

Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities





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PREFACE



For several years now, in the context of public budget constraints, globalisation and demographic change there has been a debate at the European level about the need for efficient investment in education. The current world financial and economic crisis will no doubt inject further urgency into this debate.

It is frequently assumed that efficiency and equity objectives in education are mutually opposed, and that one can only be achieved at the expense of the other. However, as the Commission argued in its 2006 Communication *Efficiency and Equity in European education and training systems* ⁽¹⁾ 'the evidence shows that, viewed in a wider perspective, equity and efficiency are in fact mutually reinforcing'. Nowhere is this more true than with regard to pre-primary education. It is both more efficient and more equitable to invest in education very early: correcting failure later on is not merely inequitable, but highly inefficient in comparison. This is so not only because pre-primary education facilitates later learning, but also because a substantial body of evidence shows that, especially for disadvantaged children, it can produce large socio-economic returns. In its Communication, the Commission concluded that:

Pre-primary education has the highest returns in terms of the social adaptation of children. Member States should invest more in pre-primary education as an effective means to establish the basis for further learning, preventing school drop-out, increasing equity of outcomes and overall skill levels.

For this reason, the Commission has identified pre-primary education as a priority theme for cooperation between Member States in 2009-10, in particular to promote generalised equitable access and reinforce the quality of provision and teacher support ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ COM (2006) 481 final, 8 September 2006.

⁽²⁾ Commission Communication COM (2008) 865 Final *An updated strategic framework for EU cooperation in education and training* 16 December 2008.

This new study from Eurydice is part of the follow-up to the 2006 Communication on Equity and Efficiency. The study presents the available cross-national data and examines national policies on early childhood education and care in Europe. It combines this with a summary of what research tells us in this domain and a summary of the main trends and approaches in Europe, drawing some tentative conclusions as to what might be some effective ways of achieving equity and efficiency in pre-primary education. As such, I believe it is essential reading for anyone involved in the provision of pre-primary education, which is a major and immediate challenge facing European Education systems and is closely related to the challenges facing our societies as a whole today.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ján Figel'". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke across the top.

Ján Figel'

Commissioner responsible for
Education, Training, Culture and Youth

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INTRODUCTION

This study explores the available cross-national data and national policies on early childhood education and care (later – ECEC) in Europe. **Early childhood education and care** in this study refers to publicly subsidised and accredited provision for children under compulsory school age. ‘Education’ and ‘care’ are combined in the phrase to underline that services for young children can combine care, developmental and learning opportunities.

The study addresses the general issues regarding the ECEC along with efforts to improve efficiency and equity in education. The emphasis is placed on policies geared specifically for at risk children. Defining **at risk children** this study uses OECD category 'C/Disadvantages' for 'pupils with special educational needs', namely 'children with disadvantages stemming mainly from socio-economic, cultural and/or language factors. The need arises from disadvantages attributable to these factors'. This therefore excludes measures for children with special educational needs due to organic disabilities and/or illness requiring extended hospitalisation (which is central to the work carried out by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education). Disadvantage arising from living in rural and remote areas is included in this broad definition. When available, national definitions of children at risk are presented in the Annex 1 Table B.

Scope

The study covers the 30 member countries of the Eurydice Network ⁽¹⁾.

The reference year of the study is 2006/07. The background Eurostat data mostly refers to 2005/06.

The study analyses only accredited and subsidised ECEC provision, which includes public provision as well as semi-private provision for children aged from birth to the age at which they enter compulsory primary school. Public provision is publicly run and funded, while semi-private provision is run privately (understood in the broadest sense to mean any provider which is not a public authority), but receives at least some public funding and is subject to public control and quality standards. Only centre-based provision is analysed, home-based provision is not within the scope of the study.

All measures introduced by the public authorities, regardless of their administrative level or the ministry responsible for them, are considered (the public authorities that are responsible for ECEC in each country are listed in the Annex 1 Table A). They may emanate from the education authorities or authorities responsible for other sectors, or be joint measures. They may be targeted solely at education or be part of broader social policies. They may focus on centres caring for young children or on families. Private initiatives are excluded.

⁽¹⁾ Turkey, a member of the Eurydice Network, did not contribute to this study.

Structure of the study

The study is in three parts, comprising: (1) a review of scientific literature on the impact of high quality education and care on young children; (2) a scene-setting chapter presenting statistical data on relevant demographic characteristics of European families and the participation rates in ECEC; (3) a comparative analysis of policy measures based on information collected from national units of the Eurydice network.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of research into the effects of early childhood education and care for disadvantaged low income and ethnic minority children. It integrates what is currently known from the research about the pedagogical quality, curriculum content, structural quality and overarching systems design of pre-primary education.

Chapter 2 provides background indicators in areas linked to ECEC in Europe. It gives a general overview of demographic data on numbers of households with small children and discusses the distribution of specific factors that create educational disadvantages, namely the prevalence of single parent households, proportion of non-national children and financial insecurity of households with small children. The general levels of participation in early childhood education and care and financing of pre-primary education are presented. The chapter is based on Eurostat data.

Chapter 3 discusses access to early childhood education and care in European countries. It describes the structure of ECEC, covering age at which children may attend these programmes, models of organisation, capacity planning and demand. A special section is devoted to the barriers to participation that place children at risk of exclusion. Policies aimed to broaden the access are presented.

Chapter 4 describes organisation of provision and approaches to education. Standards regarding group sizes and health and safety requirements are presented as indicators of quality. The objectives attributed to the various organisational structures of ECEC are summarised, as well as dominant educational models and curriculum. The chapter highlights the common conceptual division between care and education function, which is reflected in most countries by organising separate provision for children younger and older than 3 years. Approaches and initiatives for children at risk are discussed in greater detail as well as partnerships with parents.

Chapter 5 is devoted to education and training of staff. It covers the initial training of staff and the continuing professional development. The minimum requirements for the level and duration of initial training are presented distinguishing staff working with younger and older children, when applicable. The staffing structure in the settings is indicated. Training for dealing with children at risk is discussed both regarding the initial training and the opportunities for continuing professional development.

Chapter 6 focuses on the financing of early childhood education and care provision discussing the levels involved, i.e. central and/or local to family level contributions through fees. The financial strategies that facilitate the provision for children from disadvantaged groups are explicitly addressed.

The **summary and conclusions** are highlighted in the last chapter. **Annexes** include tables listing public authorities responsible for ECEC and national definitions of children at risk as well as short descriptions of national frameworks on ECEC from 18 countries of the Eurydice Network. Detailed national descriptions of seven countries (German-speaking Community of Belgium, France, Lithuania,

Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia) of the Eurydice Network are available on www.eurydice.org.

The data collection tool (available on the website) for this study has been elaborated in close cooperation with the national units of Eurydice and a special Eurydice network working group on equity in ECEC. Answers to this tool (national contributions) have been provided by the Eurydice national units, while the European unit of Eurydice has drafted the comparative study. Scientific experts in the fields have also contributed. All the contributors to this study are acknowledged at the end of the volume.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study forms part of the follow-up to the Communication '*Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems*' adopted by the Commission in September 2006 ⁽¹⁾ which explicitly refers to pre-primary education 'as an effective means to establish the basis for further learning, preventing school drop-out, increasing equity of outcomes and overall skill levels'. The study examines the available cross-national data and national policies on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe. It is structured in three parts, comprising: (1) a review of scientific literature on the impact of high quality education and care on young children; (2) a scene-setting chapter presenting statistical data on relevant demographic characteristics of European families and the participation rates in ECEC; (3) a comparative analysis of policy measures based on information collected from national units of the Eurydice network.

What do we learn from scientific research on early childhood education and care?

The pre-primary age is an especially sensitive period in children's development. A range of socio-economic factors can have a significant negative impact on children's psychological development and chances of success at school. These include: poverty; belonging to disadvantaged social classes; functional illiteracy and low levels of educational attainment of parents; and religious traditions associated with a cultural life where literacy is not highly regarded. Although low income or ethnic minority status alone may not be a decisive factor in development, it is the *combination* of factors that leads to serious consequences for child development.

Pre-primary education can contribute importantly to combating educational disadvantages, if certain conditions are met. The most effective intervention programmes *involve intensive, early starting, child-focused, centre-based education together with strong parent involvement, parent education, programmed educational home activities and measures of family support*. Most researchers also agree that the training of staff responsible for educational activities in ECEC should be at the bachelor level of higher education and should be specialised.

Due to their cultural and religious beliefs, parents of low-income communities and ethnic and socio-linguistic minorities may value upbringing at home, by the mother. They may, in addition, consider children below primary school age as too young for participating in an education programme. Although these parents do value a successful school career for their children, they may not see the connection between this goal and using a day care centre or pre-primary school. Yet, research suggests that home-based education programmes are less effective than centre-based programmes. Parents as primary intervention agents are rarely sufficiently skilled to carry out such programme activities. For example, they may be illiterate or the home language may not be the language of instruction. Also, the home situation may not be conducive to optimal learning.

⁽¹⁾ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems, COM (2006) 481 final of 8 September 2006.

The current scientific debates emphasise the importance of a balance between different educational approaches. Education programmes for very young children (under 5) should work predominantly in a child-centred, developmental way, whereas programmes for older children between 5 and 6 years may introduce academic subjects in a more planned, teacher-directed curriculum without having negative social-emotional consequences. A later emphasis on academic skills, after a predominantly developmental approach that focused on fostering of social-emotional competence, may even provide better support for the transition to primary school. The debate on the comparative merits of the two educational models would therefore appear fruitless; the priority is to combine so as to achieve the best results for children.

The long-term efficacy of ECEC seems to be best ensured by an approach that involves child, family, school and high school – a continued ‘nurture’ that broadens the scope of the intervention to include the family context and extends the approach far into elementary school.

What is the situation of families with young children in Europe?

In Europe, nearly one in eight households (12 %) is caring for a child under the age of 6. In Spain, Cyprus and Portugal such households make more than 15 %. Only Bulgaria, Germany and Finland have less than 10 % of households with at least one child under the age of 6.

There are several possible at risk groups whose distribution varies across the European countries. Firstly, single parent households with small children on average constitute 9 %, with 20 % in the United Kingdom. Secondly, non-national children comprise 3 % of the total population of children under 6 in Europe. Thirdly, nearly one in six European households (17 %) with a child under the age of 6 lives on the poverty threshold. The situation is a particular concern in Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom, which have more than 20 % of such households. This indicator is particularly important, because arguably poverty is a major trigger for other risk factors.

In most countries, women’s engagement in the labour force is clearly linked to the age of their children. The male economic activity rate is not affected by the age of children and is systematically higher than the rate for women. Many European women withdraw from the labour market when they are caring for a child under the age of 3. Women with children aged 3 to 6 years have still lower than average economic activity rates, but as soon as the youngest child reaches the age of 6, most European women state that they are prepared to take up gainful employment. This withdrawal from the workplace could be partly explained by the lack of available provision for young children.

What is the current early childhood education and care provision in Europe?

All European countries have introduced accredited and subsidised ECEC services, but in a few countries (the Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and Liechtenstein) there is very limited or no publicly funded provision for children under the age of 3 years and the participation rate in subsidised settings is very low.

Two main organisational models for ECEC services are apparent in Europe. Under the first model, provision for young children is provided in unitary settings, organised in a single phase for all children of pre-school age. Each setting has only one management team for children of all age groups and staff responsible for children’s education have, generally, the same qualifications and salary scales

regardless of the age of the children they look after. These teachers or playgroup leaders are often accompanied by staff belonging to other occupational categories in the field of infant care, such as childminders or nursery nurses. The unitary model prevails in the Nordic countries (excluding Denmark), Latvia and Slovenia. Under the second model, which is the most widespread in Europe, ECEC services are structured according to the age of the children (normally for children aged 0 to 3 years and for children aged 3 to 6 years). Each type of provision may be dependent on different ministries. In a few countries both models coexist (Denmark, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Lithuania).

The starting age for ECEC provision varies widely across Europe. In most countries the ECEC is available from the birth (in practice from around 3 months). In Denmark, Slovakia and Liechtenstein, the possible starting age is around 6 months. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden provide early childhood services only from the age of 1. Before this age, parents are encouraged to stay at home with their babies through a system of maternity and parental benefits.

The social security system, however, may sometimes act as an indirect barrier to ECEC even when provision is available. A system of lengthy parental leave and generous benefits can encourage parents to stay at home with their young children, as is the case in Estonia, Lithuania, Austria and Romania. This phenomenon can be reinforced when legislation requires a reduction in parental leave and allowances if the child attends an education/care setting, even if attendance is only part-time. In other countries such measures are more flexible in that parental rights are adjusted in relation to the number of hours a child attends a setting. However, in either case it would appear that these measures have a dissuasive effect on parents, especially for low-income and low-educated families.

Countries which have adopted the unitary model have, in some form or another, granted all children the right to a place in an educational setting from the earliest age. In other countries, where there is no guaranteed access to subsidised ECEC, places are allocated following different types of guidelines. Parental employment status is usually the main (or even the only) criterion for access to childcare for children under 2 years old, which shows the predominance of the childcare function – linked to parents' employment – over educational purposes. Another criterion that often determines preferential access is residence. In general, age is the most important determinant of access to pre-primary education (level ISCED 0) and, in most countries the ECEC functions are clearly dependent on age. The childcare role is still predominant in ECEC for very young children. Settings designed for these children usually follow objectives related to the well-being of the child and the parents' work-life balance. Many countries do not even have any central recommendations or guidelines regarding curricula for the youngest children. On the other hand, ECEC for 3-6 year-olds constitutes the first step on the educational ladder. At this level, the mission to educate is clear and overrides the child-minding function related to parental employment. The aim everywhere is to stimulate cognitive, social and cultural development and to prepare children for early learning activities in reading, writing and maths. Furthermore, staff working at this level of education have a pedagogy-related training which combines practical work experience with theoretical classes intended to produce qualified teachers or general educators.

Regarding the opening hours of ECEC services two broad approaches are apparent in Europe: subsidised ECEC may be more or less fully compatible with the working hours of parents or be available only on a part-time basis. In the majority of European countries ECEC settings generally provide extensive opening hours that take account of the needs of working parents, including some flexible arrangements (evenings, nights and/or weekends).

The problem of access – at least as regards the volume of supply – has been virtually solved throughout Europe for 5-year-olds, but this is certainly not the case for the 0-3 age group, or even for 4-year-olds in some countries. This lack of supply is particularly acute in rural areas. Nevertheless, the participation rates in ECEC have increased significantly over recent years. Participation rates of 3-year-olds in pre-primary education have risen on average by about 10 % since 2000/01. Concurrently, expenditure on pre-primary education on average in Europe increased from 2001 to 2004. Currently 74 % of 3-year-olds, 87 % of 4-year-olds, and 93 % of 5-year-olds in Europe attend a formal pre-primary or primary education programme. Several countries have introduced a preparatory compulsory year for 5/6 year-olds, and Luxembourg even for 4 year-olds.

A favourable child/staff ratio is crucial in ensuring the quality of interactions between educators and children. Yet, staffing levels do not seem to achieve this in all European countries and often no national standards exist. The child/staff ratio is generally more favourable for younger children than for older ones. One adult is usually responsible for less than 10 children under the age of 3, while for 3-6 year-olds the maximum group size under the supervision of one teacher varies between 20 and 25 children. An exception to this is those countries where provision is made in unitary settings, where favourable child/staff ratios apply for all age groups.

Fees for ECEC constitute a very important factor for equity. All European countries finance or co-finance provision for ECEC for over 3-year-olds and many countries do not even require any family contributions. Regarding the education and care of the youngest children all countries – apart from Hungary – expect families to contribute to the cost of ECEC provision.

What is done for disadvantaged children in Europe?

All countries implement measures intended to prevent educational difficulties for children at risk. In the majority of countries, intervention is targeted at groups on the basis of defined social, economic or cultural criteria. In a few countries, support is based on the individual needs of children identified during the course of their education/instruction. Regarding these groups/individuals countries apply a variety of approaches which are not mutually exclusive:

- Special language training programmes mostly for enhancement of the second language, but sometimes also for the mother tongue. The most common are the compensatory programmes or the provision of specialist support for older children (3-6 year-olds) at pre-primary level.
- Appointment of extra staff in mainstream settings which cater for all children but which also admit children with difficulties.
- Provision of separate settings/sections for specific groups: children of the unemployed, refugees, Roma children, ethnic minorities, children in particular circumstances such as orphans or those separated from their family for some reason.

Three main strategies are apparent for providing additional financial support to ECEC settings for the provision of services to at risk groups in Europe: additional financial assistance and/or additional staffing (the most widespread); financial incentives for staff working with children at risk or in settings where the majority of children are from groups at risk; and additional financial support for local authorities from central level taking into account regional demographic and socio-economic factors.

The most common factors leading to exclusion from ECEC include affordability and shortfalls in provision. To eliminate or attenuate the effects of this on the most deprived children, nearly all

European countries have implemented financial aid for the families concerned. Most countries use family income and number of children criteria to adjust the levels of fees paid for accredited public ECEC services. Tax deductions are also often used to assist families with childcare costs. Tax rebates on fees paid for childcare services (for 0-3 year-olds) are available in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom and Norway.

Some countries have special regulations regarding staff ratios for groups that include children at risk. These involve either an increase in the number of teaching staff, such as in Belgium and France where these standards are integrated within a priority area policy, or the addition of an assistant, as in Ireland and Cyprus. In Spain, the numbers of children in the class are reduced. In Slovenia, standards may vary according to the level of regional development or the presence of Roma children. However, these measures usually apply for older children; only three countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Slovenia) set specific standards for the under 2-3 years-old children at risk.

Policy issues for the future

There is a political choice between promoting the care of young children at home or encouraging participation in ECEC. If the choice is that children should be encouraged into education/care settings then the measures to be implemented are different from those needed for the alternative choice. In the first case, there is a need for more investment so that provision can be increased, access made easier, opening hours extended and improvements made in quality – particularly in the training requirements for personnel. If the alternative choice is made, parental long-term leave would need to be promoted and financial incentives given to encourage take-up. This political choice principally concerns children at-risk as research suggests that they get the greatest benefit from attendance at an ECEC quality setting. Home-based education, even when providing parental support, is usually not enough to close the educational gap.

With respect to 0 to 3 year-olds, it is important to stress that, in many European countries, the volume of provision seems insufficient. From the evidence in this study, significant financial investment and the creation of early childhood education/care settings would be needed. This could entail the creation of a unitary system of early childhood education and care with settings which accommodate the entire age group for 0/1 to 5/6 years.

The best way to guarantee educational quality in ECEC centres is to ensure that all staff receive high-quality training, both in learning and cultural approaches. As the study shows, there is great room for improvement here, particularly as regards staff in charge of the youngest children. Their training is often rooted in a tradition of healthcare and social welfare. It is provided at upper secondary school level in almost half of European countries, whereas the training of educational staff responsible for children aged over 3 is delivered at tertiary education level virtually everywhere.

Many researchers have also stressed the importance of involving parents in the process of preserving the beneficial effects of pre-primary education in the longer term. However, this is often lacking in practice. In the majority of countries, partnership with families goes no further than providing information and advice. That, in particular, is the aim of meetings with parents, who are rarely involved in an active way in the care and education of young children. However, new initiatives (i.e. networking, direct involvement of parents in certain activities, clear support and partnerships) are underway in a number of places, suggesting that awareness may be increasing and the situation evolving gradually.

CHAPTER 1: THE IMPACT OF HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION AND CARE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Paul P.M. Leseman, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Introduction

In the face of the persistent education gap, most industrialised countries provide pre-primary education programmes targeted at low income and ethnic or sociolinguistic minority groups (OECD, 2001). The programmes generally aim to promote the cognitive, language, literacy and numeracy skills of pre-primary children to provide them with a fair start in primary school. They also aim to develop the social and emotional competence of children. However, the models and systems of pre-primary education programmes implemented in these countries differ vastly in coverage, intensity, quality, and probably impact, as was reported previously (Leseman, 2002). Pre-primary education is used here as a general term referring to several different models, which can be care oriented and/or instruction oriented, and which comprise centre-based, home-based and community-based approaches. In most countries, formal instruction in school skills such as reading, spelling, arithmetic and math, starts at age six or seven. Conveniently, therefore, pre-primary – or preschool – education in this study refers to all efforts *before* age 6 or 7 that aim at fostering cognitive, social, motivational and emotional development of young children in order to provide them with a good start in formal primary education. A good start in primary school, in turn, increases the likelihood of favourable educational and social outcomes later in life.

The economist and Nobel prize laureate Heckman (Heckman, 2006) has argued that, at least for the United States, high quality early childhood education and care provides *one of the few* effective policy means of increasing social and economic opportunities for disadvantaged (minority) communities and, therefore, for society as a whole. Based on costs-benefits analyses of preschool programmes and alternative policy measures to increase equity, Heckman demonstrates a decreasing economic return of investments the later in the life course these measures are provided. High quality pre-primary education and/or care, if provided on large scale in a sufficient 'dose', fosters the emergence of school skills in the areas of language, literacy, math and science, and supports the development of young children's learning-related social-emotional skills, in particular self-regulation and social competence (McClelland et al., 2006). Ideally, pre-primary school equips children with broad ranging skills that support the child to learn and to profit from the whole range of educational opportunities that primary and secondary schools provide. The better equipped at the start, the more effective education in school will be. Investments in effective high quality pre-primary programmes for low income and ethnic minority children who would otherwise be insufficiently prepared for school, in this respect, works as a 'multiplier' of collective investments in the school system.

Different types of skills and competences may be relevant in successive phases. Basic skills in the area of literacy, for instance, letter knowledge, phonological and print awareness, basic counting strategies, number and quantity concepts, and basic school language vocabulary, may help children to benefit from initial reading, writing and math instruction in the first two grades of primary school. More profound ('deep-conceptual') knowledge of vocabulary, complex grammar and text genre conventions may help children to benefit from instruction in reading comprehension and from instruction – also through reading text books – in geography, history, and science in later grades.

Social-emotional competence, including self-regulation, intrinsic learning motivation and the ability to cooperate with other students, may help children to benefit from instruction especially when the demands on self-regulated learning, problem-solving, independent work and cooperative work increase. One of the major challenges of pre-primary education is to develop and implement curricula that serve all these domains of skills and competences equally well.

The purpose of this chapter is to review, from the point of view of equity, recent research into the effects of early childhood education and care for disadvantaged low income and ethnic minority children, and integrating what is currently known from this research about the relationship between (long term) effects of early childhood education for disadvantaged children and the pedagogical quality, curriculum content, structural quality and overarching systems design of pre-primary education, in relation to the multiple problems faced by these children and their families. Evaluations of early childhood education and care programmes indicate that the provision of early education is a viable strategy to improve the educational and socioeconomic position of low income and minority communities and to promote integration. However, evaluations also show that the design, structural quality and curriculum of programmes are fundamental to their success.

This chapter first briefly discusses research into the causes of educational disadvantages among children of low income and immigrant families. Next the different models of early education and care provision that are available will be described. The evaluation evidence – what works – is then discussed. Issues of pedagogical approach and curriculum, structural quality characteristics and systems design with respect to long term efficacy are the topic of the next sections. Finally, the chapter addresses the issue of accessibility of good quality early childhood education and care.

1.1. Causes of early education disadvantages

There are four complementary explanations for early education disadvantages among low income, ethnic minority and immigrant children: accumulation of socio-economic and psychological 'risks'; lack of stimulation of cognitive and language development in family interactions; different cultural beliefs determining parenting styles and socialisation practices; linguistic and educational consequences of bilingualism.

Socioeconomic risk accumulation

An increased number of 'risks', present in the family or wider context of the family, negatively affects the development of intellectual skill, school achievement, social-emotional competence, social adjustment, and health (Ackerman et al., 2004; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Sameroff & Fiese, 2000, Repetti et al., 2002). Risk factors include at the level of the child: low birth weight, health problems,

low intelligence (IQ) and difficult temperament; at the level of the parents and the family: parents' psychiatric problems (depression, substance abuse), marital conflict, a large number of children, single parenthood, low income, job stress, unemployment, and frequent changes of residence; and at the level of the neighbourhood and community: poor housing conditions, confrontations with crime and violence, and environmental pollution. Furthermore, it has become increasingly clear that especially for immigrants – related to their immigrant or ethnic minority status – the experience of being marginalized, discriminated against, and treated disrespectfully by members of the majority society constitute an important risk factor in its own right, in addition to general socioeconomic risks (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Poverty is an overarching concept in this context, referring to constellations of risks, such as an unfavourable income-to-needs ratio (income being insufficient to satisfy basic needs), low quality housing, unsafe and polluted neighbourhoods, reduced access to good quality care and education services, and associated problems at the family level. Preschool children are especially vulnerable to poverty which, in early childhood more than in later years, often results in persistent learning problems and behavioural maladjustment. The pre-primary age, thus, is an especially sensitive period in children's development.

Most of the risks referred to above are strongly related to low income, social class or ethnic minority status. Although low income or ethnic minority status alone may not be a decisive factor in development, it is the frequently observed *combination* with other risks that leads to serious consequences for child development (Atzaba et al., 2004; Sameroff & Fiese, 2000). The behaviour of parents is an important mediating factor here. Parenting requires a strong child-centred motivation, often at the expense of parents' own concerns. However, an increased number of risks that cannot be dealt with effectively causes chronic stress among parents (also referred to as 'allostatic load'). This leads to a shift in the balance between child-centred and self-centred goals, influencing subsequent child rearing negatively. For example, it undermines the motivation to stimulate the child and to monitor the child's safety and well-being; it often leads to harsh parenting (Conger et al., 2002). If parents, in the face of adversity, are nonetheless able to maintain positive emotions toward the child, no serious consequences for child development are to be expected (Ackerman et al., 1999). However, this will usually not be the case. The negative effects of risk accumulation can be offset by social support (Crnic & Acevedo, 1996; Repetti et al., 2002). Social support comes from persons who together constitute the social network of the family. The net effect of social support is to reduce stress and to help parents to maintain positive emotions. However, a reduced social network, or a low quality social network marked by low emotional involvement and low cohesion, leading to social isolation, is a risk factor in itself. Many immigrant families, and in particular the mothers, have been reported to have less extensive and less supportive social networks compared to low and middle income indigenous families. For instance, Leseman and Hermanns (2002) found in a large survey, using a social network grid, that the social networks of Turkish and Moroccan families in the Netherlands were smaller than that of Dutch families. Moreover, Turkish and Moroccan informants rated their social networks as less emotionally satisfying and less supportive. This situation probably is a direct consequence of migration to a new society, leaving most family and friends behind in the home country.

Informal education and school preparation at home

Studies examining patterns of informal education in the family, such as parental teaching strategies in everyday play and problem-solving situations with children or parents' talking styles in conversations with children, have consistently revealed big differences between families that correlate with

socioeconomic status and immigrant status. Moreover, these differences were found to be a major cause of early arising differences between children in intelligence, cognitive development, language development, school achievement, and academic motivation (Gottfried et al., 1998; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2006; Palacios et al., 1992; Weizman & Snow, 2001; Wells, 1985). A particularly important aspect of informal education at home is home literacy, or more specifically, shared reading and writing practices in the family. Differences between families in home literacy, depending on parents' education and own literacy skills, strongly influence children's language and literacy development, and school achievement (Baker et al., 2001; Bus et al., 2000; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Leseman & van Tuijl, 2005; Sénéchal & Lefevre, 2002). In a review of research on the contribution of parenting to ethnic and racial gaps in education, Brooks-Gun and Markman (2005) rank differences in home language and literacy as the most important factor causing the education gap. Parents of low income and ethnic minority families talk less and read less with their children than middle class parents do, and these differences in parenting, controlled for other factors, are strongly related to children's vocabulary. Moreover, in the course of development these differences accelerate and increase the gap between children from different communities.

Poverty, low social class, low educational level and functional illiteracy of the parents, non-skilled low wage jobs, non-mainstream cultural background, particular religious traditions, and low-literate cultural life styles, together, have a pervasive influence on the quantity and quality of informal education at home, explaining virtually all educational differences between lower income and ethnic minority families, on the one hand, and majority middle class families, on the other hand (Leseman & van Tuijl, 2005), leading in the end to children from disadvantaged background being less prepared for formal schooling.

Child rearing beliefs and parenting styles

Parents' child rearing belief systems consist of – often religiously inspired – ideas about the nature of children and children's learning and development, about developmental timetables (for example, the age parents expect children to have mastered particular cognitive, emotional or social skills), about the mutual roles of parents and teachers in child rearing and development, and about more specific values such as the importance of literacy and school achievement. According to current theory, belief systems can be seen as dynamic frames of cognitions and models, providing interpretations, values, goals, and strategies in childrearing, reducing uncertainties, and gearing child development through parenting to the (perceived) conditions of life (Harkness et al., 2000).

A rough but for the present purpose convenient distinction is made between 'traditional collectivistic' and 'modern individualistic' beliefs (Palacios et al., 1992; Triandis, 1995). Traditional beliefs are typically characterised by the fact that the interests of the individual child are subordinated to the interests of the greater social unit of the (extended) family and local community. Goals such as obedience and respect for adults and authorities are emphasised. Traditional beliefs are associated with authoritarian parenting styles and relatively late expectations about the age at which children are psychologically mature. Modern beliefs on the other hand are characterised by a so-called individualistic orientation. Goals such as emotional independence, self-will, competitiveness, intellectual and artistic excellence are emphasized. Modern beliefs are associated with both authoritative and permissive parenting styles, and relatively early expectations about the age at which children can be taken seriously as persons.

Parents may hold several conflicting beliefs at the same time, and their beliefs adapt to particular situations and to changing circumstances. For instance, parents who immigrated from traditional non-schooled cultures often combine collectivistic child rearing beliefs with a strong individualistic commitment to a successful school career for their children (Espin & Warner, 1982). Nonetheless, a consistent finding in several countries is that highly educated urban parents with a higher socio-economic status mostly subscribe to modern, individualistic beliefs, whereas lower educated nationals and immigrant parents with a lower socio-economic status mostly subscribe to traditional beliefs. Typically, higher educated immigrant parents often have a more individualistic orientation.

