

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
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Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

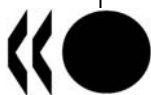
UPDATE ON THE ECEC ONLINE DATABASE AND FUTURE ECEC DATA GATHERING

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Background and purpose

1. During the 5th Meeting of the Network on Early Childhood Education and Care on 11-12 May 2009, a draft template for updating country profiles (EDU/EDPC/ECEC(2009)3) was discussed, and countries were invited to comment on the proposal. Several countries sent detailed comments and suggestions on the choice and presentation of indicators (see Annex 3 for a compilation of country comments).

2. This paper, presented on the 6th Meeting of the Network on ECEC on 7-8 December 2009, develops the work on ECEC data management further and has a threefold purpose: it records progress made since the last ECEC Network meeting on the online presentation of the data; it presents a revised and more detailed list of indicators; and suggests a timeline and next steps for the implementation of the work, in particular the data gathering exercise through a questionnaire. For all of this, comments and suggestions from countries were taken into consideration.

The ECEC database goes online

3. As agreed with Network on ECEC, the future presentation of the ECEC data will be in online form. There are several challenges confronting the creation of the ECEC database: sources of relevant ECEC data are highly diverse; data formats are equally varied, including both statistical data and descriptive information. Data on childcare and education policy and provision are sometimes difficult to compare internationally and need to be seen in relation to specific country contexts. Data are not always available at the same level of aggregation and might vary regarding the age group or be gathered at different administrative levels (national, regional, state).

4. The format of the website is therefore explicitly chosen to be flexible, permitting to integrate a wide range of data sources and formats into a common framework and allowing for further updates and possible extension of data. The aim is it to present the data in a simple and user-friendly way and to ensure transparency with regards to information on data sources, their quality and comparability.

5. The database (retrievable in the future at: www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood/database) is designed as a one-stop-shop, bringing together data from various sources on input, process and outcomes of early childhood education and care. Unlike the work in *Starting Strong* the data are not presented in the form of country profiles but organised by topic.

6. Two key concerns raised by many countries were clarity in the definition of individual indicators and reliability and comparability of data sources. In order to make this information available and transparent, and to be able to contextualise evidence adequately, the website does not only provide the raw data in Excel but also a PDF-sheet on each indicator, presenting meta-data, including a precise definition of the indicator as well as possible deviations of national definitions, information on the data sources and their quality, possible issues with data comparability and contextual information on individual countries as applicable.

A refined list of indicators

7. The selection of indicators has to be relevant to countries and support the OECD's ongoing and future work on ECEC. Based on the comments sent by countries, the list of indicators for the database has been updated and refined (see comprehensive list of indicators in Annex 2). Several indicators had to be defined more precisely. An item on outcomes of ECEC has been added to complement the categories' input and process data already taken into consideration.

8. A balance has to be struck between developing the most comprehensive and up-to-date database and the request from governments to keep the amount and frequency of data gathering manageable. Duplication in data gathering has to be avoided. For these reasons the OECD has taken great care to use as many already available data as possible, to co-ordinate tightly with other Directorates, in particular the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA) and their work on child well-being and to create synergies between the exercise to update the general ECEC database and the data gathering required for the new OECD project on quality in ECEC.

9. While some of the indicators are available through already existing OECD data sources (such as population data) or have recently been gathered through the ECEC Network questionnaires (*e.g.* information on ECEC staff and the issue of integration of care and education), other data need to be updated or newly added. To this end, a questionnaire will be administered to all countries. In order to optimise the questionnaire, it will be piloted first with a few countries before it is rolled out.

10. A list of topics on which further data gathering through the Network will be carried out is presented in Annex 1.

Next steps and timeline for implementation

11. Countries are asked to DISCUSS and AGREE on the refined list of indicators and to send any final comments and suggestions on the list of indicators and the online presentation of the database to the Secretariat by 8 January 2010.

12. Based on these comments and an assessment of which indicators need to be newly included in the data gathering exercise or need update, the Secretariat will prepare a questionnaire which will be administered first to some countries as a pilot and then rolled out to all countries during Q2 of 2010. Country responses are expected in Q2 2010 and will be analysed, data and meta-data will be fed into the database and made publicly available between Q3 and Q4 2010.

13. The extended database will provide valuable evidence to policy makers and a wider public interested in ECEC. It supports the new OECD project on quality in ECEC and serves the future work of the OECD on ECEC more generally. The current mandate of the Network on ECEC runs until the end of 2011. Towards the end of this period, it has to be decided whether the mandate is going to be renewed and whether the Network continues its work on ECEC data gathering and updating in the future.

