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DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
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Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

Summary Record of the 2nd Workshop: 'Beyond Regulation: Effective Quality Initiatives in ECEC'

The meeting was held in Brussels, Belgium, on 21-23 November 2007.

The draft Summary Record was prepared by the Early Childhood Education and Care Network Secretariat, currently hosted by the governmental agency of the Flemish Community of Belgium - the Kind & Gezin (Family and Child), in consultation with the Network Advisory Board members and the OECD Secretariat.

Document available in pdf version only.

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Report on the 2nd OECD Starting Strong Network workshop

Beyond regulation: effective quality initiatives in Early Childhood Education and Care

21(optional) – 22 – 23 November 2007 Brussels

John Bennett

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Bea Buysse

February 2008

Contents of the Report

I. About the workshop

In accordance with its mandate, Kind en Gezin organised the present workshop at its headquarters in Brussels, 21(optional) - 22 - 23 November 2007. The workshop theme, agreed after consultation with the Network Advisory Board, was Beyond regulation: effective quality initiatives in Early Childhood Education and Care. The format of the workshop consisted of:

- *A pre-meeting on Wednesday, 21st November, when Professor Peter Moss and Dr. Claire Cameron from the Thomas Coram Research Unit (University of London) presented their recent publication 'Care work in Europe: current understandings and future directions'.*
- *A presentation and discussions on the theme: Beyond regulation: effective quality initiatives in Early Childhood Education and Care on 22nd November. The main presentation was prepared by Professor Ferre Laevers, from the Research Centre for Experiential Education, University of Louvain, Belgium.*
- *A series of applied site visits to crèches and pre-schools in Louvain and a presentation on parental involvement by professor Christa Preissing on 23rd November.*

The meeting was chaired by the Network Co-ordinator, Bea Buysse, Kind en Gezin.

II. Attendance at the workshop

The following country delegates participated:

AUSTRIA : *Ms. Marisa KRENN-WACHE*, Head of Training College, Federal Training College of Kindergarten Pedagogues

AUSTRALIA: *Ms. Oon Ying CHIN,* Counsellor (Education, Science and Training), Australian Delegation to the OECD

BELGIUM FLANDERS: *Ms. Veronique ADRIAENS*, Assistant to the director, Department of Education Flemish Community

BELGIUM FRENCH: *Mr. Michel VANDEKEERE*, Senior Researcher, Observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à la Jeunesse, Communauté Française de Belgique

CANADA: *Ms. Sylvie BARCELO,* Sous-ministre, Ministère de la Famille et des Aïnés and *Ms. Lynne WESTLAKE*, Special Advisor, Human Resources and Social Development

DENMARK: *Ms. SCHMIDT PEDERSEN,* Head of section, Department of Family Affairs and *Ms. Christina BARFOED-HØJ,* Special Adviser, Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs

FINLAND: *Ms. Tarja KAHILUOTO*, Senior Officer, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

JAPAN: *Ms. Kiyomi AKITA*, University of Tokyo and *Mr. Koji UMEHARA, Deputy Director,* Early Childhood Education Division, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

KOREA : *Ms. Mugyeong MOON*, Director of Trend Analysis and International Cooperation, KICCE (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education)

THE NETHERLANDS: *Mr. Peter WINIA*, Senior policy advisor, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and *Ms. Carolien GELAUFF-HANZON,* Head of the Department of Youth and Upbringing, Dutch Youth Institute

NEW ZEALAND: *Mr. Karl LE QUESNE*, Senior manager, Ministry of Education

NORWAY: *Ms. Kari JACOBSEN*, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Education and Research and *Ms. Tove MOGSTAD SLINDE,* Senior adviser, Ministry of Education and Research

PORTUGAL : *Ms. Luïsa UCHA*, Director of School Education Service, Direcção Geral de Inovação e de Desenvolvimento Curricular and *Ms. Liliana MARQUES*, Pre-school teacher, Direcção Geral de Inovação e de Desenvolvimento Curricular

SLOVENIA: *Ms. Nada POŽAR MATIJAŠIČ*, Undersecretary, Ministry of Education and Sport, Education Development Office

SWEDEN: *Mr. Christer TOFTÉNIUS*, Senior Administrative Officer, Ministry of Education and Research Division for School and *Ms. Marie SEDVALL BERGSTEN,* Director of Education, Swedish National Agency for School Improvement

UK – ENGLAND: *Ms. Kiran EGAN*, Senior Research Officer, Department for Children Schools and Families and *Mr. Adam MICKLETHWAITE,* Team Leader, Early Years Quality and Standards, Department for Children, Schools and Families

UK - NORTHERN IRELAND: *Ms. Patricia MCVEIGH*, Head of Early Years Policy, Department of Education and *Ms. Marilyn WARREN,* Regional Co-ordinator, Early Years Strategy

Participation from the OECD: *Ms. Miho TAGUMA*, Policy Officer, Education and Training Policy Division

Participation from the European Commission: *Ms. Nora MILOTAY*, Policy officer

For Kind en Gezin: *Ms. Bea BUYSSE* (chair); *Ms. Cynthia BETTENS* and *Ms. Kris DANCKAERT* (support team); *Mr. John BENNETT* and *Mr. Will VERNIEST* (experts)

Experts: *Mr. Jan PEETERS* (Resource Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education), *Ms. Myriam SOMMER* (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance)

Special invitee: *Mr. Gaby HOSTENS* (Education Policy Committee)

The following country was excused:

IRELAND: *Mr. Heino SCHONFELD*, Director, Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

III. An overview of the programme of the workshop (see Annex 1)

Following feedback from participating countries in June, the workshop was extended with an optional pre-workshop. For this pre-workshop, Prof. Peter Moss and Dr. Claire Cameron (Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London) presented their recent publication *'Care work in Europe: current understandings and future directions'*.

The workshop was opened by Ms. Bea Buysse, co-ordinator of the network, who gave a short overview on some news from the Network. Ms. Miho Taguma, OECD Policy Officer, situated the OECD perspectives on quality in ECEC.

The keynote was presented by Prof. Ferre Laevers of the Centre for Experiential Education (University of Louvain), the founding father of the innovative project *Experiential Education*. The keynote was commented by Ms. Coleen Marin, Senior Adviser for Early Years and Child Care in Kent. The keynote and the comment were followed by a plenary discussion in which participants had the possibility to make comments or ask questions.

In the afternoon, the participants were divided into two groups. In each group there was a presentation on effective quality initiatives in New Zealand and Norway. After each presentation delegates had some time to discuss and to provide information about their own countries. After the small group discussion there was a plenary session to provide feedback from the small group discussions to all participants. This was followed by a presentation on *The Child in Flanders* in the context of data collection and dissemination in participating countries by Ms. Bea Buysse. The first day ended with a short introduction on the following workshop on '*Transition from pre-school to school'*, which will be organised in Lisbon in April 2008.

The programme of the following day began with the site visits, coordinated by Ms. Julia Moons from the Centre for Experiential Education (University of Louvain). The visits took place in Louvain where the delegates had the possibility to visit one of the four proposed services (crèches and pre-schools). All the services work with the assessment scale on wellbeing and involvement, developed by the Centre for Experiential Education. After the site visits there was some time for plenary discussion. In the afternoon, Prof. Christa Preissing, director at the Institut für den Situationsansatz of the Free University of Berlin, made a presentation on the role of parents in quality assessment.

The workshop ended with some time for conclusions and comments from country delegates.

All presentations can be downloaded from the Network website: www.startingstrong.net

IV. <u>Care work in Europe: current understandings and future directions</u> by Prof. Peter Moss and Dr. Claire Cameron

Care Work in Europe is based on an EC-funded project, from 2001-2005, that compares care work and the care workforce across sectors (work with children, young people and adults) and countries (Denmark, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK); links context, policy, structure and practice; presents examples of innovative developments; and develops a method for the comparative study of understandings of practice (SOPHOS). Its main objective was to contribute to developing good quality employment in services that are responsive to the needs of rapidly changing societies.

Main findings include:

- 'Care work' is a problematic term and concept, the borders between care and other fields are blurring and, in some cases, care is now an integral part of a wider field (such as education or pedagogy). Where it exists as a separate field, it is often weakly conceptualised.
- The workforce is three tiered, though with considerable cross-national differences in size and quality of employment: Denmark and Sweden have the largest and best qualified care workforce, illustrating the contribution that can be made to the development of good quality employment in the right conditions. Work with children is most highly qualified; work with elderly people and in domestic settings least qualified.
- There are strong commonalities in the competencies required for work across different sectors, whether with children, young people or adults. These include adopting a holistic approach; making contextualised judgements; reflection; communication; networking and teamworking; supporting development, autonomy, inclusion, citizenship; working with complexity, diversity, change; combining theory and practice, the personal with the professional. Overall, the work is becoming more complex and demanding.
- The extreme gendering of the workforce is related to the work being understood as essentially female and to training and employment practices. Work with very young children and elderly people is most gendered.
- Much care work has features of poor quality employment (e.g. pay and other employment conditions, levels of education). But reported job satisfaction is high, and much care work has some features of good quality employment (e.g. job autonomy). The social status of the work, however, is perceived by workers to be low.
- The demand for care work is increasing at a time when the major source of supply of care workers for many years – low qualified women – is dwindling. There is evidence of actual or envisaged shortages of care workers. Such developments may point to an emergent crisis of care.

- The SOPHOS method has great potential for future comparative work, in particular in an area where more cross-national and cross-sectoral work is needed, that is the investigation of differences in practice and how these differences are understood.

The findings have a number of ***policy implications***:

- Conditions that are associated with good quality employment include: well-funded services; the public sector in its various roles requiring good quality employment; social valuation of service users; visibility of the work; development of 'learning organisations'; and reconceptualisation of 'care work'.
- Developing the last point, work conceptualised and termed 'care work' e.g. 'childcare', 'social care', 'eldercare' is of lower quality overall then equivalent work conceptualised and termed in other ways. This raises a critical question, does 'care work' have an independent future? 'Care' is important as an ethic but it is not, perhaps, a distinct field of policy, practice and employment. It should instead be treated as an integral part of other fields, e.g. education, pedagogy, health.
- There should be a move over time to a two tier workforce: a professional (graduate level) worker and another worker educated to upper secondary level. The book discusses: the balance between these two groups of workers (what proportion of the workforce should be at graduate level); to what extent the workforce should be based on generalist or specialist occupations; and on what discipline a generalist profession might be based. This means improving education levels for many workers and closing the gap in education and quality of employment between workers with children and elderly people.
- Various answers to the question 'who will do the future caring in Europe' are proposed, each raising questions of principle and feasibility. There is a need for regular monitoring of recruitment, retention and turnover.
- Diversifying the workforce, in particular with respect to gender and ethnicity, is necessary and feasible.
- The widespread trend towards a more market approach may affect job satisfaction and quality of employment. Generally systems based on 'care as a private commodity', high user payments, competitive markets and demand-side public funding do not produce good quality employment. Systems based on 'pedagogical services as a public good', with supply side public funding covering most costs produce good quality employment.

V. **Experiential Education and SiCs, a process-oriented Self-assessment Instrument for Care Settings** by Prof. Ferre Laevers

The main presentation at this second workshop of the Starting Strong Network was made by Professor Laevers, Director of the Centre for Experiential Education (CEGO) of the University of Louvain. As part of its policy to improve the quality of care provision in Flanders, Kind & Gezin [Child & Family] had requested the Centre to develop a self-assessment instrument for child care services that would meet three requirements:

- To serve as a tool for self-assessment in care settings;
- To take the child and its experience of the care environment as the main focus of quality, and
- To be appropriate to a wide range of care provision including care for the under threes in day care centres and family care as well as the out of school care for children up to the age of twelve years.

The result was SiCs, a process-orientated Self-evaluation Instrument for Care Settings. SiCs is designed to help settings to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in providing an optimal environment for children to develop. Two indicators of quality are central to the SiCs approach: well-being and involvement. Well-being refers to feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions and is crucial to secure mental health. Involvement refers to being intensely engaged in activities and is considered to be a necessary condition for deep level learning and development.

Since its introduction in 2004, child care workers in more than 600 provisions have been trained in working with the instrument. Although heads of settings or coordinators collect most of the data through observation, every staff member in the settings is actively involved in the procedure of self-assessment. The process of reflection and action is seen as the responsibility of the whole team. In the various care settings visited, CEGO trainers have observed the wellbeing and involvement of more than 8000 children. These observations show that children generally are doing well on the aspect of wellbeing, but that their involvement does not reach the minimum acceptable level of 3.5 on a scale of 5.

The procedure for self-evaluation contains three steps:

STEP 1: Assessment of the actual levels of well-being and involvement (scanning of the groups);

STEP 2: Analysis of the observations (explanation of the levels observed);

STEP 3: A selection and implementation of actions to improve quality.

Assessment of the actual levels of well-being and involvement

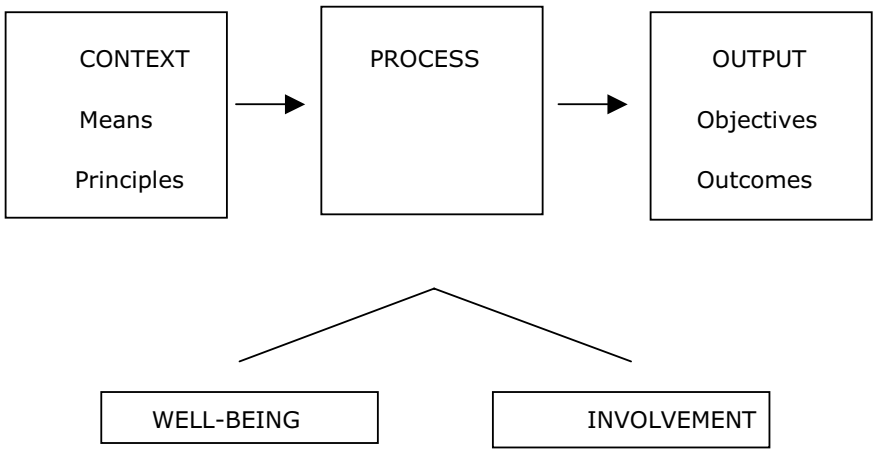
Here, the focus is on the children's experience of their stay in the setting. The observers or staff try to find out how the children are doing, that is:

- How the children are feeling (= well-being);
- How engaged they are in their activities (= involvement).

The diagram below shows the needed inputs (space, materials, etc), the process aims and the eventual outcomes characteristic of a high quality early childhood environment

Space	***Motor development***
Materials	***Language skills***
Choice of activities	***Curiosity***
Interactions	***Social competence***
Organisation	***Self-reliance***
Safety	***Self-confidence, trust***

The conceptual framework.



Impact: The use of this self-evaluation instrument not only leads to significant changes in the settings as such. It also contributes to the professional development of practitioners. Through the process, staff learn to take the perspective of the child into account in their approach and because of this, to create optimal conditions for the social-emotional and cognitive development of children.

Professor Laevers full presentation can be found on the Network web site: www.startingstrong.net

The SiCs Manual (ZiKo in Flemish) is available on the English pages of the Kind en Gezin website: www.kindengezin.be

VI. **Empowering Early Years Practitioners: a comment on the SiCs Self-assessment Instrument** by Ms. Colleen Marin

Colleen Marin is Senior Adviser for Early Years and Child Care, Kent (UK), with responsibility for raising the quality of ECEC across the county. Services in Kent County are governed by two Public Service Agreement targets:

1. To improve outcomes for young children, specifically to add at least six points to Personal, Social and Emotional Development and to Communication, Language and Literacy as defined in the Foundation Stage Profile (English curriculum for the early years).
2. To reduce the outcomes gap between areas of high social deprivation and the rest of Kent.

To meet the challenge, Ms. Marin and her team maintained a principled approach to young children (based on clear values and research on how young children learn and develop) and adopted the Leuven assessment instrument, in particular, its 10 Action points and the exploration of children's feelings (Box Full of Feelings). The action points include: creating a rich environment; offering activities based on observation; stimulating activities with open impulses; making room for child initiative; building up positive relations; exploring the world of feelings, behaviours and values; supporting children with special needs.

The results have been very encouraging both for children and practitioners:

Children: In 73% of settings, the Leuven work has impacted positively on levels of involvement; in 41% of settings, children were observed to be more independent than before; and in 64% of settings, the whole staff team has been trained in the Leuven approach;

Practitioners: Practitioners are more aware of the impact of the environment on children's play. They proactively review and change the environment as a result of observing children's well-being and involvement. Some settings have made the shift from a practitioner-oriented to a child-oriented way of organising things.

The official OFSTED inspection has also noted the improvement: "Staff have re-arranged the nursery and resource to support children's learning, allow them to use their initiative and select freely and independently from a wide selection of purposeful and meaningful activities appropriate to their individual needs."

Colleen Marin's full presentation, with the research background carefully explained, can be found on the Network web site: www.startingstrong.net

VII. Effective quality initiatives in New Zealand: presentation and small group discussion

Karl Le Quesne of the New Zealand (NZ) Ministry of Education presented the NZ early childhood system, and in particular, the non-structural initiatives to improve quality undertaken by his department. The full presentation can be found on the Network web site: www.startingstrong.net

In summary: in New Zealand, government does not own or operate ECE services - all ECE services are delivered by private organisations, either profit or non-profit. The Ministry of Education regulates minimum requirements for health, safety and education. It also subsidises the cost of ECE directly to services and provides 20 hours free early education per week to 3 and 4 year olds in teacher-led services.

The Ministry directs services through both a regulatory framework and non-regulatory influences, such as, leadership, collaboration, information and research, funding of professional learning, funding of teaching resources and self review guidelines. These are presented in a quality framework (see presentation). The Ministry also promotes credit based, socio-cultural assessment practices - based on the Te Whaariki curriculum - that involve the learning community of parent, child, teacher and others. Evaluation has found that this resource is associated with improved teaching and collaboration with parents.