Generally, traditional collectivistic beliefs correlate with cognitive delays, lower IQ, psychosocial problems, lower school achievement and less successful social integration (Palacios et al., 1992; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993; Stoolmiller et al., 2000). Interestingly, in a recent study of preschools similar negative effects were found of traditional beliefs of teachers on children's cognitive and social-emotional development (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003). However, patterns of relations between beliefs and development actually may be more complex. For instance, Okagaki and French (1998) found that in Asian-American (and to a lesser extent Latino-American, but not in African-American) communities in the US traditional beliefs and authoritarian parenting were associated with better school achievement. A possible explanation is that in both these communities traditional beliefs functioned in the context of cohesive, extended families, who had a strong sense of cultural identity and were economically rather successful. Perhaps, then, it is the combination with other risk factors, such as low socioeconomic status and low family cohesion, that causes the negative outcomes associated with traditional beliefs.

Bilingualism and language development

Experimental evidence shows that in favourable social circumstances bilingualism is not a detrimental condition (Bialystok, 2005). On the contrary, being a 'balanced' bilingual is associated with cognitive and linguistic advantages in areas such as attention control and linguistic awareness. The notion of balanced bilingualism needs further clarification. It means that the child's proficiency in L1 (mother tongue) and L2 (second language, usually the school language) has reached the same *mature, age-appropriate level*. This, in turn, implies that L1 and L2 inputs have been balanced in the course of development, both quantitatively (e.g., exposure, instruction time) and qualitatively (e.g., social prestige, level of complexity, function and use).

Bilingual development tends to occur in two ways: simultaneously or successively. Simultaneous bilingual development means that the child starts acquiring L1 and L2 at the same time, in his or her first year of life. This situation is characteristic for families with parents who fluently speak different mother tongues (often using the one-parent-one-language strategy in communication with the child). Far more common, however, is the situation of successive bilingualism, meaning that a child first acquires L1 up to a certain level of proficiency, before starting to learn L2. L1 is the predominant language at home, the language that the parents speak best; L2 is the predominant language used in school and often a language that the parents don't speak well. This situation is typical for most bilingual (immigrant) families in Europe today.

Despite the experimental evidence for the advantages of bilingualism, several studies show that successive bilingualism has a negative effect on L2 development and on school achievement in L2 contexts in general, often exacerbated by the home environment. The positive transfer between L1

and L2 therefore does not occur for the majority of bilingual speakers. Instead there appears to be a competitive relation between L1 and L2 concerning available (formal and informal) instruction time and children's cognitive resources in the acquisition process (Bialystok, 2005; Pearson & Fernández, 1994). This effect is reinforced by linguistic dissimilarities of L1 and L2, and by different uses of L1 at home (for example it may not be used for reading and writing), compared to the uses of L2 in school. Studies with young Turkish and Moroccan immigrant children in the Netherlands show significant delays in *both* first and second language vocabulary development (Scheele et al., 2007).

Although most research into (positive or negative) transfer of L1 to L2 (school language) has focused on higher order language skills (vocabulary, conceptual knowledge, reading), the effect of linguistic differences on a more basic level between the mother tongue and the school language should not be underestimated. Charity et al. (2004) studied the impact of the knowledge of Standard (School) English (SE) on learning to read in first and second grade of primary school in a sample of 217 5-year-olds who spoke non-standard African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) as their mother tongue. AAVE is considered a dialect of Standard English, marked by different phonological and morphosyntactic rules (e.g., omission of the final consonant, reduction of final consonant clusters of spoken words, and omission of the morphological plural marker *-s* and the past tense marker *-ed* in sentences). Using word and sentence repetition tasks the accuracy of children's phonological and morphosyntactic perception and memory of SE was determined. Correlation analyses revealed significant and strong relationships with reading. Phonological accuracy in kindergarten was specifically related to children's first and second grade word decoding and recognition, whereas as morphosyntactic accuracy was specifically related to second grade reading comprehension and story recall.

1.2. Models of pre-primary education and care and their efficacy

There are three major models for early education provision. The first and most important model, which accounts for the vast majority of pre-primary education provision, adopts a child-focused, centre-based, professional delivery strategy. This provision includes centre-based child care in the care tradition, targeted pre-primary educational intervention programmes, and early general preschooling in public pre-primary schools, kindergartens or reception classes of primary schools. The actual provision and programmes differ hugely on such characteristics as when they start, their intensity and duration (the so-called 'intervention dose'), the pedagogical approach and curriculum, the child-to-staff ratio, and teachers' education (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5 for a detailed comparison). The centre-based model can be expanded by incorporating strategies to work with parents, families, and communities, in order to support and empower them, leading to a *combination* model. The second major model consists of various child-focused, home-based care services and education programmes, typically using relatively untrained non-professionals – for example parents and 'grass root' paraprofessional workers – as delivery agents. The third model consists of a wide array of parent or family focused support programmes. Usually, systems and programmes of family support offer a diversity of services and activities tailored to the multiple needs of families. In the following, research on the efficacy of these different models will be reviewed, starting with the model that seems most promising for closing the ethnic education gap: the centre-based model that adopts a multisystemic approach by combining quality education for children with a focus on parents and family support. Other models will be briefly reviewed then.

Centre-based 'model' education programmes combined with parent support

The available evidence, summarized in a number of recent reviews and statistical meta-analyses, indicates that a centre-based approach which combines with activities to involve, educate and support parents, is most effective (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Barnett, 1995; Blok et al., 2005; Farran, 2000; Gorey, 2001; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Yoshikawa, 1994). Most successful are so-called 'model' combination programmes which are developed and run under scientific supervision, with sufficient funding for providing education and care in small groups, with favourable children-to-staff ratios, and reasonable staff salaries. These programmes involve intensive, early starting, child-focused, centre-based education together with strong parent involvement, parent education, programmed educational home activities and measures of family support. Examples include the High/Scope Perry Pre-school Project, the Syracuse Family Development Research Project, the Yale Child Welfare Project, the Abecedarian Project, the Project CARE, the Infant Health and Development Program, the Chicago Child-Parent Centres Programme, and the Turkish Early Enrichment Programme. Worldwide there probably are several other examples, but appropriate evaluation studies are lacking (or, at least, could not be accessed through scientific databases). The vast majority of published research comes from the USA; the few published European studies will be highlighted in the next sections. Evaluation evidence comparing the short and long term results of these combination programmes with other models have broadly the same conclusions (Barnett, 1995; Blok et al., 2005; Gorey, 2001; Yoshikawa, 1994). The effects of combination programmes on IQ and school achievement are stronger and longer maintained. In addition, there are positive effects on social-emotional measures (self-esteem, work attitude, sociability), and social and socioeconomic outcomes, such a decreased delinquency, less need for medical care and welfare support, higher employment rates and higher incomes. Based on Gorey's (2001) meta-analysis, standard effect sizes for the more intensive programmes are in the 0.7 to 0.8 range for school achievement and intelligence, that is, 'strong' according to the convention. Based on Blok et al. (2005) standard effect sizes for centre-based combination programmes with parent involvement can be estimated in the 0.6 to 0.7 range, that is, 'medium to strong', according to the convention.

An interesting approach, also in the USA, is the Success for All (SFA) project (see for instance Slavin & Madden, 1999), which is currently implemented in hundreds of school districts in several USA states with a high representation of ethnic minorities from Latin American descent. Although this project is not limited to the pre-K and K-years (up to age 6), but involves a complete elementary school reform, targeting also the school leadership and school district authority, the contribution of the early starting (age 3) pre-K program to the project's results is clearly acknowledged. SFA adopts an intensive, early starting and multi-systemic approach, just like the other programs mentioned above. The programme includes strategies of adaptive education for the most disadvantaged children and for children with special needs, who receive one-to-one tutoring in the classroom or in a resource room in the school. In addition to high quality pre-K and K-education and curricular reforms in the primary school, SFA provides parenting coaching and family support. Effects reported for the Pre-kindergarten and the Kindergarten-programme are medium to strong, and sustained in later grades of primary school.

Large-scale programmes and public pre-primary schools

Large scale centre-based programmes, including nation wide public pre-primary schools, are reported to be (slightly) less effective – although the evidence for this is complicated. There are a few studies on the efficacy of public pre-primary systems in European countries that show medium sized effects. van Tuijl and Leseman (2007) studied the effects of the Dutch pre-primary kindergarten (part of the primary school system) on about 300 Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch 4-6-year-old children's verbal and fluid cognitive abilities. Pre-primary Kindergarten in the Netherlands starts at age 4 and is compulsory from age 5. Participations rates are quite high: over 95 % of all 4-year-olds and 100 % of all 5 to 6-year-olds. Due to this, a (quasi)experimental approach was not feasible. Therefore, van Tuijl and Leseman used a well-researched, cultural fair, age-norm referenced intelligence test to determine increases in full-scale intelligence, and in verbal as well as non-verbal fluid intelligence. Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch children's intelligence was upon introduction to kindergarten on average about 18 points below the age mean (1.2 standard deviation). Two years of participating in kindergarten during 22 hours per week led to an average increase relative to the age norm with almost 9 points (standard effect size 0.6), thus halving the gap. Sylva and colleagues studied the effects of the whole array of pre-primary care and education provisions in the United Kingdom (England), including the public system of nursery classes and reception classes for 4- to 6-year-olds, in a sample of about 3 000 preschool-aged children (Sylva et al., 2004, 2007a). Using a value-added approach (multilevel regression analysis), and controlling for the effects of language and literacy activities in the home environment, the standardized effects of public pre-primary provisions on precursors of school learning were estimated in 0.6 to 0.7 range. These effects, although decaying in size over time, were sustained far into primary school. Based on a national panel study, Caille (2001) reports that attending the French nationwide pre-primary system (*école maternelle*) reduces class retention of low income and immigrant children in primary school by 9 to 17 %. Previously, Jeantheau and Murat (1998) reported for the same panel increased levels of general world knowledge, early literacy, early numeracy, and time and space concept knowledge upon the start in primary school as a likely consequence of attending pre-primary school (unfortunately, no standard effect sizes were reported to make comparisons with other studies possible).

Examples of recently studied well-known large scale programs in the United States are *Head Start* (McKey et al., 1985; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005), *Early Head Start* (Love et al., 2005), and the *state funded (half-day) pre-schools* for disadvantaged children (Gilliam & Ziegler, 2000). A recent report from the Head Start Impact study confirms the earlier findings on Head Start (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). In a randomized controlled trial (RCT) only small effects were found on a number of measures of important precursor skills for reading, spelling and math raising the question whether the benefits outweigh the costs. The results particularly cause concern because of the use of RCT, which is considered a superior research strategy. On closer scrutiny, however, the RCT methodology may have had a disadvantage as well. Families who applied for Head Start in the first place, but were randomly assigned to the no treatment control condition, appeared to seek alternatives for Head Start and frequently found other programs of reasonable to good quality for their children. This, of course, may have attenuated the Head Start results. To explain the (slightly) less successful results of large scale programs, several authors have pointed to the suboptimal conditions under which these programs are run. Ramey and Ramey (2004) mention as most important factors vis-à-vis more successful model programs the generally lower staff

qualification, the lower intensity, the later age of onset, and the lack of a multi-systemic approach which targets also the parents and the communities.

The mixed results indicate that the *quality* and *quantity* of the provision matters, in particular so-called process quality, referring to pedagogical approach and curriculum, and structural quality, referring to characteristics as group size, staff-child ratio, teachers' training level, teachers' salaries, and stability of staff (low turn-over). For instance, Gilliam and Zigler (2000) found that pre-primary schools in USA states with higher level staff training and more favourable staff-child ratios, were far more effective than pre-primary schools in states with lower mandatory quality. Large scale public pre-primary schools tend to work in a mono-systemic manner, putting less effort in working with parents and supporting families, which may render them less effective than the model combination programmes discussed above. Love et al. (2005) found that the Early Head Start programmes that combined a centre-based approach with parent support and that fully implemented quality standards yielded the strongest impact. In addition and intertwined with quality characteristics such as a small children-to-teacher ratio, the quantity or 'dose' of early education may matter. Gorey's (2001) review suggest that starting age, intensity and duration of participation are decisive factors, which in large scale (late starting, half-day, low intensive) programmes may not be optimally met. Consistent with this, Jeantheau and Murat (1998) and Caille (2001) report a stronger effect of an earlier start in the French pre-primary system, at age 2 compared to age 3, on early school skills and class retention in the first grades of primary school, especially for low income and immigrant ethnic minority children, whereas starting at age 4 had hardly any compensatory influence for these children. The issues of pedagogy and curricular approach and structural quality conditions will be examined further in sections 3 and 4 hereafter.

Day care

Good quality centre-based day care can have beneficial effects on low-income and ethnic minority children's language and cognitive skills as well. If centre-based day care is of above-average quality, there will be medium-sized cognitive and language benefits for children of low-income and ethnic minority families, as was revealed in studies from Sweden and the USA (Andersson, 1992; Broberg et al., 1997; Burchinal et al., 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Development Early Child Care Network, NICHD ECCN, 2002). Similar findings were recently reported in the United Kingdom, revealing a significant compensatory effect of good quality day-care centres for the most disadvantaged low income and immigrant children (Sylva et al., 2004). Although the social and economic function of non-familial centre-based day care and its financing and regulation systems may be quite different from pre-primary schools, from the point of child development they can be considered related systems on the same continuum.

The effects of centre-based care are increased if a centre's quality is higher, if children participated before school for longer time and more intensively – thus, if they received a greater 'dose' – and if the children come from families with a poor informal education climate, which points to a compensatory effect. However, many studies have shown that low-income families and ethnic minority families tend to select lower quality care types. This point is taken up below in section 5. A recent evaluation of the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP) for mainly (80 %) African-American newborns with low birth weight and other medical risks provides further evidence (Lee, 2005; Hill et al., 2003). IHDP provides high quality day care, starting at 12 months, developmentally appropriate educational home

activities and family support. The study used an RCT design, kept detailed record of the quantity of centre care use by both program families and controls (who were seeking alternative care), determined the quality of the day care centres used, and registered changes in the families' income as a consequence of mothers' labour market participation. The developmental outcomes regarding cognitive, academic and social-emotional development at age 3 and at follow-up at age 8 show clear effects of quality (IHDP versus regular or no provisions) and quantity, or 'dose', which are even stronger the greater the biomedical risk of the children (the lower the birth weight). Interestingly, proving the case of multisystemic effects, IHDP, in addition to direct effects on children, also had an indirect effect on child development through improved family income as a consequence of increased labour market participation of the mothers which was facilitated by the programme.

The recent outcomes of the Early Child Care Network study of the National Institute of Child Health and Development in the USA, however, are less conclusive (NICHD ECCN, 2006; see also Belsky, 2006). The study focused in particular on the long term effects – up into primary school – of a very early start (within a few months after birth), high intensity of use (30 hours per week or more), and long duration of non-parental day care. The study confirms the overall modest to moderate cognitive and language benefits of centre-based day care. However, the study also shows negative effects of the quantity of day care on social-emotional outcome measures for school-age children (more externalising problem behaviour), regardless day care quality or quality of the home environment. Perhaps a very early start and very intensive use at an early age is not recommendable.

Home-based pre-primary school education and family support

Widely implemented home-based pre-primary education programmes are the Parent as Teachers Program (PAT in the USA), the Home-based Instruction Programme for Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY in Israel, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the USA), the Mother (or Parent) Child Home Programme (MCHP, PCHP in the USA, Bermudas, and the Netherlands). Although programmes occasionally have sizeable effects on children's cognitive and language skills and their social-emotional behaviour, a recent meta-analytic review – comparing the aforementioned programmes with the centre based (combination) programmes discussed previously – indicates that home-based education programmes are less effective than centre-based programmes (Blok et al., 2005). There may be several explanations. Parents as primary intervention agents are rarely sufficiently skilled to carry out such programme activities. For example they may be illiterate or the home language may not be the language of instruction. Another explanation is that the home situation may not be conducive to optimal learning. For example, there may be multiple stressors present, hindering the effective implementation of the programme (van Tuijl et al., 2001).

The home-based education model, however, may be an appropriate instrument for promoting balanced bilingual development and empowering ethnic minority families. In view of the fact that it is often not possible to provide bilingual education in pre-primary centres and elementary schools because of financial or staffing constraints, or political objections, involving parents as L1-experts may offer an alternative approach. Leseman and van Tuijl (2001) reported medium-sized effects of the Turkish version of a home-based education programme on Turkish-Dutch children's L1 vocabulary and grammar (but, of course, not on their L2) development as well as on general cognitive and academic skills tested in Dutch as L2, indicating transfer at the cognitive level, whereas the participation of these children in the pre- and primary school promoted their L2 development.

Parenting education programmes, family support programmes or family support systems that integrate multiple services to families or parents, with children targeted only indirectly, do not yield clear effects on children's cognitive and language development (Brooks-Gun & Markman, 2005; Goodson et al., 2000; Blok et al., 2005; Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004). The exception is when a high quality centre-based educational programme (provided in a day care centre or pre-primary school) is a standard service offered to all participating families, as was the case in the Yale Child Welfare Project. However, family support programmes probably protect children against negative child rearing conditions, prevent child abuse and dysfunctional social-emotional development (MacLeod & Nelson, 2000; Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004). Sweet and Appelbaum (2004) reviewed sixty home visiting and family support programmes from several countries with different design characteristics. Although most approaches had weak to medium-sized effects on parenting skills and children's social-emotional development, and were successful in preventing child abuse and neglect, they hardly had any impact on children's cognitive and language development. Home visitation programmes, involving frequent visits to young first time parents in the pre- and post-natal period, reduce child abuse and neglect in the family, and have positive effects on children's physical and mental health, and reduce antisocial behaviour (Olds et al., 1998).

1.3. Centre-based care and education: pedagogy and curriculum

Although some authors maintain that the issue of pedagogical approach and curriculum content is rather immaterial to the efficacy of pre-primary care and education, closer examination of short and long term effects of different approaches and curricula, and of the differential effects of programmes on basic skills and more profound learning-related competences, supports an opposite conclusion. The issue of 'quality' and 'pedagogy' has led to heated debates in the research literature, as well as among practitioners. The current debate is about the balance between *developmentally appropriate practices* (abbreviated as DAP, also referred to as 'social-emotional orientation') and *didactic* (with direct instruction) or *academic approaches* (with a strong focus on basic language and cognitive skills, relating to initial reading, writing and math, but not necessarily direct instruction).

The early pedagogues

Historically, broad cultural views and values regarding the societal function of early childhood education and care, and specific theories about the nature of young children and their learning and development, have informed the pedagogical and curricular approaches to programmes in early childhood care and education (for an overview, see Nourrot, 2005). Famous and still influential pedagogues of early childhood education and care such as Pestalozzi, Fröbel, Dewey and Montessori developed their approaches in critique on the care and educational practices in the asylum type of child care and the primary schools of their times. Pestalozzi, Fröbel and Dewey saw early childhood pre-primary schools as an extension of the ideal home environment and stressed the importance of emotionally secure, loving relationships, which meant that a teacher should not exert strict discipline and should guide children in discovering the world instead of teaching them. Following the principle 'from the near to the far', curricula involved play and discovery activities with concrete – often specially designed – objects such as cubes, cylinders, triangles and rectangles, materials such as cloth, wood, clay, sand and water, and plants and animals in the garden in order to help children discover general principles of the physical and biological nature. Today, this approach would be called 'developmental'.

Montessori extended the developmental approach to a more individualized curriculum, in view of the differences in developmental pace and intrinsic motivation between children. Today, this view is represented in the notion of ‘child-centredness’, stressing the importance of allowing children initiative, choice and self-determination. Another characteristic of these early approaches to the education and care of young children was the introduction of real life activities (Fröbel) or projects (Dewey), meaning that children were stimulated to do activities that resembled the activities of the adults in their communities. In Fröbel’s case this included activities like weaving, knitting, molding clay, and paper folding. In Dewey’s approach children were presented with child-sized versions of adults’ occupations, like weaving and carpentry, presenting children with rather complex real life problems which they as cooperative groups in a kind of make-belief play had to solve. Today, this approach of introducing cultural practices of the adult world into the early childhood curriculum would be qualified ‘authentic’.

Studies on the development of children and their impact on pedagogical approaches

In the past century, scientific studies of children became an increasingly important influence on the pedagogy and curriculum in early childhood care and education. However, developmental and educational science did not provide univocal guidelines. The rise of the biological sciences led to a strong ‘maturational’ view in some systems and programmes of early childhood care and education, reinforcing on the one hand child-centeredness and giving a prominent place to physical and social play in the curriculum, but on the other hand separating early childhood education further from school education. In contrast, the rise of behaviourism emphasized learning and teaching, using stimulus-contingencies to shape language, cognitive and social behaviour in young children. Other significant scientific developments concerned Piaget’s theory of cognitive development as a process of constructing increasingly complex and abstract cognitive skills through playful interaction with objects and symbols, driven by children’s intrinsic motivation to master their world – a kind of in-between theory between maturation and learning theories – and, still later ‘discovered’, Vygotsky’s social-constructivism, that built on Piaget’s theory but emphasized the role of adults and teachers as representatives of the wider culture in children’s development. Both theories, and the pedagogical approaches that were based on them, stressed construction and symbolic (pretend) play and peer-interaction as the basis of broad cognitive and social development (Copple et al., 1984; Verba, 1998). Vygotsky’s legacy, however, also increased awareness of the importance of *cultural learning* as mediated by teachers and other adults. By cultural learning, Vygotsky meant that cognitive and language development, in part, means being introduced to the cultural practices of the adult community and learning to use the cultural artifacts of the community, which in present day societies concern in particular higher order cognitive, math, literacy and language skills.

Vygotskian theory inspired researchers to study children’s development as a process of acculturation (Rogoff, 2003). Important for the present debates about early childhood curricula are findings that young pre-primary children are very keen in observing the everyday practices of the adults in their environments and are intrinsically driven to imitate them, for instance, in using literacy technologies. The terms ‘emergent literacy’ and ‘emergent numeracy’ were coined to refer to the fact that young children spontaneously (but, of course, based on observing adults and stimulated by them) try to learn about print, try to read and write themselves, and try to count, group, measure and compare all kinds of objects. Similarly, studies using naturalistic observations of child rearing practices in families, revealed that everyday conversations, shared book reading, story telling, play and problem-solving

activities, even household chores, reflect deep cultural values concerning the importance of particular language, literacy and numeracy skills, and they function to prepare children for formal schooling. Findings like these are important to consider in regard of the continuing debate about what constitutes appropriate practice in early childhood care and education.

Yet another line of scientific research gained major influence in early childhood care and education. John Bowlby's discovery of the importance of secure attachment of the infant to the adult caregiver as the fundament for healthy emotional and social development was the start of a worldwide research programme into children's social relationships in early childhood, which was extended to non-familial early childhood care and education settings. According to this research, sensitive-responsive care giving is the strongest determinant of secure attachment (de Wolff & van IJzendoorn, 1997), meaning that parents should react promptly and adequately to signals of distress of the child, should initiate interactions with the child and respond contingently and meaningfully to interaction initiatives by the child, and should provide age-appropriate stimulation to the child (e.g., vocalising, talking, engaging in shared book reading, providing play and construction materials). Applied to caregivers and teachers in early childhood care and education settings, similar guidelines have been proposed which stress the importance of teachers' sensitivity, emotional supportiveness and non-intrusiveness in interactions with children. Currently widely used quality assessment systems such as the Early Childhood Environments Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R; Harms et al., 1998; and the Observation Rating Scale of Care Environment (ORCE), used in the NICHD Early Child Care Network study are directly based on these notions (for examples of European research with the ECERS and the ORCE, see among others Sylva et al., 2004; Tietze & Cryer, 1999, 2004; Vermeer et al., 2005).

Present debates: DAP versus academic standards

Maturation and constructivistic theories have continued to inspire child-centred approaches, in which play, peer-play, self-initiated exploration, discovery learning, and cooperative work with peers are seen as the prime mechanisms of development stimulation resulting in school readiness by the age of 6 or 7 years for most children. Learning theories, on the other hand, rooting in behaviourism in the first half of the previous century and in information processing theories in the period thereafter, have stressed the importance of teacher-directed transmission of language and cognitive skills that directly relate to the primary school curriculum, resulting in a more *didactic* approach with even very young children – using direct instruction and rewards to reinforce the learning processes within a highly structured and planned 'academic' curriculum. Pre-primary education programmes for low income and ethnic minority children working according to the learning approach, using direct academic instruction, have been reported to be rather effective in obtaining the cognitive and academic goals (e.g., Gersten et al., 1988; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). Nonetheless, the approach has been criticized for having negative effects in the social-emotional domain (see for instance Burts et al., 1992; Haskins, 1985; Stipek et al., 1995).

In the present debate on early childhood education curricula, neither 'pure' maturation, constructivistic nor learning theories are prominent on the foreground. The consensus of the scientific community, as well as among many teachers, can be characterized as *social-constructivistic*, stressing the importance of children's intrinsically motivated activity and initiative as the motor of development, but acknowledging at the same time that development does not take place in a cultural void but should be geared to culturally valued domains of knowledge and skills, much in the sense of Dewey and Fröbel.

The role of the teacher in social-constructivism, therefore, is not confined to creating conditions for optimal, self-propelled development. The teacher should also deliberately introduce children to cultural domains such as school (or 'academic') language, literacy, numeracy, math and science and should interact with children in order to scaffold their development in these domains. Yet, the way in which should respect developmental and motivational principles, allowing children to take initiatives and to determine to a certain extent their own routes through the curriculum, using construction and symbolic pretend play, and collaborative work in small groups with authentic materials and tasks as main vehicles to stimulate development, again much in the spirit of the early pedagogues, especially Dewey. A nice example of this approach, with sizeable effects on language and pre-literacy skills, is the post office experiment by Neuman and Roskoss (1993), in which children playfully and intrinsically motivated learned about letters and the functions of literacy, acquired new vocabulary and world knowledge by playing for several consecutive weeks in the post office that was installed in the classroom. Many examples like this can be found, although few have been researched.

In addition to this, there is also convergence with the social-emotional approach rooting in attachment theory. The importance of emotional secure, stable social relationships in early childhood care and education, as an essential condition for healthy development *and* efficient learning, is now widely recognized (Pianta et al., 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2002). Healthy (psychological) development is currently defined as the development of self-regulation, a concept which refers to the effortful control of positive and negative emotions and the resulting behaviour in adaptive, socially desirable ways, including desired learning behaviour (McClelland et al., 2006). Secure social relationships with teachers and classmates are an important basis of self-regulation development (Kochanska et al., 2000).

The new consensus, supported by child development studies and new insights in learning as active, constructive and mediated in cooperative social relationships, requiring sensitive-responsive teachers who guide and participate in children's activities, is among others reflected in the concept of 'developmentally appropriate practice', in short DAP, coined by Bredekamp (1987). The extensive set of principles and criteria of developmentally appropriate practice has been successfully used in the USA to evaluate practices in day care centres and pre-primary schools, and to improve on structural and process quality, and is also adopted by the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), a non-governmental organisation with 60 member organisations from countries all over the world, including several European countries. Yet, despite this consensus, early childhood care and education programmes still differ in emphasis and solutions to the problem of reconciling all concerns and satisfying all stakeholders. In many countries, pre-primary schools and kindergarten (for children over 3-4 years) are absorbed into the primary school system (see Chapter 3 on Access to early childhood education and care) and forced to help to meet the academic standards that are set for primary schools. Moreover, pressure by policy makers to produce immediate results in easy measurable domains as literacy and math, and the increasing emphasis on accountability are reported to undermine the developmental approach and to lead to an academic push-down (Dickinson, 2002; Marcon, 2002). This pressure is especially felt in programmes that serve disadvantaged low income and minority children at risk of educational failure. Perhaps even more important are the structural quality characteristics of early childhood education and care settings. Developmentally appropriate beliefs and skills of teachers may be difficult to put into practice if the circumstances are not favourable, for instance, if the group size is too big and the teacher is too much occupied with class management (see section 4).

Assessment and short or long term benefits

Crucial to the issue of developmental versus didactic or academic approaches to the early childhood curriculum, is whether programme effects are assessed in short or long term. Although didactic and academic programmes may be equally effective as, or even superior to, developmental approaches in achieving cognitive and language goals *in short term*, several studies reveal that long term benefits – also regarding school achievement – are greater for developmental programmes, presumably because of more positive effects on children’s social-emotional competence, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation. Schweinhart and Weikart (1997) compared the High/Scope curriculum with a didactic basic skills oriented programme and a traditional approach, characterized by the researchers as ‘laissez faire’, probably because of a predominant maturation view of the teachers. In short term, the didactic programme and the developmental-constructivist High/Scope curriculum were roughly equally effective in the cognitive domain, but in the long term additional advantages of the High/Scope curriculum became manifest: better self-regulation, work attitude, motivation, and social and behavioural adjustment, resulting in superior social outcomes (for instance, less crime, more economic independence) in early adulthood compared to the other approaches. These later social outcomes are similar to the outcomes reported for the Perry Preschool Project, the predecessor of the High/Scope curriculum. Note that the ‘laissez faire’ model was least effective in all respects.

Marcon (1999) compared three different pre-primary approaches for their effect on children’s development and mastery of basic language, literacy and math skills at the end of pre-primary school. The majority of the children involved in this study came from low-income and minority families. The results revealed that children who attended a child-centred, developmental pre-primary school, characterized by a strong emphasis on following children’s initiatives (‘DAP’), demonstrated greater mastery of basic skills at the end of pre-primary school than did children in programmes where academics were emphasized and skills were directly taught (‘standards’, referring to the orientation on the learning standards of primary school). However, the advantage of child-centred over academic pre-primary schools was small, and both programmes had far better results than a mixed model approach, that combined in an eclectic way elements of both approaches. In a follow-up study an even more complex picture was found (Marcon, 2002). Children who attended academic pre-primary schools had better results in initial learning in grades 1 and 2, were less often retained (especially the boys) or referred to special education than children who were in the child-centred or mixed models. This advantage was maintained until grade 3 (age 9). In grade 3 the advantage in retention and referral rates disappeared and in grade 4 (age 10) children with child-centred and mixed-model pre-primary school experience outperformed children from academic pre-primary schools in a broad range of school subjects and in Grade Point Average (GPA), although effect sizes were small in general. The results indicated a relative loss for the children from academic pre-primary schools upon transition to grade 4, which in the USA system (as probably elsewhere) is characterized by increasing demands on self-regulated learning and by a shift in focus from the basics of reading, writing and math to comprehension, composition and insight. Marcon (2002) concludes that both children from child-centred and mixed pre-primary schools apparently were better prepared to face the new challenges in grade 4.

