



Working for inclusion: an overview of European Union early years services and their workforce

Children in Scotland
every child - every childhood



Children in Scotland, (2010) Working for inclusion: an overview of European early years services and their workforce, Children in Scotland, Edinburgh

Working for Inclusion is funded by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013) and supported by the Scottish Government.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	Setting the scene	1
CHAPTER TWO	An overview of the basic features of ECEC services in the EU	9
CHAPTER THREE	ECEC, social inclusion and the early childhood workforce	37
CHAPTER FOUR	Conclusions	59

CHAPTER ONE

Setting the scene

1.1 Putting early childhood education and care on the European agenda

This report is part of a European Commission-funded study on the role of the early years workforce – workers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services – in addressing and promoting social inclusion. The Commission’s support for such a project reflects a long-standing interest in and support for the development of ECEC services¹, which has given these services an increasingly prominent place on the European policy agenda. European interest in ECEC goes back to the 1970s, when the (then) European Community’s first Social Action Programme, launched in 1974, called for ‘giving immediate priority to the problems of providing facilities to enable women to reconcile family responsibilities with job aspirations’ (Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 concerning a Social Action programme). Subsequent European initiatives have included:

- The establishment by the European Commission of a Network on Childcare and other measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities (EC Childcare Network), an expert group that from 1986 to 1996 undertook a wide range of work on ECEC services, as well as parental leave policies and men as carers for children;
- The Council of Ministers Recommendation on Childcare in 1992 (92/241/EEC), which set out a range of principles for member states to follow in developing ‘childcare services’ and other measures to support the reconciliation of employment with family responsibilities
(<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexuriserv/lexuriserv.do?Uri=CELEX:31992H0241:EN:HTML>);
- The 2002 Barcelona Targets, which set levels of “childcare” provision that member states should achieve by 2010; and
- A number of recent Commission-funded reports on ECEC services across the 27 member states and on ECEC research (e.g. Eurydice, 2009; NESSE, 2009; Plantenga and Remery, 2009).

The growing interest by the Commission in ECEC has been driven by a number of policy concerns and objectives. The initial driver was a commitment to promoting *gender equality* in the labour market, and a recognition that ECEC services formed part of a package of measures needed to bring about ‘reconciliation between employment and family responsibilities’, understood by the Commission to be a precondition for equality. Gender equality was always associated with the labour market and increasing women’s employment, but this *employment*

¹ Over the years, the European Commission has usually referred to ‘childcare services’, reflecting its initial focus on the needs of employed parents. This report uses the broader concept of ‘early childhood education and care’ (ECEC) in recognition of the close relationship between childcare and early education and the principle, as the Council Recommendation on Childcare puts it, of ‘combining reliable care...with a general upbringing and a pedagogical approach’.

agenda has become more prominent over time, culminating in the 2000 Lisbon targets, which committed the European Union to raising employment rates for women to 60 per cent by 2010.

However, the EU's concern with employment has not been confined to quantity. It wants to see not only more jobs but more good quality jobs. For example, a 2005 Communication from the European Commission on the Social Agenda emphasised the importance of promoting 'quality of employment, social policy and industrial relations, which, in return, should make it possible to improve human and social capital' (p.2). Rather than a choice having to be made, the Commission is clear that Europe 'needs to address both the quantity and quality of jobs'. (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0033en01.pdf).

A third issue has been *poverty and social exclusion*, which has been a growing concern of the EU, with the European Council in March 2006 asking member states 'to take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background'. A recent European Commission report *Child Poverty and Well-being in the EU* (Social Protection Committee, 2008) argues that 'preventing and fighting child poverty and social exclusion is therefore essential for stronger cohesion and sustainable development' (p.10). Parental employment, and therefore ECEC services, are seen as having a key role to play in reducing poverty and social exclusion, though the report notes that at present some countries with higher employment rates among mothers also have high levels of child poverty: 'while the [employment] activation of both parents is necessary to alleviate child poverty, it is not a sufficient condition if the jobs they access do not provide adequate income and working conditions' (p.31). Parents being in work does not remove the risk of poverty because of 'various labour market failures such as recurrent unemployment or unstable jobs, involuntary part-time work, low wages, or from a particular household structure with, for example, only one working-age adult and two or more dependants (both children and other dependants)' (p.34).

But the EU's social inclusion agenda – the Social Inclusion Process begun in 2000 – covers more than just poverty and employment, central though these are. Its action, the EU claims, has created a clear consensus about other key challenges, including: ensuring decent housing for everyone; overcoming discrimination against and increasing the integration of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and immigrants; and tackling financial exclusion, including over-indebtedness: (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/poverty_social_exclusion_en.htm). Particular attention has also been paid to certain 'vulnerable groups', facing higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to the general population. These vulnerable and marginalised groups include but are not limited to: people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities (including Roma), homeless people, ex-prisoners, drug addicts, people with alcohol problems, isolated older people and children.

These policy concerns have been expressed and acted on by the Directorate-General in the Commission that deals with gender equality, employment and social exclusion; today that is the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. But Europe's interest in ECEC has more recently gained further momentum by a growing involvement by the Directorate-General dealing with education, which today is the Directorate-General of Education and Culture. The interest here is in the *educational role* of ECEC services. A 2006 Commission Communication *Efficiency and Equity in European Education Systems* argues that pre-primary education has the highest rates of return in terms of achievement and social adaptation of

children and urges member states to invest more as a basis for lifelong learning, to prevent school drop-out and promote equity of access and outcomes (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comm481_en.pdf). A 2008 Communication – *An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* – proposes that priority should be given to ‘the promotion of generalised equitable access to pre-primary education, and the reinforcement of quality provision and teacher support’ (p.10) (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com865_en.pdf).

A further development of potential significance for Europe’s approach to ECEC should also be noted: the EU’s recognition of and commitment to *children’s rights*. In recent years, the EU institutions have committed themselves to promote and protect children’s rights. The Commission, for example, identified children’s rights as one of its main priorities in its Communication on Strategic Objectives 2005-2009, published in 2005: ‘A particular priority must be effective protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world’ (p.9) (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0012en01.pdf). In April 2005, the Group of Commissioners on Fundamental Rights, Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities decided to launch a specific initiative to advance the promotion, protection and fulfilment of children’s rights in the internal and external policies of the EU.

To give effect to these decisions the Commission adopted, in 2006, the Communication *Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child*. This document proposes an innovative approach to EU policies: ‘to establish a comprehensive EU strategy to effectively promote and safeguard the rights of the child in the European Union’s internal and external policies and to support Member States’ efforts in this field’ (p.2) (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0367:FIN:EN:PDF>) The strategy covers issues such as social protection, development co-operation, trade negotiation, education, health and criminal and civil justice. This interest in and commitment to children’s rights is underpinned by Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (the Lisbon Treaty), which states that ‘The Union ... shall promote ... protection of the rights of the child. ... In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall contribute to ... eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child’; and also by the establishment of the Fundamental Rights and Rights of the Child Unit, set up in January 2008 in Directorate-General Freedom, Security and Justice.

For these varied reasons, ECEC now has a substantial presence on the EU agenda. This policy interest has evolved from an initial focus on ‘childcare for working parents’ to ‘early childhood education and care’, and now encompasses the interests and needs of children and adults. The potential exists for a broad and integrated European approach to services for young children and their families.

1.2 Putting the workforce on the early childhood education and care agenda

The workforce is central to ECEC services. It accounts for the greater part of the total cost of these services. It is the major factor in determining children’s experiences and their outcomes: ‘research from many countries supports the view that quality in the early childhood field requires adequate training and fair working conditions for staff’ (OECD, 2006, p.158). No discussion of ECEC can, therefore, avoid the issue of workforce: how it is structured, how the

work is understood, how the workforce is educated, its employment conditions and its profile or characteristics. The 1992 Recommendation on Childcare recognised the centrality of the workforce in two of the principles agreed by member states:

- (Member states should) endeavour that the training, both initial and continuous, of workers in child-care services is appropriate to the importance and the social and educative value of their work (Article 3.3)
- (Member states should) ensure that due recognition is given to persons engaged in child-care services as regards the way in which they work and the social value of their work (article 4.2).

These rather generalised principles were given greater specificity in a 1996 report from the EC Childcare Network – *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children*. This report sought to define feasible goals for member states to work towards, over a ten year period, in order to implement the Recommendation. Nine of the 40 targets referred specifically to the workforce, including:

- A minimum of 60% of staff working directly with children in collective services should have a grant eligible basic training of at least three years at a post-18 level (Target 26).
- (Pay) for staff who are fully trained should be comparable to that of teachers (Article 26)
- 20% of staff employed in collective services should be men (Target 29).

In addition to questions about what types of workers should be employed, what level and type of education they need, and what pay and other employment conditions they should have, the ECEC workforce raises questions about gender inequality in the labour market and how this might best be tackled. The low level of training and poor pay of many workers in ECEC, especially those in so-called 'childcare services' (such as nurseries and family day care), are well documented. So too is the highly gendered profile of the workforce, more than 95 per cent of whom are women across Europe. The OECD *Starting Strong II* report puts the matter succinctly and clearly:

The (workforce) picture is mixed, with acceptable professional education standards being recorded in the Nordic countries but only in early education in most other countries. In all countries, considerable gender and diversity imbalances exist within the profession ... Figures from various countries reveal a wide pay gap between child care staff and teachers, with child care staff in most countries being poorly trained and paid around minimum wage levels (p.15)

The workforce, therefore, is not only part of the possible solution to the problem of gender inequality and poverty. If remedial action is not taken, especially among 'childcare workers', it can be part of the problem. For unless the related problems of low education, poor pay and gender segregation are recognised and vigorously addressed, ECEC work may add to inequality and poverty through continuing to rely on a large army of undertrained and underpaid women. ECEC services can be, and in some cases are, a source of extensive good quality employment: but they can all too easily maintain and increase poor quality employment.

1.3 The Working for Inclusion project

It is in this context that the Working for Inclusion project has been funded by the European Commission, as part of its PROGRESS programme. The project aims to focus attention and strengthen understanding at local, national and EU levels on how the early years workforce can

support social inclusion and address poverty. Within that broad approach, the project pays particular attention to four themes:

1. How ECEC can support social inclusion and address poverty;
2. The benefits of a holistic approach to the child and engaging effectively with children, families, communities and other agencies;
3. The working poor, single parents, migrant families and families with disability;
4. The early years workforce as a source of good quality employment and how it can be accessed by marginalized groups.

The project involves nine member states and a member of the European Economic Area: Denmark, Hungary, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom (with a particular attention paid to Scotland), and Norway (EEA). The project is led by Children in Scotland – the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland – in partnership with three other key member state organisations: Comenius Foundation for Child Development (Poland); Nordland Research Institute (Norway); and La Bottega Di Geppetto (Italy). Partners in the other six countries contribute as project associates.

The project has several components, including a number of conferences, study visits involving partner countries, thematic reports on each of the four main themes, and a website. In addition there is a research component, which is the focus of this report. The research, undertaken by Dr John Bennett and Professor Peter Moss, is intended to support the project, in particular contributing three main actions that offer a wide range of data to inform the conclusions of the project:

1. *An overview of the basic features of ECEC services* in the 27 EU member states as well as Norway, in particular: the structure of government responsibility, services and the workforce; qualifications and qualification levels of the workforce; providers of services; and levels of provision. It also includes key contextual information for each member state, on demographics, employment, poverty and gender equality. This overview is based on desk research, drawing on existing sources of comparative cross-national information, including from the European Union (e.g. Eurydice, Eurostat), other international organisations (e.g. OECD, the UN Development Report, Education International, Unicef), and previous comparative research studies.
2. *Detailed national reports for the 10 partner countries* participating in the project, covering the following areas:
 - Contextual information: demographics, employment, poverty and gender equality.
 - Overview of main historical developments in ECEC services.
 - Governance of ECEC services, nationally and locally: whether responsibility is integrated within one government department; the extent to which ECEC services are split or integrated, structurally and conceptually; responsibility of different levels of government.
 - Provision of ECEC services: types of ECEC services and providers; access (including entitlement to ECEC) and use of services, overall and for different groups and areas;

what barriers to equitable access (including for children with special needs) exist and how these are being tackled in the country.

- Understandings of ECEC services: dominant concepts underpinning policy, provision and practice.
- Regulations: the legal framework for different service providers in the country; enforcement methods.
- Funding: how services are funded and by whom; level of public funding for services, overall and per child; how costs for ECEC services are calculated in the country.
- Workforce: structure, initial education and qualification levels; opportunities for professional development and accessing higher levels of training; current issues of recruitment, retention and supply; workforce profile in relation to gender, ethnicity and other key diversity criteria.
- Learning environments: curriculum and pedagogical approaches; support for learning across different services.
- Relationship between ECEC and other key policy areas: including parental leave and primary schooling.
- Current issues and development: assessment of strengths and weaknesses, with particular reference to the aims specified in the tender document, e.g. ECEC work as a source of good quality employment, access to work by marginalised groups, delivery of services to the working poor, how the early years workforce can support social inclusion and address poverty etc.

The national report format is intended to build on and develop the 'country profile' format of Annex E of OECD's second *Starting Strong* report (OECD, 2006), combining quantitative and qualitative information to provide an in-depth, comprehensive and contextualised account of each country's ECEC system, including structural, conceptual and developmental features, and policy, provision and practice: in short, the aim is 'thick' and strongly contextualised descriptions of ECEC in each country. On the workforce, for example, each country report is intended to give a detailed picture of how the workforce is structured, including the main professions and occupations deployed in ECEC services, how it is trained and at what level of qualification, the providers of qualifications and training, what is known of its composition (e.g. in terms of gender, age, ethnicity etc.), its employment conditions, and the extent of organisation into unions or professional associations.

The method adopted for preparing these reports has been for the two researchers working on the project to draft an initial report for each country, based on existing sources and personal knowledge. These drafts have then been sent to an expert in each country to review and revise and, where possible, government officials have been asked to comment. The researchers have then edited the original drafts, taking account of the revisions proposed by national experts.

The completed national reports provide a valuable resource for the whole *Working for Inclusion* project. Constituting a rich data set, they give a comprehensive picture of the ECEC situation in each partner country that will inform the four thematic reports. But they have another purpose, playing a central role in the third research action.

3. *A synthesis report*, the present document, which addresses some of the main aims of the project, in particular providing a comparative analysis of ECEC services and their workforces. In addition to this broad analysis, the report examines two specific issues that are central to the overall project: the early years workforce as a source of good quality employment; and if and how ECEC, and its workforce, can support social inclusion and address poverty. So as well as being descriptive and analytic, this report aims to be evaluative, and it does so mainly by working with material produced by the two actions outlined above – the overview and the country reports.

The synthesis report has three further chapters. Chapter Two presents the overview of the 27 member states plus Norway, presenting a broad picture of ECEC services and workforces, together with demographic, economic and social contexts. Chapter Three focuses on ECEC services and workforces and their potential contribution to addressing poverty and social exclusion, focusing on the ten partner countries and drawing mainly on the country reports for its descriptions and analyses. Chapter Four provides some conclusions.

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CHAPTER TWO

An overview of the basic features of early childhood education and care services in the European Union

2.1 Introducing the overview

This overview is based on a set of 34 tables organised into eight sections, covering features of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in the 27 member states of the European Union, together with Norway, as well as a range of demographic, economic and other contextual variables. The tables can be found at the end of the chapter, where the sources for the tables are also given. These sources are comparative statistics covering all or most of the member states plus Norway, and are mainly produced by international bodies, of which the European Commission's own statistical output is the most frequently cited.

The sources used are generally the most recent available and mostly cover the period 2005-8. It should, however, be noted that they do not cover the period following the financial crisis in Autumn 2008 and the related recession. These events will have affected most member states and some very severely, for example changing the level and direction of migration between member states and having adverse effects on economic indicators.

Since working through thirty-plus tables is a somewhat daunting prospect, the first part of the chapter offers a commentary on the tables, extracting the main points about all 28 countries. The ten countries that feature in the study and for which more detailed country reports have been prepared – Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Sweden – appear in bold print in the commentaries for ease of identification. However for this initial stage of the study, the focus is on the **United Kingdom** (UK) as a whole rather than on Scotland, which is one of the four nations making up the UK; this is because most of the international data sets that have been used do not distinguish Scotland from the rest of the UK. More specific attention is paid to Scotland in the national report stage of the work, which makes a major contribution to Chapter Three. The commentary ends with some concluding reflections on the overview.

2.2 Commentary on Tables

2.2.1 Demographic and household data (Tables 1.1-1.5)

The 28 countries covered here had a combined *population* of just over half a billion in 2008, of whom 16 per cent were children under 15 years of age (http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/dissemination/echi/echi_en.htm?echisub=1#echi)².

² We have been unable to identify any comparative data showing the proportion of the population in the EU made up of children under five or six years.

