

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION  
EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Network on Early Childhood Education and Care**

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: RESEARCH ON ECEC**

**25 January 2012**

**Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Kirkegata 18, room 3022  
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## **SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: RESEARCH ON ECEC**

### **1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

[EDU/EDPC/ECEC/A\(2011\)3/REV2](#)

1. The Network **ADOPTED** the agenda.

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

[EDU/EDPC/ECEC/M\(2011\)1](#)

2. The Network **ADOPTED** the summary record of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **3. OPENING REMARKS**

3. Ms. Eli Telhaug, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway, welcomed participants. She informed the Network that a new mandate for the OECD Network on ECEC has been adopted until 2016 and that ECEC is now an integrated part of the OECD. She indicated that the high-level Roundtable provided interesting input from politicians and research and gave inspiration for future work. She explained the purpose of the meeting and highlighted the importance of stimulating research in ECEC.

4. Ms. Deborah Roseveare, Head of the Education and Training Policy Division, thanked the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research for hosting the high-level Roundtable and recognised the OECD ECEC team for their work on *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for ECEC*. She summarised the successes of the Roundtable and emphasised the importance of strengthening research and development of indicators on ECEC and increasing the knowledge base on early learning.

### **4. ELECTION OF BUREAU AND CHAIR FOR 2012**

5. The Network elected the following officers to the bureau of the Network:

- Dr. Jacqueline Jones (United States) – Chair
- Ms. Tove Mogstad Slinde (Norway) – Vice Chair
- Mr. Richard Walley (New Zealand) – Bureau member
- Dr. Kiyomi Akita (Japan) – Bureau member
- Ms. Nada Pozar Matijasic (Slovenia) – Bureau member

6. Dr. Akita and Ms. Pozar Matijasic indicated that they will discuss their nomination with their ministries and indicate their acceptance at a later stage. After three years of bureau service, Ms. Mugyeong Moon (Korea) and Dr. Arturo Sáenz Ferral (Mexico) will resign as bureau members.

### **5. FOLLOW UP ON ROUNDTABLE OUTCOMES**

7. This session focused on how to follow up on the outcomes of the Roundtable, discussing ways in which the Network could strengthen its role in advancing ECEC policy developments and suggesting topics for future Network meetings.

8. Mr. Richard Walley (New Zealand) indicated that he would encourage the Network to further research and data collection on ECEC. He stated that there are many questions and topics to be researched in ECEC and that there is much information about ECEC which requires further development. He also

indicated that evidence-based policy making is highly important. However, a challenge in ECEC is the current fiscal restriction in many countries. In this regard, it would be useful if research and data collection could contribute to what matters most in ECEC and what to spend financial resources on to improve child development.

9. Mr. Piotr Rycielski (Poland) indicated that Poland has very little available research on ECEC and little knowledge on ECEC and quality in Poland. Therefore, Poland believes that the Network mandate renewal is highly important and could, and should, contribute to research on ECEC, assess and discuss quality, and stimulate data collection. In addition to quantitative research, Poland is interested in qualitative research on ECEC and quality assessment.

10. Mr. Stefan Haddick (Germany) pointed out that Germany appreciates the work conducted by the Network and the ECEC team so far. Germany is very much in favour of any further work on policy lever 5 of *Starting Strong III*: research and data collection as well as monitoring. Mr. Haddick stated that much work is needed on this in Germany and among OECD countries. Germany believes that collecting data on ECEC on a systematic basis would be a great step forward in ECEC and feels that the Network would be an appropriate resource to collect this data. Mr. Haddick indicated that Germany would actively participate in any collection of indicators and data since ECEC is gaining importance in Germany.