The Ministry believes in partnership and collaboration. It funds regional professional development workshop and supports the clustering of services for professional development. It has established a strong web presence that supports and encourages the development and sharing of ICT knowledge. A national Help Desk is being planned to provide independent advice and guidelines to inform ECE services' decisions in the areas of health and safety (including Internet Cybersafety), management systems, and the selection of ICT equipment. It has also established *Centres of Innovation* to further develop innovative teaching practices and disseminate the findings. In New Zealand, researchers, policy makers and practitioners work closely together. The Ministry considers this collaboration to be an important strength of the system.

Small group discussion: There is no system to measure the outcomes on children; such a system would not be supported by much of the ECE sector. New Zealand parents and services normally take a holistic view of development - but all service review reports are available to parents on-line. The Education Review Office conducts three-yearly reviews of settings, which can cover the whole range of a service's operation, but only the Ministry of Education can take action to close settings. The competent children/competent learners study shows the impact of high quality ECE on children's learning continuing to age 16, but this is not representative study as it focuses on provision in one city in New Zealand. The study looks at the learning environment, interactions, activities, out of school provision, children's motivations etc.

There are three official languages in New Zealand: English, Maori and sign language, but most children are in integrated groups. There is a nation-wide network of Māori services that focus on strengthening the Māori language, and a smaller number of services that focus on Pacific languages.

New Zealand is one of a few countries that subsidizes for-profit organisations - but government regulates (in particular, the qualifications that teachers must have) and provides higher subsidies for services that employ more registered teachers. Given the regulations and the salary scales of kindergarten teachers (kindergarten teachers have pay parity with primary school teachers) which influence the salaries of all other ECE teachers, it is doubtful whether there is much profit to be made from setting up an early education centre Comparisons with other countries were made: e.g. Canada where child care services are mostly community, non-profit services, and Sweden, which has a growing private sector.

VIII. Effective Quality Initiatives in Norway: presentation and small group discussion

The presentations on Norway were provided by Kari Jacobsen and Tove Mogstad Slinde of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. In summary:

Kindergartens in Norway are pedagogical institutions for young children 1-6 years, which provide care, upbringing, play and learning. The Kindergarten Act states that the municipalities have responsibility for kindergartens at the local level. The central government provides grants to the local authorities to build childcare settings but the municipalities have responsibility for identifying the appropriate locations on which to build premises. Guidance is provided on how many square metres are appropriate for both out-door and in-door learning, e.g. the space required for out-door learning is 6 times that required for indoor learning.

In Norway, approximately 50 per cent of the kindergartens are privately owned. Coverage for the age group 1-6 is now about 80 per cent. The Government will introduce a legal right to a place in kindergarten when full coverage is reached. The Kindergarten Act states that head teachers and pedagogical leaders must have pedagogical expertise and be tertiary trained pre-school educators, or have other college education that gives qualifications for working with young children. Of the staff working in kindergartens, about 30 per cent are trained pre-school educators. The Framework plan, governing kindergarten pedagogy takes a holistic view: the development of children is seen as a dynamic and closely interwoven interaction between their physical and mental circumstances and the environment in which they grow up. Learning is seen to take place primarily through interaction in play. The Framework Plan defines seven learning areas with which children should become acquainted in kindergartens: communication, language and text; body, movement and health; art, culture and creativity; nature, environment and technology; ethics, religion and philosophy; local community and society; numbers, spaces and shapes.

Continued attention is being given to the issue of men in kindergartens. Society considers that it is the right of the child to have both genders in kindergarten. For the moment, however, the motivation of young males to study for a job in kindergarten needs to be intrinsic (not money, status). For many young men it is difficult to say to their parents (especially to fathers) that they have chosen kindergarten pedagogy as a profession. How the choice of these men are viewed from outside is an interesting issue (what is the response?). A comparison was made with Flanders: male workers in Flanders choose kindergarten or care work often as a second career (not their first job). Many have a history in scouting (working with children). Which kind of men can we motivate for this job? Should we establish men-only courses?

Small group discussion: Much of the discussion in both Norwegian workshops focussed on staffing and training, including again the question of men in kindergartens. About 9% of kindergarten pedagogues in Norway are men. The need for good child:staff ratios was underlined, for example, the EPPE study in the UK shows that the better trained teachers are, the better quality will be. In

Norway, the ratio is 14-18 children, 3-6 years old, per tertiary-trained pedagogue,[1] but in general, several less-trained staff are also present giving ratios of 4-6 children per adult. If the number of trained staff were increased, could the child/staff ratios be raised without loss of quality?

The question was also raised: Does the Norwegian Government pay for training and the replacement of staff who participate in training? The state provides some money for training but employers are directly responsible for finding replacements for staff. It is for employers to decide whether or not they pay their staff during their training, but solutions are usually reached locally.

Another important topic for discussion was *children's language development*. The Norwegian Government is working on a White Paper to parliament concerning language development and stimulation, and is considering the introduction of a legal right for language stimulation for all children who need it. This led to discussions around how one would define children in need of language stimulation. In Norway, there are health screening checks at age 2 (90% of parents attend) and 4 years, which provide an indication of which children may need language support. How many children are reached through this? 86% of 4 year old attend health checks at age 4 but not all these children attend kindergarten so coverage is not complete. It was asked also: how much does it cost to develop and disseminate a language screening tool, but figures could not be presented at the time of the discussions. Denmark has a similar screening tool for children from ethnic minority groups and one for Danish-speakers that takes place in daycare settings.

[1] In Norway, training length is usually 3 years full time and 4 years part time but this will vary locally. Training is both practical and theoretical, and the former experience of assistants is taken into account

IX. Comments and observation on the plenary discussions

The time allocated to discussions of the plenary presentations was short. Most of the interventions focussed on the keynote presentation by prof. Ferre Laevers. Speakers agreed, in general, on the importance of the well-being and involvement of young children seeing, in particular, the happiness of young children as a fundamental aim of early childhood services. Some speakers drew a distinction between child care and early education. Pre-primary education, being attached to the school, has certain targets to reach and is staffed by professional teachers. The measurement of involvement needs to take this distinction into account. One has to be mindful of the context in which one works. In England, for example, there is a lot of interest in children's attainment.

While recognising this need, Professor Laevers called attention to focussing on the children. Young children will typically be involved in some areas and not in others, and the objectives at least in Flanders - are to be attained by the end of primary school. By attending to the well-being and involvement of young children, educators can see and do things with and for young children that they would have never have thought possible.

X. Data collection and dissemination: the case of Flanders by Ms. Bea Buysse

Bea Buysse, senior adviser, presented the annual flagship publication of Kind en Gezin, *The Child in Flanders,* for which she has been responsible since 1987. Kind en Gezin aims to create – with its partners - as many opportunities as possible for every child, regardless of where he or she was born, or where and how he or she is growing up. This vision is communicated to researchers, who are requested to produce data sets with the child as the central focus, e.g. the Panel Study Households, the SILC survey (Survey on Income and Living Conditions), governmental health surveys, etc. Over the years, this has helped to enlarge the vision and scope of data collection in Flanders.

Beside this, Kind en Gezin has built up a very comprehensive data base on young children, called IKAROS. IKAROS covers all children under the age of 3 years born or living in Flanders – even more children than the official register. In IKAROS, comprehensive information is collected on each child and her family: birth information; origin; age and education level of the mother of the child; language; deprivation of the household of the child; weight; breast-feeding; vaccinations; visual or hearing loss… There are also advanced plans to add more data on the families of children, including information on fathers.

The reports are published each year and made available to the general public and the media through the publication: *The Child in Flanders.*

The Child in Flanders includes chapters on:

- *Demography and demographic trends*: background information related to birth rates, the number of children in families, migration, adoption, asylum seekers…
- *The evolution of families*, e.g. household type, presence of brothers/sisters, language of the home, the health situation of the parents, grandparents…
- *Employment and income in families with young children*: standard of living, poverty, patterns of deprivation…
- *Aspects of the health and safety of young children*: pre-natal care, mortality and morbidity; life expectancy, accidents (at home, traffic accidents…), child abuse …
- *A healthy and safe way of life*: (breast) feeding, the use of medicine for children, vaccinations, living conditions…

For ECEC specialists, there is a chapter on upbringing outside the home: on child care (both formal and informal), out-of-school care, education for children with special needs, and on special child welfare work. This chapter is particularly well researched, providing detailed information on the children who use child care or out-of-school care according to age group, household type, origin and deprivation. Figures are provided, for example on the comparative take-up of services from mainstream immigrant and at-risk backgrounds. Data is also collected on care when children are ill, and on the well-being and involvement of infants and toddlers in child care.

For the information of readers, the Table of Contents of *The Child in Flanders 2006* is reproduced in Annex 4. Copies of the work can be consulted on the English pages of the Kind en Gezin web site: www.kindengezin.be

Copies of the presentation by Bea Buysse can be found on the Network web site: www.startingstrong.net

XI. The site visits

All the services visited were located in the city of Louvain.

De Kabouterberg: De Kabouterberg is a new subsidised childcare centre (September 2002) with a capacity of 116 places. It is one of the six child care facilities of the University of Louvain (total capacity of 378 places). It provides care for children from birth to 3 years of age. The provision focuses on wellbeing and involvement of children. The aim is to make children feel at ease in a cosy environment and in stable relationships with caring child care workers. Recently, the facility moved from horizontal groups to mixed age groups for children from 0 to 3 years.

Sint-Jacob: Sint-Jacob is a subsidised childcare centre founded in 1956, with a capacity of 74 places. It provides care for children from birth to 3 years of age. The children come from different socio-economic backgrounds, a reflection of the population in the neighbourhood. The centre works with small groups so it can focus on the needs of the individual child as much as possible. The wellbeing and involvement of the children is assessed on a systematic bases.

Pre-school De Ark: De Ark is a pre-school for children between 2.5 and 6 years of age. There is also a second pre-school run by the same organisation in a different location. The pre-school has 12 different classes, reaching 290 children between 2.5 and 6 year old. The facility focuses on the well-being and involvement of all children and the development of different competences (motor development, music, language, social development, mathematics, etc).

Pre-school Vlierbeek: Vlierbeek is a pre-school for children between 2.5 and 6 years of age. The providing organisation runs a second pre-school in a different location. The pre-school Vlierbeek has 10 different classes, reaching 238 children between 2.5 and 6 year old. The facility focuses on the sense of belonging of all children and tries to support children while respecting the individuality of each.

Comments and discussions on the visited crèches:

There were many staff, including students in training. The general atmosphere in the crèches was both professional and relaxed, and the well-being of the children seemed high. Fees were very reasonable, ranging from 1,30 euro to 26-27euro per day (income related). Staff seemed welcoming to parents, and provide places to the children of parents seeking work.

The involvement of children was not high – the children were more interested in attachment to the care takers, rather than to play or activities. Advice = use more things from daily life as play things rather than plastic toys.

Opening hours: many of even the youngest infants/toddlers seem to spend a full day in the centre. Ten hours a day is not exceptional. Not the best place for very small children. Advice = why does Belgium not support a longer and well-remunerated parental leave as in other European countries?

The segregation between care and education in Flanders is strange. This is not the case in Germany and some other countries. Education starts not at 3 years old nor at 6, but from the day

the child is born. Childcare workers also teach and educate children. It does not happen only at school.

Remarks from New Zealand/ UK and Japan about the visit: Staff was highly motivated (impressive) - good child well-being due to a good leadership. Staff qualifications were not high. *Advice*: Staff development seems to be a very important challenge. For many staff, there seems to be little prospect of career development… An added danger is the growth of the independent sector (due to policy options) and the risk of lower demands concerning staff qualifications and the quality of care and education.

Comments and discussions on the visited pre-schools:

The number of children (n=26) in the classroom of 2.5 to 4 years old was very high. And the teacher was alone! She drew attention to this and about the seeming impossibility to have more teachers. (The Netherlands). Delegates from other countries made the same comment: Not enough space per child. The room was crowded. No involvement of the children or no question about the possibility of involvement. Those children were only 2.5 years old and had to stay in the same room all day long with the whole group. They are supposed to stay awake for a very long time. There is no space to take a nap, no infrastructure for the very small children. In addition, outdoor play is not really developed in Flanders. Another delegate thought that although the space was small, the children were interacting, they could do quit a lot. And it was organised. *Advice* : organisation of the outer space (corners, not everywhere hard floor etc.) plus an approach to self organisation by the children (corners).

Other comments:

- The difficulty for teachers and children of a new intake 6 times a year, which results in little continuity.
- For parent users, is the difference between private, recognized and funded services clear? Inspection is more severe in funded provisions. The biggest difference is that there is no qualification required for staff in independent provisions. In Flanders, there seems to be a culture that anyone can work in day care.

XII. <u>Parental follow-up of quality in ECEC</u> by Prof. Christa Preissing

The presentation on parental involvement was made by Professor Christa Preissing of the Free University of Berlin. In summary:

The involvement of parents in early childhood services is a human right. Parents have the right (but not always the opportunity) to choose a kindergarten that meets their basic educational ideas. They have also the right to participate in the main decisions within the public ECEC system in Germany (this is part of the social law). From a psychological perspective, to involve parents preserves the child's positive feeling of belonging to a family. At the same time, each child has the right to go beyond the experiences of the home. The ECEC-settings are often the first opportunity for a child to get to know other ways of life, other orientations, other values. It is important for the self-concept of a child and for her experience democratic values, that differences are not lived as meaning better or worse, but seen as simply diverse and generally enriching.

For kindergarten staff also, it is becoming necessary that parents should be involved. In our globalised world, life situations are becoming more and more diverse; professionals and policy makers need the experiences and knowledge of parents to understand and face the challenges of our diverse societies (see: www.decet.org). This leads to a number of principles for professionals to follow in their relations with parents and families, viz.:

- Each family and the way they live together as a family - is respected, independent of their social and cultural origin,
- Parents are seen as mothers and fathers, who are deeply interested in the well being of their child and the educational processes,
- Parents are recognized as experts on the experiences, competencies, needs and demands of their child.
- Parents must also be treated as active partners in defining quality: e.g. practitioners show parents around the kindergarten asking them what they like and what maybe is irritating them. It is important that the environment shows that diversity is welcomed and respected. Practitioners get into open dialogue on very concrete questions about the child's experiences: what she or he likes and dislikes in the daily life: daily routines, play and toys, songs and music Practitioners use individual conversations with parents - sometimes together with the child - about the portfolio of the child. Fundamental questions should be discussed and explored together, such as: What is the difference between learning and playing? It can be very challenging - even stressful - when parents have convictions that contradict professional knowledge and attitudes but professional should know that this will happen. This is part of the challenge of creating a an open learning community, and although this pedagogical work will not change the world, it can empower children and families to become active citizens.

Further information: http://www.ina-fu.org ; http://www.kinderwelten.net and http://www.decet.org/ Professor Preissing's full presentation can be found on the Network web site: www.startingstrong.net

Discussion: Parental involvement demands much extra work, e.g. to organise small group discussions, be available at drop-off and pick-up time. Often there is no time to have a discussion with parents. They drop off their children at rush moments (before/after work). You need time for this work. Logistical challenge of parents who are busy and stressed. Do pedagogues receive sufficient support to engage in programmes for parents? How to get those resources? In parts of Germany, team discussion, small group discussions, in service training, etc. are expected to take up 20-25% of teachers' time. It is important also that parental involvement (and how to deal with its pitfalls) is foreseen in the training of the teachers.

Another difficulty is that only a small group of parents will participate. Advice: necessary to organise small group meetings for certain groups of parents so that all voices are heard. Parents tend to be involved if the period of ECEC is longer.

When parents look at something as a consumer, they also react as a consumer (and not as a parent), e.g. when a service closes, parents react to the fact that it has closed but much less to questions about the quality of the service.

The OECD considers to organise a workshop on the role of the government in the promotion of parental involvement.

XIII. A summary of the country reports on effective quality initiatives beyond regulations

Austria

Developments at national level: The development of language skills in young children from an early age is an explicit goal of present government policy. Several measures have been introduced. A federal, cross ministerial initiative to improve German language skills for children from non-German speaking background was started in 2005. For screening purposes school registration takes place one year before children enter compulsory primary school. Along with early registration, the children's language proficiency is assessed by the head or a teacher of primary school. Children with obvious deficits in German language get a so-called "Language Ticket", which is a voucher to receive early language support free of charge during the year before they start with school. The offer encompasses 120 hours of language promotion per child carried out by specially trained pedagogues in the kindergartens. The initiative is sponsored by the Austrian Federal Government to an amount of 80 Euros per child. In order to receive this allocation, a short evaluation of the progress of each child has to be sent to the Ministry. (http://www.sprachbaum.at). In addition to the above mentioned initiative, all training institutes for kindergarten pedagogues are now directed to place a focus on early language development in several training areas and within their practical work at the training kindergartens.

In September 2007, further national measures were introduced by the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture, viz. the development of a specific in-service training course - offered by teacher training colleges (6 ECTS) - for primary teachers and kindergarten pedagogues to promote language development in children. At least one teacher from every kindergarten training institute has to attend this in-service training per semester. In addition, based on the Barcelona childcare targets, national agreements between the state and the provinces are in discussion and are likely to become effective soon. Developments under discussion are: the extension of ECEC services with special focus on full day care; in-service trainings for teachers and kindergarten pedagogues for the assessment of language skills; the development of specific devices for the assessment of language skills; the development of language standards for children entering schools; and the development of a national curriculum focussed on early language promotion and general educational standards for children age 3 to 6, with special attention to transition to school.

Quality initiatives across the Austrian provinces also reflect a focus on language:

Carinthia: The provincial government has developed special guidelines to improve the educational quality of work with children during their last year in kindergarten. In addition, fees have been reduced for the last kindergarten year: since 2006, parents no longer pay for the morning sessions (half day) in kindergartens. A pilot project has also been established to make the last year of

kindergarten obligatory; about half of all communities have agreed to take part in this pilot project beginning in 2008.

