater access to affordable ECEC. ECEC services need to be sensitive to the time and financial constraints faced by lone mothers when they conceive of opening hours, fees, and parental engagement objectives. Yet, the labour market also needs to respond with more flexibility so that lone-parents can balance their work and family responsibilities.

Table 2.1. Demographic trends

	Population under 6		Fertility rates ^a		Number of lone parent families as a percent of all families with dependent children		Age of women at first childbirth		
	1990	As a % of total population, 1990	1999	As a % of total population, 1999	1997		1990	1993	
Australia	1 536 473 ^b	8.7 ^b	1 536 498	8.1	1.8 ^c	1993	17	27.6	28.3
Belgium	708 475	7.1	700 550	6.9	1.6	1996	15	26.0	m
Czech Republic	760 160 ^b	7.4 ^b	591 961	5.8	1.2		m	22.4	22.3
Denmark	339 752	6.6	413 540	7.8	1.8	1996	13	m	26.7
Finland	374 746	7.5	369 870	7.2	1.8	1996	17	26.3	26.7
Italy	3 379 798	6.0	3 207 866	5.6	1.2	1996	11	26.2	26.9
Netherlands	1 103 910	7.4	1 173 578	7.4	1.5	1996	11	29.2	27.8
Norway	326 451	7.7	362 566	8.2	1.9	1993	20	m	25.5
Portugal	699 710	7.1	663 030	6.6	1.5	1996	12	24.7	25.2
Sweden	636 440	7.5	608 859	6.9	1.5	1993	18	25.8	26.5
United Kingdom	4 551 448	7.9	4 412 519	7.4	1.7	1996	23	26.6	27.5
United States	23 354 000 ^b	9.1 ^b	11 729 923 ^d	8.6 ^d	2.1		m	26.3	26.4
Austria	534 216	6.9	530 973	6.6	1.4	1996	14	m	25.0
Canada	2 376 750 ^b	8.3 ^b	2 308 017 ^d	7.7 ^d	1.6 ^c	1991	20	26.4	26.8
France	4 532 350	8.0	4 294 293	7.3	1.7	1996	15	27.0	27.6
Germany	5 205 315	6.6	4 757 243	5.8	1.4	1991	16	m	m
Greece	674 725	6.7	607 490	5.8	1.3	1996	7	m	25.7
Hungary	738 332	7.1	640 044	6.3	1.4	1990	24	m	m
Iceland	25 213	9.9	26 098	9.5	2.0	1993	21	m	24.3
Ireland	345 991	9.9	309 021	8.3	1.9	1996	13	m	m
Japan	7 551 000 ^b	6.1 ^b	7 164 000 ^d	5.7 ^d	1.4	1995	13	27.0	27.2
Korea, Republic of	3 939 212 ^b	9.0 ^b	4 292 484	9.2	1.6 ^c	1995	9	25.9	26.3
Luxembourg	27 031	7.1	34 307	8.0	1.7	1996	11	m	m
Mexico	13 346 195	16.1	13 365 611 ^d	13.9 ^d	2.7 ^c		m	m	m
New Zealand	342 800 ^b	9.8 ^b	341 610 ^d	9.0 ^d	2.0 ^c	1996	26	27.6 ^{e,f}	28.7 ^{e,g}
Poland	3 303 876	8.6 ^b	2 609 598	6.7	1.5		m	m	m
Spain	2 575 922	6.6	2 296 673	5.8	1.2	1996	8	26.0	27.1
Switzerland	460 434	6.9	486 798	6.8	1.5	1991	14	27.6 ^h	28.1 ^h
Turkey	7 964 000 ^b	13.5 ^b	7 931 000 ^d	12.4 ^d	2.7 ⁱ		m	m	m

a. Average number of children per woman aged 15-49

b. 1993

c. 1996

d. 1998

e. Data relates to live births in current union only

f. 1991

g. 1995

h. Married women only

i. 1994.

Sources: OECD Education Database 2000; *OECD in Figures 2000*, Paris; Eurostat, *Lone Parent families: a growing phenomenon*, 1998; OECD, *Caring Word*, 1999.

Family and employment: A delicate balance

29. In recent years, there have been many significant changes to family arrangements with implications for educational and social policy. The desire for greater economic independence of women and increased household standards, improved educational levels, the demands from the economy for more labour (particularly due to growth of the service sector) all have contributed to increasing female labour force participation in paid work (OECD, 1999a). Cross-national variation in labour market participation by women is related to cultural patterns, social and economic behaviour, and available supports, including access to formal and informal ECEC. As the data for mothers with young children under six are not reported consistently across countries, it is difficult to make cross-national comparisons. Instead, we look at trends in labour force participation among 25-34 year olds. Given the fact that average childbearing age at first birth falls within that range, it can be assumed that this age group includes many men and women with young children. As Figure 2.1. shows, in all countries participating in the review, except Italy, more than 70% of women are employed. Female labour force participation has increased dramatically since the beginning of the 1990s in Belgium and the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent in Norway and the UK. The economic recession in the early 1990s reduced participation rates in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, but levels remain high. In contrast, male labour force participation rates have fallen in most countries. The increasing precariousness of employment among males and the increasing instability of marriage also has encouraged women to participate in the labour market to ensure economic stability for their households.

30. As a result, more women – and also more men – are facing dual and also conflicting labour market and family responsibilities. In Finland, for example, over 60% of women with a three-year-old child are employed, compared with 78% of all women aged 25-34, while in Australia, 47% of women with a child under three work compared with 68% of all women aged 25-34. Yet, these employment gains have not been shared equally. Most governments have invested in expanding ECEC, including out-of-school provision, to meet the increased demand. In some countries, however, limited access to ECEC has been a barrier to female employment. In particular, labour-market participation by *lone mothers* depends to a greater extent than for married women on social policy provisions. Many lone parents still are reliant on social benefits rather than on employment as their main source of income, and they also have the lowest relative incomes of all households. Participation rates are lower in countries, such as Australia, the Netherlands, and the UK, where income support policies have allowed lone-parents to care for their children and receive economic support. Recent concern about the growing dependency on welfare benefits (e.g., Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, UK, USA) has led to time-limited benefits and the expansion of education and training programmes to help lone-parents enter the labour market. In the USA, welfare reform is now time-limited and some states require job search activity 14 weeks after giving birth. These policies have led to a surge in demand for affordable, formal ECEC arrangements for very young children, which, to date, have not been met adequately.

31. In most OECD countries, the working life span is compressed into a relatively short period due to increased time spend in education on the one hand, and early retirement on the other. This means that the critical time for career advancement typically coincides with the period when children are young and the demands of family are the greatest. It is not surprising, therefore, that mothers with young children tend to work fewer hours than fathers. Average weekly hours worked among mothers with a child under three were 32.7 hours across the EU, except for Luxembourg and Denmark, while for fathers it was 42.7 (Moss & Deven, 1999). There are trends, however, for both parents to work longer hours (see Table A2.2.). Women's domestic responsibilities may prevent them from competing equally on the labour market and from pursuing in more lucrative career tracks. The long hours worked by fathers and the pressures of their workplace commitments may prevent them for taking part equally in housing and care responsibilities

within the home. “Real compatibility between family and employment responsibilities depends on enhanced flexibility in both working hours and in the organisation of household and caring tasks, supported by an adapted social infrastructure” (OECD, 1991, p. 11).

32. While high female labour participation is becoming more common across OECD countries, there are different patterns of part-time and full-time work. Part-time employment has increased in most countries, and typically accounts for over 20% of total female employment and around 10% or less for males. As Figure 2.2. shows, the highest rates of part-time female employment among employed women 25-34 years old are found in the Netherlands (55.7%) followed by Norway (37.3%) and the UK (35.8%). In the UK and the USA, this increase has been almost entirely amongst married women with children, who have returned to paid part-time work between and after childbearing. The highest proportion of male part-time work is also in the Netherlands (10%), followed by Norway (7.5%) and Sweden (7.4%). In contrast, there are very few part-time female workers in Portugal (7.8%), Denmark (14.4%) and the Czech Republic (13.3%) and male part-time work is very rare in the Czech Republic (0.8%), Portugal (2.5%), and Italy (3.9%). The incidence of part-time work among mothers with young children is generally higher than among female employees. The different patterns of part-time and full-time work have implications for the ECEC system, for example, in the Czech Republic where 96% kindergartens are open full-time to accommodate the working schedules of parents.

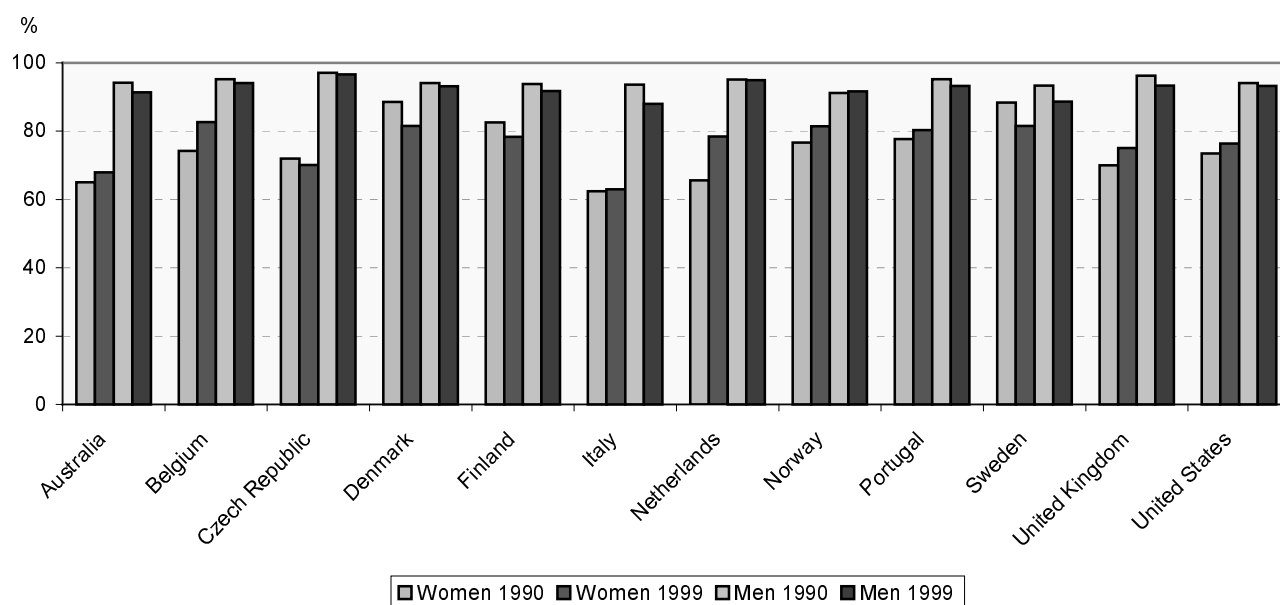
33. A high level of part-time work among women may be a sign of difficulties in combining family life and career. For many women, flexibility in working time usually means adjusting their domestic schedules to take on part-time employment (OECD, 1991). Mothers with high educational attainment levels are more likely to work full-time, while the incidence of part-time work is higher for mothers with low and medium levels of educational attainment. In part, this may reflect the lower opportunity cost for women with lower education (and lower earnings) of working part-time or it may reflect the difficulty of mothers with low education to find full-time work. Part-time work not only involves shorter hours, but in may also be associated with lower status, and less favourable conditions of employment. While part-time work may make employment compatible with meeting family responsibilities, part-time work does not always allow for regular family life. In some cases, workers with part-time jobs do not have control over the hours they work and end up working irregular hours, evening, nights, and weekends.

34. In addition to part-time work, other forms of non-standard employment – sub-contracting, temporary and casual employment, work at home, short-term employment and self-employment – are a growing reality in OECD countries. While these more flexible forms of employment can expand employment opportunities, especially for women, job and income security and conditions of employment are usually inferior, which leads to a risk of labour market marginalisation. In most OECD countries, about 10% of workers are employed with temporary employment contracts which may give rights to lower levels of social protection than full-time permanent contracts. In Australia, about 26.9% of the workforce is employed on a casual basis, and the vast majority are women. Self-employment has also increased by 3% or more in OECD countries over the past two decades, and in some countries, the self-employed do not have access to maternity/parental leave benefits (OECD, 1999a). An increasing number of parents with small children have unstable working conditions, with short and varying employment relationships. Parents often are forced to accept jobs that may be very difficult in terms of working hours, and a growing percentage of parents also work shift hours and/or nights and weekends (see Table A2.3.). In Finland, for example, 8-9% of all children in day care had parents who work shifts or irregular hours. Across countries, ECEC provision has typically provided according to the needs of parents working regular office hours. As there are limited formal options for children who need care during atypical hours, many parents rely on informal arrangements.

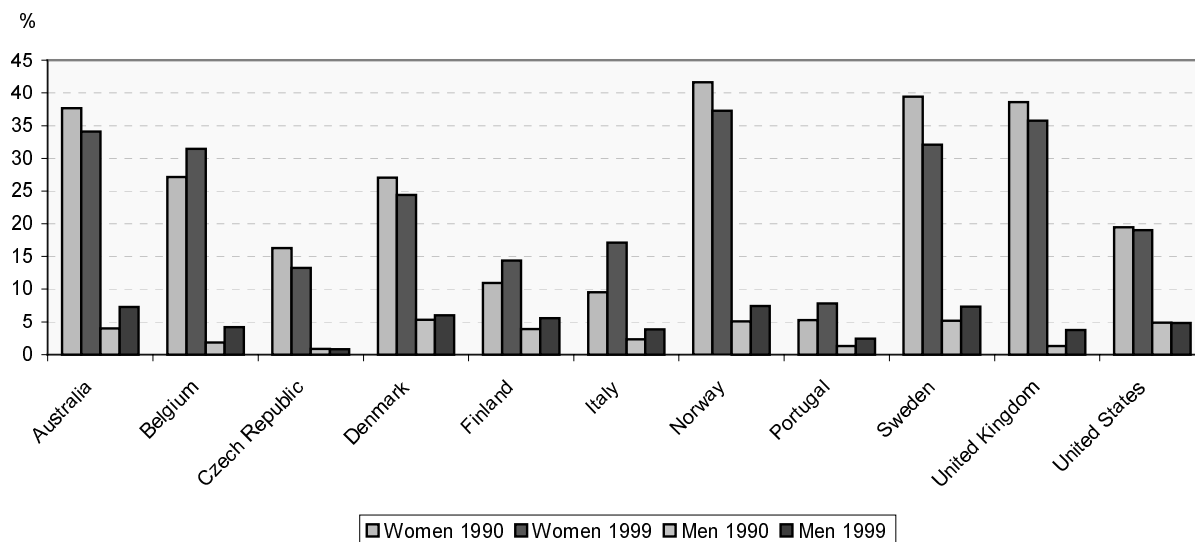
35. The changing needs of the labour market in favour of highly-skilled workers has led to a growing gap between work-rich and work-poor households. Unemployment rates are much higher among those with low educational attainment and the differences are getting larger. There have been sharp increases in the proportion of households in which there is not employment income of any sort, which can have large economic and social implications for young children (e.g., in the Czech Republic, the unemployment rate of the Romany minority is estimated at 90%). Even if low-skilled parents are working, they may not earn enough to support their families. Countries with greater income inequality – measured as the ratio of median earnings to bottom decile earnings – have a higher incidence of low-paid jobs. The incidence of low-pay has increased in Australia, the UK, and the USA in line with the increases in earnings inequality in these countries.

36. These labour market changes have large implications for ECEC policy. Not only are more women with young children participating in the labour market, but they are involved in a range of employment types, including permanent full-time or part-time, as well as casual arrangements. Non-standard employment, including self-employment and seasonal work, as well as atypical hours are becoming more common. The range and complexity of parental working patterns need to be accommodated by ECEC. In addition, the trend to lengthening of the average working week have far-reaching implications for the organisation (e.g., opening hours) of ECEC provision. Services also need to respond to the fact that parents of some children will endure short or long periods of unemployment, leading to resource constraints and other challenges. On the other hand, there is a need for the labour market to be more flexible in accommodating the needs of parents, given that the more equitable sharing of family and household responsibilities between men and women is a goal in many OECD countries.

Figure 2.1. Labour force participation rate of the population 25 to 34 years of age



Sources: For all countries except Italy, OECD Labour force statistics database; data for Italy provided by EUROSTAT.

Figure 2.2. Trends in incidence of part-time employment rates¹ for prime-age adults²

1. Part-time employment / total employment.

2. 25-34 year-olds.

Source: OECD, Full-time Part-time (National) employment database.

Family leave policies

37. Parental leave measures are an important part of child and family policy. With the exception of the United States, job-protected and paid maternity and parental leave policies exist in all the countries reviewed (though in Australia mandatory paid leave covers only 10% of working women). Such policies are acknowledged as an important contribution to providing care for infants and toddlers, and as a means of reconciling work and family responsibilities.⁶ In many countries, maternal and parental leave schemes are considered as one of the cornerstones of equality for women. At the same time, opinion surveys show wide support, among men and women, for a less pronounced division of labour in the everyday lives of families with children [e.g., OECD (2000c)]. In European countries, leave policies range from conformity to the minimal standards set by the EU Directive 96/34/EC⁷ to the generous leave schemes available in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden (see Table 2.2. below). When the OECD began research on ECEC in 1976, Sweden was the only OECD with a parental leave policy. Today, parental leave policies seem to be acceptable to both employers and employees, and are developing in almost all countries. In Denmark, Italy, Norway, and Sweden parental leave arrangements include a specific father quota. Despite some progress, fathers take minimal parental leave in most countries.

⁶ The extent to which the nature and availability of family leave policies affects the need and demand for ECEC provision will be explored in section 3.1.

⁷ The framework agreement provides for “male and female workers to have individual entitlement to parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child, enabling them to take care of the child for at least three months... Workers have the right to return to the same job at the end of parental leave or, if that is not possible, to an equivalent or similar job consistent with their employment contract or relationship. The Member States may introduce more favourable provisions than those laid down in the Directive.”

38. Several important issues arise around the question of parental leave. First, to accomplish their aims, parental leave schemes need to be supported by formal or informal parents clubs, family houses, family and child centres, that can help to break the isolation of young mothers and provide opportunities for the early socialisation and stimulation of infants and toddlers. Such centres or meeting points can also be critical for early detection and intervention, if either young parents or their children need special help. In the larger urban neighbourhoods, the traditional social services structures may no longer be adequate. Societies may now need to recreate consciously the social networks that were formerly available through the extended family and traditional community resources.

39. Second, parental leave issues are gradually shifting from the domain of child and family policy into labour market policy, a domain with its rationality that does not necessarily place the best interests of young children or women as a priority (Fagnani, 1999). There is a danger that economic and welfare-to-work considerations may predominate, rather than a family policy approach that supports parents to have children in the best possible conditions. In a labour market approach (Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, UK) paid parental leave in excess of three to six months is considered not as income replacement but as a modest unemployment benefit, and families with young children can experience a considerable reduction in income. Without guaranteed salary and job protection, women with young children, if they wish to avoid welfare dependence, are obliged often to take up low-paid, part-time work. In short, leave schemes, as they are almost exclusively taken up by women, may undermine equal opportunity, unless strong gender measures are introduced.

40. Third, when interviewed about their reluctance to take up parental leave, men generally cite the drop in family income, but go on to speak of other reasons, such as, problems of re-entry to work after leave, the dangers of a break in their professional careers and even, the negative reactions of bosses and colleagues. In many countries, men miss out on the emotional rewards of care for young children because they are constrained by the gender-based division of household and labour responsibilities. In Norway, however, with the introduction of a four-week non-transferrable father quota, take up of among men has increased to 78% of eligible fathers. Unless societal and workplace attitudes are supportive, women will have similar difficulties, with negative consequences on their careers and earnings. In addition, women in Belgium in both the Flemish and French communities, and in Italy expressed the fear that the hard-won gains of feminism during the century could be undermined by long-term parental leaves, which are taken up almost exclusively by mothers. Career interruptions – however short – can still have long-term negative effects on earning and income security, in some countries.

41. It would seem, therefore, that countries need to strike a balance between, on the one hand, giving a real choice to parents (through adequate funding of parental leave and job protection) and, on the other, keeping women attached to the labour market in an equitable way. Well-paid and job-protected parental leave policies seem to be key, rather than lowly paid leave schemes, which resemble social welfare payments. The latter schemes are generally taken up by poorly educated women, who are effectively excluded from the labour market,⁸ and gender stereotyping of care and domestic work is reinforced. Children from low-educated households are often the last to enter formal ECEC provision. More research is needed on the optimal length of parental leave, *from the perspective of the best interest of the young child*. The issue is not simple, as the individual preferences of parents must be taken into account, as well as the presence or absence of social networks, flexible services and family-friendly workplaces – all of which can significantly impact the context of child-rearing. For example, some countries provide flexible working hours for parents, as in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden, or allow parental leave

⁸ Lowly educated mothers who do not work during a child's first years tend not to work over a lifetime, e.g. in the Netherlands, lowly-educated women with children earn only 13% of lifetime incomes of similar women without children – Dankmeijer, 1996.

to be taken part-time, as in Norway. Another question is what are the social and economic costs of prioritising leave schemes over publicly-funded ECEC services for very young children.

Table 2.2. Maternity and parental leave policies

AUS	Family-based leave entitlement up to 52 weeks <i>unpaid</i> . Only 17% mothers receive payment from 6 to 12 weeks at birth (depends on workplace agreement)
BEL/CFL	15 weeks at 82% for first month, thereafter at 75% + 6 months parental leave at a flat rate of 20,400 BEF (3 months for each parent or 6 months part-time) + career break up to 5 years at 12,308 BEF monthly
BEL/CFR	15 weeks at 82% for first month, thereafter at 75% + 6 months parental leave at a flat rate of 20,400 BEF (3 months for each parent or 6 months part-time) + career break up to 5 years at 12,308 BEF monthly
CZE	Maternity leave of 28 weeks, paid at 69% earnings + 4 year (until 4 th birthday) parental leave at flat-rate
DNK	28 weeks maternity + 2 paternity weeks at flat-rate (unemployment benefit) of 2846 DK monthly + (with employer's agreement) 26 weeks childcare leave at 60% unemployment benefit
FIN	18 weeks maternity + 26 weeks parental paid at average 66% salary, + up to 3 years at flat-rate average FIM 1000
ITA	5 months maternity leave at 80% earnings + 10 months parental leave at 30% earnings
NLD	16 weeks maternity at 100% earnings + non-paid partial (must work 20 hours weekly) parental leave up to six months
NOR	52 weeks at 80% (or 42 weeks at 100%) of earnings (with upper limit) + 1 month paternity + flexible
PRT	18 weeks maternity leave at 100% earnings + non-paid parental leave up to six months.
SWE	10 weeks before birth (100%) + 2 weeks paternity (80%) + 18 months, paid 80% earnings for a year (with upper limit) and 60 SEK daily for six months - very flexible. 30 days to be taken by father, or lost
UKM	(With 1 year of employment), 18 weeks paid maternal leave, (6 weeks at 90% and 12 weeks flat-rate) + entitlement to further unpaid 22 weeks + unpaid 4 weeks yearly for three years until child reaches 5.
USA	The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides for a 12 week job-protected but unpaid leave for employees in firms with 50 or more workers, at the time of pregnancy, childbirth, or their own illness or that of a family member. Employers can require that employees use their vacation and sick leave before claiming the family leave. Some paid maternity leave depending on workplace agreement. Five states provide paid disability leave which, since 1977, is required to cover pregnancy and maternity.

Social policies and child well-being

42. ECEC policies need to be considered as part of a system of wider supports to promote the well-being of children and families. Cash benefits to families include: universal or income-tested income support for families with young children; income support payments caring for children at home; birth grants; maternity and parental leave benefits; cash benefits for lone parents; and spending on family services (e.g., child protection, counselling, assistance to victims of domestic violence). Spending on family benefits is highest in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden at about 3.5% of GDP, which is considerably above such spending in other OECD countries (1.8% GDP). More than in most other countries, expenditure in the Nordic countries focuses on services, including ECEC provision, while in Belgium and the Netherlands (as well as Ireland, New Zealand, and Turkey) cash benefits form a larger part of the budget than public services for young children (OECD, 2000b). Countries often supplement these benefits with generous assistance for children with disabled children in the form of cash allowances, additional services, payments to carers, etc. Low-income families usually are eligible for considerable targeted support (e.g., housing and health benefits). The tax system also plays a role in redistributing income toward families in most countries.

43. While taxes and transfers can help redistribute income to families with young children, in a few countries more than 20% of children still live in relative poverty. *Relative poverty* includes households with income below 50% of the national median. This definition is commonly used in most OECD countries and enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which provides for the right to “a standard of living adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (Article 27). The well-being of children is drastically reduced by being raised in poverty. “Whether measured by physical and mental development, health and survival rates, educational achievement or job prospects, incomes or life expectancies, those who spend their childhood in poverty of income and expectation are at a marked and measurable disadvantage” (Unicef, 2000, p. 3). Child poverty threatens the quality of life of all citizens as children who grow up in poverty are more likely to have learning difficulties, to drop out of school, to commit crimes, to be out of work, to become pregnant at too early an age, and to live lives that perpetuate poverty and disadvantage into succeeding generations.

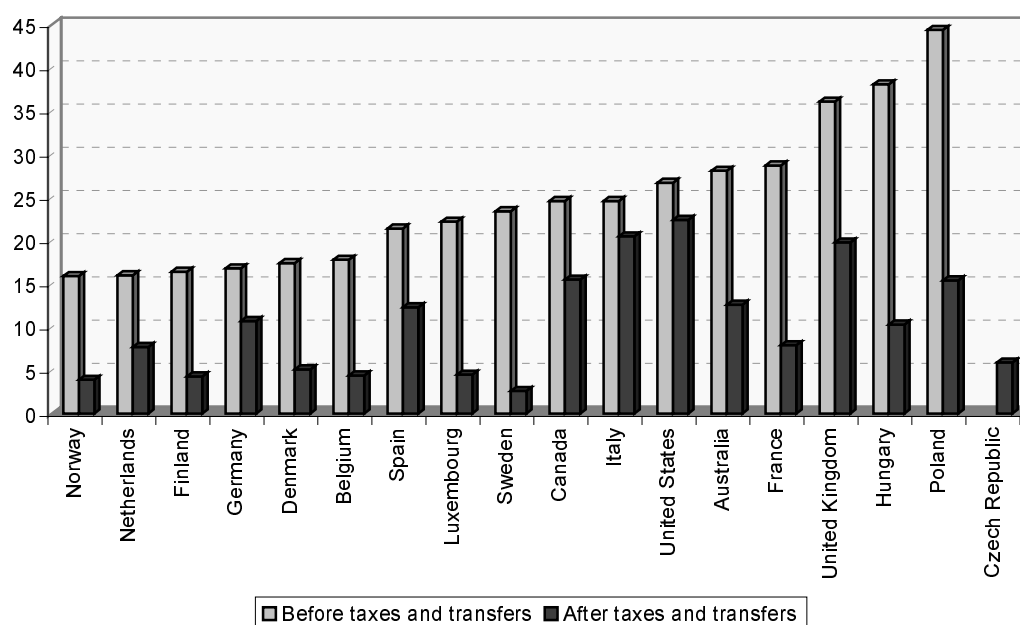
44. The six OECD countries with the lowest relative poverty rates (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Denmark) all combine a high degree of economic development with a reasonable degree of social and gender equity. Figure 2.3. shows poverty rates before and after taxes and transfers to evaluate the effectiveness of policies to redistribute resources to protect the poorest children. State intervention reduces poverty by 20 percentage points in Sweden (and France) and by 16 percentage points in the UK. In Denmark, Finland, and Norway the reduction exceeds 10 percentage points. Only in Italy and the USA do taxes and transfers reduce poverty by less than five percentage points. It is notable that in the Czech Republic – despite unemployment, greater wage inequality, and cuts in redistributive spending brought by economic and social transition – the government has kept child poverty low by maintaining significant redistributive taxes and social transfers. Child poverty rates rose by about three percentage points during the first half of the 1990s and remain among the lowest in the OECD area.

45. Child poverty rates are influenced by a number of factors including lone parenthood, employment and its distribution, wage inequality, and state transfers to the workless and low-paid. Research reveals a strong link between high female labour participation and low child poverty, and a corresponding link between comprehensive levels of family policy and high employment among women, and a third correlation between family policy legislation and low rates of child poverty (Unicef, 2000). Concerns about child development and poverty have lead countries to provide income support to those without paid earnings, particularly families with children. There is particular concern that lone-parent households are more likely to live in poverty. More reliable systems of child support payments from the absent parents

would help reduce poverty among lone-parent families. Another strategy is to improve the economic and social environment in which the child is raised through *parental work and education training programmes* which have shown to be successful as long as quality child care support is available. In countries with high child poverty rates, setting poverty reduction targets may stimulate public support and provide a framework for different agencies to work together, as in the UK, where the government has committed to halving poverty in ten years and to eradicate it by the year 2020.

46. Child poverty also has implications for ECEC policy. It is difficult for ECEC services to focus on children's development and learning, when their basic health, nutrition, and housing needs are not met. Countries are concerned about addressing these needs and target resources and comprehensive services to children in low-income families. In addition to income redistribution and job training and education, *early intervention* programmes have been explored by governments both to mediate some of the negative effects of low-income on children and as a long-term strategy to break the cycle of disadvantage. *Home-visiting programmes* to improve parenting skills and to prevent low birth weight, which is strongly correlated with lower cognitive ability. These schemes, which generally consist of health-care advice and general social services support are common in Europe, and to a lesser extent in Australia and the USA.

47. Even in countries with low-levels of child poverty, a widespread concern in OECD countries regards the *socially excluded*, the growing section of the population that faces extraordinary barriers to full participation in the labour force and society. There is concern that these barriers are likely to lead to dependence on benefits, financial deprivation, poor health status, and limited access to services. Countries including Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands, and Portugal have developed anti-poverty strategies that incorporate policies for urban regeneration, improved access to social services, and integration of immigrants or ethnic minority groups. Social assistance policy to address social exclusion has taken the form of cash assistance, social help via services, and labour market reinsertion (OECD, 1999a). A more recent focus of governments has been on the role of early childhood policy and programmes in promoting social cohesion by providing marginalised families, particularly those from immigrant and ethnic minority communities, an opportunity to develop informal relationships and build social support and networks.

Figure 2.3. Child poverty rates before and after taxes and transfers, 1990s

Source: UNICEF 2000.

2.2 Recognising diverse understandings of children and the purposes of ECEC

Key points

- The reasons for investing in ECEC policy and provision are embedded in cultural and social beliefs about young children, the roles of families and government, and the purposes of ECEC in within and across countries.
- In many countries, the education and care of young children is shifting from the private to the public domain, with much attention to the complementary roles of families and ECEC institutions in young children's early development and learning.
- Many countries are seeking to balance views of the 'here and now' of childhood and an investment with the future adult in mind. These diverse understandings have important implications for the organisation of policy and provision in different countries.

48. In most countries, ECEC policy is shaped by a multiplicity of objectives, including: facilitating the labour market participation of mothers with young children and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities; supporting children and families 'at risk'; promoting equal opportunities to education and lifelong learning; enhancing school readiness and children's later educational outcomes; supporting environments which foster children's overall development and well-being; maintaining social integration and cohesion. The relative emphasis on these policy objectives differs across countries and may shift according to the specific political, economic, and social conditions at a given time and place (Cleverley &

Phillips, 1987; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Woodhead, 1999) (see Box 2.1). In many instances, the focus on children themselves is a subset of the broader overarching policy, whether it relates to employment, families, social or educational outcomes.

49. In addition, the dominant rationale for investing in early childhood education and care is influenced by specific views about young children, about responsibility for young children's care and education, and about the purposes of ECEC institutions (c.f., Dahlberg et al., 1999). ECEC policies reflect these – mainly implicit – assumptions, which are deeply embedded in cultural and social views. In this section, we will explore some of the different understandings of young children and the purposes of ECEC that have been documented during the review.⁹ While different understandings may co-exist within countries, they are rarely made explicit in policy discussions. Recognising these diverse perspectives can help shed light on why countries make certain choices with regard to early childhood policy and provision for example, with regard to governance, staffing, parent engagement, pedagogy, and financing. Our objective is to make these complex political and ethical issues more visible so that they can be subject to critical and democratic discussion.

Who is responsible for ECEC?

50. Social views with regard to who is responsible for the education and care of young children are an important to understanding policy development in different countries. In other words, what are the implicit or explicit assumptions of the respective responsibilities of mothers, fathers, and other members of society when it comes to the education and care of young children? In the past, the pervading assumption in many countries has been that the education and upbringing of young children is a private affair and not a public responsibility. Early childhood provision therefore has been seen as an issue for parents, usually understood as mothers, not as an issue for people and society, and still less about children's rights to self-fulfilment. When childrearing is understood as a private affair, there is less public responsibility for very young children – unless the family is deemed 'in need.' This helps to explain why, historically, many countries have targeted ECEC policies to 'at-risk', poor, or abused children, and only more recently have some taken more universal approaches.

51. Government involvement in the rearing of children – particularly infants and toddlers – is still viewed in some societies as interfering with the rights and responsibilities of parents. However, the approach taken by an increasing number of countries in the review suggests that the issue is no longer whether non-parental care is worse or inferior to the care that parents can provide. All countries acknowledge that mothers and fathers have the main responsibility for their children and that the home environment is extremely important to their children's well-being. Increasing attention is also being accorded to the role of fathers in their children's early years. There has been a shift, however, toward a view of children's early care and education as a shared responsibility between family and state, and not just for the family alone to bear. As described in the Netherlands Background Report:

...concepts of childrearing and socialisation are changing. Although the family is still seen as centrally important and primarily responsible for the upbringing of children, there is a trend towards a new view of the socialisation of children being a shared social responsibility, involving many different parties including government. This signifies and exemplifies a new direction in government policy, aimed at creating constructive communities of interest in which citizens, professionals, organisations, and government participate on an equal basis (Ministry of VWS/Ministry of OCenW, 2000, p. 8)

⁹ Each Country Note includes a more detailed discussion concerning the dominant understandings of early childhood and the purposes of ECEC in the country concerned, based on a review of government documents and discussions with policy officials, researchers, practitioners, families, and other stakeholder groups.

52. Rather than being viewed as a substitute home, ECEC can be seen as different from, but complementary to, families. In Portugal, for example, the Framework Law defines pre-school education in the *jardim de infância* (for children from three to six) as:

...the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education. and complements the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation, fostering the education and balanced development of the child, with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual (Ministry of Education in Portugal, 1999, p. 24)

53. According to this perspective, both the home and ECEC provision have very important roles to play in the early years of children's development and learning, and children can benefit from both worlds. Today, most children need some non-parental care, most often because their parents are in the labour market or studying. In addition, many children are growing up in small family units, with maybe only one adult and no siblings at home, and few peers in the immediate neighbourhood. Many grow up in urban environments which prohibit freedom of movement. ECEC settings can provide care while parents are working, but also a place for children to spend their early years to socialise and learn through their relationships with other children and other adults. Most countries recognise that early childhood provision provides an opportunity to identify children with special needs or at-risk and provide intervention as early as possible in order to prevent or minimise later difficulties. When ECEC is considered as part of the public domain, settings can be viewed as meeting points for the family and community, providing social support, and where both children and adults have an interest and a 'voice' in decision-making. For example, in Denmark:

The facilities [for children from birth to seven] shall meet a demand for care and provide educational and stimulating environments for the children. The institutions create the framework in co-operation with the children and their parents to further the development, well-being and independence of the children (Ministry of Social Affairs in Denmark, 1997, p. 6).

54. Whether children are cared for in the home or in organised provision, ECEC provision can support parents in stimulating their children's development and learning. Many countries also have recognised that flexible services for parents, such as drop-in centres and playgroups, can provide important support to families with young children and promote social cohesion.

What are the purposes of ECEC provision?

55. Societies also differ in the degree to which childhood is regarded as a special time to be cherished in and of itself and the degree to which childhood is regarded as preparation for the future. One common view is that children are in need to be readied to learn or readied for school so that they can eventually take their places as workers in a global economy. In countries where this perspective is particularly prevalent, policies and provision may emphasise the importance of quality early childhood experiences to prepare children to succeed in formal schooling, the labour force, and society. In this framework, there is a need to compensate for the disadvantage experienced by children from home environments that are deemed deficient in some way. Resources may be targeted to children deemed 'at-risk' in order to foster their ability to become autonomous and economically self-sufficient individuals, but also to prevent the potential costs to society of welfare dependency, crime, and other social problems. While these are important goals within an overall educational vision, it is important to view children's strengths and potential, as well as their vulnerabilities.

56. While some countries have targeted programmes to certain groups, other countries have made it a policy priority for all young children to have the right to high quality education from an early age, regardless of socio-economic status or ethnic origin. Universal access to ECEC is sought as a means of promoting equality of educational opportunity and ensuring that all children – and especially those in need of special support or at ‘at-risk’ of school failure – experience the necessary conditions so that they are ‘ready to learn’ when they start primary school. Whether a targeted or more universal approach is taken, there is a similar focus on children as human capital investment which shapes the purposes of ECEC provision. This is not to suggest a lack of attention to the lives that children are living in the present, only that the emphasis is on the school children and adults they will become. When ECEC focuses on introducing learning skills and familiarising children with early schooling, there is a risk of downward pressure from an school-based agenda to teach specific skills and knowledge in the early years, especially with regard to literacy and numeracy. This can lead to neglect of other important areas of early learning. With help from the early childhood field, there is growing recognition of the importance of focusing on the ‘whole child’ and fostering children’s emerging literacy and numeracy within an integrated curriculum.

57. Another perspective is to view childhood is as an important phase of life in its own right. In the words of the *Norwegian Framework Plan*:

...childhood as a life-phase has a high intrinsic value, and children’s own free-time, own culture and play are fundamentally important...the need for control and management of the [barnehager] must at all times be weighed against the children’s need to be children on their own premises and based on their own interests (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in Norway, 1996).

58. Linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are seen increasingly as a distinct group in society. As a group, children not only have their own culture, but also their own rights and ‘voice.’ ECEC provides opportunities for children to socialise with their peers and with adults and to learn what it means to be a citizen. As young citizens, they are expected to become part of the social and learning communities in ECEC institutions. Again, in accordance with the UN Convention, countries are stressing children’s right to express their points of view and to participate in and influence the institutions they attend, for example, regarding planning and evaluation.

59. While the main purpose of ECEC is not to influence later school or workforce performance, this construction of childhood recognises the importance for children to possess the skills and learning strategies they will need in school. Indeed, as noted in the Sweden Background Report, the *förskola* for children under six:

...builds on the view of the child as competent and with great inner resources, capable of formulating [his or her] own theories about the world, discovering and exploring [his or her] immediate surroundings and developing confidence in [his or her] own abilities (Gunnarsson et al., 1999, p. 50).

60. Children are understood to be competent learners from birth. Since children learn all the time and in *all* aspects of everyday life, divisions between ‘care’ and ‘education’ become meaningless. There is an effort to ensure that all children have access to ECEC, particularly children in need of special support. In particular, participation in ECEC is seen as critical for children from ethnic minority groups to have early exposure to the country’s language and traditions so that they can become part of society in the present and do not suffer from social exclusion when they begin school or later in life. The distinction is that although ECEC settings are viewed as having long-term value for children’s learning and well-being, they are not designed specifically to prepare children for the future. In countries that have adopted this construction of

childhood, quite different teaching and learning traditions have developed in ECEC and schools. Recently, closer collaboration between ECEC and schools has led to cross-influences on pedagogy in both sectors.

61. This discussion does not intend to present a false dichotomy between the present and the future, between the child as 'being' and 'becoming.' In fact, a growing number of countries are seeking a balance between providing opportunities that will enable children to thrive in the next stage of education and adulthood and, at the same time, valuing ECEC institutions as places for children to live out their lives in the 'here and now.' From our analysis, it seems that if countries choose to adopt a view of the child who is full of potential and capable of learning from birth, and a view of childhood as an important stage in its own right, then ECEC provision can be concerned with both the present and the future. This perspective emerges through the New South Wales (Australia) Curriculum Framework for Children's Services:

Children are viewed as current citizens in the community. The investment in children's lives, their learning and development, comes from valuing them in the present, not largely because of the prospect of a pay-off in the future...The experience for a child in a children's service is both life and preparation for life (NSW Department of Community Services, 2000, p. 3).

62. ECEC institutions adopting this view of the child and of childhood necessarily will challenge children and enable them to acquire the abilities that they will need to participate in school, work, and society-at-large. While the main function of early childhood services is not to get them ready for formal schooling, early childhood professionals recognise their responsibility to provide children with a range of appropriate experiences so that they will begin school as capable learners, confident, flexible, and open to new possibilities and relationships. Early childhood services can give all children a firm foundation so that they are well-equipped to develop fully their potential and play a full and active part in the community and the economy. In this sense, the early childhood years are a fundamental part of the continuous process of lifelong learning.

What are the implications for policymakers?

63. This discussion illustrates the importance of recognising the complex and diverse views of young children, families and the purposes of ECEC that exist within and across societies. Social constructions of children, families, and the purposes of ECEC are reflected in how ECEC systems are envisaged and structured. They can influence whether countries invest in coherent and integrated early childhood systems or accept fragmented arrangements. They impact also on the form of services (e.g., centre-based versus home-based; formal versus informal) or whether services are age split or age integrated, publicly- or privately-funded. Structural characteristics, in turn, shape the development and implementation of policies and practices for young children. These issues will be explored in the rest of the report.

Box 2.1 The Czech Republic: Social change reflected in new understandings of children and ECEC

Although the buildings and basic structure of the Czech *mateřská škola* (centres for three to six-year-olds) remained intact after 1989, the “velvet revolution” brought with it dramatic socio-political changes that were to deeply influence understandings of education and early childhood. The conception of education as conformity to accepted knowledge and social norms has given way to a spirit of enquiry and innovation. Great efforts have been made to change the relationships between the education partners, and to lower the pressures put on children in pre-school institutions. There is a fresh appreciation of the child as a subject of rights, and parents as equal partners. Pedagogical approaches and methods of work more suited to the young child’s needs and interests have been encouraged, daily routines in kindergartens have been relaxed, age-integrated classes introduced, and individual needs and differences respected. Children with special needs are included in kindergartens, which are now more open to the public.

The change in understanding has brought also a wide range of innovative programmes into early education in the Czech Republic. Foreign programmes (Steiner, Waldorf, Step-by-Step) are current, but there are many Czech programmes for young children and their parents reflecting new value orientations and offering a wide range of choice and activities. Immersion in a foreign language, speech therapy, swimming lessons, nature classes, sport activities, art and music clubs are offered in kindergartens in the larger urban centres. Men, too, have been invited into the previously female world of kindergarten teaching: Army duty may be replaced by service as assistants in kindergartens and other institutions, bringing a young male presence – and alternative role models – to young children.

Some of these innovations are trendy and short-lived, and tend to take time from hours that might be more formative for young children. In addition, many parents still look on the kindergarten as a form of care that allows them to take up employment. Indeed, some government ministries may see early education primarily in this light, as an instrument that serves the labour market. The Ministry of Education is conscious of these views, and wishes to refocus the kindergarten as the first stage in the education cycle, a period in which important skills and personal attitudes are formed. For this reason, it has begun work on the preparation of a framework curriculum for the kindergarten. The new curriculum will be general enough to orient kindergartens to offer systematic and appropriate programmes to young children and flexible to allow innovation and experimentation. The content of education will be worked out in five spheres: biological, psychological, interpersonal, socio-cultural and environmental. The framework will identify general competencies (personal, cognitive and operational) that children should acquire in kindergartens, linked with the behaviours and knowledge expected in the first cycle of primary school.

CHAPTER 3: MAIN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES

Introduction

64. At the beginning of the 21st century, the education and care of young children is firmly on the national policy agendas of all 12 countries participating in the thematic review. While in some countries, ECEC has been accorded a high priority for several decades, in others, an unprecedented political focus on young children and families has emerged in the past five years, partly to overcome past neglect. Across countries, we have witnessed and documented strong enthusiasm for improving early childhood policy and practice, at all levels of the system, not least among the dedicated professionals who work directly with young children and their families. Fuelled by major demographic, economic, political, and social changes discussed in the previous chapter, the recent surge in policy attention has fostered several major developments in the field including, rapid expansion of early childhood provision, increased focus on quality improvement, attention to coherence and integration, and higher levels of public investment in the system as a whole.

64. Given the important changes and developments in recent years, it is timely to take stock of what has been achieved and what remains to be accomplished in the field of ECEC. Drawing on the Background Reports, Country Notes, and other materials collected during the review process, the chapter celebrates some of the policy achievements in participating countries, but also raises important issues and concerns for policymakers' consideration. To support and strengthen policy development in the field, particular attention is accorded to strategies to improve quality, access, and coherence of policy and provision. Specifically, this chapter explores seven current cross-national policy trends: (1) expanding provision toward universal access; (2) raising the quality of provision; (3) promoting coherence and co-ordination of policy and services; (4) exploring strategies to ensure adequate investment in the system; (5) improving staff training and work conditions; (6) developing appropriate pedagogical frameworks for young children; and (7) engaging parents, families, and communities in early childhood education and care. Additional information on policy developments in each of the 12 countries on can be found in Appendix 1.

65. It is well recognised that countries have adopted diverse strategies to policy development in this field – strategies which are deeply embedded in particular country contexts, values, and beliefs. Taking this into account, the report does not compare country approaches in terms of better or worse, but raises the possible implications of different policy choices for children, families, and society. In this way, an analysis of different country approaches to ECEC policy may lay out different policy options and underscore remaining challenges for policymakers' future attention. From among the many exciting and interesting initiatives underway in all 12 countries, a variety of examples have been selected because of their particular cross-national relevance, not for their potential as models, but as inspiration for reflection and discussion in OECD countries concerning how to improve early childhood policy and provision.¹⁰

¹⁰ A wide range of current initiatives in the field of ECEC are described in the Background Reports and Country Notes.