11. The Network expressed great interest in furthering the work on cost effects of ECEC, as this is a crucial question and can convince politicians to increase investment. Many countries stated they would like to have more knowledge on what is having an effect and how. There is a great need to know more about what quality comprehends – something the Network should contribute to. PISA studies are found to be of great value in convincing politicians of the importance of ECEC, as their reports show that participation in ECEC can have beneficial results in secondary schooling. It was agreed that the challenge now is to collect the indicators and strengthen statistics to find out which aspects of ECEC lead to better high school results, since it is not mere participation that matters. It was also agreed that thought needs to be given to what exactly constitutes "the early learning sector" and what indicators need to be collected.

12. Countries indicated that inter-disciplinary aspects of child development, such as the links between health care and ECEC and its effects on child development, are of increasing interest for them. Additional attention should also be given to broader child outcomes and to the importance of play. A few countries mentioned that the ways in which ECEC works for children should be more researched as well as parental understanding of what constitutes high-quality ECEC.

## 6. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE MEETING: RESEARCH ON ECEC

[EDU/EDPC/ECEC\(2012\)1](#)  
[EDU/EDPC/ECEC\(2012\)2](#)

13. Ms. Miho Taguma, Project Leader of the "Encouraging Quality in ECEC" project, set the scene by highlighting the policy lever on "advancing research" from *Starting Strong III*. She explained that research plays a key role in identifying the successes and failures of ECEC programmes and can contribute to prioritising areas for investment and to evidence-based practices. It can also contribute to explaining how children grow and develop. Ms. Taguma presented some of the largest challenges for research on ECEC, based on the results of *Starting Strong III*. These include: 1) a need for more evidence on the effects of ECEC and cost-benefit analysis, in which a balance in quantitative and qualitative research is important; 2) advancing under-researched areas and areas with growing policy interest, such as research in space and environment or the effectiveness of universal versus targeted ECEC interventions; and 3) a lack of dissemination, where linking research to policy and practices is a challenge. Ms. Taguma also presented some of the country strategies used to overcome these challenges, including launching longitudinal studies at the national or regional level to increase knowledge on the effects of ECEC; expanding research agendas to study the importance of space to advance in under-researched areas; and providing financial or in-kind support to disseminate ECEC research.

14. Dr. W. Steven Barnett, Director, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University (United States), presented four types of quantitative research, explained their methods, and highlighted the advantages and constraints of each research type. He explained that descriptive research includes longitudinal studies and programme observations among others, and that it can contribute to knowledge on learning and development, access, implementation, quality and costs of ECEC. However, descriptive research is often weak in showing any effectiveness of ECEC. Controlled studies are most often randomised small-scale studies with intensive measures and have a strong approach for showing causality, as they can show linkages between different aspects of ECEC and outcomes. However, these studies may not illuminate implementation issues. Large-scale evaluations can be randomised, longitudinal and, ideally, prospective. These can provide knowledge on average impacts and variations for subpopulations and variations in impacts with quality. Selection bias is a serious worry in large-scale evaluations since effects might be biased. Lastly, benefit-cost analyses require strong impact estimates and cannot be based on one single study: it is difficult to compare "apples with apples". When conducted correctly, cost-benefit analyses can provide cost comparisons of alternative programmes and policies, and indicate the rates of return of programmes and policies.

15. Dr. Wendy Jarvie, Visiting Professor, University of New South Wales, Canberra (Australia) discussed the opportunities and constraints of qualitative research. Ms. Jarvie explained that qualitative research is often an in-depth study of complex issue, process or event and focuses on participants, their views, or behaviours; and therefore it is difficult to generalise from this type of research. Qualitative studies often cut across disciplines and use a mix of methods. She pointed out that qualitative research is essential for government's agendas since it can provide input for best practices guidelines or regulations, it can be used in comparative studies and provide input to quantitative studies. She emphasised that high-quality qualitative research is needed to provide information and knowledge on gaining and sustaining government support for ECEC; engaging parents and communities and especially minority background families in ECEC; establishing co-operations across government; improving the quality of the workforce; and contributing to the development of an innovative culture and scaling up from successful trails. She also indicated that implementation is crucial for the success of programmes and policies, and research on this is increasingly needed.