Questions for discussion

1. Does the suggested timeline seem reasonable to you?
2. Which country would be interested in running a pilot and assisting in developing the questionnaire?
3. How do you want to handle the data gathering in the future?

ANNEX 1 LIST OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ECEC INDICATORS TO BE GATHERED THROUGH A QUESTIONNAIRE

Quantitative indicators

Funding
Estimated costs of an ECEC programme (full-day; half-day) per child
Private expenditure per child (expenses by parents, employer contributions)
Ways of public spending (targeted/general, to individuals/providers, through which level of government)
Provision and access
Enrolment by type of institution (private, public, in primary schools etc.)
Number of children on the waiting list
Licensing requirements and regulatory frameworks for providers
Minimum standards for provider facilities, minimum space per child
ECEC staff [NOTE: countries who filled in the ECEC workforce questionnaire are exempted]
Staff-children ratio
ECEC staff wage in comparison with minimum wage/with primary school teachers
ECEC staff working hours, turnover rates

Qualitative indicators

Governance
Main responsibility for policy development (responsible ministries)
Main responsibility for funding (responsible ministries, division of labour between levels of government)
Main responsibility for legislation (responsible ministries)
Main responsibility for provision (division of labour between levels of government)
Main responsibility for quality control (responsible body)
Integration [NOTE: countries who filled in the integration questionnaire are exempted]
Data collection and research
Monitoring mechanisms
Evaluation of ECEC data and ECEC research centres
Curriculum and pedagogy
Curriculum and pedagogy from age 3-6
Curriculum, if any, and pedagogy under 3
Recent developments (in policy and research) since 2005
Outcomes
Formal measurement (literacy and numeracy, school-readiness test etc.)
Longitudinal data linking participation in ECEC with improved later learning outcomes

ANNEX 2 COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF QUALITATIVE/DESCRIPTIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS FOR THE ECEC DATABASE AND THEIR DATA SOURCES

Indicator	Qualitative (QL) Quantitative (QN)	Data source
1. General information		
1.1. Demography		
Size of population	QN	<i>OECD PD</i>
Fertility rate	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Size of population of children under 6 years	QN	<i>OECD PD</i>
1.2. Socio-economic information		
GDP per capita in US\$ in 2007	QN	<i>OECD GS</i>
Child poverty rate	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
1.3. The ECEC system		
Major service type and duration	QL	<i>OECD SS</i>
Compulsory school starting age	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Legal entitlement to a free ECEC service	QL	<i>OECD SS</i>
Share of ECEC provision in primary schools	QN	-
2. Context		
2.1 Labour force participation		
Female (15-64 years) full-time and part-time	QN	<i>OECD GS</i>
Male (15-64 years) full-time and part-time	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Female with children under 6 years full-time and part-time	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
2.2 Parental leave		
Availability of paid leave	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Female use of parental leave	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Male use of parental leave	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
3. Governance		
Main responsibility for policy development	QL	-
Main responsibility for funding	QL	-
Main responsibility for legislation	QL	-
Main responsibility for provision	QL	-
Main responsibility for quality control	QL	-
4. Integration of education and care		
Integration of governance and finance structures	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Integration of staff qualifications	QL	<i>OECD NQ,</i>
Approaches/strategies to implement integration	QL	<i>OECD NQ,</i>
Actors involved in implementing integration	QL	<i>OECD NQ,</i>
Evaluations, evidence on integration	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
4. Costs and financing		
Social expenditure by age	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>

Educational expenditure by age	QN	<i>OECD ED</i>
Funding of services for children aged 0-6	QN	<i>OECD ED</i>
Private expenditure per child (expenses by parents, employer contributions)	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Estimated costs of an ECEC programme (full-day; half-day) per child	QN	<i>OECD ED</i>
Availability of subsidies to providers/to parents by child	QN	<i>OECD BW</i>
Ways of public spending (targeted/general, to individuals/providers, through which level of government)	QN	-
5. Access and provision		
5.1 Programme provision		
Regulations and provision of opening hours	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Enrolment by type of institution (private, public, in primary schools)	QN	-
Child-staff ratio	QN	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Licensing requirements and regulatory frameworks for providers	QL	-
Minimum standards for provider facilities, minimum space per child	QL	-
5.2 Rates of enrolment		
Intensity of enrolment (days per week, hours per day)	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
Number of children on the waiting list	QN	-
Enrolment of children by age	QN	<i>OECD FD</i>
6. Data collection and research		
Monitoring mechanisms	QL	-
Evaluation of ECEC data and ECEC research centres	QL	-
7. Workforce supply, qualifications and development		
Licensing and regulatory regimes for staff	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Staff profiles, recruiting and retaining,	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Training (initial and further)	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Qualifications	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
Working conditions	QL	<i>OECD NQ</i>
8. Curriculum and pedagogy		
Curriculum and pedagogy from age 3-6	QL	-
Curriculum, if any, and pedagogy under 3	QL	-
9. Parent and community involvement		
10. Recent developments (in policy and research) since 2005		
New policy or change of policy, implementation of policies, evaluation of policies such as case studies and recent research findings	QL	-
11. Outcomes of ECEC		
Learning and cognitive outcomes	QL	-
Child well-being	QL	<i>OECD FD</i>