There also may be a timing effect, meaning that education programmes for very young children (under 5) should work predominantly in a child-centred, developmental way, whereas programmes for older children between 5 and 6 years may introduce academic subjects in a more planned, teacher-

directed curriculum without having negative social-emotional consequences. A later emphasis on academic skills, after a predominantly developmental approach that focused on fostering of social-emotional competence, may even provide better support for the transition to primary school. Evidence for such a timing effect is reported by Stipek et al. (1998), who compared four groups of mainly low-income and ethnic minority children who attended either a developmental (referred to as 'social-emotional' in this study) or a basic skills oriented pre-primary school from age 3 to 5, and after pre-primary school either a developmental or a basic skills oriented kindergarten from age 5 to 6, before starting in primary school. The results of the study indicated that a social-emotional, child-centred orientation in pre-primary school in the first two years (up to age 5) was essential for positive developmental effects in both academic and social-emotional domains, regardless the type of kindergarten that was attended in the third year. However, an academic focus in kindergarten (age 5 to 6), that is, in the third year, after two years in a developmental social-emotional oriented pre-primary school, had slightly better learning outcomes in several subjects in primary school and no detectable negative social-emotional outcomes compared to programmes with a continued social-emotional focus. The latter programmes, in turn, were slightly better with respect to problem solving and language comprehension, as in Marcon's (2002) study.

Summarizing the issue

Not everyone agrees with DAP, or, to be more precise, with the strong social-emotional (vs. academic) version of it. The evidence, taken together, is perhaps not overly convincing. For instance, van Horn et al. (2005) criticize the studies that favour a developmentally appropriate approach to early childhood care and education following Bredekamp's (1987) guidelines. According to these researchers, all studies suffer from methodological flaws, such as working with nested datasets without using appropriate statistical multilevel analysis technique. With simulation studies they show that few of the reported effects on cognitive and academic skills would remain statistically significant relative to academic or didactic approaches if the appropriate analysis technique would have been used. Perhaps 'DAP versus standards' is a too oversimplified way of characterizing the challenges that pre-primary education for low income and ethnic minority children is faced with. The evidence indicates that a developmental approach is the best option for the youngest children, whereas older preschooler should gradually be prepared for the type of learning tasks they encounter in primary school, smoothing the transition to first grade. An academic orientation on basic skills (for instance, concerning phonological awareness and letter knowledge) can be embedded in a curriculum of playful, authentic activities, including shared dialogical reading and talking with the teacher, that foster deep vocabulary, discourse comprehension and world knowledge in addition (Dickinson et al., 2003) – which is also DAP. Moreover, what seems essential for all approaches is a positive socio-emotional climate, with emotionally safe and stable relationships, with sensitive-responsive, non-intrusive teachers. There is no reason on beforehand why an orientation on emerging school skills using authentic activities in which teachers participate, cannot go together with a positive socio-emotional climate (cf. Stipek et al., 1998, who make the same point).

1.4. Centre-based care and education: regulating structural and process quality

Beneficial developmental effects of early childhood care and education for all children, and beneficial compensatory effects for disadvantaged children in particular, depend on high quality – that is, emotionally secure, sensitive, supportive, non-intrusive but predominantly verbal, stimulating and guiding, or scaffolding – interactions of teachers and children. The more of this, the better. High quality interactions as defined here have been found to occur more frequently in classrooms with low child-to-staff ratios and more highly educated and specifically trained caregivers and teachers (Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Howes & Smith, 1995; NICHD ECCN, 2002; Phillips et al., 2000). Also higher teacher salaries and, related to this, lower teacher turnover rates (important for the stability of social relationships and the preservation of experience and expertise) have been found to be associated with higher process quality. In a multi-state, multi-site study of the relationships between structural quality and process quality of educational care and pre-primary settings for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, defined according to DAP standards and measured with the ECERS, an observation system also rooting in attachment theory, Phillips et al. (2000) found particularly strong effects on classroom process quality of group size (for infants and toddlers only), child-to-teacher ratios (for all children), teachers' general education level and special training in early childhood education (for infants and toddlers), and teacher wages (for all children). European studies, or studies including European countries, such as Andersson (1992), Broberg et al. (1997), Sylva et al. (2004), Tietze and Cryer (1999, 2004) and Vermeer et al. (2005), though less detailed in this respect as the US studies, show similar relationships between structural quality and process quality.

Several studies have shown that the level of general education and, in addition to that, specific training in educating young children, relate to classroom process quality and developmental and academic outcomes (for an overview of studies, see Early et al., 2006 and 2007). There is some consensus that early childhood caregivers and teachers should be trained at the bachelor level and should have credentials in courses that are specific to early childhood. Yet, the evidence is not as conclusive as this consensus suggest. Early et al. (2006), in a large scale multi-site and multi-state study in the USA, found mixed effects of different levels of general education on classroom quality. Teachers with more than a bachelor degree (i.e., master's degree or PhD) had higher classroom quality than teachers with a degree below the bachelor level, but there were no detectable differences between the bachelor and the below-bachelor degrees. Similarly, specific early childhood training mattered when teachers had lower general education, but made no difference at or above the bachelor level. With regard to children's academic skills, teachers with a bachelor or more than a bachelor degree had better outcomes in math and problem-solving, but not in language and literacy. There are several explanations for this pattern of mixed findings. First, other structural quality characteristics – the children-to-staff ratio, for instance – may be important, while not strongly correlated with teachers' education and training (see also Early et al., 2007, for a similar argument). Second, in addition to education and training before entering early childhood services, many centres provide for additional on-the-job training and supervision, especially for teachers with lower non-specific training (Early et al., 2006). The latter may an important structural quality characteristic in itself: continued in-service training and the use of quality monitoring systems in early childhood care and education centres.

In a comment on similar findings in seven different studies in the USA on the effects of teacher education, Early et al. (2007) state that 'generally, we (...) still think education should matter for

teachers as well as for most professions'. To explain the lack of associations of teacher education level with classroom process quality the researchers argue that present teacher education is not sufficiently adapted to the education of young children. They point in particular to the lack of awareness in teacher training programs of the importance of trusting, respectful relationships between children and teachers, due to the strong emphasis in these programs on subject matter content knowledge. Furthermore, a targeted training programme for early childhood teachers to promote more appropriate language and literacy interaction behaviours in early childhood classrooms was found to significantly improve children's language and literacy development (Wasik et al., 2006). So perhaps another explanation is that general teacher training programmes are not sufficiently targeted to desired practices in early childhood education.

Structural quality characteristics, like those discussed above, are usually addressed in a state's or country's statutory quality regulations (see Chapter 4).. Not surprisingly, studies have shown that states and countries with more stringent child care and education regulations have day care centres and pre-primary schools with, on average, higher structural and process quality than states or countries with less demanding regulations (Chan & Mellor, 2002; Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Gilliam & Zigler, 2000; Phillips et al., 2000). According to a European cross-national study by Tietze and Cryer (1999), which did not specifically address low income and/or ethnic minority groups, states and countries that have their systems of early childhood care and education regulated within a predominantly school learning policy frame, tend to neglect essential structural quality characteristics (i.e., allowing a big group size and children-to-staff ratio) and have lower process quality (e.g., a more didactic orientation and lower social-emotional quality) compared to states and countries that have adopted a care policy frame.

The IEA Preprimary Project is an ongoing longitudinal, cross-national study of pre-primary care and education in ten countries (including the European countries Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain). The focus of the study is on the structural and process characteristics of representative samples of care and education settings for four-year-olds, using the ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) and a few other observation systems, and the effects of these characteristics on children's language and cognitive skills at age 7 that were assessed with a cross-national equivalent test battery. The results, reported by Montie et al. (2006), based on three-level (country, setting, child) regression analysis, reveal positive effects on language and cognitive skills of the degree of adults' (teachers) participation in children's activities and of adult-child interaction (but only in the context of setting with a mainly child-initiated orientation). In addition, also the amount of child-child interaction at age 4 was positively related to language scores at age 7. The amount of whole group activities was negatively related to cognitive outcomes, whereas time for self-initiated or small group discovery learning and problem solving was positively related to cognitive development. With respect to structural quality characteristics, the IEA Preprimary Project found consistent and statistically significant, but relatively small effects of the number of years of full-time teacher training on language scores. There were no consistent effects of group size and child-to-teacher ratio across the participating countries, which may suggest that these quality aspect are not as universally relevant as thought. It may depend on the wider cultural context and the predominant patterns of socialization in the family what counts as high structural quality (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2006). However, another explanation may be that structural quality characteristics are essential prerequisites for optimizing process quality, but do not have direct effects on developmental outcomes, so that in the analyses that were conducted in the IEA Preprimary Project the impact of these characteristics may have been underestimated.

An interesting result of the IEA Preprimary Project, furthermore, was that not only factors at the setting level, but also at the country level explained variance in language and cognitive scores. For instance, variance in language and cognitive outcomes at the country level was consistently predicted by the percentage of settings in the country where adults participate in children's activities and have lots of interaction with children, suggesting that statutory regulations at the state or country level should address directly the desired process quality, for instance, in the form of so-called national curriculum (examples are presented in Chan & Mellor, 2002).

1.5. Long term benefits, obstacles to use and systems design

If pre-primary education is used as a policy measure to increase equity, it is not sufficient to have short term effects only, raising the question under what conditions the immediate results of programmes are transported to long term benefits. It also is not sufficient if effective approaches are limited to small scale 'model' programmes, that reach out to only small proportions of the target groups, raising the question how access to high quality pre-primary provisions can be enlarged.

Long term benefits

Although often documented, the fading out of programme effects is not as universal and inevitable as it may seem. For instance, the results of a number of programmes, referred to in the previous sections, indicate that long-term efficacy is possible. In their meta-analysis of evaluation studies of pre-primary programs published after 1985, Blok et al. (2005) computed an average decrease of the integrated effect size of 0.03 standard deviation per year, meaning that it would take about 15 years for a medium-sized effect of 0.5 to disappear. In the meantime there may be several benefits, such as reduced class repetition, reduced referral to special education and, in differentiated – tracked – secondary school systems, increased transition of students of low income and ethnic minority families to the higher tracks of secondary education.

It is likely that by improving programme design and curriculum quality, the positive effects of early education provisions can be elongated. The evidence indicates that an early start (at or before age 3, but perhaps not too early), together with an intensive, multi-systemic, high quality approach that combines a child-centred developmental pre-primary school with parent involvement, parent education and family support is associated with a whole range of long term gains, both individual and social (Yoshikawa, 1994). Especially the previously discussed combination programs show less decay of effects. As noted, a further important characteristic is the intensity or 'dose' of the pre-primary school intervention: the higher the dose, the more sizeable the effects that are found in the long term and the smaller the rate of decay (Gorey, 2001). Adopting a child-centred developmental approach to promote children's self-regulation skills, providing a pedagogically safe and stable environment to promote secure social relationships and social competence, and combining this approach with authentic activities that guide children in exploring the cultural domains of language, literacy, math and science, will serve the goal of equity by reducing the early education gap best in long term.

Long term efficacy appears in above-average school achievement scores in the later grades (concerning reading and math), better completed school careers, less school drop-out, lower dependency on welfare, higher economic independence, less psychosocial problems, less juvenile delinquency, less smoking and lower rates of teenage pregnancy. Three of the aforementioned

combination programmes have been subjected to cost-benefit analyses and all indicate high return rates. The three combination programmes where a cost-benefit analysis has been carried out are Perry-Preschool, Abecedarian and Chicago Child-Parent Centers (Barnett, 2000; Masse & Barnett, 2002; Belfield et al., 2006; Reynolds et al., 2002). The results indicate very high return rates, ranging from 1:2 (Abecedarian), 1:4 (Chicago CPC) to 1:14 (Perry Preschool). As Heckman (2006) has argued, educational investments in human capital are likely to be socially and economically most profitable when targeted at the early childhood pre-primary period.

Fading effects is nonetheless a problem to be taken seriously. One explanation for fading effects is that children who have had early education provision may be more likely to attend elementary schools of lower educational quality, with a less favourable socio-economic composition of the student population, and more problems of safety (see, for example, Lee & Loeb's [1995] follow-up study of Head Start participants). Put differently, pre-primary programme effects can be nullified by adverse conditions later on. Research findings like these suggest the need for multi-systemic and continued 'nurture' that broadens the scope of the intervention to include the family context and extends the approach far into elementary school.

It is interesting in this connection, to examine in more detail how an exemplary programme with sizeable long-term effects and a very favourable cost-benefit rate produced its results. In a re-analysis of the Chicago Child-Parent Centres project, Reynolds et al. (2004) detail how early programme effects on cognitive, language, academic and social-emotional skills at age 5 and 6, were transported and transformed into a variety of intermediate and final outcomes at age 18. Using a structural equations statistical technique, Reynolds et al. show that many mediating factors were involved in the transport of early effects to long term outcomes. Some of these factors were related to the family and proved that the family support component of the programme helped to sustain the early cognitive effects by reducing child abuse and the number of school moves between ages 4 and 12, and by increasing parents' participation in school. Others were related to the start of the children in primary school. Children's advances in cognitive and academic skills contributed to better classroom adjustment, which in turn led to higher commitment to the school and reduced drop-out. Decreased grade retention, as a consequence of improved cognitive and academic skills, also contributed positively to school commitment. Finally, child, school and family related factors influenced the transition to a good quality high school, which resulted in higher educational attainment and lower juvenile delinquency at age 18. The paths of effects from the early childhood education programme to its long term outcomes are quite complex and involve several systems (child, family, school, high school), each of which is vulnerable to negative external influences unless adequately protected and continuously supported (Lee & Loeb, 1995).

Obstacles: selective access and use, segregation tendencies

Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) discuss the conditions that should be met by pre-primary education and care systems in order to significantly narrow the education gap for children from low income and immigrant or ethnic minority families. The first crucial condition concerns the impact of pre-primary education and care on school readiness skills. The bigger the impact, the more the education gap will be reduced. The second condition concerns the degree in which pre-primary education and care has a differential, or compensatory, impact, meaning that the most disadvantaged will benefit most. Programmes should have stronger effects for those who are most disadvantaged. The evidence

discussed above confirms that high quality pre-primary education programmes are capable of meeting the first two conditions. The third condition concerns the actual use of pre-primary education by educationally disadvantaged groups. After reviewing the evidence, Magnuson and Waldfogel, conclude that, on the scale of society, preschool education will only contribute to significantly narrowing the early education gap if the use of high quality day care centres and pre-primary schools by low income and ethnic minority families is massively increased.

In most countries, low income families and immigrant have less access to (good quality) early childhood care and education provisions (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Chan & Mellor, 2002; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007; OECD, 2001; Sylva et al., 2007b). Stipek et al. (1998) observed that, in the USA, pre-primary schools for low-income and ethnic minority children tend to be more didactic and basic skills oriented with a negative social-emotional climate, and often employed lower educated teachers. Similarly, Phillips et al. (2000) found that day care centres and pre-primary schools with higher educated and better paid staff, with lower child-to-staff ratios and higher classroom quality had higher parental fees, thus making higher quality provisions less accessible for low income groups. Although these findings pertain to the USA, they may be indicative for other countries with largely private pre-primary care and education systems as well. Moreover, the study Sylva et al. (2007b) in the United Kingdom (England) provides similar evidence for socially selective use of pre-primary education and care. This constitutes a major obstacle to using early education and care as a means to enhance educational opportunities of low income and immigrant children, because neither the first nor the second condition mentioned by Magnuson and Waldfogel will be met. Worrying is also that the early childhood education and care systems of many countries show a patchy design (OECD, 2001). These systems are marked by many discontinuities and major transitions, disrupting children's social relationships with other children and the caregivers. Discontinuities and frequent interruptions probably render the developmental and learning processes less effective, and may be a cause of behavioural maladjustment and low achievement in primary school (Cryer et al., 2005; Rim-Kaufman & Pianta, 2002). Moreover, patchy systems reinforce tendencies of socially selective use (Leseman, 2002).

Pre-primary education and care in most countries are provided in a complex mixed and segmented market, with several different types of care and education (such as centre-based care, home-based care, half-day or full-day care), different prices, different financing systems, different quality regulations, causing in many countries socially selective use that tends to reinforce existing disadvantages (OECD, 2001). The supply is provided by private, partly subsidised or fully subsidised organisations. Subsidies may be centralised (passed directly to centres) or decentralised (through vouchers and tax reduction for parents). There may be different licensing and accreditation regulations, and – correlated with this – there may be strong differences in quality. In this mixed and segmented market, parents consider alternatives which are not always to the benefit of the child. There may be other adults present in the home or nearby who can care for the children. One of the parents may stop working as long as the children are young. There may be low priced alternative care provisions, which probably are of low quality. Available evidence suggest that socio-economic class and ethnic-cultural differences in the use of pre-primary services can be explained by at least four factors (based on literature reviewed in Leseman, 2002):

1. The family income, the number of children, and the mother's employment and hourly wages, in relation to the parental fee required by the provisions and subsidy provided to the family.
2. The cultural and religious child rearing beliefs, in particular the view that young children should be cared for by their mothers *versus* the importance attached to early stimulation of (second) language and literacy development.
3. The degree of social and cultural integration and the number of years of residence in the new country, and, more specifically, the confidence in professional education and care provisions as representatives of the majority society.
4. Considerations of convenience and the availability of informal care by relatives living in the same neighbourhood, in relation to location, opening hours, and rules regarding care for sick children.

To increase access to high quality early childhood education and care, decreasing the fee for low income groups is obviously a first starting point (see Chapter 3, section 2 on measures taken by the European countries). Due to their cultural and religious beliefs, parents of low-income communities and ethnic and socio-linguistic minorities may value upbringing at home, by the mother. They may, in addition, consider children below primary school age as too young for participating in an education programme. Although most of these parents probably do value a successful school career for their children, they may not see the connection between this goal and using a day care centre or pre-primary school. Guaranteeing quality, and in particular efficacy with respect to cognitive, language and social-emotional development, seems to be a crucial next step in policy development.

Immigrant and ethnic minority parents rightly observe discrepancies between socialisation practices in centres and pre-primary schools, and their own socialisation goals (Rosenthal, 1999). This problem could be tackled by organising pre-primary education and care to match more closely to the families' child rearing goals and values, and by employing caregivers and teachers from the same communities. Low income and minority families have to deal with lots of additional stresses regarding family income, jobs, daily child rearing, neighbourhood. Trying to meet the requirements of personal involvement in the education programme or observing the time schedule and rules of the day care centre may be an extra burden (Farran, 2000). This problem should be tackled by tailoring provisions to all the needs of families, as, for instance, in the Chicago Child-Parent Centres (Reynolds et al., 2004).

1.6. Conclusion

Given the evidence, there is little doubt that pre-primary education for low income and ethnic minority children can contribute importantly to combating the educational disadvantages of low income and minority children, if certain conditions are met. Evaluation evidence indicates that the design of programmes and the approach to pedagogy and curriculum is crucial to success. Low intensive, low dose, late starting, mono-systemic approaches are less effective overall. A didactic or academic approach in a negative social-emotional climate may do more harm than good. Early starting, intensive, multi-systemic approaches that include centre-based education and involvement of professionals as a core activity are superior, with impressive long term results and very favourable

cost-benefit ratios. Investing in accessible, high quality, early starting and intensive care and education provisions for young children is socially and economically probably very profitable.

Yet, within this general model, age-appropriate services and sensitivity to differing needs and preferences is essential. For instance, the recent results of the NICHD Early Child Care Network study (Belsky, 2006; NICHD ECCN, 2006) may be seen as a warning that very early intensive use of centre-based care and education can be hazardous for a child's social and emotional development, even if high quality care is provided. Bearing this in mind, policy considerations must include parental leave measures and the right to part-time work, combined with low intensive educational centre care, for the earliest years. Balanced bilingual development in early childhood requires balanced bilingual education. The presence of many different first languages in one classroom and the impossibility to find and to hire staff to serve all these mother tongues equally well requires alternative strategies such as involving the parents and their socio-linguistic communities. This may be facilitated through the provision of home-based programmes, in addition to centre-based care and education in the majority language.

Policy measures that seek to increase the participation in early education provisions should seek ways to decrease the costs for low income groups, while ensuring a common high level of quality of provisions for all children. Some studies suggest that an indirect way of subsidising, through vouchers and tax measures (demand-side subsidy), may be the best strategy in this regard. However, a distinct risk of indirect subsidising is an increasing gap in the use of high quality provisions between high and low-income groups. A distinct risk of direct subsidy is a low or moderate average quality, as in large-scale public pre-primary schools. In all cases, subsidy strategies should be accompanied by strong measures to monitor and ensure minimum quality standards. If it is true, as Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) contend, that only high quality pre-primary education (with the possibility of targeted interventions for those who need it most) will help to narrow the early education gap, quality regulations regarding group size (for the younger children), children-to-staff ratios (lowest for the younger children, somewhat higher for older preschoolers), and teacher education and training, should set high quality standards.

Currently, there are several problems with the provision of special pre-primary care and education programmes for low-income and ethnic minority children (Farran, 2000). First, many targeted pre-primary education programmes do not meet the criteria of quality and efficacy. Second, pre-primary education programmes for disadvantaged children are often temporary projects and vulnerable to economic and political trends. Third, targeted special measures tend to reinforce social and ethnic segregation in the preschool care and education system, which may transfer to the primary school system as well, insofar preschools are connected to primary schools. This is in particular a problem in national systems where parents are free to choose a primary school. The consequence of segregation is an increased concentration of children with disadvantages on particular pre-primary schools, which may have an additional negative effect on children's development. Recent evidence shows that pre-primary schools with a more mixed income population have better results for disadvantaged children, probably because more able children support less able children in their development (Schechter & Bye, 2007). The policy challenge, therefore, is to (re)build (current) systems of early childhood care and education that meet crucial design features as outlined above, that provide high quality care and education for all children, that are integrated, attractive and affordable to all families regardless social

class or minority status, yet that is sensitive to differing educational needs and able to compensate early educational disadvantages.

The ideal early education system is both integrated and differentiated, ensures both common developmental and educational goals, yet is adaptive to individual needs and preferences, and works in both a child- and family-centred way. The system joins up the different types of care, education and support that are provided, and is marked by equivalent quality regulations for all subsystems. An interesting model is provided by so-called 'educare' systems and age-integrated services. These systems and service are intended to combine several education and care functions in one local pre-primary centre, including full day care, playgroups, pre-primary education programmes, leisure time activities for young children, and parent-support programmes.

A second model is provided by the so called 'broad-based schools' or 'community schools' or 'full-service schools', as they are called (cf. Children's Aid Society, 1997). Broad-based schools combine, in one building, and under one management and administration, several services for (young) children, their parents and wider community. At the same time they have – as a core function – the teaching of reading, writing and maths. Services that are aligned with elementary schools include compensatory pre-primary education and language programmes (for 3-6-years-olds), full-day educationally-oriented care ('educare', for 0-6 years olds), and extended school day programmes and after-school care (for 6-12-years-old). Coherence and inter-service cooperation is ensured by periodic inter-service staff meetings, joint case-management, and occasional staff exchange. If broad-based schools succeed in keeping to the educational goals, linking early-starting intensive pre-primary programmes – or educational day care – and family support activities to the school's educational mission, the model has much in common with the combination programmes that have showed such impressive long term effects.

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CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND INDICATORS

Introduction

As indicated by the review of the research results in Chapter 1, addressing this issue of equity in education systems involves studying the causes of social inequalities between individuals (or risk factors), acknowledging these inequalities and implementing prevention measures from the first years of life. In this context, this chapter provides comparable numerical benchmarks in three areas linked to the early years of education in Europe: the number of households with one or more young children (under 6 years), the proportion of households or children considered to be at educational risk and, finally, the level of participation of young children in education centres at pre-primary level (ISCED 0).

Firstly, demographic data showing the number of households across Europe involved in bringing up a child under 6 years old are presented. This initial description is followed by an assessment of the burden on parents based on the number of children in their care.

Secondly, a large part of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of some of the principal factors recognized in the literature as placing children at risk. The data reveals that, among many households with young children, there is a significant level of: single parent families, immigration, poverty, and unemployment. The research literature review (see Chapter 1) has demonstrated that it is not the presence of a single risk factor which can pose a threat to individual life chances, but rather a combination of factors. Unfortunately, most of the databases used here come from different sources ⁽¹⁾ and so cannot be crossed at the level of individuals. Furthermore, even within the same database, crossing several factors leads to sub-samples of individuals which are too small to be considered reliable indicators of the wider population. Despite these limitations, and because they can be statistically controlled, unemployment rates and single parent family data will be crossed.

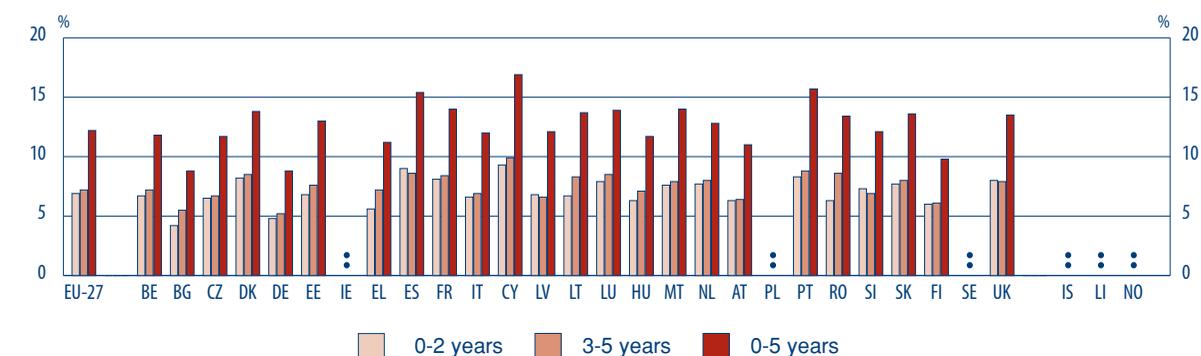
Finally, education provision at the pre-primary level (ISCED 0) is examined from several points of view: participation rates and levels of public finance; as well as changes in these statistics for the period 2001-2004.

2.1. Households with children under 6 years

In Europe, nearly one in eight households (12 %) is caring for a child under the age of 6 (Figure 2.1). In Spain, Cyprus and Portugal such households make more than 15 %. Only Bulgaria, Germany and Finland have less than 10 % of households with at least one child under the age of 6.

⁽¹⁾ All data are provided by Eurostat, Statistical Office of the European Communities and come from three separate databases: LFS (Labour Force Survey)] for most of the indicators reported here, EU-SILC (EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) for statistics on poverty levels, and UOE (UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat) for figures relating to education as ISCED level 0.

Figure 2.1: Number of households with at least one child of 0-2 years, 3-5 years and 0-5 years, as a percentage of total households, 2005



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
0-2 years	6.9	6.7	4.2	6.5	8.2	4.8	6.8	:	5.6	9.0	8.1	6.6	9.3	6.8	6.7	7.9	6.3	7.6	7.7	6.3	:	8.3	6.3	7.3	7.7	6.0	:	8.0	:	:	:
3-5 years	7.2	7.2	5.5	6.7	8.5	5.2	7.6	:	7.2	8.6	8.4	6.9	9.9	6.6	8.3	8.5	7.1	7.9	8.0	6.4	:	8.8	8.6	6.9	8.0	6.1	:	7.9	:	:	:
0-5 years	12.2	11.8	8.8	11.7	13.8	8.8	13.0	:	11.2	15.4	14.0	12.0	16.9	12.1	13.7	13.9	11.7	14.0	12.8	11.0	:	15.7	13.4	12.1	13.6	9.8	:	13.5	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

The estimated number of households with the care of at least one child aged 0-2 years, 3-5 years and 0-5 years, expressed as a percentage of the estimated total number of households in the country.

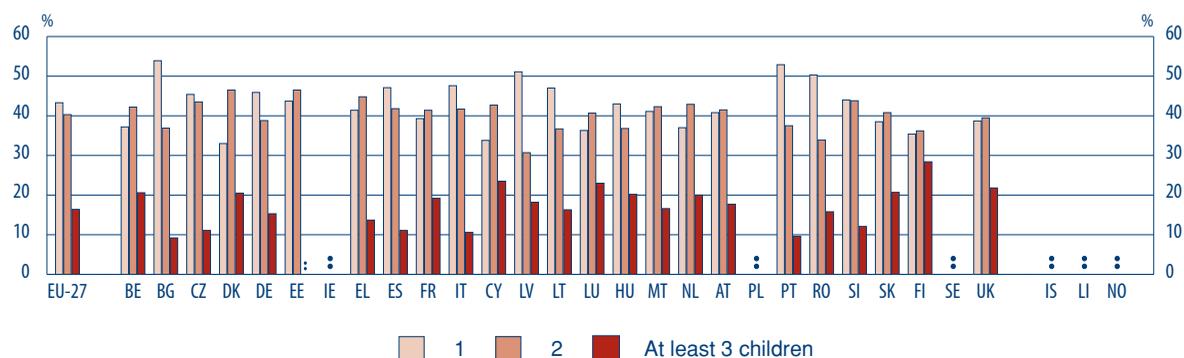
Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

In the EU-27, households with a very young child (0-2 years) represent about 7 % of families, or one in fifteen households. In Bulgaria, Germany and Greece the rate is less than 6 %, whilst it is higher than 8 % in Denmark, Spain, France, Cyprus and Portugal.

This data also indicates that the majority of European families with young children under 6 usually have a child who is either under 3 or between 3 and 5, but rarely have both. In fact, the proportion of families in the EU with children under 6 (12 %) is nearly as high as the sum of the two other categories (7 % with at least one child under 3; 7 % with a child between 3 and 5 years). This is the pattern in most countries with only two exceptions: in Denmark and the Netherlands there are almost 3 % of families with at least one child in the 3-5 age bracket and at least one child under 3.

The data in Figure 2.2 completes the picture by showing the number of children under the age of 15 in households which also have a child under 6. This gives an indication of the burden placed on the parents of these families.