3.1 Expanding provision toward universal access

Key points

66. Improving access – the ease with which children and families can take part in ECEC – is a policy priority in all countries, though with different emphases and approaches. Increasingly, countries are expanding provision toward *universal* access – provision that is available to all children whose parents wish them to participate. Countries are also striving for *equitable* access, that is quality, affordable ECEC that meets the diverse needs of children and families, especially of children who most need support. Accessibility has a number of dimensions including: availability in all areas (rural and urban), affordability,¹¹ length of operation during the day and year, flexibility, and availability for different age groups, and for children with special needs. This section presents some of the trends and developments in access to and levels of provision, including:

- The age at which children typically make the transition to primary education ranges from four to seven, meaning that in some countries, children may spend *at least* three years in ECEC, while in others, they will spend *at most* three years prior to beginning primary school;
- In several countries, access to ECEC is a statutory right from age three (or even younger). The trend in all countries is toward full coverage of the three- to six-year-old age group, aiming to give all children at least two years of free publicly-funded provision before beginning compulsory schooling;
- Out-of-school provision for children of working parents has not been a policy priority in most countries in the review. Yet, demand is high, which suggests the need for attention to the concept, organisation, funding, and staffing of this form of provision;
- Policy for the under threes is closely linked with the nature of available parental leave arrangements and social views about caring. While there have been government efforts toward expanding provision and increasing the educational focus, there is still differential access and quality for this age group; and
- Countries are trying to develop (a) more flexible and diverse arrangements while addressing the regional and local variation in access and (b) strategies to include children in need of special support.

The relationship between the starting age of compulsory schooling and ECEC

67. Access to and development of ECEC provision is shaped, in part, by the starting age of compulsory schooling. There is currently some debate concerning the appropriate age for children to start primary school. The statutory age for primary education varies from four (Northern Ireland) to seven (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden), and children in most OECD countries make the transition to compulsory school at the age of six. Children may begin to attend primary school prior to compulsory school age, particularly in countries where ECEC provision for young children has remained relatively underdeveloped compared to other OECD countries. In the Netherlands and Great Britain statutory school age is five, but it

¹¹ The relationship between affordability and access will be discussed in greater detail in the section on financing.

is common practice for young children to enrol in primary school on a voluntary basis at age four (99% in the Netherlands; 80% in Great Britain). In Great Britain, there has been concern about the quality of education for the four-year-olds in primary school and whether the staff is appropriately trained to work with this younger age group. In Australia and the USA, as well, primary schools commonly provide for children under six in pre-primary or kindergarten classes.

68. In countries where a wide range of ECEC provision is available for children below compulsory school age, children begin school-based provision later, but there are moves toward the European norm of six as the age to start formal schooling. After 30 years of debate and experimentation Norway lowered its compulsory school age to six in 1997. Denmark and Sweden have kept compulsory school age at seven, but have introduced a free, voluntary pre-primary class in the primary schools for six-year-olds, which provides a bridge from ECEC to formal schooling. In practice, therefore, almost all children enter the school system at age six. Since August 2000, all six-year-olds in Finland have the right to attend free pre-primary education either in ECEC settings (e.g., day care centres, parish provision) or in the primary schools, which is expected to raise coverage from its present level of 78%.

69. In Italy and Portugal, lowering the compulsory school age to five has been discussed, and later rejected, as a means of providing access to education for socially disadvantaged children, especially ethnic minority groups. Lowering the school start is also a strategy to provide more places for younger children in ECEC. In Norway, when the six-year-olds began attending the free public schools, the supply of ECEC for children under six increased by 20 000 places, the majority of which were switched to provide for children under three. However, in countries that have adopted market approaches to ECEC (e.g., UK, USA), there is concern that as three- and four-year-olds move into free public education, the unit cost of provision for very young children will increase and restrict access further.

Trends in provision for three- to six-year-olds: Moving toward full coverage

70. Most European countries have recognised the role of government in expanding access toward full coverage of the three- to six-year-old age group. Giving children the possibility to benefit from at least two years of high-quality ECEC is viewed as a strategy to promote equality of educational opportunity prior to starting compulsory schooling. To that end, all children have a legal right to attend *free* school-based provision from age 30 months in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), age three in Italy¹², and age four in the Netherlands and the UK. These education-based programmes are viewed as good for children and are widely accepted by the public. Indeed, over 95% of children attend (see Figure 3.1.) regardless of family income or employment status. Most school-based services do not cover the full working day, and many parents work non-standard hours, which raises the issue of out-of-school provision (see below). In countries with near full coverage, there has been little scope for recent development. Other countries have shown remarkable growth in provision. Portugal has rapidly expanded and increased public investment in the pre-school network – public and private providers – over the past five years to overcome long-standing inequities in access, and the government is working toward full enrolment of the three- to six-year-olds. Between 1996 and 1999, coverage increased dramatically, from 57% to 71%. Moreover, to encourage full coverage in the year before compulsory schooling begins, Portugal has introduced a free daily five-hour session for five-year-olds in *jardim de infância*.

71. There has been an increase in coverage in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden as well, in part as a result of recently introduced entitlements to ECEC. Current coverage for three- to six-year-olds varies from 73% in Finland and Norway to almost 90% in Denmark. As noted earlier, enrolments rise to almost full coverage at age five. As early childhood provision has developed with the dual purpose of

¹² In Italy, pre-primary education is free only in state-run and municipal schools, not in private schools.

supporting children's development *and* promoting equal opportunities for men and women to participate in the work force, most services are full-day. Parents pay fees, usually on a sliding-scale according to income. With the exception of Sweden, these services fall under auspices outside the education system at the national level, and take place in centres, and less frequently, family day care homes.¹³ Access to ECEC is a right enshrined in legislation and covers a much wider age group than the three- to six-year-olds. In Finland, children under seven have a subjective right to attend publicly-funded ECEC, and in Denmark, municipalities are expected by law to meet parental demand. Sweden currently provides an entitlement for all children aged 18 months to 12 years whose parents work or study, and there is a new government proposal to extend this right to include a part-time place for children whose parents are unemployed or on parental leave. Norway has not instituted a legal right, but it is a political priority to achieve universal access for all children under six. As a sign that the policy orientation in Sweden is shifting toward a more universal educational approach, there is a new government proposal to provide a free half-day pre-school session for all four- and five-year olds, many of whom are already enrolled in age-integrated centres or family day care.

72. Of the countries participating in the review, only the Czech Republic has experienced a decrease in coverage due to the political, economic, and social changes that have occurred in the past decade (see Box 2.1). Coverage for three- to six-year-olds declined from 96% in 1989 to 86% in 1999. Declining enrolments have been linked to changing attitudes toward female employment, the extension of maternity leave to four years, and the closing of kindergartens due to decreasing numbers of young children. Yet, coverage remains high (98% at age five) and is commonly assessed as meeting need except in areas with small and dispersed populations of children. The Ministry of Education has stressed the important role of the *mateřská škola* as part of the education system, and there are signs that attitudes are changing again: more women are entering the labour market and participation in kindergartens is on the increase.

73. In contrast to most other OECD countries, the provision of ECEC in Australia, the UK, and the USA has not been based on the notion of statutory entitlement. These countries have taken a more targeted approach to expanding access to publicly-funded provision, limiting eligibility to very low-income families or children considered at-risk. Even for these groups, access is not universal, and coverage is often part-day. In the USA, parents who can pay the necessary fees or who receive subsidies from their employers are in a position to gain access to quality programmes in the dominant private sector. Many low and moderate income working families – who on the one hand do not have the means to pay high fees, but on the other hand earn more than is needed to qualify for publicly-funded services – tend to fall through the cracks. To address these real or potential inequities, more universal approaches within the education system are gaining ground.

74. In the UK, four-year-olds now have an entitlement to a free part-day *nursery education* session – covering 98% of the cohort. The right will soon be extended to three-year-olds – starting with areas of disadvantage and moving toward universal provision for all who want it by 2004. In Australia and the USA, there also are trends toward universal access to provision for four-year-olds under education auspices through state-administered initiatives. In Australia, most states and territories aim for the universal provision of a part-time pre-school place for four-year-olds, and most children begin school in a preparatory year at age five.¹⁴ In the USA, where almost all five-year-olds attend kindergarten within the formal school system, the number of part-time state-funded *pre-kindergarten* programmes for three- and four-year-olds is growing significantly (Schulman, Blank, & Ewen, 1999). Like Head Start, most of these

¹³ Specifically, ECEC falls under the Ministry of Social Affairs (Denmark, Finland), the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (Norway), and the Ministry of Education and Science (Sweden). The impact of administrative auspices on policy and provision discussed in more detail later in the report.

¹⁴ In many jurisdictions pre-schools may also be attended by younger children although a place is not necessarily guaranteed.

programmes are targeted at children considered to be at-risk of later school failure. Two states – New York and Georgia – have developed *universal* pre-kindergarten initiatives for all four-year-olds regardless of income.

75. In sum, the trend is to provide at least two years of free provision, often within the educational system. Countries that have not achieved full coverage for this age group see it as a priority, though in Australia and the USA, the focus has been mostly on four-year olds and children deemed ‘at risk’. In some of the Nordic countries, there is a move toward a more universal educational orientation, which continues to meet the needs of employed parents and children at-risk. There has been some, but less, recognition of the role of provision within the education system in supporting parents who work, and most forms of universal provision do not cover the full working day.

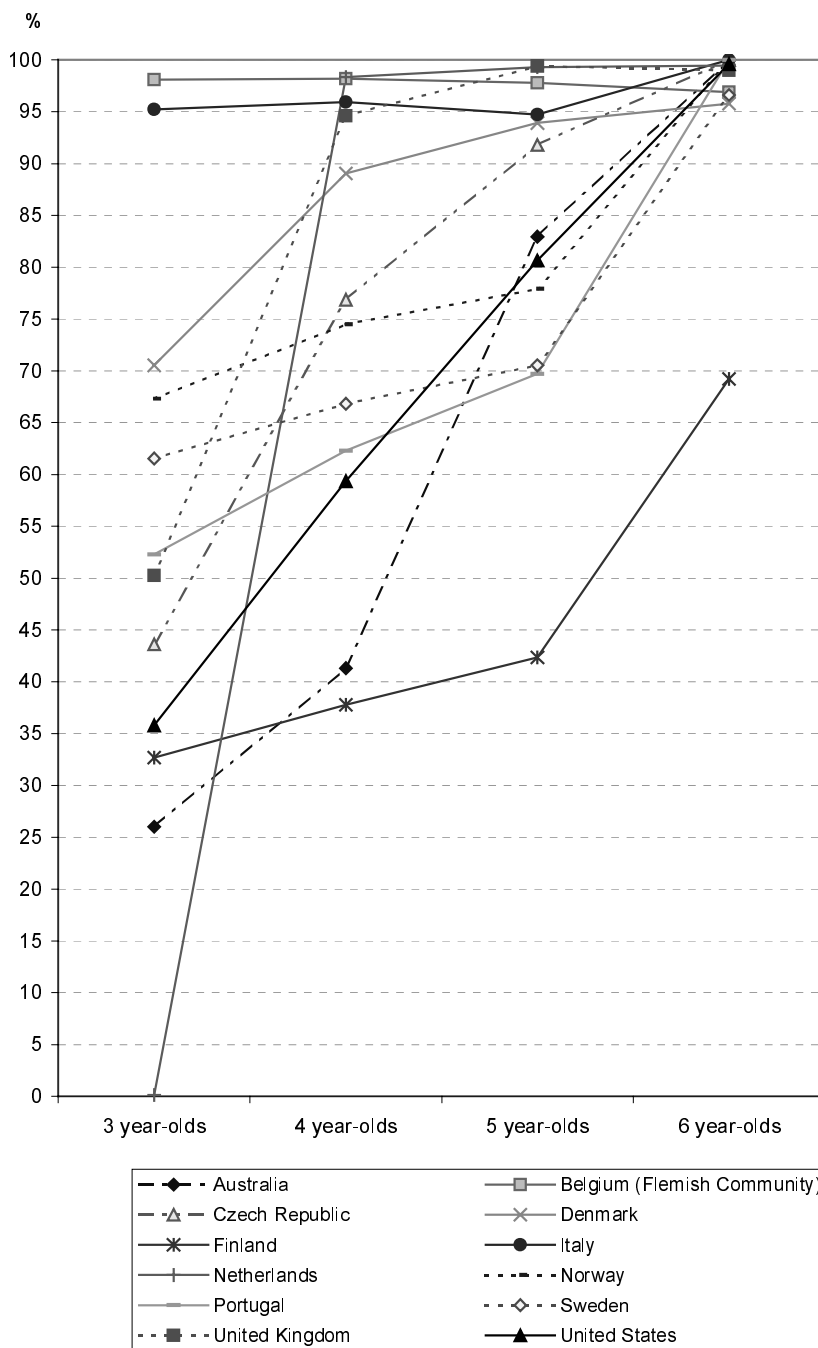
Trends in out-of-school provision: Need for improvement and expansion

76. With the exception of the Nordic countries and the Czech Republic, where full-day ECEC services are the norm, the opening hours of ECEC or early primary education generally do not cover the full working day. As pre-school or school may end in the early afternoon, many young children spend a substantial part of their day in out-of-school provision, usually alongside older school-age children. Until recently, out-of-school provision has received limited attention in most countries. It is often loosely regulated, and there is a range of varying services with few reliable statistics or sources of information. Out-of-school provision may take place on school premises, in age-integrated centres, or in family day care homes. In several countries (e.g., Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, UK, USA), out-of-school provision takes the form of ‘wrap-around’ services on school premises before and after school hours, and sometimes during lunch time. In some countries (e.g., Australia, Portugal, UK), for-profit and non-profit (e.g., parent) associations to operate programmes either in schools or in separate mixed-age facilities. In general, services are fee-paying, and staff tend to be far less well trained than staff in other forms of early childhood provision.

77. Currently, Sweden and Denmark are the only countries that provide enough places to meet demand, and employ staff trained at university or higher education level. Sweden is the only country where children under 12 have an entitlement to this form of provision. However, there are several promising recent national initiatives to expand and improve out-of-school provision. The UK government has stimulated the development of services through the national lottery and other funding sources to help schools, local authorities and other organisations establish out-of-school provision. There were 4400 out-of-school clubs in England in 2000, compared with 350 in 1992. In the Netherlands, government has increased investment to stimulate expansion, and all quality regulations for ECEC in the welfare sector also apply to out-of-school provision, including staff qualifications. In Portugal, out-of-school provision is being expanded mainly in social priority areas aimed at improving the integration of marginalised groups. In the USA, Head Start is implementing a major initiative to expand full-day/full-year services through partnerships with other early childhood programmes and funding sources.

78. There are debates within countries (e.g., French Community of Belgium, Finland) about whether out-of-school provision should take place in schools, in mixed-age centres, or in family day care, though there seems to be a trend toward school-based arrangements for cost and practical reasons. As a newer and less-established form of provision, the role of out-of-school services is often unclear and ambiguous. These services are often in a weak position in terms of funding, staffing, and even access to facilities and materials, which raises issues about the purposes of out-of-school provision and its relationship with schools and other services. Some countries emphasise the distinctiveness of out-of-school time from education and schooling, while in other countries, new relationships and ways of working are developing among pre-school, school, and out-of-school provision to provide full-day mixed-aged services for young children (see Section 3.3).

Figure 3.1. Participation by age for children aged 3 to 6, 1997
 Net enrolment rates by single year of age in pre-primary^a and primary education



a. The data refer to early childhood education, which is limited to organised centre-based programmes designed to foster learning and emotional and social development in children for 3 to compulsory school age. Day care, play groups and home-based structured and developmental activities are not included in these data (see text).
 Source: OECD Education Database.

Trends in provision for children under three: More than support for working parents

79. In most countries, there is little national data collected on services for children under three, in part due to the high levels of private provision and informal arrangements for this age group, and in part due to the regional/local responsibility for these services. Country reports document that the demand for ECEC for children under three is significantly higher than the available number of places in most countries, including those providing long parental leaves. Services for infants and toddlers are provided primarily in centres and family day care homes, and all charge parental fees. Table X.X¹⁵ provides available data on provision for under threes in the countries participating in the thematic review.¹⁶

80. The nature and availability of paid and flexible maternity and parental leaves are closely linked to policy and provision for children under three, and reflect societal beliefs about young children and their care. There are several approaches to policy for under threes:¹⁷

- In Denmark and Sweden, policy supports parent employment after a well-paid leave of 12 to 18 months by providing a right publicly-supported ECEC services. Few infants attend ECEC settings before the end of this leave period. As noted earlier, these countries have incorporated into legislation the right to ECEC for children from the end of parental leave period, on a sliding-scale, fee-paying basis.
- The explicit policy objective in Finland and Norway is parental choice: home care allowances allow one parent, usually the mother, to stay out of the workforce to care for their child until the age of two or three, and provision for children under three is publicly-subsidised as well. In Finland, this choice reinforced by a statutory right to services, and declining waiting lists, while in Norway addressing the shortages for under threes has become a political priority.
- Policy in the Czech Republic favours parents (meaning mothers) caring for their child for three or more years, with few publicly-supported alternatives.¹⁸ For example, since parental leave was extended to four years in the Czech Republic, the number of public *creches* – which covered 20% of children in 1989 – has fallen to 67 settings covering 1 913 children.
- Policy supports the belief that care for the under threes is to be resolved *primarily* by families, with some help from government. There is a short period of paid (Italy, Portugal, UK) or unpaid (Australia, USA) parental leave and low levels of publicly-funded services. Belgium (Flemish and French Communities)¹⁹ and the Netherlands have combined short well-paid leaves with moderate levels of publicly-funded provision. Access is not a right.

81. As a result of these different societal views about the role of parents and the needs of very young children, there is significant variation in levels and quality of infant-toddler services. In all countries, coverage is lower than for three- to six-year-olds. Provision for under threes is the most developed in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, countries with a long history

¹⁵ Table in preparation.

¹⁶ Parental leave policy has an important role to play in reducing the demand for and enrolment for infants in these countries, so enrolment figures that cover the age group one to three would better reflect enrolment trends.

¹⁷ This classification is based on analysis presented in EC Childcare Network (1996b).

¹⁸ This policy aim is also pursued in two countries that did not participate in the review – Austria and Germany.

¹⁹ As 85% of children attend pre-primary school from age 30 months in Belgium, infant-toddler provision concerns mostly children below this age.

of supporting publicly-funded ECEC as part of broader gender equity and family policies. In the past five years, the Netherlands, Norway, and, more recently, the UK have significantly expanded publicly-funded provision for infants and toddlers, primarily to support maternal employment. As a result of recent incentive schemes in the Netherlands, for example, 17% of children under four now have a place in ECEC in addition to the 50% of two- to- four-year-olds attending part-day playgroups. There are efforts to increase coverage for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

82. In contrast, in countries where publicly-funded provision for under threes is limited to disadvantaged families, most working parents must either seek solutions in the private market, where ability to pay determines accessibility, or rely on informal arrangements with family, friends, and neighbours. In the USA, lack of paid parental leave and limited public investment in services means that many low- and middle-income parents struggle to find affordable arrangements for infants as young as six weeks old. Although informal arrangements have played a significant role in these countries in the past, they are coming under increased pressure as traditional forms of family support – including grandmothers who are often in the workforce themselves – are no longer available to take care of young children.

83. In most countries, policy for under threes still emphasises expansion of services as a necessary support for maternal employment in a strong economy rather than as a public service that can benefit both children and parents. As noted earlier, there are signs that the concept of services for under threes is broadening from ‘child care’ to support working or disadvantaged parents to include educational, gender equality, social integration, and family support objectives. In Italy, for example, recent government proposals describe the shift in understanding of the *asili nido* as a service on ‘individual demand’ to ‘an educational and social service of public interest’. In other countries, as well, there is an increasing focus on the educational role of these services for very young children, which is supported by research showing that first three years of life are extremely important in setting attitudes and patterns of thinking (Shore, 1997). In addition, there has been a focus on providing flexible services – full-time, part-time, and drop-in centres, playgroups – to benefit children and support parents, whether they are working or not. This more universal and wide-ranging approach may help bring provision for the under threes into the public sphere and obtain much-needed policy attention and investment.

Greater diversity and flexibility vs. regional and local variation in access

84. Access to ECEC is also a function of whether parents, working and non-working, can arrange the education and care to meet their individual needs and circumstances. In some countries, there is widespread provision, but the services available are uniform and limited in scope, and, therefore they are less likely to be able to accommodate irregular hours of attendance or requests for longer hours. This tends to be the case for services for children based in the school system. In other countries, there is fragmented provision, but a great deal of local variation and innovation. A shift toward a more consumer-oriented approach has led to a greater emphasis on programme flexibility and parental choice in countries, such as Australia, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, the US. In reality, cost, location, age of child and parent working hours may constrain parental choice. Family day care is the dominant form of provision for children under three in Finland, Denmark, the Flemish Community of Belgium, and the USA, and in rural areas in many countries. In part, this may reflect parental preferences for more home-like arrangements, smaller and mixed-age groups, and flexible hours, but if family day care is to be treated as a real alternative to centre-based provision, attention is needed to the workers receive lower salaries and benefits than centre staff (Kamerman, 2000). In addition, there is a shortage of places and a growing need for services that accommodate irregular and/or longer hours of attendance, as many parents (up to 30% in some countries) work evenings, weekends, and shifts. As countries strive for services that are more flexible and accommodating parent employment schedules, another issue emerges: Is the goal to make services meet

these longer and irregular working hours or should the focus be on making the labour market more supportive of parents who wish to spend time with their children?

85. With the trend toward decentralisation of responsibilities for educational and social services, there is widespread within-country variation in access and levels of provision across municipalities and regions (e.g., Italy, the Netherlands, Norway). This seems to be the case particularly for services for children under three and out-of-school provision. These two forms of ECEC are usually the responsibility of local or regional authorities, who may vary in their willingness or ability to fund services (EC Childcare Network, 1996a). These differences also may reflect variability in parent needs and preferences in different geographic regions. Evidence from the UK and the USA suggests that market-driven approaches to expansion have contributed to uneven growth of services. In particular, supporting ECEC provision through demand subsidies has led to shortages in low-income areas, where private and non-profit operators find it difficult to survive. There is also variation in access between rural and urban areas in most countries. Barriers to equitable access in rural areas include scattered communities, small scale of demand linked to low population density, poor transport, lack of suitable buildings, and difficulty finding qualified staff. Targeted funding to existing services, integrating ECEC services with public school facilities, itinerant teachers, mobile services, and family day care are among the alternatives to operating public kindergartens for small groups of children. These strategies have been explored in Australia, Czech Republic, Denmark, and Portugal.

Strategies to include children in need of special support

86. Issues of ethnicity, culture, gender, and disability have received different emphases and attention in different countries, leading to variation in the extent to which policies and programmes are accessible to children and families of diverse backgrounds and needs. For the most part, countries have chosen to welcome all children into mainstream ECEC settings, while according particular attention and resources to those in need of special support within this regular provision. Children may have *special educational needs* (SEN) related to physical, mental, or sensory disabilities, learning difficulties, or socio-economic, linguistic, or cultural factors. The inclusion of children with SEN is an important goal for all the countries in the review. Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms the rights of such children to enjoy a full and decent life, and to actively participate in community life in a normal and self-reliant manner. Country analyses indicate that 15% to 20% of children have special educational needs at some time during their school career, although few countries, with the exception of the Netherlands and the United States, fund SEN at these levels at any given moment (OECD, 1999d). Early intervention aims to strengthen the sensory-motor, emotional, social and educational development of SEN children as early as possible, as preventive intervention is often more effective than rehabilitation measures in later life.

87. Most countries favour mainstreaming young children with physical, mental, and learning disabilities into ECEC classrooms, if this is determined to be best for the child. In several countries (e.g. Denmark, Norway, Sweden), there is a conscious policy to ensure that such children have priority in enrolment and additional resources are allocated to reduce child-staff ratios and to provide more individualised attention and specialised staff. Early intervention services focus on: early detection of problems; prevention of disabilities or further difficulties; stimulation of development; aid and support to families. Before the 1980s, these activities were conducted, almost exclusively in many countries, by health services. Today, the education sector is becoming a key agency in tackling disability and learning difficulties. Moreover, in recent years, important progress has been made in all countries in terms of legislation and the right to inclusion.

88. However, real challenges remain, as the inclusion of SEN children requires not only better public attitudes toward disability, but also important structural changes in the organisation of ECEC systems. A difficulty in several countries is the difference in *legal and policy frameworks* in public and private ECEC settings, only the former being legally obliged to accept children with disabilities. In Australia, the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 applies to both private and public sectors and makes it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of goods, services, or facilities against people who have, or may have, a disability. To break down the old divisions (and disparity of funding) between special and mainstream education, countries have tried to develop new *funding models*. Decentralisation of educational funding has been seen to be helpful in this regard as municipalities tend, in many countries, to bring educational, social services and health budgets together. In the Netherlands, special per capita grants are provided directly to ECEC centres and schools to cater for SEN children enrolled. Inclusion of children with SEN calls for attention to the *organisation and management of ECEC settings*, in particular the adaptation of premises to the needs of children with disabilities and for more flexible organisation of group sizes and rooms to cater for special sessions for children with disabilities. Similarly, inclusion of children with SEN requires a special *pedagogical approach and curriculum*: more intensive team planning and team teaching, more flexible programmes, and careful management of activities.

89. Staff need to adapt constantly to the learning demands presented by individual children. To reach the learning goals that children can realistically achieve, individualised educational plans (IEP) – determined by children, parents and teachers together – are formulated and implemented (e.g., Finland, Flemish Community of Belgium, the USA). *Staff ratios* – both teachers and classroom assistants – are by necessity higher for children with SEN and *special training* is necessary, a factor that still inhibits moves toward inclusion in some countries. In Finland and Italy, special education staff provide on-the-job training to their mainstream colleagues. *Parental involvement* is desirable in all programmes for very young children, but particularly in programmes involving children with SEN. In Denmark, parents work alongside teachers, and home-school strategies in place for individual children. Finally, ECEC centres that welcome children with disabilities or with special educational needs are obliged to put into place *co-operative agreements and activities with community health and social services agencies*, an activity that demands expertise and much investment of time.

90. As societies become increasingly heterogeneous, there is increasing recognition of the need to promote ethnic and cultural sensitivity, value linguistic diversity and create learning environments that are respectful of the different backgrounds of all children and families. As primary school curricula in most countries reflect the language, values and attitudes of mainstream society, there are concerns that children from minority ethnic or language groups who do not participate in ECEC provision may be at a disadvantage when they start school. Many countries give additional subsidies to families or to areas in need of special support to facilitate access to ECEC, including Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands, Portugal, and the UK. In Australia, Norway, Sweden, and the UK, ‘bilingual assistants’ work in pre-schools with new immigrant children and parents to help strengthen their home language and develop proficiency in the country’s language, while other countries, including Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and the Netherlands, favour language immersion and training. These initiatives support integration, while respecting cultural and linguistic difference.

91. Despite these efforts, children from immigrant or ethnic minority groups are often under-represented in regular ECEC provision, in part, due to lower rates of employment among immigrant mothers. In addition, there may be different childrearing traditions. Many new immigrants do not share the idea that very young children spend most of their day away from home. Some countries (e.g., Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden) have arranged half-day programmes focusing on culture and home language as an important part of the pedagogical activities, as these are seen not only as important for children’s language but also for fostering their social and emotional development. These programmes work

with parents and network with other community services and institutions, including the schools. They often employ staff from the community in which they work to help build bridges across language and cultural divides. As an example, the Dutch government is supporting playgroups co-located in primary schools for two- and three-year-olds from at-risk and ethnic minority families.²⁰ In Australia, too, there are a number of special services available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people where local ECEC provision is not available or not suitable. As an example, the Commonwealth-funded and ASTI-operated Multi-functional Aboriginal Services (MACS) provide flexible services for children including long day care, playgroups, outside school hours care, school holiday care and cultural programs.

92. Though the challenges seem formidable, there are very good reasons, other than respect for the basic human rights of children and parents, to support inclusion. According to studies conducted by CERI (OECD, 1998), inclusive settings eventually cost less than maintaining two separate systems, mainstream and special. Apart from the preventive nature of early intervention, the pedagogical consequences of including all children in need of special support are apparent. The inclusion of diverse groups of children reinforces some of the major aims of early childhood programming, namely, to give young children the experience of living together supportively; to focus on the individual needs and learning patterns of each child; to provide opportunities for young children to be active and develop their bodies; and to foster strong parental involvement in the education of their children.

²⁰ Dutch research estimates that 90% of Turkish and 56% of Moroccan parents would like their children to participate in playgroups, particularly when they are connected to a primary school.

Box 3.1 Special education in the Flemish pre-school

Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) provides special support to families with SEN children. When disability is diagnosed, family allowances are automatically increased by 66%. Families are also entitled to a special childbirth allowance, with health insurance paying for all costs. The family also benefits from other social advantages, such as, a reduction in taxes (a child with disabilities counts for two dependants), a reduction in mortgage loans, a reduction of VAT on the purchase of a vehicle, a reduction in costs on gas and electricity if a child is 66% disabled. If the mother is employed, she is entitled to 15 weeks holiday, at 82% remuneration, including eight weeks mandatory weeks immediately after birth; if unemployed, she receives an additional allowance. In the Flemish Community, half of the guidance and special needs support activities provided to the population as a whole, are addressed to children under six years. Yet the amount of inclusive education of children with disabilities is relatively low, as traditionally, trust has been placed in separated, special education services. Further, the agency responsible for early intervention provides services and support directly to the home, all of which may explain the lack of visibility of children with disabilities in the normal early education classroom.

In contrast, much attention is given to children with light or moderate learning difficulties through the *Zorgverbreding* (“extending care”) initiative. *Zorgverbreding* is a preventive programme aimed at those children perceived to be in danger of failing school. Schools with significant numbers of children from poor families - often from single parent backgrounds - are eligible to apply for the programme. Children in the last two years of pre-school and in the first two years of primary school are targeted. A sum of 650 million BEF has been allocated for the programme, which can be spent on providing between 6 and 18 extra teaching hours a week. Schools applying should provide an action plan, in order to bid for the money on a competitive basis. The extra teaching hours are used to improve teaching practices; stimulate language skills; support social and emotional development; involve parents; and support an intercultural approach. Additional training sessions have been offered to those 800 or so schools whose bids have been successful.

A parallel project, again administered by the Flemish Ministry of Education, is *OVB* (*Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid voor migranten*) or educational priority policy in relation to immigrants. Schools with children from poor, immigrant backgrounds are eligible to apply for the programme. The project offers schools extra teacher hours on the basis of the numbers of pupils who experience learning and/or developmental difficulties because of their ethnic origin and socio-economic background. Ethnicity is defined in this case by the place of origin of the mother; additionally the mother’s educational level is taken into consideration in making allocations. In order to be considered for subsidy under this scheme, schools must submit an action plan for approval, which includes outreach to parents and communities, reinforced Flemish language teaching and intercultural education. Bids have so far been accepted from 548 schools. Both these programmes *Zorgverbreding* and *OVB* are time limited.

3.2 Raising the quality of provision

Key points

93. After access, raising quality in ECEC is at the forefront of policy priorities in OECD countries. Much recent research emphasises that quality is important in the early childhood years. Children who receive high quality care in their first three years show better cognitive and language abilities than those in lower quality arrangements (CQCO Study Team, 1995; NICHD, 1997). Children in low quality programmes are likely to have difficulties with language, social and behavioural development (Whitebook et al., 1989). While there are elements of quality that are common to many countries, quality must be considered a relative and not a universal measure across early childhood systems (Dahlberg et al., 1999). Variations in emphasis across countries are greatly dependent on the understandings of particular societies about early childhood and of the goals they formulate (or implicitly hold) for young children. Within countries, there may be a wide diversity of criteria and goals for children and child-rearing – between rural and urban populations, across socio-economic or multicultural contexts, between parents and professionals, and even between ministries. The first part of the section discusses how quality is defined, measured, and ensured. Then, major quality issues from the review and government strategies to improve the quality of ECEC systems are identified.²¹

- There are many common elements in quality definitions across countries, especially for provision for children from the age of three. Most countries focus on similar structural aspects of quality (e.g., staff-child ratios, group size, facility conditions, staff training), which tend to be weaker for infant/toddler provision;
- In some countries, standardised observation scales and child assessment measures are used widely to measure the quality of ECEC settings, while other countries favour co-constructing the programme aims and objectives at local level;
- The responsibility for quality assurance tends to be shared by external inspectors, pedagogical advisors, staff, and parents (and occasionally children). There is a trend toward externally-validated self-evaluation to promote ongoing reflection and quality improvement;
- Major quality concerns that emerged during the review include: lack of a coherence and co-ordination for ECEC policy and provision; the low status and training of staff in the social welfare sector; the lower standards of provision for children under three; and the tendency for children from low-income families to receive inferior services; and
- Governments promote quality improvement through: framework documents and goals-led steering; voluntary standards and accreditation; dissemination of research and information; judicious use of special funding; technical support to local management; raising the training and status of staff; encouraging self-evaluation and action-practitioner research; and establishing a system of democratic checks and balances, which includes parents.

²¹ The section does not treat the pedagogical quality of programmes, a question that is addressed in section 3.6 below.

How is quality defined?

94. A premise of recent research is that variations in notions of quality originate in different national representations of childhood and society, that is, on cultural understandings of who the young child is; how young children should be reared and educated; on diverse appreciations of the function of the early childhood institution and worker. Concepts of quality differ throughout the world (Bush and Phillips, 1996; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Moss and Pence, 1994) and according to the priorities, visions, and perspectives of different stakeholders – parents, children, employers, providers, and society as a whole. In addition, national definitions of quality are shaped by economic or political factors driving ECEC systems, families' socio-economic status and culture, age of the child, and beliefs about the roles of government (Bush and Phillips, 1996). Any discussion or investigation of quality requires sensitivity to these different national and cultural perspectives.

95. Substantial agreement is found, however, across most of the countries participating in the review in their understanding of how children from three or four years should be educated. These countries have developed ECEC on an education-based model, including clear policies, approved educational aims and agreed understandings about the role of the pre-school and teaching profession. Pre-school is generally free and open for a half-day or more (in the UK, two-and-a-half hours daily). When judged against the goal of achieving readiness for school, quality in the pre-school sector is generally good, as the goal is clear and can be broken down into objectives and indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluation. The Nordic countries take an even wider view of early childhood and do not wish to assimilate the early childhood institution to a school model. A central understanding is that the early childhood institution should contribute, alongside the parents, to the individual child's development and well-being, which is generally interpreted as learning to live in society and sharing a society's fundamental values, including respect for autonomy and independence. Notions of what constitutes quality tend to place more emphasis on the quality of life in the institution and the social development of the child (e.g., well-being and friendship). The belief is strong that there is a time for childhood that can never be repeated.

96. For younger children, conceptions of quality are more diverse. In more integrated early childhood systems (e.g., Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), policy-making tend to be more consistent across the *whole* early childhood age-group, from birth to seven. Core understandings of young children, families and the purposes of ECEC, (section 2.2) are elaborated in policy documents (e.g. framework curricula), from which flow agreed national goals that are translated into integrated services for children, aged birth to six. Monitoring and evaluation of these goals take place regularly, although, as indicated below, in a rather different manner from the assessment or outcome measures used in other countries. The transition toward the school is a two-way process developed in collaboration between ECEC and primary school settings. The child remains the centre of socio-educational policy, both at central and municipal levels. Legislation in the fields of social, education and family policy is increasingly motivated by the intention to strengthen the best interests of the young child, as interpreted by the national culture.

97. In most countries, responsibility for young children is often split between ministries and among different administrative levels, and may include a large, loosely regulated private sector. Policy can be formulated on very different premises, leading to wide divergences in the objectives set for services in different sectors, and in staff profiling, training and certification.²² The major goals of early care and education services change according to the perspective taken, e.g. whether one is speaking about infants or children over three; whether early childhood is seen primarily as a means of facilitating the growing participation of women in the labour market or as facilitating social integration, either of disadvantaged and immigrant children. In short, lack of policy co-ordination makes it extremely difficult to maintain

²² This may not be a consequence of a divided system. Clear policy lines characterise infant-toddler services in Belgium and the Italian municipalities.

quality pedagogical standards either structurally or in a systematic way across the range of early childhood services. At the same time, several examples of cross-sector collaboration led by government departments are emerging, as outlined in section 3.3.

What are the conditions of quality across a system?

98. Although definitions of quality are not agreed on internationally or even by everyone in a country or community, there is general consensus among researchers that certain inputs contribute to positive short- and long-term outcomes for children. First, there are several structural conditions of ECEC that are linked to definitions of quality. These conditions are easily measured and form the basis of many regulations, though countries accord different standards and priorities to the different conditions. They include: adequate levels of investment; co-ordinated policy and regulatory frameworks; efficient and co-ordinated management structures in place; adequate levels of staff training and working conditions; pedagogical frameworks and other guidelines; regular system monitoring based on reliable data collection (see Box 3.2). At the programme level, sufficient duration and intensity of programmes, appropriate size and composition of children's groups, favourable adult/child ratios, and factors linked to physical design of settings to the indoor and outdoor-environments are included among structural variables.²³ In addressing the issue of overall quality, many countries would also see features, such as equity and respect for diversity (expressed in access levels and staffing), as conditions of a quality system.

99. All countries under review give attention to structural features in the management of their ECEC settings, although very different interpretations do emerge regarding the acceptable size and composition of child groups, staff-child ratios, pedagogical objectives and programme, and, to some extent, the training of personnel. These variations are influenced by national understandings about which pedagogical environments are suitable for young children. Some importance should be given, however, to average benchmarks, against which progress and shortfalls may be measured, e.g. where staff-child ratios are concerned, there is a continuum going from the high staff-child ratios of centre-based provision in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway to ratios commonly found in school-based provision in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands, Portugal, and the UK.²⁴

100. From a structural perspective, the situation of children under three years is generally much less favourable. Critical systemic elements that underpin quality are often lacking in programming for these children, e.g. coherent policy formulation, a unified regulatory framework, co-ordination across ministries or from central to local government, effective management structures, pedagogical frameworks, a solid professional corps. In some countries, for example, despite the presence of some excellent programmes and initiatives, the overall situation is characterised by weak public investment and high costs to parents, inadequate regulatory frameworks, low training and status of staff, insufficient attention to pedagogical frameworks, wide variations in inspection and monitoring. This challenge is being addressed by countries that are beginning to organise adequate *systems* for the younger children. In short, a policy deficit, inadequate investment, insufficient training of staff and a weak focus on pedagogical quality can be found in infant/toddler provision in many countries.

²³ A comprehensive listing and description of the major structural requirements of ECEC systems can be found in EC Childcare Network (1996a). The brochure sets out 40 targets across nine areas for ECEC administrations: policy; finance; levels and types of services; education targets; staff-child ratios; staff employment and training targets; environment and health targets; parents and community; performance targets.

²⁴ The EC Childcare Network recommended approximate staff-child ratios of 1:4 for children under 12 months; 1:6 for children aged 12-23 months; 1:8 for children aged 24-35 months and 1:15 for children aged 36-71 months.

**Box 3.2 French Community of Belgium - The Early Childhood Observatory
L'Observatoire de l'enfance**

In 1991, as a result of the profound social and demographic changes that were taking place in Brussels, the French Community Commission for the Region took the initiative to create an Early Childhood Observatory. The Observatory, established as a voluntary, non-profit association, was given the task of generating indicators and collecting all necessary data about ECEC for young children in the capital. The Observatory researches and proposes solutions regarding four themes:

- The ECEC needs of parents with children from 0-3 years and proposals to improve access;
- The quality of early care received by infants and toddlers enrolled in services in the city;
- The needs of children aged 2.5 - 12 years in the school system, including out-of-school provision;
- The socio-demographic and intercultural dimensions of ECEC, with measures to improve equity.

The Observatory, in co-operation with several university researchers, publishes annually the basic quantitative data on ECEC in Brussels, matching a number of agreed analytic indicators. The health of children is reported; their social (including ethnic) and family backgrounds described; what types of early care and education services are available to them; and which children are using what services. Several action-research studies have been completed on the accessibility and quality of services, linked with socio-economic status and other indicators.

Persuaded of the key role of well-trained personnel in raising quality and the need to keep them in the sector, the Observatory proposed the creation of a training association for early childhood personnel in the Brussels region. In this way, the FRAJE (*Centre de Formation permanente et de Recherche dans les Milieux d'Accueil du Jeune Enfant*) began its training activities – ensured by seven psychologists in the form of evening discussions or on-site sessions – which have increased the access of ECEC personnel to high quality training. The Observatory publishes a quarterly magazine – *Grandir à Bruxelles* – which provides up-to-date information about the current situation of young children in Brussels.

The contribution of the Observatory has been recognised by the French Community government, through a formal agreement. The information gathered by the Observatory, in a rapidly changing urban environment, is considered a powerful means of monitoring early childhood services in the city, and as providing a well-informed basis for policy-making.

How is quality measured?

101. How quality is measured depends on how quality is understood. In the context of decentralisation, governments tend to impose standards and to formulate quality norms and outputs so as to ensure accountability for investment. Institutions and staff are regularly inspected to ensure their conformity with practices held to be essential, or child performance is tested through standardised instruments. The use of two of these instruments – observation scales and child assessment measures – in early childhood settings is reviewed briefly below.

102. When quality is understood as an adequate response to the needs of a particular group of children, then its evaluation moves from conformity to external standards to the engagement of administrative responsibility and of professional staff. It is difficult to raise quality if government has not invested well in staff and in the pedagogical frameworks that can support their work. At field level, quality is ensured by giving the means to teachers to reflect on and assess their own practice, in the light of their children's needs and the guiding pedagogical frameworks (e.g., EEL project discussed below). Quality becomes a process of discussion and evaluation involving different groups, including children, parents, staff, the administrators and advisors attached to services. Checks and balances may also be present,

through monitoring by the relevant ministry (through surveys, light inspections, etc.) and through providing opportunities and training to parents to monitor early childhood institutions (see section 3.7).

Observation scales in ECEC

103. Measuring process through the use of observation scales has become a favoured means of evaluating and raising quality, e.g. in Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community), Portugal, UK, USA. Probably, the best known process measures are the ITERS (Harms, Cryer and Clifford, 1990 *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale*) and ECERS rating scales (Harms and Clifford, 1998, *Early Care Environment Rating Scale*), which are used to rate the quality of the physical, interactive and pedagogical environments of the early childhood setting. ECERS, for example, is a purpose-built, process observation scale. It evaluates seven aspects of centre-based care for children ages two-and-a-half to five years: personal care routines, furnishings, language, reasoning experiences, motor activities, creative activities, social development and staff needs. Detailed descriptors are given for the 37 items within these seven rubrics, and each item is rated by the observer as minimal, good or excellent.

104. Some concerns are raised against the use of scales, pointing, for example, to the possibility that imported process scales may have little to do with the child-rearing patterns and educational ideals of a particular country. Specialists fear too that scales may be used to assess and classify children or personnel in a normative and non-motivating manner. Yet, several positive aspects of these scales emerged from the OECD review, e.g. the careful adaptation of these scales to national needs and contexts (Australia, Flemish Community of Belgium, etc.). Inspired by the NAEYC guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and the ECERS rating scale, Australia, for example, has elaborated a powerful instrument for accreditation and evaluation of early services called the QIAS (Quality Improvement and Accreditation System) (see Box 3.3). In short, such scales can be useful in assessing the care and education environments of young children and, when used by trained permanent staff, they can provide a basis for discussion and self-evaluation.

105. Other countries have adopted a different approach. These countries assume that to achieve system goals requires co-construction of programme aims and objectives at local level (with children, parents, teachers and the social partners) process scales are generally subsumed into the wider activities of team planning, evaluation and goals monitoring (see section 3.6 below). In Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, for example, well-educated teams of educators and parents will normally generate their own quality observation and evaluation mechanisms.

Box 3.3 The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System in Australia

Australia is unique in having a national, government supported, accreditation system for its centre-based ECEC (long day care) that is directly tied to the provision of funding, with over 98% of both private for-profit and non-profit centres participating. As a system for quality assurance and improvement, the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) focuses primarily upon the determining, or process, components of quality. Centres are required to participate in the QIAS process in order for parents to be eligible for the Child Care Benefit, the main fee subsidy. The QIAS system, developed in 1994, is based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Developmentally Appropriate Practice and its voluntary national accreditation system, as well as on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS).

Centres undertake a self study against 52 principles related to staff-child, staff-parent, and staff-staff interactions; the programme; nutrition, health and safety practices; and centre management and staff development. The self study process is undertaken collaboratively between management, staff, and parents, and submitted to the National Childcare Accreditation Council. A peer reviewer then visits the centre and assesses the self study against his/her observations and discussions during a one or two day visit, depending on centre size. The reviewer's ratings are moderated. An independent Accreditation Decisions Review Committee is available to consider appeals against the Council's accreditation decision. All moderation, appeals and accreditation decisions are made on the basis of written documentation and without any knowledge of the centre's identity.

The QIAS process has been widely supported as having drawn attention to the quality of children's experiences in early childhood settings, and as a means of enabling centres to self-evaluate the quality of their service provision. The system focuses on both improvement and accreditation. Rather than being immediately censured, centres which at first do not achieve accreditation are encouraged to put in a plan of action to improve quality. Censure is based upon a centre's failure to participate in the system, or failing for a third time to become accredited after two previous unsuccessful attempts.

After conducting a review of the QIAS, the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council has recommended, subject to Ministerial acceptance, streamlining and simplifying administrative requirements and ensuring greater validity and consistency in the accreditation process. The Commonwealth government is supporting the development of pilot quality assurance systems for family day care (for implementation mid 2001) and out-of-school provision (for implementation mid 2002). The New South Wales Office of Child Care is funding a pilot accreditation program for pre-schools under education auspices.