Abbreviations: ED (Education Database); PD (Population Data); FD (Family Database); SS (Starting Strong); NW (Network on ECEC – Questionnaire); GS (General Statistics); BW (Benefits and Wages).

ANNEX 3 SUMMARY OF COUNTRY COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT TEMPLATE

Adapt the data gathering approach to individual country needs

14. Given the diversity of ECEC systems across provinces, **Canada** suggests a ‘jurisdiction by jurisdiction’ approach for completion of the template. Canada feels that this is the best way to capture the diversity of systems and approaches.

Describe and define the indicators better

15. **Canada** and **Norway** mention that it would be helpful if clearer definitions could either be provided in the template itself or in an accompanying document that explained the definitions (*e.g.* if information is pulled from Starting Strong I and II or the different OECD databases, it would be helpful to provide an explanation of how it had been defined in each case to assist countries in collecting data and determining whether updates are required).

16. **Canada** says that although sections 1 (General Information) and 2 (Context) are rather straightforward, a clearer definition would be helpful of the indicators “children under 6 years in recent time series” and “legal entitlement to a free pre-schooling service”. *E.g.* does pre-schooling service refer to kindergarten in the Canadian context?

17. **Finland** and **Norway** think the term ‘pre-schooling system’ is problematic, because of the variation between countries. They suggest that the term ECEC, which was adopted in Starting Strong, should be used here as well. It is more neutral and can be used as a general term to describe systems of split or integrated orientation. The common definition in this case could be, for instance, ‘the early education and care services during the period after the parental leave to the beginning of compulsory school’. In addition, if needed, it is possible to ask at what age does free service begin, what kind of services are provided for children of different ages, *etc.*

18. **Canada** prefers clearer definitions on “children with disabilities”, “children from low income families” and “ethnic and bilingual children”, which may have different interpretations in different countries. Canada also notes that in some provinces/territories, numbers are collected only for licensed/funded programs by type of care, not age group.

19. **Belgium** (Flanders) mentions that a clear definition is needed of the item “children with sole parents” since living conditions of children after a divorce become more and more complicated.

20. The estimated costs of a quality ECEC program and the participation rates for children from low income families can be subject to definitional issues and could be a sensitive area of reporting. Therefore, this indicator should be defined clearly, but carefully, suggests **Australia**.

21. **Belgium** (Flanders) suggests asking about the costs to parents for a limited number of well defined situations (*e.g.* types of family/income situation), instead of asking it in the way the OECD suggests now.

22. **Belgium** (Flanders) would like to have some clarifying information on in what way estimated costs have to be defined: do they concern the average costs? Or the maximum costs? **Norway** is concerned that the costs may not be comparable.

23. **Canada** and **Finland** suggest that in section 4 “Costs and Financing”, clearer definitions would be helpful on what “social expenditure” is expected to include, and it would be helpful to include additional information than is currently in the OECD Family Database (2005). From the Canadian perspective, we could see “social expenditure” as including the following: 1) Federal Social Expenditure (Transfers to provinces/territories, Transfers to individuals, Tax expenditure and Direct support to services/programs); 2) Provincial/Territorial expenditure (Direct Services/Programs, Transfers to Individuals, Tax Expenditure and Transfers to Municipalities); and 3) Local Expenditure (Direct services).

24. According to **Canada** and **Finland**, in section 4, it may be difficult to separate out “social expenditure”, “educational expenditure” and “funding of services for children aged 0-6” without double-counting funds. For example, in the Canadian context, it may be difficult to separate funding of services for children 0-6 with children 0-12. Some of the information is collected 0-12, not 0-6. Also, while some funding may be targeted to early childhood development or children under 6, some of it may be used for children up to 12. For Finland, it is extremely difficult to fit in the ISCED 0 -category, due to the integrated nature of their services. Instead, Finland suggests to ‘simplifying’ this information of funding and financing. Countries’ investment in ECEC as a % of the GDP could be useful information, as presented in Starting Strong.