## **7. NORWEGIAN RESEARCH AGENDA ON ECEC**

[EDU/EDPC/ECEC/RD\(2012\)1](#)

16. Ms. Kristina Kvåle, Senior Advisor, Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Ministry of Education and Research (Norway), gave an introduction to Norwegian research on ECEC and their research policies. She explained that ECEC research in Norway is no longer a "black box" since there is more research being conducted on it; the quality of research is growing; and the Ministry is investing more financial resources in research on ECEC. As an example, she presented the Programme for Practice-based Educational Research (PRAKUT) (2010-2014) on, among other things, how and in what way kindergarten contributes to children's development and growth in life. PRAKUT has the primary objective to enhance the quality of ECEC, basic education (primary and secondary education) and teacher education. The programme is designed to further develop and strengthen research and development expertise and the knowledge base in teacher education programmes; it follows the Programme for Practice-based Research and Development in Pre-school through Secondary Schools and Teacher Education (PRAKSISFOU) (2006-2010). Activities under the programme are directed towards improving co-operation on research between teacher education programmes and the field of practice in ECEC and primary and secondary schools; and these activities contribute to the implementation of research-based knowledge in the practice-field to improve the connection between teacher education and practice. The PRAKUT programme is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and has an overall budgetary framework of NOK 115 million.

17. Dr. Thomas Moser, Professor, Faculty of Education, Early Childhood Education Research Centre, Vestfold University College (Norway) presented ECEC research in Scandinavia. He explained a

collaborative project between Norway, Sweden and Denmark to map and appraise Scandinavian research in ECEC institutions (2006-2010). The purpose of the project was to provide a systematic overview of research-based knowledge about Scandinavian ECEC institutions; make Scandinavian research accessible for non-Scandinavian researchers and stakeholders; and provide research-based knowledge for future policy development to encourage research-based practice and policy development. Qualitative, descriptive and explorative studies are predominating in Scandinavia, including ethnographic studies and case studies focusing on micro-processes. Few comparative studies are conducted, and there is little focus on political, social-cultural and economical frames and implications for practice. Mr. Moser indicated that Scandinavian research has little focus on children, and the caring dimension of pedagogical work (the youngest children) is understudied. Lastly, he indicated that the Nordic base of ECEC (ECEC-NB) collects new, quality-assured Scandinavian research on zero-to-six-year-old children in ECEC, and he explained that this database is updated annually.

## **8. DISCUSSION 1: How to find the right balance between quantitative and qualitative research?**

18. This round of discussion focused on issues in advancing both quantitative and qualitative research and making use of research findings to guide policy and practice.

19. Ms. Tarja Kahiluoto (Finland) explained that Finland believes the links between researchers and policy makers should be encouraged, although she indicated that this is difficult since political decisions are mostly made on short-term economic outcomes instead of on research focusing on long-term benefits and effects. Finland therefore believes it is beneficial to co-operate with the OECD on ECEC. She indicated that there is a great interest in the government in cost-benefit studies in ECEC and how to be cost effective. Ms. Kahiluoto explained that in Finland, there is increasing co-operation at the local level, through "centres of excellence", to inform stakeholders and municipalities of research. These centres help municipalities, which do not have any direct links with research since there are no universities present in their environment, on accessing quantitative and qualitative research. Finland also has national statistics on ECEC, although these collect more general data. She emphasised the importance of using good research in policy development, which can contribute to ECEC effectiveness. She also indicated that funding is needed for policy research related to ECEC, as there is often little budget available for this.