Figure 2.2: Distribution of households with at least one child under 6 according to the number of children under 15, 2005



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
1	43.3	37.2	53.9	45.4	33.0	45.9	43.7	:	41.4	47.1	39.3	47.6	33.8	51.1	47.0	36.3	43.0	41.1	37.0	40.8	:	52.9	50.3	44.0	38.5	35.4	:	38.7	:	:	:
2	40.3	42.2	36.9	43.5	46.5	38.8	46.5	:	44.8	41.8	41.4	41.7	42.7	30.7	36.7	40.7	36.8	42.3	42.9	41.5	:	37.5	33.9	43.8	40.8	36.2	:	39.5	:	:	:
At least 3 children	16.4	20.6	9.2	11.1	20.5	15.3	:	:	13.7	11.1	19.2	10.6	23.5	18.2	16.3	23.0	20.2	(16.6)	20.0	17.7	:	9.6	15.8	12.1	20.7	28.4	:	21.8	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on the countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

Distribution of the number of children (under 15 years) in families with at least one child under 6. Of the total number of households estimated with at least one child under 6, the estimated number of households with 1, 2, 3 or more children under 15 is reported as a percentage.

The data in brackets show estimates which are not fully reliable due to the sample size. Data which is most unreliable has not been reported. However, these estimates have been incorporated into the EU-27 figure.

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

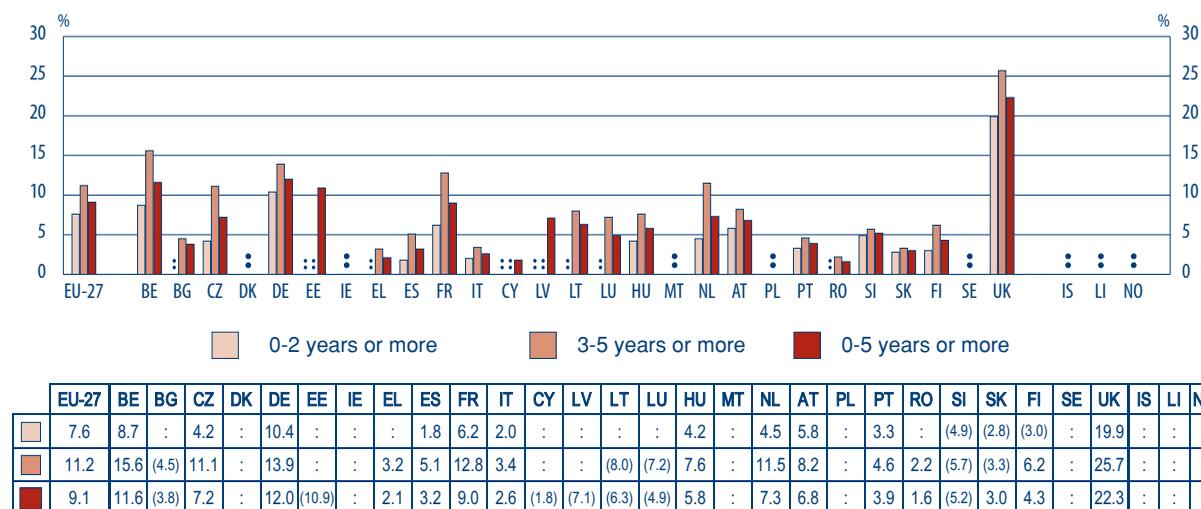
For EU-27 countries, of households with a young child (0-6 years), 43 % have just one child in their care. Families with a single child comprise more than half such households in Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal and Romania.

Large families (3 or more children) with a child under 6 years comprise 16 %. Finland has a sizeable proportion of large families: nearly 30 % of the households which care for a young child (0-6 years) also have two or more other children (under 15 years) in their care. Similarly, in seven other countries (Belgium, Denmark, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovakia and the United Kingdom) more than one family in five has three or more children.

2.2. Single parent families

The burden of child upbringing is greater when a single parent or guardian is responsible for young children (Figure 2.3). Moreover, coming from a single parent family is one of the socio-economic risk factors which affect the development of children's social, emotional and intellectual capabilities (see section 2 in Chapter 1). In the EU (countries for which data is available) of households with a child under 6 years old, 9 % are single parent families, that is, one household in eleven.

Figure 2.3: Percentage of single parent households with at least one child of 0-2 years or more, 3-5 years or more, and 0-5 years or more, 2005



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

A household is defined as **single parent** when one adult cares for at least one child whether or not the child is the offspring of the adult. The rate of single parent households is shown as three types of household with one or more children: a) households with at least one child aged between 0 and 2 years, and possibly other children; b) households with at least one child aged between 3 and 5 years, any other children being at least 3 years old; c) households with at least one child aged between the age of 0 and 5 years, and possibly with other children.

The data in brackets shows estimates which are not fully reliable due to the sample size. Data which is most unreliable has not been reported. However these estimates have been incorporated into the EU-27 figure.

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

This occurrence of single parent families is very unequal across Europe. They are most common in the United Kingdom where more than one household in five with at least one child under 6 is managed by a single adult. In contrast, the countries of the Mediterranean basin (Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, and Portugal) as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia seem less affected by single parenting: there are less than 4 % of single parent households with at least one child under 6.

The data also shows that the rate of occurrence of single parent families can vary greatly depending on the age of the youngest child. More specifically, in all the countries where the data is considered to be reliable, the rate is higher the older the children are in the household and can even be double or more. The table below quantifies this growth as a percentage.

Growth (as a percentage) of the rate of occurrence of single parent families among households with at least one child under the age of 3, and households with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 5 years, other possible children all over 3 years.

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Δ (%)	+48	+80	:	+163	:	+34	:	:	:	+181	+106	+65	:	:	:	:	+80	:	+156	+41	:	+40	:	(+15)	(+20)	(+107)	:	+29	:	:	:

Although the United Kingdom registers the highest rates of single parent families, the increase depending on the age of children in the household is only about +30 % between 0-2 and 3-5 years. This difference is amongst the lowest with Slovenia (+15 %) and Slovakia (+20 %). For these countries, single parenthood arrives early in children's lives.

In most other countries, single parenthood takes place later in a child's development, doubling in France and Finland between the two age groups under consideration and even tripling in the Czech Republic, Spain and the Netherlands.

2.3. Nationality

Belonging to a particular culture and/or ethnic minority may in some cases constitute an important risk factor with respect to adjusting to school and then experiencing a successful socio-professional life (see Chapter 1). The integration of migrants, particularly with respect to child development is one of the preoccupations of decision makers in Europe ⁽²⁾.

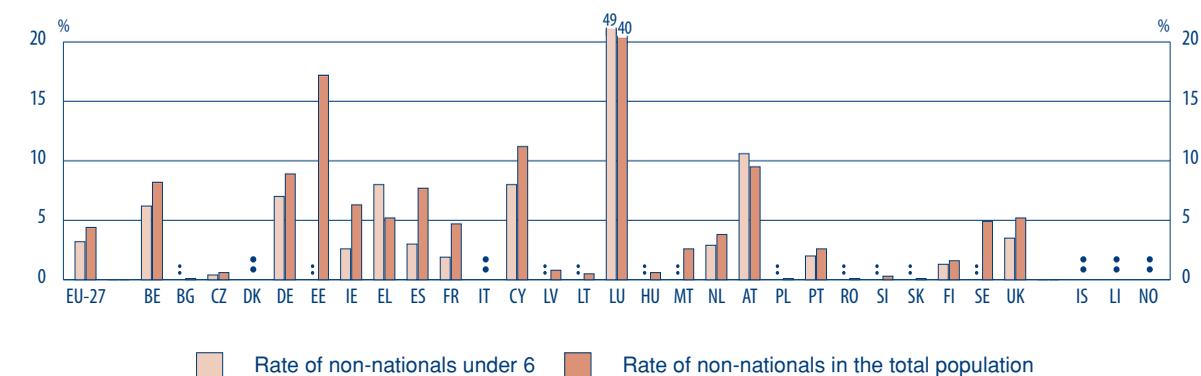
Within the comparative databases available to Eurostat, the principal criterion which defines and distinguishes the different populations living in member states is the legal criterion of nationality. More specifically, nationality as it is considered here (Figure 2.4) is defined by the country which issues the passport. The demographic data presents an obstacle as it does not take into account the procedural differences in the acquisition of nationality which may exist between countries and thus restricts comparability. Moreover, the criterion of nationality does not always identify the individuals subject to a cultural risk factor: in some countries, individuals are considered as nationals (notably intra-national migrants such as Roma and Irish Travellers) even though they belong to different ethnic groups, distinctive in culture and even language. On the other hand, being non-national does not necessarily imply being at educational risk. Such a criterion by itself does not indicate differences in spoken language and/or culture. For example, in a small country such as Luxembourg the exceptionally high numbers of non-nationals under 6 years (49 %) largely indicate high numbers of children from neighbouring countries, who share the same language and a similar culture. Therefore, the Figure 2.4 is presented here only for illustrating the diversity across European countries. Due to high levels of missing data regarding the proportion of non-national children under 6 years, the rate of non-nationals in the total population is also presented. As non-nationality is only the best available, but not the best possible indicator, straightforward inferences regarding educational risks should be avoided.

In the EU, nearly 5 % of residents are estimated to be non-nationals. Among under 6-years-olds, non-nationals comprise about 3 % (this may be biased due to the high rate of non-responses and missing data). Yet, there is a huge variation across European countries. In Luxembourg non-nationals comprise nearly half of the population of children under 6. Apart from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Cyprus and Austria, all other countries register fewer than 4 % of children under the age of 6 as non-nationals. In Luxembourg the rate of non-nationals under 6 is even higher than the rate of non-nationals in the total population. This situation is also present in Greece and Austria; everywhere else

⁽²⁾ See Eurydice (2004) Integrating immigrant children into schools in Europe.

(for which data is available) the rate of non-nationals under 6 is equal or lower than the rate of non-nationals in the total population.

Figure 2.4: Number of non-national children under 6 years as a percentage of the total population of children under 6, compared to the total population (all ages), 2005



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Rate of non-nationals under 6	3.2	6.2	:	(0.4)	:	7.0	:	2.6	8.0	3.0	1.9	:	8.0	:	:	48.5	:	:	2.9	10.6	:	2.0	:	:	:	(1.3)	:	3.5	:	:	:
Rate of non-nationals in the total population	4.4	8.2	(0.1)	0.6	:	8.9	17.2	6.3	5.2	7.7	4.7	:	11.2	0.8	(0.5)	39.5	0.6	2.6	3.8	9.5	0.1	2.6	0.1	(0.3)	0.1	1.6	4.9	5.2	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data are available.

Explanatory note

Nationality refers to the country which issues the passport.

The data in brackets shows estimates which are not fully reliable due to the sample size. Data which is most unreliable has not been reported. However these estimates have been incorporated into the EU-27 figure.

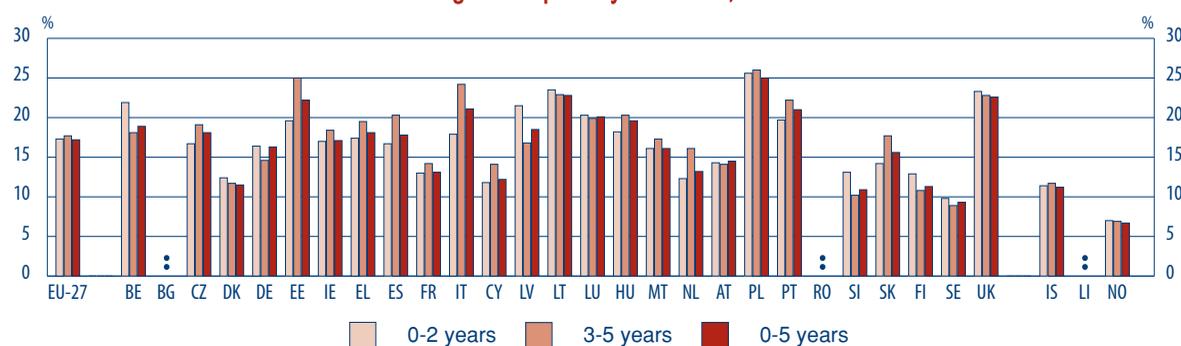
Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

2.4. Financial insecurity of households

Regarding upbringing of young children the level of family income is an essential parameter defining risk groups. Poverty is an important risk factor with regard to success at school; according to some authors, it is more significant than all other risk factors (see Chapter 1).

Figure 2.5 uses the notion of an at-risk-of-poverty threshold. This is based on the total net revenue of households (income from work as well as unemployment benefits and other social security benefits such as family allowances etc.). This income is then re-calculated using a mathematical formula based on the number and age of the members of the household (see explanatory note). According to this calculation, nearly one in six European households with a child under the age of 6 lives on the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

Figure 2.5: Percentage of households with children of 0-2 years, 3-5 years and 0-5 years living on the poverty threshold, 2005



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
0-2 years	17.3	21.9	16.7	12.4	16.4	19.6	17.0	17.4	16.7	13.0	17.9	11.8	21.5	23.5	20.3	18.2	16.1	12.3	14.3	25.6	19.7	13.1	14.2	12.9	9.8	23.3	11.4	7.0			
3-5 years	17.8	18.1	19.1	11.7	14.6	25.0	18.4	19.5	20.3	14.2	24.2	14.1	16.8	22.9	19.9	20.3	17.3	16.1	14.1	26.0	22.2	10.2	17.7	10.8	8.9	22.8	11.7	6.9			
0-5 years	17.2	18.9	18.1	11.5	16.3	22.2	17.1	18.1	17.8	13.1	21.1	12.2	18.5	22.8	20.1	19.6	16.1	13.2	14.5	25.0	21.0	10.9	15.6	11.3	9.3	22.6	11.2	6.7			

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on the countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

For each type of household (with children from 0 to 2 years, 3 to 5 and 0 to 5 years), the number of households living on the threshold of poverty is shown in relation to the total number of households of the same type. The **at-risk-of-poverty threshold** is defined as 60 % of the median value of equivalised disposable income. A household's **disposable income** includes income from work, income from personal assets, transfers from other households and social transfers (including retirement pensions and unemployment benefits), net of direct taxes.

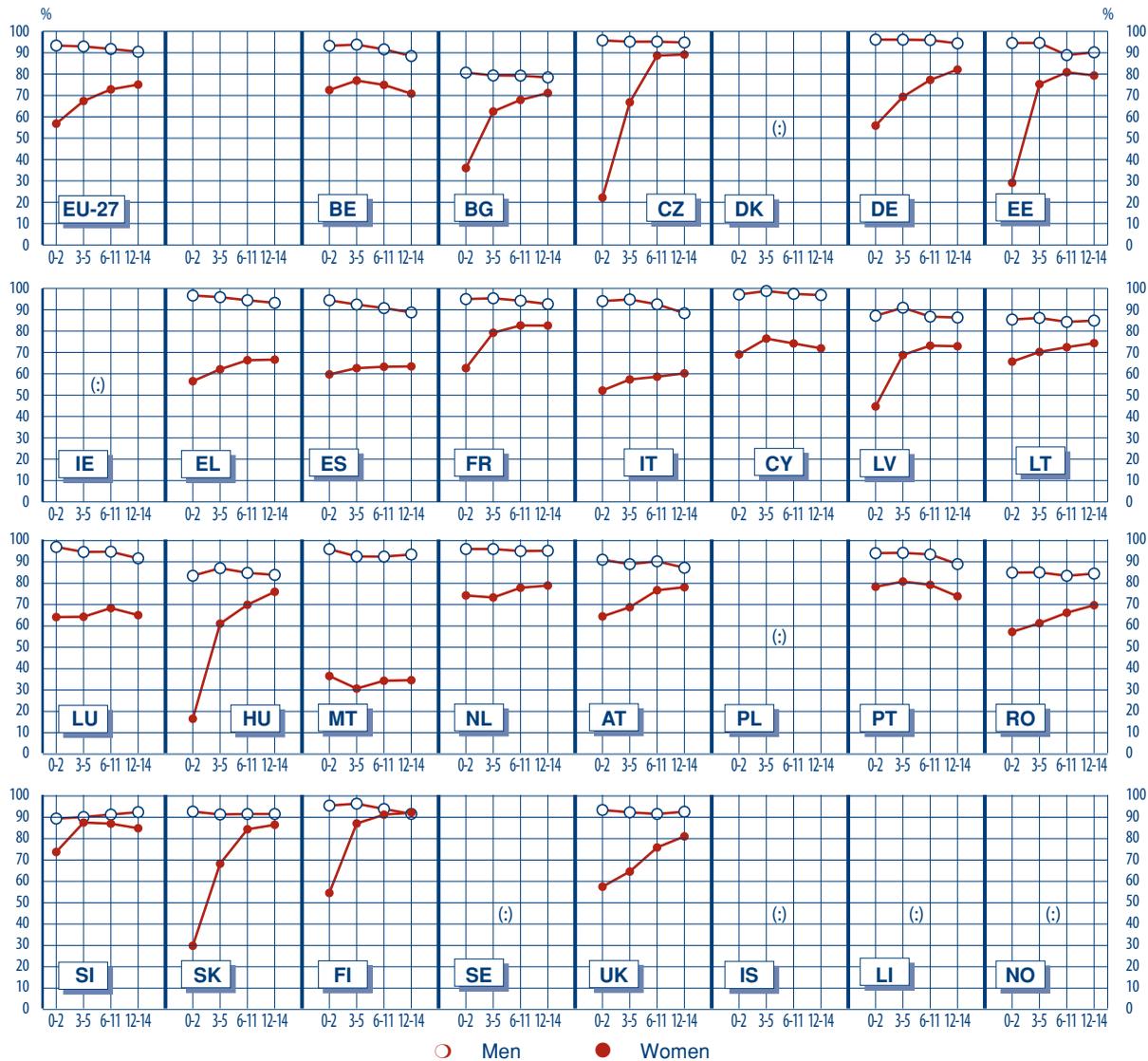
The **equivalised disposable income** is obtained by dividing the disposable income by the size of the household based on the modified scale adopted by OECD (a weighting of 1.0 for the first adult, 0.5 for all other people aged over 14 years and 0.3 for children aged under 14).

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

With the exception of Sweden and Norway, in all analysed countries, more than 10 % of households with a young child are potentially poor. The situation is a particular concern in Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom, where more than 20 % of the households raising young children are on the poverty threshold. Belgium and Latvia can be added to these countries when households with very young children (under the age of 3) are considered.

Single parenthood (Figure 2.3), through the reduction in income which occurs when one parent leaves the household, can partly explain these statistics, but not for all countries. In Italy and Portugal, for example, approximately 20 % of families with one or more child under the age of 6 are on the threshold of poverty in spite of the fact that they have fewer single parent families. The higher number of children in the household (Figure 2.2) can also contribute to a reduction in disposable income per household member unless family allowances compensate for the increased number of children. In most European countries, family allowances do increase with the arrival of a new child in the household.

Figure 2.6: Economic activity rates by gender of parents/guardians caring for children (at least one child between 0 and 2 years, at least one child between 3 and 5 years, 6 to 11 years, and 12 to 14 years), 2005



Men

Ages	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
0-2	93.4	93.2	80.7	95.8	:	96.2	94.6	:	96.7	94.4	95.0	94.0	97.1	87.1	85.4	96.5	83.0	95.5	95.5	90.5	:	93.6	84.5	88.9	92.2	95.0	:	92.9	:	:	:
3-5	92.9	93.8	79.4	95.2	:	96.1	94.6	:	95.9	92.4	95.4	94.8	98.8	90.9	86.2	94.2	86.6	92.1	95.5	88.4	:	93.7	84.6	89.6	90.8	95.9	:	91.8	:	:	:
6-11	91.8	91.6	79.3	95.2	:	95.9	88.9	:	94.4	90.7	94.2	92.5	97.4	86.7	84.3	94.3	84.4	92.0	94.6	89.8	:	93.0	83.0	90.8	91.0	93.4	:	91.1	:	:	:
12-14	90.5	88.5	78.5	94.8	:	94.4	90.2	:	93.2	88.7	92.6	88.4	96.8	86.3	84.9	91.2	83.4	93.0	94.7	86.8	:	88.5	84.0	91.9	91.1	91.1	:	92.1	:	:	:

Women

Ages	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
0-2	56.8	72.5	36.0	22.2	:	55.9	(29.1)	:	56.5	59.7	62.6	52.2	69.1	44.7	65.7	63.7	16.1	36.1	73.8	64.0	:	77.9	56.7	73.3	29.4	54.1	:	57.0	:	:	:
3-5	67.4	77.0	62.5	66.8	:	69.4	75.3	:	62.1	62.6	79.2	57.3	76.5	68.8	70.2	63.8	60.6	(30.2)	72.9	68.3	:	80.3	60.8	87.1	67.8	86.6	:	64.1	:	:	:
6-11	72.8	74.9	67.9	88.7	:	77.3	80.9	:	66.4	63.3	82.6	58.6	74.2	73.2	72.4	67.9	69.4	33.9	77.4	76.3	:	78.8	65.7	86.5	83.9	90.7	:	75.4	:	:	:
12-14	75.1	70.8	71.1	89.2	:	82.1	79.3	:	66.6	63.5	82.6	60.2	71.9	72.9	74.4	64.6	75.5	34.1	78.4	77.6	:	73.4	69.2	84.4	86.0	91.7	:	80.6	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

Economic activity rates as defined by the International Labour Office (ILO), expressed as percentages of the number of economically active (employed and unemployed) and the total number of economically active and inactive people. People aged over 74 years or under 15 years are inactive. Among the potentially active population (15-74 years) who have not done any paid work during the reference week, those people who have not been actively seeking work during the previous four weeks are considered to be inactive (unless they have stopped looking because they have found work and are due to start in the next three months) or they are not ready to take up a job in the next two weeks. Also considered inactive are those workers who have not worked for more than three months (parental leave, career breaks, lay-offs etc.) unless they are receiving at least 50 % of their income from their employer. Workers on maternity/paternity leave are considered to be actively employed as are unpaid family workers.

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

Income level seems to be related to the employment situation of the couple or adult responsible for educating children. The economic activity rate (Figure 2.6) quantifies the number of economically active people (those who are ready to take up work or are already employed) in relation to the total active and inactive population (people who are not actively seeking work). It must be noted that parents on parental leave for longer than three months are considered to be inactive unless their employer is paying them at least 50 % of their salary. In contrast, those on maternity/paternity leave are considered to be economically active and in work. The statistics are therefore influenced to a certain extent by national regulations relating to different types of leave and its length.

For households with at least one child, the economic activity rate of women is significantly lower than that of men (Figure 2.6). This disparity is largely dependent on the age of the children in the household. When the youngest child is under 3, less than 60 % of women in the EU declare themselves available for work. In contrast, when the youngest child reaches the age of 12, 75 % of women are employed or available for work. The economic activity rate among men is not affected by the age of children and is systematically higher than the rate for women.

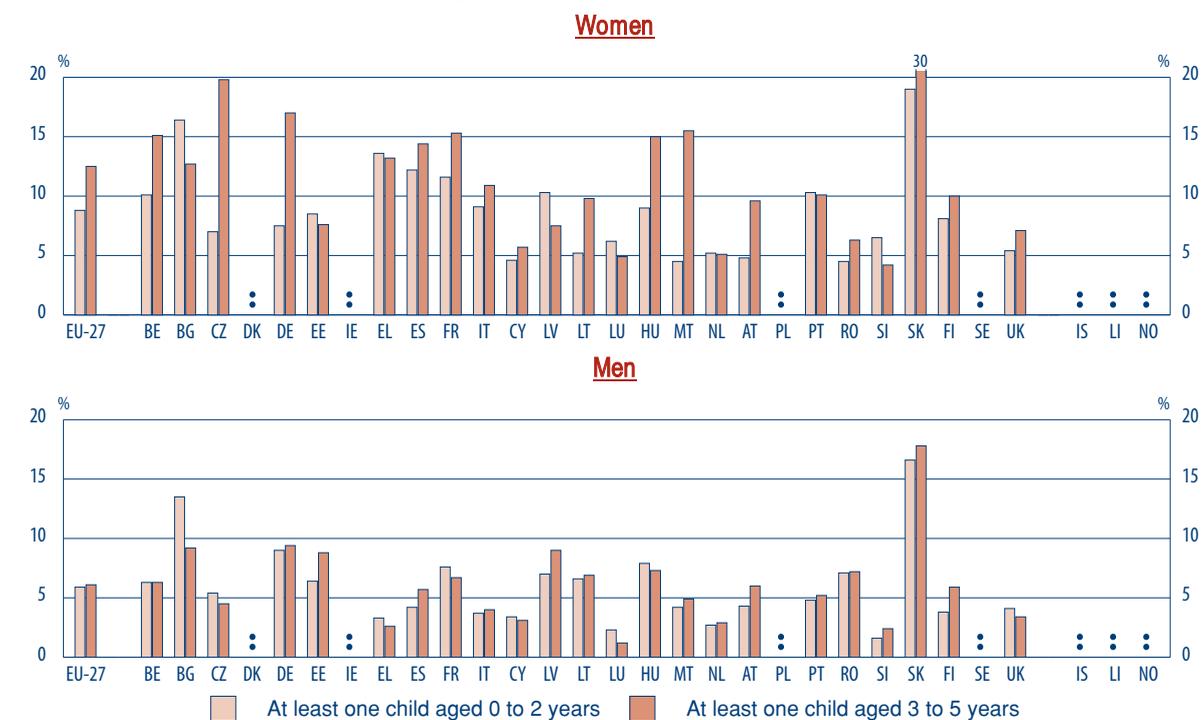
This pattern can be observed throughout most European countries. Women's economic activity rate is lower when the youngest child is below the age of 3; as soon as the youngest child reaches the age of 3, the economic activity rate of mothers is significantly higher, whilst in households where all children are aged over 12 the rate is higher by only a small amount. The raising of children therefore tends to keep women at home particularly if a child is aged under 3 years old (and to some extent till under 6). This is especially true in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia where the female economic activity rate almost trebles when the youngest child reaches the age of 3 and rises once again when the youngest child reaches the age of 6.

The variation in the economic activity of women according to the age of children is less apparent although still present in Bulgaria, Germany, France, Latvia, Finland and the United Kingdom. This phenomenon does not occur in Belgium, Spain, Malta and Portugal, where women's economic activity remains stable (and lower than that of men's – especially in Malta) regardless of the age of children in the household.

When the last child reaches the age of 6, women generally return to the labour market. However, with the exception of Finland, women never again achieve the same level of economic activity as men although they do come close in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Unemployment statistics (Figure 2.7) again reveals important disparities in Europe, not only with respect to countries, but also between men and women. Yet, it is important to take into account that levels of unemployment are closely related to economic growth and tend to change considerably over time. The presented statistics from 2005 therefore mostly intend to illustrate patterns of gender distribution among the unemployed.

Figure 2.7: Unemployment rate of parents/guardians by sex, with at least one child aged 0 to 2 years or more and 3 to 5 years or more, 2005



Women

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
At least one child aged 0 to 2 years	8.8	10.1	16.4	7.0	:	7.5	(8.5)	:	13.6	12.2	11.6	9.1	4.6	10.3	5.2	6.2	9.0	4.5	5.2	4.8	:	10.3	4.5	6.5	19.0	8.1	:	5.4	:	:	:
At least one child aged 3 to 5 years	12.5	15.1	12.7	19.8	:	17.0	7.6	:	13.2	14.4	15.3	10.9	5.7	7.5	9.8	4.9	15.0	(15.5)	5.1	9.6	:	10.1	6.3	4.2	29.7	10.0	:	7.1	:	:	:

Men

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
At least one child aged 0 to 2 years	5.9	6.3	13.5	5.4	:	9.0	6.4	:	3.3	4.2	7.6	3.7	3.4	7.0	6.6	2.3	7.9	4.2	2.7	4.3	:	4.8	7.1	1.6	16.6	3.8	:	4.1	:	:	:
At least one child aged 3 to 5 years	6.1	6.3	9.2	4.5	:	9.4	8.8	:	2.6	5.7	6.7	4.0	3.1	9.0	6.9	1.2	7.3	4.9	2.9	6.0	:	5.2	7.2	2.4	17.8	5.9	:	3.4	:	:	:

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Women Total	9.7	8.6	9.6	9.7	:	10.8	6.2	:	15.1	11.9	10.0	9.4	6.6	7.7	8.5	5.0	7.2	7.1	4.6	5.1	19.1	7.8	6.7	6.1	17.0	7.9	:	4.1	:	:	:
Men Total	8.4	6.9	10.3	6.2	:	11.6	9.5	:	5.7	7.1	8.6	6.0	4.3	8.8	8.5	2.9	6.8	6.9	4.2	5.1	17.2	6.3	7.5	5.5	15.6	7.6	:	5.0	:	:	:
Total	9.0	7.7	10.0	7.8	:	11.3	7.8	:	9.5	9.1	9.3	7.3	5.3	8.3	8.5	3.8	7.0	6.9	4.4	5.1	18.0	7.0	7.2	5.8	16.2	7.7	:	4.6	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

The **unemployment rate** is estimated by subtracting the estimated rate of the economically active population in work from 100. The latter rate is calculated as the number of economically active people with jobs as a percentage of the total number of the economically active. Workers on maternity/paternity leave are considered to be active and in work, as are unpaid family workers. Workers inactive for more than three months (for reasons of parental leave, career break etc.) are considered to be

active if they are receiving at least 50 % of their income from their employer otherwise they are considered to be inactive.

The data in brackets shows estimates which are not fully reliable due to the sample size. Data which is most unreliable is not reported. However these estimates have been incorporated into the EU-27 figure.

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

Total unemployment rates (see data in the table under the Figure 2.7) vary considerably: it is less than 5 % in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, it approaches or surpasses 10 % in Bulgaria and Germany and even 15 % in Poland and Slovakia.

Intra-national disparities between men and women are considerable. Most notably, the unemployment rate among Greek women is nearly three times higher than among men. Five other countries show a smaller though significant difference since the number of unemployed women is at least 1.5 times higher than the number of men with at least one child aged 3-5 years (the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Luxembourg).

In contrast, in eight countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Baltic countries, Austria, Romania and the United Kingdom), female unemployment is the same as, or even less than that of males.