Salzburg: "Forum Familie": The provincial government has established advisory service for families in several regions of the province (information on child care places, parental counselling…).

Tirol: "Sprachstartgruppe": Children from non-German speaking backgrounds are gathered in one group during their first year in kindergarten (most children are age 3 to 4 years) to enhance German language abilities. These groups are staffed by a kindergarten pedagogue, an assistant and a mother tongue assistant. After one year, children are integrated into regular groups near their homes. The provider is the provincial government.

Vienna: Ongoing in-service training has been established to help the implementation of the educational curriculum for kindergartens that was introduced in 2006 by the municipality of Vienna. The municipality is also engaged in the ongoing development (finalisation is foreseen, end 2008) of an online manual for kindergarten pedagogues. Special educators have also developed a tool or "language competence box" for kindergarten pedagogues in Vienna to support their educational work in the area of language development. All pedagogues receive the kit, and one pedagogue of each institution should attend a specific training to facilitate working with this material. There are also plans to introduce a portfolio documentation of the educational work and the development of children. Specific training will start in spring 2008 on voluntary basis and again will be obligatory for at least one pedagogue per institution in 2009. A curriculum for children 0 to 3 years is also being developed (finalisation is scheduled end of 2008). A mentoring programme has also been established to ensure support for newcomers in the field: new staff members are assigned a "buddy" to accompany them and facilitate their first steps into work. In addition, pedagogical teams who receive a new leader/head are accompanied by an expert who works with them to build up teamwork and mutual trust.

Vorarlberg: The provincial government has developed a "Sprachschatz" or guideline for kindergarten pedagogues to promote language development in young children. The brochure contains theoretical information on language development and a broad variety of practical examples of specific educational instructions.

Belgium Flanders

The Ministry of Education has designated the 2007-2008 school year as the year of the pre-school child. During the year, particular attention will be paid to pre-school education and to the importance of early entry to nursery school. Various initiatives are being taken, e.g. to encourage pupil guidance centres to pay more attention to the regular school attendance of preschoolers, even though these children are not subject to compulsory education. In cooperation with Kind en Gezin, the Ministry will improve data collection on young children and encourage home visits to parents of preschool age children who are not yet enrolled. It will also undertake a wide range of

training initiatives and awareness-raising activities to help convince education professionals, as well as the broad public, of the importance and value of pre-school education (both in itself and in preparing children to primary school).

In the next few years, the Flemish government, through Kind en Gezin, aims to organise child care in such a way:

- That affordable childcare will be accessible and available to all Flemish families, within a reasonable distance of their homes;
- That parents and children can rely on all child care being safe and responsible, with all child care centres meeting the same clear objectives;
- That the quality standards required of child care provision will be harmonised in all provision. At the moment, these standards are different according to the status of the provision (subsidised versus non-subsidised);
- That child care will fulfil three major societal functions - economic, educational and social – in each community, in response to local child care needs and requirements.

It is interesting to note that for the first time, the three societal functions of child care, and especially the social function, are being explicitly recognised at policy level by government and are being given equal value. In May 2007, 16 pilot project were established to support local or regional cooperation in fulfilling the three societal functions of child care. Guaranteeing accessible child care is one of the main objectives. In order to prevent exclusion, the pilot projects will have to ensure an admission policy such that the group of children cared for reflects community and regional society. In addition to caring for children whose parents are working or undergoing training, the pilot projects will have to provide priority access for children from one parent families and the families with the lowest incomes, and for children who, for social and/or educational reasons, are cared for outside their own families during the day. The pilot projects will also have to develop a central system for recording and dispatching child care requests and answering them as efficiently as possible. In this way, parents will need to make their child care requests in one place only in order to receive maximum further assistance. The pilot projects are to be evaluated in September 2008. The results of this evaluation will form the basis for new legislation.

Canada

In Canada, the federal, provincial and territorial governments work together in full respect of each other's responsibilities and recognize that provinces and territories have the primary responsibility for child care. Apart from direct responsibility for First Nations programmes on reserve, the federal Government of Canada does not intervene in quality matters, except to provide funding to provinces and territories to support the delivery of child care programs and services. In 2006, it introduced its Universal Child Care Plan, which includes the Universal Child Care benefit and a

commitment to support child care spaces. The Universal Child Care Benefit provides $100 per month for each child under the age of six, taxable in the hands of the spouse with the lower income. The benefit totals $2.4 billion in annual support to families. To help create and enhance child care spaces, the federal government is providing $250 million per year to provinces and territories, beginning in 2007, to help create and enhance child care spaces. In addition, the federal government introduced a 25-per-cent investment tax credit to businesses that create new child care spaces for their employees, to a maximum of $10,000 per space created.

The provincial governments have undertaken a number of initiatives to enhance quality, some examples of which are summarized below.

The Alberta Accreditation Program

In October 2004, Alberta implemented a province-wide accreditation program for licensed day care centres and contracted family day homes. Accreditation is a voluntary process to assess child care programs that meet 10 quality standards of child care excellence. Enhanced funding is provided to licensed day care centres and contracted family day home agencies that become accredited. Since April, 2005, approximately 43% of eligible pre-school child care programs are accredited, and most of the remaining programs are working toward that goal.

The quality standards against which child care programs are evaluated are based on four categories of outcomes: outcomes for children, outcomes for families, outcomes for staff and outcomes for the community. Further details can be found at www.child.alberta.ca

The Manitoba Strategy and Quality Framework

The Government of Manitoba is developing a multi-year action strategy to succeed the 2002-2007 Five-Year Plan For Child Care. The new strategy will take a strategic approach to system growth and development to ensure a quality and sustainable provincial system with more equitable access. It will place a high priority on supporting the development of more ELCC centres in schools or other public buildings, to make effective and efficient use of public resources. The strategy will also strive to develop stronger linkages with the education system as well as other early childhood development and family support programs and services

Manitoba is also in the process of developing and implementing a child focused quality framework to guide curriculum, programming and licensing, based on best practices and current research. The framework aims to provide important links and promote a more seamless transition between early childhood programs and toward the education system.

The Department has also developed a *Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres,* which provides well-researched ways to help improve program quality and ensure high quality early learning and child care. In addition, providers will be encouraged to pursue enhanced quality through the accreditation standards recently developed by the Manitoba Child Care Association.

The Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators

Ontario has passed legislation to allow to establish a College of Early Childhood Educators, which will have the authority to regulate the practice of early childhood education, and to govern its members. It will establish and maintain qualifications for membership, enforce professional and ethical standards, and investigate complaints. The College will also promote the profession of early childhood education, develop professional standards for early childhood educators working in the field, and set requirements for ongoing professional development.

Quebec

In May 2004, the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés released a plan for continuous quality improvement with two structural measures: a commitment to quality, whereby every child care provider is invited to identify quality improvement measures, to inform parents about these measures and to report to them on the achievement of fixed objectives; and a trial of a child care accreditation system based on the experience of the Conseil québécois d'agrément. Since the involvement of child care providers is key to achieving the quality results sought by these two approaches, the tools necessary to their implementation were developed in collaboration with educational child care associations and groups.

Finland

The implementation of the new ECEC Curriculum Guidelines continues

After publishing the first version of the Curriculum Guidelines in September 2003, STAKES, the Finnish government agency with responsibility for early childhood policy, organised a *mentor-programme*. Eight two-day mentor training sessions for experts chosen by the municipalities were organised during one year. The mentors' task was to start a networking project in their own municipalities or areas, acting as co-ordinators of the municipal curriculum processes.

This kind of a networking approach is considered crucial in the Finnish situation. There are over 50 000 ECEC workers in Finland, some of whom work alone in their remote municipalities. In many areas, the municipalities combined their resources and chose one mentor to co-ordinate a larger area of several municipalities. In others, the municipalities formed together a larger network, to which each municipality sent their own mentor. This was the case, for example, in the Oulu area, in North-Finland. There 22 municipalities formed a network together with a Social Competence Centre and the University of Oulu. They continued the mentoring process by organising their own meetings, training and consultation.

*The case of **Helsinki** provides another example of a municipal process:*

This local example describes how Helsinki supported the implementation of the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC and the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education. The process

was created during 2006-2007 in collaboration with the City of Helsinki and the University of Helsinki (Research Centre for Early Childhood and Elementary Education).

The aim was to create a dynamic working culture based on controlled change by developing the professional knowledge and skills of the personnel. Well working pedagogical activities and collaboration with parents in the form of educational partnership were a main focus. To enable this, it was also important to develop evaluation strategies, processes and instruments for day care centres in the City of Helsinki and other cities in the metropolitan area.

The process started with survey questionnaires that studied the current evaluation procedures. Based on this information researchers organized training for selected day care centres. During the process university experts visited centres frequently giving in-service training, counselling, and support. The next phase focused on organising training session for all personnel working at day care centres in the City of Helsinki and other cities on the metropolitan area. The final product of the process is a handbook for new strategies, procedures and instruments.

National ECEC quality review

The first national ECEC quality review, named *Topical*, will be published in spring 2008. *Topical* initiates a continuing quality review to be brought forward every two-year time period. Each period will adopt a specific focus point. The first one will focus on the staff qualifications in the municipal ECEC, based on both on national data and the views of parents in different parts of the country. The parental viewpoints were collected by a web-based questionnaire launched in the Varttua-portal. The survey consisted of structured and open questions about ECEC services and contents. The answers (N = 3000+) represent well the different parts of the country.

Regional ECEC development units

A number of regional development units were begun in 2005 in the social and welfare sector, with money allocated through a national programme. Currently seven regional units focusing on ECEC have started their work. These units work under the coordination of the Social Competence Centres on their area and their development work is based on networking. The aim is to make these development units part of the permanent development structure in the social and welfare sector.

National Web-consulting

A national ECEC web-consulting service was opened for ECEC personnel in 2007. The service is located in the STAKES Varttua web-site, in technical collaboration with another STAKES site (www.sosiaaliportti.fi) The environment is certified to allow the safety of the consulting processes. There are several consultancy groups, each of which specialises to a specific area in ECEC (e.g. special needs, curriculum process, organising services). A client (ECEC professional) poses a question, which is then directed to a specific consultancy group for discussion and reflection. Each group has a consultant in charge who finally writes the answer to the client.

The North Social Competence Centre has been running a regional web-consulting since 2003. This environment was started as part of another project focusing on children's special needs. The environment has proved its importance and efficiency to support professionals in an area, where small municipalities do not necessarily have enough critical mass of adequately trained administrators and experts to ensure the high quality or development of services. Experiences from this process have been crucial in the development of national web-consulting.

An information-network-based environment for learning and for the evaluation of preparedness for basic literacy and mathematics

As part of a set of measures launched by the Ministry of Education for 2006-2011, in order to improve well-being at schools, the Niilo Mäki Institute (University of Jyväskylä) develop a learning and evaluating environment to support children who find it particularly challenging to achieve learning preparedness and basic skills required in reading and writing. The target groups are pupils in preschool education and forms 1 and 2, their guardians and the teaching and pupil-welfare staff. The project seeks to find a solution that is based on the latest research results and are suitable for a) identifying b) evaluating risks in the acquisition of basic literacy and mathematical skills as well as c) training children who have shortcomings as regards these skills. In the project, operations for early recognition and support are being developed to prevent learning difficulties. These models will be available at the national level for all children who need support.

Development of pupil welfare

In the spring 2007 the Ministry of Education granted special state subsidies for the development of the service structure of preschool and basic education in municipalities or regions. The objective of the operations is to improve the quality of pupil welfare and to develop network support as well as developing and establishing the related service structure. In order to achieve the objective, municipalities will work out a strategy whereby measures will be integrated into the service system for children and young people.

Ireland

Síolta – a quality framework for providers: From 2002-05, the CECDE (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, Dublin) undertook an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders involved in the early care and education sector in order to develop a national quality framework. The framework, *Síolta,* (CECDE 2006), is intended to act as a framework for use by providers to facilitate the delivery of quality early education in Ireland by developing services in line with a series of guiding principles and standards. It will also support formal and informal assessment processes for early education settings in Ireland, in which integrated care and education is provided to children from birth to six. These settings include relatively informal childminding arrangements, preschools, playgroups, crèches and nurseries, all of which can be organised as private enterprises or as community-based initiatives and which may or may not be

in receipt of State funding. They also include the infant classes of primary schools where the guidelines will be relevant to initiatives such as Whole School Evaluation and School Development Planning.

Twelve principles are proposed by Síolta to serve as benchmark for all quality practice and service provision in early education and care:

- Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
- The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.
- Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.
- Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the wellbeing, learning and development of the young child.
- Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.
- Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.
- The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her/his well-being, learning and development.
- The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.
- The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.
- The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation, communication and mutual respect.
- Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities, which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education.
- Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.

These principles sit alongside a series of 16 standards revolving around: the rights of the child; environments; parents and families; consultation; interactions; play; curriculum; planning and evaluation; health and welfare; organisation; professional practice; communication; transitions; identity and belonging; legislation and regulation; community involvement. The principles and standards are enshrined within a series of Resource Manuals that are targeted at four specific types of early childhood education namely, full and part-time day care services, infant classes, childminding and sessional services.

The Framework for Early Learning

In Ireland, there are already a number of different curriculum guidelines in use in early childhood settings. In 2004, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published a consultative document *Towards a Framework for Early Learning*. Since then, the NCCA has sought to develop a national framework to support all children's learning from birth to six years, aiming to bring greater continuity and progression in children's learning and development as they move from home to settings like crèches and pre-schools and then on to primary school.

The Framework is based on the belief that all learning is connected and that different aspects of children's learning and development often take place at the same time. The child is seen as a unique individual who is an active, capable and competent learner, learning through play, relationships and language and through everyday experiences. Rather than looking at individual developmental domains, the Framework uses four broad themes that are linked to one another. These are: well-being, identity and belonging, communicating, and exploring and thinking.

The *Framework for Early Learning* Framework is also addressed to adults. It provides them with advice, information and tools to help them develop their practice, such as:

- Interacting with children
- Developing partnerships with parents and families
- Using play to support learning and development
- Assessing children's progress and planning for the next steps in learning

The *Framework* helps adults in different settings to work towards a set of common goals and a shared understanding of what they are trying to achieve in their interactions with babies, toddlers and young children. It describes the learning opportunities that are important to enable children from birth to six years to develop as competent and confident learners.

Korea

The quality framework

Over the last three years, ECEC in Korea has been changed dramatically, and notably in the area of quality assurance systems. The Korean Childcare Accreditation Council (KCAC) was established by the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2004, and a voluntary accreditation system was activated in 2006 after trialing in 2005. As of 2007, 3,350 facilities (both centre- and home-based) are already accredited. 40.6% (11,868 out of a total of 29,233) facilities have applied for accreditation.

Based on the Early Childhood Education Act, the government will conduct a national evaluation of kindergartens in 2008 upon the completion of a trial period of evaluation research in 2007. The evaluation scheme intends to provide individual kindergartens with consultation since all

kindergartens are licensed. The government plans to reflect the results of childcare accreditation and kindergarten evaluation through support for individual institutions.

Systematic external evaluation of both curriculum and pedagogy is limited in practice to kindergartens, which benefit from a school inspection system. Inspection through site visits is undertaken bi-annually by superintendents of local Offices of Education. For childcare facilities, the accreditation system deals to a limited extent with programmes, and internal self-evaluation is required according to the standard childcare curriculum being implemented currently.

Teachers' working conditions and qualification management

In order to improve the salaries of staff working in private ECEC services, and enable them to reach salary levels equivalent to public ones, the government has recently explored the idea of allocating a certain proportion of basic subsidies to teachers. Moreover, in 2006, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development initiated a scheme of *head teacher allowances* for private kindergarten teachers with poor working conditions in rural areas and small cities. These head teacher allowances benefited 11,300 teachers in 2007 and the number of beneficiaries will be expanded to 23,000 teachers, to include those working or resident in cities as well.

In 2007, the Office for Childcare Teachers Certification Management (CTCM) was established by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in order to enhance the quality of childcare staff and is responsible for the verification of qualifications and issuing certificates.

The national curriculum

One of the strengths of ECEC services in Korea is the development of the curriculum at the national level. The National Kindergarten Curriculum, serving as it does as a broad framework was first issued by the Ministry of Education in 1969, with new editions being developed approximately every five years. The 7th edition was developed and reviewed in 2006-2007 and will be implemented nation-wide starting from the beginning of 2009. In parallel, a standard childcare curriculum at a national level was developed in 2006 for the first time and has been under implementation since 2007. Although developed separately, both the national kindergarten and childcare curricular place an emphasis upon all-around, holistic development of the child, albeit with slight differences in domains and specific contents.

Monitoring and research

There is no overall system to monitor and evaluate the quality of ECEC services in Korea at the present. In order to take an integrative and systematic approach to ECEC policy research, the government established the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education(KICCE) in December 2005. KICCE, utilizing a strong network of academic associations and organizations in the field, has been conducting extensive policy research on major issues and thus, has been making contributions to the planning of governmental policy. One area of research undertaken by KICCE is the development of indicators and a policy monitoring system for Korean ECEC in order to examine and evaluate ECEC policies on a regular basis.

Parent and community involvement

ECEC services in Korea have increasingly been paying a great deal of attention to parent involvement and education. Based on the Early Childhood Education Act, parents receive 20 hours training in order to help them to qualify as volunteer assistants. Parent education programmes are encouraged in order to maximize the effects of ECEC, and enable ECEC staff to share knowledge and skills on child development with parents. To involve parents in decisions regarding service operation, it is now obligatory to have a parent board in childcare facilities and is strongly recommended in kindergartens. Community involvement in Korean ECEC services is relatively weak. Field trips and utilizing activity-related resource people are typical ways of involving the community more deeply in ECEC services and activities.