20. Ms. Wytske Boomsma (Netherlands) explained the Netherlands' PRE-COOL database and research. PRE-COOL, which started in 2009, collects data on two-to-five-year-old children and is a longitudinal study. PRE-COOL focuses on ECEC, studying the changes in ECEC, the effects of ECEC, and includes children who do and do not participate in ECEC. Data is being collected on different background and programme characteristics, such as staff-child ratio and what programme children participate in. The costs of PRE-COOL are around EUR 400 000 per year, funded by the Ministry of Education. At the moment, 30 pilot projects have been implemented with different programme elements, and the effects of these programmes on children's cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes are being measured. PRE-COOL is followed up by the COOL database work, following children aged six to 18 years. This work is also funded by the Ministry and costs on average EUR 2 million per year. The COOL study analyses school results, how these results change and which schools children attend, among other things. The COOL studies found that disadvantaged children have improved their performance in ten years time (up 25% in mathematics). Both PRE-COOL and COOL databases are being updated every three years by adding a new cohort to the study and following the children in the study over time. The results of both PRE-COOL and COOL are used in policy design.

21. The discussion highlighted the valuable role of quantitative research in policy discussion and design and of qualitative research in informing staff practices and exploring innovations in thinking about pedagogy, curriculum, the child and ECEC in general. It was concluded that both are needed, pointing out that the quality of research used for policy design and in ECEC practices should be of high quality, but that

sometimes it might not be easy to determine the quality of research. Countries pointed out that further data on ECEC needs to be collected. Although this might be costly, it is found to be useful, as politicians often need numbers in order to receive funding for programmes. Great consideration should also be given to the importance of, and challenges with, implementation. Using research for implementation was often found to be complex, and research on this is increasingly needed. It was agreed that the OECD Network on ECEC could play an important role in supporting countries on research and in implementation issues regarding ECEC.

**9. DISCUSSION 2: Where are our most critical knowledge gaps and how can they be addressed?**

22. This round of discussion focused on identifying the key areas of research where there is a lack of knowledge to underpin effective policy making.

23. The discussion indicated there is an increasing need for more research on the youngest children in ECEC, especially zero-to-three-year-olds, since there is little research on ECEC available on this age group. Research should also be more policy-driven since, for now, it is mostly academically driven. Additionally, a better understanding of the effects of different kinds of interventions and practices was found to be useful. There is a need for better knowledge on what is best or good for children, parents, families, etc. and which features of services lead to improved child development. It was also pointed out that international trends in ECEC and research on ECEC are of interest for the Network as well as better defining what outcomes are of interest for policy makers, cognitive and social-emotional, and what these outcomes consist of. It was agreed that the OECD has an important role in disseminating research from different countries on ECEC, since governments often only fund research itself but not dissemination of research results. It was also agreed that the Network should contribute to this as well as to collecting further knowledge and data on ECEC.

**10. THE WAY FORWARD**

24. This item discussed the proposed theme for the next meeting, the dates for the next Network meeting and the Chair's conclusions.

25. Dr, Jacqueline Jones, Chair of the Network, thanked everyone for their active participation and valuable contributions to this Network and thanked the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway for hosting the 10<sup>th</sup> Network meeting. She announced that the 11<sup>th</sup> Network meeting will be held in Paris from 11-12 June 2012, and the proposed topic of the meeting is "data collection and monitoring". She commented that sharing expert perspectives and country experiences, and discussing on different research methods and knowledge gaps in "research on ECEC" has been a constructive way to gather useful knowledge and learn from others' practices. She concluded that the topic of the meeting is highly relevant for policy makers, since many countries face challenges in financing research on ECEC or collecting data on ECEC, while this is so critically important for policy design and implementation.

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

26. The Secretariat thanked everyone for their participation in both the high-level Roundtable and the Network meeting, thanked the bureau for their active input, and thanked Dr. Jones for chairing the meeting. The Secretariat indicated that they will be in contact with the Network regarding the next meeting and the finalisation of the country policy profiles for countries participating in this output of the "Encouraging Quality in ECEC" project.

**Participants List for 10th Meeting of the Network on Early Childhood Education and Care**

**Liste des Participants pour 10ème réunion du Réseau sur l'accueil et l'éducation des jeunes enfants**

Oslo, Norway

25/1/2012 - 25/1/2012

All Sessions

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