Whatever the unemployment figures for the total population, nearly all countries show a higher difference between males and females considering households with at least one small child. The difference is most pronounced in the households that raise slightly older children (3-5 years), as at this time women tend to try to re-enter employment. Among households that have at least one child aged 3-5, the unemployment rate of women is on average twice as high as that of men. It is four times higher than that of men in the Czech Republic, Greece, and Luxemburg. Among those that raise a child under 3, a similar situation occurs in Greece and Slovenia, while on average in Europe female unemployment is 1.5 times higher than male. Only in Romania among households that raise small children (under 3 and under 5-year-olds) are male unemployment rates higher than female. Among those households that raise at least one child under 3, more men than women have difficulties to find a job also in Germany and Lithuania. Regarding households with slightly older children (3-5-year-olds), a similar situation prevails in Estonia and Latvia.

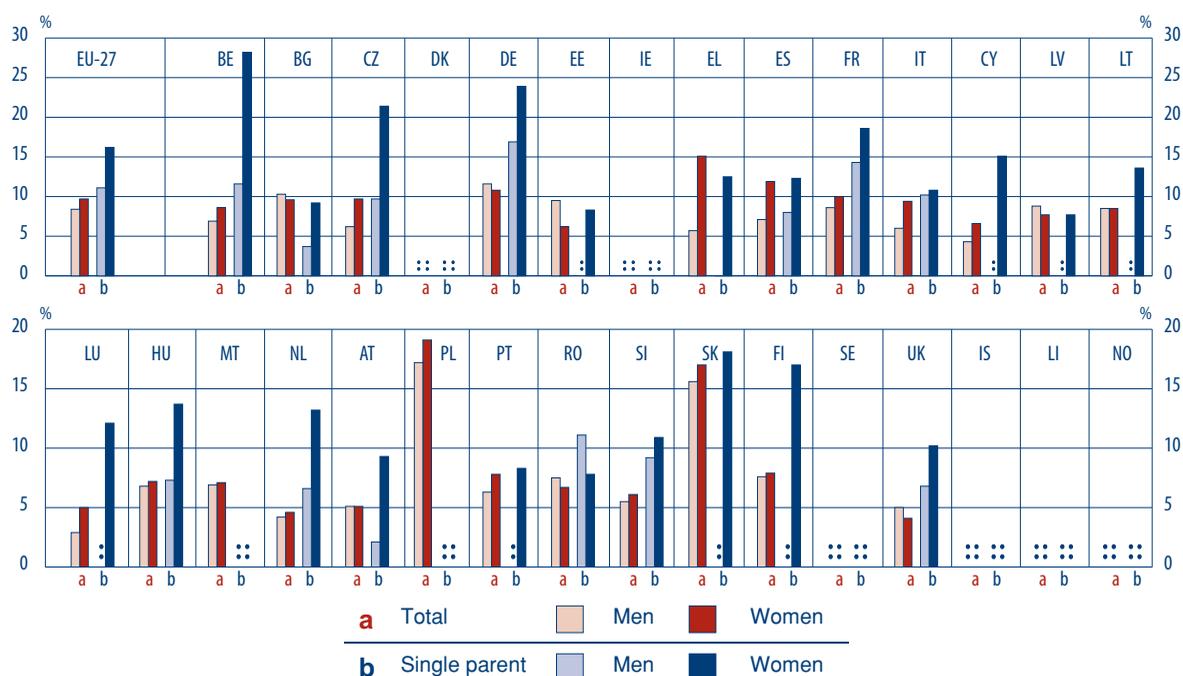
Again, it must be highlighted that the rate of unemployment amongst mothers increases when the youngest child is over 3 years old. This observation and the ones made earlier must be considered in the light of economic activity rates (Figure 2.6). The unemployment rate takes only economically active women as its denominator, that is those who are in work or available for work (and therefore excludes women who state that they are not looking for work) while the economic activity rate takes into account the people available for work or already in work (economically active) against the total population (active and inactive).

Therefore, the increased unemployment rates among women when their youngest child reaches the age of 3 (notably in the Czech Republic, Germany, Malta ⁽³⁾ and Austria where the unemployment rate of mothers doubles or even triples), can be explained by the fact that many mothers return to the labour market, but do not find work. This explanation is especially true for the Czech Republic where the female economic activity rate for women with children under the age of 3 is three times lower than that for women with children aged between 3 and 5.

⁽³⁾ The conclusions for Malta should be taken with caution as the estimates are not fully reliable.

Examination of the unemployment rates for adults who are heads of single parent families (Figure 2.8) elucidates the concept of risk accumulation. In order to increase sample size reliability the calculations pool all single parent households with at least one child under the age of 15, (unlike the figures above that described households with children under the age of 6).

Figure 2.8: Unemployment rate by gender amongst heads of single parent household with at least one child under the age of 15, compared with the total population, 2005



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO	
Total Men	8.4	6.9	10.3	6.2	:	11.6	9.5	:	5.7	7.1	8.6	6.0	4.3	8.8	8.5	2.9	6.8	6.9	4.2	5.1	17.2	6.3	7.5	5.5	15.6	7.6	:	5.0	:	:	:	
Total Women	9.7	8.6	9.6	9.7	:	10.8	6.2	:	15.1	11.9	10.0	9.4	6.6	7.7	8.5	5.0	7.2	7.1	4.6	5.1	19.1	7.8	6.7	6.1	17.0	7.9	:	4.1	:	:	:	
Single parent Men	11.1	11.6	(3.7)	9.7	:	16.9	:	:	(0)	8.0	14.3	10.2	:	:	:	:	7.3	:	6.6	(2.1)	:	:	:	(11.1)	(9.2)	:	:	:	6.8	:	:	:
Single parent Women	16.2	28.2	9.2	21.4	:	23.9	(8.3)	:	12.5	12.3	18.6	10.8	15.1	7.7	(13.6)	12.1	13.7	:	13.2	9.3	:	8.3	7.8	(10.9)	18.1	17.0	:	10.2	:	:	:	

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Additional note

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Explanatory note

The **unemployment rate** is estimated by subtracting the estimated rate of the economically active population in work from 100. The latter rate is calculated as the number of economically active people with jobs as a percentage of the total number of the economically active. Workers on maternity/paternity leave are considered to be active and in work, as are unpaid family workers. Workers inactive for more than three months (for reasons of parental leave, career break etc.) are considered to be active if they are receiving at least 50 % of their income from their employer.

A household is defined as a **single parent household** when a single adult has at least one child under his/her care, whether or not the child is the offspring of the adult.

The data in brackets shows estimates which are not fully reliable due to the sample size. Data which is most unreliable is not reported. However these estimates have been incorporated into the EU-27 figure.

Data is termly (spring) for all countries, except Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland (annual data).

In Europe on average more than 15 % of women who head single parent households and are looking for work remain unemployed, whilst the figure among the general female population is 10 %.

This phenomenon is widespread in the EU. In fact, with the exception of nine countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia), female heads of single parent households are at least 1.5 times more affected by unemployment than women in the general population. It is a particular cause for concern in Belgium (where the rate is 3 times greater), in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (where it is more than 2.5 times greater).

Single parent men are also more vulnerable to unemployment than the general male population. Yet, the average difference in the EU is less pronounced than for females: about 11 % single parent men cannot find a job compared to about 8 % of men in general population.

2.5. Participation

Children's participation in good quality education programmes plays a major role in their integration at school and later in social and work life. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can not only act as a catalyst for the integration of migrant children but may also compensate at an early stage for the possible late development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participation at this level of education is therefore essential to combat inequality.

This study examines the position of children from 0 to 6 years and the education provision made for them. Yet, participation in pre-primary education for under 3s is often viewed separately from over threes as at this age the work-life balance of parents and well-being of child are usually considered more important than the educational function (see Chapter 4). The comparative data from Eurostat on participation in pre-primary programmes only relates to ISCED 0 level of education for children at least 3 years of age. This type of pre-primary education must recruit staff with specialised qualifications in education. Day nurseries, playgroups and day-care centres where staff are not required to hold a qualification in education are not included.

Although national statistics for under-3s are available for some countries, they do not have the same degree of standardisation as the international databases compiled by Eurostat and are therefore not entirely comparable. In particular, they cover different reference years (from 2004 to 2006). For these reasons participation rates for the under-3s are not illustrated in a Figure and are therefore provided as an indication only.

The participation rates in pre-primary education for under 3s vary greatly in European countries. Publicly financed provision is virtually lacking in some countries. In the Czech Republic less than 1 % of under 3-year-olds attend crèches (*jesle*). However, about 20 % of 2 year-olds attend nursery schools (*mateřská škola*). Attendance has declined progressively since the political changes in 1989: the present capacity (2006) has fallen by a factor of approximately 25 since 1990, and by a factor of 5 since 1995. Participation rates of children under 3 years are also low in Poland (2 %). In Germany there is a sharp distinction between western and eastern *Länder*. In the western *Länder* only 10 % of under-3s attend day care, while this proportion rises to 41 % in the eastern *Länder* (2007). The data include privately organised care, *Tagesmütter*, who provide care in their own homes. There is a similar situation in Ireland, where home-based childminding is the usual form of provision and targeted interventions tend to be for children over the age of 3. However, the government Office of the Minister

for Children and Youth Affairs is committed to expanding childcare provision through the 2006–2010 National Childcare Investment programme.

In contrast, in the Nordic countries participation rates in pre-primary education for under 3s is high. The rates reach 53 % in Iceland and are even greater in Denmark (83 %), Sweden, (66 %) and Norway (61 %). Finland shows a different pattern than its Nordic neighbours and its 36 % rate is closer to that of Belgium (34 %) ⁽⁴⁾, the Netherlands (29 %), Portugal (25 %), Slovenia (39 %) and the United Kingdom (26 %) ⁽⁵⁾. France can be added to this list of countries whose total participation rate for children under 3 is in the region of 25 % in 2004. However, a distinction must be drawn between the children of 0-2 years enrolled in *crèches* (13 %) from the 2-year-olds enrolled in nursery classes (*classes maternelles*) (29 %). Participation rates of under-3s in other countries for which data is available vary between around 10 % and 20 % (Hungary 9 %, Austria 11 %, Spain 18 %, Italy and Lithuania 19 %).

The pattern for the most part continues regarding the 3-year-olds. According to Eurostat data, in the EU 74 % of 3-year-olds attended a formal education programme at ISCED level 0 in 2005/06 (Figure 2.9). This average conceals significant differences between countries. In Belgium, Spain, France and Italy almost all children (more than 95 %) are enrolled in education programmes from the age of 3. In the Nordic countries (except Finland) and Estonia the participation rates are also high (between 80 and 95 %). In contrast, in Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and Liechtenstein 3-year-old children do not attend public ECEC institutions.

The participation rates of ISCED 0 level educational programmes are the highest for 4-year-olds and reach 82 %. At this age a small number of children (about 5 %) also start ISCED 1 level education, thus the total average participation of 4-year-olds in educational programmes rises to 87 %. The increase in participation that occurs for 4-year-olds is mostly due to the fact that they become enrolled in ECEC at that age in countries that have no public provision for 3-year-olds: this concerns Greece, the Netherlands and Liechtenstein at ISCED 0 level and Ireland in infant classes at ISCED 1 level. Still rather low levels of participation (less than 50 %) remain in Ireland, Poland, and Finland, which can be partly explained by the predominance of programmes which do not meet the conditions for ISCED 0 (for example, day care in private homes), and for which data is not collected.

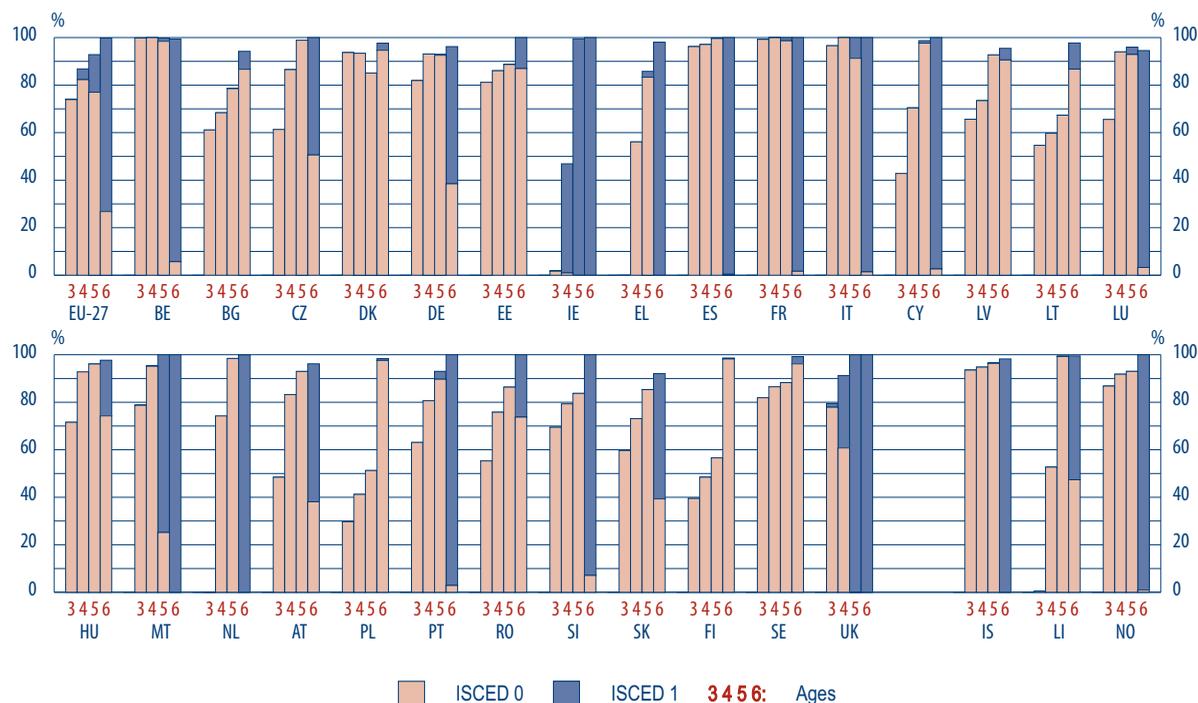
As older children are enrolled in primary education, the overall participation increases while enrolment in pre-primary programmes declines. 77 % of 5-year-olds attend ISCED 0, while the total participation in educational programmes increases to 93 %. At the age of 6 all or almost all children are enrolled in primary or pre-primary education (EU-27 average 99.8 %). Only in Bulgaria, Luxemburg and Slovakia is participation somewhat lower, ranging between 90 and 95 %. Most 6-year-olds (73 %) in European countries are already enrolled in ISCED 1 level educational programmes. Yet, about 27 % attend ISCED 0 level, as the normal starting age for primary education is age 7 in several countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Baltic countries, Poland, Romania, Finland and Sweden). Mixed patterns appear in countries where the starting age of primary education is 6, but children who do not reach their

⁽⁴⁾ 24 % in the French Community (at the end of 2005), 41 % in the Flemish Community, and 26 % in the German-speaking Community (2007), where almost of all the provision for under-3s is home-based. In Flanders 61 % of the children between 2 months and 3 years make use of formal child care and kindergarden.

⁽⁵⁾ In the United Kingdom *private and voluntary settings* only receive state funding for children aged over 3 years. The national data provided here can be explained by the fact that some settings also admit children under the age of 3 in which cases parental contributions are required. Moreover, in England and Wales, free part-time places may be made available to 2-year-old children belonging to designated target groups.

6th birthday before a certain date (often in June or September) remain in their pre-primary education till the following year (the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and Liechtenstein).

Figure 2.9: Participation of children from 3-6 years by age in pre-primary (ISCED 0) and primary (ISCED 1) education, 2005/06



Source: Eurostat, UOE.

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU																
Years	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-															
3	73.9	0.2	99.8	0.0	61.1	0.0	61.4	0.0	93.7	0.0	81.9	0.0	81.2	0.0	1.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	96.2	0.0	99.3	0.0	96.6	0.0	42.8	0.0	65.6	0.0	54.7	0.0	65.6	0.0
4	82.3	4.5	100	0.0	68.4	0.0	86.5	0.0	93.4	0.0	93.1	0.0	86.1	0.0	1.0	45.9	56.1	0.0	97.1	0.0	100	0.0	100	0.0	70.4	0.0	73.5	0.0	59.7	0.0	94.0	0.0
5	77.0	15.8	98.4	1.3	78.5	0.1	98.9	0.0	85.1	0.0	92.6	0.4	88.7	0.0	0.0	99.5	83.3	2.5	99.6	0.2	98.7	1.3	91.3	8.7	97.7	1.1	92.7	0.0	67.3	0.1	92.9	3.1
6	26.8	73.0	5.7	93.7	86.7	7.6	50.6	49.4	94.7	3.0	38.5	57.7	87.0	13.0	0.0	100	0.0	98.1	0.4	99.6	1.7	98.3	1.4	98.6	2.6	97.4	90.6	4.9	86.7	11.0	3.3	91.3

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO															
Years	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-	-0- -1- -0- -1-															
3	71.6	0.0	78.7	0.1	0.1	0.0	48.5	0.0	29.7	0.0	63.1	0.0	55.3	0.0	69.5	0.0	59.7	0.0	39.5	0.0	81.9	0.0	77.9	1.6	93.6	0.0	0.5	0.0	86.8	0.0
4	92.8	0.0	95.2	0.3	74.2	0.0	83.2	0.0	41.2	0.0	80.6	0.0	75.8	0.0	79.3	0.0	73.1	0.0	48.5	0.0	86.5	0.0	60.8	30.5	94.8	0.0	52.7	0.0	91.8	0.0
5	96.1	0.0	25.2	74.8	98.4	0.0	93.0	0.0	51.3	0.0	89.7	3.3	86.4	0.0	83.7	0.0	85.3	0.0	56.6	0.0	88.3	0.0	0.0	100	96.4	0.2	99.3	0.3	93.0	0.0
6	74.3	23.4	0.0	100	0.0	99.9	38.1	58.1	97.6	0.8	2.9	97.1	73.8	26.2	7.1	92.9	39.3	52.8	98.2	0.4	96.2	3.0	0.0	100	0.0	98.2	47.4	52.1	0.9	99.1

-0- ISCED 0 -1- ISCED 1

Source: Eurostat, UOE.

Additional notes

Belgium: Data exclude independent private institutions.

Ireland: There is no public-sector provision at ISCED level 0. Many children follow a pre-primary curriculum in private institutions but data are lacking for the most part.

Luxembourg: Education becomes compulsory from the age of 4 onwards. The difference from 100 % is therefore attributable to children enrolled abroad but also – and above all – to the method of calculation. Enrolments are counted on 1 September, whereas the population of children of that age is calculated on 1 January.

Netherlands: The participation of children aged 4 is underestimated. The population of enrolled children aged 4 is counted on 1 October, leaving out those who will become enrolled between October and December, while reaching the age of 4 in the meantime. At 31 December, almost 100 % of children aged 4 attend school at this level of education.

Explanatory note

Pre-primary education (ISCED 0) is designed to meet the educational and development needs of children at least 3 years of age. Pre-primary education must recruit staff with specialised qualifications in education. Day nurseries, playgroups and day-care centres where staff are not required to hold a qualification in education are not included. Primary education (ISCED 1) programmes are designed to give the basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects.

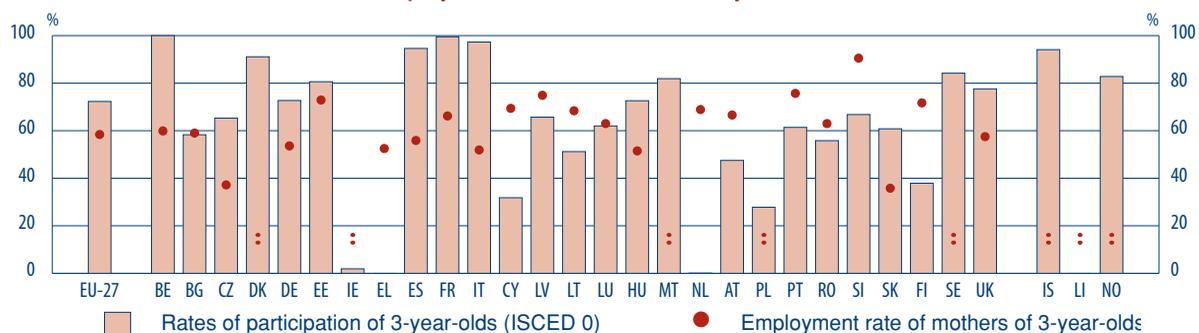
This indicator gives the participation rates in ISCED 0 and 1 for single years from ages 3 to 6 and shows the enrolment pattern in education at the early ages.

For some countries, enrolment rates appear to exceed 100 %. This is because they are calculated on the basis of two data sets (population and education) derived from different surveys carried out at different dates in the year. The figure has been proportionally rounded down to show 100.

Population data refer to 1 January 2006.

Historically, in many countries, education programmes for 3-year-olds have mainly served as child care facilities for parents (particularly women) who have not wanted to interrupt their careers when they have young children. Although childminding is still one of the central functions of ECED, the educational purpose is getting progressively more recognition. There seems to be no straightforward link between participation rates of 3-year-olds at pre-primary education and the employment rate of mothers of 3-year-olds. On average in the EU in 2005, there were around 14 % fewer mothers of 3-year-olds in employment than children of this age group attending a pre-primary institution at ISCED 0 (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10: Participation of 3-year-olds in education at ISCED 0, 2004/05, and employment rates of mothers of 3-year-olds, 2005.



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
■ Rates of participation of 3-year-olds (ISCED 0)	72.3	100	58.3	65.3	91.1	72.7	80.6	1.9	0.0	94.6	99.5	97.3	31.8	65.7	51.2	62.0	72.6	81.9	0.1	47.5	27.8	61.4	55.8	66.8	60.8	37.9	84.2	77.6	94.1	0.0	82.8
● Employment rate of mothers of 3-year-olds	58.4	59.9	59.0	37.2	:	53.6	(72.9)	:	52.5	55.9	66.2	51.9	69.4	74.9	(68.4)	63.0	51.5	:	68.9	66.6	:	75.7	63.0	90.5	35.8	71.7	:	57.5	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, UOE and LFS

Additional notes

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Belgium: Data exclude independent private institutions and enrolments in the German speaking Community.

Ireland: There is no public-sector provision at ISCED level 0. Many children follow a pre-primary curriculum in private institutions but data are lacking for the most part.

Explanatory note

The **employment rate** for a specific reference group (here mothers whose youngest child is 3 years old) is calculated by taking the number of (active) individuals in work as a percentage of the total number of individuals in the reference group (active and inactive).

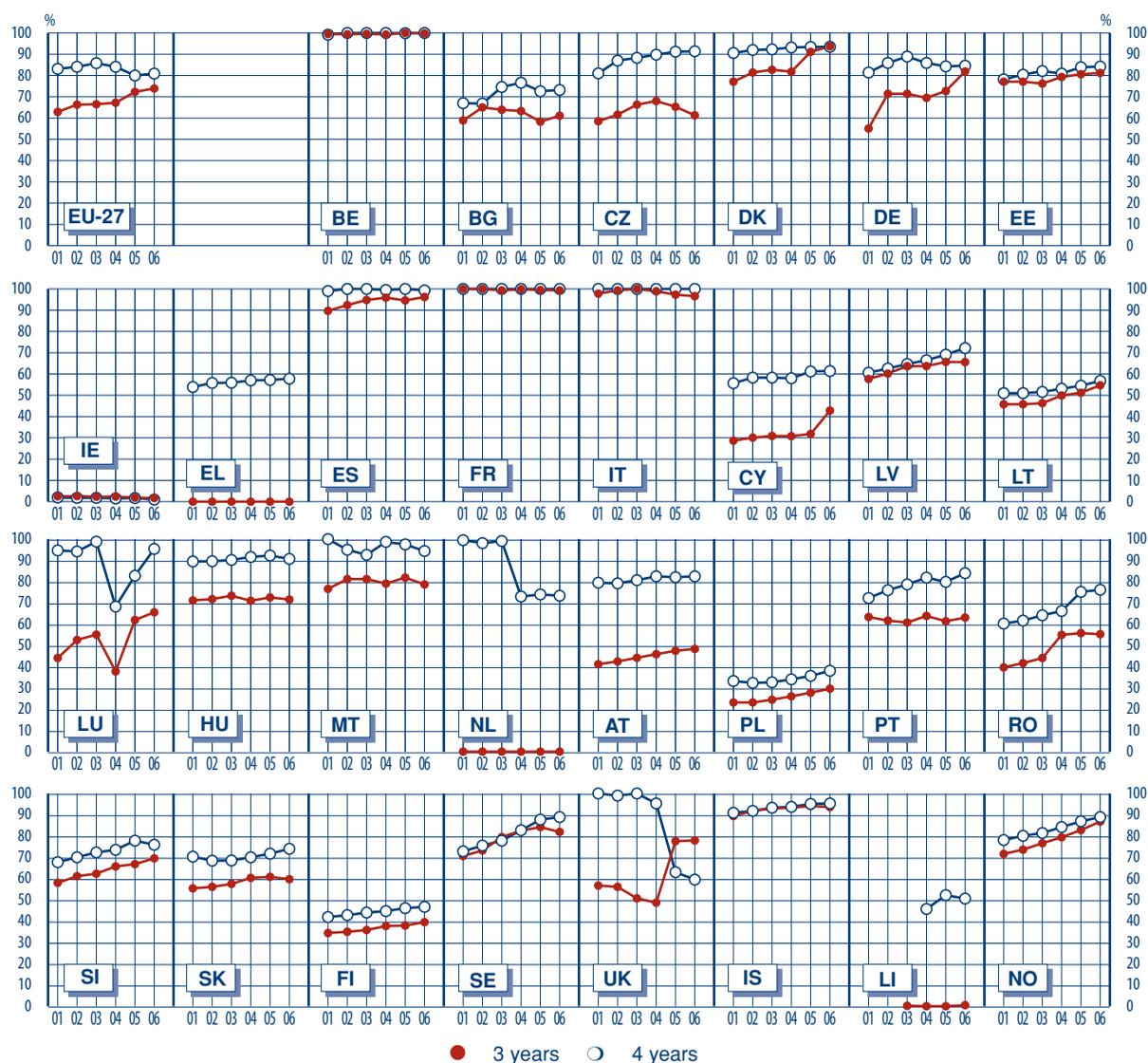
People aged over 74 or less than 15 are inactive as are those aged between 15 and 74 who have not done any paid work during the reference week and who are not looking for work (i.e. they have not been actively seeking work during the four weeks prior to the reference week – unless they have stopped looking for work because they are due to start a job in the next three months – or they are not ready to take up a job in the next two weeks). Workers on maternity/paternity leave are considered to be actively employed as are unpaid family workers.

People who have not worked for more than three months (due to parental leave, career breaks, lay-offs etc.) are also considered inactive unless they are receiving at least 50 % of their income from their employer.

Participation rate is calculated by dividing the number of 3-year-olds in pre-primary education by the number of 3-year-olds in the population. Population data refer to 1 January 2005.

The difference is clear in Belgium and Italy: the participation rate of children aged 3 is more than 40 % higher than the employment rate of mothers of children in this age group. This pattern is also pronounced in the Czech Republic, Spain, France and Slovakia where the participation rate of 3-year-olds remains at least 25 % higher than the employment rate of their mothers.

Figure 2.11: Trends in participation rates of 3 and 4-year-olds in pre-primary education (ISCED 0) and not allocated by ISCED level, 2000/01-2005/06



Source: Eurostat, UOE.

3 years

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
2000	61.6	98.2	56.9	54.9	71.8	54.8	72.3	2.8	0	84.3	100	97.9	31.2	55.6	45.7	37.7	68.6	79	0.1	39.3	23.3	58.6	38.8	52.4	56.1	33.9	68	54.1	86.9	:	70.9
2001	62.9	99.5	58.9	58.5	77.1	55.1	77.1	2.5	0	89.7	100	97.8	28.7	57.7	45.8	44.1	71.2	76.6	0.1	41.2	23.2	63.4	39.7	58	55.4	34.4	70.6	56.7	89.4	:	71.6
2002	66.3	99.4	65	61.6	81.4	71.4	77.1	2.6	0	92.4	100	99.3	30.1	60.2	45.8	52.6	71.8	81.2	0.1	42.5	23.2	61.7	41.7	61.1	56.1	35	73.2	56.1	91.8	:	73.6
2003	66.5	99.6	63.9	66.3	82.7	71.4	76.2	2.3	0	94.8	99.3	100	30.9	63.7	46.3	55.1	73.4	81.2	0.1	44.2	24.5	60.8	44.1	62.3	57.5	35.8	79.5	50.7	92.9	0.2	76.6
2004	67.2	99.3	63.3	68	81.8	69.5	79.3	2.4	0	95.9	99.8	98.9	30.8	63.7	49.9	37.8	71	79.1	0.1	45.9	26.1	63.9	55	65.7	60.3	37.7	82.5	48.7	93.3	0.0	79.4
2005	72.3	100	58.3	65.3	91.1	72.7	80.6	1.9	0	94.6	99.5	97.3	31.8	65.7	51.2	62	72.6	81.9	0.1	47.5	27.8	61.4	55.8	66.8	60.8	37.9	84.2	77.6	94.1	0.0	82.8

4 years

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
2000	83.1	99.2	67.0	81.0	90.6	81.4	78.2	2.0	53.9	99.0	100	100	55.7	60.6	51.0	94.7	89.5	100	99.5	79.5	33.3	72.3	60.3	67.7	70.3	41.9	72.8	100	90.9	:	78.1
2001	84.1	100	66.8	87.0	92.0	85.9	80.4	1.8	55.8	100	100	100	58.3	62.6	51.0	94.2	89.6	95.0	98.1	79.2	32.4	76.0	61.7	70.0	68.4	42.8	75.5	99.0	91.8	:	80.1
2002	85.8	100	74.6	88.3	92.3	88.9	82.1	1.8	55.9	100	100	100	58.3	64.7	51.6	98.8	90.2	92.6	99.1	80.7	32.7	78.7	64.2	72.3	68.5	44.0	77.8	100	93.3	:	81.4
2003	84.1	100	76.6	89.8	93.2	85.9	80.9	1.5	57.0	99.5	100	100	58.0	66.5	53.1	68.3	91.6	98.7	73.0	82.5	34.1	81.9	66.2	73.5	70.0	44.7	82.7	95.3	93.7	45.7	84.2
2004	80.0	99.9	72.6	91.2	93.4	84.3	83.9	1.7	57.2	100.0	100	100	61.2	69.1	54.5	82.8	92.3	97.5	74.0	82.1	35.7	79.9	75.2	77.8	71.7	46.1	87.7	63.0	95.1	52.2	86.9
2005	80.9	100.0	73.2	91.4	93.5	84.6	84.2	1.0	57.8	99.3	100	100	61.4	72.2	56.8	95.4	90.7	94.4	73.4	82.5	38.1	84.0	76.2	75.9	74.0	46.7	88.9	59.5	95.3	50.6	88.9

Source: Eurostat, UOE.