Child assessment measures

106. In Australia, the UK, and the USA, influenced both by the particular form that ECEC funding takes, favour, in general, outcome measures and child testing as a measure of quality. In the USA, the method most generally used to evaluate the quality of major programmes is to assess samples of children on the health, cognitive, socio-emotional and English language development that an "intervention" should help the children to achieve. These measures have become an important criterion for comparing the effectiveness of different types of programme and the justification of continued investment in Head Start and other programmes, but there is little in the assessment method that supports the practice of self-evaluation by staff.

107. Some researchers express ethical and professional reserves about such testing (Meisels, 1994, Schweinhart 1993; Penn 2000). They observe that young children have difficulty in understanding the demands of a test situation and may not be able to control their behaviour to meet those demands. Critics argue too that psychometric testing may be inappropriate to various cultures and day-to-day experience of children. (Schweinhart, 1993). Assessments may be blind to other major aims of programmes, e.g. to increasing parental understanding of their child's potential and their own important role; to nurturing creativity and autonomy in children; to fostering educational relationships with parents and communities; to multi-cultural outreach, to catering for special needs and non-mainstream communication patterns.

108. These critiques are now being addressed by the professional research teams, by using testing which takes into account more than just a cognitive functioning score, interviews, observations, work sampling and informal assessments over a period of time form a strong basis for assessment. In England, for example, Baseline Assessment of children on entry to primary school is often carried out by way of teacher observation, rather than by a formal assessment, and carried out as part of the day to day activities in the classroom. One of its main aims is to help teachers to develop detailed knowledge of their children, in a classroom environment, so that they can match work to pupil individual needs and abilities. Some providers, however, may leave aside broader aims to ensure that children meet cognitive and school readiness outcomes.

Who should ensure quality?

109. In many countries, the central government has played an important role in defining and ensuring quality. With growing decentralisation both in the education and ECEC fields, there has been a downsizing in many countries of traditional central enforcement instruments, such as detailed curricula, national assessments and external inspection. In countries such as Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Czech Republic, Portugal and the UK, which have retained pedagogical inspection, there is growing co-operation with teachers and parents as to how inspections should take place, and several innovative practices have been noted. In Denmark and Sweden, the traditional inspectors have been replaced for many years by municipal pedagogical advisors, who are conscious that maintaining quality means working as equals with personnel, parents and authorities from the local institutions. In sum, quality assurance and evaluation increasingly engages the participation and responsibility of the central actors in the early childhood field: children, parents and staff.

Parents as arbiters of quality

110. National surveys and local consultation of parents ("clients" or "service users") is another way to measure quality that is becoming more important in all countries (e.g., Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, USA). In this approach, variables such as easy access, convenient hours of opening, efficient administration and distribution of places, parents' perception of the happiness and well-being of children, the provision of meals and normal healthcare to children, amiable and informative relations with teachers are all important. The degree of parental involvement in the work of the early childhood institution is also important and can have a real impact on raising quality levels (see 3.7 below).

Encouraging teachers to evaluate their own work and practice

111. Participatory evaluation approaches are a means not only of finding out how children are developing but also of supporting the practice of educators, leading them to constructive self assessment

and change. With this intention in mind, the municipal pre-primary schools of Reggio Emilia - and institutions in other countries influenced by the Reggio approach - engage in intensive documentation of the individual child, the group class and the work of the centre (see Box 3.4). They aim both to understand each child's learning processes and to provide a platform for ongoing discussion within the pedagogical group. Teachers, in fact, are seen as "reflecting practitioners", that is, professionals who are continually reviewing and reflecting on their own practice and learning theory. Finland, too, uses child documentation and portfolios widely to improve quality and awareness in its ECEC centres. Many of its centres draw up individual 'contracts' between parent, child and personnel. A profile of the child, of her work and interests, is built up gradually and is made available to parents for comment and addition. As in Reggio Emilia, the purpose of such documentation is not to evaluate children against external norms, either developmental or cognitive, but to lead to a common reflection by professional and parents on the practice of the centre and the well-being of the child.

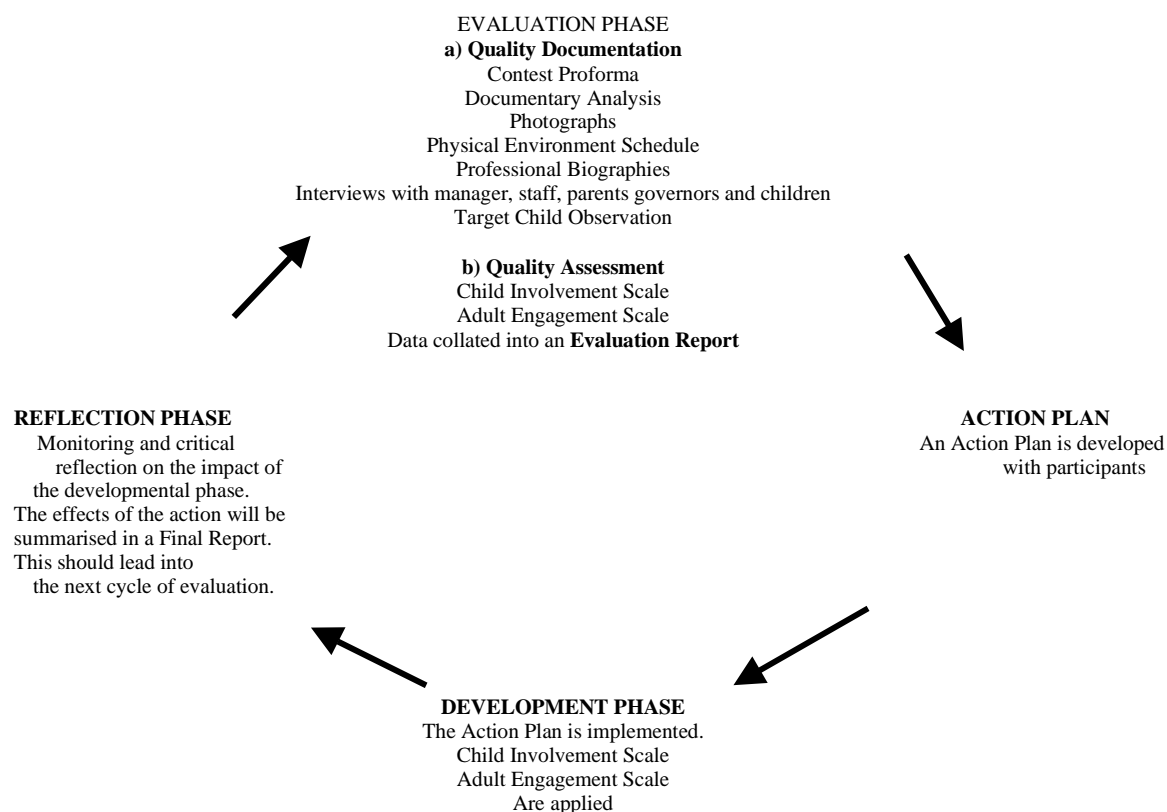
Box 3.4 Pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia

Documentation, in the Reggio meaning of the word, is the recording the children's project experience in words, drawings, photos, videos, etc. The process as well as the final product of each group project is recorded, incorporating the ideas of the children, their memories and feelings, and the observations made by teachers on the dynamics of children's explorations and social engagements. Documentation serves three key functions: 1) It provides children with a concrete and visible memory of what they have said and done, using images and words to serve as a jumping off point to explore previous understandings and to co-construct revisited understandings of the topics investigated. Children become even more interested, curious, and confident as they contemplate the meaning of what they have achieved; 2) Documentation also gives the educators an insight into the children's understanding of everyday institutions, objects and events, and their own reactions to child learning and initiative. Documentation is thus a tool for research and a key to continuous improvement and renewal; 3) Finally, documentation provides parents and the public with detailed information about what happens in the schools as a means of eliciting their reactions and support. In turn, children learn that their parents feel at home in the school, at ease with the teachers, and informed about what has happened and is about to happen.

112. In the United Kingdom also, a number of strategies have been developed to encourage staff to reflect and self-evaluate their work with children. The Effective Early Learning (EEL) project, for example, is a systematic process of self-evaluation undertaken by a whole centre, which is supported and validated externally. There are four key stages to the model as illustrated below. The self-evaluation process is supported by an External Adviser, trained in EEL methodology, who acts as a change agent and source of expert knowledge. The self-evaluation model derived from the EEL project has formed a part of the national evaluation of the government's Early Excellence Centre pilots. In addition, the EEL project has been introduced in the Netherlands (SPEEL), and along with other early childhood programmes (e.g., Piramide and Kaleidoscoop) emphasise observation and self-evaluation processes (see Figure 3.2.).

Figure 3.2. EEL Model of Quality Evaluation and Development

Following three-days of intensive training in the Project methodology, the evaluation and development cycle should take 12-18 months. There are four key stages to the model as illustrated below:



What were the major quality issues that emerged during the review?

113. A major quality issue in many countries is the *lack of a coherent vision* for ECEC and national strategy, that embraces children from birth to six. This has wide repercussions throughout systems, leading to conflicting policies; fragmentation of services; poor pedagogical settings for the younger children or directive, didactic settings for very young pre-school children; wide disparities in the status and training of staff, making common in-service training and participatory evaluation extremely difficult; confusion, both in conception and practice, about after-school care.

114. The *low status and training of staff* in the social welfare sector – not least in family day care – merits particular mention as it serves to undermine quality and negates the significant investments most governments are now making in the field.

115. Another issue that emerged in several countries relates to *quality of provision for children under three*. The insufficiency is reflected in apparent gaps in the statistical knowledge base, most notably with respect to actual numbers of under-three children in services and their daily use of services. There is often lack of information too about the amount of government or municipal transfers and of public and private cash flows to institutions.

116. Yet another quality concern is the tendency for *children from low-income families to receive inferior services* to their higher-income counterparts. The tendency is seen most clearly in countries with high levels of child poverty and in countries with low public investment. A related concern is the need for ECEC to focus on education, social, and family needs. Increasingly, pre-schools and early years services in many countries now making plans for a range of support to parents and their involvement in the daily life of the pre-school, although the organisation of out-of-school provision is still relatively neglected.

How are governments improving quality?

117. In addition to creating shared understanding about childhood, to formulating clear policies and goals, governments have at their disposal several indispensable instruments to improve the quality of early childhood services. They legislate and make regulations; they provide adequate funding and management; they fund selectively to reinforce particular elements of early childhood management or programming that need particular attention at a given moment; they train and set the working conditions for the early childhood profession; they ensure that adequate monitoring, research, data collection, and evaluation mechanisms are in place. In decentralised contexts also, the central government contribution is significant, even if perceived as “steering” or “light touch” monitoring. Ministries may guide the system through:

- Framework documents and goals-led steering (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Italy, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden);
- Supporting the creation of voluntary standards, codes of ethics, guidelines, recommendations, e.g. the support given to voluntary accreditation and quality improvement (e.g., Australia, the Netherlands, USA);
- Dissemination of research and information to the public, parents and early childhood personnel [e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Finland];
- Judicious use of special funding, e.g. the major investments made in the Netherlands to provide improved child services and early education for children ‘at risk’;
- Providing support to building up technical competencies at local management levels (e.g., Sweden, the Netherlands);
- Focusing on raising the education levels and status of early childhood personnel (e.g., Sweden, Portugal, Italy);
- Encouraging the move in early childhood services toward internal, centre-based, self-evaluation [e.g., Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, UK];
- Building up a culture of quality in the system, e.g. as in Finland, based on participatory research at local level, conducted jointly by universities and local early childhood centres; and
- Establishing a system of democratic checks and balances, in which genuine decision-making, access to information and some powers of supervision are given to parents e.g., parent councils, representation on governing boards (e.g., Denmark, Finland, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, USA).

118. Many OECD countries give careful attention to the major structural requirements that contribute to strong early childhood systems, including adequate public investment and financing mechanisms; to clear policy and pedagogical frameworks that meet both child and family needs; and above all, to motivating and retraining professional staff. The approaches and issues concerning these structural elements are discussed in later sections of the report.

3.3 Promoting coherence and co-ordination of policy and services

Key findings

119. In most countries, policies for ‘care’ and ‘education’ have developed separately, with different systems of governance, funding streams, and training for staff, while in others, care and education have been integrated conceptually and in practice. Across countries, a more holistic approach is gaining ground as policy makers seek to improve the continuity of children’s early childhood experiences and make the most efficient use of resources. OECD countries are recognising that coherent early childhood experiences are more likely to facilitate children’s transitions from one sphere of life to another, and provide more continuity in their early learning and development. This section explores some of the trends and issues related to efforts to promote coherence and co-ordination of policy and services.

- Unified administrative auspices can help promote coherence for children. In addition, several countries have adopted mechanisms to increase co-ordination for children across departments and sectors. In particular, there is increasing trend toward co-ordination with the educational sector to facilitate children’s transition from ECEC to primary school.
- The trend toward decentralisation of responsibility for ECEC has brought diversification of services to meet local needs and preferences. The challenge is for central government to balance local decisionmaking with the need to limit variation in access and quality.
- At the local level, many countries have recognised the importance of integrating services to meet the needs of children and families in a holistic manner. Services integration has taken many forms, including teamwork among staff with different professional backgrounds.

The impact of administrative and policymaking responsibility on ECEC policy and provision

120. The degree of coherence of a country’s ECEC system is strongly linked to its organisation of administrative and policymaking responsibility. Countries follow broadly three models (OECD, 1999b): In the first, and dominant, model – found in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal – ECEC policy and provision is *divided* into education and welfare systems. This division generally follows the age of the child, with ‘pre-school’ arrangements for children from age 30 months in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), from age three in the Czech Republic, Italy, and Portugal, and from age four in the Netherlands based in education departments together with primary schooling. ‘Care’ services for children under this age fall under the responsibility of social welfare or health departments. In the second model, policy and provision for children under compulsory school age are *unified* under one administrative auspice, either education, as in Sweden and the UK (also Spain and New Zealand), social affairs, as in Denmark, Finland, or children and family affairs, as in Norway. In the third model, best illustrated by Australia and the United States (also Canada and Japan), education, health and social affairs ministries run *parallel* systems for young children, such that ‘child care’ for disadvantaged families and working parents is organised under health/social affairs auspices, and programmes with a greater emphasis on preparation for school fall under educational auspices. In Australia, there is a trend toward unification under one administrative auspice at the state government level, and several states and territories have placed child care and education in the same portfolio.

121. In both the divided and parallel approaches, the two systems of services may differ in terms of regulation, staffing, funding, and delivery, despite often overlapping goals and types of families served. These differences may create inequities and lack of coherence for children and families (EC Childcare Network, 1996). For example, the welfare services tend to be far less developed in terms of coverage, and usually require a parental contribution, while education services are usually free and accessible to all, but are not available on a full-day, all-year basis. While levels of staffing in the welfare system are higher than the education system, levels of training and working conditions are lower. If developments in different parts of the system are unconnected and isolated, as opposed to a seamless system, children may experience difficult transitions in their young lives. The division of policy and provision into education and social welfare systems is often based more on traditional divisions of competence among ministries than the practical needs of children and families. This approach is difficult to justify in the context of high employment rates of mothers with young children. The reality in the field is that services in the welfare system are increasingly adopting a pedagogical, as well as a care role, while schools are pushed to respond to wider functions than education (including care for children of working parents).

122. A more unified approach facilitates policy coherence for young children in a number of ways. Placing the responsibility for ECEC under one department allows for common policies, social and pedagogical objectives, and budgets for early childhood to be organised. Regulatory, funding, and staffing regimes, costs to parents, and opening hours tend to be more consistent. Links at the services level – across age groups and settings – are more easily forged. In these systems, a common vision underlies education and care, in policy and practice, along with a real understanding of how together they contribute to children's development and learning. In Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, for example, age-integrated services have developed for children from one to six, and sometimes older. This approach allows children to be part of the same group of several years before beginning school, giving children and parents opportunities to establish important relationships with professionals and other children over time. Care and education are implemented as integrated components of all programmes for young children across age groups. Services that have developed according to this model are more likely to support the holistic needs of children and their families. In sum, the development of a coherent and integrated system of ECEC goes beyond issues of structure and organisation and deals centrally with how these services are understood by society.

123. Integration is not the only way of creating new relationships across departments. At the national level, in recent years, countries have adopted a range of innovative mechanisms to increase co-ordination for children and youth across different sectors. In the French Community of Belgium, for example, the Minister for Childhood is responsible for both basic education (pre-primary and primary) and children's services (infant-toddler and out-of-school). Although 'education' and 'care' services are still administratively divided, the appointment of a political leader with policy responsibility for all children under 12 favours co-ordinated policy development in the French Community. In Denmark, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children was set up in 1987 as an interdisciplinary body of 15 Ministries with responsibility for matters relating to children and families. Chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the main objective of the Committee is to create coherence in areas relating to children and families and to promote cross-sector initiatives to improve the living conditions for children and young persons. In 1996, Portugal set up an inter-ministerial bureau for the expansion and development of pre-school education. Guided by an advisory board (with representatives from municipalities, private profit/non-profit organisations, and researchers), the office produced joint legislation and set up communication strategies across the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. Several governments have established an Ombudsman or Council for Children as an autonomous institution that works across many different disciplines and areas of responsibility to promote children's rights and well-being, particularly through the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Hodgkin & Newell, 1996).

Co-ordination between ECEC and the education sector to facilitate children's transitions

124. Even when services before compulsory school age are coherent, there is no guarantee that the relationship between these services and the compulsory school system will be coherent (EC Childcare Network, 1996). Driven by efforts to facilitate children's transitions, there has been a trend toward more co-ordination of policy across ECEC and compulsory education, often following what has taken place at the local level. Every country has some form of pre-primary schooling to provide a bridge to formal schooling (though in the Netherlands this provision has been integrated into the *bassisschool*). In Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Italy, and Portugal, for example, the education system plays an important role in providing pre-primary schooling for children over three, and consistent regulations, funding, and curricula have been developed across the education system.²⁵ However, since policy and provision for younger children under three and out-of-school activities fall under different administrative auspices, there is still the risk of fragmentation.

125. New Zealand, Spain, and Sweden are the only OECD countries that have fully integrated all early childhood services *and* the compulsory schools into the education system under the Ministry of Education, but there are signs that other countries may follow this model. England, for example, has taken the step of transferring child care services from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Employment. Two co-located administrative units – 'Early Years Division' and 'Child Care Unit,' – share responsibility for the development and implementation of ECEC policy. Most recently, in Italy, there are political proposals to shift responsibility of services for children under three to the Ministry of Education in order to provide more coherence in policy and practices for young children and to improve the emphasis on education within the *asili nido*. In federal systems, administrative integration may be feasible to achieve at the state level. In Australia, three states and territories – South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania – have moved all children's services into education departments to facilitate coherence and co-ordination for young children.

126. Consolidating the administration under education auspices provides an opportunity to strengthen the articulation between ECEC and school and to develop a coherent policy framework for regulation, funding, training, and service delivery across the different phases of the education system. This strategy can facilitate co-operation between ECEC and primary school staff and promote pedagogical continuity for children as they transition from one level of education to another. In Sweden, integrating responsibility for pre-schools, family day care, open pre-schools, and leisure-time activities has led to an increasing public understanding that early childhood services combine care and learning – and represent a first and important stage phase of lifelong learning. However, there are risks to this approach. There are concerns in some countries that as ECEC becomes more integrated with compulsory schooling, early childhood services will become more isolated from child welfare, health, and other policy areas for children, which underlines the importance of creating cross-departmental links. In addition, specialists in some countries (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), England) fear that the dominant culture of the school system has eroded some of the specific pedagogical methods and traditions of early years provision – particularly the emphasis on children's creativity and self-initiative – in favour of more formal teaching of literacy and numeracy. Important structural elements (e.g., high child-staff ratios) contribute to this school-like organisation. However, this has not been the experience in countries such as Sweden and Spain where ECEC has been recognised as a distinct stage of education, not just a preparation phase for primary school. In these two countries, early childhood provision has a separate curriculum framework and staff with specialised training to work with children from birth to six. Finally, making early childhood an important part of the educational system suggests that these services should be accessible to all children who wish to attend, like public schooling, which raises important cost issues.

²⁵ In Portugal, the Framework Law specifies that pedagogical supervision is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Trends toward decentralisation and diversification of provision

127. In several countries, there has been a trend across the social and educational services toward decentralisation and devolution from the central government to the municipalities. This shift has been motivated by efforts to bring decision-making and delivery closer to the people being served and to adapt services to meet local needs and circumstances. It is hoped that decentralisation will facilitate the development of services that are more ‘client-oriented,’ address individual needs, and reinforce diversity of choice. This has facilitated the diversification of the types of provision, and in some cases the privatisation of services. Countries with more decentralised systems now face the difficult task of balancing power and responsibilities between the national and local (and in some cases regional) authorities, which is particularly challenging when it comes to issues of funding, access, and quality monitoring. The impact of decentralisation on the coherence of local service delivery often depends on the current political climate and the historical context of specific ECEC systems (Oberhuemer & Ulich, 1997).

128. In some of the Nordic countries, for example, there is a strong tradition of self-government, based on the principles that citizen needs are best determined and met locally. Decentralisation has built on a well-developed existing infrastructure for ECEC with clear targets for access. Whereas in the past, ECEC services had to meet rather detailed and strict national guidelines and standards, responsibility has been increasingly devolved to the municipalities. While general regulatory frameworks exist, municipalities now decide the appropriate balance of services (e.g., between family day care homes and centres). They also are free to contract with private services as they see fit, though in general, these providers must meet the same quality standards as those run by the municipality. Local authorities have considerable discretion in fixing staffing ratios, and are responsible for supervision and inspection of services, which has led to some variation across municipalities and regions. Decentralisation often goes beyond the local authority, giving considerable discretion and autonomy to institutions, and to staff and parents. In Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, parents have a clearly-defined role in planning and running centre activities, including financial and staffing decisions. In Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal, new legislation giving schools autonomy and control over staffing and budgets is likely to have implications for the delivery of services for children under educational auspices. In the Czech Republic, trends toward decentralised decision-making, increased parental influence, and the development of privately or church-operated alternatives have contributed to greater diversity in the pre-school sector than was the case before 1989. The success of these reforms depends to a large extent on the degree to which a wide range of stakeholders are involved in negotiating local standards and patterns of provision, as well as the availability of technical expertise within the local or regional authority to support the transfer of power to the institutional level.

129. In some countries, decentralisation, sometimes accompanied by deregulation, has been used as a mechanism to introduce market-driven policies to expand provision for young children. In the Netherlands, decentralisation has been supported in the interests of democracy, empowerment, and local responsiveness. The Dutch government and municipalities contract with the non-profit and for-profit sectors to provide many early childhood services, including work-site childcare and also those targeting groups that are difficult to reach through mainstream provision. In England, as well, local Early Years and Child Care Development Partnerships have been given the responsibility to expand ECEC provision in partnership with state, private, and voluntary providers (see Box 3.5). Although the funding is decentralised to the local and services level, national standards and regulations remain. The USA has traditionally relied on market approaches with little government regulation. In this federal system, responsibility for ECEC is devolved almost completely to the individual states, giving authorities considerable flexibility toward meeting the needs and preferences of children and families. As few regulations or guidelines exist at the central level, leading to widespread variation in staff training, staff-child ratios, and even health and safety requirements across and within states. There is concern that the limited role of government, at both federal and state levels, has led to variation in quality and access to services. Australia – another federal system –

has sought to address this issue by linking federal funding for child care to an accreditation scheme with nationally-recognised standards (described earlier).

Box 3.5 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in England

In England, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) function in local authorities as the primary mechanism by which the provision of universal early education for three- and four-year-olds, and childcare targets will be realised. The Partnerships consist of representatives from the maintained, private, and voluntary sectors, local education, health, and social services, employers, trainers, advisors, and parents. Members of the partnership serve on a volunteer basis. Their role is to assess the current provision of care in local areas and to develop plans for future expansion. Working in co-operation with its partner Local Education Authority, each local Partnership draws up an annual local Early Years Development and Childcare Plan. The EYDCP plans are linked to national targets for the provision of early education places for three and four year olds and are required to address the need for expansion of child care provision in their area. The Plans need to address issues of quality, affordability, and accessibility across the range of services in their area and to consider how to provide parents with access to information they need by developing Childcare Information Services (CIS) for their area.

130. In spite of the risks, decentralisation can also lead to more coherence in local policy and provision. With loosening central control, some local authorities have combined funding streams and experimented with integrating administration and policy development across age groups and sectors. In Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and the UK, for example, an increasing number of local authorities have reorganised local administrations and political committees to bring together at least ECEC and schools, often under education departments. Municipalities in Norway have integrated *barnehager* for children under six, leisure-time activities, schools and child welfare services into a Department for Growing Up, with responsibility for a child's total environment; a few have brought together a range of other services such as health, social security and eldercare under one department. Despite the inherent challenges of bringing together various services and professionals, administrative integration has helped to promote co-ordinated and inter-disciplinary ways of working, as well as a more coherent, and possibly more efficient, allocation of resources to young children in their communities.

131. Across countries, decentralisation and devolution have allowed for freedom, adaptation and variation at the local level. In particular, decentralisation has led to the development of a variety of ECEC provision rather than one standardised type, giving more choice for parents. In addition, since municipalities are now charged with making important funding decisions regarding early childhood services, ECEC policies have become an integral part of local politics. Decentralisation may promote better and more effective and co-ordinated ways of working, and more efficient use of resources. On the other hand, local decisionmaking may lead to disparities in quality and access from one municipality to the next, depending on local political priorities, especially if such priorities are driven more by economic considerations than by quality concerns. In Sweden, for example, decentralisation occurred during a period of recession, and was accompanied by funding cuts and the lowering of standards (though quality remains high by international standards). This suggests that there is a role for the national (and state) government in ensuring that local and regional authorities secure adequate resources to implement their policies. In sum, while in some cases decentralisation and devolution have been associated with increased local involvement, democratic structures and matching provision to local needs, in others it has led to regionally diverse levels and standards of provision. These differences are found within and across countries. The challenge is for central government to foster decentralisation and promote local discussion and negotiation, while retaining the authority and capacity to monitor fair access to ECEC and maintain quality across regions and forms of provision.

Links between ECEC and other services at the local level

132. Many countries have recognised the importance of integrating services in order to meet the wide-ranging needs of children and families, particularly those at-risk, in a holistic manner. By working together, social welfare, health, and education sectors can provide more effective and appropriate services for young children, often at a reduced cost to government. In addition, services integration is particularly valuable when children make important transitions, such as the critical passage from ECEC to school. Close co-operation between ECEC and school, and with allied services, can help promote continuity in their learning.

133. There is a trend toward collaboration across the range of ECEC provision – centre-based, family child care, out-of school – in order to create a network of services that work together. In most countries, groups of family child care providers have been organised into networks, which effectively reduce isolation among providers and link them to family support, schools, and other community institutions, and services. It is quite common, also, for ECEC and primary schools to be co-located, but increasingly, staff from the two institutions are also working more closely together. In some countries, multi-disciplinary teams of pre-school, primary, and leisure-time staff have developed new ways of working together to overcome professional boundaries and promote coherence in children's lives. In Portugal, thirty-five *Escolas Básicas Integradas* (Integrated Basic Schools) were created to enable all children to stay in the same school environment from pre-school to completion of compulsory education, facilitating coherent learning conditions for children and improved management of educational resources. Pre-school classes are staffed by *educadores de infância*, who are considered as equal members of the school staff and often participate in in-service training with their colleagues from other levels of the school system. Whenever possible, children are followed by the same group of teachers within the compulsory school system in order to promote a strong interaction between the staff, families, and the community. A similar initiative, in the Netherlands, is the *brede school* (broad-based school) which, in addition to its regular teaching tasks, offers a range of services to the neighbourhood community outside school hours in co-operation with volunteers and professionals (see Box 3.6).

Box 3.6 Developing the Broad-based School in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there is a trend toward integrating educational and welfare services as broad-based schools. There are many different types of broad-based schools, but all are based on the idea of service integration. Educational facilities, recreational facilities, childcare services, child health services, etc., are integrated in an area-based network or even in one multifunctional building. The development of broad-based schools can be seen as a consequence of the decentralisation policy. As a bottom-up initiative which adapts to meet neighbourhood and user needs, there is wide variety in arrangements and goals of broad-based schools in different municipalities. Yet the underlying rationale is similar. Schools are viewed as places where other services and organisations can find and reach all children and youth. Schools are confronted with a wide variety of social and health problems among their students, which often need solving before the child can fully participate in education. Schools can co-operate with other services to meet children's holistic needs. Schools also are increasingly seen as and functioning as supports to enable parents to go out to work. This relatively new demand on schools does not coincide with the way schools are organised, e.g. school opening hours and lunch arrangements. Therefore, schools look for possibilities to link with other professional services, such as out-of-school care and educational and recreational services, to provide for children during the full workday of their parents. Broad schools often stay open late at night and function as a centre of cultural, sporting, and educational activities for parents and youth in a neighbourhood. One of its aims is to strengthen community ties and the trust between parents and the local school.

134. In some countries, attention to children's transitions has led to the integration of some pre-school, school, and leisure-time programmes into a seamless full-day service (see Box 3.7). In Denmark, teams of pedagogues and primary teachers plan and organise activities for mixed-aged children from six to nine, bringing together the traditions of both ECEC and school to ease children's transition from one institution to the other. Often the same *pedagogues* work with children during the school day and in leisure-time activities. This collaborative strategy promotes continuity in children's relationships with adults on a given day and over time, and gives parents more opportunities to communicate with staff. This has led to the rethinking of respective pedagogical methods (e.g., more emphasis on learning through play, age-mixed activities, and organisation around themes). Working in interdisciplinary teams across age groups and settings is a way to bridge children's experiences from ECEC to primary school. This approach gives children the opportunity to become more accustomed to the routines and styles of working in the primary years, while retaining some of the familiar aspects and traditions of the ECEC settings. However, it is important that different workers are respected as equal members of the team, bringing different, but equally valuable, skills, knowledge and experiences to work with young children. Teamwork can provide an opportunity for staff from different fields to discuss and learn from others and reflect on their own practices with children.

135. Moreover, several countries have developed approaches to encourage links across ECEC, schools, and other community services to promote coherence for children and their families. These multi-agency initiatives sometimes target individual children and families, but more often they serve an entire community identified in need of special support. Perhaps the most well-known comprehensive early intervention programme is *Head Start*, a federally-funded, community-based initiative in the US, which provides comprehensive education, developmental, mental health, nutrition, and social services to poor families with young children, and includes an intensive parent and community involvement component. While *Head Start* has traditionally co-ordinated with the health, social, and mental health fields, increasingly, programmes are establishing links with child care services to provide full-day, year-round coverage for children of working parents. The UK recently introduced the interdepartmental anti-poverty initiative *Sure Start*, which draws on the *Head Start* model, but is area-based, and includes all children under four regardless of family income. *Sure Start* uses a partnership approach to local service delivery which includes public, private, and voluntary sectors, community organisations and parents. In Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands, Portugal, and the UK (also France), *educational priority policies* allocate extra resources to pre-schools and schools located in designated socially, culturally, and economically disadvantaged zones in order to improve the quality of children's educational experiences through a collaborative and multi-service approach. By targeting geographical areas, these programmes promote equal educational opportunities without stigmatising individual children.

136. Complementing mainstream ECEC provision, there is also a movement toward the development of more flexible services that respond to a broad set of cognitive, social, physical, and psychological needs of young children and families. Many countries recognise that very young children and their mothers or caregivers can benefit from an informal group experience that enhances child development and supports parents. These programmes tend to include part-time early childhood services, combined with parent outreach and language training, as well as other forms of family support (e.g., health, mental health). Like the educational priority zones, these projects link and network with other services, and often employ staff from the community in which they work. These programmes may take many forms. In England, Early Excellence Centres, government-supported models of exemplary practice, offer a range of services, including early years education for three- and four-year olds, full-day care for children birth to three years, drop-in facilities, outreach, family support, health care, adult education, and practitioner training. In Italy, *nuovo tipologie* (new typology) services have developed to provide flexible learning and socialisation opportunities for children and families who do not need full-time ECEC (see section 3.7). In many countries, open pre-schools or playgroups offer part-time activities for children who are accompanied by a parent or another caregiver e.g., a family child care provider. These services may be particularly valuable

for immigrant families to become familiar with the rhythm of more formal ECEC and develop their social networks and language skills. The trend is for these flexible services to be open to all families, though they may give priority to those with special needs.

137. Such linkages can help to address unmet needs, expedite service delivery, minimise duplication of services, facilitate children's transitions, and assist parents in navigating available services. Not surprisingly, integrating services for young children has been found to be a cost-effective strategy, particularly for those in need of special support (CERI, 1998). However, there are challenges to adopting a more holistic approach. Service providers may hold different visions, come from different professional backgrounds, and work in isolation from counterparts in other fields. In addition, fragmented funding and delivery systems may present a barrier to integrating services. Thus, while in some countries efforts to co-ordinate services for young children are common, in others they are only emerging.

Box 3.7 Integrated services in Maria Gamla-Stan, Sweden

Administrative integration: Maria Gamla-Stan is one of the largest districts in Stockholm (60 000 inhabitants), located in one of the oldest parts of the city. The district has one of the highest densities of children in all of Europe. In order to better serve this young population, Maria Gamla-Stan has formed a Department of Children and Youth, with responsibility for child care, education, as well as youth and preventive services. In the Department, a multi-disciplinary team of staff work together to serve the multiple needs of children and youth together. As one municipal official noted, "We now look at children and youth together as our collective responsibility." By combining funds into one stream, forming 51% of the total budget, the district can more efficiently allocate resources for children than if the money was distributed across various agencies. Three out of 18 districts in Stockholm operate following this model.

Services integration: A holistic approach has also been adopted in the many programmes that the district offers, e.g. Lilla Maria, a municipal school in Maria Gamla-Stan, has integrated pre-school classes, compulsory school, and leisure-time activities for 200 children between the ages of six and nine years old. Initiated by the teachers, Lilla Maria has aimed to take the best features of the three sectors and bring them together into one seamless programme. As a result, the school is open from 7h30 to 18h00 each day. Children easily transition from one hour of leisure-time in the morning, to five hours of school, to leisure-time activities at the end of the day. Parents pay only for the leisure-time hours.

Age- and staff-integration: The six-year-olds have the opportunity to interact with older children, while following their own developmentally-appropriate activities. Children are organised into age-mixed groups of 36, with one school teacher, one pre-school teacher, and two leisure-time pedagogues. These groups are broken down into smaller "family groups" of 10 children with one responsible adult. In this way, Lilla Maria encourages staff with different disciplinary backgrounds and training to work together and to establish close relationships with children of different ages. Since all staff work some mornings and some afternoons, they have the opportunity to meet informally with most parents. In addition, they formally monitor children's development, using checklists and work sampling, and organise regular meetings with parents to discuss their documentation of each child's progress.

3.4 Exploring strategies to ensure adequate investment in the system

Key findings

138. Adequate funding is essential to assuring that all children have equitable access to quality ECEC and that their parents have choice in selecting services. The economic arguments for public investment in quality ECEC are strong (EC Childcare Network, 1996; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000; Verry, 2000). As many countries have recognised, public intervention also can be justified by the goal of equal opportunity so that children in low-income families may have the same opportunities to benefit from quality ECEC as children in high-income families. The costs to education systems and economies become incalculable if children at-risk of educational failure are not detected and supported from the earliest age. The benefits of public investment in quality ECEC are more widespread and include social, economic and educational gains to children, parents, and families, and economic benefits to society in general through the increased labour force participation of women. Much of these costs will be offset by more efficient education systems, increased tax revenue, and reduced welfare payments. While most countries have recognised the important role of public investment, the levels of expenditures, reliance on private funding sources, and financing mechanisms adopted vary across countries.

- In almost all countries in the review, governments pay the largest share of costs, with parents covering 25%-30%;
- Direct provision through services and schools makes up the bulk of government assistance in most countries. Even when the mix of public and private providers is great, a high percentage of services receive direct or indirect public funding;
- Countries have adopted a range of financing mechanisms to improve affordability including: direct funding, fee subsidies, tax relief, and employer contributions. Affordability remains a barrier to equitable access, particularly in systems where the cost burden falls on parents;
- While most countries seek to expand supply through direct subsidies to providers, a few countries favour indirect demand-driven subsidies – fee subsidies and tax relief. In both cases, there are equity concerns about access to and quality of provision; and
- Regardless of the financing strategy adopted, it is clear that substantial *public* investment is necessary for the development of an equitable and well-resourced *system* of quality ECEC.

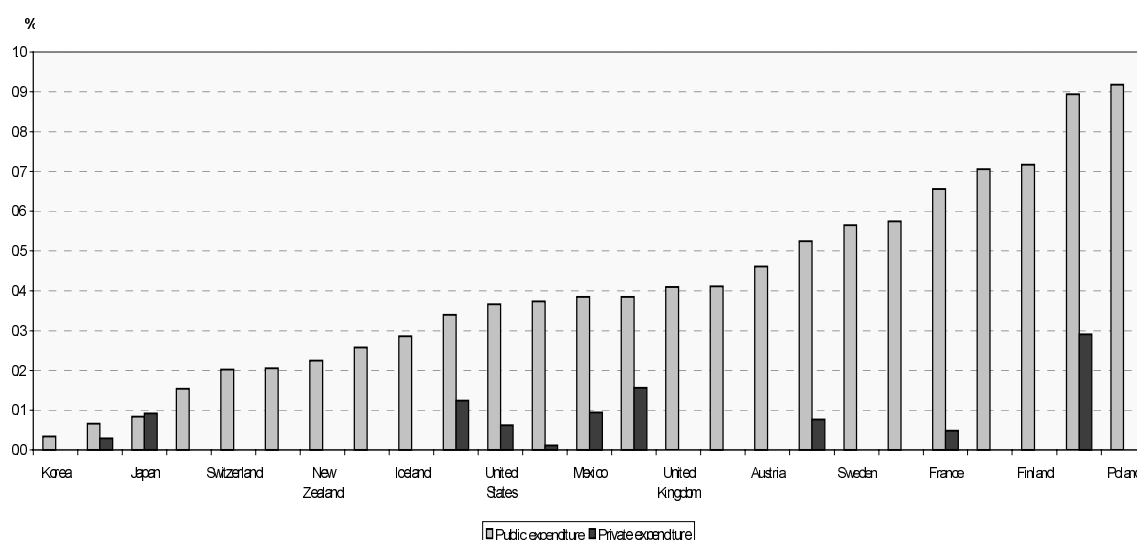
Public investment in ECEC

139. In most OECD countries, there is substantial public investment in ECEC systems, at least for pre-primary and kindergartens for children from the age of three. It is difficult to aggregate expenditure for all forms of ECEC given the variation in institutional and funding arrangements, as well as in parental contributions. While there are few comparable reliable figures on total expenditure, available data suggests that public spending on ECEC (covering the age group birth to six), in terms of percentage of GDP, tends to be the highest in the Nordic countries, in middle range in the continental European countries, and the lowest in Australia, UK, and USA (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1997; Meyers & Gornick, 2000). In terms of trends, countries with comparatively low public expenditure (e.g., Portugal, the Netherlands, the UK, USA) have increased spending significantly over the past five years.

140. As Figure 3.3. shows, the highest expenditure for pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP is 1.2% in Denmark. Most countries participating in the review spend between 0.4% and 0.6% of GDP. As these data refer only to educational provision for children over three, total expenditure may be underestimated. As an example, when all ECEC for children under six is included, the total expenditure in Sweden rises from 0.6% to 2.3% GDP. In most countries, total expenditure would increase significantly if we also included public funding for maternity and parental leave, child allowances, and other transfers to families with children. Another way to look at levels of investment within countries – and the priority accorded to young children – is to compare per child expenditure for early childhood and primary education (again limited to the narrow definition of pre-primary). With the exception of the Czech Republic, Finland, and the USA, countries spend more per student on primary education than on early childhood education (see Figure 3.4.), even though the recommended child-staff ratios and group sizes are much smaller for young children than for compulsory-aged students. Finland spends the most per child in the pre-primary years (\$6340 per child).

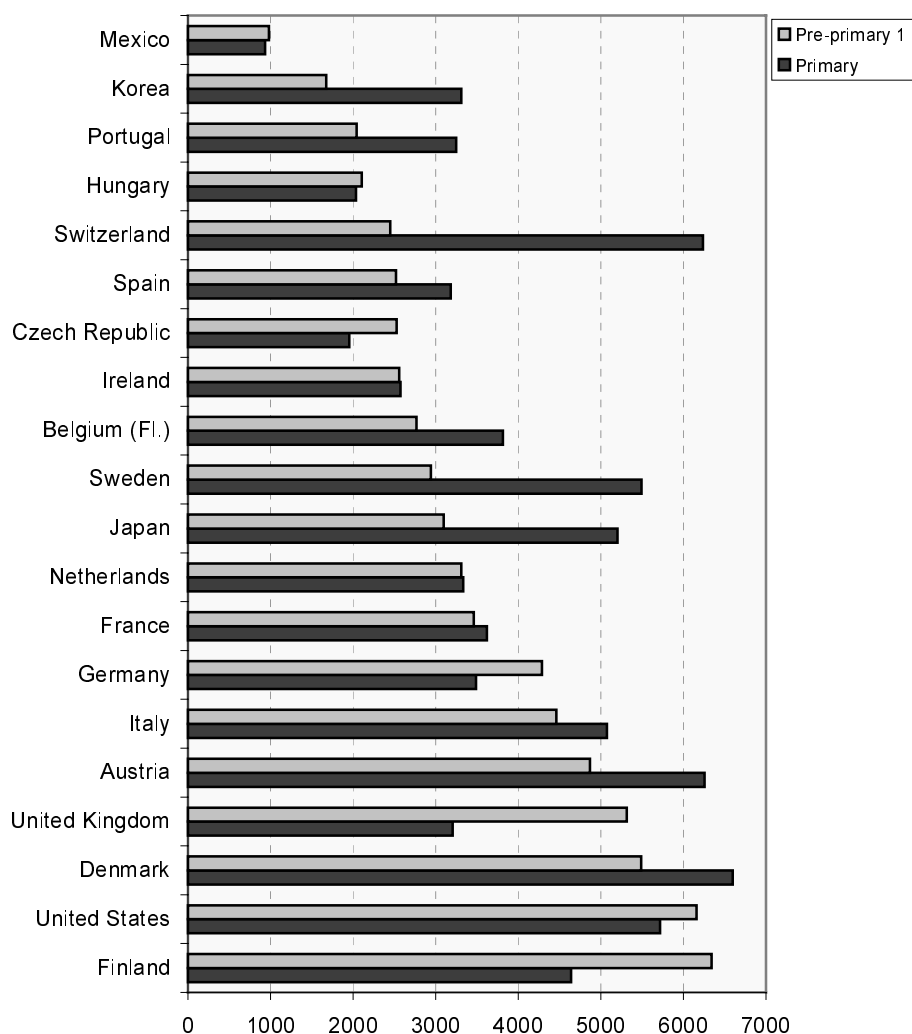
141. **The need for co-ordinated financial planning:** Effective resource allocation requires careful financial planning, yet divisions in responsibility between ministries and at different levels of government make it difficult to aggregate expenditure for ECEC. While in some countries, it is possible to obtain accurate financial data on expenditure for young children, in others data is unreliable or inexistent. Without a coherent and co-ordinated system of funding, in which all aspects of expenditure on ECEC are considered as a whole, policies are less likely to be fully implemented, and inefficiencies and duplication in the system will be more widespread. In Norway, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs compiles the annual expenditures on children across all Ministries into one document to demonstrate what share of the budget is spent on children, as well as to formulate government objectives and policy for children across sectors. In Australia, the Productivity Commission produces an annual report which details expenditure by Commonwealth and state and territory governments on children's services. In general, however, there is a need for consistent and comprehensive data collection on expenditure at the national and international levels. There is also a longer-term need for regular research and monitoring of the impact of levels of resource allocation and different financing mechanisms for children, families, and society.

Figure 3.3. Educational expenditure for pre-primary as a percentage of GDP, 1997



Source: OECD Education Database 2000.

Figure 3.4. Expenditure per student (US dollars converted using PPPs) on public and private institutions by level of education (based on full-time equivalents) (1997)



1. The data refer to early childhood education, which is limited to organised centre-based programmes designed to foster learning and emotional and social development in children for 3 to compulsory school age. Day care, play groups and home-based structured and developmental activities are not included in these data.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2000, Paris.

Cost sharing by government, parents, and business

142. In order to maximise constrained resources, the main cost of providing ECEC is usually shared among different levels of government (national, regional, and local), parents, and sometimes business. However, this distribution varies greatly across countries, as well as within countries, by sector (see Table X.X²⁶). In terms of *government* funding, federal and state governments share financial responsibility for both child care and pre-primary education in the USA, while local authorities bear most of costs for

²⁶ Table in preparation.

ECEC in the UK. In Australia, national, state/territory, and local governments finance child care, and states/territories mostly finance pre-primary education. Financing arrangements vary among the European countries, as well. For *non-school* provision, financing is shared by national, regional and local authorities in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), national and local authorities in the Netherlands, and regional and local authorities in the Czech Republic, Italy, and Portugal. National governments play a substantial role in financing *pre-primary* education in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal; Italy relies also on regional and local authorities. In Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, there is a uniform system for all services below compulsory school age, with shared financing by national and local authorities. In Norway, the state has assumed a larger share of the costs, while in Finland and Sweden, decentralisation has increased the financial responsibility of the municipalities (Meyers & Gornick, 2000).

143. In most European countries, *parents* generally cover one-quarter to one-third of operating service costs, and only 10-15% in Finland. Only in Australia, the UK, and the USA do parent fees make up most of the costs, however, these fees may be heavily subsidised by government, as in Australia and the UK. In the US, where ECEC is underfunded relative to other publicly-funded education programmes and social services (Casper, 1995), parents bear the burden of roughly 70-80% of ECEC costs of ECEC outside the school system (Barnett & Masse, 2000; CQCO Study Team, 1995).²⁷ This imbalance between public and private responsibility reflects deeply ingrained attitudes concerning individual and collective responsibility for ECEC. The education and care of young children are predominantly seen as private tasks to be managed by individual families, not as issues which demand strong public commitment.