National populations vary from 60 million or more (Germany, **France**, **Italy** and the **UK**) to under 6 million (**Denmark**, Estonia, Ireland, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, **Slovenia**, Slovakia, Finland and **Norway**) (see 1.1).

Population density provides some indication of the extent of rural and sparsely settled communities in a country. Six countries (Belgium, Germany, **Italy**, Malta, Netherlands and the **UK**) have a population density of 200 or more inhabitants per square kilometre; by contrast, Finland, **Sweden** and **Norway** have fewer than 25 (see 1.2). Confirming these distinctions between countries based on population density, a European Commission study of poverty and social exclusion concludes that within the 15 member states covered 'there is a high concentration of population in PR [predominantly rural] and IR [intermediate] areas in Eastern and **Scandinavian** countries, **France** and Ireland, while Belgium, the Netherlands and **UK** are the countries with the largest share of population living in PU [predominantly urban] regions' (European Commission, 2008c: 3). However, it is important to note that national averages may disguise a mixture of densely populated areas together with others that are very lightly populated (e.g. the South-East of England compared with the Highlands of Scotland, both within the **UK**).

Fertility in all 28 countries is below replacement level. Highest rates (1.8-2.0) are found in the Nordic countries, including **Denmark**, **Norway** and **Sweden**, and in four north-western countries (Belgium, **France**, Ireland and the **UK**). While the lowest rates (1.3-1.4) are found in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe (including **Italy**, **Hungary**, **Poland**, **Portugal** and **Slovenia**) (see 1.3).

The extent of ethnic diversity may have considerable implications for ECEC services. How do they respond to such ethnic (and possibly linguistic and cultural) diversity? Do they reach out to and include children from all groups? There are, however, no EU-wide statistics for ethnicity, only on members of the population who are foreign-born or not citizens of the country; while giving some indication of recent migration, these categories do not include descendants of earlier migrants, the second-, third- and fourth-generations. *Foreign-born residents* account for more than 10 per cent of the population in 11 of the 28 countries, with highest rates in Luxembourg, Latvia, Estonia and Austria (see 1.4).

Information on population growth gives some indication of *current* migration patterns. In 2007, **Hungary** and **Poland** were two of eight member states to record population decline, in the latter case accounted for by out-migration (i.e. Polish citizens moving to other countries); the other six were also in Central and Eastern Europe with the exception of Germany. The remaining member states experienced population growth. In most cases, including **Denmark**, **Italy**, **Norway**, **Portugal**, **Slovenia**, **Sweden**, this overall growth was mainly or wholly due to inward migration. **France** and the **UK** were two of only three member states where growth was mainly due to natural change (though migration contributes to natural change, as migrants tend to have proportionately more births and fewer deaths than the indigenous population). Among the ten partner countries, the highest levels of net inward migration in 2007 were in **Norway** (8.4 per 1000 population), **Italy** (8.3) and **Slovenia** (7). In **France** and the **UK**, net migration was under 3/1000. The highest levels in 2007 among all member states were in Ireland (14.7), Spain (15.6), Cyprus (16.3) and Luxembourg (12.5) (Eurostat, 2008a: Figure 2, Table 3) – though as already noted, such inward flows may have subsequently been affected by the

financial and economic crisis, with Ireland, for example, experiencing outward migration in response to severe recession.

The proportion of *children living in lone parent households* varies between countries by up to a factor of six – from 4 per cent in Spain to 25 per cent in the **UK**. The lowest rates (less than 10 per cent) are found among Central, Eastern and Southern European countries, including Spain, **Italy, Poland, Portugal** and **Slovenia**. The highest levels (more than 15 per cent) are in **Denmark**, Estonia, Germany, **Sweden** and the **UK** (see 1.5)

2.2.2 GDP, public expenditure and taxation (Tables 2.1-2.4)

Luxembourg, **Norway** and Ireland had, by far, the highest *per capita levels of GDP* in 2007; while the lowest levels are found in some of the Central and Eastern European countries, in particular, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, **Hungary** and **Poland**. Most of the other countries lie within 20 points either way of the EU27 average (see 2.1). It should, of course, be restated that the statistics predate the full impact of the financial and economic crises, which will have had adverse effects on most member states, some (e.g. Ireland) more than others.

Overall, Europe spends just under 5 per cent of *GDP on education*, mostly (88 per cent) from public funds. Lowest spenders (under 4 per cent of GDP) include Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Slovakia; while highest spenders (over 5.5 per cent) include the Nordic countries (with **Denmark** spending most), Belgium, **France**, Cyprus and Malta. The **UK** also has a high overall expenditure, but this includes the largest percentage of private expenditure of any country so while similar levels are spent on education overall in the **UK** and **Sweden**, 20 per cent of the total is private expenditure in the UK compared with 3 per cent in Sweden (see 2.2). *Social protection expenditure* accounts, across the EU, for nearly six times as much expenditure as education. The lower spenders (under 20 per cent of GDP) are again mainly in Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, **Poland**, Romania and Slovakia), but also include Cyprus, Ireland and Malta. High spenders (30 per cent or over) include two Nordic countries (**Denmark** and **Sweden**), as well as **France** (see 2.3).

Expenditure on social protection covers a number of areas, including 'old age and survivors', 'sickness and health care', 'disability', 'unemployment', 'housing and social exclusion' – and 'family/children'. Overall, 'old age' takes up the largest share, expenditure being equivalent to 12 per cent of GDP across the EU-27, followed by 'sickness/health care' (7.5 per cent); 'family/children' comes third at 2.1 per cent. High spenders on 'family/children', at 3 per cent or more of GDP, include **Denmark**, Finland and **Sweden**, and also Austria, Germany and Luxembourg. Low spenders, at less than 1.5 per cent, are mainly in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Spain, **Italy**, Malta, Netherlands, **Poland, Portugal** and Romania (see 2.3).

Tax receipts are equivalent to nearly 41 per cent of GDP across the whole of the EU. The lowest rates, less than a third of GDP, are found mainly in Central and Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia), but also include Ireland. Highest rates (over 40 per cent) are found in the Nordic states, including **Denmark, Norway** and **Sweden**, plus Austria, Belgium, **France**, Germany, **Italy** and Cyprus (see 2.4).

2.2.3 Income and gender inequality, child poverty and child well-being (Tables 3.1-3.4)

Both *income inequality* measures used show a similar picture. There is considerable diversity in levels of inequality between countries. The highest levels of inequality are in Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and **Portugal**, and the lowest are in a group of Central and Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic and **Slovenia**) and three Nordic states (**Denmark**, **Sweden** and Finland) (see 3.1).

Across Europe, more than 1 in 6 households with a child under six years is 'at risk of poverty', with the highest levels in **Poland**, Lithuania, Estonia and the **UK**. The Nordic countries again perform best on this indicator, with the lowest level of poverty in **Norway** (see 3.2). Children in lone parent households or large families are most at risk. The risk of poverty is also related to low levels of household employment: 'about 10 per cent of all children live in households where nobody works and 60 per cent of these children are at risk of poverty ... The share of children at risk of poverty reaches 25 per cent when only one parent works, compared to 7 per cent when both parents work' (European Commission, 2008b, p. 112).

However as noted in Chapter One, employment is no guarantee of escaping poverty, and 13 per cent of children living in households with a work intensity greater or equal to 0.5 were living under the poverty threshold in 2005³. This ranges from 7 per cent or less in **Nordic** countries to more than 20 per cent in Spain, **Portugal** and **Poland** (Social Protection Committee, 2008, p.34).

Levels of poverty are affected by social policy, in particular social transfers; such transfers have a larger effect on reducing poverty among children than among the overall population. The largest effects of such transfers on child poverty are found in **Denmark**, Finland and **Sweden**, reducing the risk of poverty for children by more than 60 per cent, against an average of 44 per cent for the EU-25 and less than 20 per cent in Bulgaria, Greece and **Spain**. This suggests a simple conclusion: 'the countries with the lowest child poverty rates are clearly those who spend most on social benefits' (*ibid.*: 38)

Poland, **Portugal**, **Hungary** and the **UK**, from among partner countries, get the poorest rankings on a 'child wellbeing index', which aggregates six broad dimensions; these four are among the bottom nine EU member states on this measure. **Sweden**, **Norway**, **Denmark**, **Slovenia** score best, coming in the first seven member states, following top ranked Netherlands. **France** and **Italy** occupy 'middling' positions (see 3.3).

2.2.4 The gender gap and female employment rates

In a global rating of the 'gender gap', Malta fares worst among the 28 European countries, followed closely by several Southern European countries (**Italy**, Greece, Cyprus), several Central and Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, **Hungary**, Slovakia) and Luxembourg. The Nordic member states are ranked in the top seven in the world, with **Norway**, Finland and **Sweden** taking the first three places (see 3.4).

³ 'A work intensity of 1 refers to households in which all working age adults are working full-time over the whole year. And a work intensity of 0 is a stronger "joblessness" indicator than the jobless indicator...since it refers to households in which none of the adults have worked over a whole year' (Social Protection Committee, 2008, p.32)

Not shown in Table 3.4, but relevant to gender equality, is women's position in the political system. Women accounted in 2006 for at least a third of the members of national parliaments in all four Nordic countries (with the highest proportion – 49 per cent – in **Sweden**), as well as in Belgium and the Netherlands; while in Finland, **Norway** and **Sweden**, women accounted for between 47 and 50 per cent of senior ministers, and 50 to 55 per cent in Austria and the Netherlands. Women made up less than 20 per cent of national parliamentarians in 13 countries: Czech Republic, Ireland, Greece, **France**, **Italy**, Cyprus, **Hungary**, Malta, **Poland**, Romania, **Slovenia**, Slovakia and the **UK** (Eurostat, 2009: Table A.44).

Women's higher education and part-time employment and parental employment (Tables 4.1-4.6)

Women today have caught up with and often surpassed men in education. In all 28 countries, back in 2004, women already accounted for more than half of the population in the first stage of tertiary education (59 per cent). Across the EU-25 (i.e. excluding Bulgaria and Romania), *the proportion of women graduating from tertiary education* in 2004 was 59 per cent, and rising, up from 53 per cent in 1997/98. Nationally, the highest proportions of women in this stage of tertiary education, over 65 per cent, are found in Estonia, Latvia, **Poland** and **Portugal** (see 4.1).

The influx of women into higher education has led to a steady rise in women's educational qualifications – 31 per cent of 30-34 year olds women in the EU25 had a tertiary level qualification in 2005, compared to 19 per cent of 50-54 year olds (Eurostat, 2009, Table A.69). One consequence is rising employment, as there is a clear and strong relationship between rates of employment and levels of education. In 2005, women with tertiary qualifications were nearly twice as likely to be employed as those with secondary level only (tertiary=80 per cent; upper secondary=66 per cent; basic, secondary level=44 per cent) (*ibid.*, Table A.70).

Employment rates among women vary more between countries than levels of participation in tertiary education, ranging from 37 per cent (Malta) to 70 per cent or over (Netherlands, **Sweden**, **Denmark** and **Norway**); 15 member states have met or exceeded the Lisbon target of 60 per cent. However these figures relate to total employment, not to actual hours worked; as women (and especially women with children) are more likely to work part time than men, employment rates fall substantially in a number of countries if converted into 'FTE' - full-time equivalents (i.e. working hours are totalled and divided by the length of a full-time working week). The countries with the largest differences between 'headcount employment' and 'FTE employment' are those with the highest part-time employment rates and include Germany, Austria, **Sweden**, the **UK** and, with by far the largest gap, the Netherlands (see 4.2).

These variations in the gap between headcount and FTE employment indicate large variations in the proportion of *employed women in part-time jobs*. Part-time work is highest (over 40 per cent of all employed women) in Belgium, Germany, Austria, **Sweden** and the **UK** and reaches 75 per cent in the Netherlands. It is lowest in Central and Eastern Europe (including **Hungary** and **Slovenia**) and in Greece. *Part-time employment among employed men* is much lower, though it reaches 10 per cent or more in a few countries – **Denmark**, **Sweden**, **UK** and, most strikingly, the Netherlands, where nearly a quarter of employed men have part-time jobs (see 4.3).

Employment rates among women with children under six years also vary markedly. Among women with children under three years, employment is highest (over 70 per cent) in Belgium,

Netherlands, **Slovenia** and **Portugal** – though it is important to read these and other figures against levels of part-time employment, e.g. Belgium and Netherlands have far higher part-time employment rates than Portugal and Slovenia. Unfortunately there is no data for three of the Nordic countries, **Denmark**, **Norway** and **Sweden**; as all three have relatively short high paid parental leave followed by longer unpaid leave and high overall levels of female employment, maternal employment might be expected to be high. The one Nordic country for which information is available, Finland, has a ‘middling’ level of maternal employment, which may be due to its long period of leave (Finland has a shorter period of high paid leave than the other Nordic countries, but a longer period of lower, rather than unpaid, leave.)

Long leave probably contributes to the very low levels of employment recorded for women with children under three years in the Czech Republic and **Hungary**. The possible impact of parental leave, amongst other factors, is supported by the much higher levels of employment in these two countries for women with a youngest child aged three to six years. For this group, Finland too is among the countries with the highest employment levels (80 per cent and over), along with **Portugal** and **Slovenia**. The other three Nordic countries again have missing data (see 4.4).

The *employment impact of parenthood* is strongly gendered. The employment rate of men is not reduced when they have young children, indeed it increases by between 4 and 15 percentage points. In other words, fathers are more likely to be employed than men without children. But women’s employment falls when they have young children in most countries; with the notable exceptions of **Portugal** and **Slovenia**, mothers are generally less likely to be employed than women without children. The impact of young children on women’s employment varies considerably. It is highest (more than 20 percentage points) in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, **Hungary**, Slovakia and **UK**; and lowest (under 5 percentage points) in Belgium, **Denmark**, Cyprus, Lithuania and Romania, plus the two countries (**Portugal** and **Slovenia**) where parenthood has a positive impact on women’s employment.

A low employment impact of parenthood may indicate that women with children have high employment rates (e.g. **Denmark**), but it may also indicate that women without children have a low employment rate (e.g. **Italy**) (see 4.5).

The employment gap between women and men is, therefore, particularly large at this stage of the life cycle, 37 percentage points across the EU25 when there is a child under three years. The gap is greatest (over 50 points) in **Hungary**, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Malta; and lowest (less than 25 points) in Belgium, Lithuania, Netherlands, **Portugal** and **Slovenia** (data are again missing for three Nordic countries). The gender gap reduces somewhat when there is a youngest child aged three to six years old. It is virtually closed in **Slovenia** and less than 10 percentage points in Finland. It remains 25 points or more in four Southern European countries (Greece, Spain, **Italy**, and Malta), **Hungary** and the Czech Republic and in Germany, Luxembourg and the **UK** (see 4.6).

2.2.5 Parental leave and access to and attendance at early childhood education and care (Tables 5.1-5.4)

We turn now to consider early childhood policies, beginning with policies that frame early childhood education and care. All 28 countries covered have some period of leave for parents of young children. What is particularly significant for determining use of leave, and therefore when

parents might want their young children to start at an ECEC service, is the *length of higher paid leave*, defined here and by the European Commission as leave paid at two-thirds or more of normal earnings. Using this criterion, half the countries (14) offer six months or less, with the **UK** having the shortest period at six weeks. At the other end, eight countries offer 12 months or more, including **Denmark**, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, **Hungary**, **Slovenia**, **Sweden** and **Norway** (see 5.1).

Some countries offer longer periods of leave, either with a low benefit payment or unpaid for some or most of the time, with a substantial number providing up to 36 months of post-natal leave, including: Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, **France**, **Hungary**, **Norway**, **Poland**, **Sweden**, and Spain.

2.2.6 Entitlements and compulsory school age

Compulsory school age in most countries coincides with starting primary school. But this picture needs to be qualified in several ways. First, in a few countries now there is a period of compulsory attendance at ECEC services, for one or two years. For example, children in Luxembourg start primary school at six years, but attendance at nursery school (*Spillschoul*) is compulsory from four; while in **Hungary** five-year-olds must attend kindergarten (*Óvoda*), a year before starting school. Compulsory attendance, therefore, is seven years in six countries (including **Denmark** and **Sweden**), six years in 15 countries (including **France**, **Italy**, **Norway**, **Poland**, **Portugal** and **Slovenia**), and under six years in the remaining seven countries (including **Hungary** and the **UK**). Second, it is common in some countries for children to start attending primary school on a voluntary basis before compulsory school age; examples include Ireland, Netherlands, the **UK** and three of the Nordic states (**Denmark**, Finland and **Sweden**) (see 5.2).

This means that, in effect, children start primary school proper (as opposed to a 'nursery' school or kindergarten) mainly at six years, but in some cases as early as four years (Ireland, Netherlands, the **UK**).