Quality initiatives

In addition to creating an accreditation and evaluation system, as well as the development of the national curriculum, what follows below is a list of some representative policy initiatives that the Korean government has undertaken to secure the quality of ECEC services:

- Strengthening inspections of the quality of curriculum and pedagogy,
- Developing and distributing teaching materials on certain topics, e.g., multicultural education, health & safety)
- Encouraging and supporting teachers to form self-organized action research groups
- Providing financial support for the supply of teaching materials and equipment (1,000 USD a year for each private kindergarten)
- Expanding full-day kindergartens (75% in 2007) by providing support for environmental and physical improvements, especially in relation to health and safety.
- Conducting a large-scale project aimed at the development of teaching materials for children with diverse needs in order to ensure equal, quality education as well as teacher training in 2008(about 1 million USD).

Portugal

The OECD review of ECEC policy and organisation in Portugal noted that quality control in all parts of the system needed to be strengthened. Although the State gives substantial grants to voluntary and charity organizations, it does not always contractually require in return verifiable evidence of target achievement or outcome measures. In response, the Inspectorate of Education (IGE) has carried out a supervision programme focused on educational activity in public kindergartens and primary schools. This activity aims at observing and following the actions developed by the networks encompassing pre-schools and schools, called "Agrupamentos", in order to obtain an insight into the implementation of educational policies addressing the early years. This programme

focuses mainly on the planning of educational activities, the management of the curriculum and the implementation of socio-educational activities. It focuses on the integration of kindergartens into "Agrupamentos", as well. In 2007, the activity was implemented in 64 "Agrupamentos", which comprise 558 public kindergartens. When the inspection is over, the "Agrupamento" receives feedback by means of a concise report.

In order to establish a culture of accountability, appraisal and inspection, the ministry has also developed a system to monitor and supervise curriculum development in pre-school education. In 2005 and 2006, an evaluation of the effectiveness of education work in the early years (pre-school and primary education) was implemented, following closely the ESSE (Effective School Self-Evaluation) project, undertaken within the SICI (Standing International Conference of Inspectorates) framework. This programme focused on four key quality indicators: vision and strategy; educational resources; educational process; and outcomes. For each indicator the teacher is questioned about his/her own practices. Evidence of their work is collected, as well as of the pupil's progress. This activity has been implemented in 79 "Agrupamentos", where the inspectors observed approximately 365 pre-school classrooms. When the inspection is over a report with recommendations for improvement is sent to the "Agrupamento".

The Ministry of Education is also developing the following projects:

- The Effective Early Learning (EEL) project. This project, originally developed in the UK, is a collaborative in-school process of self-assessment, which is subject to external support and validation. It has proven to be an effective strategy in evaluating and improving teacher practice, while contributing to the effectiveness of children's learning.
- Pre-school documentation to support the priority areas of the 1st cycle of primary school: Portuguese Language, Mathematics, Experimental Science and ICT.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity has launched a programme to support the management of quality in day-care centers, infant homes and centers of temporary shelter for youth, and has published a manual of management.

Netherlands

The quality framework

In January 2005, the quality control mechanisms employed previously in the Netherlands, especially by municipalities with regard to child care facilities, have been abolished and replaced by the general regulation of the new Child Care Act. Through this Act, the government wishes to stimulate the transformation of the child care sector into a sector with greater scope for market forces and to provide parents with more freedom of choice. By reducing the number of regulations, the administrative burden on operators will decrease, something which could also have a favourable effect on the costs of child care.

At the same time, the Act imposes requirements on day care centres, out-of-school day care and registered child minders with regard to basic standards of health and safety, information to parents, and attention by providers to certain fundamental quality indicators. Childcare has now gained an important social position in the Netherlands. For this reason, suppliers and consumers of childcare are expected to draw up quality requirements for childcare in the Netherlands. The Social Entrepreneurs group (MO groep), the Branch Association of Entrepreneurs in Childcare and BOinK (Interest Group of Parents in Childcare) have set out these commitments in an Agreement (*Sound Childcare: further steps towards the future*), which was signed by representatives from these organisations on 13 October 2004.

At local level, basic quality standards are formulated through self-regulation in the form of a covenant between providers, organizations and the parent organization. Operators must make an inventory of safety and health risks themselves. They must also be able to demonstrate that they pay attention, among other things, to the number of children per supervisor, the size of the group and the educational background of staff members. Furthermore, the child care centre operator may only deviate from the advice of the Parents' Committee if he/she provides a written explanation for doing so. A parent board is required to support and monitor progress and the local municipality is responsible for regular health and safety inspections. Licensing processes for daycare centres involve registration by the municipalities and annual health and safety checks. Inspection is carried out by the local or regional public health service and includes pedagogical as well as health and safety issues. Only provision that complies with the basic quality standards obtain registration.

In the education sector (provision for 4- to 6-year-olds), quality control is ensured by the school inspectorate, which undertakes systematic and holistic analyses of whole schools, noting in particular the ways in which schools give account of their pedagogical policy to parents.

Curriculum and pedagogy

National curricula do not exist in the Netherlands at any level of education. However, a co-ordinated curriculum effort has been made over the past decade to improve the quality of early childhood education for 2.5- to 6-year-olds from low SES and ethnic minority backgrounds. Two curriculum programmes have been validated for use, Pyramide and Kaleidoscope, and a third programme is under evaluation. A group of expert advisors work with teachers across the Netherlands to determine effective pedagogies for children from low-income backgrounds. In addition, the expert centre for teaching the Dutch language, Expertise Centrum Netherlands, developed protocols in 2004-05 to improve mastery of the Dutch language within validated curriculum programmes. Many municipalities also have policies to raise the awareness of parents about the importance of ECEC for their children.

Within the context of child care, an ongoing Curriculum for Childcare project was begun on 1 November 2006. The object of this project is to create, together with all parties involved in the field, a pedagogical framework for childcare for 0-4 year-olds.

Educational disadvantage policy

As of 1 August 2006, the old municipal educational disadvantage policy was ended. In the new policy, municipalities retain responsibility for dealing with educational disadvantage among children only up to the age of 4. As of 1 August 2006 the municipalities are therefore still directly responsible for preschool programmes but no longer for early school education. A division has therefore been made between preschool programming and early school education. For the execution of preschool education, municipalities will receive an annual amount of € 110 million until 1 August 2010. As of 2010, this sum will be increased to € 210 million in total. In parallel, school boards are now responsible from the aforementioned date for early school education and will receive €60 million Euros per year for this until 1 August 2010. Preschool education will take place primarily in playgroups and to a very small extent in child day care centres. Early school education takes place in groups 1 and 2 of primary school. The quality requirements that preschool education should fulfil have been laid down by Governmental Decree, namely:

- Preschool programmes should be conducted by qualified staff;
- Preschool programmes should be offered for a minimum of three half-days a week for one year; and
- As far as possible, the work should be done with evidence based programmes.

The Government Decree also lays down that municipalities should strive to reach 70% of the target group children by 2009. At this date (1 August 2007), 53% of the target group children are being reached. From the national Preschool and Early School Education Monitor (VVE) (August 2007), it emerges that the municipalities are fairly optimistic that they will achieve the 70% goal before 2010. In order to stimulate municipalities to achieve this target percentage as soon as possible, the Government has invested an extra €45 million in preschool education for the academic years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

To develop children's mastery of the Dutch language

Another major aim of the Cabinet is to ensure that all children showing a deficit in Dutch language should be able to attend an appropriate early learning programme from the earliest age. An important strategy in this project is the early detection of language deficiencies in preschool children, with the aim of reaching all target group children through early childhood programmes within the lifetime of the present government. Some challenges to this plan have already been identified. For example, two types of facility have been created over the last decades in the Netherlands for children between the ages of 2 and 4 years of age, viz. playgroups and daycare centres. The two facilities have in common that the central focus for both is on meeting other children and stimulating development. Differences between the amenities are mostly related to the methods of financing, the daily duration of attendance and the auspices of the facility. Thus, child day care centres are private institutions, 'market parties', that have emerged from the requirement financing system of the Childcare Act. (Preschool and Early School Education-

programmes =PESE). In these centres, the offer of language stimulation programmes is encountered far less often than in playgroups, which are usually facilitated and organised by the public sector, and are sensitive to public policy. As a result, many language stimulation programmes are offered in playgroups, e.g. the Language Route mentioned below:

The Language Route

It has emerged from a study on the subject that current preschool programmes have beneficial effects on the development of children but that the language stimulation component could be augmented further A special programme - the *Language Route* for preschool and early school learning - was therefore developed on the instructions of the Ministry of Education. It is an effective means of working to stimulate the language development of young children. Its approach is not linked to any particular early childhood programme. As a result, it can be easily used in preschool playgroups, day care centres and schools. The teachers and infant school teachers can learn by means of practise-oriented training programmes how they can stimulate the language development of children. During the 2005-2006 school-year at least 2200 infant school teachers acquired knowledge via the *Language Route*.

Other initiatives

In the evolving Dutch scene, the following issues are under discussion:

- *To strengthen the supervisory role of municipal authorities in preschool education*: Under a new cabinet agreement, municipalities will still keep their supervisory role for preschool education, e.g. determining the target group for preschool education, the preschool education programmes on offer and the distribution of institutions that offer preschool education programmes across the municipality.
- *To improve the cohesion of the supervisory bodies*: Under the Childcare Act, the municipalities are responsible for inspection and enforcement in the childcare sector, with the Area Health Authority carrying out the supervision in accordance with nationwide standards. In parallel, the local Schools Inspectorate supervises primary education and is gaining experience in the supervision of PESE in pilot schemes conducted in the four large cities, in schools (groups 1 and 2), playgroups and child day care centres. The present Cabinet wishes to avoid double supervision and is thinking of the Education Inspectorate as the new supervisory body. Such a choice can only be made after further analysis.
- *To enhance co-operation between schools and day care providers in providing out-of-school care* : Starting August 2007 a new law requires schools to facilitate the provision of care before and after school hours if the parents wish so. In most cases, the care is provided by a local day care organisation within the school. In this way Dutch government stimulates cooperation between schools and day care providers. As a result of this cooperation, the use of day care becomes more easy for parents.

Norway

The quality framework

The Norwegian Kindergarten Act (Act no. 64 of June 2005 relating to Kindergartens) states that the municipalities are the local authorities for kindergartens. Municipalities are responsible for the licensing regimes for family day care and ECEC services and must ensure that all services are registered and undergo annual health and safety checks. The municipalities must approve kindergartens, provide guidance and ensure that kindergartens are operated in accordance with current rules. Private kindergartens have a legal right to approval if they are suitable in terms of purpose and content and fulfil the requirements in the Kindergarten Act. Approximately 50 per cent of the kindergartens are privately owned. Ownership, the purpose of the institution (e.g. the particular pedagogical or religious purpose), criteria for access, opening hours and physical spaces are considered as part of licensing. Municipalities have responsibility for supervision and authorisations.

The national curriculum or framework plan

A revised Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens entered into force on 1st August 2006. Being a regulation of the Kindergarten Act, the Framework Plan is binding on all providers. A Sami supplement has been integrated into the plan. All kindergartens, including family kindergartens and open kindergartens, must base their annual plans on the Framework.

The Framework Plan states that all kindergartens must work in a goal-oriented manner on children's development and learning, and stimulate children's linguistic and social competence. Kindergarten programmes must be built on a holistic pedagogical philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Childhood is a phase of life with intrinsic value. Kindergartens must be inclusive, promote fellowship and encourage autonomy for each child. In order to make it easier for kindergartens to plan a varied and comprehensive pedagogical programme, the content of kindergartens is divided into seven learning areas that are of central importance to experience, exploration and learning: communication, language and text; body, movement and health; art, culture and creativity; nature, environment and technology; ethics, religion and philosophy; local community and society; numbers, spaces and shapes. At the moment, the ministry is working on a report to the Parliament (a white paper) concerning language stimulation and the language development of young children.

Each learning area covers a wide range of learning. Goals are named within each learning area, in order to promote the development and learning of children, and to clarify the responsibilities of the staff. The aims that focus on the children's experiences, are expressed as process aims. The learning areas are to a great extent similar to the subject areas that children will meet again at school. There is a clear connection between the Framework Plan and the Curriculum for Norwegian primary schools. The Kindergarten Act of 2005 gives children a legal right to participation. The Framework Plan also emphasises the importance of adult's attitudes, knowledge and ability to

relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society.

A focus on staff development

Competent staff are the most important component of quality. For this reason, the Ministry has developed recently a strategic plan to raise competence in the ECEC sector. An investment of approximately 60 million NOK this year (2007) has been allocated for this strategy. The Ministry has prioritized some central elements in this strategy: pedagogical leadership, children's participation, language and language stimulation, and transition from kindergarten to school. The Ministry has also laid down a strategic plan to recruit pre-school teachers to kindergartens and to improve the capacity and quality of preschool teacher education (June 2007). The strategy is needed due to lack of preschool teachers (c. 30% of total), the increased number of children attending kindergartens, the increased ratio of children under three, and the development of the content of kindergartens. The main goals for the strategy are:

- To secure recruitment of preschool teachers/pedagogues in accordance with the regulations concerning teaching staff, and the needs of the future;
- To contribute to encouraging staff already in kindergartens to stay within the kindergartens. A high level of staff stability is a strong feature of quality;
- To encourage preschool teachers in other sectors to return to the kindergartens.

Strengthening practice-based research

An important part of developing staff competences is a new project aiming at strengthening practice-based research and development, conducted by the Norwegian Research Council commissioned by the Ministry. The programme must ensure knowledge development that strengthens kindergarten education. The programme will promote R&D work in teacher education, improve the connection between education and occupation, and ensure that evidence based knowledge will be used. The following ECEC projects have so far received grants from the programme:

- The kindergarten as an institution for knowledge and learning. Children's language as a basic skill: Children's learning about language and through language (Vestfold University College)
- The kindergarten at change – Inclusion in practice (Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- The multicultural kindergarten in rural areas (Hedmark University College)
- Children's participation in a relational perspective, with focus on the youngest children in the kindergarten (In cooperation: University of Agder, Ostfold University College, Tromso University College, University of Stavanger and a sample of barnehager at the different places)

Parent and community involvement

To ensure opportunities for involvement and co-operation between kindergartens staff and parents, the 1995 and 2005 Kindergarten Acts state that every kindergarten must have a parents' council and a parent-pedagogue-owner co-ordinating committee. According to the regulations, the parents` council should promote the parents' shared interests and contribute to ensuring good collaboration. It has the right to express an opinion on all matters of importance to parental relationships with the kindergarten. The co-ordination committee should in particular participate in discussions of the kindergarten's underlying aims and practice and seek to promote contact between the kindergarten and the local community. Parents are actively encouraged to take part in quality monitoring and in reviewing kindergarten activity through meetings, conversations, committees and regular surveys.

Slovenia

The quality framework

Slovenia has a broad and easily accessible network of preschool institutions. The majority of places are provided by public preschool institutions; only 1.7 % of children attend private preschool institutions. The law stipulates that the public network should be organized in such a way as to enable parents and children to have access to a choice of programmes. Structural elements are generally very favourable, e.g. child/staff ratios. According to data for the school year 2005/06, there were 7,116 educators (3,509 preschool teachers and 3,607 preschool teacher assistants[2]) working in 3,375 preschool class units in Slovenia. For the 57,134 children enrolled in 2005, this employment rate gives a ratio of one trained adult for every 8 children. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2006/07) calculates the ratio children/educator as being 7.9 children per preschool teacher or assistant. 96% of pedagogical staff in pre-school institutions work full time and, as public officials, have employment contracts of indefinite duration.

The national curriculum

A national curriculum for pre-school institutions was formulated in 1999. It is based upon appreciation of the child's integrative and balanced development and takes into account individual differences in development and learning. It is supplemented by guidelines for educational work in mixed ethnic areas in Slovenia (Italian and Hungarian national communities), with Roma children and children with special needs, which requires either didactic and methodological adaptations/modifications or different organisation of work, schedule, space etc. The objectives, contents and activities are designed separately for the first and the second age-group of children. There are six areas of activities: movement, language, art, nature, society and mathematics. In addition to the areas of activities, the global objectives and the objectives of individual area of

[2] Assistants should hold an upper secondary technical qualification (4-year secondary education) and be qualified for the field of pre-primary education.

activity, examples of activities for individual age groups and the role of the adults are also defined. Interdisciplinary activities like ethics, health care, safety, traffic education are incorporated into all those fields. The suggested curriculum themes extend over the stringent limits of a single field and are placed in the context of the children's every-day life in a pre-school institution. This open framework curriculum enables child initiative and the implementation of various programmes. Children's particularities, the right to choose and their individuality must be respected, and the classroom should be flexible, diverse, safe and stimulating.

Parent involvement

An important quality element of a pre-school institution is cooperation with parents. Parents have the right to take part in planning of the life and work in a pre-school institution. Parents should consider the professional autonomy of the pre-school institution workers, who – on the other hand – should consider the culture, identity, language, world view, values and convictions, customs and habits of parents. There are two councils in each pre-school institution in Slovenia: *the pre-school institution council* and *the council of parents.* On both councils, parents are represented.

Effective quality initiatives 2006-08

In 2006, the National Commission for Quality Assessment and Assurance (the commission was established in 2003) together with the Ministry of Education and Sport, put out a call for tenders for the co-financing of networks of educational institutions for quality assessment and development (January 2006). The selected networks are co-financed by the Ministry and the European Social Fund. The aim is to encourage educational institutions to form networks, test and develop various instruments and methods of self-evaluation, thus incorporating self-evaluation into their practice.

All networks (the preschool network includes fifteen preschool institutions with 2.441 children and 400 educational and management staff) nominated quality teams and presented their projects to parents, local communities, social partners and other stakeholders. The teams defined the fields of self-evaluation, prepared questionnaires, carried out surveys, interpreted the data, and so analysed the present situation. The next step was to define the aspects which needed improvement, chose instruments and methods of further work, discuss quality indicators and design action plans. Action plans included objectives, activities, their time frames, and the monitoring and evaluation of individual phases. Several materials were prepared for work with students; seminars for in-service teacher training were selected; leaflets for parents and other stakeholders were written; several web sites were designed to present the projects and their progress. Conferences and workshops were organised, where the interested parties could discuss the issues and possible solutions, share experience and examples of good practice, exchange information and opinions.