144. The role of *employers* in financing services outside the education system varies across countries, depending on the extent to which these services are viewed as a labour market support. In Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), employers contribute 0.05% of the wage bill for services for children under three, and in Italy, they pay 0.1% of the wage bill for social services (including child care), but this represents only a small contribution to the costs (Meyers & Gornick, 2000). In Australia, the Netherlands, and the USA, the tax system stimulates employer contributions by allowing employers to deduct the cost of child care for employees from their taxable earnings (or through a tax exemption to the fringe benefits tax in the case of Australia). The Netherlands is aiming for a tripartite arrangement in which government, employers, and parents share the major costs of child care provision and is moving toward greater reliance on employer-sponsored care. In 1990, the government initiated a *Stimulative Measure on Child Care* which succeeded attaining cost sharing as follows: employers 21%, government 35%, and parents 44%. In the Nordic countries, it is not common for employers to contribute to the cost of ECEC. Services are viewed as a public responsibility, and admission is a social right, rather than a benefit for employees.

Financing mechanisms and delivery systems

145. The choice of funding and financing mechanisms varies across countries and reflects different political traditions. Most OECD countries favour public delivery of services, but costs are often shared with parents, as noted earlier. The direct provision of ECEC through services and schools constitutes the bulk of government assistance. Providers in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden are either public authorities (i.e., state or municipalities) or a mixture of public and private (non-profit, primarily) organisations that are funded and regulated by public authorities. There is a slight trend toward greater reliance on privately-delivered but publicly-financed providers in order to reduce costs for the municipalities and provide parents with more

²⁷ In the USA, families pay higher fees for child care (an average of \$4 000 a year) than they pay for higher education tuition and also a larger share of the total cost (Barnett & Masse, 2000).

diverse options.²⁸ In Sweden, most private providers are parent co-operatives. In general, private providers must meet the same quality standards as public provision in order to receive direct subsidies. In the Czech Republic, changes in the political and economic system have opened up the opportunity for privately and church-organised ECEC settings for three- to six-year olds, although to date on a small scale (covering 1.6% of children).

146. In the Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA, the public-private mix is greater, and for-profit providers are more common.²⁹ In Australia, for example, the involvement of the private for-profit sector has increased in past decade and has been concurrent with a shift from funding service providers to consumers. Recently, the Commonwealth removed the operational subsidies to community centres in order to 'level the playing field' with for-profit providers.³⁰ For-profit provision also exists in Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal, primarily for children under three, and Finland and Norway allow private companies to develop employee ECEC programmes with some state subsidies. Again, most countries require quality standards for private and public provision if they are to receive direct or indirect public resources, and in many instances, if they are to operate at all (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Denmark, the Netherlands).

147. In some countries, parents receive subsidies to purchase care. *Fee subsidies* – vouchers or cash grants – enable access to a wide range of services for many parents who could not otherwise afford the full cost. In Australia, for example, parents receive fee subsidies through the new Child Care Benefit (CCB) for private and community-based centres, family day care and out-of-school provision. All families who use formal approved child care are eligible for a minimum amount, and assistance increases as family income decreases. Centres are required to participate in the QIAS process to be eligible for the CCB. A minimum level of CCB is also available to families using informal (registered) care. In Finland, some municipalities provide a fee subsidy in the form of the Private Care Allowance for parents to purchase private centre-based or home-based provision for children under school age. Local authorities pay the allowance – which consists of a basic allowance and supplement related to income and family-size – directly to the provider.

148. Other financing mechanisms include *tax relief* to enable parents to purchase private care and incentives for *employer contributions* (discussed earlier). In most countries, tax relief allows families to deduct ECEC expenses from their tax liability. This strategy may not help very low-income families if they do not earn enough to pay taxes. In contrast, the new Childcare Tax Credit in the UK (part of the Working Families Tax Credit) is targeted to increase demand for childcare services and make them more affordable for low and middle income families. The Childcare Tax Credit can be worth up to a maximum of £70 a week for one child, £105 a week for two or more children to a limit of 70% of the costs of registered or approved ECEC (nurseries and family day care) for children under eight, and out-of-school provision for older children. While fee subsidies, tax relief, and employer contributions are mechanisms to supplement publicly-subsidised provision in most countries, they form the majority of government assistance in Australia, the UK, and the USA – especially for the non-school sector. In contrast to direct funding and provision, these mechanisms may represent greater reliance on family or market sectors to provide services, and in some cases, to absorb the costs (Myers & Gornick, 2000).

²⁸ Publicly-funded, privately-operated provision currently covers 7% of children in Finland, 13% in Sweden, 30% in Denmark, and 42% in Norway.

²⁹ For example, 90% of provision is private in the US (60% of which is not-for-profit and 30% for-profit) and in Australia 73% of long day care centres are private. Other forms of ECEC – family day care, out-of-school provision, occasional care – are currently provided by the community-based, not-for-profit sector.

³⁰ New South Wales and Northern Territory continue to provide ongoing funding in the form of operational subsidies to community-based long day care.

Affordability and access

149. Affordability is determined by the percentage of disposable income that families accord to ECEC services. Reflecting the growing consensus that participation in ECEC is desirable for three- to six-year-olds, countries have sought financial incentives for children to attend services. In order to promote equal educational opportunities, Portugal now provides a free daily five-hour session for five-year-olds in *jardim de infância*, and soon Sweden will subsidise a free half-day session for four- and five-year olds in the *förskole* (most of whom are already attending centres on a fee-paying basis). These recent changes suggest a shift in policy toward a more universal educational approach that has long been adopted in the education sector in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) from 30 months, in Italy from age three (in state-run and municipal schools), and in the Netherlands from age four. Due to the high costs for infant-toddler care and different delivery systems, parents pay much more for services for children under three than for older children. In most countries, publicly-funded services charge parents on a sliding scale according to income, and in many cases the fee is waived completely for low-income families or children with special needs. Fees are often reduced for additional siblings (e.g., by 50% in Denmark and Finland). As a result, parent fees for publicly-funded ECEC take up less than 10% of the average family income in most European countries and Australia.

150. Affordability is a major criterion of access, especially in systems where most of the costs are expected to be covered through parental fees. In the USA, parent payments are generally very low for means-tested public provision, but access to these subsidies is limited.³¹ As a result, lower-income families end up paying a higher proportion of their income for services than higher income families. Research found that families earning less than \$1,200 per month paid 25% of their incomes for child care, while families earning over \$4,500 per month paid only 6% of their incomes (Casper, 1995). Despite availability of fee subsidies, affordability is cited as a major barrier to access to non-school services in Australia, the UK, and the USA, leading to a lower percentage of low-income families enrolled in ECEC than higher-income families. In the USA, only 45% of three to five year old children from low-income families were enrolled in pre-school programmes, compared with almost 75% of children from high-income families (National Education Goals Panel, 1997). Even in heavily subsidised systems, some children are excluded due to their families' economic situation. As children with limited access to services are often those who would benefit the most from quality ECEC, for equity reasons, there is a need for better monitoring of the consequences of public expenditure and mechanisms for distributing resources.

151. With trends toward increased decentralisation and deregulation, higher fees and greater variation in fees across regions have become prevalent in many countries (e.g., Australia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, USA). There is some concern that substantial fee increases have led to decrease in utilisation, particularly among middle- and low-income families. In Australia, for example, fees, which are not regulated by government, have increased by 7% each year between 1991-1999, representing a total increase of 58%. Well-targeted public investment may help address these concerns. Since its introduction in July 2000, the new Child Care Benefit in Australia has improved the affordability of child care (for very low-income families, services are now free). There has been an increase in demand among families not previously using provision and existing families have increased their hours of usage. Another mechanism, adopted in Finland and Sweden, is to introduce a maximum fee set at a low level to ensure that no parent pays more than a set amount on ECEC.

³¹In the US, only 10% of income-eligible children received the main federal subsidy, the Child Care and Development Fund.

Financing strategies to expand supply

152. Government subsidies can help promote the development of ECEC provision. Although it is difficult to gauge the impact of public subsidies on accessibility to ECEC (EC Childcare Network, 1996b), waiting lists for places in publicly-funded programmes suggest that funding is inadequate to ensure equitable access – even in some nations with entitlement policies. One of the major financing issues centres on the following question: what is the desirable mix between *demand-side* subsidies (allocating government resources directly to families) and *supply-side* subsidies (allocating resources to create and support a stable infrastructure of services)? As noted earlier, most countries seek to expand supply through subsidies to providers, generally via municipal block grants for non-school services and via earmarked per capita grants for educational services. The exceptions are Australia, the UK, and USA, where demand-side subsidies to parents are favoured for non-school ECEC. It is anticipated that the demand for services will both stimulate the expansion of supply and increase affordability. The use of subsidies to parents reflects a preference for a predominantly demand-driven system and individual choice at family level rather than direct intervention through support to services.

153. However, it is argued that a completely demand-driven system only works in a more or less perfect market. Markets for ECEC are far from perfect: buyers lack both financial resources and full information on quality and accessibility (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000; Verry, 2000). There is also evidence that demand-driven systems can lead to inequitable development of services. In Australia, in early 1990s, fee subsidies to parents using private provision led to uneven and unforeseen growth, with some areas experiencing an oversupply, while gaps in supply, such as places for infants and toddlers, still existed in some regions. To address these longstanding problems, a national planning system has been devised to support the viability and sustainability of existing services and to encourage providers to offer services in disadvantaged communities. In the UK and the USA, as well, there have been difficulties attracting private providers to low-income and rural areas (see section 3.1). This suggests a need for supply-side investment to the full range of providers in exchange for guarantees of improved access and quality. This funding approach can be strengthened by demand-side subsidies to make programmes more affordable for middle- and low-income families. There is also a need for better consumer information on quality, affordability, and accessibility of ECEC (see section 3.7).

154. In funding systems relying mostly on supply-side funding, there also may be a need for more parity in funding across regions and sectors to achieve more equitable access. In countries with wide differences in regional wealth (e.g., Italy, Portugal), there is a need for *differential funding* to even out geographic disparities in provision. Finland and Sweden address this problem through a special levelling mechanism that takes into account differences in local tax bases and redistributes tax revenue more evenly among municipalities. In addition, several countries (e.g., Norway, Portugal), rely on non-profit and for-profit providers to expand provision toward universal access, but these services receive lower levels of public funding than public providers. Without more equitable resource allocation, private services may be forced to cut costs and have difficulty in meeting quality standards. The Netherlands has addressed this issue by providing equal levels of public funding to both private and public providers, as long as the latter meet the defined quality standards. In Australia, all families using private for-profit and non-profit provision are all eligible for the same level of Child Care Benefit.

Cost and quality: The need for investment in services and the infrastructure

155. When services rely primarily on revenue from families with limited budgets, they must keep the costs down. There is a tension between the financial viability of services, affordability for parents, and high quality for children (Hayes & Press, 2000). In systems with limited public support, services compete to keep fees low and earn a profitable return on capital. The need to contain costs may result in programme

standards that do not require increased expenditure for personnel or facilities (Cochran, 1993). Without adequate resources, staff often subsidise underfunded systems with foregone wages and benefits, leading to difficulties in recruiting and retaining a well-qualified workforce (CQCO Study Team, 1995). These hidden costs are rarely made visible in cost-effectiveness analyses. Low public investment in ECEC jeopardises children by forcing services (both for-profit and non-profit) to operate with inadequate funds to provide quality. It also constrains the choices of lower-income parents who cannot afford the full cost of ECEC and may force them to settle for lower quality care for their children (CQCO Study Team, 1995).

156. As the proceeding sections have argued, ECEC provision needs to be supported by a quality *infrastructure* for planning, monitoring, support, training, research and development. Without secure and adequate resources, in both services and the infrastructure, it will be difficult to ensure quality improvement. In particular, raising the qualifications of staff (see section 3.5) carries cost implications, since it would involve a major revaluing of early childhood work in many countries. Similarly, there is a need to invest in higher wages and benefits for staff in order to recruit and retain a qualified workforce which carries financial implications as well, as staff costs make up the bulk of programme costs (roughly 80% in most countries). Investment in other structural characteristics (child-staff ratios, group size, facilities) of quality also requires ongoing investment. Regardless of the financing strategy adopted, it is clear that substantial public investment in ECEC is necessary for the development of a coherent and well-resourced *system* of quality services for all young children (Kagan & Cohen, 1997).

3.5 Improving staff training and work conditions

Key findings

157. It is widely recognised that staff working with children in ECEC programmes have a major impact on children's early development and learning. Research shows the links between strong training and support of staff – including appropriate pay and conditions – and the quality of ECEC services (CQCO Study Team, 1995; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Whitebook et al., 1998). In particular, staff who have more formal education and more specialised early childhood training provide more stimulating, warm, and supportive interactions with children (CQCO Study Team, 1995; NICHD, 1997; Phillipsen et al., 1997). This section discusses the links between the structure of the early childhood system and the structure of staffing, and in turn, the implications for training, pay, status of professionals. We will focus first on centre-based provision and then on family day care. Beyond issues of structure, different approaches to staffing relate to diverse understandings of the role of early childhood workers, the nature of their work with children, as well as how that work is valued by society (Moss, 2000).

- Countries have adopted two main approaches to staffing: a split regime with a group of teachers working with children over three and lower-trained workers in other services; or a pedagogue working with children from birth to six, and sometimes older in a range of settings. There is a cross-national trend toward at least a three-year tertiary degree for ECEC staff with the main responsibility for children;
- While the degree of early childhood specialisation and the balance between theory and practice varies across countries, there appear to be training gaps in the following areas: work with parents, bilingual/multi-cultural and special education, and research and evaluation;
- Opportunities to participate in continuous training and professional development are uneven. Staff with the lowest levels of initial training tend to have the least access;
- Low pay, status, poor working conditions, limited access to in-service training and limited career mobility are a concern, particularly for staff working with the young children in infant-toddler, out-of-school, and family day care settings;
- As ECEC provision expands, recruitment and retention are major challenges for the field. Many countries are seeking to attract a diverse workforce to reflect the children in ECEC. Another major issue is whether a more gender-mixed workforce is desirable, and if so how.

The structure of staffing

158. Earlier sections have discussed the divided systems of 'care' and 'education' provision falling under responsibility of either social welfare or education authorities in most countries (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal). The length, level, and orientation of training, as well as pay and work conditions, considered appropriate for staff who work within the welfare and education systems tend to follow this dividing line. In these countries, one finds a mixture of highly-trained staff working as teachers in pre-primary schools in the education sector and various types of child care workers employed in the welfare sector, usually in infant-toddler and out-of-school provision (see Table 3.1 for an overview of staffing). The latter group tend to have lower levels

of training, less specialisation in early childhood, lower compensation, and poorer working conditions than their early childhood counterparts in the education system.

159. Countries also vary with regard to the emphasis on specific age groups within that training. In Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA, training for early years teachers has been integrated with mainstream teacher training. While this ensures that professionals working with children from age four and older share a basic principles and knowledge, professional identity, there is some evidence that time spent on learning about the early years tends to lose out to the weightier status of compulsory schooling. Other countries such as Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Czech Republic, Italy, and Portugal consider that a high degree of specialisation is necessary for quality work with young children from three to six. Early childhood educators are trained separately from primary teachers, at the same level and institutions. They are not qualified to work in primary schools, except in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities).

160. When all early childhood services are under the responsibility of one Ministry, there is usually a unified training system with a high level of qualification for staff working with all children from birth to six. In the UK, where administrative integration is fairly recent, it is not clear whether or not a new staffing structure will emerge, and if so, whether or not it will include a more integrated approach to staff working in ECEC with children from birth to six. In more integrated early childhood systems (e.g., Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden), pedagogues are trained to work with children across the early childhood period, birth to six and sometimes older, in non-school settings. These countries have adopted a simple staffing structure, with a highly-trained pedagogue as the main worker, who may be supported by less-trained assistants, and with reasonable working conditions across the ECEC field. Pedagogues are considered to have a different, but equally important, role to school-teachers, and often enjoy equivalent status, pay, and working conditions. Given the range of educational, social, and community contexts in which they work, they view their multi-purpose roles as fulfilling social, cultural, and educational objectives. In Norway, pre-school teachers may work with children from birth to eight years, in out-of-school provision, and with children with special needs.³² Denmark trains its *paedagoger* to work with people from birth to 100 in all early childhood services, out-of-school provision, *and* in range of services for children and adults with special needs. A more general, broad-based training in social care, though at a much lower level, is available in Australia, Finland, and the Netherlands, as well.

161. Increasingly, pedagogues and other staff are working in teams with primary school teachers in the early years of schooling (see section 3.3). To support such collaboration, in Sweden, there is a proposed reform to partially integrate the training of different teachers who work with children, while encouraging them to develop a variety of knowledge profiles. The proposal would extend the education for pre-school teachers and leisure-time pedagogues another six months to three-and-a-half years. The first six months would consist of joint training so that students who will work in pre-school, compulsory school, and upper secondary school obtain a common core of knowledge in areas such as, teaching, special needs education, child and youth development, and interdisciplinary subjects. The remaining three years of training would include specialised studies and *practica*. Teachers in pre-school, the first years of compulsory school, and out-of-school provision would have the same qualification, strengthening teamwork among the professionals, and building closer links across different phases of lifelong learning.

³² After completing one more year of higher education, pedagogues may teach children up to the age of ten.

Trend toward longer and higher levels of initial training

162. Whatever the organisation and emphasis, there is widespread movement toward longer and higher levels of basic training for the *professional staff* working with children from the age of three, and sometimes younger. In the Western European countries, most centre-based staff are required to complete at least three years of training at the tertiary level – either in universities as in Italy, Finland, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK or in higher education institutions, as in Denmark, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Norway, and the Netherlands. In the Czech Republic, almost all staff working in pre-schools have completed four-year secondary level programme with a pedagogical orientation, and discussions are underway to move the training for pre-school teachers to the tertiary level. In part due to the federal systems in Australia and the USA, there is currently no agreed national framework for staff qualifications, and regulations vary across states and territories. A very complex system of staffing has evolved with multiple roles, training, and qualifications to reflect the diverse set of services found in these two countries, though regulations of staffing tend to follow the ‘care’ and ‘education’ division.

163. The training situation is more varied for *auxiliary staff*. In Denmark, a minority of staff are untrained auxiliaries, and most are gaining experience prior to beginning training as pedagogues. In Finland and Sweden, most assistants have completed at least two years of post-16 vocational training, while a minority of auxiliary staff have completed this training, which is new, in Norway. This is comparable with the levels of training of staff with group responsibility for children from birth to three in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and Italy. A matter of great concern is that countries with large private and voluntary sectors still have a large group of low-trained and untrained staff working in ECEC outside the school system (e.g., Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA). In the UK, for example, 50% of staff in nurseries, playgroups, after-school programmes have no training to work with children, compared with only 2% of staff in centres in Sweden.

164. Until recently, *out-of-school provision* has not been a high priority in most countries, and this neglect is reflected in the lack of attention to the workers who staff such services. In most countries, work with children is divided between school time and ‘wrap around provision’ staffed by a different set of workers. With few exceptions, there is no framework for qualifying or regulating personnel working in out-of-school provision. Sweden is the only country to have a specific qualification for work in leisure-time centres. Training for *fritidspedagoger* takes place at university level alongside pre-school and primary school teachers, but (currently) in a separate track. Denmark follows a more general approach. Qualified pedagogues in Denmark who wish to work in out-of-school provision may specialise in school-age recreation work within their broad training. In the Netherlands, qualification requirements for staff in out-of-school provision are identical to those working in settings with children under four. With the expansion of these services in many countries, there is recognition that there will be a need to clarify the nature of the work, qualifications, and training necessary to work in such services in the near future.

Initial training: What it covers and what it does not

165. In many countries, responsibility for developing training curricula has been decentralised. General study plans, focusing broadly on the purpose, content, and structure of training are articulated at the national level, and the details are developed by individual training institutions. This can lead to some variation, but also allows for tailoring courses to local needs and increasing the involvement of local institutions and community members (Pritchard, 1996). In general, training for staff to work with children under three often emphasises a paramedical, health, or care orientation, while training for staff working with three- to six-year-olds tends to focus on broad education-related courses, such as psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, along with subject-based courses including music, art, and movement.

Supervised work placements are usually worked into training course, with the longest period in final year. These *practica* may include placements in remedial, sociocultural, and special needs settings. The balance between theory and practice is an issue under discussion in many countries, particularly in countries where training has recently shifted to the university sector (e.g., Finland, Italy, Portugal), as well as in the Czech Republic where there are proposals to upgrade training to the tertiary level. In sum, across Europe, a good general level of education and field-relevant knowledge-base, complemented by practical work experience, are considered essential ingredients for preparing staff to work in posts of responsibility with young children. In contrast, in Australia and the USA there is less professional and public consensus regarding the level of education and knowledge necessary to work in the field, and this ambiguity is reflected in pre-service qualifications, which can be quite low by comparative and professional standards.

166. Looking ahead, there is a need for initial training to address some of the challenging issues facing early childhood practitioners. Across countries, there seems to be little emphasis on adult-related issues. Few staff training courses focus on professional issues in the field and strategies to work with parents and family members, even though these are an important part of programme goals in most countries. With changing patterns of migration, there is a need for more focus on bilingual/multicultural education and work with diverse communities of children and families. Similarly, trends toward inclusion mean that many mainstream staff need specialised training to work with children with disabilities and other special educational needs. In countries, with complex funding streams (both public and private), staff are expected to be social entrepreneurs to juggle various funding sources, compete for scarce resources and grants, etc. Some countries are recognising the roles of staff as researchers, by including approaches to observing and assessing children, as well as self-evaluation strategies that promote reflective practice in their basic training, while in others, this area could be further developed.

Continuous training, professional development: Opportunities are uneven

167. Access to in-service training is important to improving early childhood practice (see Box 3.8). It is difficult to obtain information on access to or participation in in-service training, because in many cases, budgets from the central government are decentralised to municipalities or institutions to be used at the discretion of the municipality or programme director. In a few cases, the right to in-service training is determined by collective agreements, but in general, provision of and participation in continuous training is voluntary. Workers face many practical challenges to accessing in-service training, especially the difficulty of obtaining release time with pay to attend courses. This problem is aggravated for small centres in rural areas, where there may be only one staff member for each group of children, and for family day care providers. If training is not subsidised, low wages prevent many workers, especially in the welfare sector, from taking advantage of in-service training. Consistent with trends in other sectors of employment, workers with the lowest levels of basic training are the most likely to have the least access to in-service training (OECD, 1999c). In terms of content, there is wide variation in the quality of in-service training offerings and in the transferability of training credits toward degree programmes, which is essential for enhancing career mobility in the field. Trends toward devolution of responsibility to the institutional level mean that staff in management positions will need to develop budgeting, organisational, and human resource skills. There currently is little professional development opportunities for such management roles.

168. In addition to providing access to co-ordinated in-service training courses, well-run workplaces include regular opportunities for staff discussion and planning. In most countries, developing good working relationships amongst staff, their mutual supportive and collaboration, is viewed as essential to fostering good relationships with children and promoting co-operative relationships amongst children. In Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Italy, and Portugal, non-contact time is set aside for staff development as an essential part of forging staff relationships and of undertaking an ongoing critical evaluation of the curriculum being offered to children (EC Childcare Network, 1996a). In Italy, six hours a

week are set aside as non-contact time to allow staff to undertake, for example, the process of pedagogical documentation (discussed earlier) – a very useful tool to deepen understanding among staff and children, and encourage reflective practice.

Box 3.8 BUPL: A strong partner in raising quality

BUPL is the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators, with more than 50,000 trained staff members in childcare centres, kindergartens, leisure-time centres and youth clubs across Denmark. BUPL is at once a traditional trade union, protecting its members working conditions and salary levels, and a professional association committed to raising quality in Danish ECEC. BUPL positions itself in relation to the competent ministries (the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education), as an independent consultative partner, and supports them in implementing national policy. It attempts to maintain a presence in all the arenas important for early education and care, ranging from informal meetings with local authorities, civil servants, parents and parliamentarians to membership of councils and committees at central and local levels. BUPL starts from the premise that the quality of personnel in the early childhood centres is fundamental to the well-being of children in ECEC settings.

In the last two years, BUPL has actively co-operated with the Ministry of Education in the project *Folkeskole 2000*, in particular to strengthen co-operation between the kindergarten and the primary school, and between schools and the educators in after-school care. The municipalities - which, in Denmark, have full responsibility for the organisation, management and funding of ECEC at local level - have nominated its members as pedagogical advisors with the task of raising education standards and improving pedagogical methods in both kindergartens and schools. BUPL's Education Division is researching at the moment the issue of children's development of competencies - personal, developmental, cognitive and social - in consultation with widely childcare centres, kindergartens, parents experts and local employers. With educators in the field of special education for children and adults with disabilities, BUPL has created a Foundation for Development and Research, which finances, from its own funds, projects on childcare and special education.

BUPL publishes reports and guidelines on the rights and duties of the education partners (including children), and initiates discussions on pedagogical issues with parent and professional groups. It provides extensive in-service and continuous training, not only of its own members, but also at community level for all those involved with early education and care matters. BUPL has been closely involved also in the discussions setting up a common Educational University for teachers and educators.

Concerns about working conditions, status, pay

169. The need to improve the work conditions of ECEC staff – organisational climate of the ECEC setting, remuneration, and benefits – is an issue in most countries. In many countries, staff receive poor pay and benefits, relative to workers in similar occupations, including those working in other levels of education. The growing diversification of providers, including higher proportion of private for-profit and not-for-profit providers and service provision in home care settings has introduced greater variations in employment, working conditions, and career prospects within the sector (Christopherson, 1997). Staff working with the youngest children in the welfare system have difficulties getting public recognition for the educational role of their work and have the lowest levels of training, least access to in-service training, lowest pay, poorest work conditions, and highest turnover rates of the ECEC workforce. It is not surprising that staff dissatisfaction and turnover are huge challenges for the field. In the UK and the USA, where pay can be close to the minimum wage and many child care workers do not receive paid sick leave and holidays, annual staff turnover may reach over 30% in centre-based ECEC. Research shows that wages are the most important determinant of staff turnover and a strong predictor of programme quality, yet child care workers in the USA earn less than bus drivers and garbage collectors (US Department of Labor, 1999). High turnover rates interfere with the continuity and consistent relationships that are so important to

young children's development and learning. On the other hand, good conditions of work will encourage a well motivated workforce with high morale and resilience, and a more enduring commitment, which will raise the quality of provision (Bertram & Pascal, 1999).

170. Policy to improve staff qualifications and reduce turnover must also address the low wages in the field, as higher trained staff will expect improved compensation. The cost implications are even greater if a high level of basic training is linked to a system of professional development which gives regular non-contact time to staff. Yet, there is a conflict in many countries between policies which attempt to reduce the cost of services by employing workers at very low wages and the recognition that quality ECEC requires highly-trained workers. Increasingly, there is a bifurcated workforce with a small number of well-trained staff, and a larger and faster growing sector of low-trained, low-paid childcare workers: in largely market-driven systems, this less-skilled workforce provides labour flexibility and cost competitiveness (Christopherson, 1997). Without adequate public funding, either the early childhood workforce subsidises the costs of provision with their low wages or costs are passed on to parents through higher fees. In light of budget constraints, some countries perceive a trade-off between cost and access, fearing that employing highly-trained workers at reasonable wages will lead to fewer places and/or limited access to lower-income families. While most countries invest heavily in staff working with children over three, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden are unique in their commitment to high levels of public funding across the early childhood workforce covering all centres for children under seven. Pay and conditions for staff are similar to, if not the same as those of school teachers *and* services are affordable to families (see section 3.4). This suggests a need to address the underlying issue leading to the low status and pay of workers in some countries: how the profession is valued by society.

Staff recruitment and retention: Who in the future will do early childhood work?

171. As early childhood provision expands, it has been challenging to meet the increase in demand for trained staff. In the Netherlands, for example, with the rapid growth of welfare services on the one hand, and efforts to reduce class size and the greying of the teaching population in schools on the other, there has been an increasing demand for, and shortage of, qualified staff in both sectors. Thousands of former teachers have been offered refresher courses to meet this demand. In Norway, there has been a drop in applicants and a decline in the grades of students admitted to training colleges for pre-school education. Just over a third of the workforce are trained pedagogues. In 1999, about 15% of pre-school staff who did not hold the necessary qualifications received dispensations to address this staffing shortage. Within countries, these recruitment problems are more acute in remote and rural areas (e.g., Australia, Portugal), and in areas with higher levels of economic and social deprivation (e.g., the Netherlands, UK, USA), which suggests the need for providing incentives for qualified personnel who accept such placements. As the need for staff has increased, employers have turned to entry level, less skilled and credentialed workers to make up the gap, which may compromise the quality of provision. Attracting workers who have not previously been employed in significant numbers – ethnic minority groups, staff with disabilities, and men – may help solve the staffing crises faced by several countries in the short-term (see discussion below). As a long-term solution, however, it would seem that the status, pay and working conditions of the workforce will need to be addressed.

172. It is unclear whether recruitment and retention problems are a temporary problem or a long-term difficulty for the sector. It may be part of wider issue in the care, educational, and social services, in economies in which women are better educated and have a wider range of employment opportunities with better pay and stronger career possibilities. In many countries, the ECEC sector is competing with other employment areas, particularly the rapidly expanding field of elderly care. In addition, recruitment and retention difficulties may be linked to strenuous working conditions, particularly high child-staff ratios, long hours, and increasing demands on early childhood professionals. In several countries, particularly

those where major policy changes are impacting the profession, practitioners speak of ‘change fatigue’ as they try to cope with a large number of reforms in a short period of time – in addition to their regular roles and responsibilities with children. Many countries also document that practitioners currently take on a significant amount of unpaid overtime to prepare activities, complete forms and other administrative responsibilities, attend meetings, work with parents, and participate in professional development.

173. What are some strategies to address recruitment and retention issues and create training incentives for employers and employees? Where joint training requirements and systems exist for pre-primary and primary school teachers – as in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Portugal, the Netherlands, and the UK – teachers of young children receive the same compensation as counterparts working with older children in the school system and enjoy similar status. Early childhood professionals may also have more chances for career mobility within the school system, which may contribute to attracting and retaining a motivated workforce. In Denmark, where demand for training far exceeds available places, students may start training after working in the field, so they have the opportunity to get to know the nature of the profession *before* embarking on training. In the USA, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, developed in North Carolina and implemented in seven other states, provides scholarships to individuals already working in the field so that they can attend courses (see Box 3.8). They must commit to continue working in the setting that releases them for an agreed length of time, thereby increasing staff training and retention. Unions and professional associations in many countries have been successful in drawing public attention to industrial issues, though membership and power vary from country to country (see Box 3.9). In the Netherlands, for example, collective labour agreements apply to both public and private (for-profit and non-profit) settings, ensuring the same minimum level of salaries and working conditions for staff working throughout the sector.

Box 3.9 T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project in the USA

The goal of the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) project is to improve the training of ECEC workers, linking additional training to higher wages. T.E.A.C.H. is geared to all levels of practitioners already working in ECEC centres or homes. The director of the setting agrees to release time so that participants can attend courses, and participants agree to stay at the same setting for a year after completing their T.E.A.C.H. educational goals. The director pays the participant a higher salary, or a bonus, when the goal is completed. The educational goals are set by the participant, who may later set higher goals and enter the programme again. This scholarship programme can be used for entry-level training for assistants, or for higher-level graduate degrees for teachers or directors. The project ties lateral or vertical job mobility to courses and degrees. By compensating ECEC workers for receiving more training and education, the programme works to retain staff and improve the quality of the workforce. T.E.A.C.H. was started in North Carolina by Day Care Services Association (a non-profit service, research and advocacy group) and has been adopted by other states, including New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Colorado and Indiana. Both employers and employees pay a portion of the training costs, and the remaining funds come from federal, state, and private (business and philanthropic) sources. The project has built-in data collection and evaluation components.

Career opportunities in the field are limited for some

174. Opportunities for horizontal and vertical career mobility enhance the attractiveness of the early childhood profession. Policymakers are faced with a dilemma: How to meet the need for a well-prepared workforce while at the same time maintain the tradition of broad access to the sector for those with lower-skills? In most countries, there are two completely separate systems for care and education, representing different areas of expertise and training. Not surprisingly, training routes are fairly inflexible across this divide, and there is little career opportunity for lower-skilled workers to move into high-skilled and better paid positions. Various approaches are being developed toward creating a more flexible, modular career

structure, so that it is possible to acquire necessary training in a variety of ways, speeds, and to access routes and to exit at various stages of the training process. These strategies (including part-time training and distance education) are being adopted to ensure that women with less formal training, but with valuable skills and experience, are not excluded from the field, particularly as more rigorous and higher level training become the norm. Denmark, for example, takes a relatively mature intake of students and places weight on prior work experience, giving opportunities for those who did not excel at school. The diversification of routes into the profession also can be a useful step toward increasing training opportunities and career mobility. In Sweden, there are conceptual and practical links which enable trained childcare assistants to enrol in the university training and receive credit for prior experience. Such strategies are particularly important for countries that have recently raised qualifications (e.g., Italy, Portugal) and are seeking to reconcile tensions between those in the field with a lower-level of training and their newly entering university-educated counterparts.

The challenges of attracting a diverse workforce

175. As the population of children become more diverse, recruiting employees to match this diversity has become a priority in many countries. Countries face the challenge that as the requirements for formal qualifications to work in ECEC increase, the diversity of backgrounds of staff decreases. Data from the US, for example, indicates that family day care providers do match the children they serve in terms of ethnic and linguistic background, out-of-school provision is more diversely staffed than centres, and centres are more diverse than public schools. Again, this supports the need for open entry to the field supported by a flexible, modular career structure. A basic tenet of the Head Start programme is to employ parents and volunteers from the local community. Many complete the Child Development Associate (CDA) qualification³³ and work in centres after their children have 'graduated.' In the Netherlands and Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), paraprofessional, ethnic minority parents have been employed to take part in early childhood programmes as bridge staff with the local community. There are some concerns that the involvement of paraprofessionals, who by definition have lower training than regular staff members, can lower the status of the work and jeopardise quality of provision. However, if well-supported through in-service training and mentoring, this strategy can enrich the lives of young children, regardless of their background, improve women's self-esteem and provide opportunities for them to pursue other training employment. (The trade-off is the turnover as women leave for higher-paid, better status positions).

176. Several countries (e.g., Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, UK) recruit staff of immigrant backgrounds, some of whom are trained teachers from their home countries, to work in ECEC as bilingual assistants to help maintain children's home languages and facilitate communication with parents. In Australia, it has been a great challenge to recruit and train staff from indigenous backgrounds to the early childhood field, because of the geographic isolation and limited literacy skills of many of the students. The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Northern Territory) has played a very important role in developing and delivering early childhood courses to Aboriginal students and for providing community development support for local communities wishing to develop ECEC programmes. Across countries, it seems that if training for diverse students and diverse communities is to be successful and relevant it needs to acknowledge the particular context of each community, as well as appreciate variations in cultural values and skills involving children and child rearing practices.

³³ The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a national competency-based credential that was developed in 1971 for Head Start workers and has become known and accessible to workers in licensed centres and family day care. The CDA usually represents about half a two-year degree and may be applied toward post-secondary degree programmes in some states.

Gender issues: Why are there so many women and so few men?

177. In all countries, ECEC work is highly gender segregated, beginning with student intakes. Why are there so many women and so few men working in early childhood? In some countries, the low levels of training, status, and pay of ECEC staff, particularly those working with infants and toddlers may be reinforced by public views that ECEC is 'women's work' rather than a skilled occupation. Yet, the issue of recruiting men is more not only linked to low pay and conditions, since there are very few men even in countries with relatively higher pay and conditions. Some countries view the feminisation of the sector as a concern, while others fear that opening up the ECEC profession to men may threaten an area of employment where women traditionally have had more influence. With the expansion of services, it should be possible to increase male involvement in the field without jeopardising women's employment opportunities.

178. A few countries have sought to challenge traditional gender roles and patterns of employment in ECEC, with some success. For example, Denmark has worked to recruit males into the profession in recent years, and, 25% of Danish *paedagoger* students are now male. In Norway, where currently 5% of trained staff and 7% of all staff are men, the government set a target to attain 20% male staff in ECEC by 2000 (see Box 3.10). As part of the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs plan to seek a more gender-mixed workforce, a regulation on positive discrimination in favour of male applicants for ECEC positions has been introduced. The public commitment found in Denmark and Norway reflects a political view that men need to take an increased role with children for two reasons: gender equality (with men needing to assume more responsibility for children as women take a fuller part in the labour market); and the right of children to meet both men and women. In other countries (e.g., UK and USA), the discourse has focused more on concerns about child abuse than on the consequences for children, parents, and early childhood workers – and society – of men as carers. Clearly, the risk of child maltreatment and abuse is not to be taken lightly, however, Cameron et al. (1998) have argued that it should be tackled separately from the issue of roles of men as carers.

Box 3.10 Men as Workers in Services for Young Children in Norway

During the 1990s, the Norwegian government committed itself to recruit more men into the early childhood field. Various measures were taken to support the commitment, including conferences, the development of a network of male workers and the preparation of documents and videos to stimulate discussion. The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, responsible for ECEC policy in Norway, made a report *Men in barnehager (kindergartens) and male care* -that gives a summary of available research on the topic. In 1997, it published its programme of action: *The barnehage: a place in which to work for men and women – the Ministry’s initiatives, 1997-2000*. The goal of the programme was to have 20% of male workers in early childhood services by the year 2000. Most recently, in July 1998, it was agreed that within the Gender Equality Act, positive action could be applied to the recruitment of men in ECEC, the first time that positive action had been applied to men.

For a number of reasons, – including unresolved issues of pay, status and overall recruitment to early childhood teaching – the programme of action has not yet reached its goal. However by its commitment and work, Norway has made the issue of gender in early childhood visible a matter of discussion. It has approached it from the perspective of the child’s need for both men and women, and with a desire to avoid the stereotyping of child rearing as “women’s work”:

Children need to associate with both men and women in day care. Since the great majority of children in due course are likely to attend day care, it is worrying from a gender-equality perspective that the day care seem set to remain a women’s environment. A broad awareness of this is needed, both on the part of staff and authorities (Norwegian Background Report)

Some countries do not allow men near young children, as male workers are seen as a potential source of abuse. Norway, like other countries, requires police records for all males working with young children. Safeguards too can be built into the routines of early childhood centres, e.g. the witness strategy, which requires that a woman is always present when a male worker changes a child. But the issues go beyond the ‘danger discourse.’ In societies today, a male presence can no longer be taken for granted in the child’s world. An increasing number of homes have no resident father, and both ECEC and the school have also become feminised environments. Yet, in their early years, children benefit from having realistic male and female role models. It is important also for the work of an early childhood centre that men should be staff members, as there is a difference in male and female caring or pedagogy. Without over-generalising roles, men in a centre will tend to organise many outdoor activities, important for the health and inner development of children. This relates to a wider Nordic discussion of ‘gender pedagogy,’ that is, the need to keep the gender composition of the group in mind when offering programmes or activities to children.

There are other related and unresolved issues in this debate e.g., the need to model the current world in ECEC, not only the mix of male and female, but also the multicultural balance of our societies. There is also the issue of status and remuneration. No matter how imaginative recruitment policies may be, it is unlikely that they will have much success in the long-term unless societies are willing to pay staff a respectable wage.

Staffing issues in family day care

179. The preceding discussion has focused on training for centre-based staff, which is high on the agenda in most countries. In contrast, training for providers of family day care has received very little attention (Karlsson, 1995). The levels of education and training of family day care providers are well below those found among centre-based staff. Most have no training to work with young children, although providing access to specialised training courses can help raise qualifications. Municipalities in Sweden offer a 50-100 hour introductory class for family day care providers. In 1998, 72% of family day care providers in Sweden were trained to work with children, meaning they had completed either this class or a

family day care certificate. In many nations, family day care providers are exempt from all pre-service training/education requirements, but this may vary according to the extent to which providers are employed within organised and publicly-funded schemes or networks (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden) or operate as independent and self-employed providers (e.g., UK, USA). In some countries, there are incentives for self-employed providers to complete training, as in the UK where most publicly-funded childminders are required to complete a pre-service vocational qualification. When workers are linked to a scheme, they are more likely to receive continuous training, technical assistance, and financial support.

180. Several countries have provided incentives to ensure that family day care is regulated and supervised. In the Netherlands, providers must be part of a publicly-funded licensed scheme in order for parents and employers to be eligible for tax benefits. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, registration is obligatory for all family day carers, regardless of whether or not they receive public subsidies, and the system of tax relief for childcare requires parents to use only registered providers. As a result of such incentives, few parents use unregistered private providers. Across countries, family day care providers have limited possibility of moving into other forms of early childhood work or into accredited training programmes. Despite the large numbers of children in home-based organised provision, family day care providers are not recognised as professionals with the same status, benefits, and rights to training as staff working in other forms of ECEC. This may change, however, as the family day care sector is under the same recruitment pressures as other forms of informal and formal ECEC, and many countries report difficulties in finding and retaining providers. Finally, it is surprising that supervisors tend to be either social workers or pre-school teachers and rarely have personal experience in the job. This raises the issue of whether training needs of family child care providers are the same as workers in centre-based services, or whether their circumstances and ways of working are fundamentally different.

Table 3.1. Overview of trained staff in centre-based ECEC

	Main type of staff	Initial training	Age range covered	Main field of work	Work in primary?
AUS#	Teacher	3-4 yrs university	0-5	Preschools	No
	Child care worker	2 yr post-18 to 4 yr univ	0-5	Long day care	No
BEL-CF	<i>Institutrice de maternelle</i>	3 yrs pedagogical higher education	2.5-6	<i>École maternelle</i>	Yes
	<i>Puéricultrice</i>	3 yrs post-16 vocational secondary	0-3	<i>Crèches</i> (or assistant in <i>école maternelle</i>)	No
BEL-FL	<i>Kleuterleidster</i>	3 yrs pedagogical higher education	2.5-6	<i>Kleuterschool</i>	Yes
	<i>Kinderverzorgster</i>	3 yrs post-16 voc secondary	0-3	<i>Kinderdagverblijf</i>	No
CZE	Kindergarten teacher	4 yrs second voc. or voc. higher ed or university	3-6	<i>Mateřská škola</i>	No
	Child nurse	3 yr higher vocational	0-3	<i>Creche</i>	No
DNK	<i>Paedagog*</i>	3.5 yrs vocational higher education (depending on prior exp)	0-100	Educational, Social care, special needs institutions (including day care)	Yes - with 6 yrs and in teams with 6-9 yr olds
FIN	<i>Lastentarhanopettaja*</i> (<i>Sosiaalikasvattaja</i>)	3-4.5 yrs university or 3.5 yrs polytechnic	0-7	<i>6-vuotiaiden esiopetus</i> <i>Päiväkoti</i>	Yes - with 6 yrs
	<i>Lähihoitaja</i>	3 yrs sec. vocational	0-7	<i>Avoin päiväkoti</i>	No
ITA	<i>Insegnante di scuola materna</i>	4 yrs university	3-6	<i>Scuola materna</i>	No
	<i>Educatrice</i>	Sec. voc. diploma	0-3	<i>Asili nido</i>	No
NLD	<i>Leraar basisonderwij</i>	4 yrs voc. higher ed. (PABO)	4-12	<i>Basischool</i>	Yes
	<i>Leidster kinder centra</i>	MBO (3 yrs) or HBO (4 yrs)	0-4	<i>Kinderopvang</i> <i>Buitenschoolse opvang</i> <i>Peuterspeelzaal</i>	No
NOR	<i>Pedagogiske ledere*</i>	3 yrs higher ed. at state colleges	0-7	<i>Barnehager</i> <i>SFO</i>	Yes - in Grade 1 (and Grade 2-4 with 1 extra year of higher ed.)
	<i>Assistents</i>	2 yr post-16 apprentic.	0-7	<i>Grade 1 primary</i>	
PRT	<i>Educadora de infância</i>	4 yrs university or polytechnic	0-6	<i>Jardim de infância</i> <i>Creches</i> <i>ATL</i>	No
SWE	<i>Förskollärare*</i>	3 yrs university	0-7	<i>Förskoleclass</i> <i>Förskola</i>	Yes - with 6 yrs and in teams with 6-9 yr olds
	<i>Fritidspedagog*</i>	3 yrs university	0-7	<i>Oppen Förskola</i> <i>Fritidshem</i>	
UKM	Qualified teacher	4 yrs university	3-11	Reception class	Yes
	Trained nursery teacher			Nursery school/class	
USA+	Nursery nurse	2 yrs post 16 secondary	0-5?	Day nursery	
				Playgroup	
USA+	Public school teacher	4 yrs university	4-8 (0-8)	Public schools	Yes
	Head Start teacher	CDA = 2 yr higher ed	0-5	Head Start	No
	Child care teacher	1 course to 4yr univ.	0-5	Child care centre	No

Staffing varies according to the regulations of each state and territory.

* These are 'core workers' with group responsibility. They may be assisted by other workers (trained and untrained) which form the minority of the workforce in integrated ECEC systems.

+ There are wide variations in how these credentials are valued from state to state.

Table 3.1. Overview of trained staff in centre-based ECEC (continued)

	Trained staff	Men in ECEC	In-service opportunities	% primary teacher salary	Length of practicum
AUS#	?	3.3% childcare 2.3% pre-primary	Commonwealth and state funding to centres	?	
BEL-CF	c. 100%	c. 0%	Funding decentralised to schools	100%	
BEL-FL	c. 100%	c.0%	Funding decentralised to schools	100%	
CZE	95%	c. 0%	Voluntary Offered by regional centres	75%	
DNK	75%	14% 3% in pre-school class	Funding dec. to centres Min 2 days/yr	?	64 weeks
FIN	c. 100%	4%	Funding dec. to municipalities Min. 4 days/yr (not daycare staff)	81%	
ITA	?	c. 0%	Municipality or director/inspector decides	c. 100%	
NLD	c. 100%	25% in primary - few in first cycle c. 0%	Funding decentralised to municipalities	100%	
NOR	34%	7%	A plan for access is part of an agreement in the public sector	c. 88-96%	20 weeks
PRT	?	0.57%	Offered by regional teacher centres and universities to teachers in public and private sectors	One pre-school teacher per classroom	50-60 weeks
SWE	60%?	5%	Up to municipality	84%	
UKM	20%?	1% in non-school ECEC	Regular access for teachers Limited in child care	?	
USA+	?	3%	Most states require a certain # of hrs per yr	100% school 42% in childcare	

Staffing varies according to the regulations of each state and territory.