In recent years there has been an increasing movement towards countries providing a universal *entitlement to ECEC services*, sometimes linked to making attendance compulsory, but more often voluntary attendance. Most commonly this entitlement is for attendance for children from three years of age, often the age at which nursery school or kindergarten begins. The four Nordic countries, **Denmark**, **Norway** and **Sweden** and Finland, are the exceptions, offering an entitlement to all children to attend ECEC services from 12 months of age or earlier (see 5.3).

2.2.7 Enrolments in early childhood services

Actual attendance at formal ECEC services, defined as centred-based services, including schools, and organised family day care is generally high among children between three years and the start of compulsory primary schooling. Eight countries reach the Barcelona target for this older age group of 90 per cent (Belgium, **Denmark**, Germany, Ireland, Spain, **France**, **Italy** and **Sweden**), while the Netherlands and the **UK** come very close. However rates of attendance are relatively low (under 70 per cent) in a number of countries, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and **Poland**), but also in Greece, Luxembourg and Malta (see 5.4).

Levels of attendance at formal services are considerably lower for children under three years. Highest levels (at or above the Barcelona target of 33 per cent) are Spain, Netherlands, **Portugal, Sweden**, the **UK** and, far ahead, **Denmark**, where nearly three-quarters of children in this age group attend a service. Very low levels of attendance (under 10 per cent) are found in several Central and Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, **Hungary**, Lithuania, **Poland** and Slovakia), as well as Austria and Malta.

In reading these figures, particular care should be taken to note the bracketed figures in Table 5.4. These indicate the proportion of children attending ECEC services *for longer hours* (i.e. 30 hours a week or more), and this proportion varies considerably between countries. Thus both Netherlands and the **UK** have relatively high overall attendance rates, but very few children attending 30 hours or more per week, indicating high levels of part-time attendance, e.g. in sessional playgroups or nursery classes. By contrast, **Slovenia** has lower attendance rates for children under three-years-old and three to six-year-olds than either the Netherlands or the UK, but far higher proportions of children attending for 30 hours a week or more. **Denmark** combines very high overall attendance for both under and over three-year-olds with very high levels of attendance for longer hours.

The difference between simple attendance rates and the 'volume of hours' attended can be illustrated from secondary analysis of the source that supplies the figures used in Table 5.4 (the EU-SILC, Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), although for 2005 rather than 2006. In this analysis all the hours of attendance per week are totalled, then divided by 40, to give a 'full-time equivalent' (FTE) attendance rate. On this basis Denmark comes top on both counts: 73 per cent of children under three years attend a formal service, and this converts to 59 per cent FTE, due to most children attending for more than 30 hours a week. But the Netherlands drops down the rankings, from second place on attendance levels, with 40 per cent attendance, to just 16 per cent FTE, reflecting a high level of part-time attendance (Amerijckx and Humblet, 2008, Tableau 7).

'Informal care' – by private family day carers, nannies, relatives and friends – plays a larger part in provision for children under than over three years. In most member states, children under three years who are not cared for full-time by parents are more likely to be in informal than formal provision. The gap is particularly high – more than 25 percentage points – in Greece, Cyprus, **Hungary**, Austria, **Poland** and **Slovenia**; in all but Slovenia, levels of attendance in formal services are also very low. However in seven countries – Belgium, **Denmark**, Spain, **France**, Finland, **Sweden** and **Norway** – children are more likely to be in formal than informal provision. Levels of attendance at formal services are high in all these countries (over 30 per cent), but there is a major difference within this group: 30 per cent or more of under three-year-olds go to informal provision in Belgium, Spain and **France**, but less than 8 per cent in the **four Nordic countries** (in the fifth Nordic country, Iceland, the figure is also very low, at 3 per cent). Put another way, informal services today only play a small part in early childhood education and care in the Nordic world; parents overwhelmingly use formal services, mostly centre-based.

This suggests that in countries with well paid parental leave and high levels of formal services for younger children combined with entitlements to attend, parents make far less use of 'informal care'. It is also possible that friends and family members may themselves be less available to act as informal carers due to higher female employment rates.

A research study in Belgium has undertaken secondary analysis of 2005 EU-SILC data to examine whether there are social differences in usage of formal services for children under three years. The results are shown in Table 5.5. There is an almost consistent picture, which confirms 'the hypothesis of social inequality in recourse to formal ECEC services' (Amerijckx, Humblet, Maron and Meulders, 2009, p. 92). Children under three years whose mothers have high levels of education are more likely to attend formal services than children whose mothers have low levels of education; the difference is particularly large, more than 20 percentage points, in Belgium, **France**, Netherlands and the **UK**. In most cases, too, the relationship between attendance and maternal education is linear, i.e. children of women with medium levels of education use services more than children of women with low levels, while children of women with high levels of education use them most. However in a few cases, children whose mothers have medium levels of education are slightly more likely to attend than children whose mothers have high levels.

Once again, the three Nordic countries for which there is information, show consistent and different patterns. They combine high overall attendance rates at formal services for children under three years, with *no* linear relationship between use and maternal education. In **Denmark**, attendance rates range only between 70 and 75 per cent, with children of mothers with high levels of education having, by a small amount, the lowest attendance rates; in **Sweden** the spread is from 47 to 52 per cent with children of mothers with high levels of education having, again, lowest attendance rates; while in Finland, attendance ranges from 22 to 25 per cent. At the other extreme, attendance in the Netherlands runs from 16 to 59 per cent, with children whose mothers have high levels of education more than three times as likely to attend as children whose mothers have low levels; while the spread in the **UK** is from 13 to 39 per cent, again with highly educated mothers three times more likely to use formal services for their children.

Though not included in Table 5.5, the same analysis of the EU-SILC 2005 shows similar patterns for use of informal services; the Nordic countries have so few children using this provision that they do not figure. In other words, there is no sign that women with different levels of education have different patterns of usage of provision; overall, women with high levels of education use services – formal *and* informal – more than women with low educational levels. There is one striking exception: in the Netherlands, women with high educational levels are far more likely to use formal services, and the least likely to use informal services. There are no further comparative data showing access to ECEC services among different socio-economic groups, for example between different ethnic groups, or between different types of area, for example between urban and rural areas.

2.2.8 Structure of early childhood education and care services and main types of centre-based services (Tables 6.1-6.4)

In most of the 28 countries, the ECEC system is split into two parts, each with its own government *ministry or agency responsible for services*, and its own arrangements for access, funding, regulation and workforce. Typically the division is age-related. Services for children under three years are located within the welfare (or health) system, while services for children over three years are in education; the former emphasises childcare and child welfare, the latter education.

However six countries (the four Nordic states, **Denmark, Norway, Sweden** and Finland, plus Latvia and **Slovenia**) have a fully integrated – or ‘unitary’ – ECEC system, meaning one government department responsible for services (welfare for Denmark and Finland, elsewhere education) *and* a common framework for access, funding, regulation and workforce. Three countries (Germany, **Spain** and the **UK** – in England and Scotland) fall in between, and their partially integrated systems are designated ‘partial unitary’. In these cases there is one government ministry responsible for ECEC services at national level (education in Spain and the UK, welfare in Germany), but on some of the key dimensions – access, funding, regulation and workforce – the ECEC system remains split (see 6.1 and 6.2). Arrangements also vary at *länder* (or regional) level in Germany, with its federal system, some with responsibility in one department, some with responsibility split.

Another dimension in considering the governance of services concerns the extent and nature of decentralisation. What responsibilities do different levels of government have for ECEC? Five countries (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Austria, **UK**) are either federal states or else have strong devolution of power to regions/‘Autonomous Communities’ (Spain) or nations (**UK**). In these cases, the level below central government – such as *länder* in Germany or language communities in Belgium – have the main responsibility for services. Even in unitary states, there are variations in decentralisation, in particular how much responsibility is decentralised to regional, provincial or local authorities.

Services themselves can be organised in various ways, for example: in centres or in domestic homes (e.g. family day care); in schools or in non-school centres; and on an age-integrated or age-separated basis. This last organisational dimension distinguishes between: services that cater for limited age groups within the ECEC field, typically children under three or children over three years old; and services which integrate children from across the early childhood age range, typically children under and over three years for a four, five or six year period⁴ (though sometimes there are separate services for children in the last year before compulsory school age) (see 6.3 and 6.4).

Five countries (Latvia, **Slovenia**, Finland, **Norway** and **Sweden**) have mainly age-integrated services, for example the preschool (*förskölan*) in Sweden, which takes children from 12 months until they reach six years, after which they go to ‘preschool classes’ (*förskoleklass*) for six-year-olds in school for the year preceding compulsory school age. These five countries all have a fully integrated ECEC system. The only such system not fitting this pattern is **Denmark** which has a mix of services – some age-integrated, others age-separated. In most other countries, services are largely age-separated.

2.2.9 Providers and funding (Table 7.1-7.3)

The contribution of the *public and private sectors* to providing ECEC services varies, between countries as well as according to the type of service under consideration. The public sector provides more than 65 per cent of services for children over three years in most countries, often in schools; while the private sector has a larger role in services for children under three years (in particular, in Ireland, Greece, **Spain**, Luxembourg, Netherlands, **Portugal** and the

⁴ Age-integrated services often group children by age within centres.

UK). In countries with higher levels of provision for children under three years, the public sector is a major provider in **Denmark**, Finland and **Sweden**.

However, it is important to note that the private sector is heterogeneous, including a range of non-profit providers as well as for-profit providers. The latter are most prominent in the **UK** (where the for-profit sector accounts for 85 per cent of nursery provision) and Ireland (see 7.1).

Except in integrated systems, *sources of funding* usually differ between services for children under and over three years. Parents mainly make an income-related payment in the former case. The main exceptions are Belgium and **France**, for children aged 30 months upwards who can be admitted to free school-based services and **Hungary**, where parents only pay for meals for all children under three years. What parents pay varies considerably between countries. According to OECD figures for the cost of services for a two-year-old, it is lowest in **Denmark**, **Hungary**, **Spain** and **Sweden**; and highest in **France**, Ireland, Netherlands and the **UK**. These figures should be treated with some caution not only because they are from some years back but also since it is unclear why the costs in Spain, with a large private market, should be so low or the costs in **France**, with extensive public subsidies for services, so high.

Parents of children over three years are more likely to get a free service, mainly for the whole period of attendance or else, in some cases, for part of the day or for some of this period of their child's life. This is very common in countries which have a school-based early education system, which is generally provided free of charge. In other systems, parents usually contribute towards costs, though in **Sweden**, four and five-year-olds are entitled to a period of free attendance, soon to be extended to three-year-olds (see 7.2)

Public funding of ECEC services can involve *supply or demand subsidy*. It is mostly direct to services ('supply subsidy'), especially where there is school-based early education. But in some cases this funding is supplemented by some form of direct funding of parents ('demand subsidy'). Demand subsidy (e.g. via tax credits or allowances) is the only form of public funding for children under three years in Ireland, Netherlands and the **UK**; this form of public funding has developed furthest in these three countries, reflecting a strong emphasis on marketisation of 'childcare' services (Table 7.3).

2.2.10 Workforce in ECEC services (Tables 8.1-8.3)

The ECEC workforce can be *integrated* or *separated* according to whether staff work with children across the entire early childhood period or with a specific age group, generally birth to three years and three to compulsory school age. In most countries (including **France**, **Hungary**, **Italy**, **Poland** and the **UK**⁵), the workforce is separated, in effect split between different groups of workers working with different age groups of children; each group of workers usually works with only a two or three year age range of children, for example under three-year-olds or three to five- or six-year-olds. However in ten countries, there is an integrated workforce, working across the whole age range of children in ECEC, both under and over three years. This is a feature of all six countries with a unitary ECEC system (the four Nordic countries, including

⁵ The **UK** has been categorised as age-separated. The workforce in the nursery (childcare) part of the system may work with children from birth to five years, but the main workforce with three and four-year-olds consists of teachers in schools who generally do not work with children under three years.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden, plus Latvia and **Slovenia**), as well as Austria, Germany, **Portugal** and Spain. However, in the case of the last two countries, younger children (under threes) get fewer higher qualified teachers than older children, and the pay and conditions of teachers working in these services may be lower (see 8.1).

Where there is an integrated workforce, it usually consists of a professional with a *basic education* at tertiary level and a lower qualified assistant, often educated at upper secondary level. How the workforce divides between these two groups varies between countries and, in the case of **Portugal** and Spain, according to the age group worked with. Where there is an age-separated workforce, workers with children over three years usually have a tertiary level qualification (often teaching), while those working with younger children have an upper secondary or lower level qualification (see 8.2).

As a consequence, the *workforce profile* (in terms of qualification) for workers with children under three years is usually lower than that for workers with children over three years. Qualifications are the same in eight countries, with a graduate (ISCED level 5) 0-6 professional in six cases (the four Nordic countries, Latvia and **Slovenia**) and a lower qualified 0-6 professional in two (Austria at ISCED 3, Germany at ISCED 4) (see 8.3). Austria remains the only country in Europe where the lead early childhood professional is trained only to upper secondary level.

2.3 Concluding comments

The countries with the best records on child poverty and child well-being mostly also have high levels of ECEC provision and attendance, particularly for those under three years. It would, however, be misleading to regard this as a simple causal relationship. Child poverty is strongly related to social transfer levels (i.e. income redistribution), while the recent study by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) concludes that there is consistent evidence that a wide range of health and social indicators, including those contributing to child wellbeing, are related to levels of income inequality; so too are levels of trust and social cohesion. As these authors observe:

There is not one policy for reducing inequality in health or the educational performance of school children, and another for raising national standards of performance. Reducing inequality is the best way of doing both. And if, for instance, a country wants higher average levels of educational achievement among its school children, it must address the underlying inequality (30).

However, good and easily accessible ECEC may contribute to heightened parental – and especially maternal – employment rates, although there are many other contributory factors affecting both demand for and supply of labour

How then to assess the role of ECEC services in addressing child poverty and social inclusion? From this initial overview, it seems likely that low poverty and high social inclusion are favoured by a package of inter-connected policies, high taxation levels to support these policies, and strong cultural values that support equality and universality. ECEC services can make a contribution as part of this package, but are by no means sufficient by themselves – ECEC services cannot ‘cure’ unequal societies. Indeed plentiful and good ECEC services are most likely to be found in more equal societies, a product of sufficient tax-based funding and a value system that supports a view of them as a universal entitlement and a child’s right.

Looking across the 28 countries covered in the overview, a main difference in ECEC services is in how they are structured. Historically, every country has started with a split system, one part offering 'childcare for working parents', the other education for older pre-school children. Today countries vary between those with a fully integrated birth to six service, including a birth to six profession; those with a completely split system, with a workforce strongly differentiated between those working with children under three years and those working with over threes; and, between the two extremes, those countries that are moving away from a split system towards full integration, but have some way to go yet.

Those 'split system' countries with a strongly differentiated workforce rely on a continuing supply of women with lower levels of education prepared to work with the youngest age group of children for low pay. But irrespective of the desirability of such a workforce system, its continuing viability must be questioned in the light of the growing proportion of women in higher education and with higher qualifications. This increase in women's educational qualifications, with a consequent diminishing pool of low qualified young women, will make it increasingly hard to maintain the current ECEC workforce in many countries where there is dependence on this group to supply low paid 'childcare' workers. The same problem confronts services for older people.

The necessity of change due to a shrinking labour supply will, however, bring the bonus of growth in good quality ECEC employment because the proportion of the ECEC workforce educated to graduate level will have to increase. The need to increase services for under threes will create further good quality employment, once a more highly qualified workforce is available.

How will this change occur? There are no examples of countries with split systems that have brought the under threes workforce up to the same level as the over threes workforce, either through introducing a birth to six professional or a narrower birth to three professional with parity to teachers. It remains, therefore, an open question whether good quality employment across ECEC can be implemented within a split system, or whether it depends on moving to an integrated system.

Attendance at ECEC services by three to six-year-olds is nearly universal across the EU, with a few exceptions and though hours of attendance vary considerably. But attendance for children under three years is lower, often much lower. One reason for this is parental leave, which reduces demand even when it is available for only a relatively short period. Another reason is negative attitudes towards mothers being employed when they have a child under three-years-old and towards the use of formal services for this age group; informal care by friends and relatives remains high and favoured in many countries. A third reason has been policy indifference or neglect, which has led many countries to invest relatively little in these services. The experience of Denmark and Sweden shows, however, that where there is investment, a well-qualified workforce and entitlement then use is high, social differences in use diminish, and few parents any longer turn to friends and relatives to provide care on a regular basis.