Additional notes

Belgium: Data exclude independent private institutions and, in 2003/04, enrolments in the German speaking Community.

Ireland: There is no public-sector provision at ISCED level 0. Many children follow a pre-primary curriculum in private institutions but data are lacking for the most part.

Luxembourg: Education becomes compulsory from the age of 4 onwards. In 2002/03 and 2003/04, the difference at 100 % is therefore attributable to children enrolled abroad but also – and above all – to the method of calculation. Enrolments are counted on 1 September, whereas the population of children of that age is calculated on 1 January.

Netherlands: Since 2002/03, the participation of children aged 4 is underestimated. The population of enrolled children aged 4 is counted on 1 October, leaving out those who will become enrolled between October and December, while reaching the age of 4 in the meantime. At 31 December, almost 100 % of children aged 4 attend school at this level of education.

Explanatory note

Pre-primary education (ISCED 0) is designed to meet the education and development needs of children aged at least 3 years. Education-oriented pre-primary institutions are centre or school-based, and are obliged to recruit staff with qualifications in education. Nurseries and play centres, whose staff do not have qualifications in education are not covered here.

The indicator is calculated by dividing the number of 3|4-year-olds in pre-primary education by the number of 3|4-year-olds in the population. Population data refer to 1 January of the reference year.

In contrast, in Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Finland, the employment rates of mothers of 3-year-olds is more than 30 % higher than participation rates of 3-year-olds. It would appear therefore that, in these countries, mothers resort to informal provision (a member of the family or a child minder for example) due to either the lack of formal education provision, its cost or parental preferences for home care. This may be the case in Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia, where the employment rate of women is also higher than the participation rate of 3-year-olds.

Whatever the employment circumstances, parents seem increasingly to enrol their child(ren) in pre-primary education (Figure 2.11). On average in European countries participation rates of 3-year-olds in pre-primary education have risen by 10 % since 2000/01. There is a recent overall downward trend regarding the participation of 4-year-olds in ISCED 0. This however is largely due to changes in two countries: the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands the 25 % drop in participation rates since 2002/03 can be mainly attributed to modifications in estimation methodology (see the note to Figure 2.11). The decrease in 4-year-olds participation rates in ISCED 0 in the United Kingdom is due to the fact that since 2004/05 in Northern Ireland all 4-year-olds attend ISCED 1 level educational programmes.

As two different educational levels start to mix regarding 4-year-olds, it is more reasonable to interpret trends of participation of 3-year-olds. The above-mentioned general increase is manifested in different patterns in different countries. In Luxembourg and the United Kingdom the increase has been very rapid (almost 25 %). The participation rates of 3-year-olds rose more than the EU-27 average also in Denmark, Germany, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia and Norway.

2.6. Financing of ECEC programmes (ISCED 0)

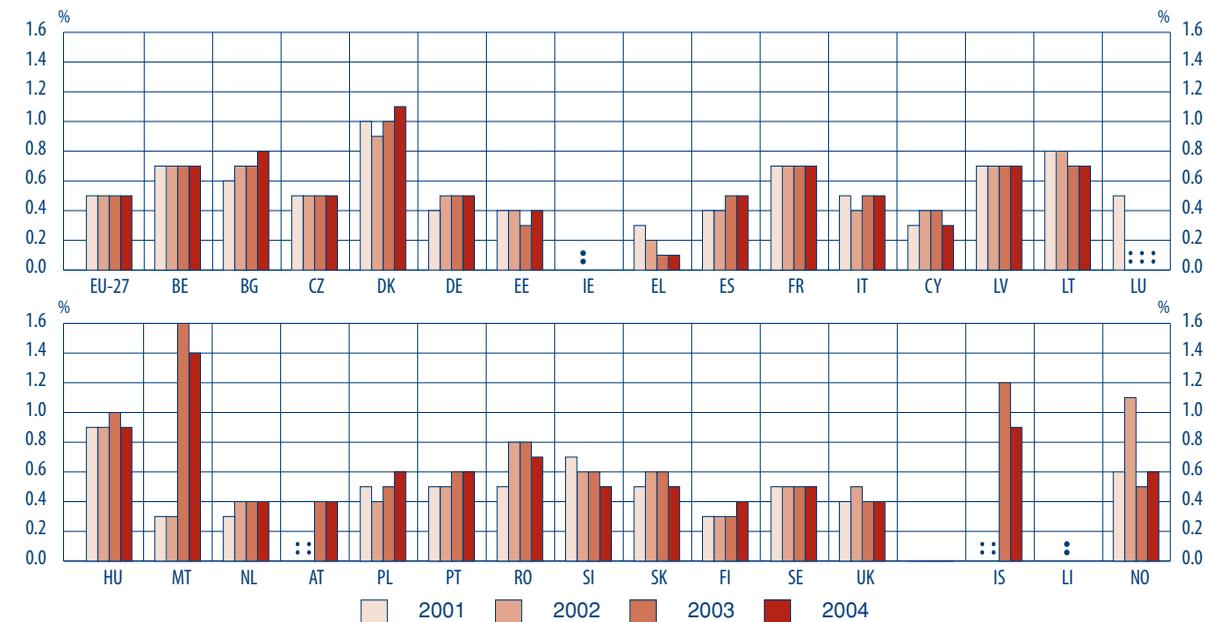
Although there is a growing demand for pre-primary education for young children, such provision must increase not only in quantity but also in quality. The budget allocated to ISCED level 0, expressed in relation to GDP (Figure 2.12) provides information on countries' efforts to implement pre-primary programmes and/or to provide such programmes with optimal operating conditions.

It is important to note that the expenditure expressed in relation to GDP is difficult to compare over time if the GDP is changing significantly. For example, in a period of economic growth an apparent reduction in expenditure in relation to GDP may, in fact, indicate no change or even an increase in the actual expenditure. Therefore, this indicator shows whether or not expenditure follows changes in GDP.

For the EU on average, and in most countries, the budget allocated to the pre-primary level has followed the same pattern as GDP – it has remained stable in relation to GDP between 2001 and 2004. A significant investment can be seen in 2003 in Malta where the budget in relation to GDP increased fivefold. On the other hand, in Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, resources allocated in relation to GDP have been somewhat declining since 2001. In these countries the investments in relation to GDP have declined although budgets in real terms may not have changed if there was an increase in GDP. In other countries such as Slovenia, this decrease in the budget may be attributed to the fact that the pre-primary sections of primary schools, which are not included in these data, attract increasing numbers of children in pre-primary education, and thus receive an increasingly large share of the budget.

The comparison of trends in expenditure with participation rates (see Figure 2.11) reveals that budget increases (in relation to GDP) in Malta have not been accompanied by an increase in participation rates of 3- and 4-year-olds at ISCED 0. More striking perhaps, is the fact that some countries had an increase in the number of participants at ISCED 0 without a corresponding increase in expenditure in relation to GDP: such is the case in Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia, Sweden and Norway. A demographic factor (reduction of the number of young children in the population) or economic factor (increase in GDP) can account for this budget reduction in relation to GDP in Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden. The expenditure per child in real terms has not decreased in these countries (Figure 2.13).

Figure 2.12: Total public expenditure on pre-primary education (ISCED 0) and not allocated by ISCED level as a percentage of GDP, 2001-2004



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
2001	0.49	0.69	0.64	0.53	0.98	0.41	0.35	0.06	0.27	0.39	0.69	0.48	0.32	0.68	0.82	0.50	0.85	0.30	0.33	:	0.46	0.50	0.45	0.65	0.53	0.32	0.47	0.44	:	:	0.60
2002	0.50	0.70	0.69	0.54	0.94	0.49	0.42	0.07	0.19	0.42	0.69	0.40	0.35	0.67	0.78	:	0.91	0.30	0.35	:	0.43	0.53	0.80	0.59	0.55	0.33	0.52	0.45	:	:	1.06
2003	0.49	0.71	0.70	0.54	0.99	0.46	0.34	0.07	0.13	0.46	0.69	0.45	0.36	0.69	0.74	:	0.97	1.57	0.36	0.41	0.48	0.60	0.83	0.56	0.64	0.34	0.50	0.35	1.18	:	0.53
2004	0.49	0.70	0.79	0.51	1.05	0.47	0.36	0.00	0.12	0.48	0.68	0.45	0.33	0.66	0.66	:	0.93	1.40	0.36	0.40	0.55	0.59	0.66	0.49	0.54	0.35	0.52	0.35	0.90	:	0.57

Source: Eurostat, UOE and National accounts.

Additional notes

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Belgium: Expenditure excludes independent private institutions and the German speaking Community.

Greece: Expenditure of pre-primary level of education is reported under primary level of education. 2001, 2002: imputed retirement expenditure is not available. 2003: student loans from public sources are not available.

Lithuania: public transfers to other private entities are not available for 2003 and 2004.

Luxembourg: The data include expenditure on primary education (ISCED 1).

Poland: Including child care expenditure at pre-primary level of education.

Portugal: Expenditure at local level of government is not included. Imputed retirement expenditure is not available. 2003, 2004: student loans from public sources are not available. 2003, 2004: public transfers to other private entities are not included. 2003, 2004: expenditure for ancillary services is not available.

Slovakia: Including child care expenditure at pre-primary level of education.

United Kingdom: Adjustment of GDP to the financial year that is running from 1st of April to 31st of March.

Iceland: Expenditure for ancillary services is not available at pre-primary level of education.

Norway: 2002: including child care expenditure at pre-primary level of education. 2003, 2004: expenditure for ancillary services is not available.

Explanatory note

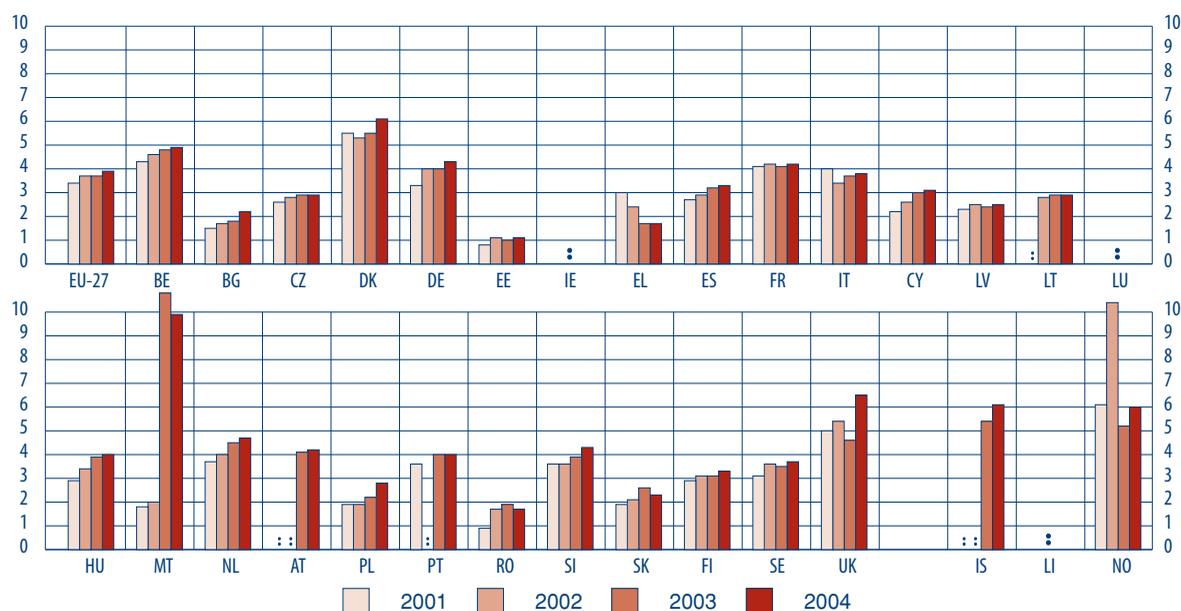
In general, the public sector finances educational expenditure by assuming direct responsibility for the current and capital expenditure of schools (direct public financing of schools) or by offering financial support to pupils/students and their families (public-sector grants and loans) and by subsidising the education or training activities of the private business sector or non-profit organisations (transfers to households and firms). Direct public funding for educational institutions and transfers to households and firms are included in total public educational expenditure.

Total public expenditure on education is related to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The result is multiplied by 100.

Conclusions drawn from the data must take into consideration the existing facilities in countries, i.e. distinguish capital expenditure from operational expenditure. There is no doubt that an increase in participation often demands an increase in operational expenditure (teachers, materials etc.) although to a lesser extent if a certain level of infrastructure is already present.

Despite the contextual differences, expenditure has generally increased during the four analysed years. Evidence can be found in Figure 2.13 which shows educational expenditure expressed in relation to the number of children attending ISCED 0 education programmes.

Figure 2.13: Total public expenditure per child on pre-primary education (ISCED 0) and not allocated by ISCED level, in thousands of EUR PPS, 2001-2004



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
2001	3.4	4.3	1.5	2.6	5.5	3.3	0.8	:	3.0	2.7	4.1	4.0	2.2	2.3	:	2.9	1.8	3.7	:	1.9	3.6	0.9	3.6	1.9	2.9	3.1	3.6	5.4	:	:	6.1
2002	3.7	4.6	1.7	2.8	5.3	4.0	1.1	:	2.4	2.9	4.2	3.4	2.6	2.5	2.8	:	3.4	2.0	4.0	:	1.9	:	1.7	3.6	2.1	3.1	3.6	5.4	:	:	10.4
2003	3.7	4.8	1.8	2.9	5.5	4.0	1.0	:	1.7	3.2	4.1	3.7	3.0	2.4	2.9	:	3.9	10.8	4.5	4.1	2.2	4.0	1.9	3.9	2.6	3.1	3.5	4.6	5.4	:	5.2
2004	3.9	4.9	2.2	2.9	6.1	4.3	1.1	:	1.7	3.3	4.2	3.8	3.1	2.5	2.9	:	4.0	9.9	4.7	4.2	2.8	4.0	1.7	4.3	2.3	3.3	3.7	6.5	6.1	:	6.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE and National accounts.

Additional notes

EU-27: Estimates based on countries for which data is available.

Belgium: Expenditure exclude independent private institutions and the German speaking Community. Enrolments exclude independent private institutions and, in 2004, the German speaking Community.

Greece: Expenditure of pre-primary level of education is reported under primary level of education. 2001, 2002: imputed retirement expenditure is not available. 2003: student loans from public sources are not available.

Lithuania: 2003, 2004: public transfers to other private entities are not included.

Poland: Including child care expenditure at pre-primary level of education.

Portugal: Expenditure at local level of government is not included. Imputed retirement expenditure is not available. 2003, 2004: student loans from public sources are not available. 2003, 2004: public transfers to other private entities are not available. 2003, 2004: expenditure for ancillary services is not included.

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Iceland: Expenditure for ancillary services is not available at pre-primary level of education.

Norway: 2002: including child care expenditure at pre-primary level of education. 2003, 2004: expenditure for ancillary services is not available.

Explanatory note

In general, the public sector finances educational expenditure by assuming direct responsibility for the current and capital expenditure of schools (direct public financing of schools) or by offering financial support to pupils/students and their families (public-sector grants and loans) and by subsidising the education or training activities of the private business sector or non-profit organisations (transfers to households and firms). Direct public funding for educational institutions and transfers to households and firms are included in total public educational expenditure.

The indicator has been calculated by dividing total annual expenditure by the number of children enrolled at ISCED 0.

Annual expenditure has been expressed in terms of the purchasing power standard (PPS) in order to eliminate distortion caused by differing national price levels.

Greece is the only country which has experienced a considerable decrease (about 40 %) in annual expenditure per child from 2001 to 2004. The overwhelming majority of European countries increased expenditure by more than 10 %, and Malta increased expenditure dramatically by over 400 % from 2002 to 2003.

Slovenia and the United Kingdom reveal a distinctive pattern where expenditure per child has grown while the total expenditure in relation to GDP has somewhat diminished (Figure 2.12). This paradox can be mostly attributed to the reduction in the number of participants in real terms ⁽⁶⁾. It must be noted that in Slovenia the reduction in the number of participants is due to a fall in the birth rate which was accompanied by an increase in the participation rate (proportion of children enrolled in relation to the total child population). In the United Kingdom, the fall in the number of participants is due to the reduction in the proportion of children enrolled in ISCED 0 and increase in ISCED 1.

*
* *

This overview briefly presented the social, cultural and economic issues that may create educational risk for children. Some countries are affected more than others by various factors which have been examined here. For example, the proportion of single parent households with small child(ren) is far the highest in the United Kingdom. Such households often encounter financial difficulties. Poverty among households with young children is also widespread in Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal. In Slovakia both women and men raising small children face higher risk of unemployment than in other European countries. In Luxembourg the proportion of non-national children is the highest in Europe. Pre-school education of migrant children is also an important issue in Greece, Cyprus, Austria and probably other countries where ethnic minorities (Roma in particular) are numerous and not accounted for in the statistics.

The analysis also reveals that in most countries, women's engagement in the labour force is clearly linked to the age of their children. Many European women withdraw from the labour market when they are caring for a child under the age of 3. Women with children aged 3 to 6 years have still lower than average economic activity rates, but as soon as the youngest child reaches the age of 6, most European women state that they are prepared to take up gainful employment.

⁽⁶⁾ Eurostat data show that participation has fallen in real terms (not shown in graphs) in these two countries more than anywhere else (-26 % between 2001 et 2004 in Slovenia; -31 % in the United Kingdom).

This withdrawal from the workplace could be partly explained by the lack of available provision for young children. Nevertheless, in this area, the trend in the rate of participation at ISCED 0 is positive in the majority of countries, as is the investment made at this level of education.

These trends are, in part, linked to actual measures implemented at the pre-primary level whether or not they have been implemented to address specifically the issues considered to be risk factors. The remainder of this document focuses on these measures and on the education policies developed to meet the needs of young children and, in particular, the needs of the young children who are most disadvantaged in society.

Introduction

Research shows that models and systems of early childhood education and care differ vastly in terms of coverage, intensity, quality and probably impact (see Chapter 1). All countries in Europe offer some form of early programmes for children before the start of compulsory schooling which are at least partly publicly financed (see Figure 3.1 below). Yet, the age at which children may access these programmes, the extent to which programmes meet existing demand as well as the nature of early education and care provision are subject to significant cross-national or even cross-regional differences. This chapter addresses these issues raising the following questions:

- How is early childhood education and care organised? From what age is publicly-subsidised and accredited early childhood education and care available? What are the preferred criteria for access? What are the opening hours for early childhood education and care services?
- Is the demand for affordable early childhood education and care being met? How are public authorities required to meet the need for this type of provision?
- What policies facilitate access to early childhood education and care? Specifically, what measures are in place to broaden access and reach children who otherwise might not benefit from existing services? What evaluation and reporting procedures are in place?

3.1. Structure and admission criteria

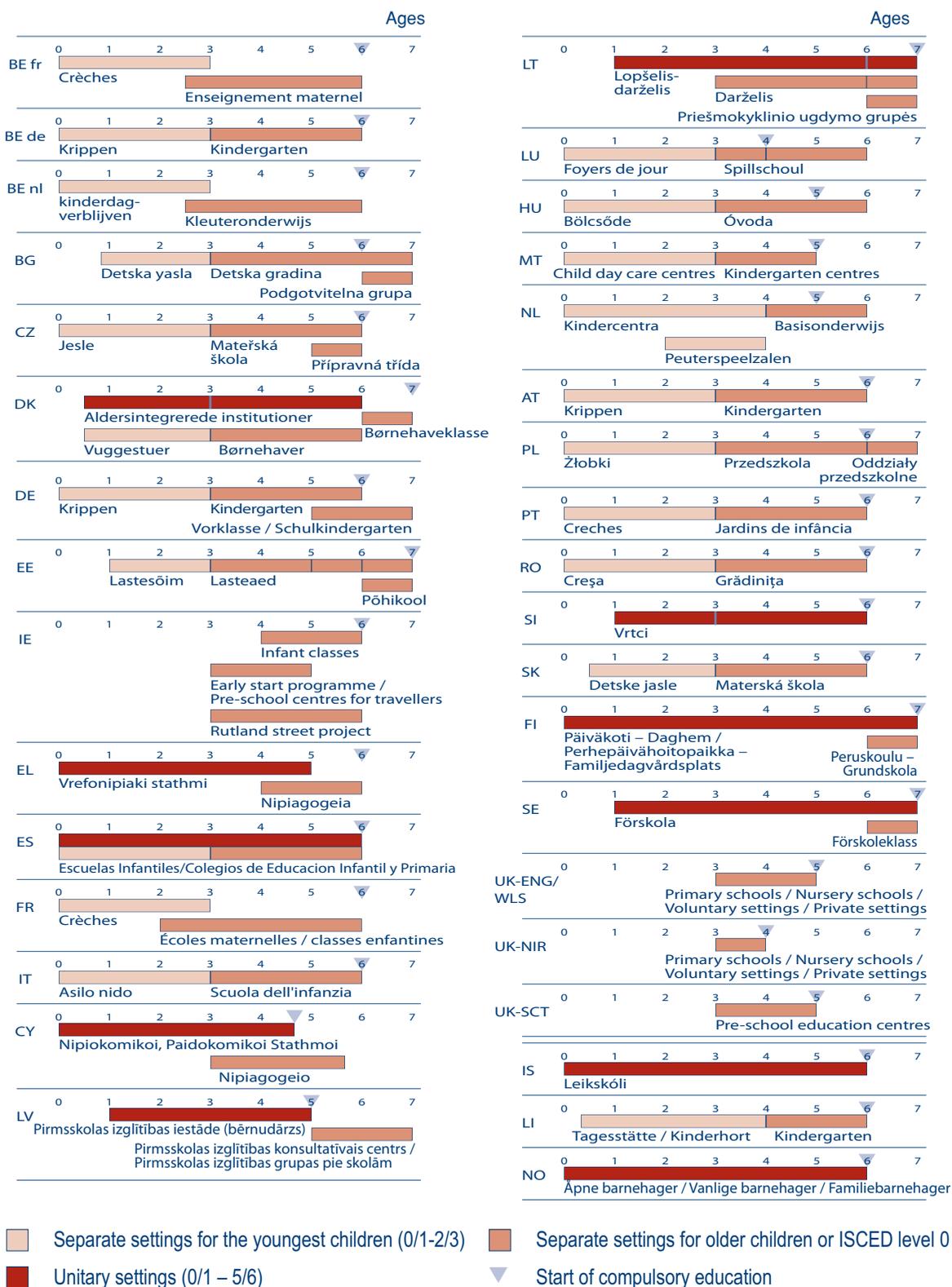
3.1.1. Main models of provision

Without exception, every country in Europe has set up some form of publicly subsidised and accredited early childhood education and care for children below the age of compulsory schooling. The differences lie in the organisational forms, the competent authorities and the age at which children may access this type of provision.

In many countries public authorities offer subsidised places from a very early age, often from the end of statutory maternity leave. However, this does not necessarily mean that demand for these places is fully met (see section 3.2 on capacity planning).

Two main organisational models for ECEC services are apparent in Europe. Under the first model, provision for young children is provided in unitary settings, organised in a single phase for all children of pre-school age. Each setting has only one management team for children of all age groups and staff responsible for children's education have, generally, the same qualifications and salary scales regardless of the age of the children they look after. These teachers or playgroup leaders are often accompanied by staff belonging to other occupational categories in the field of infant care, such as childminders or nursery nurses (see Chapter 5). Under the second model, ECEC services are structured according to the age of the children (normally for children aged 0 to 3 years and for children aged 3 to 6 years). Each type of provision may be dependent on different ministries (see Annex, Table A). This model is the most widespread in Europe. In a few countries both models exist side by side.

Figure 3.1: Organisation of subsidised and accredited early childhood education and care provision for pre-school children of different ages, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Czech Republic: The preparatory programme (*přípravná třída*) is available only for children of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Denmark: From the 2008/2009 school year, the starting age of compulsory education is age 6 rather than age 7.

Ireland: day nurseries and pre-school centres which admit children under 4 years are not obliged to employ staff with qualifications in education which is why this type of provision is not included in the Eurostat data (chapter 2). Only the programmes intended for a particular targeted group (the *Early Start Programme* for 3 to 4 year-olds, the *Rutland St Project* for 3 to 5 year-olds and the pre-school centres for *Travellers* aged 3 to 4 years) must employ staff with such qualifications.

Greece: the first year of *Nipiagogeia* (4 to 5 year-olds) is also provided by the *Vrefonipiaki stathmi*. From 2007/08 the starting age of compulsory education was lowered to age 5 from age 6.

Cyprus: the exact age for the start of compulsory education is 4 years and 8 months.

Latvia: preparatory programmes for primary school (*obligātā sagatavošana pamatizglītības apguvei*) may be provided in the separate settings for older children and also within the *pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde (bērnudārzs)*.

Lithuania: preparatory programmes (*priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupė*) are provided in the *lopšelis-darželis* and the *darželis*, as well as in general education schools (*bendrojo lavinimo mokykla*).

Hungary: While as a general rule, *óvoda* provides services for children from age 3 to 6, in case a child is diagnosed as not fit for primary school, (s)he may be kept in *óvoda* until the age of 8.

Netherlands: There are separate provisions for childcare and early childhood education. Childcare, for children 0-4 years old, is provided by childcare centres and childminders; for children from 4-12 years old there are out-of-school centres. Early childhood education is available for children from 2 to 6 years old, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds; it is provided by preschool playgroups (children 2-3 years old) and primary schools (children 4 and 5 years old).

Romania: the starting age of compulsory education changed from age 7 to age 6 in 2003/04. However, an exemption is available and widely used by parents who do not want to enrol their child until the age of 7.

Slovakia: the *materská škola* is intended for children aged 3 and over although some schools can admit children from the age of 2 years if they have been judged suitable for this age group.

Finland: local authorities also make provision for pre-school children, for example, through play schemes. In addition, there is no definite cut-off age between the single structure day care centres or the pre-primary programme (*Esiopetus*) which is provided by the day care centres (*Päiväkoti*) and the schools which deliver compulsory education (*peruskoulu*). If the child's compulsory education begin at the age of 7 she or he has the right to pre-primary education the year when she or he turns 6 years, but this is voluntary. Finally, pre-primary education for children with special educational needs is extended to two years even though the starting age of compulsory education for these children is age 5.

Sweden: 95 % of children from pre-primary school move to *förskoleklass* when they reach the age of 6. There also exist universal and free of charge pre-schools that provide 3 hours of classes per day (15 hours per week) for some children aged 4 to 5.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): Some settings in the private and voluntary sectors provide for a wider age-range but provision for under-3s is not shown as, even though it is accredited, it is not funded. There is a limited level of funded provision for under-3s, but this not shown in the figure either as there is no general entitlement.

United Kingdom (SCT): it is up to local authorities to provide monetary assistance for the care of 0-3 year olds if they so wish but they are under no central obligation to do so.

Explanatory note

The national diagrams show the general framework of provision for the care and education of young children (between approximately 0 and 6 years). By provision, we mean all recognised and accredited types of care and educational provision in the public and subsidised private sectors, even if they are not in widespread use. Home-based child-minding is not included.

The diagram shows each country, its types of provision, age of entry and the length of the programme(s). The starting age of compulsory education is marked by a grey triangle on the age line of the diagram.

Two main organisational models may exist at the same time in a given country. 'Unitary settings' (illustrated in dark red) usually accommodate children between 0-1 years and 5-6 years. It involves a single phase for all pre-school children under the same educational framework (the same management, the same level of qualifications for staff responsible for children's education and the same source of funding).

For separate settings for each age group (light colour for younger children and dark colour for older children), ages vary between countries but usually covering 0-1 to 2-3 years and 3-4 years up to 5-6 years.

Where possible, the names of the settings are indicated in the national language; where the national language term is not available, English has been used.

In the Nordic countries (excluding Denmark), Latvia and Slovenia ECEC services are provided only under the single phase model. Latvia, Finland and Sweden in addition to unitary settings also have preparatory provision for primary school (usually for children aged 5 or 6 years) which is different from the provision for younger children. Preparatory programmes for primary school may be organised in the same settings as for younger children, in separate settings, or in schools that provide primary education.

The universal right to access from the youngest age is clearly recognised in the countries that have the unitary model. In Finland, the right to day care starts from the end of maternity or parental leave. Parents apply for places in early childhood education and care services to the municipality, and the decision on the form of service to be offered (for example, family day care or centre-based care) lies with the municipality. Provision is adjusted to the needs of parents (including shift day care in the evenings and at weekends). 6-year-olds can participate in pre-primary classes. In Sweden, municipalities are also required to offer pre-schooling to all children from the age of 1 until they begin the voluntary pre-school class or the obligatory compulsory school. This is relevant when parents work or study or if the child itself needs pre-schooling. Places must be offered without undue delay, usually within 3 to 4 months of receipt of the application by the family. In Norway, a government priority is to achieve full kindergarten coverage for children aged between 1 and 5. A legal entitlement to a place in kindergarten will enter into force in 2009. Municipalities have a duty to ensure that there are a sufficient number of places for children under compulsory school age. In Slovenia all children are entitled to a place in early childhood education and care and parents may choose the type of setting. Local authorities almost always manage pre-school programmes within the public sector.

In five countries that have the mixed system (Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Lithuania), children may attend settings which either follow the single phase model or settings structured according to age. In Denmark and Spain, unitary settings (providing for children aged 0 to 6 years) exist alongside settings organised in two phases according to age: the first phase for children 0 to 3 years and the second phase for children of 3 to 6 years. In Denmark, a recent reform appoints that local authorities must offer guaranteed day-care to all children from the age of 26 weeks until the child reaches school age. In Spain, pre-primary education (*educación infantil*) constitutes the first level of the Spanish education system, beginning from the first months of a baby's life, until the age of 6, when schooling becomes compulsory. Most of the provision is either public or grant-aided and the Autonomous Communities have a duty to ensure that families have access to the provision of their choice. Greece, Cyprus and Lithuania have a different system whereby only the older children (over 4 in Greece and over 3 in Lithuania) have a choice between provision in a unitary setting or a setting specifically for their own age group. In Latvia and Lithuania, where integrated provision exists for children from the age of 1, most children do not participate in pre-primary education until the age of 3.