The final results of the projects has helped to set up the quality indicators both at national and institutional levels, create bases for legislative changes and for the anticipated implementation of self-evaluation as an integral part of the curricula in Slovenian preschool centres and schools.

Sweden

The quality framework

The organisational framework of early childhood services in Sweden is conducive to good quality. The system is largely public and subject to clear public regulation and supervision. The professional education of staff is high, and 95% of all staff some training. Pedagogues (both educational and leisure-time) require a three- to four-year tertiary degree from a university or higher level university college, and form 51% of staff. Most child carers, who work alongside teachers, have completed a post-secondary professional diploma of three years, focused on "Children and Leisure-time Activities". Some older staff have fewer formal qualifications, but the current career ladder has various points of entry for child carers to take up higher training leading to pedagogue status. Expectations about family day care providers are lower: they are not required to have a qualification, but some 70% have either a child assistant certificate or have received 50-100 hours of mandatory training from their municipal employers.

Work conditions for staff are good and although national statutory requirements for child-staff ratios do not exist, the monitoring of the actual ratios practised is compulsory and ongoing. In centre-based ECEC centres and in family day care, the ratio is typically 5 to 6 children per adult (average ratio 5.1 to one trained adult). The number of staff per child is higher for younger children and lower for older children. Group size in centres, based on national statistical averages data, is 16,7 children per group.

The curriculum framework

The Government issued a curriculum in 1998, which is an ordinance with binding provisions. It is a general framework, curriculum (in Swedish, Lpfö, 1998) for pre-school centre services, in order to ensure a high level of cohesion in curriculum and pedagogy across the country. At the same time, consistent with the devolution of operational authority to the municipalities, centres are free to evolve their own local curricula and pedagogical methods, from the principles outlined in the state curriculum. Lpfö 1998 specifies only broad goals and guidelines, leaving open the means by which these goals should be achieved. The goals specify the orientation of the work of the pre-school and desired quality targets for the pre-school. There are also guidelines for the staff/working team, which underlines the responsibility of staff to ensure that work is directed towards the goals of the curriculum. Philosophically, the curriculum builds on the idea of the child as competent learner, an active thinker and involved doer. A strong orientation towards: democratic values; continuous learning and development; connecting to the child's experiences; development in groups; and the pedagogical importance of both care and play, underpin curriculum development and enactment in

ECEC programmes. Municipalities have responsibility for programme implementation and evaluation.

Parent and community involvement

The curriculum, Lpfö 98, specifies the involvement and influence of children in centre based services. There are guidelines and goals for a close and confidential co-operation between the home and the pre-school. Parents should have the opportunity within the framework of the national goals to be involved and influence activities in the pre-school. Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school, and the after-school centre is emphasised.

Quality initiatives

The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement is responsible for general support to schools and pre-schools within the nationally prioritised areas. Its long-term goal is to increase capacity to establish systematic quality reports as a tool for better evaluation and analysis. It plans to reinforce the pedagogical task of the pre-school e.g. by clarifying some of the goals of the curriculum, in particular, about reading, writing and mathematics. The focus will be on learning but still with play as a way of learning. The Agency has been involved during the last years in several quality initiatives. Some examples are:

- *A series of seminars* - In co-operation with universities, university colleges and regional development centres, the Agency has sponsored a series of seminars, during one year, for key-persons in municipalities about quality work. The seminars are comprised of lectures, workshops and reflective discussions on quality development work.
- *Quality in pre-school* – This is an action-research project in seven municipalities, launched in co-operation with the Swedish Teachers' Union, the University of Gothenburg and the municipalities. The aim has been to strengthen knowledge on system quality and improvement work and to increase ability to use quality reports as a tool for improvement. A parallel aim is to develop strategies to evaluate goal fulfilment and quality in pre-school in order to improve the learning environment. Head-teachers and preschool teachers have completed a university course (7,5 ECTS – credits of the European Credit Transfer System) in quality development on the principles of action research.
- *Quality networks*. These networks may be regarded as a forum for exchanging experience, knowledge and good practice in order to develop the pre-school. Since networks are flexible and embody a "bottom-up" perspective, they are a highly usable method. The network is valued by its members and often leads to contacts over many years between pre-schools and across municipal boundaries.The Agency provides support for the networks and the network leaders. There are about 50 networks around the country. By taking this type of initiative, the Agency encourages the formation of effective quality networks, which can make an important contribution to local pre-school development.

- *Self-evaluation*. The agency also supplies a self-evaluation quality tool – *BRUK* – which is a national quality indicator system. Self-evaluation is an important element of quality work and the aim is to stimulate work on continuous improving of activities.

The United Kingdom – England

It is difficult to summarise in a few pages the numerous quality initiatives undertaken in England in the last years, as the system has been completely reformed and expanded beyond all recognition. Even today (11 December 2007), a new *Children's Plan* has been published by central government, which includes several elements for the early years sector: 20,000 new child care places to be financed for children in deprived areas; greater investment in special needs children; more personal tutoring for children who need it; more links between schools and parents; more professional development for teachers… Much of the reform is driven from the centre, that is by central government and the (former) department for education and skills (now by the *Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Group* - part of the Children and Families Directorate within the new Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) established in June 2007). In the early childhood field, local initiatives – such as in Kent - are also numerous. They take place generally in response to central government directives and are increasingly taken in charge by the local authorities. Among the major reforms and advances in the early years sector over the past decade have been:

I. Every Child Matters: Change for Children

This is possibly the most ambitious integrated plan for children and young people (0-19 years) that exists in Europe. It was drawn up in 2003 following the tragic death from abuse of a young child, Victoria Climbié. Crossing all the major government sectors, the partnership of all agencies dealing with children is required, as well as the collaboration of local authorities, their health and education sectors, directors of children's services; and eventually from 2008, the Children's Trusts that are to be established in every area. Common outcomes have been set for all children:

- Be healthy – food in schools, sport, PSHE
- Stay Safe – bullying, discrimination
- Enjoying and achieving – each pupil to progress as well as they can
- Make a positive contribution – volunteering, citizenship
- Achieve economic well-being – education as way out of poverty

These five outcomes are universal ambitions for every child and young person in the UK. The government considers it of primary importance to narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. In addition, there is a focus on improving outcomes for looked-after children and children with special educational needs and disabilities.

New legislation has been introduced to implement *Every Child Matters* (ECM): the *2004 Children Act*; the *Childcare Act* in 2006. The Act gives outcomes for the youngest children the legislative

importance and status they deserve, enabling professionals working in early childhood services to promote them on an equal footing with those for older children and young people. It puts the needs of children and their parents - fathers as well as mothers - at its heart, with local authorities as their champions, shaping and supporting the childcare market, and ensuring families' views are heard in the planning and delivery of services; and it enshrines in law a parent's expectation that high quality childcare will be available for all those who want to work.

The Act provides for:

* A new duty on local authorities to improve the outcomes of all children under 5, and close the gaps between groups with the poorest outcomes and the rest, by ensuring early years services are integrated and accessible;

* A new duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare to ensure it meets the needs of their local communities, in particular those on low incomes and with disabled children;

* An extended duty on local authorities to ensure people have access to the full range of information they may need as a parent;

* A reformed and simplified regulatory regime for early years and childcare to reduce bureaucracy and raise quality, including a new single framework for learning and development for children under 5 – the Early Years Foundation Stage - to ensure consistently high standards and

promote achievement.

A Children's Commissioner has been established, and a *Children and Young People's Plan* (CYPP) published in 2006. According to this plan, "Areas will produce a single, strategic, overarching plan for all services affecting children and young people. The CYPP should support more integrated and effective services to secure the outcomes for children…It is a key part of the children's services improvement cycle, set out in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. It will identify where children and young people need outcomes to be improved, and how and when these improvements will be achieved." A strict duty has been imposed on local authorities to promote cooperation; improve outcomes of young children and reduce inequalities.

As part of the ECM project, a *Children's Workforce Strategy* has been published that lists and requires a common core of skills and knowledge for work with children, young people and families. These skills include: Effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families; Child and young person development; Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child; Supporting transitions; Multi-agency working; Sharing information;

Integrated inspection of services: there will also be integrated and standardised inspection of all children's services, with Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) being in charge. Using a Common Assessment Framework, annual performance

assessments and 3 yearly joint area reviews (JARs) will be taken in charge by Ofsted. "The JAR judges the outcomes for children and young people growing up in the area and evaluates how local services work together to contribute to their achievements, progress and well-being. The services being reviewed will include council services, health services, police and probation services, and publicly funded services provided by voluntary bodies. Evidence from other inspections, such as schools, further education colleges and residential settings contribute to the review."

II. The Ten Year Childcare Strategy

A governmental *Ten Year Childcare Strategy*, "Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children", was published alongside the Pre Budget Report (PBR) in 2004. Its key themes were:

- Choice and Flexibility - greater choice for parents in how they balance their work commitments and family life through enhanced parental leave and easy access to Sure Start Children's Centres for all;
- Availability - flexible childcare for all families with children aged up to 14 who need it; and 15 hours a week free early education for all 3 and 4 year olds for 38 weeks a year;
- Quality - high quality provision delivered by a skilled early years and childcare workforce, with full daycare settings professionally led and a strengthened qualification and career structure; and
- Affordability - affordable provision appropriate to the needs of families with substantial increases in tax credit support.

A corresponding Ten Year Strategy *Action Plan* ("Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: Making it Happen") was published in April 2006. The *Action Plan* highlights achievements since the strategy was first published, the challenges ahead, and who needs to do what, by when, to ensure Strategy commitments are delivered.

III. Integrating Early Years Services

Within the early childhood field, the Department of Education has been encouraging the delivery of childcare alongside early education and other health and family services. Over the years, this has led to:

*Sure Start Local Programmes***:** 524 pioneering Sure Start Local Programmes were operational by 2004, offering a range of early learning, health and family services to more than 400,000 children living in disadvantaged areas - including over 30% of under 4s living in poverty.

Sure Start Children's Centres: The 2004 Spending Review announced the establishment of a network of up to 2,500 centres by 2008, and all the young children and their families in the most disadvantaged areas will have access to one. The Ten Year Strategy confirmed there will be 3,500 centres by 2010. These are multi-purpose services "where children under 5 years old and their families can receive seamless holistic integrated services and information, and where they can access help from multi-disciplinary teams of professionals". They are planned to deliver high

quality early learning combined with full day care provision for children; good quality teacher input to lead the development of learning within the centre; Child and family health services; Parental outreach; Family support services; A base for a childminder network; Support for children and parents with special needs; Effective links with jobcentre plus to support parents/carers who wish to consider training or employment… Flexibility is offered to parents to choose how they use their free, part time, early education entitlement by linking it more effectively with the hours of childcare they pay for. More Sure Start Children's Centres, nurseries, schools and childminder networks will offer integrated education and care for a full day, so they can enjoy a seamless package that best suits them and their children.

Extended Schools: Extended schools will open from 8 am – 6 pm. All children under 14 will have access to a wide range of services, among which certain core services must be offered to families: 'wraparound' child care; a varied menu of activities, e.g. homework clubs, study support, music/dance/drama/arts; parenting support incl. information sessions and parenting programmes; referral to a wide range of specialist support services; wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities. By 2010, all parents with children aged 5-11 will be offered affordable, school based childcare on weekdays between the hours of 8am to 6pm, all year round. Half will be able to enjoy this service well before then, at least by 2008. Recent surveys have highlighted the positive impact of extended services on children and families. An Ofsted survey published in July 2006 found that schools that offer out-of-hours clubs and study support are good for children's self-confidence; and that the extended schools programme appears to have improved exam results and parental involvement in education. The increase in pupil attainment in full service extended schools was around double the rate of the national average between 2005 and 2006. At KS 4, the number of pupils achieving 5 A*-Cs at GCSE increased by just over 5 percentage points, compared to a 2.5 percentage point increase in the national average over the same period. In June 2007, a new extended schools prospectus: *Extended Schools: Building on Experience* was published. It updates the 2005 version, reflects on recent policy developments and shares experiences and lessons learned to date. It can be found at:
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools/publications/

IV. Quality initiatives:

The UK Government has taken substantial steps to improve the quality of early education and childcare in England. In summary, the following aspects have been given most attention:

a) A national regulatory framework, stronger inspection and curriculum development: The Government has taken action to create a stronger national framework for the regulation and inspection of early years services, in which Ofsted plays a central role. It is considered important that providers of early education and childcare should meet acceptable standards in the delivery of services, and that parents have information about the quality of early years settings so they can make informed choices about what is best for their children. Former standards used by different local authorities were replaced in 2001 by a national standard for services for children under 8

years, and responsibility for registration and inspection transferred from local authorities to Ofsted at this time.[3] However, through the Childcare Act 2006, the national standards were replaced by the introduction of a reformed and simplified regulatory regime for early years and childcare in order to reduce bureaucracy and raise quality, including a new single framework for learning and development for children under 5 - the Early Years Foundation Stage - to ensure consistently high standards and promote achievement.

For children under 5 years, all registered settings will be required to deliver the new *Early Years Foundation Stage*, which brings together the existing *Birth to Three Matters* and *Foundation Stage* frameworks with elements of the *National Daycare Standards*. This will ensure that all young children have access to an integrated learning and care experience. A new *Early Years Foundation Stage* framework was published in March 2007. All registered early years providers and schools will be required to use the EYFS from September 2008.

b) Workforce development: The Government is committed to radical reform of the early years and childcare workforce. It will work with leading bodies in the sector to:

- Ensure all full daycare settings are led by graduate qualified early years professionals. The government will introduce measures to boost the Graduate Leader Fund so that every full daycare setting will be led by a graduate by 2015, with two graduates per setting in disadvantaged areas.
- Support the development of local workforce strategies;
- Improve the qualifications and status of early years and childcare workers. More will be trained to degree-level, and there will be a single qualifications framework and greater opportunities for existing workers to increase their skills. The role of the Early Years Professional (EYP) will be strengthened and home based care will become more integrated with group provision; and
- Put in place training opportunities for childminders and other home-based carers to enable more to achieve level 3 qualifications, work in partnership with other providers, and develop long-term careers as part of the children's workforce.

The Children's Workforce Development Council for England (CWDC), which became a legal entity on 31 March 2005, will play the lead role in taking forward the outcome of the consultation exercise. The childcare workforce issue will be one of its early priorities. It will work closely with the Training and Development Agency to increase the supply of qualified teachers.

[3] Recent Ofsted reports have a good story to tell on childcare quality. Their *Getting on Well: enjoying, achieving and contributing* report, published in August 2007, revealed that 96% of the childcarers providers inspected in 2006-07 were at least satisfactory overall, and 57% were good or outstanding. Government funded early education for 3s and 4s was at least satisfactory in 98% of the provision inspected in the same period, with 60% of providers judged to be good or outstanding

Publications relating to the workforce: *Children's Workforce Strategy* ("a strategy to build a world-class workforce for children and young people"), published on 1 April 2005; A *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* setting out those areas of expertise that everyone working with children, young people and families should have; and A *Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for Children and Young People* which represents a new, standardised approach to assessing children's needs for services.

XIV. A summary of the evaluations submitted by the delegates after the meeting

Participants had the possibility to submit an evaluation form at the end of the workshop. The evaluation focussed on the items below and included a section for 'any other remarks':

	1 = Not pleased to 4=Very pleased			
	1	2	3	4
The content of the workshop				
The presentation in the pre-workshop (Moss & Cameron)	0	0	5	13
The main presentation (Laevers)	0	0	3	19
The comment on the main presentation (Marin)	0	7	7	7
The plenary discussion	0	5	13	2
The small group discussions	0	2	11	9
The presentation on data collection and dissemination in member countries (Buysse)	1	3	10	7
The site visits	0	1	7	8
Discussion on the visits	1	0	6	7
The presentation on the role of parents	0	0	7	3
The organisation of the workshop				
The accommodation	0	1	8	12
The accessibility	0	1	5	16
The food and beverages	0	0	2	20
The information in advance	0	2	11	9
The information map	0	1	6	11
In general				
The usefulness of the information and contacts	0	1	7	13
General impression	0	0	12	9

In summary then, the practical logistics of the workshop received much praise. Participants were very pleased with the welcome they received from the Network host. They also appreciated the speakers and their presentations. Also, the contacts with the other countries and the information participants received were considered as very useful.

Some participants would appreciate some more time for discussion and some more space to reflect or think. The programme was considered enjoyable but rather tiring.