Table 1: Demographic and household data

	1.1 Population, 2008 (millions)	1.2 Population Density, 2006 ⁶	1.3 Total fertility Rate, 2007	1.4 Foreign-born population, 2005 ⁷
BE Belgium	10.7	347.8	1.81	12.5
BG Bulgaria	7.6	69.4	1.42	NI
CZ Czech Rep	10.4	132.9	1.44	4.4
DK Denmark	5.5	126.2	1.85	7.2
DE Germany	82.2	230.7	1.39	12.3
EE Estonia	1.3	30.9	1.64	15.2
IE Ireland	4.4	62.3	1.91(2006)	14.1
EL Greece	11.2	85.2	1.38	8.8
ES Spain	45.3	87.2	1.38	8.5
FR France	63.8	99.9	1.98	10.7
IT Italy	59.6	199.7	1.34	4.3
CY Cyprus	0.8	83.5	1.5 (2006)	13.9
LV Latvia	2.3	36.7	1.42	19.5
LT Lithuania	3.4	54.2	1.35	4.8
LU Luxembourg	0.5	182.8	1.61	37.4
HU Hungary	10.0	108.3	1.32	3.1
MT Malta	0.4	1287.8	1.30	2.7
NL Netherlands	16.4	483.8	1.71	10.1
AT Austria	8.3	99.5	1.38	15.1
PL Poland	38.1	122.0	1.27(2006)	1.8
PT Portugal	10.6	114.9	1.30	7.3
RO Romania	21.5	93.9	1.29	NI
SI Slovenia	2.0	99.6	1.37	8.5
SK Slovakia	5.4	110.0	1.25	2.3
FI Finland	5.3	17.3	1.83	3.0
SE Sweden	9.2	22.1	1.85	12.4
UK U.Kingdom	61.2	250.0	1.85(2006)	9.1
EU27	497.5	114.8		
NO Norway	4.7	15.3	1.90	7.4

⁶ Inhabitants per km²

⁷ As a % of total population

Table 1: Demographic and household data (continued)

	1.5 % of children in lone parent household, 2005
BE Belgium	14
BG Bulgaria	NI
CZ Czech Rep	11
DK Denmark	17
DE Germany	21
EE Estonia	18
IE Ireland	15
EL Greece	5
ES Spain	4
FR France	12
IT Italy	7
CY Cyprus	5
LV Latvia	15
LT Lithuania	14
LU Luxembourg	7
HU Hungary	11
MT Malta	6
NL Netherlands	9
AT Austria	9
PL Poland	5
PT Portugal	6
RO Romania	NI
SI Slovenia	7
SK Slovakia	6
FI Finland	13
SE Sweden	19
UK U.Kingdom	25
EU27	13 (EU25)
NO Norway	NI

Table 2: GDP, public expenditure and taxation

	2.1 GDP per capita in PPS, 2007 (EU27=100)	2.2 Expenditure on education as % GDP, 2005 ⁸	2.3 Expenditure on social protection as % GDP, 2006 ⁹	2.4 Tax receipts as % GDP, 2007 ¹⁰
BE Belgium	118	5.65 (6.0)	29.7 (2.0)	45.2
BG Bulgaria	37	3.83 (4.45)	16.1 (1.1)	32.6
CZ Czech Rep	80	4.07 (4.64)	19.1 (1.4)	36.1
DK Denmark	120	6.83 (7.4)	30.1 (3.8)	49.4
DE Germany	115	4.17 (5.09)	29.4 (3.2)	40.3
EE Estonia	68	4.58 (4.96)	12.5 (1.5)	32.2
IE Ireland	150	4.26 (4.55)	18.2 (2.5)	32.9
EL Greece	95	3.95 (4.2)	24.2 (1.5)	33.9
ES Spain	106	4.10 (4.63)	20.8 (1.1)	37.7
FR France	109	5.43 (5.98)	31.5 (2.5)	44.7
IT Italy	101	4.23 (4.67)	26.4 (1.1)	43.2
CY Cyprus	91	6.01 (7.22)	18.2 (2.1)	42.2
LV Latvia	55	4.74 (5.5)	12.4 (1.3)	31.7
LT Lithuania	60	4.54 (5.03)	13.2 (1.2)	30.3
LU Luxembourg	267	NI	21.9 (3.6)	36.8
HU Hungary	63	5.12 (5.61)	21.9 (2.5)	39.4
MT Malta	77	6.82 (7.2)	18.3 (0.9)	35.5
NL Netherlands	131	4.59 (5.02)	28.2 (1.3)	39.5
AT Austria	124	5.04 (5.51)	28.8 (3.0)	43.1
PL Poland	53	5.38 (5.93)	19.6 (0.8)	34.5
PT Portugal	76	5.26 (5.68)	24.7 (1.2)	37.6
RO Romania	41	3.33 (3.73)	14.2 (1.4)	30.4
SI Slovenia	89	5.31 (6.12)	23.4 (2.0)	38.3
SK Slovakia	67	3.66 (4.36)	16.9 (1.9)	29.3
FI Finland	116	5.84 (5.97)	26.7 (3.0)	42.6
SE Sweden	122	6.19 (6.38)	32.0 (3.0)	48.5
UK U.Kingdom	119	5.03 (6.28)	26.8 (1.7)	37.2
EU27	100	4.72 (5.39)	27.2 (2.1)	40.5
NO Norway	179	5.67 (5.72)	23.9 (2.8)	43.4

⁸ First % = public expenditure; second % (in brackets) = public + private sources

⁹ Expenditure on social protection includes old age, healthcare, disability, families and children, unemployment and housing. Figures in brackets are for spending on 'families and children' and for 2005.

¹⁰ Total figure from aggregating taxes on income and wealth, taxes on production and input and social contributions

Table 3: income and gender inequality, child poverty, and child wellbeing

	3.1 Income inequality, 2006-7 ¹¹		3.2 Households in poverty as % all h/holds with child 0-6, 2005 ¹²	3.3 Child well- being, 2005/6 ¹³	3.4 Gender gap ¹⁴
	S80/S20	Gini			
BE Belgium	4.2	.26	18.9	14 th	28 th
BG Bulgaria	3.5	.24	NI	26 th	36 th
CZ Czech Rep	3.5	.25	18.1	16 th	69 th
DK Denmark	3.4	.25	11.5	6 th	7 th
DE Germany	4.1	.30	16.3	8 th	11 th
EE Estonia	5.5	.33	22.2	18 th	37 th
IE Ireland	4.9	.31	17.1	9 th	8 th
EL Greece	6.1	.34	18.1	23 rd	75 th
ES Spain	5.3	.31	17.8	13 th	17 th
FR France	4.0	.26	13.1	15 th	15 th
IT Italy	5.5	.32	21.1	19 th	67 th
CY Cyprus	4.3	.30	12.2	12 th	76 th
LV Latvia	7.9	.35	18.5	27 th	10 th
LT Lithuania	6.3	.34	22.8	28 th	23 rd
LU Luxembourg	4.2	.27	20.1	10 th	66 th
HU Hungary	5.5	.26	19.6	22 nd	60 th
MT Malta	4.2	.26	16.1	29 th	83 rd
NL Netherlands	3.8	.28	13.2	1 st	9 th
AT Austria	3.7	.26	14.5	11 th	29 th
PL Poland	5.6	.32	25.0	20 th	49 th
PT Portugal	6.8	.37	21.0	21 st	39 th
RO Romania	5.3	.34	NI	25 th	70 th
SI Slovenia	3.4	.23	10.9	7 th	51 st
SK Slovakia	4.0	.24	15.6	17 th	64 th
FI Finland	3.6	.26	11.3	5 th	2 nd
SE Sweden	3.5	.23	9.3	2 nd	3 rd
UK U.Kingdom	5.4	.33	22.6	24 st	13 th
EU27	4.8(EU25)	.30	17.2	NA	NA
NO Norway	4.6	NI	6.7	3 rd	1 st

¹¹ S80/S20 is the ratio of the total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income to that received by the 20% of the population with the lowest income; the higher the ratio the greater the inequality. Gini coefficient. measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution; ranges from 0 to 1, the higher the number, the greater the inequality of income.

¹² Proportion of all households with a child under six years below 'at-risk-of-poverty threshold, defined as 60% of the median value of equivalised disposable income.

¹³ Average ranking of member states + Norway and Iceland (4th), for six dimensions of child well-being: health; subjective well-being; children's relationships; material resources; behaviour and risk; education; housing and environment.

¹⁴ The Gender Gap Index assesses countries on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, based on 14 variables across four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; political empowerment; health and survival. Shows ranking of country out of all countries.

Table 4: women’s higher education, part-time employment and parental employment

	4.1 Women as % graduating from tertiary education (1 st stage) 2004	4.2 Women’s employment rate, 2007		4.3 Part-time employment as % total employment 15-64, 2007	
		Head Count	FTE ¹⁵	Women	Men
BE Belgium	57.6	55	47	41	8
BG Bulgaria	58.6	58	57	2	1
CZ Czech Rep	58.8	57	56	9	2
DK Denmark	59.2	73	63	36	14
DE Germany	53.7	64	48	46	9
EE Estonia	71.8	66	64	12	4
IE Ireland	57.2	61	51	32	NI
EL Greece	NI	48	46	10	3
ES Spain	58.0	55	49	23	4
FR France	56.8	60	52	30	6
IT Italy	58.2	47	42	27	5
CY Cyprus	59.7	62	60	11	4
LV Latvia	69.3	64	63	8	5
LT Lithuania	66.5	62	62	10	7
LU Luxembourg	NI	55	45	39	3
HU Hungary	63.8	51	50	6	3
MT Malta	54.8	37	33	25	4
NL Netherlands	56.6	70	44	75	24
AT Austria	51.4	64	51	41	7
PL Poland	65.7	51	49	13	7
PT Portugal	66.5	62	58	17	8
RO Romania	57.4	53	52	10	9
SI Slovenia	60.9	63	60	11	8
SK Slovakia	56.9	53	52	5	1
FI Finland	62.6	69	64	19	9
SE Sweden	62.4	72	62	40	12
UK U.Kingdom	58.1	66	51	42	11
EU27	59.2 (EU25)	58	50	31	8
NO Norway	60.8	74	NI	NI	NI

¹⁵ Headcount is the proportion of all women employed; FTE is the employment rate for women based on actual working hours converted into a full-time employment equivalent. A low FTE compared to the headcount figures means a high level of part-time working.

Table 4: women’s higher education, part-time employment and parental employment (continued)

	4.4 Employment rate (%) for mothers, 2005 Child aged:		4.5 Employment impact of parenthood, child 0-6, 2006 ¹⁶		4.6 Employment Rate difference mothers & fathers, 2005 ¹⁷ Child aged:	
	0-3	3-6	Women	Men	0-3	3-6
BE Belgium	73	77	-1	+10	-21	-17
BG Bulgaria	36	63	-22	+4	-45	-17
CZ Czech Rep	22	67	-41	+9	-74	-28
DK Denmark	NI	NI	-3	+9	NI	NI
DE Germany	56	69	-27	+9	-40	-27
EE Estonia	(29)	75	-26	+9	-66	-19
IE Ireland	NI	NI	-18	+6	NI	NI
EL Greece	57	62	-15	+5	-40	-34
ES Spain	60	63	-8	+10	-35	-30
FR France	63	79	-10	+12	-32	-16
IT Italy	52	57	-6	+13	-42	-38
CY Cyprus	69	77	-4	+9	-28	-22
LV Latvia	45	69	-19	+8	-42	-22
LT Lithuania	66	70	-4	+10	-20	-16
LU Luxembourg	64	64	-6	+11	-33	-30
HU Hungary	16	61	-34	+8	-79	-26
MT Malta	36	(30)	-12	+5	-59	-62
NL Netherlands	74	73	-8	+6	-22	-23
AT Austria	64	68	-18	+4	-27	-20
PL Poland	NI	NI	-10	+15	NI	NI
PT Portugal	78	80	+4	+12	-16	-13
RO Romania	57	61	-2	+9	-28	-24
SI Slovenia	73	89	+5	+12	-16	- 3
SK Slovakia	29	68	-33	+7	-63	-23
FI Finland	54	87	-18	+12	-41	- 9
SE Sweden	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
UK U.Kingdom	57	64	-21	+6	-36	-28
EU27	57	67	-14	+10	-37	-26
NO Norway	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI

¹⁶ Difference in percentage points between employment rates for women and men aged 20-49 without any children and with a child aged 0-6 years; - (minus) indicates women/men with children have lower employment rate; + (plus) indicates women/men with children have higher employment rate.

¹⁷ Difference in percentage points between employment rates for women and men with children aged 0-3 and 3-6 years; - (minus) indicates women with children have lower employment rate than men with children.

Table 5: Parental leave and access to and attendance at ECEC

	5.1 Length of well- paid parental leave (months) ¹⁸	5.2 Compulsory school starting age (CSA) (years) ¹⁹	5.3 Entitlement to ECEC service and from what age ²⁰
BE Belgium	4 (10)	6	Yes-2½ yrs
BG Bulgaria	NI	7	NI
CZ Czech Rep	6.5 (36)	6	No
DK Denmark	12 (11)	7*	Yes-6 mths
DE Germany	15 (36)	6	Yes-3 yrs
EE Estonia	15 (36)	7	NI
IE Ireland	6 (16)	6*	Yes-4 yrs
EL Greece	4 (9)	6	No
ES Spain	4 (36)	6	NI
FR France	4 (36)	6	Yes-3 yrs
IT Italy	4.5(13.5)	6	NI
CY Cyprus	4	6 (4.8)	Yes-4.8 yrs
LV Latvia	4	7 (5)	Yes-5 yrs
LT Lithuania	12	7	NI
LU Luxemb'rg	10	6 (4)	Yes-4 yrs
HU Hungary	25 (36)	6 (5)	Yes-5 yrs
MT Malta	3	5	NI
NL N'lands	4 (8.5)	5*	Yes-4 yrs
AT Austria	4 (24)	6	Yes-5 yrs
PL Poland	4 (36)	7 (6)	No
PT Portugal	5 (34)	6	No
RO Romania	NI	6	NI
SI Slovenia	12.5(11)	6	Yes, end of PL*
SK Slovakia	6.5	6	No
FI Finland	9 (36)	7*	Yes- birth
SE Sweden	13 (36)	7*	Yes-1 yr
UK U.K'dom	1.5(18)	5* (4,N. Ireland)	Yes-3 yrs
EU27	NA	NA	NA
NO Norway	12.5(36)	6	Yes-1 yr

¹⁸ Period of statutory maternity, paternity and parental leave paid at two-thirds or more of normal earnings; figure in brackets indicates total period of leave available (in months) combining paid and unpaid leave.

¹⁹ Compulsory school age (CSA); figure in brackets indicate age at which attendance at ECEC is compulsory. *-indicates many children start school before CSA on a voluntary basis

²⁰ Includes countries where attendance at ECEC is compulsory as well as countries where an entitlement exists for voluntary attendance *end of PL - indicates entitlement from end of parental leave

	5.4 Attendance rate (%) at ECEC services, 2006 ²¹			5.5 Attendance rate (%) at formal ECEC, 0-3 years, by mothers educational level, 2005		
	0-3 years Informal	Formal	3 to CSA Formal	Low	Med	High ²²
BE Belgium	40 (23)	30 (8)	98 (62)	25	40	48
BG Bulgaria	NI	NI	NI	No information		
CZ Czech Rep	2 (1)	20 (2)	67 (39)	0	1	5
DK Denmark	73 (66)	1 (0)	96 (80)	75	72	70
DE Germany	18 (7)	27 (3)	93 (27)	15	12	25
EE Estonia	18 (12)	32 (10)	85 (78)	3	17	13
IE Ireland	18 (5)	36 (14)	93 (13)	9	7	24
EL Greece	10 (8)	54 (29)	61 (20)	0	7	19
ES Spain	39 (19)	27 (9)	91 (44)	28	39	44
FR France	31 (17)	28 (14)	94 (42)	17	30	48
IT Italy	26 (16)	35 (13)	90 (66)	19	27	35
CY Cyprus	25 (18)	53 (40)	87 (37)	18	15	18
LV Latvia	16 (14)	14 (9)	60 (56)	5	13	20
LT Lithuania	4 (4)	21 (14)	56 (47)	7	9	14
LU Luxemb'rg	31 (17)	41 (11)	58 (16)	18	27	36
HU Hungary	8 (6)	48 (6)	79 (58)	3	9	6
MT Malta	8 (3)	16 (5)	57 (25)	No information		
NL N'lands	45 (4)	56 (3)	89 (7)	16	37	59
AT Austria	4 (1)	36 (5)	71 (16)	5	3	14
<i>PL Poland*</i>	2 (2)	36 (18)	28 (21)	1	1	8
PT Portugal	33 (32)	46 (37)	75 (66)	19	37	36
RO Romania	NI	NI	NI	No information		
SI Slovenia	29 (26)	60 (23)	81 (66)	17	24	28
SK Slovakia	5 (4)	23 (8)	73 (63)	0	2	5
FI Finland	26 (21)	5 (2)	77 (56)	22	22	25
SE Sweden	44 (27)	4 (2)	92 (58)	52	56	47
UK U.K'dom	33 (5)	38 (8)	89 (24)	13	30	39
EU25	26 (12)	NI	84 (40)	No information		
NO Norway	34 (22)	7 (1)	80 (52)	No information		

*Polish data from the Ministry of Education 2006, is different: No information for 0-3 years informal care, and 57 (21) for 3 to compulsory school age.