Most European countries fall into a second category where publicly funded and accredited early childhood education and care systems split all provision according to the age of children and the bodies responsible for formulating and implementing the policies under which such provision is made. Children between 2, 3 or 4 and 6 years old are integrated into structures forming part of the national education system (ISCED 0). Both in Belgium (the French Community) and in France, children from the age of 2.5 (in France, sometimes from 2) join the mainstream school system. In Luxembourg, where compulsory schooling starts at 4 years, local authorities will have a statutory duty to provide pre-primary education for 3 year olds from September 2009.

For the youngest infants (normally those aged 0-3), the situation is complex and varied, but in general these countries do not guarantee subsidised places for all children before they are old enough to enter pre-primary education, which is usually at around the age of 3. This is the case in Belgium, where the system of care for children under the age of 2.5 is accredited and subsidised by governmental agencies for the three Communities. There is, however, a shortfall of places and the private non-subsidised sector, also supervised by governmental agencies takes up a part of the unmet demand.

The system is similar in France, where regional agencies, known as the CODAJE (*Commissions départementales pour l'accueil des jeunes enfants*) play a role in planning and accrediting provision (as well as more general policy and evaluation duties). Provision for under-3s is very mixed and less than a third of children of this age have a place in centre-based care such as municipal crèches with very nearly full enrolment in pre-primary education. The same is true in Luxembourg.

In Austria, there is some provision for under-3s either in day nurseries or mixed age settings, although enrolment rates are low and provision is concentrated in urban areas. Most children over 3 attend kindergarten. In Poland, access to nursery schools for children over 3 is open to all children; children aged 0-3 whose parents are in employment may be given a place in a number of municipally-run day nurseries, some of which are also attached to nursery schools.

In many countries that have either the separate or mixed ECEC model, provision for younger children (aged 0 to 3) is subject to much local variation. Often local authorities are entirely responsible for deciding how to organise subsidised services (see Table A in the Annex). This is the case in Greece, Italy, Austria, Liechtenstein and almost all the Eastern and Central European countries.

In a few countries there is almost no publicly funded provision at all for children under the age of 3 years. As a result, in the Czech Republic, Ireland and Poland the ECEC participation rates of under 3-year-olds are extremely low (more details on participation rates see in Chapter 2, section 5). In the Netherlands, childcare is largely provided by the private sector and the government, employers and parents pay for accredited services. The emphasis here is thus on supporting parents who are in employment. A central policy goal is that disadvantaged children participate in early childhood education from the age of 2 (see below). In the United Kingdom, directly funded provision for the youngest children (under-3s) is not generally available. There are some exceptions; free part-time provision for 2-year-olds is being introduced in disadvantaged areas in England and Wales and is being piloted in Northern Ireland, where public sector nurseries can admit 2-year-olds if they have places available. There may also be local arrangements such as the childcare affordability programme in London. In England and Wales, from April 2008, there is a new duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. They are not required to provide childcare directly but are expected to support its development in the private and voluntary sectors where there is demand. The policy focus across the United Kingdom is for more integrated support for families and children to improve outcomes for all children. In England, the quality frameworks for early learning and childcare for children from birth to five years old are being brought together in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is mandatory from September 2008.

3.1.2. Starting age and parental leave regulations

The starting age for ECEC provision varies widely across Europe. In most countries the ECEC is available from birth (in practice from around 3 months). In Denmark, Slovakia and Liechtenstein the possible starting age is around 6 months. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden provide early childhood services only from the age of 1. Before this age, parents are encouraged to stay at home with their babies through a system of maternity and parental benefits.

In Bulgaria, mothers are entitled to social financial support for taking care of children until they reach the age of 1, or the age of 2 if the child has disabilities. Estonia has a comprehensive system of family benefits including: maternity benefit, parental benefit, universal family benefits, tax credits and holiday

benefits. The maternity benefit is given to working mothers and compensates 100 % of the mother's previous wage during 140 days prior and after childbirth. The amount of parental benefit is based on the parent's previous earnings, although a minimum and maximum rate are fixed. The parental benefit is paid to the working mother after the end of the maternity benefit. The maternity benefit and the parental benefit cover 455 days. Non-working parents have the right to parental benefit for 14 months, starting from childbirth. Fathers also have the right to parental benefit beginning 6 months from childbirth, as well as additional childcare leave during the pregnancy and maternity leave of the mother, or within 2 months of after the birth of the child.

In Latvia, one parent is entitled to childcare leave for a maximum of one year and a half, up until the child reaches the age of 8, and this is covered by the state social insurance. Childcare benefit is paid to the parent taking care of the child until the child reaches the age of 1, if the parent is unemployed or taking parental leave. Since the 1st of January 2008, parental benefit has been introduced as part of the social insurance service. The benefit is granted to the parent looking after the child under the age of 1. However, the benefit is not granted if the other parent is currently receiving maternity benefit or childcare benefit.

In Lithuania, a parent or foster-parent is paid a benefit equivalent to his/her full salary (subject to a ceiling) until the child is 1 year old, and 85 % of his/her salary until the child reaches the age of 2. In addition, fathers are entitled to a benefit equivalent to 100 % salary for one month's leave after the child is born. A regulation adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science also encourages families to educate their children at home, by entitling them to educational support. Such support includes information on pre-school education and pedagogical counselling in various forms.

Similarly, in Austria, substantial spending on federal childcare benefits and parental leave measures contrast with far lower spending on early childhood services for children up to the age of 6. If a parent stays at home under the national child benefit scheme, she or he is covered for 18 months by public health insurance and contributory retirement pension arrangements and continues to enjoy legal employment protection for a further 6 months, until the child reaches the age of 2.

Sweden provides 480 days of paid parental leave (before and after birth). 60 days are reserved only for the mother (*mammamånader*) and 60 days only for the father (*pappamånader*). The remaining 360 days is a family entitlement that is supposed to be shared equally, but can be transferred from one parent to another. For 390 days the benefit amounts to 80 % of earnings (subject to a ceiling), for the remaining 90 days there is a flat-rate payment of 180 SEK a day (about 17 euros). Parental benefit may be drawn until the child reaches the age of 8, or when the child comes to the end of his or her first year at school.

In Slovenia, besides providing a wide range of entitlements in terms of leave and parental allowances in connection with the birth or arrival of a child – maternity leave (105 days), paternity leave (90 days, including 15 days' paid leave) and adoption leave (150 or 120 days) – also grants periods of leave for the upbringing and protection of a child, amounting to 260 days, which may be increased in certain circumstances, such as the birth of twins or of a child with a disability. Responsibility for payment of these benefits lies with insurance schemes that are funded by means of compulsory contributions payable by workers and employers. In addition, the right to work part-time is available to one of the parents of any child below the age of three.

In the Czech Republic, there is no limit to the age that children can be placed in a crèche (*jesle*) and the state supports parental care for children below three years of age. Maternity leave lasts 28 weeks, and after this parental leave, that the employer is obliged to accept, can be taken until the child is three years old. Parents who educate their children themselves are also entitled to additional specific financial benefits.

3.1.3. Allocation of early childhood places

This section briefly presents the general principles of allocation of ECEC places for the youngest children, i.e. the first enrolments. Special additional measures for children at risk will be presented in greater detail in section 3.3.

Some European countries, mostly the Nordic ones, have universal guarantee to subsidised early childhood education and care, while the majority do not. Where there is no guaranteed access to subsidised ECEC, places, which are often scarce, are allocated following different types of guidelines. Parental employment status is usually the main (or even the only) criterion for access to childcare for children under 2 years old. It shows the supremacy of childcare over the educational function and emphasis on work-life balance issues regarding the ECEC of the youngest children (see Chapter 4). The strength of the parental employment criterion nevertheless varies in different countries. In France, both parents will usually have to demonstrate that they are either employed or seeking employment, while Italian parents are also asked about their work commitments. Priority is also given to working parents in Spain. In Poland, only children of working parents are admitted to crèches.

Another criterion that often determines preferential access is residence. Families living or working in the provider's catchment area are more likely to get a place in the three Baltic countries as well as in Greece, Spain, Hungary and Romania. That measure was put in place in Hungary in order to reduce inequalities and to assure access for children to the nearest place to their home. Similar reasons led to such measures in other countries that apply residential criteria.

The most common procedure of enrolment into ECEC is that parents have to apply for an early childhood place. Usually parents have free choice of available types of provision, both in terms of home or centre-based settings and in terms of private or public providers. Subsidised provision is of course more affordable (see chapter 6 on funding). In the Nordic countries, where subsidised places are guaranteed, local authorities may take additional steps to ensure that all children are benefiting from available services. In Denmark, for example, if parents do not enrol their child in a day-care facility themselves, the local authority may offer the child a socio-educational aided place. In Norway, great importance is attached to the wishes and needs of users and a coordinated admission process is intended to ensure equal treatment of children and treatment of municipal and privately owned kindergartens. A coordinated admissions process, at the local level, for childcare provision, is also planned in Belgium (Flemish Community).

Finally, as outlined above, age is the most important determinant of access to pre-primary education (level ISCED 0). Priority is frequently given to children who are just below the age of compulsory schooling. This is especially the case in the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

3.1.4. Opening hours

How early childhood services are organised and, in particular, what their opening hours are, has implications for how these services can be used by families and whether they meet their real needs for childcare.

Two broad approaches are apparent in Europe: subsidised ECEC may be more or less fully compatible with the working hours of parents or be available only on a part-time basis. In the majority of European countries ECEC settings generally provide extensive opening hours that take account of the needs of working parents. Full-day provision (including morning and afternoon sessions) is the norm in the five Nordic countries, three Baltic countries, Belgium, Spain, France, Hungary, the Netherlands (except in playgroups), Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia. The situation is close in the Czech Republic, where *crèches (jesle)* work mainly on a whole-day basis, as is most commonly the case for nursery schools also, although some work on a half-day basis, while a few schools also offer night care. Local authorities often determine specific arrangements according to local needs. Several countries offer even more flexible hours for ECEC services accommodating parents' special working arrangements. In France, some provision is also available evenings and nights for parents working shifts, only for children under the age of two. In Finland and Norway opening hours of ECEC may be extended to evenings, nights and weekends irrespective of the age of the child. In Belgium (the Flemish and French Communities), flexible provision also exists in order to supply occasionally needed childcare. In Spain, where opening hours vary according to the type of school (public or private), and the education authority they are under, some providers open earlier and/or close later to accommodate parent's employment constraints. Some countries are developing flexible ECEC services. In Lithuania the 2007-2012 early childhood education and care development plan introduces flexible forms of provision.

Secondly, some countries offer only part-time subsidised provision. This is the case in Germany, Greece, Cyprus and Liechtenstein. In the Netherlands, playgroups operate on a half-day basis, but *basisonderwijs* for 4-6 year-olds is full-time. Two countries have a mixed system. In Malta, ECEC providers offer either full-time or part-time provision. Those offering part-time provision may choose to extend their opening hours, in order to meet the needs of popular demand. In the United Kingdom, publicly funded early learning places are currently mainly made available on a part-time basis, although it is a local decision, and in some local authorities it is the norm to offer full-time publicly funded places. There is a wide range of 'top-up' provision in the private and voluntary sectors, which parents pay for if only part-time places are available.

3.2. Capacity planning and demand

In most countries, capacity planning of early childhood education and care for the youngest (under 3 year-olds) children is the responsibility of the local authority as the service provider. In the Nordic countries, local authorities must guarantee a place in a childcare setting, irrespective of the family circumstances. Danish local authorities, for example, have the obligation to ensure that the requisite number of places is available for children as day-care services must reflect local needs and be developed when needs change. A statutory duty on local authorities also exists in the United Kingdom (except in Northern Ireland), although access to guaranteed ECEC places starts later, at the age of 3. Currently, local authorities provide mainly part-time ECEC places for all 3 and 4-year-olds. In England

and Wales access is being gradually expanded as, from 1 April 2008, local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work or study.

In many countries, there is a shortfall in capacity for the youngest children. The ECEC shortage in some Eastern and Central European countries can be explained in a context of recent economical, political, and social changes. In these countries, the decline in birth rates since the late 1980s has led to decreasing demand and a withdrawal of some early childhood services. In recent years, birth rates have risen once more and the need for affordable childcare is not being adequately met. This is the case in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Although in Hungary the overall demand continues to be met, there were shortages in some areas of ECEC services in 2007 due to cuts in government funding. To juggle existing demand with future trends continues to be an important concern which is tackled differently in various countries. For example, Latvia and Romania introduced programmes of renovation and extension of existing early childhood centres. Slovenia stands out as the only exception from the common pattern. Here, provision of early childhood education and care is characterised by high accessibility for children from the age of 1: only 3 % of children whose parents applied for a place in a pre-school centre were not granted one in 2006/07.

The sharp distinction between younger and older children has differentiated effects regarding capacity planning, demand and even the fees required from the parents of children under and above 3 years old. In Spain, for example, education has been free of charge for all children in the second cycle (3-6 years) but not in the first (0-3 years) since 2005. However, for the first cycle of pre-primary education, both the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities offer grants and aid to help families meet the cost of private provision, as the publicly funded places do not meet the existing demand. The objective is to increase publicly funded places for children aged 0 to 3 at a rate of 2 % a year, until demand is fully met. Full schooling for children aged 3 to 6 is planned for 2010. These aims seem to have a real effect as in 2006, 300 000 new places were made available for the second cycle ECEC. In Portugal, one of the current principal aim to ensure that 100 % of 5-year-olds participate in pre-primary education by 2009. In Belgium, the difference in terms of capacity for very young children (under the age of 2.5) and older children is also striking. In each of the three communities, subsidised childcare for the younger age group is a responsibility of a government agency: the *Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance* (ONE), *Kind en Gezin* (K&G) and the *Dienst für Kind und Familie* (DKF) respectively. In the Flemish Community, subsidised childcare places are allocated by *Kind en Gezin* depending on financial resources made available by the Flemish government. The objective of achieving at least 33 % participation rates for the under-3s in ECEC is explicitly mentioned in Belgium. In the French Community, the *Cigogne* I and II plans are designed to increase capacity and are implemented by the *Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance* (ONE).

There is no central regulation or monitoring of capacity for very early education and care in most of the countries. Yet, there are a few pioneering attempts in this area. Norway provides an interesting example of how trends in capacity are made available to the general public. All Norwegian municipalities must report the number of children in kindergartens and children on waiting lists to the ministry. The ministry has established an electronic map showing the percentage of all children in kindergartens and waiting lists in all municipalities. The intention of the map, which is available on the ministry's website, is to benchmark access rates between municipalities in the hope of promoting higher access rates. Slovenia has taken a similar initiative by introducing a National E-Register of available places in pre-school institutions in 2007. Pre-school institutions are required to enter their data concerning

available places, so that applicants, municipal and national authorities are kept up to date on the situation in each institution. The National E-Register is accessible to all users on the internet. 90 % of pre-school institutions already use it, and registering data on it becomes compulsory in 2008/09.

Finally, it is important to note that the ECEC coverage is not even across the countries. In particular, there is an acute lack of adequate early childhood provision in rural areas in a number of countries. Uneven or differentiated (for example, more home-based provision) early childhood services in rural as opposed to urban areas is an especially pressing issue in Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Romania. In Poland, where municipalities have a right, but not a duty to provide crèches, there are virtually no crèches in rural areas. Despite a statutory duty to establish and administer nursery schools for 3-6 year olds, there is still a considerable shortfall in capacity. Participation rates differ considerably across the country, with far fewer children attending nursery schools in rural areas. Local solutions include organising part-time activities as a joint initiative of communes and foundations, associations and parents' groups.

3.3. Measures to increase access for children at risk

3.3.1. Barriers to participation

Access to early childhood services may be hampered by a number of factors to an extent that some children run the risk of being excluded from early education and care altogether. The most common exclusion factors include affordability and shortfalls in provision. Parents decision to keep their children at home may also be conditioned by a lack of suitable early childhood services, such as, for example, the availability of part-time care only, making it impractical to pursue employment (usually for the mother, as discussed in Chapter 2).

The social security system, however, may sometimes act as an indirect barrier of children's accession to ECEC even when provision is available. As explained in section 3.1, a system of lengthy parental leave and generous benefits can encourage parents to stay at home with their young children, as is the case in Estonia, Lithuania, Austria and Romania. For example, in Romania, parental leave benefits are payable for 2 years. The amount is comparable or even higher than some salaries and is lost if the child is enrolled in early childhood facilities. In some other countries, entitlement to specific benefits is conditional on the amount of time a child spends in an early childhood setting. In the Czech Republic, the parental benefit is applicable only if the child spends no more than 5 days a month in an early childhood setting under the age of 4 or not more than 4 hours a day for children under the age of 3. In Bulgaria, children who only spend a half-day in kindergarten do not pay fees for textbooks. Three Nordic countries have special 'cash-for-care' schemes for parents of 1-3 years old children who do not use publicly subsidised childcare. The 'cash-for-care' schemes cannot be taken simultaneously with the parental benefit and in practice are often used as an extension of the parental leave. The difference from parental leave schemes also lies in the fact that parents receiving 'cash-for-care' may hire external non-subsidised day care as there is no obligation to take care of the children themselves. In Finland such schemes exist since 1985, in Norway since 1999 and in Sweden it was re-introduced again in 2008. However, it is important to note that 'cash-for-care' schemes have disputable class consequences. This cash benefit is of greater importance to low-income families because it represents a higher share of these families' total income. In Norway, a national early childhood education and care survey in 2002 showed a correlation between participation in early childhood settings and parents' level of education and income, with less participation from low-income homes. Data also

show that the use of the 'cash-for-care' scheme decreases, as the number of places in early childhood services increase.

Exclusion factors can also be informal and less tangible. In Belgium (Flemish Community), a 2004 survey shows that groups that have priority of access by law are in fact the least likely to use early childhood services. Thus, the lowest rate of use is by ethnic minority children who belong to underprivileged families. Children of one-parent families also make less use of child care than the general population. The survey results suggest that socially vulnerable groups are especially prone to experience difficulties in enrolling their child(ren) to ECEC. Long waiting lists, the requirement for regular attendance and respecting rules in childcare are commonly listed formal barriers. Informal barriers include the way in which information about childcare is publicised, the language used and the attitudes of the staff. The Flemish 'Community and Neighbourhood services' project was set up in 2007 in order to address some of these issues. Half of the staff comes from identified at risk groups and the working method very explicitly involves the participation of parents, children and community. This project was positively evaluated at the end of 2007. This type of provision will be embedded in childcare legislation in the near future.

3.3.2. Financial measures

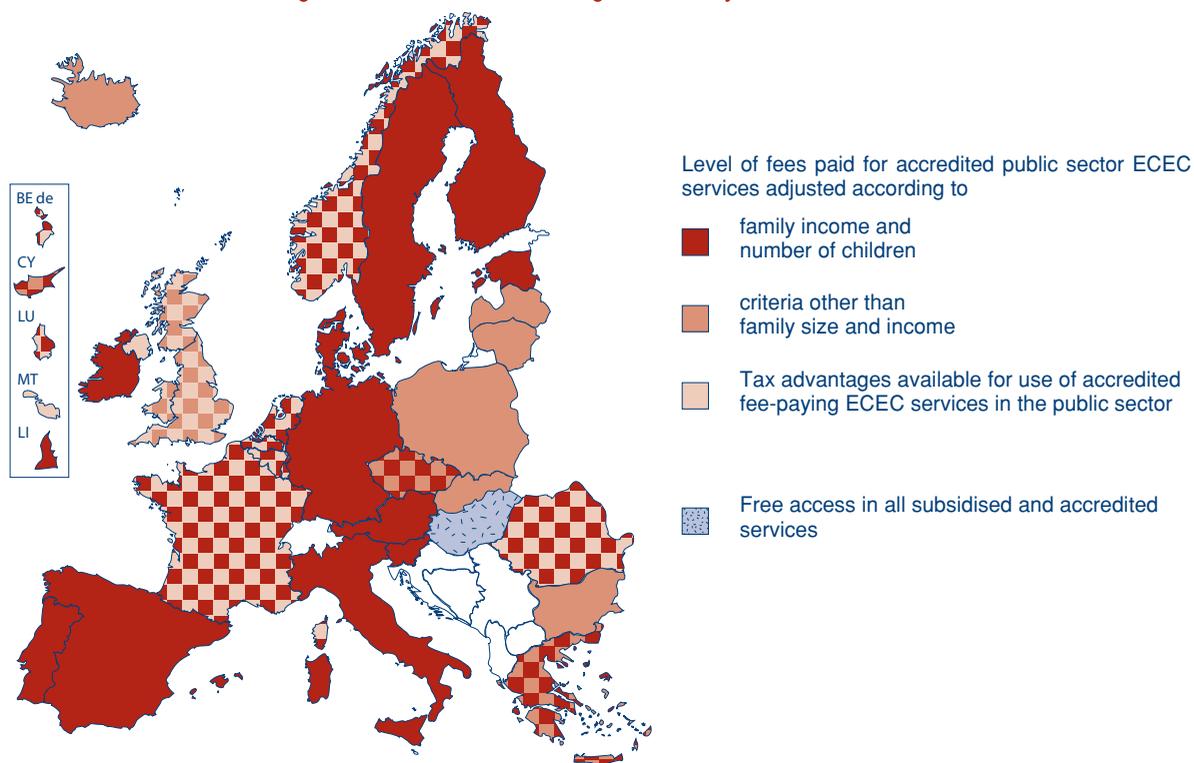
Free education for older children (usually from the age of 3) is guaranteed in school settings in a majority of countries. This is sometimes matched by a downward extension of compulsory schooling to include the final year of pre-primary education. This is the case in Greece, Cyprus and Poland, for example. However, parents are expected to contribute some fees for the ECEC of the youngest children in all countries except Hungary (see more Chapter 6).

In addition to broader policies designed to tackle poverty and social exclusion, such as social protection, employment and housing, almost all countries offer means-tested access to early childhood settings in order to ensure affordability for low-income families. Most countries use family income and number of children criteria to adjust the levels of fees paid for accredited public ECEC services (see Figure 3.2). In Belgium, parental contributions for childcare services (for 0-2 year-olds) are means-tested in the subsidised sector and a fee scale is applied accordingly. In the Czech Republic the school head of a nursery school sets a standard fee for all children. The head has the right to decrease or waive the fee, in particular in cases of children coming from disadvantaged families. Overall, parents who receive social benefits or who take care of a child and receive foster care benefit are exempted from fees. Also in Slovenia the public nursery school fee is regulated and parents who receive social benefits are exempted from paying this fee. In Ireland, early childhood services are grant-aided through three income bands on the basis of parental profiles, with the two lower bands applicable to parents entitled to social welfare benefits. A maximum fee was introduced in Sweden in 2002, where fees are set according to the level of parental income and the number of children in the family. Norway also has a similar system.

In Bulgaria, where the amount of fees, their reduction or exemption is regulated by law, lone parent families and families with more than two children, as well as disabled parents are exempted from paying fees. Children who only attend half a day in kindergarten are also exempted from fees. In Cyprus, since September 2004, preschool education is compulsory and free of charge for children from 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months. The fees for children from 3 years to 4 years and 8 months are set to 42 euros per month with a reduction to 25 euros to families with four or more

children. Children of very poor families and those whose parents suffer from serious illnesses are exempted from paying fees. The fees nevertheless are very low compared to what parents pay in the private sector (from 102 euros to 307 euros). In Hungary, the public ECEC provision is free; fees exist only for meals and extra activities, such as foreign language lessons or extra sports activities. It is interesting to note that, since 2008, new measures have been taken with the aim of motivating parents of children with multiple disadvantages to have their child participate in ECEC. Only parents of children with multiple disadvantages are eligible for a special allowance, which is paid by the local municipality in two instalments following the enrolment of the child in June and December. In Ireland, the level of parental contributions depends on whether parents are in receipt of benefit and on the nature of that benefit. Finally, in Latvia, Poland and Slovakia, fees are not related to income but local authorities are free to decide whether to exempt families in financial difficulties from paying fees.

Figure 3.2: Means of enhancing affordability of ECEC, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Italy: Measures vary according to the regulations of Regions and Communes.

Lithuania: Lone parent, student families and families where the father is conscripted are granted a 50 % reduction of fees.

Slovenia: When more than one child is enrolled from the same family, fee for older children is lowered by one category.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): Beyond the entitlement to free part-time provision for 3 and 4-year-olds, provision is mainly fee-paying and unsubsidised (although parents may receive tax credits).

Iceland: Municipalities are free to decide the amount of fees. Many municipalities have different rates with regard to marital status and whether parents are studying.

Liechtenstein: Lone-parent families may obtain supplementary financial support payments, depending on their financial situation.

Explanatory note

This figure looks at fee-paying ECEC provision only, whether in the public and/or private government-dependent sector combined. ECEC provision that is free of charge (such as school-based provision) is not therefore represented in this figure.

Tax deductions are another way of protecting families from the full extent of childcare costs. Often they complement the above mentioned criteria. Tax rebates on fees paid for childcare services (for 0-3 year-olds) are available in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom and Norway. In the Netherlands, parents benefit also from employers' contributions for the costs of childcare, provided they make use of a registered childcare centre or a registered agency for childminders. In Malta all families who enrol their child(ren) in ECEC get tax rebates, and those who receive social assistance are entirely exempted from school fees. In Romania, childcare vouchers are available for families who are not entitled to parental leave benefits. These tickets may only be used for paying taxes on early childhood services. In the United Kingdom, families at low- and middle-income levels receive tax credits through the *Working Tax Credit Child Care Element*, paying up to 80 % of (capped) costs for parents who work at least 16 hours a week.

3.3.3. Social and cultural measures

Various central government policies seek to promote access for particular target groups and to ensure that early childhood settings are sensitive to the specific needs of disadvantaged children. In Belgium (the Flemish Community) pilot project called *Centrum voor Kinderopvang* (CKO) (Integrated Centres for Childcare), tries to ensure such admission policies that the composition of children groups in ECEC would reflect the local/regional societies. In July 2006, Denmark introduced a written child environmental impact assessment for all day-care facilities with to ensure that day-care environments promote socially disadvantaged children's development. The government is investing in supplementary training for day-care staff to enable them to work with disadvantaged children, for example language teaching.

In France, all children living in the *zones d'éducation prioritaires* (education priority zones, or ZEPs) are entitled to start pre-primary education at the age of 2. The primary goal of the ZEP program, which was established in 1982, is to provide additional resources to schools in the most disadvantaged areas (defined by high unemployment levels, poverty, high numbers of non-French speakers, etc.).

In the Netherlands, government policy with regard to early childhood education and care is geared to children aged 2 to 5 who are at risk of educational disadvantage. This target group consists mainly of children with poorly educated parents, including many children from ethnic minorities. The main forms of provision are *peuterspeelzalen* (playgroups offering part-time day-care) for 2 and 3 year olds and primary schools for 4 and 5 year olds. The central policy goal between 2007 and 2011 is that all disadvantaged children between 2 and 6 participate in early childhood education. At a local level, parents are encouraged to enrol their children in early childhood education; the health services for young children (0 to 4 years) are an important facilitator as nearly all parents (more than 95 %) bring their babies or toddlers to health care centres for children. Furthermore, special programmes inform the parents about the benefits of early childhood education. Municipal authorities determine which strategy and which means will be used.

In Portugal government-funded *Social Solidarity Centres* that provide ECEC services are specifically targeted to disadvantaged children. In addition, recently introduced socio-cultural mediators support the integration of ethnic minority and migrant children in schools and elsewhere.

In Ireland, priority for funding childcare facilities as part of the *National Childcare Investment Programme* includes reference to the socio-demographic profile of the area. Disadvantaged children

(generally defined by the economic and educational status of the parents) are also given priority access in Hungary since 2008. They must be accepted by the kindergarten in the catchment area and have priority in any kindergarten. Non-municipal kindergartens with government funding have to accept disadvantaged children for up to a quarter of their capacity. In Spain, the distribution of children from socially and culturally disadvantaged groups is balanced between publicly funded schools in the public and private sector. Places are reserved and the cost of schooling reduced for children at risk aged between 0 and 3 years.

In the United Kingdom (England), *Every Child Matters* is a cross-government programme to ensure the well being of all children including the most vulnerable. In 2004, a ten-year strategy for childcare set out the Government's commitment to invest in childcare and early years education and to help parents achieve a work-life balance. The *Sure Start* programme supports the *Every Child Matters* objectives for the youngest children, bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. It includes services available for all, with greater support for children and families who are most in need, such as ethnic minority children and families, the unemployed, people with disabilities, teenage and lone parents, and asylum seekers. Programmes in the rest of the United Kingdom also provide broad-based support to families with young children in a similar way. Hungary has adopted a similar *Biztos kezdet* (Sure Start) program for children up to 3 years who live in areas where no *bölcsőde* is available. The *Biztos kezdet* professionals and volunteers help in child care, health and welfare areas.

Some countries organise special classes for specific groups of children in order to facilitate their access to mainstream schooling. These groups are usually formed prior to the start of compulsory schooling (for more information on the organisation of these special programmes please see Chapter 4, section 4.3).

3.4. Evaluation of the accessibility and targeted interventions

There are few systematic evaluation and reporting procedures on the government policies outlined above, except in the English-speaking, Nordic countries, Spain, France and the Netherlands.

In Denmark the monitoring of early childhood education policies is under the responsibility of the *Danish Evaluation Institute* (EVA). This institute is self-governing and carries out evaluations both on its own initiative and upon request from the government, ministries and advisory boards, local authorities and educational establishments. The evaluations cover public educational establishments and private institutions in receipt of state subsidy.

As part of the Spanish government's *National Reforms Plan of Spain* (PNR), there is a reporting procedure to monitor the progress towards achieving a participation rate of 27 % in 2008 and 30 % by 2010 in the first cycle of pre-primary education (0-3 years). Two progress reports were produced in 2006 and 2007. The latter report shows that the different measures have increased the participation rate in this cycle from 13.2 % in 2004 to 16.6 % in 2006.