* These are 'core workers' with group responsibility. They may be assisted by other workers (trained and untrained) which form the minority of the workforce in integrated ECEC systems.

+ There are wide variations in how these credentials are valued from state to state.

3.6 Developing appropriate pedagogical frameworks for young children

Key findings

181. Developing appropriate pedagogical frameworks – general goals and guidelines for practice – for work with young children is fundamental to raising and maintaining quality across an ECEC system. Most European countries have developed national curricula or frameworks, which state the general objectives and specific aims for children. These national frameworks may cover pre-primary provision (Flemish and French Communities of Belgium; Czech Republic, Finland, Italy; Portugal; UK), infant-toddler provision (Flemish and French Communities of Belgium) or all provision for children under compulsory school age (Finland, Norway, Sweden). In Australia and the USA, there are several curricula guidelines for ECEC have been developed at the state and territory level.

- Pedagogical frameworks promote an even level of quality across age groups and provision, help guide and support professional staff in their practice, and facilitate communication between staff, parents, and children;
- There is a trend toward frameworks which cover a broad age span and diverse forms of settings to support continuity in children’s learning;
- For the most part, these frameworks focus broadly on children’s holistic development and well-being, rather than on narrow literacy and numeracy objectives;
- Flexible curricula developed in co-operation with staff, parents, and children, allow practitioners to experiment with different methodological and pedagogical approaches and adapt overall goals for ECEC to local needs and circumstances; and
- Successful implementation of frameworks requires investment for staff support, including in-service training and pedagogical guidance, as well as favourable structural conditions (e.g., ratios, group size, etc.).

The utility of pedagogical frameworks in guiding early childhood practice

182. Viewed from the perspective of ministerial authorities, pedagogical frameworks are important, even in the very early years when developmental aims are foremost. With trends toward decentralisation and diversification of policy and provision, there is more likely to be variation in programming at the local level. A common framework can help ensure an even level of quality across different forms of provision and for different groups of children, while allowing for adaptation to local needs and circumstances. In several countries (Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Italy, Portugal) frameworks have been developed, in part, to harmonise the general educational opportunities offered across public and private networks. A clear view and articulation of goals, whether in the health, nutrition, or the education field, can help foster programmes that will promote the well-being of young children and that will respond in time to the needs of children with disabilities or special educational needs. The interests of younger children are served too by well-defined educational projects of the ECEC settings that they attend. In infant-toddler settings with a weak pedagogical emphasis or in which the educational level of staff is low, young children may miss out on the stimulating and formative environments that are so important in the early years.

183. At the programme level, guidelines for practice in the form of a pedagogical or curriculum framework help staff to clarify their pedagogical aims, to keep progression in mind, to provide a structure for the child's day and to help focus observation on the most important aspects of child development. When educators have only a broad statement of national goals to guide them, they normally seek out more detailed texts as a framework for their monthly, weekly and daily planning. In Norway, the co-ordinating committee – consisting of staff, parents, and owners, decides the 'annual plan' for each institution, based on the national framework plan. In the French Community of Belgium, the *conseil de participation* with representatives of staff, parents, and school administration develop and evaluate the local school project. In Denmark and the Netherlands, where there is no national framework, staff develop their own curricula and often consult or use the many curricula and manuals in publication.

184. For early childhood staff, the curriculum also can be an indicator of belonging to a professional group that has recognised responsibility for the foundation stage of lifelong learning. Signs of professionalisation are particularly important for personnel looking after the younger children as they are easily perceived by parents as being unskilled. Codified pedagogical frameworks may not only strengthen the educational emphasis of the programme, but also improve the status of early childhood workers. Especially when staff have been directly involved in the development of frameworks (see Box 3.11), guidelines may legitimise good practice and encourage further reflection and improvement, though there is a need to provide staff with ongoing training and professional development opportunities. A curriculum framework can provide opportunities for staff to communicate with parents in order to articulate and discuss the goals and methods of activities taking place in the ECEC setting. Guided by common goals, staff and parents can work together to support the development and learning of individual children.

What age group should pedagogical frameworks cover?

185. In education systems in the past, it was assumed that pedagogical aims applied only to the age group three to six years. Contemporary research on early learning would question this assumption. Learning occurs, and can be supported, from the earliest age, as affirmed by the statement from the Jomtien World Conference of Education For All, 1990, "learning begins at birth." What was seen almost exclusively as a care period is now recognised as an important moment in the human life cycle for brain, cognitive and social development (Lindsey, 1998). The period is gradually becoming a focus for education in the broad sense, as the realisation grows that from birth, children have entered the foundation stage of lifelong education. How early childhood services for the younger children are structured and conducted has become therefore an important public policy issue, especially as research suggests that low-quality early childhood services are actually harmful for young children (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000).

186. For these reasons, many countries are moving toward establishing pedagogical frameworks that include children under three. In the French Community of Belgium, for example, ONÉ (National Office for Children) has developed the official *Quality Code for care and its implementation (Le Code de qualité de l'accueil et son application)* described by the Minister as being "like the frame that holds the artist's canvas, a support through which every setting should develop its own project." The ONÉ has also put into place an intensive system of external quality assurance to support the framework. As a group, younger children need this attention most, as those who attend ECEC centres receive less care and interaction than children over three (Bühler Institute, 1994). A pedagogical framework can improve the educational-focus of ECEC settings for this age group. Indeed, practice in many countries (e.g., Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Finland, Norway, Sweden) is tending toward an integrated pedagogical approach for children from birth (or age 30 months in the case of Belgium) to eight years. As we will explore next, the policy trend is toward treating the early childhood years as an age-integrated period from birth to eight years and establishing links with other stages of education to provide pedagogical continuity for children.

How do frameworks ensure pedagogical continuity from ECEC to school?

187. In addition to broadening the focus of pedagogical frameworks to include children under three, many countries are making efforts to strengthen the conceptual links across age groups and settings. Particular attention has been accorded to promote continuity in children's learning when they make the transition from ECEC to primary school. For example:

- The French Community of Belgium has organised early schooling around three 'cycles of learning,' the first two covering the age ranges from 30 months to five and from five to seven. These cycles reinforce the structural and pedagogical links between pre-primary and primary education and enable the teaching team to better adapt their teaching methods to the rhythm and progress of each child. One of the goals is to assure that all children have access to the *socles de compétences* (basic competencies) necessary for their social integration and for the pursuit of their further education. Developmental goals as well as competency goals related to numeracy, scientific enquiry and language are integrated into the curriculum.
- In Australia, a number of states and territories are developing curricular strategies to improve children's transitions. As an example, the new *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability* (SACSA) Framework covers children from birth to 18 across diverse school and non-school settings. With regard to children in the early years, the framework is divided into age ranges of birth to three, three to five, and five to eight. The goal is to build a seamless system of learning in terms of curriculum but also in terms of services. Transitions and continuity are key themes throughout the SACSA Framework.
- Sweden has developed three curricula for pre-school, compulsory school, and upper-secondary school that are conceptually linked by a coherent view of knowledge, development and learning.³⁴ The goal is to promote an educational continuum for children *from birth through the first 20 years of lifelong learning*, guided by the same fundamental values: democracy, the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, gender equality, solidarity with the weak and vulnerable, and respect for the environment. Goals and objectives for children under six are specified, but pre-school and school staff are responsible for fostering the conditions and opportunities for children's learning.

188. Most recently, Finland has produced a framework to bridge children's learning from the last year of ECEC to the first years of primary school, and one for children under six is also under development. All these approaches help improve the conceptual and pedagogical links between ECEC and schools and promote increased continuity for children over the years. There is some concern about the dangers of a 'downward push' from formal schooling when early childhood frameworks are linked with curricula for older age groups. On the other hand, as pre-school and primary school staff increasingly collaborate around curricular issues, they may develop new ways of understanding children's learning across a wide age span. This process can contribute to a synergy of cultures: schools can foster a more child-centred perspective and ECEC services have the chance to work more collaboratively with the schools to strengthen children's continuum of learning.

³⁴ The three curricula cover: (1) centre-based pre-schools (förskola) for children from birth to six; (2) compulsory schooling [grades 1-9], the voluntary pre-school class (förskoleklass) for six-year-olds, and leisure-time centres (fritidshem) for children from six to 12; and (3) upper secondary school [grades 10-12]. The National Agency for Education is working on guidelines, based on the same values, for other forms of ECEC (e.g., family day care).

What are the goals in existing early childhood frameworks?

189. In all countries, governments and the ministries responsible for early childhood institutions define very *general goals or outcomes* that early childhood services must ensure for young children. According to Eurostat (1999), these goals are “fairly similar in all countries: development, autonomy, responsibility, well-being, self-confidence, citizenship, preparation for school life and future education.” Most documents make at least some reference to the importance of facilitating children’s transitions and the need for collaboration between ECEC, and the schools. Co-operation with families is another common goal. In all countries, *goals in specific developmental areas* are also proposed in the official documents: e.g. physical development; socio-emotional development; the development of intellectual skills; the development of aesthetics and creativity; a positive relationship toward the environment. Many countries identify skills to be acquired by children in these domains.

190. Several countries propose, in addition, *subject and learning areas* for children, areas in which pre-school education is expected to foster the acquisition of knowledge, e.g. written and oral language; mathematics; introduction to art; introduction to science and/or the environment, physical education; etc. Many of these countries (Belgium (Flemish and French Communities),³⁵ the Netherlands, UK, USA) also define skills that children should have mastered prior to beginning compulsory schooling. Cognitive skills (comparing, sorting, matching, sequencing, counting, literacy, etc.) predominate and knowledge items of the subject being considered can also be included. Many countries also include values education, either religious (e.g., Finland, Italy, Norway) or civic democracy (e.g., the Czech Republic, Sweden) or both.

191. Beyond these broad goals and learning areas, significant differences exist between countries – and within countries – in terms of how ECEC is conceptualised, and hence, in the emphasis of the frameworks developed for children. In Italy, for example, although programmes are highly oriented toward learning, the approach emphasises the autonomy and self-direction of children. Similarly, in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden, emphasis is placed on holistic child development, on providing a caring and stimulating environment, on children’s play, learning, theme activities and social outcomes. The motivation to improve school effectiveness exists, but a reading of the *Norwegian National Framework Plan* for ECEC underlines that the rationale for public funding of early childhood services stems as much from the wider needs of children and the overall project of Norwegian society, as from the desire to ensure an easy transition for children from *barnehage* to primary school.³⁶

192. In several countries (Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands, UK) education-based ECEC (from three or four years of age) is considered as the initial stage of the educational system, as well as the beginning of organised instruction. Programmes tend to be more formal, and organised according to a school-model, with children grouped according to age and relatively high child-staff ratios. As the daily routine is fairly structured, and teachers spend a great deal of time preparing, selecting and organising activities, there seems to be less emphasis children’s self-initiative. Quality control through registration, regulation, inspection, and curriculum is customary. In order to prepare children for school, discipline-based knowledge is stressed toward the end of the cycle. In Australia and the United States, the expansion of early childhood services is taking place primarily through the expansion of pre-school or pre-kindergarten for four-year-olds. As in the pre-primary tradition in Europe, these programmes are seen primarily as instruments to provide equality of educational opportunities for

³⁵ There is a growing tendency in the Flemish Community, especially in the EXE programme, to define skills in terms of learning dispositions, e.g. involvement, curiosity and desire to learn; perseverance with tasks, trust, ability and confidence to communicate.

³⁶ There are some basic differences between curricula in the Nordic countries. See for example, Alvestad and Pramling, (2000).

children and to improve the effectiveness of the education system. As most of these programmes are staffed by early childhood specialists, there also is a clear focus on children's social and emotional development and on relations with families and the wider community.

How do countries approach early literacy and numeracy?

193. Countries also have developed different approaches to the issue of setting goals in the area of early literacy and numeracy. Most countries in the review have adopted an emergent literacy approach. The emergent literacy approach follows the interests of children, but encourages (play-) reading, (play-) writing, counting, scientific theory and numbers as they arise naturally from the normal interests of children. The child's environment is enriched by symbols and literacy materials – drawings, photos, signs, books, writing materials, communication resources, etc. – but little attempt is made before the year immediately preceding entry to primary school to approach literacy or numeracy in a formal manner or to evaluate children's progress in these areas. This conception of literacy is found, for example, in the *Orientamenti*, or official guidelines governing the *scuola materna* system for 3-6 year-olds in Italy, in which the domains of reading, writing and measuring are incorporated into the broader perspective of communication and symbol systems. This is also the dominant approach in Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden.

194. A second approach – most common in Australia, the UK, and the USA – places more emphasis on instruction and assessment of literacy and numeracy in the early years to ensure that children will develop mastery of these important skills before beginning primary schooling. In England, the new Foundation Stage includes children from the age of three to the end of their reception year (around age five). The accompanying guidelines for practitioners cover the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills as well as more subject based areas of learning. *Early Learning Goals* set out what *most* children should be able to do by the end of the reception year and include quite detailed outcomes, for example, in the areas of literacy (e.g., name and sound the letters of the alphabet; read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently; begin to form simple sentences using punctuation; use their phonics knowledge to write simple regular words).

195. In the USA, as well, there is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, particularly in programmes targeting children deemed at-risk of school failure. The goals and curriculum of the federally-funded Head Start programme, for example, are framed by 'performance standards' which endorse a comprehensive approach to fostering child development and school readiness, including physical health, cognitive development, social and emotional development, language development, emerging literacy and numeracy development, and creative arts. Recent legislation mandates more explicit attention to tracking and fostering children's progress on specific indicators of language and literacy development (e.g. recognising 10 letters of the alphabet). At the state level, many of the pre-kindergarten initiatives also prioritise the development of literacy and numeracy skills to ensure that children are prepared for primary school.

196. Whilst in practice these two approaches seem to have much in common, they do highlight an important, and unresolved, debate about appropriate ways to use the early childhood services to strengthen lifelong learning.

What are the keys to successful implementation of pedagogical frameworks?

197. Contemporary research tends to show that flexible curricula, built on inputs from children, teachers and parents, are more suitable in early childhood than detailed, expert-driven curricula. Recent research suggests that curriculum for ECEC should be: broad and holistic with a greater emphasis on developmental goals rather than on subject outcomes (Bredenkamp, 1997); more process-related and co-constructive (Moss, 1996); defined by the vital interests and needs of the children, families and community (Carr and May, 1992); and more in tune with socio-cultural reality (Woodhead, 1999). This suggests the need for flexibility and freedom for adaptation and experimentation.

198. For the most part, pedagogical frameworks adopted by national, state, or local governments provide the main values base and pedagogical orientations for early childhood centres, but do not enter into detail as to how goals should be achieved. They stress multiple aspects of the child's development, including cognitive development. The well-being of children and their holistic development, guided by the values set by society, also emerge as the major concerns. Ministries and municipalities normally rely on the staff and parents of each centre to work out their own educational vision, objectives, pedagogical methods and daily routines, guided by the national framework, and the curriculum or directives of the local authority. This allows for an individual settings and practitioners to experiment with a range of pedagogical approaches or curriculum models (e.g., Experiential Education, High/Scope, Montessori, Modern School Movement). A few countries (e.g., Australia, Belgium, UK, USA) focus more explicitly on areas or competencies that children should acquire prior to entering school, and subject categories are presented in detail with examples of activities. In practice, however, significant autonomy is often left to ECEC staff to adapt frameworks to the specific needs and circumstances of children and families in their communities. Indeed, a more proactive policy to encourage staff to adapt the curriculum to children's needs might lead to greater creativity and child initiative.

199. While local adaptation and variation are welcome, there are risks that without guidance and careful monitoring the intentions of the goals may be misinterpreted, particularly by staff with low levels of initial training. There is a risk that a model which is 'too formal, too soon' will be adopted, which can be particularly difficult for those outside cultural norms and for late developers who can quickly acquire notions of failure. In-service training provides a valuable opportunity for staff to become familiar with frameworks and guidelines and with approaches to successfully use them in the classroom. There is also a need for professional development and non-contact time to support staff in the ongoing planning and evaluation of their work. What is needed most of all, perhaps, is to improve structural aspects such as initial training and professional development, staff-child ratios, and pedagogical advising to provide the most favourable conditions for children's learning and development. Moreover, as governments move toward a more consumer-oriented approach to policymaking, greater statutory participation of parents in setting the vision and curriculum of each centre can also be effective and allow greater variety and choice of programmes for children in accordance with national or local goals.

Box 3.11 Portugal: Providing Curricular Guidance

In order to address the isolation of many pre-school teachers, their lack of in-service training and the sharp divide between early services and the primary school, the Department for Basic Education decided to introduce a curriculum framework to raise the pedagogical quality of the *jardims de infância* (kindergartens for three- to six-year-olds). After preliminary consultations with a range of stakeholders, it was decided that the new curriculum would take as a premise that ECEC should be seen as the first phase of lifelong learning. Viewed as such, the curriculum guidelines would focus on learning, and attempt to incorporate innovative approaches in the pedagogical activities of the kindergartens. The curriculum would have to strike a balance between expert knowledge and existing professional capacity; between adult responsibilities and a statement of outcomes for children; between having a common reference point for all teachers and their freedom to adopt diverse educational programmes.

The official publication of the *Curricular Guidelines for Pre-School Education* in 1996² was preceded by a long discussion process involving the preparation of three drafts. The first draft was analysed by “institutional partners” i.e. Regional Directorates for Education, Inspector-General of Education, Initial Teacher Training Schools, Teachers’ Association, Teachers’ Union, Association of Private Education Providers (Private Sector, IPSS, Misericórdias) and Parent Associations. A second draft was produced based on comments received from the institutional partners and was distributed among groups of pre-school teachers for trialing and comment. Teachers were asked to apply the proposed guidelines in their contexts prior to expressing their views. Some groups met informally to discuss the guidelines, while other groups participated in the *Círculos de Estudos* (Study Groups) as a type of continuous training aimed at preparing teachers to question and introduce change in their professional approaches. Comments from teachers were incorporated in the draft and the final version of the Curricular Guidelines was prepared.

The Curricular Guidelines are not a programme. They call on teachers, however, to observe certain fundamental principles or practices, such as:

- Children’s development and learning are concurrent;
- Children are the subjects of the educational process, therefore their knowledge should be valued and serve as the starting point for the acquisition of new knowledge;
- Learning is interrelated and should not be divided for young children into separate areas;
- Children’s questions should be answered.

Teachers in the *jardims* should know and take into account i) The general objectives stated in the Framework Law of Pre-School Education. ii) How educational environments should be organised so as to support the child’s learning and the teacher’s programme; iii) To focus on certain content areas so that a body of common knowledge can be built up, e.g. *personal and social development; expression and communication* (including the use of language and mathematics); *knowledge of the world*. The curriculum suggests that there should also be *educational continuity*, or the understanding that teachers should take as a starting point what the children already know and create the conditions for the successful continuation of learning. *Educational intentionality* is also stressed, that programming should stem from the teacher’s own observations and self-evaluation, leading to a continual adaptation to children’s needs.

The planning of each centre’s education programme should be understood as a joint activity of the teaching team with the participation of the children, parents and the community. Evaluation of the programme and its implementation would take place regularly through self- and team-evaluations by teachers, supported externally by government inspection teams and the kindergarten board.

3.7 Engaging parents, families, and communities in early childhood education and care

Key points

200. The arguments for engaging parents and families in early education and care are strong. Normally, a parent or parents play the central role in the young child's life and provide the interaction required for personal, social and educational development. They are the first and primary educators of children, and despite some decline in both nuclear and extended family forms, their formative influence on young children remains central. Educating young children requires partnership with parents, which implies a two-way process of knowledge and information flowing freely both ways (ECEC, 1998). After children themselves, parents are the first experts on their children, and can much assist programme staff to tailor programmes to the needs of particular children or particular groups. This section will explore why countries are supporting parent engagement and provide some examples of strong engagement in the countries in the review. Although mostly focusing on parents, some attention is devoted to opportunities to engage other members of families and the wider community in children's early development and learning.

- Parent engagement seeks to (a) build on parents' unique knowledge about their children (b) promote positive attitudes and behaviour toward children's learning; (c) provide parents with information and referrals to other services; (d) support parent and community empowerment;
- The extent to which parents are engaged in their children's ECEC varies on a continuum from marginal engagement to full participatory and managerial engagement. Several formal and informal mechanisms foster strong parental, family, and community engagement; and
- Some of the challenges to strong engagement include, cultural, attitudinal, linguistic, and logistical barriers (i.e., lack of time). It is particularly difficult to ensure representation and participation from across families from diverse backgrounds.

What is the rationale for engaging parents in ECEC?

201. Parental engagement is not an attempt to teach parents to be "involved" (they already are) or to hold them solely responsible for difficulties a child may have. In democratic ECEC institutions, the approach of professionals is to share responsibility for young children with parents, and learn from the unique knowledge that parents from diverse backgrounds can contribute. In many countries, for example, parents have a statutory right to be involved in planning and evaluation activities, and even in the direct management of services. Public policy in most countries requires ECEC provision – school-based, centre-based and family day care – to welcome the participation of parents of young children. Especially in the mornings and evenings, parents are encouraged to stay with their children for half an hour or so, to look after their needs, read to them, or to discuss their opinions and concerns with staff. Strong parent engagement benefits both parents and their children. Research in New Zealand has found that parents involved in early childhood programmes experience enhanced relationships with their children, alleviation of maternal stress, upgrading of education or training credentials, and improved employment status (Wylie, 1994). Studies in Ireland and Turkey shows that parents, especially from minority and low-income backgrounds, report improved self-confidence and better relationships with their children, when they are involved as valued partners in ECEC (Kagitcibasi & Bekman, 1991; O'Flaherty, 1995).

202. Countries participating in the review have recognised the important role of ECEC settings in supporting parents in their childrearing responsibilities and promoting positive attitudes among parents toward children's learning, e.g. the home-visiting programmes in Denmark, the Netherlands and the USA that encourage parents to read with their children and to become involved in learning tasks for which children need support. These home-visiting programmes are found also to be effective in raising the participation rates of children from disadvantaged groups in ECEC and in heightening awareness among parents of how important their support is for their children's learning. In particular, collaboration between professionals and parents of children with special needs enhances programme planning, and reinforces the energy and optimism needed to conduct the intensive, individual learning programmes that children with special needs require. To that end, new legislation in the USA has improved parental engagement in their children's special education by giving parents the right to be included in eligibility and placement decisions about their children, as well as in discussions about their children's individualised educational plan (IEP) or individualised family services plan (IFSP).

203. Early childhood settings also can support families by providing links to parenting education, continuing education and adult literacy, and allow parents to resume their own education or develop new creative or social interests. In addition, ECEC programmes can provide parents and families with formal and informal opportunities to develop social support networks and ties with other families and members of the community (see Box 3.12). ECEC institutions may play a role in community building by bringing members of a community together toward the goal of meeting the needs of young children and their families. ECEC programmes may engage community members in programmes in a variety of ways (e.g., as teachers, volunteers, fund-raisers) and provide a public space where community members can gather. ECEC may also provide direct services to community members or act as a hub for referrals. Community involvement linked to ECEC can contribute to the empowering process, leading to change in other areas, such as health, environment, or employment, as we have seen in initiatives involving immigrant communities e.g., in Belgium (French Community), the Netherlands, and Sweden. In this way, ECEC can strengthen social cohesion and social support that benefit individual families and society as a whole. In recognition of the importance of the role of families and communities in building and providing social support, as well as the value of developing "social coalitions" between families, communities, governments, and the corporate sector, Australia recently launched the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, which will expand parenting development programmes and playgroups in rural areas and help families with children with special needs to access ECEC.

Box 3.12 Family and Community Engagement in Two Italian Municipalities

Pistoia: Long interested in the relationship between the needs of young children and the community as a whole, Pistoia has now expanded its ECEC provision beyond the *scuola dell'infanzia* and *asili nido* to include a network of psycho-educational services. In 1987, the municipal government initiated this system of services in the form of special places for children with and without their parents as a part of a larger set of resources and services for children of all ages. A major rationale for the resulting *area bambini* [children's centres] is to provide a form of child and family support for those families not in need of full-time child care. Grandparents and parents can attend various enrichment activities with and without their young children, such that the centres serve as a form of community meeting place for adults as well as a source of play and experimentation for children. Researchers in Pistoia have focused on spatial and environmental influences on infants and toddlers and on fostering early child-child interaction. These children's centres also serve as after-school environments for school-age children and educational resource centres for teachers of the city's elementary schools and the state and municipal *scuole materne*.

Milano: Yet another form of *nuovo tipologie* [new typology services] can be found in Milano. Milano's first *Tempo per la famiglie* [Time for the Family] was opened in 1986, and the city now has 12 such family-child centres. Distinct in purpose from that of the *nido*, the *Tempo per la famiglie* was designed as a flexible and informal service revolving around the needs of families with children three years and under, offering both children and their parents a caring environment that supports social experiences as well as learning opportunities. These municipal services were developed for several purposes particular to the changing demographics of Milan. As an alternative to the traditional *nido*, it includes the provision of a space where parents and professionals can interact around the care and development of the young child. Another equally important goal in Milano is that of connecting families of young children with one another, particularly those whose parents are young, culturally or linguistically diverse and/or socially isolated. Like Pistoia's *area bambini*, Milano's system of *Tempo per la famiglie* represent only one type of service in addition to the municipally supported *asilo nido* and *scuola materna*.

204. For these reasons, policy and practice in all countries in the thematic review, attempt to strengthen the relationships between staff, families, and members of the community. In fact, as discussed in section 3.2, parental satisfaction is often viewed as a measure of quality of early childhood services. In the Czech Republic, for example, throughout the education system – including the kindergartens – attitudes are changing toward becoming more welcoming of parents. Parent involvement as partners in their children's education is considered a high priority and an essential element toward rebuilding educational institutions as more open and democratic settings.

205. Ambiguities about the role of parents sometimes arise when parents are obliged to take the lead in providing voluntary services because public services are either absent or insufficient, e.g. in organising out-of-school provision for children (ENSAC, 1994). Effective parental engagement does not mean that parents should substitute for professionals or professional services. In parent-sponsored ECEC in Norway and Sweden, for example, parents may volunteer their time and expertise in various ways. These services, however, must meet the same requirements as public institutions in terms of staffing, programme planning, evaluation, and fees. A second ambiguity stems from the perception that almost anybody can substitute for a parent or professional in looking after young children. Ministries may see "childcare" as an opportunity to develop social employment schemes in which lowly-educated persons are employed, at a low cost, to work directly with young children. Social employment schemes can contribute to the ECEC sector, if untrained personnel are hired to perform non-contact tasks or if training is offered to persons who wish to work directly with young children. In several schemes in the Netherlands, for example, staff from

immigrant backgrounds who are trained and fairly paid to work alongside the other ECEC professionals help facilitate communication and understanding among children, families, and other staff members.

How can ECEC policy contribute to strong parent engagement?

206. While policies with regard to parent involvement are present in all countries, the degree of engagement may vary along a continuum as follows:

207. ***Marginal engagement:*** *Marginal engagement* occurs when policy concerning parent involvement is considered unimportant, and official regulations, which exist in all participating countries, are observed only minimally. In such circumstances, centres may turn to selected parents as a source of extra funding or of help in extra-curricular activities, but no great effort is made by early childhood institutions to engage in regular dialogue with parents.

208. ***Formal engagement:*** *Formal engagement* is undertaken in compliance with official directives or regulation. Organised by the ECEC centre or pre-primary school, it may take the form of regular staff-parent meetings and even home visits from teachers (e.g., the Netherlands, USA), at which parents are informed of their child's progress and about the goals and objectives of the programme. Parents also have the opportunity to inform staff about the particular strengths and needs of their children. In the participating countries, there are many different forms including school boards, pedagogical councils, class councils, parent-teacher associations, etc. Formal engagement may also involve regular consultation of parent organisation. In the Netherlands and Portugal, parent associations are among the privileged partners in the formulation of national educational policies, including those concerning ECEC. The efficacy of formal engagement depends greatly on the comprehensiveness of the regulations and on the importance given to dialogue by parents, their representatives and professional staff. A challenge in almost all countries is that middle-class parents tend to predominate on school boards or other formal bodies, while families from more modest backgrounds are under-represented.

209. Formal engagement can also include mechanisms to provide regular provision of information to parents on available ECEC options and to support them in their roles as consumers. In the USA, there are over 600 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), which are important agencies for making the market visible for consumers, by maintaining a data bank on ECEC services in the region. They focus mainly on structural dimensions of the various programmes (opening hours, adult/child ratios, etc.) and do not to make value judgements about provision. Other core services of the CCR&Rs include parent education about available ECEC facilities, provider training, local networking and advocacy, work with employers, and efforts to build the supply of provision. The UK Childcare Information Services (CIS) – local information centres for parents linked to a national network – and the Australian Childcare Access Hotline – a toll free number to parents to call when they need information on Commonwealth-funded childcare services in their area – are similar initiatives.

210. ***Informal, organised engagement:*** *Informal, organised engagement* is frequent, varied and planned. Typically, informal consultations between parents and staff take place at the morning reception of the child or at the evening pick-up, when parents are welcomed and time is provided in the centre's programme for parents to talk with staff or remain with their children for a period. In these sessions, teachers inform parents about the child's experiences in the centre and listen to the expectations and concerns of parents, especially those who need support. Informal morning and evening activities are organised jointly, so that ideas of both parties contribute to the vision and work of the centre. Research conducted in Australia and Norway suggests that 'informal' briefing chats or sessions by staff are much welcomed by parents. While the frequency of contact through formal channels such as staff meetings, parents' meetings and thematic meetings appears to have just a small effect on the parents' general level of

satisfaction, ongoing verbal information on their own children has a much stronger positive impact. These informal opportunities to communicate with parents are especially important as many parents are working and have little time to devote to meetings. Informal opportunities may help engage and empower parents who are relatively inarticulate and unused to the protocol of meetings.

211. **Participatory engagement:** *Participatory engagement* occurs when parents of different backgrounds, as well as other members of the community, are invited, on a regular basis, to interact with staff and children and take an active part in the programmes of the setting. As a matter of course, parents are consulted as a group on all matters of concern to the programme. Efforts are made to have as wide a range of parents as possible to contribute to the life of the institutions – by participating in activities, assisting directly with young children, or leading activities in which they excel. In participatory engagement, parents may take part in outside trips, help with the upkeep and renovation of facilities and grounds, and contribute to cultural activities around national holidays and celebrations, linguistic or religious matters. Participatory engagement may be formalised, e.g. through school-home contracts and agreements as in Italy or Finland, or may be a requirement to access special funding, as for example, the *Zorgverbreding* programme in the Flemish Community of Belgium, or *Sure Start* in the UK. The US Head Start programme mandates the development of volunteer programmes to support services. The participation of volunteers – parents, local residents, and members of the larger community – has been an effective way of mobilising community resources to strengthen services. Volunteers help lower adult-child ratios, meet the need for bilingual adults for non-English speaking children and parents, and support children with disabilities. Moreover, 29% of paid staff are parents of current or former Head Start children.

212. Policies in support of participatory engagement may help foster strong parent-child-staff relationships. As an example, many Italian labour laws, as well as regional and local policies now mandate parental leave to assist the child and the family during the delicate transition (*l'inserimento*) from the home to out-of-home setting. Diverse interpretations range from inviting parents to accompany the child during his or her initial transition into out-of-home care to having parents stay with their child in the centre for as long as it takes for both to feel at ease in the new setting. Similarly, in Sweden when children begin pre-school, there is a two-week adjustment period when parents spend time with their children in the centre, which not only eases the transition for the child, but helps establish a positive relationship between the parent and the ECEC setting.

213. **Managerial engagement:** *Managerial engagement* goes beyond *formal engagement* discussed above, in its intensity of relationship and the responsibility given to parents for decision-making. Managerial engagement is found in many countries, for example, in Denmark where parents constitute a majority on kindergarten councils or, as in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the UK in parent-run co-operatives and playgroups. In centres in Norway, not only must every child centre have a *parents' council* to promote the shared interests of all the parents at management level, but also a *co-ordinating committee of parents, staff, and owners* to act as an advisory body and to ensure good relations between the *barnehage* and the local community. In the Netherlands, a parent body for 'co-steering' is required in subsidised ECEC and primary schooling so that parents have a voice in policies. In the USA, federal legislation for Head Start mandates the right of parents to participate in programme decisions; a Parent Committee and a Policy Group formed of parents and community representatives assist in decisions about the planning and operation of the Head Start programme. Thus, managerial engagement promotes parent leadership and empowerment and may be a vehicle for bringing members of the community together in the context of meeting children's comprehensive needs.

Box 3.13 Parent engagement in Finland

In Finland, as the ECEC system has developed, a shift has taken place from an emphasis on the professional autonomy of staff to closer co-operation with families. Parents are seen as important partners in designing the operation of ECEC provision, and have a right to express their opinions and be heard. ECEC centres aim to combine both the expertise of parents concerning their child and the expertise of staff developed through training and work experience. This shift toward greater appreciation of the knowledge and needs of parents has led to a number of initiatives:

The use of a written care and development contract: Several municipalities use a care and education agreement made in joint consultation between the ECEC centre and parents. The purpose of the agreement is to increase dialogue about educational objectives and attitudes, thus improving the parents' opportunities to influence. In Helsinki, the agreement was introduced in 1998, and a future objective is to introduce annual child-specific assessment discussions. *Parents' councils* also play a role in discussing or deciding the objectives and principles of the day-care centre's activities and financial management within the framework set by the municipal budget.

Individual plans or growth portfolios: The growth portfolio is a record of each child's life and growth at the centre, and is often the basis for assessment discussions with parents during and at the end of each year of activity. In addition to teacher comments and records, the child also contributes to the portfolio by entering photos, drawing and memories of significant moments. Through the portfolio, programme aims are explained to parents with the objective of mobilising parental follow-up and of achieving a shared understanding of education. Children can take their portfolio with them when they change to a new centre or school, which helps smooth their transition from one setting to the other. By law, *individual rehabilitation plans* must be prepared, in co-operation with parents, for children in need of special care and education. Centres and parents work together to support and monitor the growth and learning of these children.

The use of a regular inquiry questionnaire seeking feedback from parents. In Helsinki, an inquiry questionnaire has been used in all parts of the municipality since 1989. It seeks to establish whether there has been an appropriate 'contract' between centres and parents, and the parents' degree of satisfaction with it. It also provides an 'open-ended' section for responses on specific good or bad points about the centre. In other municipalities, groups of parents have designed surveys evaluating the quality of municipal day care and expressed their opinions on day-care issues. *Informal daily talks* when dropping off and collecting children are also important opportunities to discuss parent views on the quality of the centre and their children's development and learning.

At the national level, the Finnish Parents' Association (*Suomen Vanhempainliitto*) is the central organisation or federation of the local parents' associations throughout Finland. It consists of 1055 independent member associations and has a total membership of some 200,000 parents. It helps to establish groups, advises on their organisation and running, answers questions from parents, deals with enquiries. The Association has a strong co-operation with the teacher unions, and mobilises parent resources to promote good learning environments for children. It strives to influence national opinion on a wide range of education and care issues and supports individual parents in matters of public concern.

Challenges to strong engagement

214. Despite the range of possibilities, staff working in ECEC in many countries still find it difficult to move beyond marginal engagement of parents. Time seems to be one the largest barriers. When both parents are working or studying, it is often difficult for them to contribute effectively to the life of the early childhood setting, especially if they are coping with other life stresses. Parent engagement can be even more challenging for lone parents who carry the full burden of both work and caring responsibilities. Yet,

governments and employers can support parents in their roles as partners in their children's ECEC, for example, by allowing workers paid time off to visit, monitor, and participate in ECEC programmes. Logistical barriers – difficulties securing transportation, linguistic differences, and the length of the family's stay in the local area – may also prevent the development of strong relationships with parents. Attitudinal and cultural differences between staff and parents can also be obstacles. In particular, negative experiences from parents' own schooling may dissuade some parents from expressing their points of view on the organisation or content of the ECEC programme. These barriers seem to disproportionately impact parents with modest educational levels or low socio-economic backgrounds, who are already among the least empowered groups in society. However, despite these challenges, the many interesting and innovative responses adopted by countries suggest that staff and parents can work together in flexible and creative ways that support the engagement of parents in their children's development and learning.

CHAPTER 4: POLICY LESSONS FROM THE THEMATIC REVIEW

Introduction

215. As a result of demographic, economic, and social developments, childhoods are changing in OECD countries. An increasing proportion of children are growing up in lone-parent households. In some cases, they are living in poverty and deprivation, at risk of social exclusion. A part of any strategy to improve outcomes through interventions early in life must be to prevent child poverty by ensuring sufficient income support to prevent deprivation and pursuing measures to increase employability of parents. Perhaps the most significant change in modern childhoods is that children no longer spend the first five years of their lives at home with their mothers. Increasingly, they are living a greater part of their early childhood in out-of-home settings, and in some cases, in multiple settings with multiple caregivers. If these ECEC experiences are of sufficient quality, they will help strengthen children's dispositions to be lifelong learners and to take an active part in society. Greater participation in ECEC has implications for broader education policy as well, as quality ECEC experiences cannot produce lasting benefits if they are followed by poor school experiences. Policy-makers also need to recognise the interface between the needs of children, parents, and the labour market. Improved access to affordable and quality ECEC, paid and job-protected parental leave, and greater flexibility in work arrangements can provide the key to better employment opportunities for families with young parents, particularly lone-parents. Shared family and employment roles will increase the potential labour force, promote a better utilisation of human capital, enhance gender equity and improve quality of life.

216. Governments need to acknowledge these changes and seek to better understand the implications for children, families, and society, so that policy and provision can respond in a holistic and integrated manner that will improve their well-being. Given that policies for young children and families are shaped by these dynamic contexts, what cross-national findings emerge from the review? One of the main lessons from the review is that the diverse approaches to addressing issues of quality and access in different countries can help inform policy makers in all countries about the relative merits of different policy options. Drawing on the Background Reports, Country Notes, and other materials collected during the review process, we have identified eight elements of successful ECEC policy. These are *key elements of policy that are likely to promote equitable access to quality ECEC*. The elements presented below are intended to be broad and inclusive so that they can be considered in the light of unique and diverse country contexts and circumstances, values, and beliefs. They do not offer a prescriptive and standardised approach, but allow room for diversity among individual systems and services to interpret them in different ways. They are intended also to be seen as interrelated elements and to be considered as a totality. They should form a part of a wider effort to reduce child poverty, promote gender equity, value diversity, and increase the quality of life for parents and children. While government should play a large leadership role, partnerships with regional and local authorities, business representatives, organised civil society, and community groups should be involved in the formulation and implementation of a strong and comprehensive ECEC policy agenda.

Key elements of successful ECEC policy

1. Systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation

217. Countries are more likely to provide quality, accessible services when they take a systemic and co-ordinated approach to ECEC policy, including careful attention to the structural requirements of early childhood systems, to clear policy frameworks, to effective governance and monitoring processes, to motivating and training professional staff, and to adequate funding and financing mechanisms. A *clear vision* underlies policy development for ECEC in these countries. They focus on children from birth to compulsory school age, with attention to the links with the school system and other allied sectors such as health, social welfare, etc. Most countries have acknowledged that quality ECEC provision can fulfil many policy objectives, including raising educational standards and increasing the labour market participation of parents. However, countries that have developed strong ECEC systems have recognised *children as a social group with rights*, and not just as dependents on parents or as primarily in need of childcare to enable their parents' employment.

218. A systemic approach entails developing a common policy framework with consistent goals across the system (e.g., with regard to staffing, financing, etc.) and clearly-defined roles and responsibilities at both central and decentralised levels of governance. The success of these decentralisation efforts depends to a large extent on the degree to which a wide range of stakeholders are involved in negotiating local standards and patterns of provision. There needs to be a balance between decentralisation to allow for local discussion and negotiation, while retaining the authority and capacity to monitor fair access to ECEC and maintain quality across regions and forms of provision. The limited role of central government in some countries has led to fragmented policy and provision, including unacceptable variation in levels of quality and access.

219. In particular, coherence and co-ordination is facilitated by integrated administrative responsibility at both national and local levels. Although there may be several ministries interested in, and committed to, ECEC policy, there is a need for one ministry to take national responsibility for all services for young children below compulsory school age. It seems to matter less whether the lead ministry is education, social welfare, or family affairs, as long as the education, care and the social functions of early childhood services are acknowledged in an integrated, holistic policy approach. Countries that have developed systems under unified administrative auspices at the national level tend to address both the care and education of young children more holistically and coherently, with an integrated approach to staffing, financing, monitoring, etc. In countries where responsibility is divided according to the age of the child or according to whether policy is considered to have an education or social welfare orientation, policy and provision tend to be more disjointed. However, in both approaches, co-ordinating mechanisms across the ministries or local departments can help to overcome this fragmentation. Another advantage of administrative and conceptual integration of ECEC policy is that it includes children under the age of three. In most countries, the interests and needs of this age group have not been given the policy priority necessary to ensure adequate quality and access.

220. At the services level, strong partnerships among different forms of early childhood provision, families, and other services for young children (e.g., schools) can help promote coherence for young children. Services integration can help meet the full range of children's learning and developmental needs in different settings on a given day and in learning institutions over time. Co-ordination can reinforce children's learning, identify and solve problems at an early stage, and ensure efficient use of resources. Coherence and co-ordination entails stronger staff-parent partnerships, linking family support with other educational programmes, and smoothing children's transitions. In many countries, the links between pre-

school and out-of-school provision need to be strengthened. Finally, coherent educational experiences take into account the informal learning of children that takes place within families and communities, from the early childhood years to school and beyond. The development of flexible integrated services to meet the needs of working and non-working parents will support and build on these informal learning opportunities.

2. Strong and equal partnership with the education system

221. There is a welcome trend toward increased co-operation between ECEC and the school system in terms of both policy and practice. The moves toward integrated policy making for ECEC under education auspices in Sweden, Spain, New Zealand, and more recently in Italy, Portugal, and the UK, raises important issues about the relationship between early childhood provision and the school system. Integration under education auspices strengthens the conceptual and structural links between ECEC and primary schools and recognises ECEC services as an important part of the education process. This strategy acknowledges that early childhood services are a public good, like the compulsory schools, and that all children should have the right to access quality ECEC before starting school. In all countries, attention to children's transitions from ECEC to schools has led to a greater policy focus on building bridges across departments, training, regulations, and curricula. Closer co-operation with the education system supports a lifelong learning approach which recognises early childhood – from birth to six – as an important phase for developing important dispositions and attitudes toward learning. A lifelong learning approach recognises the importance of fostering coherence for children across the different phases of the education system along with learning that takes place outside of formal institutions.

222. Strong partnerships with the education system also provide the opportunity to bring together the diverse perspectives and methods of both early ECEC and schools, focusing on the strengths of both approaches, such as the emphasis on parental involvement and children's social development in ECEC. Much could be done to further meld policy and practice, so that ECEC and primary education could benefit from the knowledge and experience from the other, and in the process help children and families negotiate the transition from ECEC to school. Some countries are moving toward integrated initial training across a large age span, so that teachers at all levels of the education system share a common theoretical base. Curriculum frameworks that bridge pre-primary and primary education (as well as out-of-school provision) would help strengthen pedagogical continuity, and joint in-service training for early childhood and primary school staff could reinforce links. The needs of young children are wide, however, and there is a risk that increased co-operation between schools and ECEC could lead to a school-like approach to the organisation of early childhood provision. Downward pressure of content and methods from the primary school could have a detrimental effect on young children's learning. It is important that early childhood is viewed not only as a preparation for the next stage of education (or even adulthood), but also as a distinctive period where children live out their lives. Stronger co-operation with schools is a positive development as long as the specific character and traditions of quality early childhood practice are preserved.

3. Universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support

223. Most countries have recognised the role of government in expanding provision toward full coverage of the three- to six-year-old age group. These services are acknowledged as important to children's early development and learning, independent of their parents' employment status. While the trend is toward universal access and full coverage for children over three, there is still significant variation in access to and quality of infant-toddler provision and out-of-school arrangements. Unlike services for children over three, there has not been sufficient emphasis on improvement and expansion for these two forms of provision, which suggests the need for a more universal approach. A universal approach does not necessarily entail achieving full coverage, as particularly for very young children, there will be variation in

need and demand for ECEC. There is also a need to address unmet demand in rural and remote areas, as well as in some lower-income communities. In addition, *paid and job-protected maternity and parental leave schemes of at least a year* should be part of any comprehensive strategy to support working parents with very young children and may help reduce the cost and demand for investment in infant care. To address the needs of children and working parents, a coherent approach includes strong administrative and conceptual links between ECEC, schools, and out-of-school activities.

224. It is important not only to strive for expanding provision, but to ensure *equitable access*, such that all children have equal opportunities to attend quality ECEC, regardless of family income, parental employment status, or ethnic/language background. The role of government is to set targets and develop strategies for meeting these targets. Equal opportunity means that all children have possibilities to benefit from the full range learning strategies offered in quality ECEC. To that end, most countries take a universal approach to access, according special attention and resources to children who need them and linking with supportive services in allied fields. When this approach is not feasible, more targeted programmes and projects can be developed to provide equality of educational opportunity and promote social integration for children living in disadvantaged communities. While targeting resources and services to certain populations can help address inequities, there is a danger that services for disadvantaged children and families will become stigmatised. Many countries have recognised the importance of developing services that are flexible in terms of setting, hours, and programme options to meet the diverse needs of children and parents, both working and not. This includes developing strategies to ensure that ECEC provision values and responds to the diversity of today's children and families, according additional resources where necessary. While there needs to be a range or variety of provision to meet the diverse needs of children and families, this should not justify either diversity in quality offered to families or diversity in access.

4. Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure

225. Although the financing ECEC services may be shared by a range of different funding sources – public, private, business, parents – it is clear that *public* investment by national and local government is necessary to support a sustainable system of quality, accessible services. If ECEC is to be treated as a vital public service – like primary schools – it cannot be funded largely by the parents who use it. Limited public investment leads to a shortage of good quality programmes unequal access, and segregation of children according to income. In several countries, current approaches to funding and financing do not assure that all families who wish to enrol their children in quality ECEC can afford to do so. In particular, the fact that low-income, immigrant, and special needs children are less represented in ECEC provision in several countries raises serious equity concerns. Fee levels and structures within countries need to be closely examined to assess the impact on access for lower-income families. The role of the private (for-profit and non-profit) sector raises issues as well. Without adequate resources from parents or elsewhere, these services may be forced to cut costs, usually through staff salaries and benefits, which may jeopardise the quality of children in these arrangements. To avoid the development of a two-tiered system, countries should consider allocating public funding to private services, as long as they meet or exceed the standards set for public provision. In terms of financing mechanisms, it seems that without government regulation and planning, demand-side subsidies are insufficient to ensure equitable access and an even supply of services across regions and across income groups.

226. Country evidence suggests that a coherent *system* of ECEC requires secure funding for services, including substantial direct public funding, as well as ongoing public investment in the infrastructure which supports them – in-service training, planning, research, monitoring. In order to maximise limited funds and avoid duplicative efforts, a rational use of resources entails new ways of *co-ordinating* financial planning and allocation. Governments need to develop clear and consistent funding and financing strategies for efficiently allocating and using scarce resources. In general, there is a need for better

monitoring of the levels of public and private funding at different levels of government and across different departments and programmes, as well as the consequences of these funding levels and financing approaches for supply, demand, enrolment, and quality. Achieving universal access will require additional resources in some countries to ensure that all families who wish to enrol their children in a quality programme can afford to do so. Raising quality carries cost implications as well, especially if it includes improving staff training, professional development opportunities, pay and working conditions.

5. Participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance

227. While there are national and local differences in how quality is understood, most countries recognise the importance of creating and consistently enforcing minimum standards at national, regional, or local level. These standards set a minimum guarantee that the safety and health of children is ensured and tend to focus on structural and process features of quality. One major difference in policy is the degree to which private (for-profit and non-profit) provision is covered in legislation. This is of particular concern as in most countries, the majority of children under three attend settings in the private sector. Equal access to quality services assumes that quality control, support, monitoring, availability, and cost will be addressed similarly in both public and private services. For equity reasons, regulations need to apply to all settings, whether they are publicly or privately operated and should cover infant-toddler, pre-primary, and out-of-school provision, recognising that different settings and age groups may require different standards. In order to meet standards, provision will need to be supported by a strong infrastructure of co-ordinated national, state, and local mechanisms for assuring adequate financing to attract and retain highly-trained early childhood staff.

228. Equality of access and quality of provision depends on government at national, regional, and local levels to assume major responsibility in funding and supporting the development of services. Government needs to support and encourage, but not limit, local initiatives. Across countries, there is a need to balance setting standards to ensure even levels of quality across regions and forms of provision, and the need to respond to the widely differing needs of communities. Yet, minimum standards are not sufficient as policy and provision should strive to constantly improve toward providing quality, accessible, and coherent early childhood experiences. Beyond minimum standards set by governments, defining and assuring quality should be participatory and democratic, involving different groups including children, parents and families and professionals who work with children. The way in which quality is developed and the priorities and perspectives which are emphasised may vary between or across countries. While countries have developed different approaches to working with young children, most recognise the importance of adapting practices to the needs of the child, taking into account of individual strengths and differences.

229. A pedagogical framework may guide practice and ensure consistent standards across different forms of early childhood services. It can provide the basis on which to engage in a discussion about what is quality and how to achieve it. A framework also can promote continuity in children's learning and bridge children's transition to compulsory school. These frameworks work seem to best when they focus broadly on children's holistic development and well-being, rather than on narrow literacy and numeracy objectives, and when they are flexible enough to allow staff to experiment with different methodological and pedagogical approaches. Whether they are produced at the national, local, or programme level, frameworks should be co-constructed through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including staff, parents, and other members of the community. Successful implementation of curriculum guidelines can be supported through ongoing training and pedagogical advising.

230. Quality inspection and monitoring can ensure that services are meeting standards consistently across regions and sectors. A quality assurance system includes both inspection and monitoring to enforce

compliance of rules and regulations *and* mechanisms to provide pedagogical guidance and support. Some countries have developed quantitative scales measures of quality which focus on the environmental, organisational, and process features of provision. These evaluations should be complemented by processes to support services and enable them to change, grow, and develop. Externally-validated self-evaluation methods and ongoing reflective practice by staff members should be encouraged as important elements of quality assurance and improvement efforts.

6. *Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision*

231. The review has shown that most staff working in publicly-funded early childhood centres are trained at a high level, with at least three years of post-secondary education, often at university level. In split systems, staff working with children under three in the welfare sector tend to have lower levels of training, compensation, and poorer working conditions than education staff. This has serious consequences for the quality of provision for children in these settings. In more integrated systems, there is a unified training system for staff, with high levels of training and adequate pay and working conditions across age groups and forms of provision. In-service training and professional development opportunities are uneven in many countries, and there needs to be more attention to developing a career structure that crosses care and education boundaries. In most countries, training and working conditions for workers in family day care and in out-of-school provision also need to be reconsidered and improved so that they are recognised and supported as qualified professionals. Auxiliary workers also perform important roles and tasks in ECEC, and attention needs to be paid to their training and working conditions.

232. The demand for more flexible services to accommodate diverse children and families suggests the need for reconceptualising the roles of ECEC workers to encompass a wide-range of educational and social responsibilities, which goes beyond the focus of basic training in most countries. This suggests that the training of staff should balance the specific content and methods necessary to work with young children with a broader focus on how the sector connects with, and contributes, to social integration and lifelong learning objectives. It also means that more efforts are needed to train and employ staff who reflect the diversity of the local community. It is therefore important to ensure that a career lattice makes it possible for a wide range of trainees from different ethnic and social groups to enter the system. Another important issue centres around helping practitioners to understand and build on the rich diversity of cultures in their everyday work by integrating an intercultural dimension into all components of initial training and ongoing training.

233. Recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce is one of the major challenges for the future. There are several national strategies to address this concern, but it is unclear whether they will be successful in the long-run. There is a critical need for working conditions across the workforce that ensure that a career in ECEC is satisfying, respected, and financially viable. The cost implications are real and demand increased public investment, as they cannot be expected to be covered through higher parental fees or in savings in other areas of service delivery. Finally, the feminisation of the sector has had negative consequences for the economic and social status of the workforce, yet few countries have developed strategies to recruit more men to the profession. With very few exceptions, countries have not addressed the larger issue of the role of men as carers and the implications for staff, children, parents, and society. Nonetheless, raising the training, status and compensation of *all* early childhood workers – and ensuring access to professional development – would help address the difficulties of recruiting and retaining qualified women *and* men from diverse backgrounds to the profession.

7. Systematic attention to monitoring and data collection³⁷

234. Given the trends toward increased decentralisation to local authorities and institutions, well-funded mechanisms for monitoring ECEC systems are important to support quality improvement in the field. Systematic data collection and development on the supply, utilisation, and unmet need for services, levels and training of staff, and other aspects of service delivery are necessary to support national and local policymakers in making informed decisions concerning ECEC. Although there is considerable research data available at national levels, there is a need for a systematic procedure to provide consistent and comparable information on ECEC within a given country, as well as across countries. Establishing ongoing national data collection on the status of young children and the programmes that serve them is an imperative of national leadership and responsibility.

235. The thematic review has identified several *data gaps* and barriers to national and cross-national comparisons. Present approaches to data collection tend to focus on educational services for children over three. There is a need for national efforts to collect data on fully-private centre-based provision and family day care, as these arrangements often accommodate children under three. Future data collection efforts should cover the whole age group birth to six and include all forms of provision, regardless of administrative responsibility (education, welfare), funding source (public, private) or setting (centre, school, home). Leave schemes should be evaluated according to accessibility, length and payment, and figures on take-up should be made comparable. Background indicators (e.g., demographic data) can shed light on the variations in need and demand and complementary benefits available, such as leave schemes. The availability of informal care should also be documented. Indicators on quality should include both quantitative and qualitative data. Indicators on availability and access should look at the objective of services, the age groups served, affordability (including fee variation), and the number of children attending. Using full-time equivalences to convert part-time into full-time and term-time into full-year facilitates comparisons within and across countries.

8. Stable research framework and long-term research and evaluation agenda

236. Research on areas concerning key policy goals is an essential element of a continuous improvement process. Setting up a strong, sustained national research infrastructure demands a permanent government funding base for research and evaluation combined with a long-term research agenda and generous training opportunities. Creating a stable research framework would help inform effective policy-making and raise the overall quality of early childhood education and care. As part of the infrastructure that supports quality, accessible services, there is a need for a publicly-funded long-term research and evaluation agenda focused on ECEC. As in other areas of social and educational policy, the field is changing rapidly and there is a need for up-to-date research and evaluation information to strengthen the connections between research, policy, and practice. The body of international research in the early childhood field is growing, though much of it is dominated by the English-speaking world, which represents one particular paradigm. Increased investment in research and development in the field is needed in all participating countries.

237. The research agenda might be expanded to include areas that have not been accorded much attention in the past. The concerns and methodologies of developmental psychology have traditionally played a dominant role in much of ECEC research. While this perspective is important, a stronger research focus on the *sociology of childhood* to look at the many and very different conditions under which children grow up, on children's views of the world, and on descriptions of children's daily routines would help to deepen adults' perceptions and understandings of children and their social networks. Studies focussing on

³⁷ This section draws on a paper prepared by Rostgaard (2000) for the Thematic Review.

process quality in different *learning environments* would provide valuable data and help policymakers gauge priorities when setting up and raising the quality of services. How can very young children best be helped to develop life-coping and school-coping competencies? What balance is needed between child-initiated and adult-led activities? How do practitioners best assess if they are achieving the goals they set? How do different approaches towards language and literacy development influence children's proficiency? There is also a need for research to explore the *structural parameters* of a quality ECEC system (e.g., regulation, governance, training, funding, etc.). Finally, *longitudinal research* studies of the short-term and long-term impact of ECEC for children, families, and society is needed.

238. There also is a need to develop a range of research and evaluation instruments. Developing research instruments and evaluation procedures that are sensitive to the complex dynamics of early childhood environments, to the interdependence between family beliefs and practices and centre beliefs and practices, would be an important step towards deepening understanding in these areas. Research based on self-evaluation procedures would support critical self-reflection and team development and complement external evaluation. Cost-benefit analyses of different approaches and initiatives which are underway in some countries should be supported more widely. Finally, there is a need for mechanisms for disseminating research findings and examples of good practice. Governments should support innovative local and community-based initiatives to make them durable and to disseminate lessons from these experiences within and across countries. Early childhood observatories or institutes at national and international levels, as well as regular meetings and opportunities for cross-national dialogue could help monitor the impact of different policy initiatives and contribute to the improvement of policy development.

Future directions of work

239. Countries that have adopted some or all of these elements of successful policy share a strong public commitment to young children and their families. They have assumed responsibility for the education and care of their youngest citizens in partnership with families. In different ways, these countries have made efforts to ensure access for all children, and have initiated special efforts for those in need of special support. Quality is high on the agenda as a means to ensure that children not only have equal opportunities to participate in ECEC but also to benefit from these experiences in ways that promote their development and learning. *These countries have given young children high priority among all the many priorities that compete for attention on the policy agenda.* They have recognised that strong national and local policies are needed to support children in the early years so that they live good childhoods and so they can thrive later in life. ECEC is understood not only as preparation for later formal schooling, but also as an opportunity to foster lifelong dispositions to learn.

240. The countries that have participated in the thematic review should be pleased with their accomplishments over the past decade. Some countries have made dramatic progress, especially in light of the low base from which they are starting. Other countries, with a longer history of involvement in the field, have worked to further strengthen and update their policy and practice. Early childhood is firmly on the public and political agenda in all 12 countries, and children and families are likely to benefit from the attention to, and investment in, efforts to expand provision, improve quality, and promote coherence. Countries have improved training of staff, worked to engage parents and families, and developed closer co-operation with the school system and other allied sectors. While the developments and achievements in recent years are impressive, there are significant remaining challenges and questions to be addressed. Based on the findings from the thematic review, future policy work in the field should focus on:

- How are childhoods changing? What is a good childhood? What are the purposes of early childhood institutions? What do we mean by learning, care, knowledge?

- How can countries move toward an integrated early childhood system? What are the implications for policy and practice? What are the challenges brought about by this change?
- How much additional investment is needed to improve quality and access? Who should fund the system? How should governments allocate resources? Should the priority be to develop parental leave schemes or to expand infant-toddler provision?
- How do we want to structure the early childhood workforce? Why are there so few men working in the field? What are the consequences for children, parents, workers, and society as a whole? Do we want a mixed-gender workforce, and if so, why? How can we achieve it?
- How will our societies respond to staff shortages? Will countries recruit low-qualified workers, drawing on the pool of low-skilled from immigrant backgrounds or welfare recipients? Will they revalue the profession to compete better with potential workers?
- How can policy help parents balance the work and family life? How can we promote parent engagement in ECEC given the current working hours and patterns? What do we mean by flexibility in the workplace? What are the implications for men, women, and children?

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APPENDIX 1. AN OVERVIEW OF ECEC SYSTEMS IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Introduction

1. The aim of this Appendix is to provide a comparative snapshot of ECEC in the countries that participated in the review. A common profile of each country is presented, using the following descriptors: auspices; developments; context; provision; staffing and training; and policy issues identified by the OECD review teams. These descriptors provide an insight into present country characteristics and, if read in conjunction with Chapter 3, give some indication of the qualities of each system. No doubt, further descriptors might have been added - regulatory policy and system monitoring, funding mechanisms, curriculum and programme characteristics, quality indicators and control, but space did not allow their inclusion. An overview of terms and organisation of the main forms of ECEC provision is provided in Table A1.1.

2. The brief paragraph on *Auspices* indicates which ministries have competence in ECEC matters, and whether decentralisation of responsibilities takes place. Apart from giving factual information as to who is in charge, auspices can also indicate whether unified policies for young children from birth to six years are the rule, or whether the traditional division between care and education is perpetuated through administrative structures.

3. The section on *Developments* describes advances made in recent years by countries in the Review, starting from very different bases and levels of provision. From the evidence presented, it is clear that countries have made remarkable efforts to expand and improve services in the ECEC field in recent years. Even countries that have enjoyed decades of extensive service provision have refocused their efforts and undertaken needed policy reforms.

4. *Context* includes four elements that influence young children's experiences in their early years:

1. *The proportion of GDP that countries are devoting to ECEC services.* A central conclusion coming from the review is that sufficient expenditure is a prerequisite to expanding access and improving the quality of early services. Where they are provided, this figure has been communicated to us by the relevant ministries.
2. *The levels of female participation in the labour force.* The figures (from *OECD In Figures*, 2000) show a rapid progression of female participation rates in the labour market, although women still take up the greater part of part-time employment available. As their employment levels increase, it would seem equitable that part of the increased taxation revenue derived from their work should be spent on expanded maternity leave provision and improved services for their children.
3. *The provision of maternity and parental leave.* Though problematic in certain regards, a developed maternity and parental leave provision generally improves the quality of care provided to an infant in the crucial first year. In its absence, parents are often obliged to have recourse to informal, unregulated care. Parental leave is also an important ECEC policy

consideration: countries that fund adequately parental leave have high levels of uptake, and a correspondingly lesser need to fund infant and toddler services. At the same time, these same countries give attention to supplying meeting points for families and young children to counter the potential isolation of young mothers and to provide socialisation and learning opportunities for young children outside the home.

4. A fourth element included in *Context* is one particularly important for ministries, viz. *Attention to children with special education needs before their entry into compulsory school*. Figures quoted are taken either from the Background Reports or in the case of child poverty figures from *Child Poverty in Rich Nations*, UNICEF, 2000. Most countries now pay attention to children with disabilities, often under pressure from the courts. Less importance is given to low SES (socio-economic status) children. Rates of household and child poverty are often in excess of 15%, even after redistribution mechanisms have come into effect, that is after fiscal transfers, child benefits and social assistance payments have been allocated to poor families.

Children from low-income and immigrant families are most at risk of school failure. Analysis of education statistics show that between 20-25% of children in schools in the OECD countries experience some kind of learning difficulty or failure in their school careers (OECD1999,d). Early learning difficulties frequently lead to children being placed in costly, special education classes, or to a tolerance by teachers of low standards and underachievement. Obviously, ministries cannot reverse social and economic inequalities.³⁸ Their responsibility is rather to fund and create quality programmes that mobilise families to enrol their children in pre-school programmes as early as possible. Several research projects show that quality ECEC services have a most positive impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Appropriate early childhood programmes can contribute greatly to improving the life chances of these children and to preparing them effectively for school. In addition, early services can play an irreplaceable role in identifying and supporting, without stigma, children with special learning needs.

5. Rates of *provision* are among the most evident parts of an ECEC system. Countries are often evaluated by the percentages of children in each age cohort for whom they are able to provide either full-day or part-day services. The figures that we quote come from the country *Background Reports* or relevant ministries. Without other information being supplied, such statistics beg the question of the base from which a country is starting, tell little about the level of demand, and provide no indication of the quality of services. Yet, a pattern does seem to emerge across the industrialised countries. Many countries provide sufficient places for their children, ranging from about 20 -30% in year 1-2 and reaching over 80% coverage in full-time places, some time in the fourth year. Obviously, many factors can influence demand, such as the attitudes of a society toward child-rearing, the presence of high quality services that parents can actually see in operation, and to a lesser extent, the rate of participation of mothers with young children in the labour market.

6. A final indicator chosen is *Staffing and training*, one of the more important issues of the review. Wide differences can be seen between countries in their recruitment and training of staff, ranging from countries with 98% of staff fully trained, to countries in which less than a third of contact staff have a recognised early childhood qualification. Yet, well-motivated, professional staff are perhaps the key to quality in a system. Early socialisation and the stimulation of children's learning in out-of-home

³⁸At the same time, policy makers should not place too great a responsibility on early education services, particularly when they serve neighbourhoods that lack investments in the housing stock, family and youth infrastructure, local industry, and pro-active training and employment policies.

environments is a complex task, ideally entrusted to a well-trained, profession. The positioning of ECEC as the first phase of lifelong learning carries also the implication that the staff of early childhood centres should be educators, and can ensure for young children smooth entry into primary school classes that in turn employ methodologies appropriate to the age of these children.

7. *OECD Policy Issues:* The country profiles are rounded off by a section outlining the *policy issues* that emerged in the review of each country. The reviews differed widely from each other, as review teams attempted to grapple with the variety and complexity of country-wide systems and a wide range of national concerns. Yet, what emerges is a remarkable similarity across the twelve countries in the challenges that were identified. At the end of each profile, these challenges are simply listed, but they are analysed in more detail in Chapter 3 of the present report.

Table A1.1. Terms and organisation of main forms of ECEC provision

Country	Name of provision (generic English term)	Setting	Ages served	Opening hours [#]	Administrative auspice (national)	Locus of policy making
AUS	Long day care*	Centre	0-5	Full-time	Social welfare	Commonwealth
	Family day care*	Caregiver's home	0-5			
	Pre-school	School/centre	4-5	Part-time	Education	State/Territories
BEL - FL	<i>Kinderdagverblijf</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Social welfare	Community
	<i>Diensten voor opvanggezinnen</i> (DOGs) (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-3			
	<i>Kleuterschool</i> (pre-primary school)	School	2.5-6	Part-time	Education	
BEL - CF	<i>Crèche</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Social welfare	Community
	<i>Gardienne encadrée</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-3			
	<i>École maternelle</i> (pre-primary school)	School	2.5-6	Part-time	Education	
CZE	<i>Creche</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Health/welfare	Local
	<i>Mateřská škola</i> (pre-primary school)	School	3-6	Full-time	Education	National and local
DNK	<i>Vuggestuer</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Social welfare	National and local (primarily)
	<i>Aldersintegrede</i> (age-integrated centre)		0-7			
	<i>Børnhaver</i> (kindergarten)		3-7			
	<i>Familiedagpleje</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-7			
	<i>Børnehavklasser</i> (pre-primary class)	Primary school	5-7	Part-time	Education	
FIN	<i>Päiväkoti</i> (age-integrated centre)	Centre	0-7	Full-time	Social welfare	National and local
	<i>Perhepäivähoito</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-7			
	<i>6-vuotiaiden esiopetus</i> (pre-primary class)	Centre/school	6-7	Part-time	Education	
ITA	<i>Asilo nido</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Health/welfare	Local
	<i>Scuola materna</i> (pre-primary school)	School	3-6	Varies	Education	National
NLD	<i>Kinderopvang</i> (age-integrated centre)	Centre	0-4	Full-time	Social welfare	National and local (primarily)
	<i>Gastouderopvang</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-4	Part-time		
	<i>Peuterspeelzaal</i> (playgroup)	Centre	2-4			
	<i>Basischool</i> (primary school)	Primary school	4+	Part-time	Education	
NOR	<i>Barnehage</i> (age-integrated centre)	Centre	0-6	Full-time (and part-time)	Children and Family Affairs	National and local
	<i>Familiebarnehage</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-6			
PRT	<i>Creche</i> (infant-toddler centre)	Centre	0-3	Full-time	Social welfare	Regional and local
	<i>Creche familiar</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-3			
	<i>Jardim de infancia</i> (kindergarten/pre-primary school)	Centre/school	3-6	Full-time (varies)	Education/Social welfare	National
SWE	<i>Förskola</i> (age-integrated centre)	Centre	0-6	Full-time	Education	National and local (primarily)
	<i>Familiedaghem</i> (family day care)	Caregiver's home	0-6	Full-time		
	<i>Förskoleklass</i> (pre-primary class)	Primary school	6-7	Part-time		
UKM	Day nursery*	Centre	0-5	Part-time	Education	National and local
	Nursery class/school	School	3-5	Part-time		
	Pre-school playgroup	Centre	2-5	Part-time (varies)		
	Childminder*	Caregiver's home	0-5	Full-time		
	Reception class (not in Scotland)	Primary school	4-5	Full-time		
USA	Child care centre*	Centre	0-5	Full-time	Social welfare	State
	Family child care*	Caregiver's home	0-5	Full-time		State
	Head Start	Centre	4-5	Part-time (varies)		National and local
	Pre-kindergarten	School/centre	4-5	Part-time (varies)	Education	State
	Kindergarten	Primary school	5-6	Part-time (varies)		State

Sources: OECD Background Reports; Meyers & Gornick, 2000; Kamerman, 2000; Oberhuemer & Ulich, 1997; Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998.

Note: Family day care in many countries accommodates school-age children during before and after-school hours. We do not include other forms of out-of-school provision here.

* Mostly *privately*-funded and *privately*-provided, whereas the other forms of provision listed are mostly *publicly*-funded.

A full-time place is defined as a minimum of 30 weekly hours (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998).

Australia

Auspices

In Australia, ECEC has separate and layered auspices, shared at central government level by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and the Department of Education, Training and Youth (DETYA), and in competency terms, by both Commonwealth and State Governments. Traditionally, daycare has been separate from education and seen as an issue of employment and family support, so responsibility for policy is held by the Commonwealth, represented by FaCS. States responsible for minimum standards and licensing. Pre-school education, on the other hand, is considered the responsibility of the State Governments, although the Commonwealth Government, represented by DETYA, exerts a strong influence through national agenda setting, and provides supplementary funding for indigenous children and children with disabilities. Several inter-governmental committees exist at Commonwealth level. At State level, education, care and community services are sometimes unified in one department.

Developments

Starting from a low base, the present Commonwealth Government has committed itself to expansion of ECEC provision and quality improvement, through fostering new investment and competition in the sector. From 1990, a shift occurred from funding services directly to providing social support to families. Through the Child Care Benefit scheme, fee subsidies have been made available to parents using regulated services, bringing new investment into childcare from the private sector. Except in the case of indigenous services, direct operational subsidies to community services were removed. Quality issues in long-day services (and soon family daycare) are being addressed through the *quality improvement and accreditation system* (QIAS). In the education sector, a major concern is on learning outcomes, especially literacy and numeracy skills, which are seen as vital for equity reasons and for future labour market participation. The commitment of several States to improving quality can be seen from their support to curriculum development and quality standards. Both Commonwealth and State governments have at their disposal a rich resource of professional expertise in their various ministries and the research universities.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): About 0.25% of GDP. GDP per capita is \$24,400.

Labour force: 65% female participation in labour force, of which almost 41% part-time. 47% participation of women with children below three years; 28% participation by lone mothers, of which 7% full-time.

Parental leave: Workers have a minimum entitlement to 52 weeks unpaid parental leave, after 12 months of more continuous employment with the same employer. This leave can be shared between mother and father at any ratio, but periods of leave cannot overlap.

Attention to children with special educational needs before compulsory education begins: a) *Children with disabilities:* Inclusion of children with disabilities into ECEC services is growing. b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty level is 12.6% after redistribution. c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Poverty is particularly marked in the Australian indigenous community (2% of population) where life expectancy is nearly twenty years less than for the white population. In addition, 38% of children in early services are

from culturally diverse backgrounds (of which 4% indigenous). 40% of the indigenous population is under 15 years. Significant Commonwealth investment is being channelled toward indigenous programmes.

Provision

The Australian ECEC system is one of mixed public and private provision. Parental fees are subsidised by a comprehensive Child Care Benefit (CCB), paid for attendance at approved (formal) services both public and private (less benefit is paid if a parent uses a registered, informal service). Low-income families receive a higher rate of CCB, which can cover total costs.

0-1 year: Parental and informal care predominate. C. 4% of infants are enrolled in regulated services.

1-4 years: About 22% of children are enrolled in either full-day or part-day care, provided mainly by QIAS approved private services (58%), community services (23%) and family daycare schemes (18%). Fee support is available to over 98% of parents using services (formal, approved and informal/registered) through the Child Care Benefit scheme.

4-6 years: Early education services are provided through kindergartens or reception classes generally attached to schools, for 6-hours daily, during school term. Attendance in the year before compulsory schooling (at 6 years) ranges from 80.4% in Western Australia to 96.3% in Queensland.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios in long daycare centres are: 5:1 for children 0-2 years; 8:1 for children 2-3 years, and 10:1 for children 3-6 years (variations occur across States).

Staffing and training

The staffing of ECEC varies according to the regulatory requirements of each state and territory. In general, non-school services employ a mix of trained (often two-year vocational) and untrained staff. In the case of family daycare, contact staff are not required to have a qualification, other than a First Aid diploma. In Long Day Care Centres, the need to minimise staff costs so as to limit fee increases has worked against the employment of teachers, whenever such staff are not a regulatory requirement. Although they may have longer hours, greater responsibility, fewer holiday and less planning time than teachers, the status and pay of staff in non-school services is low. Turnover rates are high and difficulties in recruiting staff are reported. Men are hardly represented in care services (3.3%) or pre-school (2.3%).

In pre-schools, a teaching qualification is demanded, but not necessarily with an early childhood qualification. A teaching qualification requires normally a three- or four-year university degree. The Commonwealth and State governments fund a limited number of in-service hours for teachers and staff in the non-school sector, but daycare staff report a lack of opportunity for professional development, due to the difficulty of being released from their jobs.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

Understandings of childhood and early education: ECEC in Australia reveals a range of beliefs and policy directions depending on government philosophy, jurisdiction (the government department or administrative body in charge), type of setting and community perception. It was felt that a clearer vision (including a

strategy framework) of Australian ECEC policy should be elaborated, drawing from the views and interests of children, families, communities, professionals and researchers across the states and territories.

System coherence and co-ordination: Currently, real limitations on system coherence are imposed in Australia by the complexities of government in a federal state and the multi-layering of administration and regulation. Other difficulties arise from the vastness of the territory and the dispersion of populations.

Quality issues: It was felt that the low status and training levels of ECEC staff undermines quality, and may counterbalance the investments governments are making in the sector. In addition, attention was drawn to the poorer work conditions experienced by teachers and staff in the early childhood sector, compared to other education sectors.

Training and status of ECEC staff: The OECD team recommended comprehensive training at a range of levels for staff in the ECEC sector.

Children with special educational needs: SEN issues arise most acutely with regard to indigenous children. After past injustices, the determined targeting of resources by recent governments towards Indigenous educational, economic, and health programs is acknowledged. The key to the success of the new indigenous programmes will be their respectful approach to issues of self determination, cultural ownership, and for some, language.

Belgium - Flemish Community

Auspices

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a clear division exists in responsibility for education and care. All childcare arrangements must be reported to *Kind & Gezin*, a governmental, public agency dependent on the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health. The Federal Government intervenes only with regard to tax benefits for childcare costs, parental leave and career breaks, or with the regions, in employment policy. *Kind & Gezin* officially supervises the great majority of such arrangements and subsidises a significant number of them. In addition to providing childcare places, *Kind & Gezin* has responsibility for community health services, preventive childcare, and for policy and inspection of out-of-school care. Some local authorities and non-profit organisations also have a role in providing childcare, a role that is partly historical and, in some cases, partly in response to initiatives being developed by *Kind en Gezin*.

The Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community has full competence for education matters, and designates the broad aims and objectives of education in the Community. There is considerable autonomy to organise schools, a freedom originally established to guarantee confessional choice. Most schools and educational services fall therefore under one of three main umbrella organisations or networks: Community Schools, that is, non-confessional, local authority based, covering 13% of children; Official Subsidised Education organised by local authorities, covering 18% of children; and Subsidised Private Education (including voluntary, state-aided) covering 68% of pupils (rather less, at kindergarten level).

Developments

Flemish society has become increasingly multicultural, and there is growing public awareness of immigrant issues, poverty and the need for equity. Child poverty levels have been reduced to a low level, and a main policy concern is to make regular care and early education accessible to all children who need it, irrespective of their family situation, their socio-economic background or their ethnic origin. There emerges also a strong concern to improve quality in care, especially to make care settings more educational and stimulating for infants and toddlers. Much effort is being invested in training, and *public* childcare centre staff, in particular, have excellent access to training and professional development opportunities.

In early education, a universal and well-organised system has been in place for decades. There is a firm determination to promote equity and quality across the system, and significant funds are being invested on behalf of low-income and immigrant children. Another important policy orientation is to bring pre-primary (the *kleuterschool*) and school closer together, so as to make basic education a cohesive unity. At the same time, there is widespread recognition that pre-primary has its own specific aim of developing the total personality of the children. Goals for the classes are elaborated in the "Developmental Objectives" or minimum goals (knowledge, insights, skills and attitudes) considered desirable and attainable by children in *kleuterschool*. Many in-service training opportunities are offered to *kleuterschool* teachers, and new co-constructive approaches to inspection, quality improvement and control are being put into place. The research capacity of the universities and their ability to bring quality instruments and new pedagogies into the system is also another strength.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (\$24,300 per capita).

Labour force: 58% female participation in labour market of which 32.2% part-time (figures for all Belgium)

Parental leave: Universal paid maternal and parental leave to 9 months (all Belgium).

Attention to children with special educational needs before compulsory education begins a) *Children with disabilities:* In Belgium, the tradition has been to support young children with disabilities in the home, but there is growing awareness of the benefits of including children with light handicaps in ECEC services. Special education is well funded, though often apart; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty level is 4.3% after redistribution; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* At least; 5.5% of children are from immigrant backgrounds. The government makes significant investments in social exclusion and priority education programmes.

Provision

Both daycare and early education are characterised by mixed public and private provision, funded by the Flemish Government. In the care sector, provision is publicly subsidised and supervised when supplied by community services, e.g. centre-based daycare or family daycare attached to the community. It is supervised only when provided by private bodies, e.g. private family daycare. Parents pay fees, according to income, from 17% - 25% of actual costs. In turn, they are granted tax benefits to recuperate these costs, up to 80% or 345BF daily. Services are used mostly by double-income parents.

Education from 2.5 years is free, with supplementary investments given to schools catering for low-income/ethnic areas and families. *Kleuterschool* are operated by the different networks (see above), each group being financed by the Government.

0-1 year: Parental care predominates. Because of regulations and tax-credits paid to families for use of accredited services, there is little informal care except familial.

1-2.5 years : 21.5% full- or half-day coverage of children in family day-care (14%) and daycare centres. Normally, these services open 10-12 hours per day.

2.5 – 5 years: 85% half-day coverage at 2.5 years in free nursery schools. Almost 100% coverage at 3- 4 years. Schools open daily (half-day Wednesday) from 8.30 - 15.30, with after-school care if needed.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios in childcare are as follows: ???

In the pre-school, recent government investments to increase staff for the young children has reduced the maximum child-staff ratio to 20:1, but numbers can be greater or lesser depending on the time of the year,

Staffing and training

The division between care and education is reflected in the training and status of staff in each sector. Non-executive staff in the childcare sector are generally childcare workers (*kinderverzorgster*). Young women choosing this career take the professional secondary stream and are given one year additional specialisation

in their field. A strong theoretical base in early childhood is sometimes lacking. Family daycarers are selected by interview, and receive an in-training of between four to sixty hours. Afterwards, though regularly visited and guided by Kind & Gezin supervisors, they benefit little from further in-training. In contrast, intensive in-training of childcare workers in the centres is provided within their contractual hours.

In the *kleuterschool*, the *kleuterleidsters* (pre-primary teachers) are trained at tertiary level for three years in teacher training colleges, alongside primary and lower secondary teachers. In-service training is well developed in the education sector, and the Ministry of Education devolves substantial training budgets to the level of the school. The umbrella organisations are also required by the Quality Decree to engage in in-service training activities and quality inspection.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

Better child-staff ratios for the early years classes: Traditionally in the *kleuterschool* (kindergarten), there has been no guarantee of favourable adult-child ratios or of group size for children of 30 months.

Co-ordination of care and education: There seems to be a need for greater co-ordination between the systems to promote coherent policy and provision. The co-operation that took place a result of the OECD visit has been a useful starting point for considering the issue.

Status and training of personnel: Several issues arose in this field: a) the barriers that exist to hinder the movement of personnel from one system to another; b) the relatively low status and pedagogical training of childcare workers and family day-carers (better in-service opportunities are offered to public childcare centre staff). c) the scarcity of staff from ethnic origins and the weakness of multicultural training at many levels.

Further action and research on inclusiveness: Several innovative and publicly funded projects (MEQ, OVB and Zorgverbreding) to address the needs of immigrant children deserve to be developed and extended. Outcome targets and measures for the different groups might be also considered, so as to measure the effectiveness of programmes.

Belgium - French Community

Auspices

In the French Community of Belgium, education and care are divided administratively, although brought together at ministerial level under the Minister of Childhood (Ministère de l'Enfance). The Minister has full competence for early care and basic education (the *école maternelle* and primary education) within the French Community. Some policy and funding responsibilities have been devolved to the two regions, Wallonie and Bruxelles-Capital.

For children from 0-3 years, the Minister relies on ONÉ (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance), a governmental, public agency responsible for mother and child health and protection, and for all aspects of childcare policy and provision. All settings, wishing to provide care to children under 6 years of age must declare themselves to the ONÉ, obtain its authorisation and bring their programme into conformity with the *Code de qualité*.

The Minister of Childhood also designates the broad aims and objectives of basic education in the Community, which includes primary education and the *école maternelle* for children from 2.5 - 6 years. Most schools and educational services fall under one of three main umbrella organisations or networks: French Community Schools (non-confessional, covering 10% of children); the public network of Communal Schools (organised by local communes, covering 50% of children; and the Free Schools (including voluntary, state-aided) covering 40% of pupils.

Developments

In the French Community, childcare and the *école maternelle* are seen as powerful tools against exclusion, and a privileged means of integrating 'at risk' children (including immigrant children) into the education system. At the same time, the *universal* right to early care and education is emphasised, and is implemented through the *école maternelle*, which is open to all children from the age of 2.5 years.

In the care sector, the wish to improve the quality of services has given rise to management reform, concertation and planning. A *Code of Quality* for early care centres and other child services has been formulated, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and European Union recommendations. Emphasis is placed too on training and professional development. There is high take-up of training opportunities, particularly in Brussels where the FRAJE (a training association attached to the region) has been very active.

At the *école maternelle*, the focus on quality has given rise to official guidelines (*Décret mission*), drawing attention to fundamental goals, such as developing the creativity of children, early learning, socialisation and citizenship, and the early diagnosis of disability or special need. Consultations are taking place to translate these guidelines into a curriculum that can be used by teachers in all *écoles maternelles*. In-service training is also seen as a privileged instrument to improve the understanding and professional practice of personnel, who, it seems, will come together from the different networks for common training sessions. The commitment of university researchers to the early childhood sector is great, and in collaboration with teachers and staff, they carry out many action-research projects on the ground. An important signal to the early childhood sector sent out by the government has been the decision to upgrade pre-school teacher salaries to a level equivalent to that of their primary school colleagues.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (\$24,300 per capita).

Labour force: 58% female participation in labour market of which 32.2% part-time

Parental leave: Universal paid maternal and parental leave to 9 months (all Belgium)

Attention to children with special educational needs before compulsory education begins: a) *Children with disabilities:* In Belgium, the tradition has been to support these children when young in the home, but there is growing awareness of the benefits of including children with light handicaps in ECEC. Special education is well funded, though often apart. b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty level is at ??; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Immigrant children constitute 12% of the school population, reaching 30% in Brussels. Strong government investment in social exclusion and priority education programmes exists.

Provision

In both care and education, the system is one of mixed public and private provision. Education from 2.5 years is free, with special supports for low-income/ethnic areas and families. In the care sector, parents pay fees to recognised services, according to income, from 17% - 25% of actual costs. In turn, they are granted tax benefits to recuperate these costs, up to 80% or 345BF daily. In the care sector, provision is publicly subsidised and supervised when supplied by community services, and supervised only when provided by private bodies, e.g. private family daycare. In the education sector, *écoles maternelles* are operated by official, community and private (majority in education) networks - almost completely financed by the CFR government.

0 - 1 year: Parental care predominates. Because of regulations and tax-credits paid to families for use of accredited services, there is little informal care except familial

1 - 2.5 years : 21.5% full- or half-day coverage of children in daycare centres (12%) and family day-care. Normally, these services open 10-12 hours per day.

2.5 – 5 years: 85% half-day coverage from 30 months in free pre-school, with after-school care if needed. Almost 100% of children are enrolled at 3- 4 years. The pre-school opens daily (half-day Wednesday) from 8.30 - 15.30, with after-school care if needed.

Child-staff ratios: In childcare, ratios are as follows: in centre-based daycare (*crèche*) 1 children's nurse (*puéricultrice*) for 7 children; in family daycare, 1 adult for 3 children. Crèches (18-48 places) must also employ a medical nurse and trained social worker, one of whom is generally the manager. In the école maternelle, the maximal child-staff ratio is ?? ? *Puéricultrices* are often employed to assist teachers with the younger children.

Staffing and training

The division between care and education is reflected in the training and status of staff in each sector. The *puéricultrices* who take charge of the children, have a secondary level, four-year general professional course, followed by two years (16-18 years) of child nursing, which comprises a number of paramedical courses and practical placements. Their salary level is low, about half that of a pre-school teacher. Personnel in family daycare or *maisons d'enfants* (children's centres) are required simply to have a "useful experience" although in the *maisons d'enfants*, many *puéricultrices* are found. Much in-service training is

available, especially for personnel belonging to community services in Brussels. In the *école maternelle*, teachers are trained at tertiary level for three years in one of 14 higher education colleges. The Community devolves in-training budgets to the level of the school, which must organise eleven days training per year. The umbrella organisations are also required to engage in training activities and inspection of quality.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

Understandings of childhood and early education: The creation of a unified vision of services for young children aged 0-6 years is possible in the French Community, given the auspices of one Ministry. An element in that vision may be increased, paid parental leave, and a more diversified supply of services.

The need to increase supply in early care and to reinforce its educational mission. This project requires improved recruitment and training (pre-service and in-service) of care personnel

The need to value the école maternelle and its pedagogical tradition: An important aspect of that tradition has been that early learning takes primarily through play, discovery and the child's own activity.

Reinforcement of the social role of the école maternelle, and its irreplaceable role in identifying and supporting, without stigma, children with special needs or educational difficulties. Late diagnosis of special need in primary school often leads to children-in-difficulty being placed in special classes, which may reinforce their sense of failure and make a return to mainstream schooling difficult.

Greater co-operation between the school networks and the local authorities so as to make transitions for children easier between family, care, school, or out-of-school hours

Czech Republic

Auspices

Early education in the Czech Republic is almost entirely a public service. Since 1991, kindergartens (*materská škola*) have become part of the educational system, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. Regional and municipal education authorities have increasing responsibilities, however, and centres enjoy a great deal of autonomy. Financing is drawn from multiple sources - the regional school authority (teacher's salaries, books and equipment), municipalities (running costs and capital investments) and from parental fees, while funds to improve material conditions or purchase equipment and toys are often generated through sponsoring contracts with private enterprises. Some private and church kindergartens are now in operation, though on a very small scale.

In practice, there is no longer an organised daycare system for children from 0-3 years. Only 67 crèche have survived from the previous regime, administered by the Ministry of Health. Former crèche buildings have been sold or allocated to other purposes.

Developments

Since the "velvet revolution of 1989, the Czech Republic has renewed its links with its long tradition of early childhood education. There has been an impressive increase in diversification and pedagogical freedom. The understanding of education as conformity to accepted knowledge and social norms has given away to a spirit of enquiry and innovation. Decentralisation is taking place, and great efforts have been made to change the relationships between the education partners. There is a fresh appreciation of the child as a subject of rights, reflected both in the desire to lessen the pressures placed on children in pre-school institutions, and to integrate children with special needs. Pedagogical approaches and methods of work more suited to the young child's needs have been encouraged, and daily routines in nursery schools have been relaxed. Greater emphasis is placed on free play and creative expression. Innovative experiments with age-integrated classes are also current. Outreach to parents as equal partners has improved immeasurably, and men have been invited into the previously female world of nursery school teaching: (Army duty may be replaced by service as assistants in nursery schools and other institutions, bringing a young male presence - and alternative role models - to young children). Work on the preparation of a framework curriculum for the nursery school has begun. The new curriculum will orient nursery schools to offer systematic and appropriate programmes to young children, yet remain open enough to allow innovation and experimentation. The content of education will be worked out in five spheres: biological, psychological, interpersonal, socio-cultural and environmental. General competencies (personal, cognitive and operational) that children should acquire in the nursery school will be set, linked with the behaviours and knowledge expected in the first cycle of primary school.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (\$13,100 per capita).

Labour force: 69% female participation rates in labour force, of which 5.4% part-time

Parental leave: Universal paid maternity leave of 28 weeks (69% of earnings) with a flat-rate, parental leave of 4-years, taken almost exclusively by mothers

Attention to children with special educational needs before they enter compulsory school: a) *Children with disabilities:* There is growing inclusion of children with disabilities, though many special kindergartens and schools still exist, even for children with relatively light handicaps; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty level is 5.9% after redistribution, and specific and means-tested benefits are available to families with young children. c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Problems of poverty, social exclusion and education under-achievement are most acute among the Roma. Other ethnic groups, e.g. Polish, German, generally organise education in their own language. The settled Roma community constitutes 0.7% of the population, but according to estimates, numbers may rise to 2% of population if migrant Roma are included. Very high rates of unemployment (over 90%) are recorded among the group and levels of education are low compared to Czechs, 84% of whom have completed upper secondary education. Since 1993, the government has invested in preparatory classes for socially or culturally disadvantaged children of 6-7 years, whose entry into compulsory school had been delayed.

Provision

In early education, 3-6 years, the system is almost entirely public. It is now decentralised, with a great deal of autonomy given to each centre. Helped by falling fertility rates, sufficient numbers of places are available, except in some areas. Parental fees are capped at 30% of costs, and are reduced or waived for families in need. There are special supports for low-income/ethnic areas and families. Despite this, families considered to be most in need are least likely to enrol their children in pre-school settings.

0-3 years: Children in this age group are cared almost exclusively by mothers and/or by informal caregivers.

3-6 years: 66.5% of children enter public fee-paying, full-day pre-school at three years, reaching 98.4% at 5-6 years. Children whose parents are on leave have right of access to the kindergarten for 3 days every month. Kindergartens remain open eight or more hours per day.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios are in principle 12:1 but for financial reasons, are 20:1 on average and sometimes reach 25:1 or more.

Staffing and training

More than 95% of teachers in the *materská škola* have completed four years of training (15 to 19 years) in one of the 18 training schools (secondary, vocational) in the country. Particular emphasis is placed on skills in art, music and sports, areas that traditionally have been deemed important for Czech pre-schools. All graduates are female, but increasingly fewer of them actually enter the profession. Wages are low, only 76% of a primary teacher's salary, which itself is 103% of the national average wage. Further accreditation through in-service courses has not yet been organised.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

The sale or different allocation of former, well-accommodated crèche buildings and services. Before this national asset is allowed to disappear, the use of *crèches* for alternative forms of family support may be envisaged, e.g. as a drop-in centre for young parents, infant health centres, play groups, parental *crèches*, part-time care, family counselling. If the overall employment situation for women improves, a real need for such services may be felt.

Families considered to be most in need are least likely to enrol their children in pre-school settings. Despite marked improvements in outreach to parents and families, socially or culturally weak groups still have serious difficulties in trusting the municipal institutions or entering into close relationships with kindergarten staff.

Staffing and training: Attention was drawn to the feminisation and ageing of the teaching corps in the *materská škola*, and to the reluctance of young women - even those who had been trained - to embark upon kindergarten teaching as a career. There is a need to improve the wages and low status of the profession.