²¹ 'Formal' covers centre-based services, including schools, and family day carers in organised services. 'Informal' covers private family day carers, nannies, relatives and friends. Unbracketed figures are for all children; bracketed figures are for children attending 30 hours or more per week.

²² Low=below upper secondary; Medium=upper secondary; High=above upper secondary

Table 6.4: main types of centre-based services

	Services for children 0-3/4	Services for children 3-CSA
BE Belgium French comm. Flemish comm	Creches (0-3) Kinderdagverblijven(0-3)	Enseignement maternel(2.5-6) Kleuteronderwijs(2.5-6)
BG Bulgaria	Detska yasta (1-3)	Detska gradina(3-7)**
CZ Czech Rep	Jesle(0-3)	Materská škola(3-6)**
DK Denmark	Vuggestuer(0.5-3) Aldersintegrerede institutioner (0.5-6)	Børnehaver(3-6)**
DE Germany	Krippen (0-3)	Kindergarten(3-6)
EE Estonia	Lastesõlm (1-3)	Lasteaed(3-7)
IE Ireland	Nursery(0-4); Playgroup(2-3)	Infant class(4-6)
EL Greece	Vrefonipiaki stathmi (0-5)	Nipiagogeia(4-6)
ES Spain	Escuelas infantiles(0-3) Escuelas infantiles (0-6)	Escuelas infantiles(3-6)
FR France	Creches (0-3)	Ecoles maternelles(2.5-6)
IT Italy	Asilo nido(0-3)	Scuola dell'infanzia(3-6)
CY Cyprus	Nipiokomikoi/Paidokomikoi Stathmoi(0-5)	Nipiagogeio(3-6)
LV Latvia	Pirmsskolas izglitibas iestāde (1-5)	Pirmsskolas izglitibas grupas pie skolām(5-7)
LT Lithuania	Lopšelis-darželis(0-7)	Darželis(3-7)**
LU Luxembourg	Foyer du jour(0-3)	Spillschoul(3-6)
HU Hungary	Bölcsöde (0-3)	Óvoda(3-6)
MT Malta	Child day care centres(0-3)	Kindergarten centres(3-5)
NL Netherlands	Kindercentra(0-4); Peuterspeelzalen(2-4)	Basisonderwijs(4-5)
AT Austria	Krippen(0-3)	Kindergarten(3-6)
PL Poland	Złobki(0-3)	Przedszkola(3-6)
PT Portugal	Creches(0-3)	Jardins de infância(3-6)
RO Romania	Creșă(0-3)	Grădinița (3-6)
SI Slovenia	Vrtci(1-6)	
SK Slovakia	Detske jasle(0-3)	Materská škola(3-6)
FI Finland	Päiväkoti/daghem(0-7)**	
SE Sweden	Förskola (1-7)**	
UK U.Kingdom	Nursery(0-5); playgroup(2-5)	Nursery class(3-5)
NO Norway	Barnehager(0-6)	

**-also separate school-based provision in year before compulsory school age.

Table 7: providers and funding

	7.1 % of provision by public sector		7.2 Cost to parents ²⁵		7.3 Type of public funding ²⁶	
	0-3	3+	0-3	3+	0-3	3+
BE Belgium	50-65	>65	B (16), A*	A	A,B	A
BG Bulgaria	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	
CZ Czech Rep	>65	>65	B (10)	B, A*	A	A
DK Denmark	>65	>65	B (8)	B	A	A
DE Germany	50-65	<50	B (12)	B	A	A
EE Estonia	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	
IE Ireland	<50	>65	C (30)	C, A*	None	A
EL Greece	<50	>65	NI	NI		
ES Spain	<50	50-65	B (6)	A	A,B	A
FR France	50-65	>65	B (34), A*	A	A,B	A
IT Italy	50-65	50-65	B (NI)	A	A	A
CY Cyprus	NI	NI	NI	A,B**	NI	
LV Latvia	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	
LT Lithuania	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	
LU Luxembourg	<50	>65	NI	NI	A,B	
HU Hungary	>65	>65	A (6)	A	A	A
MT Malta	NI	NI	NI	NI	B	
NL Netherlands	<50	50-65	B (29)	B, A*	B	A,B
AT Austria	50-65	>65	B (13)	B, A*	A	A
PL Poland	>65	>65	B (NI)	B		
PT Portugal	<50	50-65	B (NI)	A	A	A
RO Romania	NI	NI	NI	NI	B	NI
SI Slovenia			B (NI)	B	A	A
SK Slovakia	NI	NI	B (6)	B	NI	NI
FI Finland	>65	>65	B (8)	B	A	A
SE Sweden	>65	>65	B** (6)	B**A*	A	A
UK U.Kingdom	<50	>65	B (25)	B, A*	B	A,B
EU27						
NO Norway	50-65	50-65	B (12)	B	A	A

²⁵ A – free to parents, except for meals and extra activities (* indicates attendance is free for part of the age period and/or for part of the day) ; B – parents fees subsidised (**indicates ceiling on parental payments); C – most parents pay full fee (though some may get subsidy from employer, welfare authority). Figure in brackets indicates cost of a full-time place for a two-year-old as % of earnings of average production worker).

²⁶ A – supply subsidy (i.e. public funding direct to services); B – demand subsidy (i.e. public funding to parents, such as tax credits or rebates)

Table 8: workforce in ECEC services

	8.1 Age- integrated or age separated ²⁷	8.2 Level of basic education for main workers with children ²⁸		8.3 Workforce profile for 0-3 compared to 3-CSA ²⁹
		0-3 years	3 years-CSA	
BE Belgium	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
BG Bulgaria	Separated	NI	ISCED 5	Lower
CZ Czech Rep	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 3	Lower
DK Denmark	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
DE Germany	Integrated	ISCED 4		Same
EE Estonia		NI	NI	
IE Ireland	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
EL Greece	Separated	NI	ISCED 3	Lower
ES Spain	Integrated*	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
FR France	Separated	ISCED 3,4	ISCED 5	Lower
IT Italy	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
CY Cyprus	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
LV Latvia	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
LT Lithuania				
LU Luxembourg	Separated		ISCED 5	Lower
HU Hungary	Separated	ISCED 4	ISCED 5	Lower
MT Malta	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 4	Lower
NL Netherlands	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
AT Austria	Integrated	ISCED 3		Same
PL Poland	Separated	ISCED 4	ISCED 5	Lower
PT Portugal	Integrated*	NI	ISCED 5	Lower
RO Romania	Separated	ISCED 4	ISCED 5	Lower
SI Slovenia	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
SK Slovakia	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 4,5	Lower
FI Finland	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
SE Sweden	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
UK U.Kingdom	Separated	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
EU27				
NO Norway	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same

²⁷ Age-integrated – the same workers work with younger and older children; age-separated – different workers work with different age groups of children *-fewer teachers with children under 3 years

²⁸ ISCED 3-upper secondary education; ISCED 4:-post-secondary non-tertiary education; ISCED 5-tertiary education. ISCED=International Standard Classification of Education

²⁹ Lower indicates workforce with children under three has lower level of qualifications compared to workforce with children between three and compulsory school age

Sources for Tables

Table 1.1, 1.2: Eurostat, 2009: Table 2.2

Table 1.3: Eurostat, 2008a: Table 4

Table 1.4: Migration Policy Institute, 2006, Table 2

Table 1.5: Social Protection Committee, 2008, Table A8a

Table 2.1: Eurostat, 2008b

Table 2.2: Eurostat, 2009: Table 2.14

Table 2.3: Eurostat, 2008c: Tables 1 and 3

Table 2.4: Eurostat, 2009: Table 1.8

Table 3.1: Europa Press Releases, 2008; New Policy Institute, 2009

Table 3.2: Eurydice, 2009: Figure 2.5

Table 3.3: Child Poverty Action Group, 2009

Table 3.4: World Economic Forum, 2008: Table 3a

Table 4.1: Eurostat, 2009: Table A.18

Table 4.2: Plantenga and Remery, 2009: Table A.1

Table 4.3: DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2008: Statistical Annex

Tables 4.4 and 4.5: Eurydice, 2009: Figure 2.6

Table 4.6: Plantenga and Remery, 2009: Table A.2

Table 5.1: Moss and Korintus, 2008: p.97; (for CY, LV, LT, MT, SK – Social Protection Committee, 2008, p.44)

Table 5.2: Eurydice, 2007

Table 5.4: Plantenga and Remery, 2009; Tables A.7, A.10

Table 5.5: Amerijckx and Humblet, personal communication 2009; based on secondary analysis of EU-SILC 2005

Table 6.1: Authors' assessment

Table 6.2: Eurydice, 2009: Annex 1, Table A

Table 6.3: Eurydice, 2009: Figure 3.1 (revised by authors)

Table 6.4: Eurydice, 2009: Figure 3.1 (revised by authors)

Table 7.1: Amerijckx and Humblet, 2008: Tableaux 4 and 5

Table 7.2: Authors' assessment; Immervoll and Barber, 2005: Figure 2.2

Table 7.3: Authors' assessment

Table 8.1: Authors' assessment

Table 8.2: Eurydice, 2009: Figure 5.1 and 5.4; European Commission, 2008a: Table 2

Table 8.3: Authors' assessment

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CHAPTER THREE

ECEC, social inclusion and the early childhood workforce

Introduction to the chapter

In addition to an overview of ECEC services in 27 EU member states, the investigating team were asked to examine in greater detail the situation of early childhood services in ten countries, viz. Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In order to achieve this aim, the investigators prepared a profile of each of these countries, based on a common protocol. The areas selected for description were: 1. Key terms used by countries to describe their services and workforces; 2. The social context of early childhood in each country; 3. A historical overview of the development of ECEC in each country; 4. Key concepts and important influences on ECEC; 5. The structure and organisation of ECEC; 6. Access levels and strategies; 7. Conditions for quality improvement and assurance, including workforce issues; 8. Relationship and transitions between ECEC and school; 9. Out-of-school services; 10. Current issues and development. Within several of these rubrics, the issue of the social inclusion of excluded children and families was raised. Once the draft profiles were completed, they were then sent out to country experts (see Acknowledgements) for checking and revision. This chapter provides an overview of these ten country reports with special reference to the contribution that early childhood services and staff can make to social inclusion.

The issue is a critical one for the well-being of young children. In the American compilation, *Consequences of Growing Up Poor*, (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1999), the editors brought together developmental psychologists, economists, and sociologists to revisit a large body of studies that answer specific questions about how poverty puts children at risk intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Many of the investigations demonstrate that although income clearly creates disadvantages, it does so selectively and in a wide variety of ways. Low-income preschoolers exhibit poorer cognitive and verbal skills because they are generally exposed to fewer toys, books, and other stimulating experiences in the home. Poor parents also tend to rely on home-based child care, where the quality and amount of attention children receive is inferior to that of professional facilities. In later years, conflict between economically stressed parents increases anxiety and weakens self-esteem in their teenaged children.

1. Social inclusion investments differ widely across EU countries

As seen in Chapter 2, but also in many other sources, there are large variations in social equality and child poverty across the EU Member States. Within countries, variations in well-being are also evident, with poverty levels significantly higher in lone-parent families, isolated rural settlements or among immigrants. Government investments to alleviate the effects of poverty and exclusion also differ from country to country.

In the following table, the ten countries selected for review are grouped according to the type of welfare system that they have adopted, namely: *universalist* (the Nordic social democratic economies), *social insurance* (most of the continental European economies) and *residual* (liberal economy regimes, e.g. the United Kingdom)³⁰. These categories are drawn from the work of the Swedish researcher, Esping-Andersen, (1990), according to the way in which social welfare is allocated between state, market and households. To these categories, we have added a fourth, *post-communist*. The three countries placed in this category, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia, differ significantly from each other; Hungary and Poland have many characteristics of the conservative, social insurance group, while Slovenia resembles more the universalist, social-democratic model. The table is also organised to show the extent of government investment in social protection expenditure followed by three outcomes: the extent of social inequality, the percentage of poor households and the level of child well-being. The data in the table is extracted from the more detailed tables provided in Chapter 2 above.

Table 1. The impact of social welfare models on child well-being

Type of social welfare system	Country	Social protection expenditure %GDP b)	Social inequality – SS20/80 a)	Poor households % d)	Child well-being e)
Universalist (Social democratic)	Denmark	30.1	3.4	11.5	6th
	Norway	23.9	4.6	6.7	3rd
	Sweden	32	3.5	9.3	2nd
Social insurance (conservative)	France	31.5	4.0	13.1	15th
	Italy	26.4	5.5	21.1	19th
	Portugal	24.7	6.8	21	21st
Residual (liberal)	United K.	26.8	5.4	22.6	24th
Post-communist	Hungary	21.9	5.5	19.6	22nd
	Poland	19.6	5.6	25	20th
	Slovenia	23.4	3.4	10.9	7th

Notes: All figures are from Eurydice unless otherwise stated.

a) Social inequality is measured by the SS20/80 ratio, that is, the range between the top 20% of incomes and the bottom 80%. A ratio of 4, as in France, means that the top 20% of incomes are 4 times greater for the rich than for the rest of the population. Ratios above 5 suggest a large gap between rich and poor.

b) Social protection expenditure is the total spent by government on social services and protection. It includes family benefits expenditure, etc. A percentage expenditure below 20% suggests that a significant part of the population does not have access to basic services.

³⁰ Under the present Labour government, the United Kingdom is by no means a pure liberal economy, although it preserves many liberal characteristics, such as a marketised childcare sector. By contrast, energetic policies have been put into place to combat poverty, and in particular, child poverty. The country has also enacted one of the most ambitious child protection policies in Europe, viz. Every Child Matters. In general, Scotland enjoys a more egalitarian tradition than south of the Border, although severe poverty can be found in inner cities and isolated rural areas.

c) Family benefits expenditure include cash benefits, services and tax advantages for families with children. Figures are taken from the OECD Family Data Base.

d) The rate of 'poor households' is the number of poor households expressed as a percentage of all households with children 0-5 years in a country. A household in poverty is one living on less than 60% of the average median income of a national family of two adults and two children.

e) The rankings in the column on child well-being are taken from Social Protection Committee (2008) *Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU*. Six dimensions of child well-being are measured: health; subjective well-being; children's relationships; material resources; behaviour and risk; education; housing and environment.

In terms of child well-being – evaluated across six different dimensions: health; subjective well-being; children's relationships; material resources; behaviour and risk; education; housing and environment – a clear contrast exists between the Nordic universalist welfare regimes and other countries. In Denmark and Sweden, government investments in social inclusion policies are higher than in other countries and obtain excellent results, as the figures for household poverty and child well-being demonstrate.³¹

2. Two related explanation for variations in social investment

No doubt, one needs to consider the convergence of many factors to provide a sufficient answer to variations in social investment. A popular explanation appeals to different rates of economic growth – X country is richer than country Y and therefore can invest more in social protection – but an analysis of the data shows that the level of economic development and investment in social inclusion are not necessarily linked. An example often quoted in Europe is that of the United States, one of the richest economies in the world which continues to lag behind on most social indicators, and where income inequality has recently reached an all time high (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/08/14/income-inequality-is-at-a_n_259516.html), despite forty years of high expenditure on anti-poverty programmes. However, similar examples can also be found in Europe, e.g. in Luxembourg, a country with an average GDP 2.6 times greater than the EU average, but where 20% of households with a child 0-6 years live in poverty. By contrast, Slovenia with a GDP of 0.89 of the EU average has less than 11% of poor households and comes in 7th among the EU countries in terms of the six dimensions of child well-being. In recent decades, a more convincing explanation of inequality has been provided by the Swedish researcher, Gosta Esping-Andersen.

The nature of the social welfare system

In a series of books and articles during the 1990s, Gosta Esping-Andersen turned to the traditional social welfare responses of societies to explain why countries tend to produce greater levels of equality or inequality. When faced with new social inclusion challenges, governments tend to respond according to their social welfare traditions and bring solutions to them along these lines. Clear differences can be seen, for example, between social democratic regimes and the liberal economies in their manner of treating child poverty or of organising early childhood services.

³¹ The difference between Norwegian and other Nordic investment in social inclusion is illusory. Because of oil revenues, national income is much higher in Norway than is Denmark or Sweden, which means that the investment devoted to social welfare is smaller in percentage terms than the neighbouring countries but, in fact, is equivalent in real terms.

Social democratic regimes are characterised by the principle of universal rights, including increasingly, the principle that the youngest children should enjoy all the rights granted to other citizens, such as the right to care and education. Social welfare policies, e.g. education and health systems, are universal and are enacted statutorily to safeguard all citizens and permanent residents. These societies stress full employment on equal terms for both men and women. The challenge for socio-democratic societies is to ensure that their economies are successful enough to pay for their social services and that the majority of citizens are convinced that the taxes they pay for these services provide good value.