XV. Annexes:

Annex 1. Programme of the workshop

Wednesday 21 November 2007 (optional)

15.45 – 16.30 Welcome and coffee (room Davina)

16.30 – 19.00 Care work in Europe: Current understandings and future directions by Professor Peter Moss and Dr. Claire Cameron, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

Chair: Ms. Kris Danckaert, Child and Family

(room Amber)

19.00 – 21.00 Aperitif and tapas (room Davina)

Thursday 22 November 2007

9.00 – 9.30 Welcome and coffee (room Davina)

9.30 – 9.45 News from the Starting Strong network by Ms. Bea Buysse, Network Co-ordinator (room Amber)

9.45 – 10.00 Welcome to the workshop by Ms. Miho Taguma, Policy analist, Education and Training Division, Directorate for Education, OECD

10.00 – 11.00 Main presentation: The process-oriented Self-evaluation Instrument for Care Settings (SiCs) by Prof. Ferre Laevers, Research Centre for Experiential Education, University of Louvain (plenary)

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee Break (room Davina)

11.15 – 11.45 Empowering early years practitioners to improve the quality of provision by Ms. Colleen Marin, Senior Adviser (Early Years), connected with Experiental Education, Kent County Council, UK (plenary) (room Amber)

11.45 – 12.15 Questions and comments (plenary)

12.15 – 13.30 Lunch (room Davina)

13.30 – 14.30 Group A: Effective quality initiatives in Norway introduced by Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway), followed by small group discussion (room Ismaël)

Group B: Effective quality initiatives in New Zealand introduced by Mr. Karl Lequesne (New Zealand), followed by small group discussion (room Charlotte)

14.30 – 15.30 Group A: Effective quality initiatives in New Zealand introduced by Mr. Karl Le Quesne (New Zealand), followed by small group discussion (room Charlotte)

	Group B: Effective quality initiatives in Norway introduced by Ms. Tove Mogstad Slinde (Norway) followed by small group discussion (room Ismaël)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break (room Davina)
16.00 – 16.30	Feedback from the small group discussions (plenary) (room Amber)
16.30 – 17.00	Data collection and dissemination in member countries: presentation of *'Het kind in Vlaanderen'* (The child in Flanders) by Ms. Bea Buysse (plenary)
17.00 – 17.15	Other announcements
19.30	Dinner (Hotel Metropole, Brouckèreplein 31, 1000 – Brussel

Friday 23 November 2007

7.45	Meeting place: lobby IBIS hotel, Engelandstraat 2, 1060 - Brussel
8.00	Transfer to Leuven by train (departure train 8.08, platform 8)
8.40	Transfer to different ECEC services in Leuven
9.00 – 11.00	Site visits : Crèche Sint-Jacob / Crèche Kabouterberg / Kleuterschool Ark 1 / Abdijschool Vierbeek
11.00	Transfer to meeting room (Faculty Club)
11.30 – 12.30	Discussion on the site visits, moderated by Prof. Ferre Laevers (plenary)
12.30 – 13.45	Lunch
13.45 – 14.30	How can parents have a say in the follow up of quality in ECEC, by Prof. Christa Preissing, Institut für Situationsansatz, Freie Universität, Berlin (plenary)
14.30 – 15.00	Conclusions Workshop and comments from country delegates
15.00 – 16.00	Guided tour of Beguinage Leuven (optional)

Annex 2. Paper by Prof. Peter Moss and Dr. Claire Cameron

FINAL REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CARE WORK IN EUROPE: CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Project Coordinator

THOMAS CORAM RESEARCH UNIT

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF LONDON (UK)

Partners

JYDSK PÆDAGOG-SEMINARIUM (Denmark); NEMZETI CSALÁD- ÉS SZOCIÁLPOLITIKAI INTÉZET (Hungary); NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR ZORG EN WELZIJN (Netherlands); FUNDACIÓ CIREM (Spain); INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE, UNIVERSITY OF UMEÅ (Sweden)

Objectives and scope

The overall objective of *Care Work in Europe: Current Understandings and Future Directions* has been to contribute towards the development of good quality employment in caring services that are responsive to the needs of rapidly changing societies and their citizens. Key themes, therefore, are employment in care services (care work); the quality of that employment; and the implications for that employment of societal change and of services that are increasingly responsive to individuals and societies. More specific objectives have been:

- descriptive (for example, documenting the demand for, supply of and use of care services and describing the structure, size and composition of the workforce);
- methodological (to develop innovative methods for cross-national research);
- supporting debate and exchange (to promote the exchange of experience and best practice); and
- analytic (for example, to compare understandings of care work cross-sectorally and cross-nationally or about; examine the causes and consequences of the gendered nature of the care workforce; identifying different approaches to and models of care work; and identifying conditions necessary conditions for the development of good quality employment in care work).

The terms 'care work' and 'care service' recur frequently in this and other reports of the study. But definitions of both have proved difficult and contentious: they are neither self evident nor uncontested. One reason is that the borders are neither clear nor settled. Many occupations include elements of care. An occupation that may be described in one country as 'care work', may in another country be located within a different policy field, such as education or pedagogy. There is a further issue: whether care is understood as a distinct policy and occupational field, or as an integral and inseparable component of a holistic approach to working with people, for example 'pedagogy', where care is important but viewed as inseparably linked with educational, developmental and other practices.

However, although the research team treat the concepts of 'care work' and 'care services' as problematic, to be questioned throughout the study and its conclusions, we have had to adopt a pragmatic approach. To conduct the research, we have needed to agree a definition of what services and occupations fall within a 'care work domain', which has been our subject of study. Our definition focuses on (a) paid 'front line' workers (as opposed, for example, to managers), (b) who are *not* employed to care for family members, and (c) work in three groups of services:

- childcare and out-of-school care (including schooling for children below compulsory school age);
- child and youth residential and foster care; and
- care for adults with disabilities, including elderly people.

Our care work domain is wide-ranging. It runs across the life course and across many types of setting – from home-based work through to work in a range of residential and non-residential institutions. Even so, it excludes numerous workers who have an element of care in their jobs, including many in the grey economy such as domestic workers.

General overview of the project

The project ran for 44 months from August 2001 to April 2005 and involved a research team drawn from six countries: Denmark, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The research has been in three stages, and the detailed presentation of results and methodology is organised around these stages. Stage One focused on mapping and reviewing care services and care work. This was mainly desk based, working with existing data sources, including secondary analysis of the European Labour Force Survey. The overview report on Stage One also included a 'state of the art' review on care work and the care workforce. Stage Two, the heart of the study, was empirical. It included three case studies of care work in specific settings: centre-based work with children under 6 years of age; care work with elderly people; and care work with adults below retirement age with serious disabilities. The fourth part of this stage involved the development of an innovatory method for cross-national working, which involved work in services for young children and elderly people. Stage Three involved the identification and collation of

innovative developments in care work, focusing on quality, professionalisation, gender and understandings; and dissemination of results through eight seminars. Reports on all parts of the research can be found on the project website at www.ioe.ac.uk/tcru/carework.htm.

The main objective of the project specifically recognised the need to consider care work within the context of rapidly changing societies. The most relevant changes include:

- demand for formal services arising from demographic, economic and social changes (e.g. ageing population, increased parental employment) and supply both of formal and informal carers arising from decreasing numbers of women with low levels of education, increased female employment and demographic changes bringing about more 'beanpole families;
- the social position of service users with greater emphasis on users as active subjects, citizens with rights, consumers of services, and on empowerment, integration, autonomy, choice and development;
- welfare policies, including increasing emphasis on decentralisation, integrative and holistic approaches involving collaboration and networking, welfare mix, choice and flexibility; increasingly blurred boundaries between former distinct policy and provision fields; and in some cases, more emphasis on privatisation of services, provision through markets, targeting of provision, and enabling service users to purchase services directly (e.g. through demand subsidy and direct payments);
- increasing diversity in the characteristics, conditions and requirements of service users and their families.

Research results

Structure and conditions of the current workforce

There is a three tier workforce in the care work domain. In the bottom tier, with the lowest level of training (no relevant qualifications or qualifications at secondary level), come a group of workers many of whom work in domestic settings (e.g. home helpers, family day carers, personal assistants); in the top tier, with the highest level of training (with higher education qualifications), come pedagogues and early years teachers. The middle tier has upper secondary qualifications and includes some childcare workers and workers in group settings for adults. Those who work with children and young people have, overall, higher levels of training than those who work with elderly people, and the gap is probably widening. Care workers have the highest level of training in Denmark, with highly trained pedagogues working across all age groups and relatively high levels of training for other workers.

Most care workers are women, although there is some variation according to the age group who are worked with; the proportion of male workers is greatest for work with young people and younger adults. Most care workers are aged 25 to 44 (and, therefore, are likely to have their own

care responsibilities), similar to the total workforce. Educational attainment is relatively low among the majority group of care workers. It was not possible to locate comparable information on a number of important features, including ethnicity and workers' own care responsibilities, nor to get a reliable and comprehensive picture of the size of the workforce in the project's care work domain across the six partner countries, let alone all EU member states or further afield in Europe – either as it is currently or how it has changed recently. However, such evidence as exists points to a general and substantial growth in employment in the care workforce in recent years.

Among partner countries, Denmark has the most detailed information on the care workforce. Not only does it have the highest level of services, it also has the largest care workforce (proportional to population): approximately 10 percent of the total workforce are employed in our care work domain and the numbers have been rising substantially during the 1990s. The proportion of the total workforce in the care work domain may be similar or slightly lower in Sweden. But in the other four partner countries it appears to be substantially lower. Not only does Denmark have a large number of care workers, but they are highly trained compared to other countries (except for childcare workers in Sweden, who have similar levels of training). Moreover, most Danish workers are in full-time jobs, while in the Netherlands and the UK most work part time.

Levels of part-time working are higher than average among care workers, reflecting high proportions of women workers; reflecting the composition of the wider workforce, part-time employment of care workers is widespread in the Netherlands and the UK, but uncommon in Hungary and Spain. Few are self-employed, but they are more likely to have temporary employment than the workforce overall. Earnings vary between different groups of care workers and different countries: full-time workers in the largest group in the European Labour Force Survey ('personal care workers') earn less than the average for all full-time employees, while part-timers earn around the average (except in the UK). There is a clear relation between levels of training and levels of pay in national workforces: Denmark is high on both, the UK low. Differences in training and pay appear to be related to different types of welfare regime.

Understandings of care work

In several instances, parts of what we have defined as the 'care work domain' are not understood as a separate field of policy, provision or practice, but as an integral part of a wider field. This is especially true of services for young children: the three countries in the Stage Two case study of centre-based services (Denmark, Hungary, Spain) view part or all of these services as primarily educational or pedagogical (and in both cases, having a strong developmental element). 'Childcare', in the sense of meeting the needs of working parents, is recognized as a function of services, but not as the only or even the main function. Services for adults with severe disabilities in Denmark are also seen as pedagogical; indeed, Denmark is unique in the way a wide range of services for children, young people and adults share theory, practice and profession (pedagogy, pedagogical work, the pedagogue). Although pedagogy plays a more central role in Denmark than

in other partner countries, it is important to emphasise that pedagogy is a European tradition, found across many countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe – though with national differences, including the extent and nature of the pedagogue's place in the 'care work domain' workforce.

Other services in other countries are located in a more specific and explicit care or social care field. But informants often find it difficult to define care or social care. Social care, for instance, is often reduced to a descriptive label for a collection of services and care may often be defined in terms of what it is not (e.g. it is not health, it is not social work). Understandings of care can, however, be discerned from how practitioners and others talk about the work in the services being studied. Different concepts of care emerge: care as providing protection; care as supporting autonomy and inclusion; care as creating a family like environment; and care as a commodity or service that can be bought and sold. These are, however, not necessarily mutually exclusive; understandings of care can contain a mix of concepts, and are in any case subject to change over time.

Different understandings define who the worker is. In services for young children, the worker may be a 'childcare' worker, but in our three case study countries most workers are pedagogues or teachers. In the other two services, some workers are pedagogues, nurses, therapists or other types of professional. But many are care workers with various titles. A potentially important development, through the growth of direct payment schemes, is a new type of worker, the 'personal assistant', closely related to the idea of care as a commodity or service, employed by the individual needing care (i.e. the employer) to provide specific services to the employer's direction.

Despite these strong differences, a number of common or shared themes can be made out. Overall, the work in all sectors is becoming more complex and demanding, because of the changing context outlined above and the increased recognition of what is involved in responding holistically to the needs of people using care services. Across all sectors and countries, a number of *common requirements for the work* can be identified, including:

- Fulfilling recipients' fundamental physiological needs and needs for protection.
- Relational: communication, listening, empathy, to be in relationship with the Other
- Ability to renew knowledge, to be in a lifelong process of constructing knowledge, identity and values
- Supporting development and/or autonomy
- Supporting the integrative relationship between the individual, family and friends and wider communities (working with autonomy *and* solidarity; autonomy *and* interdependence; supporting inclusion and citizenship)
- Networking (with family, community) and teamworking (with other workers and services)
- Responding to changing image of 'cared for' person (e.g. from passive object to active subject with rights)

- Working with diversity.

In turn, a *number of common competencies and qualities* are needed of the care worker, in whatever sector she or he works:

- Communicative competence (in many 'languages', with many individuals and organisations; including listening).
- Analytic and reflective competencies.
- Understanding and valuing learning as a lifelong process.
- Personal competencies/experience (e.g. patience, the will to go deeper, empathy, challenge) and the ability to connect the personal and the professional.
- Professional knowledge (about the specific group that the care worker works with and their particular needs; about social science/social psychology, e.g. developing networks between people)
- Contextualised judgement.
- Working between theories and practice.
- Musical and aesthetic competencies.
- Broad cultural knowledge.
- Competencies concerning the prevention of psychosocial and physical strains especially when working alone (e.g. knowledge about ergonomics, first aid)
- Intercultural (and other diversity) competencies.
- Competencies in cross-professional work and general teamwork

Both these requirements and competencies underline that 'care work' is not a substitution for work done in the home by (mainly female) family members: it involves different relationships, practices and possibilities and it requires different or additional capabilities. It complements, rather than substitutes: so the worker is not a substitute mother/female relative, but someone in a non-familial relationship with those with whom they work. This means that the fact of being a woman and/or being a 'housewife' does not assure adequate competencies. However, workers do bring personal experience (of all kinds) to the work, and this constitutes a resource and competence which is, however, neither uniform nor essential.

Future directions: different approaches to and models of care work

The study includes 36 examples of innovative developments in care work across the project's care work domain, organised around three themes: quality and professionalisation; diversity; and changing understandings. Cross-cutting themes include: new relations between services and occupations, in particular a search for more integrated or collaborative approaches, increased

attention to the service user as a subject of rights, and new occupations and work environments in response to policy and service developments. In this context, two contrasting approaches and models of care work are offered:

(A) ***Generalist*** **professional** ('social professional', 'pedagogue') with graduate level basic education doing ***all*** aspects of work, from front line caring to management, and all aspects of front line work (e.g. including physical tasks, rather than managing others to do physical tasks); supported by/working with ***a generalist*** **worker** with a medium (upper secondary) level qualification. This workforce model is based on a common underpinning approach (concept, theory, practice) – pedagogy - with a strong emphasis on the work as relational rather than task-base. Both types of worker are employed: with a wide range of people (across the life course); in many settings; in many occupations (in early years services, free-time services for school-age children, residential child and youth care, youth work, adults with disabilities etc).

But they also work with a range of other workers (e.g. health workers, teachers, social workers). So generalist here is used in three senses: (a) works across many groups/settings/ occupations; (b) has a variety of identities (e.g. front line worker, manager, counsellor, adviser etc); and (c) adopts a holistic approach in working with people.

The nearest example to this model is Denmark, which in 1992 reorganised its workforce in the 'care work domain' from three separate types of pedagogue to one; and from five other types of social and health care worker to two (social and health care helpers and assistants). Pedagogues now constitute half or more of the workforce across the care work domain except in services for elderly people, where social and health care helpers and assistants predominate (although there are some pedagogues and their numbers are growing).

(B) ***Specialist*** professional working with a **number of different levels of support workers** (i.e. a more differentiated and hierarchical workforce structure than A). The balance varies from sector to sector (e.g. there may be a higher proportion of professionals in early childhood, far lower in eldercare), but overall there are fewer professionals than in model A. In many areas professionals are confined to a managerial/leadership role; mostly they are not found doing front line work, which is undertaken by lower qualified (but still qualified) workers. Most workers specialise within a particular age range or service/policy area, i.e. they do not cover the life course but are workers in childcare, children's social care, adult social care etc. There is no common, cross-sectoral underpinning approach. Especially for non-professionals, there is a strong emphasis on task-based work linked to a vocational training approach focused on

demonstrating competence (meeting an occupational standard) in particular tasks (often defined by employer organisations).

These different approaches and models raise major questions, returned to below. But given the increasing complexity of the 'care work domain', whatever approach is adopted care work will require:

- Initial education *and* ongoing education and professional development (i.e. a commitment to lifelong learning within learning organisations).
- A reflective professional practitioner with tertiary level education working with other workers with an upper secondary education, for whatever the balance deemed appropriate between professional and other workers, other workers require a level of education appropriate to the complex demands of the work. This means, in effect, moving from the current three tier structuring of the workforce (outlined earlier) to a two tier system in which the third, lowest tier (with little of no education for the work) is phased out.
- Opportunities for horizontal and vertical mobility
- Diverse workforce (gender, age, ethnicity).

What are the causes and consequences of the gendered nature of the work?

The causes of the gendered workforce are related to (a) understandings of the work as essentially female, replicating the gendered nature of care work in the home (though we recognize this is gradually changing); and (b) the way that the existing gendering of the workforce is reproduced in training and employment practices (which presume female students and workers). Especially in countries which provide limited policies to support employed carers, paid 'care work' may also attract women workers because it may offer working conditions that fit around women's domestic situations including care responsibilities – for example, flexible and/or part-time working hours.

One consequence of gendered work is poor pay, but poor pay does not appear to be a major cause of gendering (cf. there are still relatively few men working with young children in Denmark or Sweden despite the work being better paid); at most, low pay is one part of the larger process of employment practices reproducing a gendered workforce. Another consequence is that care services are running counter to a societal process of men taking more responsibility for care in the family (e.g. fathers take more responsibility for children). A third consequence is that a gendered workforce is a major obstacle to a diverse workforce.

The potential for recruiting more male workers is considerable, a view supported by successful innovative projects. But to achieve this potential (a) requires sustained commitment, strong analysis and great attention to practice by all interested parties (government, educators, provider

organisations, trade unions etc); and (b) will take time to achieve (perhaps a decade to move to a situation where 15 to 20 percent of the workforce overall are men).

Good quality employment: what is it and do care workers have it?