25. **Canada** and **Finland** also say that in Section 4, a clearer definition would be helpful for “average cost to parents”. Is this the average cost of regulated child care?

26. For “estimated costs of a quality ECEC programme (full-day; half-day) per child, it is recommended that ‘quality’ be removed since it is subjective, not defined, and would be a challenge to collect, says **Canada**.

27. **Australia** notes that the participation rates are included but mentions that participation is not defined as attendance or enrolment, or both. Australia would like to know what is meant by participation.

28. **Canada** mentions that in item 5.1 “rates of participation” under “Access and Provision”, it would be a challenge to provide information on “children age 0-2” and “children age 3-6” because Canada’s provinces/territories collect information on infants/toddlers differently, e.g. some look at infants (i.e. under 18 months), others toddlers, which could include up to age 3. It would also be difficult to separate out participation by 3-6. In Canada, they don’t know the numbers of children 0-6 in family day-care in some provinces/territories, the number of children in kindergarten who also attend child care, and the numbers of children who use regulated child care part time (i.e. kids who share one full-time space equivalent).

29. **Finland** and **Norway** suggest providing rates of participation by each year, not by those categories suggested because in Finland most children under one are taken care of by their parents on parental leave.

30. For **Australia**, **Belgium (Flanders)**, and **Canada** it is not clear whether attendance reporting will be concerning hours, sessions, days or some other counting measure. They suggest clarifying this. Belgium suggests collecting information per year of age.

31. **Canada**, **Finland** and **Norway** prefer a clearer definition of ‘provision’ of ‘out-of-school time’ under item 5.2 (Provision). Plus, they prefer an explanation of what is meant with ‘out-of-school time.

32. **Australia** says that although workforce qualifications are included, the data items do not make specific reference to length or type of qualification held. Licensing and regulatory regimes for staff are included as a data item, but Australia thinks that caution should be used to ensure that this does not become a proxy for qualification level held.

33. Additionally, **Canada** mentions that in section 7 on “Quality”, clarity would be helpful on the difference between “quality assurance mechanisms” and “monitoring, evaluation and research.” Wouldn’t “monitoring, evaluation and research” fall under “quality assurance mechanisms” rather than as a separate heading?

34. **Norway** thinks that that whole staff : child ratio *and* teacher/pedagogue : child ratio should be included.

35. **Canada** also wonders what is meant by “appropriate sequencing of actions” in “Integration of Education and Care (section 8)” (*e.g.* “approaches, strategies and appropriate sequencing of actions”).

36. **Finland** mentions that a time perspective should be given and defined in Recent Developments (section 9).

Use information from Starting Strong II

37. In section 3 “Auspices”, “main responsibility for policy, funding, provision and legislation”, it will be important for countries to review information pulled from Starting Strong II to ensure that is accurate and to recognize that there may be different levels of responsibility in some countries, particularly in federal countries, mentions **Canada**.

38. **Norway** suggests using the vocabulary used in the Starting Strong reports.

Use the existing Country Profiles

39. **Finland** finds the model used in Starting Strong appropriate and adequate. The country profile as such could work as a fact sheet of each country and no separate fact sheets are needed.

Include other relevant populations in the data

40. **Australia** mentions that there are no specific data items that cover indigenous populations while this is an important group in Australia.

41. **Belgium (Flanders)** thinks that migrant or foreign children should be added in addition to ‘ethnic or bilingual children’.

Enlarge the ‘Integration of Education and Care’ item (section 8)

42. **Belgium (Flanders)** thinks that this item needs to be enlarged with approaches, strategies, actions aimed at a smooth transition for children between the child care provisions and pre-primary schools.

43. **Finland** agrees that this is an important issue, but not a part of the country profile because it is prescriptive. It should be asked separately.

Information on labour force participation by marital status is not relevant

44. **Belgium (Flanders), Finland and Norway** think that the relevance of this item is very limited.

Information on parental leave is (not) relevant

45. **Finland** mentions that information of parental leave is not needed, or at least not in such detail. If you find this important, then Finland suggests asking all options: maternal, paternal and parental leave, duration and utilisation. Asking only parental leave does not open, for instance, the situation in Finland.

46. On the other hand, **Norway** thinks information on parental leave is important due to the connection with ECEC systems.

Map items more logically

47. **Belgium (Flanders)** suggests making an item 1.4 on the out-of-school time provisions instead of having item 5.2 on provisions for ‘out-of-school time’. Section 5 should be limited to access, for both kinds of provisions.