In the continental *conservative* regimes, entitlements are based mainly on status, in particular, citizenship and current employment status. Benefits and pensions are funded by social insurance, schemes which, in turn, are linked closely to being in employment. Many statutory entitlements to services exist but, as in liberal regimes, they do not include a statutory entitlement to childcare, which is still considered to be the private (non-governmental) sphere. Yet, in some of the conservative countries, e.g. France, energetic policies are in place to support families and young children, but these policies are generally linked to citizenship or work status. To prove eligibility for benefits is often a challenge, particularly for unemployed and immigrant families.³²

In the *liberal* countries, social entitlements are individually assessed and many important benefits are means tested, with the exception of obligatory education, which is free and publicly funded. Energies are focussed on the economy and job creation, with governments tending to play a minimal, residual role in the social sphere. The national policy reflex toward families and young children has been traditionally *laissez-faire*, that is, families and young children belong to the private sphere and are expected to fend for themselves. Enterprise and employment are considered the main defences against poverty, rather than statutory enactment of social welfare policies. A high value is placed on individual responsibility and the family as a private social safety net. In addition, whereas the social democracies highlight democracy and inclusion as key values, the liberal economies stress markets and competition in service delivery. All the evidence points to the exclusionary effects of treating childcare as a market – poorer families cannot afford the fees being charged and rather than seek state assistance, prefer to look after children at home or through unqualified childminders (See Fig. 1 below). For this reason, many of the liberal economies have put into place targeted early childhood programmes for poor children.

'More equal societies almost always do better'

Another reason often advanced to explain why Nordic countries excel is because taxation levels are high and generate more money for services. The argument seems plausible as taxation is a government instrument not only to finance services but to produce greater equality or, at least, to prevent greater inequality between the haves and the have-nots. In this respect, two British researchers Wilkinson & Pickett (2009) in their book, *The Spirit Level: why more equal societies almost always do better*, provide compelling evidence as to why social equity and social justice are not just ideals but practical roads to greater individual happiness and social harmony. Large

³² Inspired by the French egalitarian and universalist tradition, many NGOs and associations in France resist government measures to limit services to citizens only. The early childhood field is an example, where NGOs and teachers often combine to provide places to indigent immigrant children.

inequalities of income in a society are divisive and generate many costly social problems. There is more teenage pregnancy, mental illness, higher prison populations, more murders, higher obesity and less numeracy and literacy in more unequal societies. Great inequality deprives huge sections of the population of things like security (and not least, job security), adequate housing and health care, and deprives them of time to recover from work or to develop other interests. Even the rich report more mental ill health and have lower life expectancies than their peers in less unequal societies. According to the authors:

Health and social problems are indeed more common in countries with bigger income inequalities. The two are extraordinarily closely-related ... it is clear that greater equality, as well as improving the wellbeing of the whole population, is also the key to national standards of achievement and how countries perform in lots of different fields ... National standards of health, and of other important outcomes ... are substantially determined by the amount of inequality in a society (20-29).

This work suggests that tackling exclusion through education only, without addressing the underlying issue of inequality, does not work. No matter how good an early childhood service is, it cannot – as Ed Ziegler, one of the founders of Head Start in the US famously remarked – “inoculate children in one year against the ravages of a life of deprivation”. Excluded neighbourhoods and parents need, in addition to early childhood services, sufficient incomes for each family, health care, good housing, freedom from drugs and violence, support for parents in all their roles and equal education for all (Ziegler, 2003). It is interesting to note that the Nordic countries generally avoid the neighbourhood and family deprivation experienced in other European countries, the worst ravages of school failure, and early delinquency, perhaps because of their strong egalitarian traditions and practices (Dahlberg & Moss, 2007; Eurochild, 2009).

3. Weak administration of early childhood education and care systems can generate inequality

At first view, a primary purpose of early childhood services is to provide a fair start in life for young children from deprived backgrounds and allow their parents to participate in the workforce. In fact, however, the organisation of these services can generate more inequality than equality of opportunity.

For historical reasons, policies for the “care” and “education” of young children developed separately during the 19th century in Europe, with different understandings of young children and different administrations. The historical separation of childcare from education remains widespread in Europe, though a number of member states have moved towards integrating ‘care’ and ‘education’ – some partially (e.g. England, Scotland, Spain), others totally (e.g. Nordic countries, Slovenia). Systems that remain split or are only partially integrated can contribute towards inequality, through the gendered nature and poor quality of employment in the childcare sector, the lower standards for children under three, and barriers to access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table 2. The structure of ECEC services in selected countries

Selected countries	Unitary or split ECEC system ³³	Ministry responsible for services for:		Services age-integrated or age-separated ³⁴
		0-3 years	3-6 years	
DK Denmark	Unitary	Welfare		Both
FR France	Split	Welfare	Education	Separated
IT Italy	Split	Family Affairs (municipal)	Education	Separated
HU Hungary	Split	Welfare	Education	Separated
NO Norway	Unitary	Education		Integrated
PL Poland	Split	Welfare	Education	Separated
PT Portugal	Split	Welfare	Education	Separated
SI Slovenia	Unitary	Education		Integrated
SE Sweden	Unitary	Education		Integrated
UK United Kingdom	Pt unitary	Education		Both

A gendered workforce

Women comprise roughly 98% of the workforce in early years provision, which has numerous repercussions at different levels. A recent 18-month investigation by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in the United Kingdom on classroom assistants illustrates the gender pay gap endemic to the entire early years sector. The EOC found that, because classroom hours fitted well the schedules of many mothers (in terms of time management), employers could get away with paying very poor wages to classroom assistants. In Scotland, the Gender Equality Duty (GED) has a role to play in changing such situations for the better.

It is possible that more men can be recruited to, and retained by, services for young children if there is a significant upgrading of the pay and status of this work. If the Gender Equality Duty becomes the stimulus for that change, then it will benefit the entire early years workforce – and, thereby, the children and families served by them. Yet, the experience of Denmark, Norway and Sweden suggests that this may be an optimistic scenario: improved pay is necessary but may not be sufficient to solve the gender gap problem in services for young children. Even in Nordic countries (where pay and conditions are better than in the UK), there are far fewer men than

³³ *Unitary*: government responsibility covers access, funding, regulation and workforce integrated across all ECEC services; *Pt (part) Unitary* indicates that government responsibility is integrated, but not all the other dimensions. *Split*: split systems occur when government responsibility for ECEC is divided between 2 ministries, generally based on the age of children, with Ministries of Social Welfare (Health, or Family Affairs) given responsibility for young children birth to three years and to Ministries of Education for three to six years. Ministerial responsibility can be more or less great depending on the degree of decentralisation practised in this field, e.g. in Italy, most dimensions are devolved to municipalities.

³⁴ Centre-based services only. Integrated – services take children for four, five or six years from end of paid parental leave, though there may be an age-separated service for one to two years before CSA; Separated – services are organised for different age groups, usually taking children either under or over three years. Both – some integrated and some age-separated services

women in the early years workforce. Except as paediatricians, men can experience negative reactions about working with young children, both from peers and families. Such work is seen as 'natural' for women – and, conversely, as 'not natural' for men. In Scotland, affirmative efforts to recruit men are undertaken within the context and rules of the Sex Discrimination Act (of which GED is a part) to ensure that recruitment practices result in less gender discrimination.

Poor quality employment in childcare services

The survival of a separate childcare sector has resulted in a highly feminised pool of childcare workers, generally under-qualified and poorly paid. The situation impacts negatively on the education of young children and on the prestige, salaries and working conditions of women working in the childcare sector. In six of the countries reviewed – France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom³⁵ – services are split between child care and early education. Early education is free and delivered by ministries of education, generally from the age of three years. Parents pay, in part or wholly, for childcare and these services can be delivered by a variety of providers, becoming in some instances a patchwork of small-scale providers and individual family day carers. Frequently, staff have relatively low qualifications and may not have employment contracts or insurance.

As noted in Chapter I, the workforce is central to ECEC services. It accounts for the greater part of the total cost of these services and is the major factor in determining children's experiences and their outcomes. It accounts for hundreds of thousands of jobs across Europe, composed mainly of women. How this staff is recruited, trained and treated is critical for the appeal of this form of employment; for the quality of early childhood services provided and for the appropriate inclusion of all children. The data in the following table – extracted from the EU tables provided in Chapter 2 - indicates that educational levels and workforce profiles are a matter for concern in segregated childcare systems:

³⁵. Administratively, childcare and early education are integrated in England and Scotland, with both sectors administered by education ministries. However, in a number of key areas (e.g. funding, workforce, access, ethos), the ECEC system remains split between 'childcare' and 'early education'.

Table 3. Employment in integrated and split early childhood systems

Country	Integrated or split systems ³⁶	Level of basic education for lead workers with children ³⁷		Workforce qualifications in the 0-3 sector compared to 3-6s ³⁸
		0-3 years	3 years- CSA	
DK Denmark	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
FR France	Split	ISCED 3,4	ISCED 5	Lower
IT Italy	Split	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower
HU Hungary	Split	ISCED 4	ISCED 5	Lower
NO Norway	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
PL Poland	Split	ISCED 4	ISCED 5	Lower
PT Portugal	Split*	ISCED 5	ISCED 5	Lower
SI Slovenia	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
SE Sweden	Integrated	ISCED 5		Same
U. Kingdom	Split	ISCED 3	ISCED 5	Lower

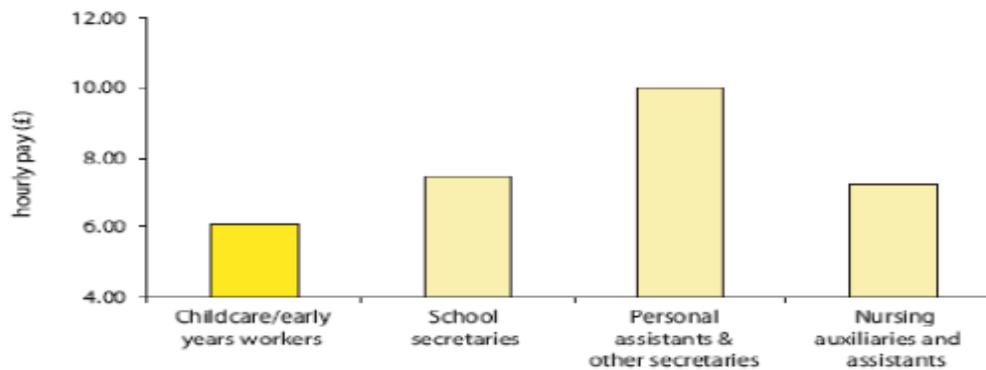
The low qualifications of childcare workers are matched by low salaries and poor work conditions. *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006) cited data showing that childcare staff in many countries are poorly trained and are paid around minimum wage levels. For example, average gross hourly pay for staff in childcare settings in England in 2003 ranged between £4.80 and £5.30 per hour, compared with hourly pay rates for nursery and primary teachers of £13.76. Average gross annual pay for childcare workers was £7,831, compared with £22,662 for primary teachers (*Sure Start*, 2004). One is talking basically of a difference of 3:1. The following chart is taken from the British Labour Force Survey of 2003 (DfES, 2005b):

³⁶ Refers to structure of workforce in ECEC systems. In integrated systems, there is one workforce undifferentiated between services or age groups; in split systems, there are separate workforces for different age groups and/or 'childcare' and 'education'. *-fewer teachers with children under three years

³⁷ ISCED 3-upper secondary education; ISCED 4:-post-secondary non-tertiary education; ISCED 5-tertiary education. ISCED=International Standard Classification of Education

³⁸ Lower indicates workforce with children under three has lower level of qualifications compared to workforce with children between three and CSA

Fig. 1. Average hourly pay for early years workers (including nannies but not teachers) compared to similarly qualified occupations



Source: Labour Force Survey, Winter 2003

In the US, Kagan and Rigby (2003) raised the issue starkly in the following comment:

Research has indicated that teachers' wages are associated with the quality of care provided. Professional quality ECE [early childhood education] is hard to find in a market place where ECE providers do not earn as much as funeral attendants (\$17,320) or garbage collectors (\$25,020). Despite having higher levels of formal education than the average American worker, ECE professionals earn dreadfully low wages – on average, only \$16,980 per year. In addition, they rarely receive benefits or paid leave. Not surprisingly, given the low salaries, staff turnover is high in early childhood programmes outside the public schools. Some estimate it to be around 36% a year.

A potential negative effect on sustainability

Another aspect of poor working conditions is that the sector may become uncompetitive and lose staff to other low qualified employment areas in modern economies. For example, the rapidly expanding care-of-the-elderly sector draws essentially on the same pool of workers, particularly when childcare is considered not as 'education' but as baby-sitting while mothers work. Again, in moments of national prosperity and high employment, young women may turn from childcare to find work elsewhere that is better paid and with shorter working hours. The dilemma facing these ECEC services has been clearly expressed by a French labour economist:

Wherever the present standard for any category of job is 'low qualified women around the age of 30', there will unmistakably be a strong need to improve the quality of job so it will be acceptable to people with higher educational attainments. And if no improved professionalization of the job was achieved, then it will rapidly end up in a severe labour supply shortage (Coomans, 2002).

Even if recruitment in the early childhood field continues at present levels – due, for example, to the present recession and the contraction of employment opportunities in other sectors – countries will have created a large, feminised pool of low quality employment, unable to support adequately the learning and development of young children.

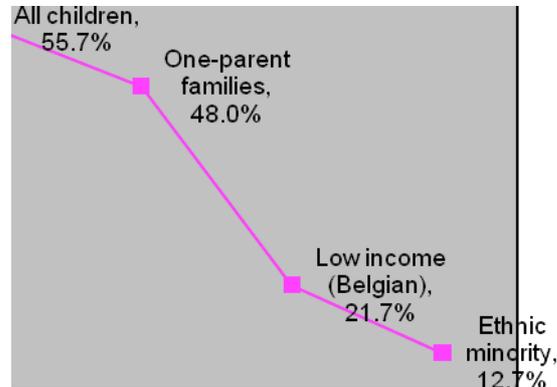
Lower standards for children under three

The separation of childcare from early education may also impact negatively on the quality of the early education sector, since the quality of childcare services offered to children under three years can be low and, at times, harmful to young children (NICHD, 2005). Childcare staff with low levels of qualification may not have the caring or pedagogical competences necessary to create a non-stressful environment for groups of very young children or know enough to promote those modes of interaction that promote the socio-emotional and language development. Even more so, they will be at a loss to receive children with special learning needs. Interaction with parents may also be limited, especially if they have less education than parents. In fact, few extensive evaluations of childcare centres have indicated high overall quality at national level (see, for example, NICHD (2005) for the United States; Tietze & Cryer (2004) for Germany; EPPE (2004) and DfES (2007) for the UK).

Barriers to access

There are a number of barriers to access in the childcare sector, especially for disadvantaged children. Services are generally less widely available and evenly distributed than in the education sector, and there is no entitlement to access a place. Because parents have to pay, in part or for the whole cost, affordability is often an issue. When childcare services are fee-paying, it can be more difficult for disadvantaged children and families to access services for reasons of cost, unless special vouchers or tax breaks are provided, as in France or the United Kingdom. Even then, the most excluded families are often unable to apply early for places or to master the intricacies of applying for subventions. Their exclusion from services can add to their isolation and to the dependency of young immigrant children on the home language. The situation does not make it easier for these second-language children when they are enrolled for the first time in early education from the age of three or four or five years. The research is fairly unanimous that an early starting age (but not too early), the intensity of focus on learning and the duration of enrolment in early childhood services are particularly important for these children (EACEA, 2009). The following graphic, based on information from Flanders indicates the difficulty of attracting poor and immigrant families to childcare services:

Fig. 2. Access of low-income children to childcare in Flanders
 (Source: Kind en Gezin, *The Child in Flanders, 2007*)



Obviously, the situation is more complex than this graphic indicates. Cultural and quality reasons may also play a part in excluding some groups. For example, the use of childcare services is often not acceptable to new immigrant families although, as Vandebroek (2007) warns, much more research is needed on this issue. The reluctance of immigrant mothers to enrol their children in early childhood centres can have several different causes, for example, affordability, enrolment criteria, the mono-cultural organisation and expectations of existing childcare services that do not recognise or practice diversity; the difficulties that immigrant women have to find work; opposition from male family members to women working outside the home; the expense and difficulty of accessing appropriate child care. Vandebroek (2006) suggests that the social representations of early childhood services both among immigrant and the majority group may play an important role in barring immigrant children from services. Immigrant families are more likely to accept services that are free and considered educational. In a country such as France, they are among the first to enrol their children in early education services from the age of two-and-a-half or three years.

4. Good early childhood education and care services contribute to social inclusion and equity

As part of a wider approach toward inclusion

An important reason for government investment in early childhood services has always been to include disadvantaged children early within the education system. Nation-building rather than social justice inspires state interventions: official texts and speeches can be littered with references to ensuring educational outcomes equal to other nations or to providing future workers able to compete with those of other economies. Whatever the rationales advanced, early childhood services of good quality do contribute to the holistic development of many disadvantaged children and allow them to enter school with good chances of success. Does this

mean that early childhood services by themselves can overcome the effects of poverty or of dysfunctional family environments?