A number of features are widely accepted as constituting good quality employment, including:

- Pay, benefits and employment
- Education, initial and ongoing (Lifelong learning)
- Supportive environment
- Health and safety
- Career prospects
- Decision latitude (autonomy)
- Meaningful employment
- Social recognition and status
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- Work and family reconciliation

On the basis of the project's findings, especially from the case studies in Stage Two, we may conclude that overall in the care work domain (with some exceptions): pay and other employment conditions are poor; levels of initial education and further education opportunities vary, but opportunities for career development are limited; the work is often demanding, both physically (e.g. lifting, noise) and psychologically; and the work is extremely gendered. On the other hand, informants report: a lot of satisfaction from their jobs (in particular, they like the children or adults with whom they work), that they often have considerable control over their work and decisions (though not over budgets); and few problems combining work with family life. On this last point, In some countries, paid care work and unpaid care work are often closely connected, with part-time work and/or atypical hours in paid care work enabling women to 'fit in' employment and family responsibilities; paid care work has been a means of managing work and family life in the absence of a strong social infrastructure providing support to employed carers. Where this support is available, for example in Denmark and Sweden, care responsibilities are more readily compatible with working longer hours and continuously. So while employment itself can help or hinder working carers, so too can public policies (or the absence of them).

From the perspective of most informants, the prestige or social standing of their work is low – even though they themselves are clear that they work is important, valuable and meaningful. Once again, the main exception to this general picture are Danish pedagogues, who tend to see the social status of pedagogical work in Denmark as quite high today, having risen in recent years (it has also been a popular education for young people in recent years). An important longer-term issue is the position of the growing number of 'personal assistants' and the consequences of

growth in this area for the social status of work with adults with severe disabilities and with elderly people. While this development holds out possibilities for increasing choice and control for people who can now purchase the services they want, 'personal assistants' may come to be seen as a new servant class, with few training or development possibilities and liable to exploitation. This may not be inevitable: but it will require careful attention if it is to be avoided.

Overall, the balance between demands, decision latitude and rewards is such that most workers are positive about their work, even though they recognize a number of negative features and, with some notable exceptions, the work is still some way from being good quality employment.

What is the potential of care work as a source of good quality employment?

The difference between the quantity and overall quality of work in the 'care work domain' defined by the project between countries like Denmark and Sweden on the one hand and Spain and Hungary on the other indicate the scope for care work to contribute to the creation of good quality employment within the European Union.

On the basis of countries and sectors which have good quality employment, what are the conditions associated with this? They include:

- Well funded services. So far such services have been found among Nordic welfare states with funding based on high tax levels, although this does not mean that this is the only way to achieve this goal.
- Social valuation of those who are worked with (e.g. the situation of workers with young children is improving partly because of the high social and political value put on young children today; work with older people suffers from a low valuation of this group and the widely held view that this involves "care without result").
- Organisation of the workforce to give it a strong, well articulated public voice and the ability to argue/struggle for improved conditions (via trade unions, professional associations). An important issue here is trade unions and other professional organisations focusing not only on pay and working conditions but also on education, public understanding of the work, policy development etc.
- Improved visibility of the work leading to increased recognition of its complexity and the high level of competence needed to do it.
- Development of 'learning organisations', which recognise and support lifelong learning and stimulate free and critical reflection and discussion.
- Public sector employment and/or public funders requiring good quality employment, rather than encouraging practices leading to low quality employment (governments here have a key role as funders, regulators and, in some cases, providers).
- A recognition of the need to improve quality of employment if workforce shortages are to be avoided.

- (Re)conceptualisation of employment in the 'care work domain' as not care. For where 'care work' is viewed as a distinct field, then training, pay and other conditions are often poor; but where it is understood and defined as part of a wider or different field (e.g. pedagogy or education), then employment quality is significantly better. In saying this, we recognise the relationship is not simple and direct, but involves, for example, complex and long-term processes of re-thinking and re-structuring.

Questions raised by the study

How should the workforce be structured?

Two approaches to and models of the workforce have been set out above. Either way the workforce should consist of two main groups: a tertiary educated professional and another worker educated to at least upper secondary level. This leaves three main questions:

- What should be the balance between professional and other workers?
- Should the workforce be based on generalist or specialist occupations, i.e. should there be a basic education that qualifies workers to work across a wide range of groups and settings or should there be more specialist education that qualifies workers to work with particular groups in a limited range of settings?
- If there is to be a generalist profession, on what discipline should it be based?

Answers to these questions are likely to be influenced by national traditions, understandings of the work and more general approaches to welfare policy. For example, a pedagogical approach, with its holistic perspective, combined with a well funded, universalist welfare regime, as in Denmark, leads to answers that emphasise a high proportion of professional workers undertaking all care work tasks and a generalist profession based on the discipline of pedagogy that works with people from babies to very old people with dementia. Or, to take another example, proposed by the Dutch partner, a generalist profession might be less numerous, more managerial (with little or no participation in direct care) and with a hybrid identity combining pedagogy, social work and health.

Is 'care work' a separate field?

The term and concept of 'care work' should not be taken as a given, and there is evidence that the boundaries between 'care' and other fields are increasingly blurring. This opens up the question of whether 'care work' is or should be a separate field of policy, provision and practice, in part or across all of what we have defined as the 'care work domain'. At least three different approaches to the care work domain and its workforce can be discerned based on different answers to this question:

1. **No 'care' focus:** care is subsumed within a wider field, and the workforce works generically with a wide range of groups of different ages (although there may be some degree of specialisation during or after initial training). This is exemplified by Denmark

where: the pedagogue is a broad 'core' profession, working in many settings and with people across the life course (although less with elderly people than others); nearly all services in the 'care work domain' are within the same legislative and administrative framework; and 'care' is located within a wider pedagogical field, which is also distinct from the educational field. However, in this example workers with lower levels of training and qualification do not work in a generic way: instead, different occupations work with different age groups (e.g. social and health service helpers and assistants work only with adults).

2. **Distinct 'care' focus**: at this opposite end of the spectrum, 'care' remains a distinct field, albeit closely related to other fields, and the workforce is structured around work with different groups. This is exemplified by the Netherlands, where the three parts of our care work domain are increasingly distinctive: services for adults, including elderly people, are termed 'long-term care' and are moving closer to health; residential child and youth care, along with other youth work, are considered 'welfare services' with a strong pedagogical approach; while childcare services have a different policy and legislative orientation with a developmental and labour market orientation. Although there is a common training framework, the care work domain contains different groups of workers who are trained at different levels and for different specialisms.

3. **Mixed focus**: in this case, some work in the 'care work domain' is subsumed within a wider field, whilst other work remains in a distinct care field, and the workforce is structured around work with different age groups. This is exemplified by Sweden, where childcare and adultcare services have different orientations (pedagogy and social care respectively) and different locations in government (education and welfare). Thus, pre-school workers, workers in out-of-school care services and school teachers have recently been brought together within a common training framework, all will be known in future as teachers and all services are within the education system: care is therefore subsumed within the field of education (which, in turn, adopts a broad approach which might be called pedagogical). This reconfiguration brings together three professions, *including school teachers,* to create a single profession for working with children and young people – but not with adults or indeed residential care services for children and young people.

It seems to be the case that work conceptualised and explicitly termed 'care work' is of lower quality overall than equivalent work conceptualised and termed in other ways, perhaps because 'care work' is bound up with the idea of domestic activity for which women are assumed to be 'essentially' qualified.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that to remove 'care' as a distinct field of policy, provision and practice does not mean removing 'care' from policy, provision and practice. 'Care' is, for example, an important element in pedagogical work, while the developing literature on the 'ethics of care' is a reminder that 'care' can be conceptualised as an ethic that can influence a wide range

of occupations and not just in what we have defined as the 'care work domain'. In short, 'care' in services is not dependent on there being 'care services' (e.g. staff in schools, hospitals, prisons or any other institutions can work with 'care, understood as an 'ethic of care'), anymore than working with care requires care workers.

Is there a crisis of care?

The study reports evidence of actual or envisaged shortages of staff for services in the 'care work domain', so too do other cross-national studies. This may be read as temporary labour market problems, resulting from particular local conditions, or as a reflection of something more profound and long term – an emergent crisis of care. If there is a crisis developing, it affects both informal care and care work in formal services and the causes are twofold: rising demand for care at a time when the traditional supply of care (i.e. women with lower levels of education) is diminishing. Put another way, the short period in historical terms when the male breadwinner model predominated, accompanied by an abundant supply of unpaid or low paid female carers, has been overtaken by events.

Who then will do the caring in Europe in the future – in the home or outside? A number of answers are put forward. Some policy measures - such as parental leave and incentives for relatives to act as carers (for example, through cash for care schemes which include payments to relatives) - seek to stimulate the supply of informal care, in particular within families and across generations, in response to a 'care deficit'.

Another policy response is to exploit reserves of labour currently underused in care work. This might include finding new supplies of women with low educational qualifications, ready to work for low pay – including more workers drawn from existing or future migrants, either employed in the mainstream labour force or marginalized in the grey economy. Another possibility is to support increased participation by men in both informal and formal care. Moreover, without increasing the number of men in paid care work, shifts from informal care to formal care will simply increase the gendering of care since men are more involved in informal than formal care.

A third response is a sustained effort to restructure and revalue the work in the care domain via new professions and improved training, including both higher levels of initial education and continuous 'on the job' training (and including possibilities for existing workers to build on existing qualifications to improve their levels of education).

These options raise questions of principle and overall objective. For example, is the stimulation of informal care compatible with promoting gender equality? Even if workers can be found, should low status care work be sustained? But they also raise questions of practicality. Is it possible to stimulate informal care – and if so under what conditions? Is this compatible with EU policy goals of increasing women's employment? It may well be that payments need to be at a high level (e.g. earnings-related benefits paid to parents taking parental leave) and that even then women (or

men) with higher level education and better jobs will be less likely to respond to such measures (e.g. longer periods of parental leave are more likely to be taken by women with lower educational attainment). Is it possible to recruit more workers from under-represented groups, and if so, how? For example, are different recruitment strategies necessary for women and men to reflect their different career routes? Will societies pay the costs of more professionalized care work?

In practice, the options set out above are not mutually exclusive. Each could have a contribution to make. Restructuring and revaluing work in the care work domain will attract entrants with higher levels of education; there is a strong case and need for more male workers at all levels; and there is likely to be a continuing, if reduced, need for workers with less training, which will require more recruitment from currently under-represented groups (and also attention given to career progression for these workers). As retirement age gets later all over Europe, more older people might be attracted to care work, given opportunities for retraining and increased flexibility in working hours.

Is care work compatible with a market approach?

A widespread trend in European welfare states is towards a more market approach to services in the care work domain. This takes a number of forms. Public involvement increasingly takes the form of local authorities or other public agencies purchasing services from service providers who compete in a market, or providing 'cash for care', that is funding 'consumers' to purchase services directly, again from competing providers. This process is associated with a 'Taylorisation' of services, in which care work is broken down into discrete and specific tasks that can be timed, costed and allocated to particular workers. This, in turn, allows for the increasing application of managerial methods of surveillance and control, by which for example the performance of itemised tasks can be assessed against norms or targets for performance.

These trends raise a number of questions, two of which are highlighted here. First, what effects will marketisation of services have on job satisfaction? The findings of the study illustrate how many care workers today have poor employment conditions, yet they report considerable satisfaction with their work because of the autonomy they enjoy and their sense that the work is meaningful and socially important. But can either autonomy or meaning be sustained if the work is increasingly controlled through managerial technologies and market disciplines? Does this lead to a potentially damaging conflict of values and rationalities?

Second, what effects will marketisation have on quality of employment? Our discussion so far has pointed to the need to increase levels of education and qualification, across the workforce. Yet the logic of 'direct payment' schemes is that the consumer, for example the person with a severe disability, decides what services s/he wants and from whom, and thus by implication what level of education and training care providers require. The danger here is that 'personal assistants' could remain low qualified workers, vulnerable to exploitation, treated more as unskilled domestic

workers than skilled care or pedagogical workers. In short, how is it possible to reconcile the rights of care users with the development of good quality employment?

Policy implications

- The 'care work domain' can be a source of substantial good quality employment (as the cases of Denmark and Sweden illustrate) – but not necessarily employment conceptualised or described as 'care work' *per se*, which may not promote quality of employment.
- More attention should be given to the concept of 'care work' or 'social care work', in particular its meaning and application. If used in policy or to describe a field of work, what do such terms mean? Are there are concepts and terms that are more useful and appropriate to the nature of the work? Conceptualising work theoretically is a necessary part of developing policy and practice, not simply an academic exercise.
- Sectors in the 'care work domain' are often very compartmentalised: the early childhood or childcare field does not necessarily talk with the child welfare field which may not talk much with those working with adults. Even when these different sectors are the responsibility of different ministries and are located in different legal and policy fields, there should be regular opportunities for dialogue and exchange. For as this study shows, they have much in common, for example sharing many requirements and competencies.
- If not already in existence, a wide ranging graduate profession should be developed to work across much or all of the 'care work domain', in management and in policy making, but also in daily practice (though the extent of participation in this direct caring work is contested). The profession of pedagogue is one such profession already in existence, most developed in Denmark but found in many other parts of Europe. But other 'social professions' are possible.
- The initial education of other workers in the care work domain should be improved over time, up to at least upper secondary level. Work in the care work domain is demanding and complex, and getting more so; being a woman or having been a housewife is not sufficient basis for undertaking such work today, if it ever was.
- Steps should be taken to close the gap in education and quality of employment between workers with children and workers with elderly people. Even if the balance may vary, all sectors of work need to have both the graduate professional and the remaining workforce educated at upper secondary level. This will also focus attention on social attitudes towards and valuing of older people, an important issue in a Europe with increasing numbers of frail elderly people.
- Initial education is a necessary but not sufficient condition. It needs to be complemented by programmes of continuous professional development, including the possibility to work for

higher level qualifications. It needs to be supported by funding and ensuring workers have time available to undertake further education.

- If market approaches are developed, attention should be given to how these can be made compatible with improving quality of employment, in particular how the quality of employment of 'personal assistants' in direct payment schemes can be assured.
- There is a need for regular and sustained monitoring of recruitment, retention and turnover among workers in the care work domain; comparison between countries, sectors and occupations; and systematic review of responses to recruitment and retention difficulties and their consequences – to enable the extent and nature of a crisis in care to be assessed.
- This monitoring should be part of a larger programme of work to ensure detailed and updated information on the workforce across the care work domain. This programme should be broadly conceived, encompassing not only the workforce in what we have defined as the 'care work domain', but the workforce in bordering and related areas, such as teaching, nursing and social work. It should include both regular, large-scale surveys and occasional and more in-depth enquiries on identified issues. The Labour Force Survey could play a major role here, both nationally and at a European level. For example, the ELFS has the potential to provide regular cross-national data on the care workforce, being available for all member states, conducted on an annual basis and the harmonisation process is quite advanced. However, this potential is not fully realised, not least because of problems with the system for classifying occupations (ISCO).
- There should be commitment to diversifying the workforce within a set time period, in particular with respect to gender and ethnicity. This should be expressed through targets (for example, Norway has set a target of 20 percent male workers for its early childhood services) and through the introduction of and extension of coordinated projects to attract and retain men and minority ethnic workers into training and employment. This project provides examples of successful local projects; what is now needed is to extend these isolated examples into larger scale regional and national initiatives.
- Both the EU and member states should promote and support exchange of experience on a regular and systematic basis, for example: through visits and longer-term partnerships; creating forums for dialogue; and databases of examples, e.g. building on this project's collation of innovative developments.

Areas needing further research effort

- Practice and understandings of practice: as one part of the project, development work was undertaken on a video-based method for the cross-national study of understandings of practice in care work (Sophos – **S**econd **O**rder **Ph**enomenological **O**bservation **S**cheme). Development work was undertaken with centre-based services for young people and in

services for elderly people, including the production of six films in three countries and their showing to a wide range of groups in these countries. Overall, the research team concluded that the SOPHOS method has great potential for future comparative work, in particular in an area where more cross-national and cross-sectoral work is needed, that is the investigation of differences in practice and how these differences are understood.

- The relationship between systems, structures, concepts and practice: in particular there is a need to further explore the relationship between welfare regimes, how services are structured, what are the key concepts in conceptualising services and workers, how work is practiced and understandings of that practice. Recent cross-national work on the care work domain has tended to be focused on welfare regimes and structures, paying too little heed to the work itself, how it is practiced and understood. This project has begun to explore the connections, showing for example the connections between the Danish welfare state, the structuring of its services and workforce, the concept of pedagogy and how that concept shapes practice in services.
- The project's limited exercise in identifying and collating examples of innovative practice should be built on. The project's directory of 36 examples could be developed into a larger and updated directory or database, generally accessible through the internet. Research can then be commissioned to examine innovative practice in more detail.
- Diversification of the workforce needs to be supported by research into obstacles to diversification, successful programmes and the consequences of non-diversification and diversification. For example, to what extent is practice across the care work domain shaped by the highly gendered workforce? Do men and women, in general, work in different ways?

Annex 3. Paper by Prof. Ferre Laevers

Making care and education more effective through wellbeing and involvement. An introduction to Experiential Education.

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In May 1976 twelve Flemish pre-school teachers, assisted by two educational consultants, start a series of sessions with the intention to reflect critically upon their practice. Their approach is 'experiential': the intention is to make a close, moment by moment description of what it means to a young child to live and take part in the educational setting. This careful observation and 'reconstruction' of the child's experiences brings to light a series of unsatisfactory conditions. Too many opportunities to sustain children's development remain unused. During the following tens of sessions the group discusses possible solutions for the problems they meet, work them out in practice and reflect on their experiences. Gradually they begin to realise how much they have moved away from current pre-school practice. A new educational model for pre-school is taking shape: Experiential Education (EXE). It grew further to become one of the most influential educational models in the area of elementary education in Flanders and the Netherlands. From 1991 the dissemination in other European countries, including the UK, took off.