Clarify how the information will be used and presented

48. **Canada** mentions that, given the amount of work involved in the collection of data and concerns about how Canada, as a federal system, has been captured in some publications, it is essential that countries get a better sense of how the information will be used and presented. Canada would appreciate more information on the intended use of the data as well as a clear understanding of the terms used in the document (criteria and scope). Canada is concerned about the suitability of public release of the updated country profiles since ECEC systems across OECD countries are so different and it can be hard to compare systems accurately. If the main purpose is to understand our systems better, Canada would recommend that the information be used as an internal “working tool” of the Network and not released publicly.

49. Should the information be used as an internal “working tool”, **Canada** recognizes that the OECD would likely want to use the information for the ECEC Quality Study and, potentially, for other research purposes across the OECD. In each case where there is a desire to use the information Canada would want a clear indication of the purpose for use, and permission to use.

Contextualize the information

50. While **Canada** recognizes that chapters will not be done on each country as in *Starting Strong I and II*, Canada would also like the information to be properly contextualized so the main differences in the ECEC systems – and data by extension – can be understood better. In whatever form the information is pulled together (whether public or not), it will need to be properly contextualized and footnoted, e.g. with definitions, as appropriate. It is important from the Canadian perspective that the information be properly contextualized so that the raw data cannot be misinterpreted.

Indicate the quality of the data sources

51. **Australia** notes that the the OECD country profiles template doesn't indicate whether data sources are of strong or weak quality, or if there are not yet identified. According to Australia this could be indicated either by a footnote, or addition of another column that briefly dot points strengths and weaknesses of sources, or availability of sources. Fleshing out the issues in this approach would provide a more systematic overview of data collections and sources.

Inform on frequency of updates

52. **Canada** mentions that precision about frequency of data collection would be helpful from the Network on the potential frequency of updates to the country profiles.

Clarify the time line for data collection

53. Timing of data collection: precision would be helpful on the time period in which the data is to be collected, mention **Canada and Finland**. It is important to recognize that data may come in different forms (*e.g.* some may be based on the calendar year and others on the fiscal year), and may be collected and available over different time periods across jurisdictions, or within jurisdictions. This may be a constraint on how the data is presented. In the Canadian context, most information is collected based on the fiscal year (April 1 to March 31 of following year). If this is the situation for other countries, it is recommended that information be based on the fiscal year.

Finalize template before data collection

54. If the Network plans to update the profiles, **Canada** would recommend that the frequency of these updates be discussed at the next Network meeting. Canada would also recommend that the Network finalize the template before the data is collected. If the idea is to update the data in the future and potentially add other items, it is recommended that those items be incorporated now while the template is being designed rather than adding them after the fact.

Use a legend

55. **Australia** says that it would also be useful for a legend to be included alongside the template, in order to decipher the differences between symbols and colours and their meaning, if these will be used.

Other country comments related to quality indicators

Define 'quality'

56. **Belgium** (Flanders) suggests putting forward a definition on quality, or at least depicts the principles of good ECEC in view of underpinning the set of indicators. For instance the 10 principles put forward by Children in Europe could be used.

Redefine the quality outcome indicators

57. **Norway** has a concern with the 'outcome indicators', since the country does not assess children. Norway prefers 'interactions between children and adults in ECEC' instead of 'partnership with parents' as a process indicator, especially since everyone already knows the importance of competent and professional staff.

58. The suggested outcome indicators are problematic for **Finland**, as it does not measure outcomes but focuses on pedagogical. Finland mentions that language as such is important, but it is also extremely culturally bound, which makes it more difficult to measure in a comparable way. Moreover, language should not be evaluated only as skills, Finland believes. In the Finnish ECEC curriculum guidelines, language is seen as a thread running through the whole curriculum, and therefore it is a content area but is seen as a vital communicative and cultural element within the ECEC communities. This broad orientation is difficult to measure, but Finland supports the idea of developing good indicators describing the broad language orientation and is willing to help set up quality indicators.

59. **Finland** also mentions that social skills are important, but very difficult to measure. Instead of the skill-based outcome perspective, Finland suggests another way of looking at quality. The suggestion of the process indicator “partnership with parents” is interesting and important according to Finland, but not adequate.

Define the data collection (better)

60. **Finland** would appreciate a more precise definition of what kind of data collection is needed from the participating countries. Is the idea to renew the work done in the Starting Strong –process (i.e. to collect descriptive information from countries), or to develop it further in accordance with the policy areas for consideration? Their suggestion for the OECD quality proposal is to take some 10-15 clear benchmark indicators (like in the UNICEF Report Card 8) and maximum 5 deeper quality evaluation indicators (focusing on process quality and well defined outcomes, if needed) with a proper policy tool box. They suggest that all already done work should be exploited.