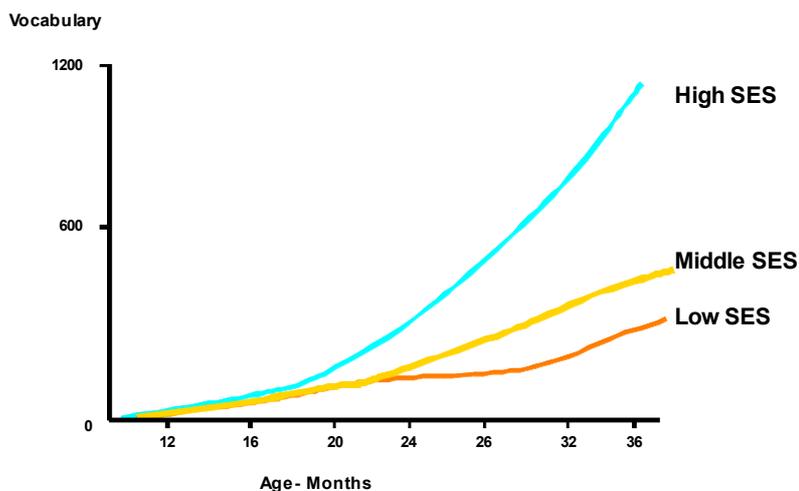
Research suggests that much depends on the global (national) response to inequality and on the type of programming provided by services. As already noted, excluded neighbourhoods and parents need, in addition to mainstream early childhood programmes, many other conditions including the support of special services, income redistribution, housing, social welfare and job creation programmes. A degree of equality and fairness in society is critical to avoid serious social dysfunction (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). We return here once more to Esping-Andersen's analysis: the effectiveness of the social welfare regime in place. Because of their egalitarian traditions and social welfare practices, the Nordic countries generally avoid the worst ravages of school failure, delinquency, family and neighbourhood deprivation experienced in other European countries.

By increasing access, especially for children with diverse learning rights

Access to high quality services is critical for disadvantaged children. Children from lower socio-economic groups are (statistically) likely to have poor outcomes on a wide range of measures, including health, socio-emotional development, educational attainment, school attendance, family stability and employment opportunities.

They are also more likely to commit offences, to be taken into care, or to become very young parents. Moreover, the social class gap opens early and widens swiftly. More able children from poor homes are, by the time they are six years old, doing less well in reading and maths tests than less able children from well-off homes (Feinstein, 2003).

Research suggests that the educational and language level of the family home – and actual parental engagement in the education of their child – strongly influence children's language acquisition. This is illustrated by the well-known Hart and Risley study of 1995, showing that family



13

Source: B.Hart & T. Risley. Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children, 1995

The statistical forecast of poor outcomes is even more probable in the case of poor children from excluded ethnic groups. For example, research from Serbia shows that Roma children fare far worse in education, social outcomes and future employment than children from the lowest income quintile. This, in turn, feeds into negative and sometimes vicious racial stereotyping of Roma children.

Entitlement and funding and affordability are critical to increasing access for children from such backgrounds. When the state provides an entitlement to free or low cost universal early childhood services, attendance is generally high, even for quite young children. However, as outlined in Chapter 2 (see *Parental leave and access and attendance at ECEC services, Table 5; Providers and funding, Table 7*), countries differ widely in their approach towards entitlement to and funding of services.

A marked difference exists, for example, between services for over-threes and under-threes. Parents of children over three years are likely to get a free service, at least for part of the day or for some of this period of their child's life. This is very common in countries that have a school-based early education system; in other systems, parents usually contribute towards costs, though in Sweden, four and five year olds – and soon three-year-olds – are entitled to a period of free attendance. For under-threes, costs to parents can range from about 12% in the Nordic countries to 100% of costs in the UK, although a working family childcare allowance is provided to low- and mid-income families in the UK to subsidise costs. In addition, the Nordic countries – and Slovenia – waive fees or heavily subsidise families who are unable to pay the normal fee.

Services in the Nordic countries and Slovenia are unitary, that is, child care and early education are integrated under one ministry, with centre administration, regulation, financing, staffing and pedagogy applied equally across the age groups. In addition, all children have an entitlement to a service – not just from three years but from the end of parental leave and whether their parents are working or not – as development and education is considered a personal right of the young child. Not surprisingly, attendance at under-three services – which are widely available, free or affordable, and highly regarded by parents and society as a whole – is higher than in most other countries.

The effect of the strong entitlement/low cost formula goes beyond overall attendance. As we discuss below, in the Nordic countries it is associated with a strong shift towards use of formal services and away from informal provision such as relatives and private family day care arrangements. It has also led to a convergence of attendance rates for children from different social backgrounds. An evaluation of recent reforms in Sweden – combining extending entitlement and reducing costs to parents – has shown striking reductions in inequality of attendance (see Box 1). While secondary analysis of the EU-SILC data shows only small variations in attendance at formal services for children under three by maternal educational level in Denmark, Finland and Sweden; compared with substantial inequalities in, for example, France and the UK (see Table 5.5 in Chapter 2)

Box 1: Sweden – parental fee policies influence access

At the beginning of the 1990s, responsibility for early childhood services was transferred to the municipalities, at the same time as Sweden was affected by an economic crisis. Follow-ups to the transfer showed that parental fees for child care increased during the period, as well as the variation in the fee level among municipalities. To prevent certain groups of children from being excluded either temporarily or permanently from pre-school activities, a reform of child care was carried out between 2001 and 2003, focussed on the reduction of parental fees and making services available to non-employed parents. Measures included making services available to children of parents who are unemployed or taking parental leave, setting a maximum fee (less than £100 a month) and providing free pre-school to all four- and five-year-olds. These measures were intended to increase the availability of ECEC services for all young children.

Subsequently, Skolverket, the Swedish National Agency for Education, was asked to review the results of the reform (Skolverket, 2007). It found that the extended entitlement to pre-school activities and the free periods of attendance for four and five-year-olds had significantly increased overall attendance and had reduced inequalities:

- Between rural and urban areas, e.g. in 1998, less than 50% of rural children attended pre-school as against almost 70% in urban areas (a gap of 20%). By 2004, 70% of rural children were enrolled and urban attendance had increased to 80% (a gap of 10%, that is a 50% reduction).
- Between social categories: in 1998, a significant difference in attendance at pre-schools was noted between children of well-educated (tertiary level) parents and other children. By 2004, this difference had almost disappeared, as had recourse to informal services by any category of parents.

As noted in the profile of Sweden, Skolverket also identified a similar reduction in the impact on attendance of other 'background factors', including parental occupation and foreign background of children. Furthermore, "the reform has above all led to an increase in the availability of pre-school for children whose parents are on parental leave with younger siblings, but also for children whose parents are unemployed" (Skolverket, 2007: 18-19): opportunities for children with a non-employed parent to attend pre-school have increased. Between 1999 and 2002, the proportion of parents who wanted an ECEC place but did not have one halved – from 4% to 2%.

Source: Five years with the maximum fee (Skolverket, 2007)

For children over three years, the most common strategy adopted in Europe to increase access – and facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged children – is to provide an entitlement to free early childhood services from the age of three years. With the exception of Poland, all countries of the group under review do so, although Slovenia and the Nordic countries – with the exception of Sweden – charge fees for that age-group.³⁹ The strategy seems to work well across all the countries in the group that adopt it, that is, in all countries with the exception of Poland.

³⁹In Sweden, free attendance for four and five-year-olds is to be extended to three-year-olds.

The universal, free model works also for disadvantaged and ethnic families: a free kindergarten of pre-school service seems to be acceptable to most groups and take-up is over 90% in several countries (Denmark, France, Italy, Hungary, Sweden and the UK). Where there is not a free or highly subsidised service, enrolments are not as high and children from vulnerable groups are more likely not to attend.

One other response, recently adopted in Hungary and Poland, is to make attendance at kindergarten obligatory from the age of five years. Hungarian kindergartens also offer a free meal to impoverished children in order to ensure that children from Roma or other poor ethnic groups attend kindergarten for at least one year before entering primary school. Reports from Hungary suggest that the free meal and other support services have helped to make the obligation acceptable. However, lowering the compulsory age of ECEC attendance can bring certain risks. Apart from it not being the only solution to expanding access, the strategy may remove any pressure on services to become more attractive to young ethnic minority children and their families and may also lead to a schoolification of early childhood methodology. There is also the danger that governments and school systems may place an undue emphasis on education and learning, without trying to resolve the socio-economic structures and prejudice that created the problem in the first place. It may be argued that the success of entitlements in the Nordic countries stems from low or no costs to poor families, the cultural acceptance of early services in these countries and the relatively few children living in poverty. There is also a question of the capacity to provide an entitlement, e.g. to have sufficient numbers of services and the political will at local level to apply the letter of the law. The Nordic countries seem to have that capacity but one is less certain about local political will in other countries to ensure provision to excluded groups. This is most true of Central and Eastern Europe countries, where since the late 90s, enrolment of under threes has been very low and only slow progress has been made in including Roma children.

Through workforce upgrading and diversity profiling

In Section 3 above, we have already referred to the need to provide qualifications, training and good work conditions to staff employed in early childhood services, and especially those working today in 'childcare' services. Services for excluded children need to ensure: security and well-being for the young children within the services; acceptable learning outcomes and eventual school readiness; and positive changes in the attitudes of majority children, staff and parents toward minority children and their families. Such an agenda requires well-trained staff. A number of strategies can be identified in the selected countries for improving the qualifications and working conditions of the workforce. One approach, applied in the Nordic countries and Slovenia, is to restructure and integrate the workforce, basing it on a graduate level worker (teacher or pedagogue) who works with children under and over three years, and whose education, pay and working conditions are similar to school teachers. A less radical and less effective approach is to work with the split system, for example incrementally improving the education and pay of childcare workers and introducing a 'graduate' leadership into childcare services (the current UK strategy, but also to be introduced in Belgium (Flanders) and Hungary).

In addition to raising the pre-service education and qualifications of childcare staff, governments may also wish to reflect on how to improve the diversity profiling and professionalism of early child childhood staff, in early education as much as in childcare. Specialised training and diversity profiling are necessary for work in neighbourhoods with

children from different backgrounds. Strategies include increasing the recruitment of contact educators from diverse backgrounds, providing training that prevents bias and mono-cultural assumptions, and recognising and valuing diversity in all its forms. In the post-communist countries with significant numbers of Roma families, centres employ Roma assistants, who not only assist the children but also keep contact with the families. Discussions are taking place concerning how to provide a career ladder into teaching for these assistants.

According to DECET (2008: Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training – a European organisation based in Ghent), a high quality early childhood service is one where:

- Every child, parent and staff member should feel that s/he belongs. This implies an active policy to take into account family cultures when constructing the curriculum.
- Every child, parent and staff member is empowered to develop the diverse aspects of his/her different identities. This implies that the curriculum fosters multiple identity building and multilingualism by building bridges between the home and the institutional environment as well as with the local community.
- Everyone can learn from each other across cultural and other boundaries
- Everyone can participate as active citizens. These implies that staff develops an explicit anti-bias approach and takes appropriate action to involve all parents.

How do the selected countries measure up to these standards? Curricula from Norway, Sweden and the UK address diversity issues, e.g. the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage in England underlines that “Providers have a responsibility to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and difference”. It is likely that curricula in the other countries carry similar messages.

However, restructuring and reforming the workforce also needs to be accompanied by rethinking – reconceptualising the identity and role of the early childhood worker. Oberhuemer (2008), for example, advocates ‘democratic professionalism’ - a concept based on participatory relationships and co-operation between professional colleagues and other stakeholders. She emphasises engaging and networking with the local community.’ Other authors argue that teachers should be ‘reflective practitioners’ (Schön, 1983) or teacher-researchers who continually question their pedagogical practices and, together with the parents and the children, create an educational practice that is being constantly renewed and improved (Moss, 2006; Cameron, 2005). In a recent book in the *Contesting Early Childhood* series, Lenz Taguchi (2009) points out that, while there is endless talk about respecting diversity, strong standardisation and normalisation in early childhood policy and practice is also taking place, for example, through targets, goals, learning standard, and detailed curricula.

By including parents

Centre-based early childhood services bring a key economic advantage to families in that they allow parents, in particular mothers, to reconcile work and family responsibilities. The increased earnings of the parent(s) contribute to the family budget with, in principle, a standard-of-living enhancement for children and, for the state, more effective education systems and an improved

employment/population ratio.⁴⁰ (CCHRSC, 2009). However, reconciliation calls for other measures - both public and workplace policies - and for fathers to assume more equal sharing of care and upbringing. Moreover, as already noted, the economic advantage also depends on job quality and wage levels.

Though not quite so evident, parents can also reap personal returns from early childhood services. There is some evidence to show that the provision of accessible, affordable and appropriate services allow parents more choice concerning the number of children they desire (OECD, 2009). Again, a recent piece of large-scale research from the University of Chicago (Small, 2009) shows how early childhood services favour parent networking which, in turn, has a powerful effect on their social participation, on their children's school achievement and on job-finding. These effects draw attention to the need to support more actively the family and community environment of the child and to identify the features of early education programmes that have proven to be effective for children and families from excluded groups.

As the first educators of children, parents generally wish to support their child's development and learning. Many are prevented, however, by lack of time, or by underestimating the importance of the responsibility or by not knowing how they can effectively do so. The early childhood centre can encourage parents to invest in their children's socialisation and learning, especially during the early childhood period. Staff can promote positive attitudes toward children's learning, provide parents with information and referrals to other services, and include parents in the life of the centre. In addition, the continuity of children's experience across environments is greatly enhanced when parents and staff-members exchange information regularly and adopt consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning (OECD, 2006)

Through countries learning from and with each other

The phrase is taken from Moss (in *Children in Europe*, 2007) and supported by a number of EU initiatives, such as the Open Method of Co-ordination, which encourages European countries to consult and work with each other. Theory and policy in the early childhood field are extraordinarily rich in Europe and early childhood policy-makers can learn a great deal through observing and reflecting upon what is being done in neighbouring countries. The data in the following table – extracted from the EU tables provided in Chapter 2 –provides an overview of early childhood offers across the ten selected countries and the take-up of services from birth to three years and three to six years.

⁴⁰ The latter has been a key reason for states to invest in early childhood services: more people at work, improved tax returns, a better and more educated workforce, a more effective education system. Even in the current recession, the US States have slightly increased their early education expenditure for the school year, 2009-10 (Education Week, 22nd October 2009).

Table 4. An overview of early childhood offers and uptake in the selected countries

Country	*Parental leave (PL)- months	Entitlement to an ECEC service	Full day in EE c. 8 hours	Unitary or split system	Staff & age integrated	Formal enrolments 0-3	3-6s
Denmark	12	Yes - 6 months	Yes	Unitary	Yes	70%	97%
Norway	12.5	Yes - 1 year	Yes	Unitary	Yes	33%	80%
Sweden	13	Yes - 1 year	Yes	Unitary	Yes	47%	91%
France	4	Yes - 3 years	Yes	Split	No	28%	93%
Italy	4.5	No	Depends	Split	No	25%	90%
Portugal	5	No	Yes	Split	No	27%	75%
U. Kingdom	1.5	Yes - 3 years	No	Unitary	No	38%	84%
Hungary	25	No	Yes	Split	No	8%	84%
Poland	4	No	No	Split	No	2%	65%
Slovenia	12.5	Yes - from end of PL	Yes	Unitary	No	30%	84%

Notes

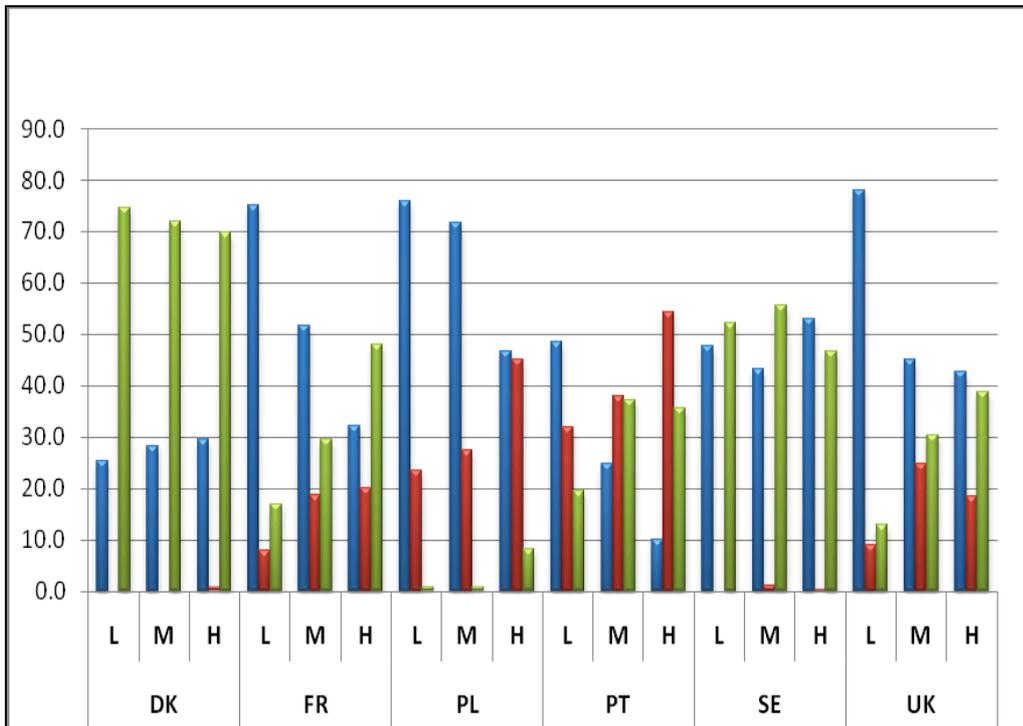
*Parental leave is statutory maternity, paternity and parental leave paid at two-thirds or more of normal earnings

Formal enrolments means enrolments in formal services, that is, in services subsidised, regulated and inspected by the state.