A national framework to make the goals of ECEC explicit and to guide practice: Attention was drawn to the impressive increase in diversification and pedagogical freedom achieved since 1989. Greater coherence in children's early learning experience may also be desirable, as many children (at least 20%) experience difficulty in the transition into primary schooling. To that end, it would be helpful if the kindergarten curriculum were linked to the primary school, which, in turn, would make pertinent use of co-constructive, discovery methods throughout the early cycle.

The need for more national research: In the light of future social and economic trends, more national research on the needs of families and children in the Czech Republic is needed to provide policy makers with reliable information about present gaps and future needs in the family and early childhood field.

Denmark

Auspices

In Denmark, services for children aged 0-6 years have traditionally been considered as an integral part of the social welfare system. A major aim today is to support, in collaboration with parents, the development of young children and provide caring and learning environments for them while their parents are at work. The Ministry of Social Affairs has the primary responsibility for national policy concerning the many different types of provision that families demand, but most policy and operational matters have for long been decentralised to local authorities. The Ministry of Education has policy responsibility for pre-school classes (5/6-7 years) and SFO (school-based, leisure-time activities) facilities. Local authorities are responsible for the adequate provision of early childhood facilities and schools, either directly or through outsourcing. They determine the goals and frameworks for work carried out in municipally funded centres, and are responsible for their supervision and evaluation. Frequently, they establish unified departments, bringing together care and education.

Developments

Despite the high coverage rates achieved by Danish ECEC services, demand continues to rise. The law requires that a childcare place should be provided for each child whose parent(s) request it, but waiting lists are still common. New investments by local authorities are meeting the challenge, and it is expected that places for all children will soon be available. Attention is also being focussed on providing places and appropriate programmes for children at risk, i.e. children with low socio-economic status, immigrant children, children from families with alcohol problems, drug-abuse, etc.). A Danish language stimulation programme is available to bilingual children and families in the years prior to compulsory school.

Qualitative developments are also taking place. The traditional division in Denmark between education and care is now being questioned, and seen as a weakness to be overcome through discussion and partnership. The debate is focused on the need to develop a common set of values, such as defining ECEC not solely in terms of play and social development, but also as “learning activities in a caring environment”. A new non-compulsory, pre-school class (6-7 years) at the start of the *Folkeskole* (the basic school) has been created, characterised by this approach. The pre-school class and an adequate school start for children are given special attention in the *Folkeskole 2000* project. With the help of their pedagogical advisors, some municipalities are pushing ahead with plans to make of their kindergartens and schools, active *learning centres*, with a focus on the learning relationship between children, their interests and the pedagogue’s role. These centres will develop their own learning plans. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark created a working group in 1996 to improve quality and develop new methods for educational work in kindergartens. Other initiatives are being considered, which include reforms in staff training and curriculum guidelines.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (26,300)

Labour force: 1998 female participation rates were 75.3% overall, of which one quarter was part-time. In 1999, participation rates for women 20-44 years, working 36 hours per week on average, reached 83%

Parental leave: Universal paid maternity leave of 28 weeks for mothers + 2 weeks paternity leave paid at unemployment benefit. Possibility of another 26 weeks at 60% of unemployment benefit. Parents returning to work after 26 weeks have the guarantee of an immediate childcare place for their child.

Attention to children with special educational needs before the attend compulsory school: a) *Children with disabilities:* Inclusion of children with disabilities in all early services and schools is customary; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty level is 5.1% after redistribution; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Immigrants (mostly from Turkey, former Yugoslavia and Pakistan) form 4.1% of the Danish population, and it is estimated that bilingual children will constitute 9% of pupils in 2001. In February 2000, the Government published an overall action plan for the improved integration of these children. It is now mandatory for local authorities to offer language-stimulation activities (15 hours per week) to bilingual children from 3-5 years. Language activities take the form of home-visiting, kindergarten language inputs, and Danish language coaching in the first years of primary education.

Provision

The system is predominantly one of mixed, public and private services, supervised and funded (from local taxes and central government grants) by local authorities. Fees are capped for parents at 30-33% of running costs, with poorer families using services free of charge or at reduced rates. Major forms of provision are:

i) Daycare facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children from 0-6 years, divided into *centre-based daycare* (crèche, age-integrated centres and kindergartens), *family daycare* (municipal childminders) and *private facilities*. In 70% of instances, daycare facilities are operated, by public, community services. Public services are supplemented by private facilities and networks (30% of provision) that offer parents further options and choices of pedagogy. To receive municipal grants, private providers must work in conjunction with the local authority, and observe regulations and operating guidelines. Daycare facilities open 12 hours per day, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and over 90% of children take a full-time place.

ii) Pre-school classes (*bornehaveklasse*) for children 5/6-7 years (7 is the compulsory school age). The pre-school class takes place in the primary school (*Folkeskole*) and is free. Teaching in the pre-school class must be developmental and play-based. Emergent literacy approaches are gaining ground in this class, which, with the first and second classes of the primary school, now forms part of the new programme “integrated school start”.

iii) School-based, leisure time facilities (*skolefritidsordninger* or SFO facilities). Out-of-school care is fee paying, but is massively enrolled, with 81% of 6-9 years.

0-1 year: Because of parental leave, parental care predominates. From six months or so, just over 22% of parents use the services of a registered family daycare, and 3% of babies are placed in age-integrated centres. Informal care outside the family is little used.

1-3 years: 68% of children are in daycare facilities in this period. Family daycare predominates (45%) especially in rural areas, with age-integrated facilities (14%) and crèche (12%) having next preference.

3-5 years: 91% of children are enrolled, with 51% in kindergartens and 32% in age-integrated centres. Free home-based programmes to help bilingual children are also in place.

5/6-7 years: 98% enrolment in free pre-school class in *Folkeskole*, with wrap around care provided for them in the kindergarten or age integrated services they have left.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios in 1999 per full-time adult were as follows: *crèche* (0-3 year olds) 3.2 children; *kindergarten* (3-7 years) 6.4 children; *age-integrated facility* (0-7 years) 5.8 children; *special daycare* 1.4 children; *out-of-school care* 9.3 children.

Staffing and training

With the exception of family daycare, all facilities have a manager and deputy-manager, both of whom must be qualified educators. *Educators* (pedagogues) - who are the lead personnel in all facilities, including pre-school - are trained for 3.5 years at tertiary level in Centres of Further Education. *Assistants* are now offered an (adult education, vocational) 18-month training course, and much in-service training is available. There is no mandatory training for family daycarers, but all receive at least three weeks training, and are supported by regular supervision and in-service training. Men make up 8% of employees in daycare, and 25% in out-of-school care. Work conditions/status of educators are considered satisfactory.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

Understandings of childhood and early education: Diverging views of early learning processes and the appropriateness of adult-led interventions are common among parents and educators, which may inhibit emergent literacy approaches in the kindergarten and prevent a smooth transition toward the *Folkeskole*, and

Coherence and co-ordination of services: Regulations, the lines of competence, funding, service delivery are clear in Denmark. It would be helpful to have further agreement on common aims for young children, improved steering of municipalities, and better articulation between kindergartens, pre-school classes, the early *Folkeskole* and the SFOs.

Issues related to staffing and training: Staffing and training seem well developed in Denmark, but concern was expressed about the difficulty of movement between the care and education sectors

Finland

Auspices

Central responsibility for the education and care of young children 0-6 years falls to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, assisted by its research agency, STAKES. Early childhood policy is intended to support the development and learning of young children and enable them to become ethically responsible members of society. The National Agency for Education has chief responsibility for the curricular orientation of the pre-school class.

Developments

The ECEC system in Finland is a well-developed and stable system much appreciated by parents. It is characterised by a sensitivity to the rights of the child and an avowed concern for equality and fairness throughout the system. One of its most notable features is the subjective and unconditional right of every child to have a place during the years, birth to seven. This unconditional right also includes the right of parents to choose a home care allowance instead of municipal daycare for their child. Services are very affordable to parents, although there was a drop-off in enrolments during the economic recession of the early 90s, when many were unemployed. Free, pre-school education for the six year olds - based on the "educare" concept in which care, education and instruction are combined - has become a reality this year. There is much commitment, across two ministries, to this pre-school reform and much effort has been invested in formulating a new curriculum that would embrace the pre-school year and the first two years of primary school. ECEC in Finland is also gaining a foothold as a concrete scientific discipline in the universities and polytechnics. Kindergarten teachers are highly trained and graduate after three to four years as Bachelors of Early Childhood Education, many of them going on to Master's level. Municipalities encourage and fund research, bringing together in common research projects, university researchers and the personnel of childcare centres and pre-schools. A new focus for research and the early childhood centres is the broader community and family context of a child's life. Greater outreach to parents is being practised, seeing them as not only clients but as valued pedagogical partners.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$22,800)

Labour force: 70% female participation, of which 13% part-time. Over 60% of mothers with a three-year old child are employed.

Parental leave: Universal 18 weeks maternity leave+26 weeks parental paid at 66% of salary. In addition, a flat-rate, three years (or partial) home care leave can be taken.

Attention to children with special educational needs before they enter compulsory school: a) *Children with disabilities:* The inclusion of children with disabilities is customary in all ECEC services, and they have priority admission to services; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty rate in Finland is 4.3% after redistribution; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Apart from the Swedish population (9%) which organises its own education and care system in Swedish, there are no significant ethnic or language minorities in Finland. Much attention and investment is devoted to the small indigenous Sami population (only 121 children under 7). New immigrants from Somali and other countries have access to immersion programmes and special courses in schools, but to date, young children from such groups do not generally attend

childcare centres. The municipalities in which there is some small concentration of immigrants, that is, in Helsinki and the surrounding municipalities, have begun to make policy to support immigrant families.

Provision

The ECEC system in Finland is mixed system combining public and private provision. In general, municipalities provide services directly through municipal daycare centres (*päiväkoti*), family daycare centres or pre-school classes (the main forms of provision), but they may also outsource to private providers (about 5% of total provision) or support voluntary services, e.g. the play groups provided by the Lutheran Church. Play groups and family circles run by the Church are much in demand, as the 1973 Act on Children's Care did not mention afternoon care. Parents may also request a private daycare allowance (700 FIM per month) to be paid by the municipality to the childminder or daycare centre of their choice.

Every child in Finland under compulsory school age (7 years) has an unconditional right to early care and education, to be provided by the local authority once parental leave comes to an end. This right is scrupulously respected in Finland, and problems of access are found most usually in isolated rural areas and among the new immigrant groups. Affordability is not an issue, as parents are required to pay only 15% of costs, the rest being subsidised by state and local authority taxes. Parents pay 11 months only per annum, although their child's place is available during holidays also. The highest fee cannot be more than FIM 1,100 per month (c. \$150). Pre-school class hours for the 6-7 year olds are free (compulsory school age is 7 years).

0-1 year: Almost all children are cared for by parents or through informal family care

1-3 years: About ??% of children are in ECEC services during this period, ? % in family daycare and ? in childcare centres. Services are open 10-12 hours daily, and almost all children take full-time places.

3-6 years: ??% of children from this age group attend, generally full-time in childcare centres

6-7 years - pre-school classes: 78% of children currently attend pre-school classes, either in the kindergarten (99%) or in schools (10%, but a growing trend). Forecasts predict that about 90% of the age group (60,000) will participate in the new pre-school class amounting to 18-20 hours per week (700-760 hours annual), which began in August 2000

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios are low in Finland: at least 1 trained adult for every 3 children under-three; 1:7 for over three year olds, and 1:4 (max) in family daycare.

Staffing and training

Lead educational staff in *päiväkoti* settings are trained as pedagogues (that is, primarily, as educators of young children with a social support role vis-à-vis parents and communities) for over three years at tertiary level. Auxiliary staff have an upper-secondary qualification and are trained nursery assistants or paediatric nurses. Heads of centres receive further training. Family daycarers are not required to have a qualification, but they are well-protected with the same social benefits as other ECEC staff. At present, a vocational training qualification of 40 credits is being planned for them.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

The possible negative effects of the prolonged child home care allowance. Many of the children, whom policy-makers would like to see come early into the system, remain at home. The position of their mothers in the labour market is weakened, and domestic stereotypes are reinforced.

The weakness of provision for children outside school hours: The unconditional entitlement of children to daycare did not include afternoon care. Consequently, the majority of municipalities excluded out-of-school care from their list of responsibilities. The parishes (with trained personnel) and private organisations often provide afternoon care, but the leadership and funding of the municipalities is needed.

The variability of in-service training: Access to in-service training opportunities depends essentially on the interest shown by municipalities. A more stable base for training needs to be found.

Further attention to the issue of monitoring the ECEC system and evaluating quality: The 1994 Local Government Act decentralised much responsibility for ECEC to the municipalities, generally with good effect. However, the need for a national steering system is felt to orient municipal policy and determine the overall societal needs of Finnish children and families.

Greater co-operation between the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs/STAKES and the education sector, following the model of the recent curricular reforms

Italy

Auspices

Policy responsibility for ECEC in Italy is split between the Ministry of Education for the *scuola materna* (nursery school) catering for the 3-6 year olds, and the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Solidarity for the *asili nidi* (childcare centres) catering for infants and toddlers. The regions and the municipalities have also defined responsibilities. In response to community demand, municipalities may offer to provide and operate services, using part of their own funding. The region supplements municipal budgets, through the distribution of the employer's 1% contribution to social funds (devoted, in principle, to infants and toddlers). The region is also responsible for financing buildings and training. The Ministry of Education is responsible for educational orientation, quality inspection and evaluation of the *scuola materna* system, but its regulations are not necessarily applied in non-state *scuole materne*.

Developments

Though reaching only 6% of children, several ECEC programmes in Italy for children under-three are recognised as outstanding. Because of divisions of competencies, these programmes are predominantly regional and local. A concerted effort has not yet been made by governments to bring successful programmes to scale across Italy, although almost half the children in the age-group 1-3 years are cared outside the home by relatives and informal babysitters. A proposal has been made to confide responsibility for the whole age group to the Ministry of Education, but the proposal is still being debated. The present government has supported some important regional and national initiatives, e.g. the twinning exchanges between municipalities in the north and south, with the aim of sharing knowledge and expertise in creating and managing ECEC projects. A major national initiative is the current reform in staff training. In future, co-ordinators of the *asili nidi* will have a 4-year university degree, and staff will require a 3-year tertiary diploma from teacher training colleges.

Developments in the 3-6 field are also far-reaching. Again, a staff-training reform is under way: in the *scuola materna* system, and teachers will have in the future a 4-year university degree. Enrolment rates in the *scuole materne* are climbing steadily higher, and achieve mass participation (c. 90%) for the four year-old cohort. The Ministry of Education, municipalities and the private providers are moving toward greater collaboration. An increasing number of *scuole materne* (58%) are now under State control, yet enjoying more autonomous management (Bassani Law). Many *scuole materne*, funded through the ASCANIO project, have experimented with new interpretations of school organisation, curriculum methodologies and evaluation techniques..

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$21,800)

Labour force: 45% female participation, of which 22.4 % (growing) is part-time.

Parental leave: 5 months maternity leave at 80% earnings + 10 months parental leave at 30% earnings (taken almost exclusively by women).

Attention to children with special educational needs before their entry into school: a) *Children with disabilities:* Since 1982, general inclusion of children with disabilities into ECEC and schools is the rule, with reduced group sizes and special needs teachers at their disposal. b) *Low SES children:* The child

poverty level in Italy is 20.5% after redistribution (OECD average is 11.9%). c) *Ethnic and bilingual children*: The Ministry of Social Solidarity has increased investment and programmes for immigrant groups, estimated over one million, with many Moroccan, Albanian and Roma children at risk.. It is reported that many immigrant children are on waiting lists - with Italian children - for entry into *scuole materne* in Rome (6000 children) and other large urban centres.

Provision

Three main types of provision are found in Italy:

i) The *asilo nido* for children under threes, which enrolls about 6% (declining) of children, and is open 10-12 hours daily. Most of the provision is sponsored and funded by municipalities, generally in the north of Italy, where levels of female work force participation and childcare provision reach northern European levels, e.g. the city of Bologna enrolls 30% of the age-group 0-3 years. Fees differ according to municipality and the ability of parents to pay, and range from 90-460 Euros monthly, that is, on average, 12% of disposable income.

ii) The *scuola materna* for the three to six year olds which enrolls in the year before entry into compulsory school (age 6) over 90% of children. About 57% of *scuole materne* are now under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The private sector organises and operates 29% of *scuole materne*, most of which are confessional, and funded by parental fees and to some extent by the regions. Municipalities fund and organise a further 14% of early education provision. The *scuola materna* offers a full day programme, from 8.30 a.m. to 16.30 p.m. from September to June, with municipal services generally offering summer programmes. Attendance at state and municipal *scuola materna* (combined, c.71% of provision) is free, except for meals. Modest fees are charged in the confessional *scuola materna* (19% of provision), as these services receive some regional funds. Other private providers (c. 11% of provision) may charge higher fees, but many private services are, in fact, non-profit.

iii) *Integrated municipal services*. Typically, these services combine care and education, and do not perpetuate the division between younger and older children. They are considered essentially as educational services for children 1-6, as for example, in Reggio Emilia. Municipal services may also include new service typologies that are characterised by integrated, inter-generational approaches, with outreach to families and children who normally would not have opportunities to interact and socialise with others.

0-1 year: most care is parental, supplemented by informal family care;

1-3 years: Children are looked after in the following ways: 27% home care; 48% relatives or informal baby-minding; 15% by a child-minder in the home; 6% in *asili nidi* (open full day for 11 months); and 2% each fathers and family care.

3-6 years: from 70% - 90% of children (depending on region) attend *scuole materne* from three years, reaching a national coverage of over 96% in year 5-6.

Child-staff ratios: Law 285 of March 1999 sets a ratio of 7:1 in the nido, 8:1 for complementary services outside the home, and 3:1 for services inside the home. Ratios are higher in the *scuola materna*: 20-28 children per teacher (a much higher ratio than the 10:1 ratios of the primary school).

Staffing and training

Except in some municipalities, the childcare sector has traditionally been characterised by low levels of entry into the profession, poor training, and low pay. At the moment, radical reforms are taking place, in particular in the staff training field (see Developments above). In the *scuola materna*, teachers are currently paid at the same rates as primary teachers, and conditions of work are good. The State provides them with many opportunities for in-service training. Conditions for staff in the *nidi* are much less satisfactory. Although often as highly trained, these staff have less pay, longer working hours, less status and access to in-service training than teachers in the *scuola materna*. Limited opportunities for advancement can lead to high rates of turnover and little motivation to take on professional development courses.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

Understandings of childhood and early education: in terms of state intervention, the early childhood system in Italy has been focussed most strongly on the 3-6 year olds. There is an urgent need for the State to take on responsibility to meet the real needs of under-3 children and their parents.

Co-ordination of administrations and services: Fragmentation of responsibility has been a longstanding obstacle to efficacy. A need is perceived for increased co-ordination of policy formulation and planning both vertically (state, regional and municipal levels) and horizontally (across state, municipal and private providers). More collaborative projects between the different partners may be useful, e.g. creation of an inter-party network of experts to guide the new teacher training initiatives.

The effectiveness of policy formulation and its actual outreach to the municipalities and regions. Basic texts governing ECEC services are not necessarily applicable in parts of the private system. More integrated in-service training for administrators and teachers from the different networks is recommended.

The low provision of publicly-funded after-school care and leisure-time care needs attention, as in some parts of the country, non-state *scuole materne* and elementary schools are open only in the morning.

The Netherlands

Auspices

ECEC policy and provision in the Netherlands is a shared responsibility between national, provincial and local governments. The national government takes on those tasks that can be more efficiently organised at national level, e.g. legislation, rules and regulations, developing policy frameworks, formulating national standards and attainment targets, promoting innovations, national monitoring and evaluations of quality. At central government level, two ministries have major responsibility for young children. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), has responsibility for family support, socio-educational activities and the funding and supervision of out-of-home childcare. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OcnW) is responsible for children in primary education from 4-6 years (obligatory schooling begins at 5 years but up to 6 years, children remain in the early years cycle). In addition to the different levels of local government, other major bodies are expected to play a role in decision making and implementing early childhood policy, viz. the employers, unions, parent, youth and other professional organisations.

Developments

After a period of decentralisation, the Dutch Government is moving toward an integrated framework of services for young children from 0-6 years, crossing traditional education and social welfare lines, and steering local authorities toward national goals. Much work has been done to tighten up regulatory frameworks, training regimes and quality control. National standards and attainment targets are becoming better known. A special focus is given to ethnic or bilingual children 'at risk', in whom large government and local authority investments are being made. Another striking feature of Dutch early childhood policy has been the use of an experimental phase to trial innovative programmes. A number of such programmes, including intensive pre-primary early education programmes, are now being mainstreamed to the advantage of children both in school and outside. Dutch governments have succeeded in involving employers in the ECEC sector as a major funder of childcare provision.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP: (per capita \$21,800)

Labour force rates: 62.7% female participation rates, of which 54.8% part-time.

Parental leave: 16 weeks maternity leave at 100% earnings + non-paid, partial leave (must work 50% of regular working hours per week) up to six months. Family -friendly work policies have been introduced and initiatives to bring flexibility into the length and timing of work hours.

Attention to children with special educational needs before their entry into compulsory school: a) *Children with disabilities:* With a growing awareness of the benefits of including children with light handicaps in ECEC, more children are being integrated into mainstream services. Subsequent special education is well funded, though often apart; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty rate is 7.7% after redistribution. c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* The immigrant population is significant in the Netherlands: 13% of children between 0-5 years are from ethnic or bilingual backgrounds, mainly concentrated in the large cities. Government and local authorities make important investments in social integration and targeted educational programmes.

Provision

Three “circles of provision” have been created around the child and family i) *General provision* for young children aged 0-6 years; ii) *interventions* toward families and children who need special attention, and iii) *specialised or intensive forms of help for children with special education needs* (SEN). Provision is private (both for-profit and non-profit) but publicly co-funded. Employers are an important stakeholder, either setting up their own childcare services or, more usually, purchasing or renting “company places” in childcare centres. These places represented about 50% of all childcare places for 0-4 year olds in 1998. The aim of government is to fund childcare equally through (local) government, employers and parental fees.

General provision includes *childcare centres* (generally full-day or half-day for 0-4 years, used by c. 17% of children); *playgroups* (used by over 50% of 2-4 year olds); *family daycare* (?%); *out-of-school care* for the 4-12 year olds (used by c. 5% of children); and *primary education* from 4-6 years in the *basisschool* (100% enrolment). Primary education is free. Two-thirds of schools are privately managed, but all are fully publicly funded.

Playgroups are the most popular form of provision in the Netherlands, usually established by private bodies with the legal status of foundations. Many of these foundations are independent; others are part of a larger co-operative structure, frequently a childcare organisation or general welfare foundation. Children usually visit the playgroups twice a week (2-3 hours per visit) to play with their peers or participate in an intervention programme. Almost all playgroup provision is subsidised by local government, but parental contributions are also demanded, often income-related. Special efforts are directed to children at risk (low SES, ethnic minorities in both playgroups and primary schools. In addition to the Law on funding education disadvantage, further significant investments are planned – 100 million guilders each by central and local governments – in the effort to expand playgroups or provide more intensive programmes in schools and outside school.

Though the parental share of total costs is high (over 40%), childcare costs are subsidised by government and employers. Cost ceilings are calculated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Depending on income, costs to parents range from 6% - 21% of net family income for a full-time place in childcare. Parental fees are related to the actual use of childcare, and some costs can be deducted from income tax. Childcare provision mainly targets double-income families, resulting in a marked tendency for well-to-do parents to use services more than low-income families. Despite great progress in the nineties (a fourfold increase in places), the demand for daycare places still outstrips supply in the Netherlands.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios are set for each age cohort. One group leader (MBO or HBO level) must be assigned to every 4 children, ages 0-1; to 5 children ages 1-2; to 6 children ages 2-3, to 8 children, ages 3-4 and to 10 children, ages 4-12. Staff ratios in the early years of the basic school are higher, but have been reduced recently to 20:1. As large investments are being made to improve general quality and to integrate more effectively children at risk, it is probable that class sizes may be reduced further.

Staff Training and Ratios

The status of staff, almost wholly female, has traditionally been low, particularly in the daycare sector. Acute recruitment problems and staff shortages are now imminent but efforts are being made to address the issue through raising wages and improving secondary labour conditions. ECEC workers in contact with children must have, in principle, a higher professional qualification, either a HBO (four-year tertiary, non-university qualification) or an MBO (a senior secondary level, vocational education qualification of 2-3 years). Quality regulations with regard to childcare also apply to the out-of-school care and play-groups, including staff qualifications. In the education sector, teaching staff are trained for four years in the PABOs

or primary teaching training colleges, as polyvalent teachers who can work in the entire 4-12 year age range. They take, however, a specialisation for either the age group 4-8 years or 5-12 years. Regardless of what class they teach, all teachers are now paid at equal rates.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

Coherence and co-ordination of services: During decentralisation, the co-ordination and coherence of the system was often stretched in terms of management, categorisation and training of personnel, equitable access and quality control.

Understandings of childhood and early education, during the early 90s, mainly seen from a protection and care angle.

Greater support to parents: The funding of Dutch ECEC services relies heavily on parents in terms of fees, opportunity costs and daily time devoted to children, a contribution borne in particular by mothers. The review recommends a reduction of parental costs, supported by expanded parental leave and the provision of more out-of-school care.

Staffing and training: The imminent staff shortages are due to a combination of factors, but low status, uncertainty about career paths, poor work conditions and wages and are issues that merit attention

Norway

Auspices

The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs has responsibility for schools, out-of-school care and the training of kindergarten staff. Responsibility for ECEC policy lies with the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (BFD), and within the ministry, to the Department of Child and Youth Affairs. BFD co-ordinates all matters on early childhood and has convened a cross-ministerial Committee for Child and Youth issues, which meets regularly at senior official level. In recent years, much responsibility has been devolved to Norway's 435 *kommuner* or municipalities, which for the most part, have unified school and early childhood services into one department. The county governor administers the State grants to *barnehager* and provides the local authorities with information. There is a national regulatory framework for *barnehager*, the *Barnehager Act*, 1995. An important *Framework Plan for Barnehager* was elaborated in 1996, which provides guidelines to *barnehager* concerning values and objectives, curricular aims, and pedagogical approaches.

Developments

In Norway, an integrated system of services for children from 0 to 6, with a well-established and quite extensive system of publicly-funded *barnehage* exists for many years. Underpinning the system is an interesting and well articulated vision of children, both individually and as a social group, of their place in society and their relationship with the environment.

This year, the Norwegian Government has committed itself to increased funding of *barnehager*, so as to avoid excluding certain categories of children because of prohibitive parental costs. By 2005, government grants will cover 50% of costs, municipalities will underwrite 30%, leaving a maximum 20% to parents. In addition, as access had been variable across Norway, legislation has been passed (effective 2002), obliging all municipalities to provide access to children, regardless of location. Full access for children under three has been reached this year, with full access for all children being postponed to 2003. Plans to recruit up to 20% male workers in the *barnehager* have been renewed.

Quality issues are also being addressed in these new initiatives. A new, three-year programme (2000 - 200???) has been announced to improve overall quality in the *barnehage*. Special attention will be paid to children with special educational needs, recruitment will be broadened and improved, while parents as consumers will be consulted more widely about their needs and expectations with regard to opening hours and programmes. The *barnehage* has an important role in terms of preventive child welfare and supports will be provided to enable it to accompany effectively children with disabilities, low SES and bilingual children

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$27,600)

Labour force rates: The female participation rate is 76.3% of which 36% (declining) is part-time.

Parental leave support: Universal 52 weeks maternity leave at 80% earning (or 42 weeks at 100%) + 1 month paternal leave. Time accounts are used to enable parents to combine partial parental leave with flexible work hours.

Attention to children with special educational needs before they enter compulsory schooling: a) *Children with disabilities:* General inclusion of children with disabilities, who have a priority right to services. In 1997, nearly 2% of children in *barnehager* had a disability, and 3% received additional support. b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty rates in Norway is 3.9% after redistribution; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Norway has an indigenous ethnic group, the Sami who constitute 1.7% of the population. Sami language kindergartens are funded generously whenever there is a concentration of Sami families. New immigrant groups constitute 3% of the population, with 28,000 children in primary schools (just less than 6%) registered as non-native speaking children. Less than 40% of these children attend a *barnehager* in the larger towns. The government has funded the hiring of minority ethnic workers in *barnehager*, but largely as bilingual assistants rather than as pedagogical staff.

Provision

47% of *barnehager* are public (municipal) and cater for 58% of children using the service. Private *barnehager* are more numerous but smaller, and cater for 42% of children. Both receive subsidies from the government amounting to 39% (public) and 36% (private) for their costs. Municipalities also have the duty to provide funding to their own and private providers, but often fail to support adequately private providers. Costs to parents range - depending on the municipality, income and the type of care chosen - from 28% - 45% of actual costs (see Developments above). In addition to family allowances and lone parent (22% of families) allowances, all parents are allowed tax deductions to cover care and kindergarten costs. Research shows that low-income parents pay proportionately higher for a place in a kindergarten (c. 19.5% of income) compared to middle- (11%) and high-income families (c. 8%). There is also a Cash Benefit scheme which grants a parent who looks after a child at home, an equivalent amount to the state subsidy per child paid to kindergartens, i.e. about \$400 per month. In principle, there are sufficient places for all children, as the lowering of the school age to 6 years freed many places for the younger children. Provision rates are as follows:

0-1 year: Care is predominantly home care by parents. Only 3% of children are in care;

1-4 years: Over 40% of enrolment. Given the high participation of mothers in the work force, it may be presumed that many parents are choosing to use family and informal child-minding.

4-6 years: Currently, demand is considered fully met with enrolments of just over 75% of the age group.

Child-staff ratios: Normally, there should be one trained teacher for 30 children. Younger children???

Staffing and training

Head teachers and teachers in kindergartens have 3-4 years tertiary level training, at one of 17 tertiary level, vocational state colleges. About a third of trained staff in Norwegian *barnehager* are ECEC teachers, a relatively low proportion of lead personnel. Further, because of recruitment shortages, only 80% have a formal qualification. Their status, pay and working condition compare unfavourably to those of primary school teachers. Assistants who make up the bulk of the staff, have no particular qualification, but with the 1994 reform of upper secondary education, assistants in the future will have the secondary level diploma of "child and youth worker". Men make up 6.6% of total kindergarten staff. The aim is to bring this proportion to 20%.

OECD Policy Issues

Issues of equity and access: Inequalities exist both in access (provision varies with respect to areas and social groups) and funding (private *barnehager* receiving much less support from municipalities than public). The developments mentioned - with a commitment to more government spending, and greater attention to SEN children are important contributions to addressing access inequalities.

Issues of diversity - Though difficult in all countries, such issues should be confronted at the kindergarten level, though more multi-cultural recruitment and through a greater emphasis in programmes on tolerance and anti-racist practice.

Issues of staffing: Although well-trained, only a third of staff in Norwegian *barnehager* are qualified teachers. Their status, pay and working conditions compare unfavourably to those of primary school teachers. Staffing in the SFOs (school-based, leisure-time activities), an expanding sector, is also unsatisfactory, as staff have little or no training. The intent to pursue better gender balance in staffing is noteworthy, and shows an awareness of the child's need for both men and women as role models.

The possible negative effects of the Cash Benefit Scheme, which may encourage families that most need good quality services for their children, not to use them.

Issues of evaluation and monitoring: Although the Ministry collects relevant statistics and indicators, and supports a range of research, the amount of government funding allocated to ECEC research, development and evaluation activities remains modest, compared to the size and importance of the sector.

Portugal

Auspices

The national ECEC network in Portugal is public and private, and overall policy responsibility for both networks is shared between two ministries. The Ministry of Education is responsible for pedagogical quality in all settings, and for the funding of kindergarten educational contexts for the age group 3-6 years. The Ministry of Labour and Solidarity has charge of family support, provision of socio-educational activities and the funding and supervision of out-of-home childcare, for children aged three months and older. A move toward decentralisation has recently taken place. Many local decisions and policy matters are now being decided by municipalities, the Regional Directorates of Education and the Regional Social Security Centres, which have the responsibility of enabling the implementation of national ECEC policies in their regions. To ensure co-ordination, a *Bureau for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education* was established in 1996, bringing together the major ECEC stakeholders, including the National Association of Municipalities and the larger non-profit or voluntary providers, such as the Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS). The 1997 National Framework Law provides the definitions, major policy aims, orientations and implementation strategies for pre-school (kindergarten) education. Although the Law perceives pre-school as the first stage of lifelong learning, family responsibility for children is emphasised.

Developments

Starting from a low base, Portugal has made notable progress in recent years in ECEC policy formulation and implementation. The whole sector has effectively been reformed, and the pre-school budget has more than doubled. A government *Programme for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education* was drafted in 1996, followed one year later by the 1997 *Framework Law* which co-ordinates the hitherto diverse provision for young children, and includes for the first time the three to six year-olds within the realm of Basic Education. The government programme intended that the expansion and development of pre-school provision should take place in co-ordination with municipal, private and social welfare institutions, with central government assuming a guiding and regulatory role. The ensuing increase in coverage has been remarkable, going in the pre-school sector from 57.5% coverage in 1995 to over 77% in 1999. Free access to a 5-hour session has now been accorded to 5-year olds, and is planned for 4-year olds in the near future. Much attention has been devoted to staff training and status, and Portuguese *educadores* are now required to have a four-year, higher education degree. Curriculum guidelines have been formulated and issued, and there is growing public interest in provision for 0-3 year old children.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$16,500)

Labour force: 65.2% female participation, of which 15.8% part-time.

Parental leave: Universal 18 weeks maternity leave paid 100% of earnings + 6 months unpaid parental leave.

Attention to children with special educational needs, before they enter compulsory school: a) *Children with disabilities:* There is growing inclusion of children with disabilities in all branches of education; b) *Child poverty rates* reach 24% after redistribution (OECD average is 11.9%). c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* There are sizeable immigrant minorities, centred especially around Lisbon. Several social integration

programmes with an educational component have been sponsored by the High Commission for Ethnic Minorities, government ministries and municipalities. Children at risk are given priority entrance into some services.

Provision

Children from three months to three years can attend childcare centres (11% of children) or family daycare (either nannies or family crèches - together 1.5% of children). Children from 3-6 years generally attend kindergarten or *jardins de infância*. Average costs to parents for childcare amount to c. 11% of an average aggregate family salary. In addition, the State through the Ministry of Labour heavily subsidises family support components such as meals, medical supervision, socio-cultural activities. Families also receive tax exemption for various educational expenses. Pre-school education is free for 5-year olds and will become free to 4-year olds in the coming year.

0-3 years: Almost 90% of children cared for by their families or in informal care arrangements; 12% in some form of full-day crèche or family daycare;

For the age group *3-6 years*, enrolment rates in *jardins de infância* are as follows: *3-4 years:* 60% enrolled. *4-5 years:* 75% and from *5-6 years:* 90% are enrolled. Community centres, itinerant provision and socio-educational activities are also available to children on a small scale, after kindergarten hours. *Jardins de infância*, open from 5-6 hours daily (depending on auspices) and vary greatly in terms of quality. The Ministry of Education has introduced a *Curriculum Framework* to improve pedagogical method and content.

Child-staff ratios: Child-staff ratios in *jardins* are: 15:1 for 3-year olds and 20-25 children to one teacher. In the crèches, ratios of up to 10 children per adult professional are practised.

Staffing and training

All settings should have a pedagogical director, and each class a qualified kindergarten teacher (*educador*). Crèches are staffed by *educadores* (see below), nurses and social workers, all of whom have tertiary-level, professional qualifications. They are assisted by auxiliary workers who are not required to have a particular qualification. In the *jardins de infância*, the *educadores* or kindergarten teachers are the lead staff. They are required to complete a four-year university degree as polyvalent educators. *Educadores* have the same pay conditions as primary school teachers, but pay levels and conditions of work may be considerably reduced when they work in IPSS crèches in the social sector.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

Coherence and co-ordination of services: In the early childhood field, the tradition of multiple and overlapping levels of decision making tends to diffuse accountability and may render national policy less effective.

Understandings of childhood and early education: Pre-school in Portugal has tended toward formal structured learning, aiming at rather narrow cognitive outcomes, rather than on developing autonomy and the disposition to learn. The new curriculum guidelines, new inspection approaches and appropriate self-evaluation are expected to help.

Accountability, self-evaluation and inspection: Greater emphasis needs to be placed by ministries and local authorities on the contractual obligations that receiving subsidies brings, such as the presentation of verifiable evidence of value for money, target achievement, impact or outcome measures. Likewise, quality could be improved with more systematic and effective self-evaluation procedures for settings and staff, with the necessary external moderation, support and validation.

Staff training and status: Great progress has been made in pre-service training of staff. The effects of the shift toward an education approach could be disseminated even more widely through organising in-training between sectors and providers.

Children with special educational needs: Children with severe disabilities may be diagnosed too late, at primary school age. The important role of the early childhood centre for preventive child welfare is not always appreciated.

Research: Further research on the quality of diverse forms of provision would help policy makers.

Sweden

Auspices

Auspices for young children 0-6 are unified in Sweden. Responsibility for central policy, for the goals, guidelines and financial framework of ECEC lies solely with the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science. Distinctions between daycare and kindergarten were removed by the 1998 School Act, which sees all services for young children from 1-5 as 'pre-school' and from 5-6 years as 'pre-school class'. Like the shifting of responsibility for the sector toward the Ministry of Education some years earlier, this Act signals - and reinforces - a major shift of understanding in Sweden with regard to early childhood services. The School Act also devolves major responsibilities to municipalities. Municipalities have the duty to provide sufficient numbers of pre-school and leisure-time centres and places, of monitoring the quality of ECEC services and of providing sufficient resources. The National Agency for Education is responsible for overall evaluation, data collection, development and supervision of ECEC at central and regional levels.

Developments

Several far-reaching developments have taken place in ECEC in Sweden over the last years. In addition to moving the sector into the sphere of education, the system has been much expanded and reformed. The right of every child to a place "within reasonable limit" (defined as not more than three months) has now been achieved in almost all municipalities. The condition formerly limiting this right, i.e. the need for parents to be employed or have student status, is about to be removed. Universal and free pre-school for five-year olds has become a reality and, if a draft law before Parliament passes, will be extended to all four-year olds. For children from bilingual backgrounds, a free three-hour session every morning is available from the age of three. Fee variability across municipalities, which sometimes hindered low-income parents from using services, has been countered in the draft law, which will introduce a low flat, parental fee for services. The municipalities will be compensated for loss of revenue by central government. Much effort has been invested also into improving quality, particularly toward the top end of the system. A *Curriculum for Pre-school* was elaborated in 1997-98, linking into the curricula for primary and secondary schools, and providing a common view of knowledge, development and learning. From the point of view of the Swedish State, it sets out the foundation values for the pre-school, and the tasks, goals and guidelines for pre-school activities. The means by which those goals should be attained are not prescribed. Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the after school care centre is emphasised. A new proposal would extend the pre-service training of *pedagogues*, the lead personnel in the pre-schools, by another six months to allow a common psycho-pedagogical training with teachers and leisure time pedagogues.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$23,000)

Labour force rates: 72.6% female participation, of which 22% part-time. For women with children between 0-6 years, the participation rate is 78%, of which 46% is part-time.

Parental leave: Universal 10 weeks maternity leave before birth at 100% earnings + 2 weeks paternity (80%) + 18 months paid 80% of earnings for a year and 60 SEK daily for six months. There is great flexibility about taking this leave full or part-time. 30 days non-transferable leave is allowed to fathers.

Attention to children with special educational need before they enter compulsory education: a) *Children with disabilities:* Children with disabilities have a priority right to services and are well integrated; b) *Low SES children:* The child poverty rate after redistribution is 2.4%, the lowest in OECD countries; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* Sweden has a growing immigrant population (? %), e.g. 40,000 refugee children between 1-6 years were given asylum from 1990-95. Over 90% of municipalities have special programmes for these children, including mother-tongue programmes. Government has also made funds available to provide daily, a free three hour session of daycare for bilingual children from the age of three.

Provision

All children 1-12 years have a right to childcare, as long as parents work or study. This condition of employment has been questioned, as in 1997, there were 59,000 children with a mother who was unemployed or on parental leave. (As explained above in *Developments*, efforts are now being made to remove the condition.). Most pre-school provision is provided directly by municipalities in daycare centres, but there is a 12% municipal provision in family daycare (especially in rural areas). A 13% private provision of daycare centres by parent and personnel co-operatives, churches, corporations and other providers, also exists. Except for parental fees, private provision is funded by the municipalities and contractually, is expected to meet the basic standards of public childcare, although without the obligation to follow the *Pre-school Curriculum*. Currently, parents may pay between 2% and 20% of income for childcare, depending on their income and municipality fees. To reduce disparities between municipalities and provide greater support to families with young children, there is a proposal before Parliament to have free pre-school for all children from the age of 4 years. Further costs would be capped at 3%, 2% and 1% of income for the first, second and third child. Enrolment rates are as follows:

0-1 year: Almost all children are looked after by a parent at home.

1-5 years: 61% of children attend a full-day pre-school, with a further 12% in family daycare;

5-6 years: 91% of children attend the pre-school class, with another 7% already in compulsory school.

56% of children from 6-9 years are enrolled in leisure -time centres. In addition, there are also open pre-schools that offer a service to children and families (often low-income, immigrant) for a few hours every day. In rural areas, some of these drop-in centres are being transformed into family resource centres. The National Agency for Education is preparing guidelines for the conduct of these centres and family daycare.

Child-staff ratios: In pre-school centres, the present ratio is 5.6 children per adult. In pre-school class, the average ratio practised is ???

Staffing and training

98% of staff in Swedish pre-school centres are trained to work with children. Each centre must have a director, with a university teaching or pedagogue qualification. Pedagogues or pre-school teachers make up 60% of the personnel in pre-schools. Like leisure-time pedagogues, they require a 3.5 years tertiary degree from a higher level college or university. The pedagogues are assisted by child minders (38% of personnel) who currently, are given a senior secondary, three-year vocational formation in 'Children and Leisure-time Activities'. Some older staff have no formal qualification, but the current career ladder has various points of entry for childminders to take up higher training leading to pedagogue status. Family daycarers are not required to have a qualification, but 72% have either a child's nurse certificate or have received training (50-100 hours of mandatory courses) from their municipal employers. The National Agency for Education is recommending to municipalities training equivalent to daycare child-minders. Leisure-time staff are also

highly trained - at university level - unlike many other countries. In-service training is well developed for centre-based kindergarten and leisure-time staff, but less well for family day-carers. About 5% of pre-school personnel are men, 60% are pedagogues and 35% are certified child minders.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were

Quality issues: Family daycare needs to be regarded as a more integral part of the system, and the necessary supports, monitoring and training provided to family daycarers;

Research issues: Sweden has a rich tradition in research on early childhood. The OECD review team recommended further research on a number of issues that could be of use to the international community.

United Kingdom (England)

Auspices

Responsibility for ECEC policy in England is shared between national and local government. Historically, services for children from birth to age three were in the province of the Department of Social Security, while the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) had responsibility for children 3-5 years. In an effort to have better articulation of policy, and to overcome the division between education and care, the responsibility for implementing policy and delivering planned outcomes was assigned to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). A new Children's Unit has recently been established at Cabinet level to co-ordinate the work of the major ministries in favour of children. The OECD review focused on England, but the review team also visited Scotland which has taken a slightly different approach to ECEC policy. Please see the UK Country Note for more details on Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Developments

Since 1997, the Labour Government has launched an unprecedented effort to increase investment in families and young children, and to develop a wide-ranging plan of action that will expand and reform the early years system. In May 1998, a *National Childcare Strategy* was announced, to be implemented by locally based, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships working in concert with the local education and social services authorities. Special funding for disadvantaged areas has been awarded through the *Sure Start* initiative, in which funding for Early Excellence Centres has recently been integrated. A *Childcare Tax Credit* (CTC) for working parents (minimum, 16 hours per week, to be included in wages) has also been instituted, targeted at low-income families.³⁹ The Early Years Directorate, a new arm of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), has been instituted to formulate and inspect national standards, to ensure that all children receive good quality service, and that providers are clear about the standards they must meet. Already, the accumulation of these initiatives is radically altering the picture of early years provision in England. It is estimated that 1.6 million new childcare places will have been created by 2004, and a further 80,000 childcare workers recruited. In addition, local education authorities are now required to provide an early education place (of two-and-a-half hours daily) for all 4-year olds by 2001 (target already reached), and for all 3-4 year olds by September 2004. Provision for 80% of these new places will be outsourced to playgroups, voluntary and private providers.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$22,300)

Labour force rates: 67.2% female participation, of which 41.2% is part-time

Parental leave: Universal 18 weeks paid maternity leave + entitlement to further unpaid 22 weeks + unpaid 4 weeks yearly for three years, until child reaches 5 years. A further extension of parental leave is being considered.

Attention to children with special educational needs before their entry into compulsory schooling: a) *Children with disabilities:* The growing awareness of the benefits of mainstreaming children with disabilities is leading to their increased inclusion in ECEC services. Recently, the government has

³⁹ The CTC can be worth £70 per week (c.\$100) or meet up to a maximum of 70% the costs of registered childcare.

announced a significant increase in investment for these children; b) *Low SES children*: The child poverty rate after redistribution is 19.8% (OECD average: 11.9%). About 23% of children under 6 are being raised by a lone parent. c) *Ethnic and bilingual children*: 6% of the British population is composed of ethnic minorities (esp. London, West Midlands where the proportion may rise to 15%). As research indicates that immigrant children are seriously underachieving in education, policies to prevent discrimination and racism have been strengthened, and very significant investment made in the Sure Start programme, designed to support disadvantaged families and their children from 0-4 years.