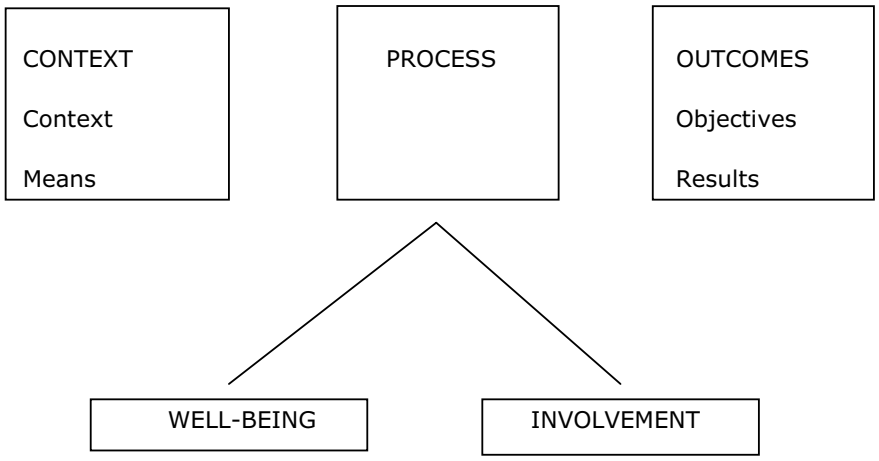
EXE offers a conceptual basis that proved to be useful in other contexts such as child care, special education, secondary education, teacher training and any kind of setting where learning and professional development is meant to take place.

In search of quality

What constitutes 'quality' in care and education? From the point of view of the parent, the counsellor, the head teacher, the curriculum developer the question is very often answered by expressing expectations with regard to the educational context and the teacher's actions: the infrastructure and equipment, the content of activities, teaching methods, adult style... From the point of view of policy and government there is a more direct reference to the expected outcomes of education. With regular assessments the system of care and education, in a sense, is 'forced' to get better results. In the middle of this stands the practitioner, living and working with children. Wanting the best for them. Accepting sensible guidelines and accepting at the same time the fact that education has to be effective. But how to combine all those things and get the two ends - context and outcome - together?

Focusing on the process

The project Experiential Education's most important contribution answers exactly this question, by identifying indicators for quality that are situated just in the middle of the two approaches of quality. It points to the missing link: the concept that helps us to sense if what we are doing (the context) is leading to somewhere (the outcome)!



The basic insight within the EXE-theory is that the most economic and conclusive way to assess the quality of any educational setting (from the pre-school level to adult education) is to focus on two dimensions: the degree of 'emotional well-being' and the level of 'involvement'.

When we want to know how each of the children is doing in a setting, we first have to explore the degree in which children do feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence. All this indicates that their emotional well-being is o.k. and that their physical needs, the need for tenderness and affection, the need for safety and clarity, the need for social recognition, the need to feel competent and the need for meaning in life and moral value are satisfied.

The second criterion – involvement - is linked to the developmental process and urges the adult to set up a challenging environment favouring concentrated, intrinsically motivated activity.

Care settings and schools have to succeed on both tasks: only paying attention to emotional well-being and a positive climate is not enough, while efforts to enhance involvement will only have an impact if children and students feel at home and are free from emotional constraints.

Involvement, the key word

The concept of involvement refers to a dimension of human activity. Involvement is not linked to

specific types of behaviour nor to specific levels of development. Both the baby in the cradle playing with his or her voice and the adult trying to formulate a definition, both the (mentally) handicapped child and the gifted student, can share that quality. Csikszentmihayli (1979) speaks of "the state of flow".

> One of the most predominant characteristics of this flow state is concentration. An involved person is narrowing his or her attention to one limited circle. Involvement goes along with strong motivation, fascination and total implication: there is no distance between person and activity, no calculation of the possible benefits. Because of that, time perception is distorted (time passes by rapidly). Furthermore there is an openness to (relevant) stimuli and the perceptual and cognitive functioning has an intensity, lacking in activities of another kind. The meanings of words and ideas are felt more strongly and deeply. Further analysis reveals a manifest feeling of satisfaction and a bodily felt stream of positive energy. The 'state of flow' is sought actively by people. Young children find it most of the time in play.

Of course, one could describe a variety of situations where we can speak of satisfaction combined with intense experience, but not all of them would match our concept of involvement. Involvement is not the state of arousal easily obtained by the entertainer. The crucial point is that the satisfaction stems from one source: the exploratory drive, the need to get a better grip on reality, the intrinsic interest in how things and people are, the urge to experience and figure out. Only when we succeed in activating the exploratory drive do we get the intrinsic type of involvement and not just involvement of an emotional or functional kind.

Finally, involvement only occurs in the small area in which the activity matches the capabilities of the person, that is in the 'zone of proximal development'.

> To conclude: involvement means that there is intense mental activity, that a person is functioning at the very limits of his or her capabilities, with an energy flow that comes from intrinsic sources. One couldn't think of any condition more favorable to real development. If we want deep level learning, we cannot do without involvement.

Measuring involvement

Involvement may seem to be a subjective property, it is very well possible to assess in the levels of involvement in children and adults. For this the "Leuven Involvement Scale" (LIS) has been developed, encompassing seven variants for different settings, ranging from childcare to adult education.

The LIS is a 5-point rating scale. At level 1, there is no activity. The child is mentally absent. If we can see some action it is a purely stereotypic repetition of very elementary movements. Level 2 doesn't go further than actions with many interruptions. At level 3, we can without a doubt label the child's behaviour as an activity. The child is doing something (e.g. listening to a story, making something with clay, experimenting in the sand table, interacting with others, writing, reading,

finishing a task...). But we miss concentration, motivation and pleasure in the activity. In many cases the child is functioning at a routine level. At level 4 moments of intense mental activity occur. At level 5 there is total involvement expressed by concentration and absolute implication. Any disturbance or interruption would be experienced as a frustrating rupture of a smoothly running activity.

The core of the rating process consists of an act of empathy in which the observer has to get into the experience of the child, in a sense has to become the child. This gives the information to draw conclusions concerning the mental activity of the child and the intensity of his experience. Despite of the required observational skills, the inter-scorer reliability of the LIS-YC (a comparison between two observers) is .90 and thus very satisfactory.

Research with the Leuven Involvement Scale has shown that the levels of involvement within a setting tend to be more or less stable (Laevers, 1994). They are the result of the interactions between the context (including the way teachers handle their group) and the characteristics of the children. We can expect that the more competent the teacher, the higher the level of involvement can be, given a particular group of children. We find indications for this in our own research, but also in the large scale Effective Early Learning project in the UK, where more than 5.000 adults learned to use the scale and more than 50.000 children at the pre-school age have been observed with it (Pascal & Bertram, 1995; Pascal et al., 1998).

Raising the levels of well-being and involvement

The concepts of well-being and involvement are not only useful for research purposes, but at least as much for practitioners who want to improve the quality of their work. Capitalising on a myriad of experiences by teachers, a body of expertise has been gathered and systematised in *The Ten Action Points,* an inventory of ten types of initiatives that favour well-being and involvement (Laevers & Moons, 1997).

THE TEN ACTION POINTS

1. Rearrange the classroom in appealing corners or areas
2. Check the content of the corners and replace unattractive materials by more appealing ones
3. Introduce new and unconventional materials and activities
4. Observe children, discover their interests and find activities that meet these orientations
5. Support ongoing activities through stimulating impulses and enriching interventions
6. Widen the possibilities for free initiative and support them with sound rules and agreements
7. Explore the relation with each of the children and between children and try to improve it

8. Introduce activities that help children to explore the world of behaviour, feelings and values
9. Identify children with emotional problems and work out sustaining interventions
10. Identify children with developmental needs and work out interventions that engender involvement within the problem area.

The action points cover a wide range of interventions. In AP1, 2 and 3 the organisation of the space and the provision of interesting materials and activities is at stake. With AP4, the teacher is invited to observe carefully how children interact with all that they encounter in their environment in order to identify interests that can be met by a more targeted offer of activities. It is on this track that open projects come to life. They gradually take shape building upon what children indicate as points of interest in their responses to a former offer.

The realisation of a rich environment doesn't stop with the provision of a wide variety of potentially interesting materials and activities. A decisive element in the occurrence of involvement is the way the adult supports the ongoing activities with stimulating interventions (AP5) which are part of an effective adult style.

Using the dynamics in children and their exploratory drive requires an open form of organisation that stimulates children to take initiative (AP6). That is why in EXE-settings, children are free to choose between a wide range of activities (up to about 65 % of the available time). This point includes the setting of rules that guarantee a smoothly running class organisation and a maximum of freedom for every child (and not only for the 'fittest' and the most assertive ones). It takes time to get this far with a group of children. But the efforts to implement this open form are rewarded. Research indicates that - given a rich offer - the more children can choose their activities, the higher the levels of involvement.

In AP7 the field of social relations is addressed. The adult not only explores the relations between the children, but also tries to be aware of how she/he is experienced by children. Guidelines in this area encompass qualities already defined by Carl Rogers (empathy and authenticity). At the group level explicit attention is given to the creation of opportunities to share experiences and build a positive group climate.

In AP8 activities are generated that support the exploration of feelings, thoughts and values. For a part it is about the development of social competence. One of the materials supporting this Action Point is the *Box Full of Feelings*. The series of open ended activities linked to this set, helps children to discern between four basic feelings – happiness, fear, anger and sadness - develop emotional intelligence and role taking capacity. The effect has been reported by Nanette Smith – on the basis of her PhD at Worcester College of Education - on a BBC programme for practitioners: "We've only used the *Box Full of Feelings* for seven weeks. Already we've seen a big, significant difference. (-) we can sense a general feeling of protectiveness, awareness, friendship and empathy in the children which wasn't there before.".

Children who need special attention

AP1 to 8 have a general character: they lay the foundations. The two remaining action points turn our attention to children needing special attention because they do not reach the levels of well-being and involvement that we strive for. In the first (AP9) we deal with behavioural and emotional problems: children who, through all kinds of circumstances, do not succeed in realising a satisfying interaction with their environment, who come under pressure and lose contact with their inner stream of experiences. On the basis of a large number of case-studies, an experiential strategy has been developed to help them. Interventions that proved effective range from "giving positive attention and support" to "giving security by structuring time and space".

The last action point (AP10) is about children with special developmental needs. We define them as children that fail to come to activity in which the quality of 'involvement' is realised in one or more areas of competence. This means that their development is endangered and chances are real that they will not develop the potential they have in them.

Five factors and basic work forms as a framework for primary education

In the field of primary education the logic of the original EXE-model has been maintained. This means that a wide variety of educational interventions have been explored that promote "well-being" and "involvement". In an attempt to make order in these practical experiences a framework originated that can inspire teachers in the design of a powerful learning environment. The framework is built on 5 dimensions or factors that have a particular influence on the crucial process variables.

Teachers can, for any sequence of their lessons, focus on each of these factors and check (1) how the planned activity affects the group climate and the relations with and between children, (2) if the offer is not too easy or too difficult and is sufficiently challenging (3) if the content can be enriched by more documentation, more lively brought information or concrete material, (4) if the organization allows enough action and (5) how much opportunity is given to the children to make personal choices.

In the process of implementation, the five factors evolve towards 5 basic work forms that can be considered as the building bricks of a primary educational model that offers enormous opportunities for "well-being" and "involvement". These work forms are: (1) "circle times" and "reunions", (2) contract work, (3) project work, (4) workshops and (5) free activity. They are the consequent elaboration of the 5 factors but each of them contain several variants that allow an organic growth from a very accessible to a more complex form.

An experiential teacher style

Teacher interventions can vary a lot, depending on the nature of activities or on the responses and initiatives of children. Nevertheless, we can discern individual patterns in the way adults intervene in a wide variety of situations. The notion of 'style' is used to grasp this pattern.

The 'Adult Style Observation Schedule' (ASOS) is built around three dimensions: stimulation, sensitivity and giving autonomy (Laevers, Bogaerts & Moons, 1997).

Stimulating interventions are open impulses that engender a chain of actions in children and make the difference between low and high involvement. Such as: suggesting activities to children that wander around, offering materials that fit in an ongoing activity, inviting children to communicate, confronting them with thought-provoking questions and giving them information that can capture their mind.

Sensitivity is evidenced in responses that witness empathic understanding of the basic needs of the child, such as, the need for security, for affection, for attention, for affirmation, for clarity and for emotional support.

Giving autonomy in not only realised in the open form of organisation but has to be implemented as well at the level of interventions. It means: to respect children's sense for initiative by acknowledging their interests, giving them room for experimentation, letting them decide upon the way an activity is performed and when a product is finished, implicate them in the setting of rules and the solution of conflicts.

Once we begin to look at the way adults interact with children we realise how powerful these dimensions are. In view of getting high levels of well-being and involvement the person of the teacher is even more important than other dimensions of the context, such as the space, the material and the activities on offer.

The Process-Oriented Child Monitoring System

To identify children who need special attention systematic observation is necessary and, in fact, one or another kind of monitoring system. Although the traditional product-oriented systems have their value, especially for diagnostic purposes, they also have serious limitations. The first is that using them at a group level leads to an enormous investment – ticking an endless series of boxes - leaving no time for real interventions. Further, most systems concentrate on typical academic achievements and do forget that success is often more dependent on the development of learning dispositions. Finally, having discovered where a child stands does not mean one knows immediately which actions to take. The paradigm behind most monitoring systems seems to be that one just has to break down the task further to help the child overcome the gap. But this approach doesn't take the nature of developmental processes into account nor that the child functions as a whole.

Totally in consistence with the EXE-framework, the Process-oriented Monitoring System (the POMS) focuses onto the two major indications for the quality of the educational process: well-being and involvement. These give the answer to the essential question: how is each child doing? Are the efforts we make sufficient to secure emotional health and real development in all important areas and for each of the children? In a first step, children are screened, with a five point scale for each of the dimensions. For children falling below level 4, teachers proceed with further observations and analysis. A periodic assessment (3 or 4 times a year) of these levels has shown to be practicable and effective. In contrast to other systems, the POMS gives a sense of purpose: teachers get immediate feedback about the quality of their work and can get to work without delay. The target being to evoke enjoyment and more intrinsic motivated action within the fields of development that are at stake (Laevers, 1997).

The concept of deep level learning

In the EXE-theoretical framework, a lot of attention is paid to the effects or outcomes of education. The concept of 'deep level learning' expresses the concern for a critical approach of educational evaluation. Central to this is the questioning of superficial learning, learning that does not affect the basic competencies of the child and has little transfer to real life situations. In line with a constructivist tradition, we don't see the process of development as a mere addition of discrete elements of knowledge or aptitudes to an existing repertoire. On the contrary: every performance is depending on an underlying structure of fundamental schemes. These operate as basic programmes that regulate the way one processes incoming stimuli and construct reality. By them we interpret new situations and we act competently - or not. They determine which and how many dimensions of reality can be articulated in ones perception and cognition (Laevers, 1995 & 1998).

The ongoing research programme in which instruments are developed to assess levels of development, covers five areas of development: (1) physical knowledge; (2) psycho-social cognition; (3) communication and expression; (4) creativity and (5) self-organisation.

In this context the exploration of forms of intelligence based on intuitive faculties, as opposed to the logical-mathematical intelligence, gets special attention. Real understanding of the world is built on the capacity to get the feel of it. Consequently, the difference in competence between people, in any profession that requires a certain level of understanding, is made by their intuitive view on the matter. This is the case for physicists, medical doctors, biologists, geologists, engineers... but also in any craft where routine and technique is to be transcended and interpretations have to be made. This also holds for the field of psycho-social cognition. Intuition is the core of the expertise in professions where dealing with people plays an important role, such as, child care, teaching, all kinds of therapies, human resources management, advertising and of course in all the sciences connected to these. This domain is one of the most fascinating ones and can be seen as one of the challenges for educational research in the current century.

Values education

Within the EXE-project the concept of 'linkedness' is the expression of the deep concern for the development of a positive orientation towards the physical and human reality. It offers a point of reference for the whole of value education.

Linkedness with the eco-system in its entirety is essentially a religious concept, in the broadest sense of the word. Etymologically, 're-ligion' (re-liare) means 'linking again'. As "de-linquency" means "the lack of being linked", the sense of 'connectedness' can be seen as the cornerstone of prevention of criminal behaviour or any action that brings damage to things and people. One who feels connected with something would not act as a vandal.

In the elaboration of the concept at the level of preschool education, children are helped to develop this attitude of linkedness with (1) themselves, (2) the other(s), (3) the material world, (4) society and (5) the ultimate unity of the entire eco-system.

Conclusion: it is all about energy

Experiences accumulated in the EXE project support the conclusion that well-being and involvement are welcomed by practitioners as most stimulating and helpful to improve the quality of their work. The concepts of well-being and involvement match the intuitions of many caretakers and teachers and give them a scientifically-based confirmation of what they knew already: when we can get children in that 'flow state', development must and will take place within the area(s) addressed by the activity. In contrast to effect variables – the real outcomes are only seen on the longer run – the process variables give immediate feedback about the quality of interventions and tell us on the spot something about their potential impact. Furthermore, bringing at the foreground involvement as key indicator for quality, engenders a lot of positive energy and synergy: the enthusiastic responses of children, when teaching efforts are successful, are very empowering and give the teacher deep satisfaction both at the professional and the personal level. Finally, taking involvement as a point of reference in the guidance of professionals makes it possible to respect the actual level of functioning of the teacher and the setting. When implementing Experiential Education one starts where one stands, with the room, the children, the material, the methods and all the limitations linked to the actual situation. Then a field of action is chosen and initiatives are taken that have the potential to bring about an increase in well-being and/or involvement. This increase – how small it may be - is experienced as a success and drives one towards new initiatives.

That is what experiential education is about: mobilising and enhancing the energy in people and drawing them into a positive spiral which engenders deep level learning. Only this way can we make settings and schools more effective and strong enough to meet the challenge of education: the development of (future) adults who are self-confident and mentally healthy, curious and

exploratory, expressive and communicative, imaginative and creative, full of initiative, well-organised, with developed intuitions about the social and physical world and with a feeling of belonging and connectedness to the universe and all its creatures!

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[A manual covering 3 stages, from group screening to interventions, with 8 forms to support all the process and ideas for interventions]

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