A rapid analysis of the table shows that the three Nordic countries have among the highest access rate of all countries, particularly for the younger children. In addition, these countries offer a year-long parental leave at two-thirds replacement wage, and provide service entitlements to children much earlier than other countries. The structure of their early childhood system is unitary, that is, services for one to three-year-olds and three to six-year-olds are integrated – managerially, financially, pedagogically, by staff, age and location. They offer also full-day services to children, unlike other countries, which though having high access rates may offer only a few hours per day to children.

Evidence from another data source – the Brussels PEPSI Project (2009) – suggests also that compared to other countries, there is a marked preference and use across all social strata in the Nordic countries for formal services. The figure below shows in most countries a strong social gradient in the preference for either parental or informal care as against formal services except in Denmark or Sweden where informal care has almost totally disappeared. It is interesting to note that in both these countries, there is a steady rise in parental care as parents are more educated, which again goes against the trend in most other countries.

Fig. 4. Use of services (parental, informal and formal) according to the educational levels of parents



Levels of education: L – Low, M-Medium, H-High

DK – Denmark, FR – France, PL – Poland, PT – Portugal, SE – Sweden, UK – United Kingdom

■ Parental care, ■ Informal care, ■ Formal care

Source: Amerijckx and Humblet, 2008

The graphic also shows the strong preference for parental care among Polish parents and the existence of high levels of informal care in Poland and Portugal, and to a lesser extent in the UK and France. The impact of such choices on social inclusion is probably negative: the use of maternal care by immigrant or low-income groups means not only less family income but also suggests more isolation from and less contact with mainstream population and events. From a children's perspective, the use of informal services is also not reassuring: many informal providers have no training and little knowledge of developmental issues. Their focus is often on physical care and safety, with much less attention to children's learning, social development and language acquisition.

Postscript: The adequacy of data sources and identification of key information gaps

In the text sent to country experts, the investigators asked whether data is collected on a regular and official basis on:

- The supply and distribution of early childhood services across the country;
- Enrolments and profiles of children enrolled (e.g. age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, etc.);

- Care arrangements for 0-12 children (i.e. who cares for them during the day, including out-of-school care);
- The workforce – numbers, qualifications, pay and profile (e.g. age, gender,);
- Structural standards, e.g. ratios and group sizes;

A sixth question was whether a national evaluation of early childhood services had been undertaken in the last five years. These six requirements were considered to be necessary to make informed national policy in the early childhood field and to ensure equity of access for disadvantaged children.

Many of the selected countries achieved four or five of the criteria, at least to some degree. But only one country, Sweden, met all six requirements. Unlike most other countries Sweden has undertaken a recent national evaluation of its early childhood system: *Pre-school in transition - A national evaluation of the Swedish pre-school* (Skolverket, 2004), followed in 2007 by an evaluation of the impact of the maximum fee (Skolverket, 2007), followed again in 2008 by a comprehensive statistical review of children and staff in preschools (Skolverket, Report 315, 2008).

The situation of data collection in the UK is also good. Regular surveys of parents' take-up, views and experiences of childcare have been made since the late 1990s, the most recent being in 2008. Research results and data on both childcare and early are also available in England through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF – formerly DES, Department for Education and Skills) and regular OFSTED reports, and similarly so in Scotland through the Care Commission and by government inspection (HMiE). By contrast, several countries have only approximate knowledge about supply, distribution of services, enrolments and outcomes, especially in the childcare sector.

In general, the data situation with regard to disadvantaged children is unsatisfactory, for example attendance rates between different income, social and ethnic groups. Their exact number in or outside services is not known in most countries nor do we have sufficient information, except in a handful of countries, about the additional funds allocated to services for disadvantaged children or about successful strategies undertaken for these children. Without such data, it is challenging to design effective policies within mainstream early childhood services in favour of social inclusion.

Similarly, there is little information on the composition of the workforce, especially with respect to social, ethnic or other dimensions of diversity.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

There are wide variations in Early childhood education and care systems and services

Key dimensions of variation include:

- *The respective role of formal and informal services:* in countries with well developed formal services for *all* ages of pre-school children, use of informal provision (e.g. relatives, private family day care), which in most countries is particularly significant for children under three years, has dropped to a low level. Is this because the supply of informal care has fallen (e.g. as more women, including grandmothers, are employed), because most parents prefer formal provision when available or a combination of the two?
- *The structuring of formal services, in particular how far they have integrated formerly split childcare/education systems:* in some countries integration has begun, but remains partial (e.g. with major differences continuing between services in areas such as access, funding and workforce); in other cases, there is full integration, with no distinction between services for children under and over three or between 'childcare' and 'education'. Most countries in the EU still maintain totally split systems, with ECEC policy, administration, structure and practice totally divided between welfare and education sectors.
- *The relationship of ECEC services (a) to leave policies and (b) to compulsory schooling.* Payment, length and other design features of leave policy vary considerably, influencing who takes leave, for how long and with what effects. Some countries have focused on providing a year or so of well-paid leave; others offer around three years, usually not well paid over most of the leave period. Some countries adopt a gender-neutral approach, others have active incentives to encourage paternal take-up. Whatever the leave system, except for the Nordic countries and Slovenia, it is unusual to find a well articulated relationship between leave policies and ECEC services, by which we mean a well paid period of leave and an entitlement to ECEC that is either concurrent or immediately consecutive to leave.

At the other end of the ECEC period, compulsory schooling, or a voluntary 'pre-school' class in school, usually begin at six years, though a few countries start compulsory schooling (in some cases including a final compulsory year at ECEC) at five years or (in the case of Luxembourg and Northern Ireland) four years.

So at one extreme, in a Nordic country, children may typically start ECEC in their second year, and leave to enter school at six years, i.e. a four-to-five year spell in early childhood services often spent in one age-integrated centre (e.g. a kindergarten or pre-school) and often for more than 30 hours a week. At the other extreme, for instance in the UK, a child may typically enter nursery education at three years, before admission to the first year of primary school at five years or even in the previous year, i.e. a one to

two year spell in early childhood services usually spent in an age-segregated centre (e.g. a nursery class in a primary school) and usually for less than 30 hours a week.

There are large inequalities in attendance rates at early childhood education and care services...

Overall levels of attendance vary between countries, and these variations are most striking for children under three years. Most countries in the EU now have high levels of attendance for children over three years, often based on entitlement, but the same is not true for the younger age group, where only a small number of countries offer an entitlement to children from 12 months.

If attendance rates were calculated not simply on a headcount basis (i.e. how many children go to ECEC) but on a 'full time equivalent' basis (i.e. how many children attend and for how long), then variations between countries would be more marked. This reflects different offers in different services, ranging from Nordic countries where services are typically open on an all day basis; to countries like the Netherlands and the UK where much provision is organised and available for short part-time hours of attendance.

There are also documented inequalities for other variables apart from age:

- *Type of area*: children living in rural areas have less access to services and lower attendance levels;
- *Social background*: in most countries, there is a gradient in attendance at formal services for children under three years, with lowest attendance for children whose mothers have low levels of education and highest for children with mothers who are graduates;
- *Ethnic background*: although the evidence is patchy, it seems probable that attendance is lower for children from certain minority ethnic groups.

And also within the early childhood education and care workforce

As is well documented by now, the ECEC workforce is highly gendered, overwhelmingly constituted by women. Even Norway, the country that has done most to change this situation, has less than 10 per cent male workers; elsewhere it is usually less than 2 per cent. This situation has shown no signs of change over decades, and seems to reflect deep seated understandings about the nature of ECEC work and women's innate suitability to undertake it, compounded by a failure on the part of almost all significant players (e.g. governments, training institutions, providers of services) to address the issue in a systematic and sustained way (Norway being a notable exception over the last decade or so). Due to lack of information, it is not possible to say whether the workforce in different countries is similarly unrepresentative of the population on other dimensions of diversity, for example whether it under-represents the minority ethnic population.

But there are also striking inequalities within the ECEC workforce, most notably between those working in 'childcare' and 'education', which often equates to those working with children under and over three years. In both split and only partially integrated systems, the 'childcare' workforce lags far behind the 'education' workforce, with its professional cadre of teachers, in terms of education, pay and employment conditions. The situation of family day carers is

especially bad, but the childcare workforce in general is excluded from good quality employment, despite the social and educative importance of the work they do.

These inequalities can be overcome

Inequalities in access and among the workforce can and have been largely reduced in those countries that have *fully* integrated their ECEC systems. In such cases, full integration has typically included: extending entitlement to all children over 12 months (or sometimes younger); a common funding regime that reduces costs of attendance for all children; and restructuring the workforce around a core professional working across the whole early childhood age range, i.e. with children under and over three years. The best examples are Denmark (which has integrated ECEC fully in welfare, with a pedagogue as the core professional), and Sweden (which originally did the same but has now transferred its fully integrated service into education, and where a pre-school teacher is the core professional). In both countries, these professionals constitute just over half the total workforce, the remainder consisting of less well qualified workers. Norway and Slovenia, both fully integrated in education, are other important examples,

This does not mean that no steps to reduce inequalities can be taken in split or partially integrated systems. Much can be done and there are examples in practice, for example measures to upgrade the position of 'childcare' workers and to develop services in rural areas. Despite these examples, the divisions and inequalities remain and are highly visible in these systems. We would conclude that split and only partially integrated systems, because services are divided between sectors with different values and approaches, seem to be inimical to ECEC based on full equality for children and workers.

Early childhood education and care services can be a major source of high quality employment in Europe

There are many examples of ECEC work already providing good quality employment, especially in educational and pedagogical services for children over three years, where graduate professionals are widespread, playing a major role. However, there is considerable scope for more such employment, with three factors potentially able to drive growth. Continuing expansion of ECEC services, especially for children under three years where the shortfall of services is greatest, will increase employment. If the education, pay and employment conditions of workers with children under three years are improved, leading to a fully integrated ECEC workforce, then increased employment will also mean increased good quality employment.

There is also an important and relatively neglected issue about the number of graduate professionals needed in the ECEC workforce. This already varies considerably between countries. In the UK, for example, the goal is one graduate worker in each nursery; in Norway about 30 per cent of kindergarten workers are graduates, in Denmark and Sweden it is just over half; whilst in New Zealand, the world leader in this respect, the goal is 80 per cent. To take another example, in French nursery schools there will be one graduate teacher per class of about 30 three to six-year olds; in Sweden pre-schools, there is one graduate pre-school teacher in a group about half this size. There is, therefore, considerable scope for further discussions not only about group sizes but also about the proportion of the workforce that should be graduate professionals. If the Swedish ratio became the European norm, then the employment of graduate professionals would increase in many other countries.

Good quality employment can also be increased by developing the range of services provided by ECEC services, by making them multi-purpose centres offering a variety of functions to families and their local communities with the necessary staffing to support these functions.

Early childhood education and care is not a magic solution to poverty and social inclusion...

Often based on unwarranted generalizations from small-scale, local studies undertaken in the US, uncritical claims are made for the power of early intervention including ECEC services to fix deep-seated, structural societal problems, including poverty and social exclusion. One dollar (or perhaps euro) invested, we are told, will guarantee a high return, variously quoted as 6, 13 or 16 dollars. However the recurrent poor performance on health and social indicators of the US should provoke some scepticism about these claims for the transformative power of ECEC and a recent EC-funded research review advises caution about “the application of the findings (from these studies) beyond the communities in the USA where the investigations were undertaken” (NESSE, 2009: 28).

It is certainly the case that countries with the best developed ECEC services also perform well in international comparisons of social performance including child poverty and well-being, and it would be wrong to say that ECEC plays no part in this. But the success of these countries is probably due to a complex combination of various factors: relatively low income inequality and a strong welfare state across many sectors; high taxation that redistributes income and finances the welfare state, including good services; and widely accepted cultural and political values that assign priority to democracy, rights, solidarity and equality. Good ECEC services are part of and a product of this context, and it is in this mutually supportive context that they can have most impact, complementing other measures and supported by a strong tax base and societal values.

...but it has a part to play

Good ECEC services can play an important part in supporting employed parents and the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, so contributing to greater equality (gender and otherwise), lower poverty and social exclusion – but in conjunction with good leave policies, supportive workplaces and fathers assuming more responsibility for child-rearing. To these might be added measures to provide good job training, to improve wage levels and to increase good quality employment; the ECEC field is a classic example of how one country’s low quality employment can be another country’s high quality employment.

Good ECEC services can also provide opportunities for social inclusion and democratic participation for children and parents through providing a public space where all citizens, young and old, can meet, dialogue and relate – but in conjunction with other measures to reduce exclusion and marginalisation. ECEC services understood not only as public spaces but as multi-purpose community resources – collaborative workshops – are more likely to support inclusion, through being responsive to the diverse needs and circumstances of their local communities.

If ECEC services are to make their full contribution to reducing exclusion, not only must they be available and accessible, multi-purpose and responsive. They need a well educated workforce able and wanting to work democratically and with diversity – ‘democratic reflective practitioners’. And constant attention must be paid to how best to make these services

welcoming, responsive and supportive of all families in their communities. Getting the structures right is essential, but so too is working on ethos and practice.

And it can make things worse

As already noted, ECEC services have the potential to support greater equality and inclusion – but they can also exacerbate inequality and exclusion. For example, by creating a large workforce of low paid women workers; or by structuring that favours access by more advantaged families, such as admission criteria that prioritise children of parents already in employment or funding systems that deter lower income families; or by adopting practices and relationships that ignore or stifle diversity and complexity. ECEC services have great potential, but they can also be dangerous, offering many opportunities to normalise and govern children and families through applying standardised outcomes and measures.

Statistical information needs to be improved.

Most countries have broad brush statistical information on a few items, such as overall enrolment levels and numbers of staff. But few provide statistics on a regular basis that would enable ongoing *assessment of which groups are accessing ECEC services, in what ways they are doing so, and how, if at all, this is changing.* When do children start attending and how long do they attend for? What is the attendance pattern in different types of area? How does attendance compare between children from different social, ethnic and economic backgrounds? What is the comparative use of formal and informal provision? What are parents paying for services and how does this relate to income and levels of access? These are basic items that should be part of any rigorous ongoing monitoring and evaluation of ECEC systems.

Two other areas require improved statistical information. An ongoing and detailed picture is needed of the *ECEC workforce*, again to enable assessment of how systems are functioning and evolving. Such information needs to include: the socio-demographic profile of the workforce (e.g. age, gender, ethnic origin); education (initial and continuous) and qualifications; pay, working hours and work conditions; and recruitment and retention. *Financial data* is also urgently required, starting with the basic issue of expenditure on ECEC services, both private and public, enabling assessment of the share of GDP allocated to this area and also of how total costs are met. What proportion of expenditure comes from government, parents, employers and others? And what proportion of household income is expended by different groups of families?

Statistical information currently varies between countries, but within countries the situation is often made worse by childcare and education sectors conducting different and non-comparable statistical operations.

The EU has begun to be a source of comparative cross-national statistical information, using EU-SILC, which is providing some information on access to ECEC services, both formal and informal, and also enables linkages to be made between access and socio-economic characteristics of families. Further secondary analysis of this source, to explore its potential, would be valuable, while at the same time it will be important to compare results from this source with national data sources, e.g. for access to services, to understand better the causes and significance of discrepancies between EU and national statistics.

The EU could provide a valuable role in the development of a more standardised approach, at national level, to statistical information, which would enable comparable data to be assembled

that could contribute to the evaluation of ECEC systems in different member states. The report of the 1995 EC Childcare Network seminar on information needed for an effective policy on reconciling employment and caring for children would form a good starting point for this process.

Children in Scotland, January 2010