Provision

Compared to most other European countries, ECEC provision in the UK is starting from a low base. In general, children 0-3 of working parents are cared for by private childminders, playgroups and day nurseries, and are not eligible for public funding, unless they qualify for special services or are considered to be seriously at risk. From 3-4 years, almost all children tend to be in playgroups or nursery schools. All four year-olds are in state-funded (local authority or maintained) nursery school provision or primary reception classes, operated mostly by local authorities, while five-year olds are in primary and reception classes. Provision rates are as follows:

0-1 year: Almost all children are cared for by parents or, informally, by relatives and childminders;

1-3 years: Care provision is mostly private, e.g. childminders or day nurseries, and provision statistics on a full-time equivalence basis are not available. 20% of 2-year olds attend a playgroup, two-thirds of which are run by church or voluntary associations, and one-third by private persons or agencies.

3-4 years: c. 90% participate in some form of early education programme. 55% of 3-year olds attend a playgroup and 29% of the age group are in nursery school or nursery class, generally for 2.5 hours per day.

4-5 years (compulsory education begins at 5 years): All children have an early education place. Local education authorities currently provide 59% of early education places for 3- and 4- year olds, mainly through nursery schools and nursery classes (2.5 hours daily during school terms), and reception classes (6.5 hours daily, from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., during school term). The private sector (generally companies or trusts) provides about 30% of places in independent, fee-charging schools, while community and voluntary agencies provide a further, non-profit 9%.

Child-staff ratios: 4:1 in opportunity groups and special schools; 4:1 and over in local authority nurseries, depending on the age of the child; 8:1 in private day nurseries, playgroups and nursery schools; 10:1 in nursery schools with trained teachers and nurses; 13: in nursery classes and early years units; 30:1 (but in practice, much less) in reception classes.

Staffing and training

A significant divide in training levels exists between early care (0-5 years) and early education (3-5 years) personnel. The majority of childcare workers - and classroom assistants in the reception classes - have no formal training, except for some hours required by a few local authorities. Only 20%, mostly in opportunity groups and day nurseries, have a university or tertiary qualification. The government has recognised the concern and is attempting to bring coherence to the patchwork of recruitment approaches and training schemes. Wages and conditions of work remain a problem: childcare staff are paid much less than the average wage and at less than a third of a teacher's salary. They have poor conditions of work, and do long hours with little access to training or support. Teachers in the education sector have a four-year university or teacher training qualification, with a specialisation in early years education.

OECD Policy Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

Co-ordination issues: Already great progress has been made. A key to further movement is strong government support to the EYDC Partnerships, who have the potential not only to lead and organise at local level, but also to overcome the institutional divide between care and education.

Expanding toward full-time access for children: The present part-time access (2.5 hours) leads to concentration on programme and is insufficient to address the language, social and emotional needs of many children. If ECEC budget is insufficient to fund full-time access, then ethnic minority and low SES children should have priority.

Issues of staffing: The need is perceptible to raise levels of training across the system and, in the interests of recruitment and retention, to improve salary level and conditions of work. Increased recruitment of staff from ethnic backgrounds is also a priority.

Creation of a quality assurance and inspection regime that will respect diversity.

A need to increase work-family supports, e.g. parental leave, flexible work scheduling.

United States

Auspices

Because of its constitutional history, size and diversity, the U.S. has no national child or family policy. Public education is primarily a state responsibility. The Federal Government plays an important role, however, through Congress, which formulates ECEC policies and goals, focussing primarily on funding services to children considered 'at risk'. Most funding for social services (including the Head Start programme) is managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), while the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has responsibility for funding compensatory education and special education for disadvantaged three to five year olds. As part of 'welfare reform' through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) of 1996, the Government has provided additional funding to the states to expand provision of childcare, as an incentive to welfare recipients to find work.⁴⁰ Four separate child care funding streams have been consolidated into a single Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). At each state level, policy decisions are made with regard to eligibility, extent of the supply and availability of services, allocation of services and benefits, scope and quality of services, including health and safety standards. The states use legislation, supplemental funding and regulation to implement policy decisions. In the last decade, states have also taken the leadership role in developing and implementing pre-kindergarten services and early intervention services for young children at risk. The allocation of resources and policies vary greatly across and within the states. Some states encourage local government and community participation in the development of early childhood policies through the formation of localised planning groups, matching funding and the development of local plans as a criteria for state funding. Other states assume near complete fiscal, regulatory and policymaking responsibilities for early childhood education and care.

Developments

Public awareness campaigns, strong advocacy, and internationally-renown research have helped to secure a place for ECEC on the political agenda. There has been a marked increase in political commitment and investment both at the federal and state levels, with concomitant expansion of funding and coverage of ECEC provision. In particular, federal money has been made available to States to expand and improve quality childcare through increased funding from the CCDF block grant. There are moves toward universal access to pre-kindergarten programmes in many states. Several multi-agency, state-wide initiatives have been developed to promote co-ordination and collaboration among state government and local government, non-profit organisations, businesses, and families. Likewise, numerous state initiatives have developed to address the question of quality, and there have been significant improvements in regulations for in-service training. Professional organisations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), have played an important role in promoting voluntary accreditation and professional development for early childhood staff.

⁴⁰ The PRWORA requires that women with children aged 3 months or older should engage in work within two years of claiming benefits, and limiting assistance to a maximum of five years. By according a fixed block grant per year, states have given much more flexibility and freedom to determine eligibility of recipients and how to administer the benefits.

Context

Public investment in 1999 in ECEC (0-6 years): ?% of GDP (per capita \$33,900)

Labour force rates: 71.3% female participation, of which 19.1% (of salaried women only) work part-time.

Parental leave: The 1993 *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA) provides for a 12 week job-protected but unpaid leave for employees in firms with 50 or more workers, at the time of pregnancy, childbirth, or their own illness or that of a family member. Employers can require that employees use their vacation and sick leave before claiming the family leave. Some paid maternity leave depending on workplace agreement.

Attention to children with special educational needs before they begin compulsory schooling: a) *Children with disabilities:* Federal law requires that centres catering for children should accommodate children with disabilities in “the least restrictive environment”. Depending on the state, there is growing inclusion of such children. 10% of available places in Head Start are intended for children with disabilities. b) *Low SES children:* the child poverty rate in the U.S. is 22.4% after redistribution (OECD average: 11.9%). In 1997, 40% of African American, 38% of Latino, and 13% of white, non-Hispanic children under six lived in poverty; c) *Ethnic and bilingual children:* In the U. S., there are significant ethnic and immigrant populations: 15% African-Americans; 15% Hispanic; 4% Asia/Pacific and 1% indigenous American.

Provision

Private centre-based ECEC and family day care (90% of provision - two-thirds non-profit and one-third for-profit) is the most usual form of provision up to the age of three years, giving way gradually to publicly-funded kindergarten provision by the school districts from the age of four. Rates of provision are:

0-1 year: About a fifth (20%) of children are cared for by parents on a full-time basis; more than half are cared for by a relative or in-home child-minder; 22% are in private family daycare and 9% in centre-based settings, generally from the age of three months;

2-4 years: Provision is characterised by decreasing parental and in-home, informal care (39%) and increasing use of both centre-based settings (19% of two-year olds and 41% of three year-olds are in centre-based settings), and pre-primary education programmes (48% of three year-old children enrolled, mostly in private, part-day, nursery school programmes).

4-6 years: More than 60% of four-year olds are enrolled in educational programmes in nursery schools (some kindergarten). Georgia and New York State have pledged to provide full and free coverage for 4-year olds in public, part-day pre-kindergarten. In 41 other States, some form of free pre-kindergarten to four-year olds is found, sometimes extending to three-year old children. This form of provision is expanding rapidly. Almost all (90%) five-year olds are enrolled in kindergartens, the first year of formal schooling (85% public).

Where childcare is concerned, families pay on average about 60% of costs (rising to 70-80% of costs outside the school system), with Federal Government contributing 25%, and States and local government about 15% of costs.⁴¹ Depending on the State, parents pay on average more than \$3000 annually per child

⁴¹ The above Federal and State contributions are mainly directed to programmes for low-income families and to children considered to be ‘at risk’, e.g. Head Start, which covered 700,000 (36% of eligible children) three- and four-year old children in 1998.

for childcare, with low-income families paying on average 18% of income, and families earning less than \$1200 per month paying 25% of income.(Adams & Schulman, 1998). Some costs can be recuperated through Federal tax benefits for parents. Low-income families can benefit from fee subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) block grant. Most school districts offer free half- or full-day kindergarten to all 5-year olds as part of formal primary schooling, and an increasing amount of pre-kindergarten to 4-year olds.

Child:staff ratios: Different State regulations and different standards (licensing requirements only; funding standards; voluntary accreditation standards and voluntary goals standards) make it difficult to describe child-staff ratios for the U.S. as a whole. In general: ratios of 3:1 or 4:1 are practised for infants; 12:1 for pre-school children, with two- and three- year old children having ratios somewhere in the middle.

Staffing and training

In the U.S., the status and pay of early childhood staff outside the public school system are low. No coherent system exists to set the qualifications of early childhood workers. The characteristics of the three main provision systems are:

Head Start: To raise the level of staff training, Head Start has relied heavily on funding standards (called the Head Start Performance Standards) and from 1971, created its own professional profile, the Child Development Associate (CDA). The CDA is equivalent (depending on the State) to half a two-year, tertiary-level, professional diploma or associate degree. It is widely recognised across the U.S. and provides credits for a university degree in several States. The aim of Head Start (almost achieved) is to have one CDA in every classroom, while Congress recently enacted a law requiring Head Start to have 50% of its contact staff to have a 2-year degree or 4-year post-secondary degree by 2003.

The public school system: Teachers in all (pre-)kindergarten classes are required to be certified by the State in which they work. However, a specialisation in early childhood is not required in all States. Teacher certification is based on a four-year university degree, and often a Master's degree. It is not always a requirement for working in private schools, nor, in some States, for working with young children in a public school.

The purchase-of service system: The large purchase-of service system is composed of private centres and family day care homes which are licensed by state social service agencies to provide programmes for the general population. These services are subject to licensing and funding standards, but pre-service staff requirements can be very low (Minnesota) or non-existent (Michigan). Most States, however, now require a certain number of annual hours of further training from all staff.

OECD Issues

Among the issues for policy attention identified by the OECD Review team were:

The need to create a co-ordinated and comprehensive ECEC system: The present patchwork of services, regulations and funding sources leads to confusion, uneven quality and inequality of access. The responsibility to provide political leadership, funding, clear policy goals and frameworks rests with government, both at Federal and the State level. An effective first step might be the nomination of a national commission to propose how government roles in ECEC could be strengthened. Stronger implication by Education Departments may be vital for creating a more equitable system with broad public support. Stable networks of inter-agency partnerships at the State level could also be effective;

The urgent need to address access issues: The access of children 3-5 years from ethnic and low-income backgrounds is a serious concern. Only 45% of children from 3-5 years from low-income families are enrolled in pre-school, compared to 75% among high-income families. These inequalities are often linked to contextual issues, such as housing policy, which tends to support segregation of families by income and ethnic origin. A more proactive stance toward child poverty and diversity is recommended.

The need for quality improvement: Quality in childcare can be weak, and regulations in many States may set standards too low. In addition, families of four-year old children often have access only to narrowly focussed, instructional type programmes. Voluntary accreditation of centres as proposed by the NAEYC can dramatically improve standards and the use of well-known methods, (e.g. the Project Approach) or guidelines, (e.g. the revised *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*) can contribute significantly to the effectiveness of programmes.

Creating an effective staff training and professional development system: Serious weaknesses occur in the initial and continued training of staff at all levels. In addition, concerns were expressed about recruitment, remuneration, status, retention and career development. Projects such as Head Start and T.E.A.C.H. address many of these issues. The articulation of qualifications and staff licensing within and across states is also a challenge.

APPENDIX 2. STATISTICAL TABLES

Table A2.1. Contextual Table

	Total area thousand sq. km.	Population (thousands) 1998	Population density (per sq. km.) 1998	GDP per capita USD (using current PPPs ¹) 1999	GDP per capita USD, OECD=100 (using current PPPs ¹) 1999	GDP per capita USD (using current exchange rates) 1999	Total tax receipts as a percentage of GDP 1997	Educational expenditure as a percentage of GDP 1997	Public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP 1997
Australia	7 687	18 751	2	24 400	110	20 700	29.8	5.6	17.4
Czech Republic	79	10 295	131	13 100	59	5 200	38.6	5.2	19.4
Denmark	43	5 301	123	26 300	118	32 600	49.5	6.8	30.8
Finland	338	5 153	15	22 800	102	24 900	46.5	6.3	28.7
Italy	301	56 979	189	21 800	98	20 100	44.4	4.8	26.4
Netherlands	41	15 698	385	25 100	112	25 000	41.9	4.7	24.2
Norway	324	4 418	14	27 600	124	33 900	42.6	m	25.1
Portugal	92	9 979	108	16 500	74	11 100	34.2	5.8	18.2
Sweden	450	8 851	20	23 000	103	27 000	51.9	6.9	31.9
United Kingdom	245	59 237	242	22 300	100	23 900	35.4	m	21.1
United States	9 372	269 092	29	33 900	152	33 900	29.7	6.9	m
Austria	84	878	96	24 600	110	25 800	44.3	6.5	25.3
Belgium	31	10 203	335	24 300	109	24 200	46.0	5.2 ²	23.5
Canada	9 976	30 300	3	25 900	116	20 400	36.8	6.5	16.6
France	549	58 845	107	21 900	98	23 600	45.1	6.3	29.4
Germany	357	8 224	230	23 600	106	25 700	37.2	5.7	26.2
Greece	132	10 507	80	14 800	66	11 800	33.7	4.9	22.0
Hungary	93	10 114	109	10 900	49	4 800	39.4	5.2	m
Iceland	103	274	3	27 300	122	32 300	32.2	5.7	m
Ireland	70	3 705	53	25 200	113	24 200	32.8	5.0	17.6
Japan	378	126 486	335	24 500	110	34 500	28.8	4.8	m
Korea	99	46 430	467	15 900	71	8 800	21.4	7.4	4.8
Luxembourg	3	427	164	39 300	176	43 100	46.5	m	22.4
Mexico	1 996	95 675	48	8 100	36	4 900	m	5.5	7.9
New Zealand	269	3 792	14	18 000 ³	81 ³	14 100 ³	36.4	m	m
Poland	313	38 666	124	8 100	36	3 900	41.2	m	24.5
Spain	505	39 371	78	18 100	81	15 000	33.7	5.7	19.9
Switzerland	41	7 106	172	27 500 ³	123 ³	36 000 ³	33.8	6.0	m
Turkey	781	64 789	83	6 300 ³	28 ³	3 000 ³	27.9	m	m

1. Purchasing Power Parties (PPPs) are the rate of currency conversion which eliminates the differences in price levels between countries. They are used to compare the volume of GDP in different countries. PPPs are obtained by evaluating the costs of a basket of goods and services between countries for all components of GDP; PPPs are given in national currency units per US dollar.

2. Belgium (Fl.) only.

3. Countries still using the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1968.

Sources: OECD, OECD in Figures 2000, Paris; OECD, Education at a Glance 2000, Paris; OECD Social Expenditure Database 2000.

Table A2.2. Average usual weekly hours worked by person in full-time employment in EU countries

		1988	1998
Austria	Men	41.8 ^a	41.8
	Women	40.8 ^a	40.4
Belgium	Men	41.9	42.3
	Women	40.4	40.1
Denmark	Men	42.2	41.0
	Women	38.5	37.3
Finland	Men	41.6 ^a	42.4
	Women	38.8 ^a	39.1
France	Men	43.4	42.2
	Women	40.6	39.4
Germany	Men	42.4	42.4
	Women	40.9	39.7
Greece	Men	46.1	46.4
	Women	43.4	43.5
Ireland	Men	47.9	46.2 ^b
	Women	40.4	40.1 ^b
Italy	Men	42.2	42.7
	Women	40.2	40.2
Luxembourg	Men	42.1	41.8
	Women	41.4	40.3
Netherlands	Men	41.5	40.8
	Women	38.4	37.2
Portugal	Men	46.0	44.0
	Women	45.6	41.7
Spain	Men	42.9	43.0
	Women	41.5	40.9
Sweden	Men	41.6 ^a	41.5
	Women	38.2 ^a	38.4
United Kingdom	Men	46.9	46.5
	Women	40.5	40.8

a. 1995

b. 1997.

Source: *European Labour Force Survey*.

Table A2.3. Persons working shift-work, at night, on Saturday or on Sunday

		Usually work shift work	Sometimes shift work	Usually work at night	Sometimes work at night	Usually work on Saturday	Sometimes work on Saturday	Usually work on Sunday	Sometimes work on Sunday
Austria	Females	13.6	3.5	5.8	6.5	28.4	17.2	14.5	10.6
	Males	16.1	4.8	10.8	11.6	22.7	25.1	14.2	14.5
Belgium	Females	10.5	2.1	3	5.5	19.4	18.9	9.5	13.7
	Males	15.4	2.6	5.9	12.2	16.9	23.7	9.2	16.9
Denmark	Females	6.4	1.2	6.6	4.1	28.6	15.2	21.8	12.3
	Males	7.9	1.5	9	8.6	24.1	24.4	18.5	21.1
Finland	Females	22.2	-	7.4	8	25	12.1	17.3	8.6
	Males	16.7	-	10.6	12.6	27.9	15.3	20.6	10.8
France	Females	6	-	2.1	5.7	26.3	23.5	8.3	17.4
	Males	9.3	-	5.2	16.3	22.7	33.7	8.8	23.2
Germany	Females	8.6	0.8	4.5	3.2	23.9	12.8	11.3	8.3
	Males	12.1	1.2	8.7	7.2	21.8	21.7	11.3	13.4
Greece	Females	6.1	3.1	2.3	6.6	38.6	20.2	11.5	16.6
	Males	8.7	3.9	4.4	13.1	45.8	21.9	15	20.1
Ireland	Females	9.6	3.9	5.1	8.5	23.7	24.2	12.4	16.5
	Males	9.8	3.9	6.8	18.1	34.5	32.8	20.1	19.4
Italy	Females	13	2.8	3.3	4.6	41.7	15.9	7.6	11.2
	Males	15	3.9	6.3	9.7	39.8	24	8.8	15.4
Luxembourg	Females	7	-	-1.9	5.3	24.1	16.7	7.8	12
	Males	13.4	-1	4.1	12.2	16.1	27.3	7.3	16.5
Netherlands	Females	6.4	0.4	1.8	7.7	28.4	11	15.9	7.9
	Males	8.5	0.5	2.5	9.6	27.6	16.1	14.6	10.5
Portugal	Females	4.9	-0.2	0.4		32.4	3.9	13.1	1.3
	Males	7.4	0.3	1.1		32.3	6.9	15.2	2.3
Spain	Females	4.3	0.7	2.9	4.1	38.4	4.4	15.4	3
	Males	6.5	0.9	5.4	7	36.6	5.4	15.8	3.6
Sweden	Females	26.7	1.6	5.9	3.4	21.3	17.9	18.9	15.6
	Males	16.4	1.7	7.7	8.7	15.3	25.3	13.2	22.7
United Kingdom	Females	12.1	2.5	4.8	9.6	21.6	29.1	12.3	21.8
	Males	14.9	3.9	7.4	21.8	27.4	42.8	13.4	35.6

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 1997.

Table A2.4. Participation rate of the population 25 to 34 years of age

	1990		1999	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Australia	94.2	65.1	91.4	67.9
Belgium	95.3	74.2	94.1	82.7
Czech Republic	97.1 ^a	72.0 ^a	96.6	70.1
Denmark	94.1	88.6	93.1	81.6
Finland	93.8	82.5	91.8	78.4
Italy	93.6	62.4	88.0	63.0
Netherlands	95.1	65.6	94.9 ^b	78.5 ^b
Norway	91.2	76.6	91.7	81.4
Portugal	95.2	77.7	93.2	80.3
Sweden	93.3	88.4	88.7	81.5
United Kingdom	96.2	70.0	93.3	75.1
United States	94.1	73.5	93.3	76.4
Austria	91.4 ^c	76.2 ^c	92.4 ^b	77.5 ^b
Canada	93.5	77.0	91.5	79.2
France	95.4	76.1	93.2	78.1
Germany	86.2	65.2	91.9	75.1
Greece	95.2	59.3	95.2 ^b	68.5 ^b
Hungary	91.6 ^d	58.5 ^d	89.8	62.7
Iceland	95.9 ^e	75.0 ^e	94.6	83.1
Ireland	94.1	60.0	93.8	75.1
Japan	98.0	56.6	96.5	63.6
Korea	94.5	46.0	89.7	50.3
Luxembourg	94.4	61.1	93.8	70.3
Mexico	96.6 ^e	39.2 ^e	96.6	45.0
New Zealand	93.2	61.5	90.3	68.4
Poland	94.9 ^f	74.3 ^f	93.4	74.7
Spain	94.6	60.8	92.2	72.4
Switzerland ^g	97.4 ^e	72.3 ^e	98.0	77.4
Turkey	97.4	36.1	96.1	33.3

a. 1993

b. 1998

c. 1994

d. 1995

e. 1991

f. 1992

g. 25-39 year-olds.

Sources: For all countries except Italy, OECD Labour force statistics database; data for Italy provided by EUROSTAT.

Table A2.5. Trends in incidence of part-time employment rates¹ for prime-age adults², by sex, 1990-99

	Full-time				Part-time			
	1990		1999		1990		1999	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Australia	96.0	62.3	92.7	65.9	4.0	37.7	7.3	34.1
Belgium	98.1	72.8	95.8	68.5	1.9	27.2	4.2	31.5
Czech Republic	99.1 ^a	83.7 ^a	99.2	86.7	0.9 ^a	16.3 ^a	0.8	13.3
Denmark	94.7	72.9	94.0	75.6	5.3	27.1	6.0	24.4
Finland	96.1	89.0	94.4	85.6	3.9	11.0	5.6	14.4
Italy	97.7	90.4	96.1	82.9	2.3	9.6	3.9	17.1
Netherlands	90.5 ^b	42.2 ^b	90.0	44.3	9.5 ^b	57.8 ^b	10.0	55.7
Norway	94.9	58.4	92.5	62.7	5.1	41.6	7.5	37.3
Portugal	98.7	94.7	97.5	92.2	1.3	5.3	2.5	7.8
Sweden	94.8	60.6	92.6	67.9	5.2	39.4	7.4	32.1
United Kingdom	98.7	61.4	96.2	64.2	1.3	38.6	3.8	35.8
United States	95.1	80.5	95.1	81.0	4.9	19.5	4.9	19.0
Austria	96.9 ^c	74.2 ^c	95.9 ^d	69.8 ^d	3.1 ^c	25.8 ^c	4.1 ^d	30.2 ^d
Canada	95.9	79.5	94.4	78.6	4.1	20.5	5.6	21.4
France	97.3	79.6	94.6	72.3	2.7	20.4	5.4	27.7
Germany	96.7	69.1	94.4	69.7	3.3	30.9	5.6	30.3
Greece	98.3	93.5	96.9 ^d	89.8 ^d	1.7	6.5	3.1 ^d	10.2 ^d
Hungary	97.9 ^c	92.2 ^c	97.7	91.5	2.1 ^c	7.8 ^c	2.3	8.5
Iceland ^e	94.0 ^e	49.7 ^e	92.1	55.5	6.0 ^e	50.3 ^e	7.9	44.5
Ireland	97.6	88.0	96.7	81.2	2.4	12.0	3.3	18.8
Japan	92.0 ^f	69.6 ^f	92.1	70.0	8.0 ^f	30.4 ^f	7.9	30.0
Luxembourg	99.5	87.4	98.9	80.4	0.5	12.6	1.1	19.6
Mexico	83.8 ^e	61.4 ^e	92.1	69.2	16.2 ^e	38.6 ^e	7.9	30.8
New Zealand	97.0	65.6	93.9	69.2	3.0	34.4	6.1	30.8
Poland	95.7 ^g	91.3 ^g	96.2	89.1	4.3 ^g	8.7 ^g	3.8	10.9
Spain	98.8	90.7	96.8	84.1	1.2	9.3	3.2	15.9
Turkey	90.8	65.4	84.8	54.8	9.2	34.6	15.2	45.2

1. Part-time employment / total employment.

2. 25-34 year-olds.

a. 1993

b. 1996

c. 1995

d. 1998

e. 1991

f. 1997

g. 1992.

Source: OECD, Full-time Part-time (National) employment database.

Table A2.6. Child poverty rates before and after taxes and transfers, 1990s

		Before taxes and transfers	After taxes and transfers
Australia	1996-97	28.1	12.6
Belgium	1992	17.8	4.4
Czech Republic	1996	m	5.9
Denmark	1992	17.4	5.1
Finland	1995	16.4	4.3
Italy	1995	24.6	20.5
Netherlands	1994	16.0	7.7
Norway	1995	15.9	3.9
Portugal		m	24.0
Sweden	1995	23.4	2.6
United Kingdom	1995	36.1	19.8
United States	1997	26.7	22.4
Canada	1994	24.6	15.5
France	1994	28.7	7.9
Germany	1994	16.8	10.7
Hungary	1994	38.1	10.3
Luxembourg	1994	22.2	4.5
Poland	1995	44.4	15.4
Spain	1990	21.4	12.3

Source: UNICEF 2000.

Table A2.7. Educational expenditure for pre-primary as a percentage of GDP, 1997

	Public expenditure	Private expenditure	TOTAL
Australia	0.07	0.03	0.10
Belgium (Fl)	0.26	0.00	0.26
Czech Republic	0.52	0.08	0.60
Denmark	0.89	0.29	1.18
Finland	0.72	0.00	0.72
Italy	0.41	0.00	0.41
Netherlands	0.37	0.01	0.38
Norway	0.57	0.00	0.57
Portugal	0.15	0.00	0.15
Sweden	0.57	0.00	0.57
United Kingdom	0.41	0.00	0.41
United States	0.37	0.06	0.43
Austria	0.46	0.00	0.46
Canada	0.21	0.00	0.21
France	0.66	0.05	0.70
Germany	0.39	0.16	0.54
Hungary	0.71	0.00	0.71
Iceland	0.29	0.00	0.29
Ireland	n	n	n
Japan	0.08	0.09	0.18
Korea, Republic of	0.03	0.00	0.03
Mexico	0.38	0.09	0.48
New Zealand	0.22	0.00	0.22
Poland	0.92	0.00	0.92
Spain	0.34	0.12	0.46
Switzerland	0.20	0.00	0.20

Source: OECD Education Database 2000.

Table A2.8. Expenditure per student (US dollars converted using PPPs) on public and private institutions by level of education (based on full-time equivalents) (1997)

	Pre-primary ¹	Primary
Australia	m	3 633
Belgium (Fl.) ²	2 768	3 813
Czech Republic	2 526	1 954
Denmark	5 487	6 596
Finland	6 340	4 639
Italy ³	4 462	5 073
Netherlands	3 310	3 335
Norway ³	m	6 315
Portugal ³	2 044	3 248
Sweden	2 943	5 491
United Kingdom ²	5 312	3 206
United States	6 158	5 718
Austria ³	4 867	6 258
Canada	3 942	m
France	3 462	3 621
Germany	4 288	3 490
Greece ²	x	2 351
Hungary ³	2 106	2 035
Iceland ³	3 591	m
Ireland	2 559	2 574
Japan	3 096	5 202
Korea	1 676	3 308
Mexico	979	935
Poland	m	1 435
Spain	2 520	3 180
Switzerland ³	2 451	6 237

1. The data refer to early childhood education, which is limited to organised centre-based programmes designed to foster learning and emotional and social development in children for 3 to compulsory school age. Day care, play groups and home-based structured and developmental activities are not included in these data.

2. Public and government-dependent private institutions.

3. Public institutions.

x : included in primary.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2000, Paris

Table A2.9. Participation by age for children aged 3 to 6, 1997
 Net enrolment rates by single year of age in pre-primary^a and primary education

	Enrolment rate in pre-primary				Enrolment rate in primary			
	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds
Australia	26.0	39.6	12.9	0.8	0.0	1.7	70.0	99.6
Belgium (Flemish Community)	98.1	98.2	97.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.7	92.4
Czech Republic	43.6	76.9	91.8	45.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	55.0
Denmark	70.5	89.1	93.9	91.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6
Finland	32.7	37.8	42.4	68.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
Italy	95.2	95.9	94.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	101.0
Netherlands	0.0	97.9	98.5	0.8	0.1	0.4	0.9	98.7
Norway	67.3	74.5	77.9	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	99.1
Portugal	52.3	62.3	69.7	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	102.7
Sweden	61.5	66.8	70.5	89.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2
United Kingdom	50.3	94.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	99.2	99.0
United States	35.8	59.4	74.0	11.0	0.0	0.0	6.6	88.6

a. The data refer to early childhood education, which is limited to organised centre-based programmes designed to foster learning and emotional and social development in children for 3 to compulsory school age. Day care, play groups and home-based structured and developmental activities are not included in these data (see text).

Source: OECD Education Database.

APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE PREPARATION OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT

Overview

1. The Background Report (BR) will be based on two types of questions: a *common core* of questions addressed to all participating countries; and *supplementary* questions tailored to the needs and circumstances of countries concerned.
2. The supplementary questions will be developed in consultation with the countries concerned. There may be two sources for such questions: particular issues or policy developments identified by country authorities as of high priority in the national context, and which are not fully addressed in the common core of questions; and questions prompted by other material available to the Secretariat.
3. Due to differing contexts and circumstances in the participating countries, the importance of questions to national concerns may vary. Questions may be seen as more or less relevant, or may be interpreted differently from country to country. Countries are encouraged to note such differences in emphasis in their BR, as these will be important for the review to investigate.
4. In order to collect as much comparative data and information as possible, all participating countries need to respond to a common set of questions. The questions below are grouped into five sections. It is important for the BR from all participating countries to follow this common structure. Within each section, country authorities may wish to combine, rephrase, or expand certain questions in light of the particular national circumstances. *The key requirement is that the issues underlying the questions are addressed in the BR.*
5. To be useful to country authorities and to the review, the report should aim to be an integrated document rather than a list of responses to individual questions. For some questions, brief answers may be appropriate initially; the Secretariat may ask for clarification or elaboration of responses later. There will be opportunities for country authorities to revise or expand the responses during the reviewers' visit or shortly thereafter.
6. Responses to the questions also may be complemented by material extracted from existing reports and data tables. *Wherever possible, please present responses to questions in a data table or in a figure.*
7. Terminology in ECEC can be confusing, as similar terms and labels may have very different meanings in different countries. In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is requested that all key terms referring to ECEC provision and workers/staff be provided in the original language. A glossary defining these terms in English or French should be included in the BR.
8. In the questions, the term *parents* refers to those with primary caretaking responsibility for children, regardless of biological relationship. *Families* includes those individuals whom parents and children define as being part of their families, often those who have ongoing contact and responsibility for the well-being of children.

9. The review will focus on children from birth to compulsory school age. Countries may choose to extend this age range to include children in the early years of primary school. ECEC covers a broad scope of services and options including those that are public, private, centre-based, school-based, home-based, full-time, part-time, as well as caregiving and teaching by parents, relatives, and informal carers.

Section I. Definitions, Contexts, and Current Provision

This section will aim to provide information on the policy context for early childhood education and care. It would be helpful for any information that will help the reader contextualise ECEC policy within specific historical developments and current circumstances to be included. It will provide an overview of ECEC policies and provision currently in place.

1. What are the historical roots of early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy and provision in your country?
2. What are common understandings today of young children and the early childhood period? How does society view young children? Who is responsible for ECEC? How does ECEC policy interpret the respective responsibilities of mothers, fathers, and other members of society for caring and educating young children? Are women viewed as mothers first and foremost, or as potential workers?
3. What are the main political, economic, labour market, social, and demographic changes that have shaped ECEC policy development in recent years?
4. Is there an articulated national child or family policy? Do ECEC policies fit into a set of wider supports for children and families (e.g., child and family allowances/tax credits, family leave policies, health services, etc.)?
5. What are the current objectives for and purposes of early childhood education and care? Who are the intended beneficiaries of ECEC policy? Which groups of children and families do ECEC policies target?
6. What age spans of children are generally considered to fall within the scope of ECEC policies? What is compulsory school age? Is there debate about raising or lowering this age? How many entry dates are there to primary school per year? Are children below compulsory school age attending primary school?
7. What are the available forms of ECEC provision for children from birth to compulsory school age? What is the current level of coverage for each ECEC arrangement by age of child? Where applicable, what are the typical hours/length of operation of these arrangements during the day and year? What information is available about the socio-economic and family backgrounds of the children in these different forms of ECEC? *It would be helpful for this data to be presented in a table.*
8. Are responsibilities for ECEC integrated or split across administrative auspices (e.g., education, welfare, health)? If split, why does it operate this way? If not split, were services previously split? If so, when and why did this change? To what extent are responsibilities for the implementation and administration of ECEC distributed across and within different levels of government (e.g., national, regional, local)? Has responsibility always been within the same administrative auspice? If not, when was responsibility transferred and why? Are there

trends toward increasing centralisation or decentralisation? *Please present this information in a table.*

9. Which other government agencies or statutory bodies have significant involvement and/or interest in ECEC? What mechanisms exist to promote policy coherence and inter-agency collaboration among different ministries, levels of government, and statutory bodies?
10. To what extent are actors outside government (e.g., non-governmental/non-profit organisations, community groups, staff unions, training institutions, business) involved in policy development in ECEC? Are there particularly effective institutional frameworks, networks, or programmes for promoting regular dialogue and common action among these actors?

Section II. Policy Concerns

This section will focus on the main concerns related to ECEC policy. Quality and access have been identified as concerns for further investigation. Countries are invited to discuss other cross-cutting areas of concern in this section and to document them with relevant quantitative and qualitative information. It also is important to identify which particular groups of children and families are the focus of concern. The section will set the stage for the subsequent discussion of specific issues and approaches to ECEC.

A. Quality

1. How is quality conceptualised by different stakeholders (e.g., government, parents, children, researchers, early childhood workers)? How do these conceptions of quality relate to overall goals of society for ECEC?
2. What specified objectives for quality exist? Do quality objectives vary in content or specificity at different levels of government? Have they changed over time? If so, how?
3. Is quality of ECEC a concern for particular groups or ages of children? Is quality variable across regions or states?
4. How are quality objectives identified and prioritised? Who is included in the process of defining quality? What is the extent of actual involvement of these various stakeholders?
5. What policy approaches have been directed explicitly toward quality improvement? What does research show about the impact of these policy approaches?
6. How is quality assessed? What inputs, outputs, or processes do evaluations of quality measure? Who is involved in the assessments? For what purposes are they conducted?

B. Access

5. Is access to ECEC a statutory entitlement, and if so, from what age and for whom? Has this entitlement been achieved? If not, why not? Is there a timetable for when the entitlement will be achieved and/or enforceable?
6. What are common eligibility criteria for accessing publicly-funded options (e.g., universal, poor, special needs, working parents)?

7. To what extent is access to ECEC a concern for (a) children of certain ages; (b) families living in certain geographic areas; (c) children with special educational needs (i.e., children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities); (d) other particular groups of children and families? What are the main barriers to equitable access to ECEC for these children and families?
8. What information is available on the supply of and demand for different forms of ECEC provision? *Please include available information in table form.* Is there a mismatch between supply and demand for certain types of ECEC arrangements?
9. In practice, to what extent do parents--including low-income parents--have a choice among a variety of ECEC options? Does policy encourage parental choice or is one model of ECEC arrangements favoured?
10. What strategies have been developed to increase access to and enrolment in quality options according to family needs and parent preferences?
11. Are there particular strategies to increase ECEC access to children with special educational needs? Is there a particular effort to include these children in mainstream ECEC provision or does provision tend to be separate? What steps (e.g., staff-child ratios, staff training, curriculum, on-going assessment, etc.) have been taken to make the chosen approach a success?
12. What has been the impact of existing policies on facilitating or constraining access?

Section III. Policy Approaches

This section will review and analyse approaches to executing ECEC policy. To the extent possible, particularly interesting and/or innovative examples of policy and practice should be identified. In each policy area, there should be some discussion of recent and proposed changes, and the reasons for them. It would be helpful to include a discussion of how these areas are linked. Any evidence of impact of policies on addressing quality, access, and other concerns should be included. If there are other policy issues that deserve attention in this section, they may be raised as well. In responding to each question, it is essential to consider all forms of ECEC arrangements and all age groups within the scope of the review.

A. Regulations

1. To what extent are ECEC arrangements regulated? Are there trends toward loosening or tightening regulations? Are there other mechanisms for ensuring that children's health, safety, and development are promoted and that a certain standard of quality is maintained in ECEC arrangements?
2. Who is responsible for ECEC regulatory policy? Is the regulatory authority an independent body? Do different agencies or levels of government handle different functions? What types of provision are regulated? What types are exempt?
3. Are regulatory standards provider-focused, child-focused, facility-focused, or a combination of these? Are regulations demand-driven? What is the justification for the chosen approach? To what extent is the content of regulations uniform or variable across regions?

4. How are regulations enforced? How often are arrangements inspected? What is the professional background and training of inspectors? What sanctions are available to inspectors? How often are they imposed? In practice, is the emphasis on technical assistance or regulatory compliance?
5. What policies are in place to facilitate information sharing on the standards attained by facilities and/or providers? Who has access to information on the regulatory track records (e.g., assessments, ratings, code violations, complaints) of facilities and/or providers?
6. Do non-government sponsored guidelines, standards, or voluntary accreditation programmes play a role in promoting quality ECEC arrangements?
7. How does regulatory policy in ECEC relate to regulatory policy for other social services?

B. Staffing

It would be helpful to include a table that synthesises the data requested on staff roles, qualifications, and fields of work.

1. What are the different staff roles found in existing forms of ECEC (i.e., including home-based provision)? What are the initial training requirements/professional qualifications (e.g., level and length of training) for these positions? What age range is covered by this training/education (e.g., 0-3, 3-6, 0-6, 0-18, etc.)?
2. What are the aims and expectations of early childhood work and the ECEC worker? Are staff viewed as school teachers, early childhood specialists, social network experts, etc.? Do these aims and expectations vary for staff working with children of different ages? How do these understandings impact the way training systems prepare ECEC workers?
3. Are workers trained specifically for early childhood work or for a broader professional role? How is this approach to education/training reflected in course structure and content? To what extent does training/education prepare staff to work with children with special educational needs and to respect and value diversity?
4. To what extent does the structuring of the early childhood workforce, and its education/training, reflect the structure of ECEC provision? If ECEC is (or was) split between two systems, are there efforts to promote greater coherency in staff education/training? Does the current approach encourage preparation for a variety of different types of worker, including workers with different levels of training? Is there a clear role for paraprofessionals in the current staffing scheme?
5. How much and what kind of in-service or continuous training do early childhood workers receive? What are the purposes of in-service or continuous training? What are the career prospects in ECEC work? What are the opportunities for vertical/horizontal mobility?
6. Who pays for training, basic or in-service? Are there efforts to increase the availability of and access to training?
7. How are personnel prepared to take on support, management, and other positions that involve working with early childhood workers in centre-based and home-based arrangements?

8. Are there efforts to seek a more gender-mixed workforce? What is the role of training institutions in maintaining or challenging ECEC as a gendered occupation?
9. What is the professional and public status of ECEC workers? Are ECEC job profiles, training requirements, minimum qualifications, and salaries recognised in statute? To what extent are family child care providers (i.e. providers caring for children in the carer's home) seen as professionals? Are family child care providers organised as publicly-funded employees or do they operate as independent, self-employed service providers?
10. How does early childhood work relate to work with school-age children in schools and in care and recreation services, with regard to training, job description, compensation, status?
11. What are the average wages of ECEC staff (a) just starting work and (b) with several years of experience? What are the rates of staff turnover? Are there efforts to improve status/compensation and working conditions? What are the roles of trade unions or other professional associations for the early childhood workforce?

C. Programme content and implementation

1. What are the main philosophies or goals guiding the different forms of ECEC programmes? Are there particular people (e.g., pedagogical theorists, practitioners), disciplines, experiences, or events, which have strongly influenced ECEC practice?
2. Is there a national curriculum? If so, how is it implemented? Is it interpreted as an exact method or blueprint to be followed? To what extent can and do programmes adapt the national curriculum to local needs and circumstances?
3. What are the most common curricular/pedagogical approaches found in ECEC provision? How do these relate to the main purposes and goals of ECEC?
4. What are some innovative strategies to improve programme quality? To accommodate children with special educational needs? To respect and value all kinds of diversity (i.e., cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and disability)? To what extent are issues of diversity explicitly recognised in curriculum, guidelines, and legislation?
5. What are some of the policies and practices in place to ease transitions in the lives of children--including transitions that occur within the family, as well as transitions from home to ECEC, from one form of ECEC to another, and from ECEC to public schooling?
6. Are there efforts to promote curricular and pedagogical continuity between ECEC and the early years of primary school?
7. What linkages and partnerships exist between and among families, ECEC programmes, schools, and community services? Are there efforts to strengthen these linkages? If so, by whom and for what purpose?

D. Family engagement and support

In responding to these questions, please pay attention to the roles of fathers and other male family members.

1. What is the role of parents and families in ECEC? How and to what extent are parents and families engaged in their children's ECEC? Is family involvement a policy priority, and if so, for what reason? Does family engagement vary according to the form of ECEC provision?
2. What are some of the barriers to parent involvement in organised provision? Are these barriers reinforced by income, class, educational level, ethnicity, etc.? What are some strategies to overcome these barriers? To what extent are these strategies being implemented?
3. What information is available to parents and families on cost, quality, and availability of ECEC options?
4. What do parents expect from their children's ECEC? What do they expect from ECEC workers? To what extent are these expectations met?
5. How do public and private employers support parents in reconciling work and family responsibilities (e.g., through parental/family leave and flexible work schedules)? Did these policies result from enacted legislation?
6. Are there specific policies (e.g., long-term, supported parental/family leave, job security, etc.) to encourage parent(s) to spend more than six months out of the labour market with their children at home?
7. What types of parent education, personal development, adult or occupational education, or family support services exist to serve the needs parents and other family members? How are these services linked to ECEC provision?
8. Are there specific programme or policy approaches to support parents and families with children with special needs?
9. What is the role of community members in supporting families and ECEC? To what extent does government support and/or fund the development of community-organised approaches to providing ECEC?

E. Funding and financing

1. How are the costs of providing ECEC services currently shared among the following: national government, local government or other statutory bodies, parents, non-profit/non-governmental/social organisations, and business? How has this distribution changed in recent years? What are expenditures on ECEC from these sources? *Please include this information in a table.* What are some estimates for providing ECEC services to all families who wish to enrol their children?
2. What types of ECEC are funded by government at all levels? What services or components are covered by this funding? What tax benefits are available to help parents pay for ECEC? Are fees and/or benefits determined on a sliding scale according to family income? What percentage of average family income is spent on ECEC? What is considered to be the appropriate balance between universal and targeted public funding of programmes?
3. What are some strategies to (a) generate revenue; (b) distribute funds to programmes/parents; and (c) improve staff compensation and benefit levels?

4. What are the actual or potential effects of different kinds of financing options on improving (a) quality, (b) access, and (c) equity? Is there evidence that increased financing for ECEC helps parents move into the labour force and obtain better paying jobs?

Section IV. Evaluation and research

This section will seek to identify the processes and information sources that are used to evaluate the impact of policies and monitor changing conditions of policies.

1. What mechanisms for policy and programme evaluation are in place? What bodies promote data collection and evaluation in ECEC? What public funds are allocated for this purpose?
2. What “indicators” are available related to ECEC, and to child well-being? To what extent are these indicators used in policy development and monitoring related to ECEC? How could existing indicators be improved for this purpose?
3. What information is routinely collected on the early childhood participants, services, workforce, and systems? How and how often is this information collected? What has been learned? For what purposes is this information used? How could this process be improved? Where are the major information gaps?
4. To what extent are regular data bases available and used in policy making and monitoring?
5. What longitudinal studies are underway to study the impact of ECEC? What does research to date show to be the relationship between costs and benefits of ECEC in your country?

Section V. Concluding comments and assessments

This final section provides the authors with the opportunity to give an overall assessment of ECEC policy in the country concerned and to comment on trends or changes in policy development. Authors may choose to include a discussion of their vision for the future of ECEC policy.

1. What have been the most significant changes in ECEC policy in recent years? How successfully have ECEC systems and practice adapted to these changes?
2. What are the most noteworthy examples of innovation in the field? To what extent have they achieved notoriety? What is their national and/or international significance for ECEC?
3. What are areas of strength and weakness in current policy and practice?
4. What are some trends or changes that might be anticipated in future policy development in this area?
5. What are some questions or issues meriting further investigation?

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APPENDIX 5. COMMISSIONED PAPERS

Gormley, William T, Jr. (July 1998). *Early Childhood Education and Care Regulation: A Comparative Perspective*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Groot, Wim, Maassen van den Brink, and Dobblessteen, Simone. (June 2000). *The economics of early childhood education*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Kamerman, Sheila B. (May 1998). *Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): An Overview of Developments in the OECD Countries*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Moss, Peter. (May 1998). *Training and Education of Early Childhood Education and Care Staff*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Myers, Robert G. (June 1998). *Financing Early Childhood Care and Education Services*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Rostgaard, Tine. (March 2000). *Developing Comparable Indicators in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

Verry, Donald (July 1998). *Some Economic Aspects of Early Childhood Education and Care*. Background paper prepared for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.

APPENDIX 6. COUNTRY CODES USED IN TABLES AND CHARTS

<u>Thematic Review Countries</u>	<u>Code</u>
Australia	AUS
Belgium	BEL
Czech Republic	CZE
Denmark	DNK
Finland	FIN
Italy	ITA
Netherlands	NLD
Norway	NOR
Portugal	PRT
Sweden	SWE
United Kingdom	UKM
United States	USA

<u>Other countries</u>	<u>Code</u>
Austria	AUT
Canada	CAN
Greece	GRC
Hungary	HUN
Ireland	IRL
Japan	JPN
Korea	KOR
New Zealand	NZL
Poland	POL
Spain	ESP
Switzerland	CHE
Turkey	TUR