In France, the supervision and assessment (including that of accessibility) of public *crèches* and nurseries are highly decentralised. It is usually the responsibility of departmental services, particularly the mother and child protection service. By contrast, assessing the implementation of national policies is the responsibility of the Inspectorate-General of Social Affairs (*Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales* (IGAS)) and also some other authorities. The supervision and assessment of nursery schools

is the responsibility of the various national education inspection bodies. These bodies are also responsible for monitoring statistical and assessment indicators and for examining selected samples of pupils.

The government in the Netherlands has set up a special *Landelijke Monitor Voor- en Vroegschoolse Educatie* (National Monitor for Early Childhood Education) body to monitor the results of early childhood education policy. During the years of measurement (2006, 2008 and 2010) municipal authorities are asked to provide data on definitions of children at risk, participation rates, programmes used, staff training, etc.

In Finland, state provincial offices have responsibility to monitor performance and handle complaints about municipality services, including ECEC services. This function is performed by the county governor in Norway, while in Sweden the National Agency for Education is responsible for following up recent reforms.

In the United Kingdom, the *National Evaluation of Sure Start* (NESS) is an ongoing independent study looking at the impact of *Sure Start* programmes over a long-term period.

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Accessibility of services is one of the key factors of social justice and inclusion. Guaranteeing access to high-quality ECEC services, particularly for the most disadvantaged sections of the population, is one of the main challenges for any policy designed to integrate children into society from the earliest age (see chapter 1). Accessibility can be gauged – and achieved – on the basis of diverse economic, geographical, social and cultural parameters. The impact of each of these factors is all the greater where supply is limited. In most countries, for example, childcare services for the youngest children – from birth to the age of 2 or 3 – are not universal; consequently, access priorities have been set. The general policies are often underpinned by financial measures. Preferential access for particular sections of society is usually set on the basis of various criteria, which may be of a socio-economic, geographical or cultural character. The policies, however, are thwarted by cultural and social barriers, such as a preference for maternal upbringing or a lack of familiarity with enrolment procedures – a disadvantage which is not easy to overcome and which can exclude certain groups. Lastly, the way in which centres operate, particularly their opening hours, can either broaden access – if they operate on a rota system – or limit it – as in the case of part-time opening.

CHAPTER 4: ORGANISATION OF PROVISION AND APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

Introduction

This chapter examines the main characteristics of the provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) with respect to age of participation and educational approaches. Of major importance are the factors which have been highlighted in the literature review (see Chapter 1) as particularly relevant for the effectiveness of ECEC programmes, notably their ability to accommodate children at risk.

The first section deals with functional aspects and focuses on staff/child ratios and group sizes as well as recommendations for health and safety. The second section examines the objectives, curricula and methodology of the different approaches to ECEC, paying particular attention to basic principles and educational references. The question of integrating children at risk crosses all aspects studied; however, the measures specifically put in place to facilitate the integration of such children are covered in section 3. Finally, participation of parents and partnerships with families is dealt with in section 4.

Chapter 3 provides evidence that many countries have distinct organisational structures for children of different ages. Figure 4.1 synthesises the detailed national information contained in Figure 3.1. It highlights the fact that most countries have two distinct types of provision based on the age of children, each type of provision often coming under the aegis of a different ministry (see table A in the annex for details of the ministries responsible). About ten countries provide a single organisational structure for all children 0/1-5/6 years which is sometimes extended by a preparatory year in the ECEC setting and/or in schools.

The differences in status, development and traditions between the different types of provision for children under 2 or 3 years and those for older children (often between 3 and 6 years) are quite significant. Therefore, it is reasonable to surmise that these differences have shaped the types of organisational frameworks and pedagogical approaches adopted for each age group. Thus, in this chapter, each aspect is dealt with separately taking into account the provisions targeted at the youngest children (under-2s or under-3s) and those for older children (usually 3 to 6 years); the latter being collectively known as 'pre-primary level' and, in most countries, forming ISCED level 0.

4.1. Functional parameters

4.1.1. Group sizes and staffing ratios

Staffing ratios are one of the determining factors with respect to quality. They may be laid down in two ways: by the establishment of maximum adult/child ratios or by the establishment of a maximum number of children who can be supervised by one or more adults. The size of the group in which children learn is important and partly influences both the nature of the activities organised by adults and the way they interact with the children. Children are much more sensitive to the effects of group size when they are young; the number of children in the group impacts on their exchanges and interactions with each other as well as with adults (see Chapter 1). The larger the group, the greater the chance for a child to become lost and to find it difficult to gain access to the adults present. For adults, working with others in a large group of children impacts on their working methods. Consequently, sharing responsibility with others for a large group of very young children can reduce adults' capacity for building individual and personal relations with children. Moreover, the number of children gathered together influences the tone of the exchanges between them and can, for example, lead to more conflicting interactions.

With the exception of the Nordic countries, Belgium, France and the Netherlands, where the responsibility for determining the size of children's groups is left to local authorities or the institution, most countries establish some form of guidelines for group sizes or adult/child ratios for ECEC provision for children over 2-3 years in institutions largely belonging to ISCED level 0 (see Figure 4.2a).

Figure 4.2a: Standards for ECEC provision (adult/child ratio and/or group sizes). Accredited and subsidised provision for children over 2-3 years, 2006/07

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
Specific standards for children at risk		●	●	●	●	*	*	*	*	● 1+1:15	*	●	●	*	● 1:20	*	*	*	*
Group size	min.	*	*	*	12	13-18	*	*					*	15		10		8	*
	max.	*	*	*	22	24	*	25	20	24	25	25	*	28	25	24	20	25	20-25
Maximum adult/child ratio		1:19; 2:39	1:19; 2:32	*	*	1:24	*	1+1:25	1+ 1:20	1:8-10	1:25	1:25	1+1/G	1:25-28	1:25	1:8	1+1/G	1+1/G	1:25
		MT	NL (a)	NL (b)	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI (a)	FI (b)	SE	UK (')	UK-SCT	IS	LI	NO	
Specific standards for children at risk		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	●	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Group size	min.	15	*	*			20			15	*		*			*		*	
	max.	20	*	*	25	25	25	20	22	22-28	*	13-20	*	26	*	*	20	*	
Maximum adult/child ratio		1/G	1+1/G	*	*	1/G	1+1:25	1:20	1+0.5:22	1/G	1:7-13	1:13; 2:20	*	*	1:8	1:5-10	*	1+2:14-18	

* Standards not set centrally ● Specific standards exist

UK (') = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr, BE de): The number of teaching posts is determined by the total number of children in the pre-primary school; the second number indicates that the school may have a second teacher (pre-primary level), paid for by the respective Community, where there are at most 39 (BE fr) or 32 (BE de) children enrolled. The presence of children at risk generates an increase in 'teacher periods' and consequently the number of posts.

Belgium (BE de): Schools which have between 4 and 6 recently arrived immigrant children are entitled to an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ of a post, with a further increase of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a post for each additional set of 3 pupils.

Belgium (BE nl): The number of teaching posts is determined by the total number of pupils in pre-primary classes.

Bulgaria: The adult/child ratio is not specified. It is known that it varies according to the type of provision (full-time, part-time, preparatory classes) and the age of children.

Czech Republic: Founders may increase or decrease the ratio by 4 pupils. If the number of pupils is lower, founders must cover the increased costs, if the number is higher they must guarantee the quality of education and the safety of children. In preparatory classes (*přípravné třídy*) the minimum number of pupils is 7 and the maximum is 15.

Denmark: The situation is the same in the unitary settings and in the kindergarden (3-6 years).

Spain: Compensatory measures are adopted in particular situations: mixed age groups, rural areas, schools admitting 'looked-after' children. National regulations require group sizes to be reduced in such circumstances. The size of this reduction is determined by each Autonomous Community

Ireland: Full/part-time Day-care Service (children from 3-6 years): 1 adult to 8 children; in Sessional Pre-school service (3-6 years): 1 adult to 10 children or 2 adults to a maximum of 20 children. There are specific standards for *Early programmes* which are accessible only to children at risk who come from disadvantaged families.

France: No standards for group sizes but the average class size is 26.

Italy: No national standards exist; optional guidelines might be set by local authorities. Classes with 28 children have 2 teachers; 2 teachers work in relay over the 8 hour working day when the class works full time. Recommendations exist for children at risk but no national standards.

Cyprus: The maximum number increases with the age of children; in priority areas, the maximum is set at 20 pupils.

Latvia: Data refers to the numbers of children who may be admitted to settings in cities and district centre areas. In other areas the minimum number is 8. The number of children in a group increases with age. In addition, given a shortage of available places, the tendency is to increase the number of children per group.

Hungary: This number may increase by 20 % where the *kindergarten* has at least two classes, when this is considered necessary at the start of the school year, or when a child has to be admitted during the school year.

Netherlands: (a) refers to standards for playgroups which are fixed at municipal level. (b) No standards for ratios in primary education for children aged 4 and 5 (*basisonderwijs*). The responsible authority decides the maximum number of children per group; however, the recommendation is 15 children. No national standards exist.

Portugal: Legislation provides for 1 assistant per 3 classes, local authorities must provide additional staff to ensure that activities can be properly carried out, therefore, in practice, there is usually at least 1 assistant per class. However, there are general guidelines which provide for support for groups at risk. Decree No 3/08 provides for specific support to be given to children who have relationship problems or learning difficulties.

Slovenia: Operate in unitary settings with groups of children under 3 and classes of children over 3. Standards differ according to the age of the children but also depending on the admission of children at risk and whether children are of mixed age. Standards may also vary in regions which are under-developed or in areas which include different nationalities.

Slovakia: Ratio lower (1:14) if the institution has a separate group for children under 3. Ratios are lower in institutions which take children as weekly boarders. In addition, an extra teacher is required for certain activities, such as swimming.

Finland: (a) relates to unitary settings for the 0/1-5/6 years. Standards apply to children over 3 years attending full-time; for children attending part-time, the ratio can extend to 1:13. (b) Refers to pre-primary classes; if the education is given in full-time day-care the ratio 1:7 applies whereas if the education is provided only for pre-primary age children the ratio 1:13 applies. The ratio is 2:20 if there is an assistant or a child minder present for most of the time with the teacher. These are recommendations only; the municipal board in charge of the primary education decides on the maximum group size.

Sweden: Standards are not laid down at central level but at municipal level, however, legislation provides guidelines. The Education Act states that groups of children shall be of appropriate composition and size and that the premises shall be appropriate.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): 2:26 applies to public sector settings (which must employ a qualified teacher and a nursery assistant with a relevant qualification). 1:8 applies to private and voluntary sector settings (which are not required to employ a qualified teacher).

Iceland: The ratio varies according to the age of the children, 1:5 from the age of 2 to 1:10 children from the age of 5.

Norway: Relates to children aged 3-6 in unitary settings. The ratio is a preschool teacher/child ratio, there is also other staff, e.g. assistants.

Explanatory note

Ratios relate to the standards covering the number of adults to children regardless of group divisions or group sizes. The group size maximum figure indicates the maximum number of children a group may include. The group size minimum figure indicates the minimum number necessary to form a group. Standards relating to the numbers necessary to establish a setting are not covered here.

With respect to the adult/child ratio, the first number (varying between 1 and 2) refers to trained staff responsible for the group and the second (after the + sign) refers to assistants or auxiliary staff.

In general, the maximum group size normally under the supervision of one teacher varies between 20 and 25 children. Only in Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Finland and Iceland the ratios are one adult to 12 or less children. This is also the case in the Netherlands in childcare centres – 1 adult to 8 children between 3 and 4 years – and also in other settings for children of 4 to 6 years including, playgroups and *basisonderwijs* where the recommended figure is 15 children generally under the care of 2 adults. Nine countries (Germany, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (playgroups), Portugal, the United Kingdom (except Scotland) and Norway) provide an assistant.

Specific measures for children deemed to be at risk operate in only a few countries. These involve either an increase in the number of teaching staff, such as in Belgium and France where these standards are integrated within a priority area policy, or the addition of an assistant, as in Ireland and Cyprus. In Spain, compensatory measures are implemented such as the reduction of children in the class. In Slovenia, measures may vary according to the level of regional development or the presence of Roma children; the standards for Roma children vary from region to region, for example, in the area of Doleniska a Roma assistant may make up the team of staff while in the area of Prekmurje the Roma community organises its own ECEC services with or without teams of Roma staff.

The situation is very different with respect to the norms for group ages relating to provision for children under 2/3 years (see Figure 4.2b). In countries for which data are available, rates are lower than those laid down for institutions which serve older children, 1 adult is responsible for less than 10 children in nearly all countries. Some countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) set group size numbers as well as the adult/child ratio. For several countries, data have revealed that they have teams of adults working with relatively large groups of children: in the German-speaking Community of Belgium there are 3 adults for 18 children, in Poland accordingly 4 adults per 35 children, and in Slovakia 3 adults work with groups of 14 to 20 children.

In just over half of the countries, these norms are regulated at national level, elsewhere by the regional or local authorities. In this case there are two alternatives: standards are either set according to guidelines decided at national level or they are defined at local level. These standards undoubtedly say more about the financing criteria of institutions (see Chapter 6) than about the methods for organising groups of children in centres. Only three countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Slovenia) set specific standards for the under 2-3 years-old children at risk.

**Figure 4.2b: Norms for ECEC (adult/child ratio and/or group sizes).
Accredited and subsidised provision for children under 2-3 years, 2006/07**

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK (a)	DK (b)	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT
Specific standards for children at risk	*	*	*	●	*	*	*	:	*	⊗	*	*	*	*	●	:	*
Maximum group size	*	*	*	18	*	*	*	:	14	⊗	*	*	*	*		10 to 16	10 to 15
Maximum adult/child ratio	1:7 or 1:9	3:18	1:7 or 1:10	:	*	*	*	:	1:7	⊗	*	*	1:5 or 1:8	*	1:6-12	:	1+1/G

	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK (1)	UK-SCT	IS	LI	NO
Specific standards for children at risk	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	●	*		*	⊗	⊗	*	*	*
Maximum group size	*	10-12	*	*	15	*	15	10-15	12	20	:	*	⊗	⊗	*	*	*
Maximum adult/child ratio	*	1:6	1:3-6	1:4-8	1+2	2+2:35	1+1:15	1:4-6	1+0.5:12	2:8-14; 3:14-20	1:4; 2:8	*	⊗	⊗	1:5-10	*	1:7-9

* Standards not set centrally ● Specific standards ⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr): The ratio in day nurseries (0-3 years) is 1:7; in kindergarten (*prégardiennat*) (18 months to 3 years) it is 1:9.

Belgium (BE nl): Private day-care: children under 18 months 1:7, over 18 months 1:10.

Bulgaria: 2-3 children with specific educational needs can be integrated into a group.

Czech Republic: The standards are not set centrally, but regulated by the health service.

Denmark: The situation is similar in the unitary settings (0-6 years) and in the day nurseries (0-3 years).

Spain: No national criteria for provision for 0-3 years; standards are set by the Autonomous Communities but the ratio generally increases with the age of the children (for example, in some Communities: 8 children per class/group for 0-1 year-olds; 13 for 1-2 year-olds and 20 for 2-3 year-olds).

France: 1 adult to 5 children who are not yet walking and 1 adult to 8 children who are walking.

Italy: Standards are set by the regions. In practice the ratio varies between 1 adult for 5 or 10 children depending on their age.

Cyprus: 1 adult to 6 children of 0-2 years and 1 adult to 12 children of 2 to 3 years.

Latvia: According to Regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers, in cities and district centre areas for children aged 1-2 the allowed group size is 10-14, for 2-3 year-olds it is 10-16 children. In other areas, the minimum number allowed is 8.

Netherlands: The child/adult ratio increases with the age of the children – 1:4 for children under 12 months; 1:5 for children aged 1-2 years and 1:6 for children aged 2-3 years. The maximum of 8 relates to children aged 3-4 years. The maximum number of children per group is 12 for children under 12 months and 16 for children under 4 years. However, these standards are not set centrally.

Austria: No federal standards, but regulations made at regional level (*Bundesländer*).

Poland: No figures given, but the composition of staff teams is specified.

Sweden: Responsibility rests with municipal authorities, but central legislation provides recommendations.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): There are standards for adult/child ratios for under-3s but these are not shown here as most provision is in the voluntary and private sectors and is not directly subsidised.

Norway: Standards apply for children 0-3 years in unitary settings. The ratio is a preschool teacher/child ratio, there is also other staff, e.g. assistants.

4.1.2. Health and safety requirements

The vast majority of countries have legal requirements for health and safety provisions in ECEC. In some countries non-adherence to these standards can lead to the closure of settings or to the withdrawal of public funds, but the standards are not detailed, except in some countries. The Czech Republic, Latvia and Austria set very strict standards for the opening of new settings. They specify the minimum space required per child in m², a separate entrance for the kitchen and supplies, and separate toilet facilities for each group of children. Only a few countries address matters relating to the quality of the environment beyond health and safety issues. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Spain cite acoustic qualities, ventilation, available light and, as in Poland and Iceland, the use of outside space for general exploitation and for play. In Denmark, although there is no specific legislation relating to health and safety, all ECEC settings must use the *Children's Environment Assessment*, the objective of which is to describe, evaluate and improve children's environment. The assessment focuses on three areas: the physical environment (health, ergonomics and safety, etc.), the aesthetic environment (a measure of the effect of the surroundings on the well-being of children) and the psychological environment (relations between children themselves and with adults). The management team of each ECEC setting is responsible for carrying out this evaluation periodically (every 3 years) and making it available to the public.

Figure 4.3: Health and safety standards for ECEC (accredited and subsidised) provision, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
Settings admitting children under 2-3 years	●	●	●	●	●	*	*	●	⊗	●	●	●	*	●	●	●	*	●
Settings admitting children over 2-3 years	●	●	●	●	●	*	*	●	●	●	●	●	*	●	●	●	*	●
	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI (a)	FI (b)	SE (a)	SE (b)	UK (¹)	UK- SCT		IS	LI	NO
Settings admitting children under 2-3 years	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	*	●	⊗	⊗		●	●	●
Settings admitting children over 2-3 years	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	*	*	●	*		●	●	●

● Standards set * Standards not set centrally ⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision

UK (¹) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Denmark: The situation is similar in the unitary settings (0-6 years) and in the separate settings: day nurseries (0-3 years) and kindergarden (3-6 years). No specific standards but since 2006 it has been compulsory for all day-care centres to carry out a 'Children's Environment Assessment'.

Germany: Standards for *Krippen* and *Kindergärten* are set by the communities.

Ireland: The Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 cover settings for children under 2-3 years of age.

Austria: Standards are not centrally set, but all 9 provincial laws require similar standards.

Italy: Some local authorities publish general optional guidelines/general indication on health and safety. They are not mandatory

Finland: (a) unitary settings (0-6 years); (b) pre-primary classes.

Sweden: (a) unitary settings (1-6/7 years); (b) pre-primary classes. General standards are set at central level in the form of overarching rules and recommendations. The responsibility for their implementation rests with the local level.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): There are standards for health and safety for under-3s but these are not shown here as most provision is in the voluntary and private sectors and is not directly subsidised.

4.2. Curricula, approaches and objectives

Whilst all countries have established programmes for children aged 3 to 6 years, the position is much more varied with respect to younger children (0 to 3 years). Bulgaria, Malta, Romania, the United Kingdom (England), with its *Birth to Three Matters* framework, and Liechtenstein have specific national programmes for very young children. The five Nordic countries and Slovenia organise and plan their policies in terms of curricula and methods for the whole age group 0-6 years. The situation is currently similar in Spain but in 2008-2009 the programme for the first phase of ECEC (0-3 years) will become the full responsibility of the Autonomous Communities (under the 2006 legislation).

Several other countries (Belgium (Flemish-speaking Community), Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania and the United Kingdom (England)), where the provision is not delivered within unitary settings, have nevertheless adopted or are preparing regulations to integrate programmes/ curricula for children for the full 0-6 age range. Other countries either do not mention the issue or indicate the absence of programmes which settings must follow. However, in Belgium (French Community) and France there is a concern that institutions draw up education plans.

Legislation which lays down the educational options recommended by the state is issued by central or regional authorities. There is a tendency to confer responsibilities for curriculum and educational planning to the local authorities or to teams within ECEC organisations. Several countries place the accent on decentralisation or deregulation including Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

4.2.1. Aims and objectives

Since their origins in the middle of the 19th century, day nurseries have adopted the dual roles of caring and safeguarding – protecting working class' and disadvantaged families' children from illness and disease. There was also an economic role – to free up women to work in the rapidly expanding industries. But over the years, in line with social, cultural and economic developments in European society, other roles have been conferred on day nurseries: health and social care, education and socialisation. Even with these additional functions day nurseries retained their original role of childminding.

In contrast, from the inception of the pre-primary education and/or kindergartens, their founders – Maria Montessori, Pauline Kergomard and before these, the pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel – emphasised taking early charge of children from disadvantaged families in order to assure their well-being and development and to lay the foundations of their social emancipation. The emphasis on education and early schooling of 3-6 year olds often obscured their role of childminding. This tension between day-care (childminding) and education is still prevalent and provides a useful framework for analysing ECEC provision in the present day.

Many countries consider services for infants (0 to 2/3 years) as initiatives which have an economic purpose, taking care of children to allow both parents equal opportunities to work or study. However, whilst explicitly attributing a childminding role, the educational and socialising dimensions of these services are also recognised.

The Nordic countries, Spain and Slovenia have adopted a comprehensive approach to ECEC which, amongst other measures, is realised through unitary settings. These countries explicitly recognise that, from infancy, ECEC provision constitutes the first step on the education path. In some countries,

including Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, legislation is revised to focus on the educational dimension and some recent initiatives are taken to ensure that infants have the best start in life. Romania over the last two decades was re-directing its day nurseries down the educational path.

In addition, some countries place an emphasis on the importance of protecting vulnerable children from neglect and abuse. In the United Kingdom (England) for example, ECEC is seen as part of the range of services for children and families, which also include health services, parental outreach and family support. Other countries see it as a weapon in the fight against poverty: by offering support to parents and allowing them to work, family income is increased and the basic needs of young children can be met (Ireland, Romania and Slovakia in particular). In Latvia, ECEC for infants (0-3 years) aims at increasing the birth rate.

Consequently, it is possible to say that almost everywhere the educational dimension has been added to, or indeed has surpassed other concerns which influence legislation or approaches to provision for infants.

The situation for the settings for children aged over 3 or 4 years is quite different. All countries agree in their views that the various settings for this age group should provide the first steps on the educational ladder. Differences between countries emerge in the arrangements for day-care in pre-primary settings.

The objectives attributed to the various organisational structures of ECEC in Europe can be summed up along the following broad lines:

- Settings designed for infants (0/1-2/3 years) usually follow objectives related to the well-being of the child (physical, psychological and social), to reconciling the needs of family and work, to the early learning and socialisation of the child, and to the prevention of social problems.
- Pre-primary education (ISCED 0), usually designed for children aged 3-6 years, focuses on the educational dimension which is aimed at cognitive and social development, early learning and socialisation, and laying the foundation for the basic skills – reading, writing and arithmetic – which are necessary to start primary school. Other concerns, such as the physical health of children (Estonia, Poland, Slovakia and Finland) can also play a part.
- Countries with a unitary system for all children aged 0/1 to 6/7 years award the same importance to education, socialisation and day-care for the complete duration of the ECEC phase.

4.2.2. Educational models and teaching approaches

Guidelines and educational objectives are usually established by the ministry that is responsible for ECEC policies (see appendix, table A for details of ministries). In some cases, they are laid down in legislation. Even where official curricula exist, the general trend is to delegate the responsibility for curriculum and development planning to the local level – local authority or institution – in collaboration with staff, parents and even children. This policy is intended to ensure that, on the one hand, plans and activities meet the needs of localities and their cultural and social environments, and, on the other hand, that local staff are involved and motivated.

The various education programmes can be viewed in the light of two major schools of thought (evident in the research review discussed in Chapter 1, section 4) which differ as much in their objectives and

methods as in their view of the role of adults and the part played by 'children activity' in the educational process.

The characteristics of the first model of provision (grouped here under model 'Programmes with a child-centred approach') are centred on the notion of the development of the whole person and the promotion of learning through self-determined activity, spontaneous exploration and play. Interactions between peers and cooperative work are favoured, and symbolic or pretend play is considered equally important as cultural learning. The role of adults is, on the one hand, to arrange the room, set out equipment for play and activities and organise the schedule and, on the other hand, to engage with the children in a manner which will encourage their cultural learning (such as literacy, numeracy and science). Educators are seen as the means to guide and support children in their social and intellectual growth.

In the second model of provision, model 'Programmes with a teacher-directed approach', early learning is inspired by the theories of education based on the transmission of knowledge and skills by the teacher. Language and academic skills linked to the primary curriculum are favoured. Teaching methods are based on direct instruction, directed activities and reinforcement; a structured and planned curriculum underpins the whole process.

All countries have education programmes at ISCED level 0 and there has been a degree of convergence in educational policies throughout the countries studied. A certain level of homogeneity is apparent with respect to teaching guidelines for this level. With only a few exceptions, countries prioritise teaching practices which combine the personal development of the child with socialisation (first model). The aim is the development of the whole child, seeking to educate them as future citizens, making them aware of their physical and social environment and encouraging them to participate in school life. Children are considered as participants in their own development; their intellectual, social and artistic growth is promoted while placing also particular importance on physical and motor activities. Play and cooperative activities are the chosen means to encourage development, children are seen as partners accompanied and supported by teachers. In Belgium, the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Norway there is also a desire to cultivate literacy and numeracy in older children in preparation for primary school. Some countries also mention the transmission of knowledge (second model). However, there are few indications on how these programmes are delivered particularly with respect to the role played by adults.

Figure 4.4a: Curricula and educational approaches, accredited and subsidised provision for children over 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
National guidelines or curriculum	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Programmes with a child-centred approach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Programmes with a teacher-directed approach													●				
Health-related objectives					●			●							●		
Programmes including literacy and numeracy related learning	●	●	●		●							●	●	●		●	

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/WLS/NIR	UK-SCT	IS	LI	NO
National guidelines or curriculum	●	●	*	*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Programmes with a child-centred approach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Programmes with a teacher-directed approach							●									
Health-related objectives	●				●	●			●	●		●				●
Programmes including literacy and numeracy related learning			●			●						●				●

● Recommendations * No central recommendations

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Estonia: Programme designed for children aged 1-7.

Ireland: The Curricular Framework for Early Learning is being developed, due to be published in 2009.

Greece: programme for ECEC for children from 4 years and implemented in schools.

Spain: the 'national core curriculum' for pre-primary education covers children from 0-6 years. From the 2008/09 school year it will only cover the second phase (3-6 years), the curriculum for the first phase will be drawn up by the Autonomous Communities.

Italy: Some local authorities publish general guidelines/general indications on health and safety; they are not mandatory. There are recommendations on literacy and numeracy.

Lithuania: Guidelines for the whole ECEC (children 1 to 6 years) and the curriculum for children of 6 to 7 years.

Luxembourg: Provision for the youngest children is the responsibility of local authorities, no national guidelines exist.

Austria: There is no national curriculum in Austria but all 9 provinces have clear guidelines and a handbook as well as obligatory written planning and reflection sheets for the pedagogical work.

Netherlands: There is a mix of the two approaches.

Poland: Educational activities are left to the initiative of educators.

Romania: In force since 2007. The transmission model applies only to the final year, known as 'the preparatory year for school'.

Figure 4.4b: Curricula and educational approaches, accredited and subsidised provision for children under 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
National guidelines or curriculum	●	●	●	●	*	●	*	●	⊗	*	●	*	*	●	●	●	*
Health option				●					⊗	*					●		
Programmes with a child-centred approach				●		●			⊗	*	●			●	●	●	

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/WLS/NIR	UK-SCT	IS	LI	NO
National guidelines or curriculum	●	●	*	*	*	*	●	●	:	●	●	⊗	⊗	*	●	●
Health option					●	●	●			●		⊗	⊗			●
Programmes with a child-centred approach										●		⊗	⊗			

● Recommendations * No central recommendations ⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr, BE de): All settings (0-12 years) must adhere to a quality code which requires them to submit their provision plan and, in particular, their education plan for assessment and approval respectively by ONE (BE fr) and DKF (BEde). The quality code is not considered a national curriculum; each management team may produce its own curricula and pedagogical method.

Belgium (BE nl): There are a number of quality conditions that have to be met by the provisions and recognised provisions need to dispose of a quality manual, but this is not approved by *Kind en Gezin*.

Czech Republic: No central recommendations exist, but day crèches (*jesle*) usually follow the first model and must also meet health requirements.

Spain: The 'national core curriculum' for pre-primary education covers children from 0-6 years. From the 2008/09 school year, it will only cover the second phase (3-6 years), the curriculum for the first phase will be drawn up by the Autonomous Communities.

Austria: There is no national curriculum in Austria but all 9 provinces have clear guidelines and a handbook as well as obligatory written planning and reflection sheets for the pedagogical work.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): There are recommendations for curricula and educational approaches for under-3s but these are not shown here as most provision is in the voluntary and private sectors and is not directly subsidised.

Even though there may be a cut-off between the day-care provided for the youngest children and the pre-primary level (ISCED 0), educational concerns are still evident in day-care provision. Some countries require settings to produce educational plans specifically for this age group. For example, in the French Community of Belgium, legislation provides for a quality code with which settings must comply. Under this framework, each setting must produce a development plan and a learning plan. To encourage and support this initiative, a resource document *Provision for young children: aim for quality* has been made available on the website of the Office for Birth and Childhood (*Office de la naissance et de l'enfance*). This educational handbook, specifically for 0-3 year-olds, provides, through case studies of provision for young children, original ideas on 3 central themes: bonding, socialisation and activities. It proposes a framework for the design and implementation of high-quality educational programmes for early childhood settings for 0-3 year-olds which is ethical and theoretical as well as practical. A handbook for 3-12 year-olds on extracurricular care is being developed. However, in general, the tendency is for countries to adopt the same educational approaches for the whole ECEC phase (0-6 years).

Ensuring the physical well-being of babies is the main preoccupation in many countries. Contributions from several countries (in particular, Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland and Romania) place day nurseries firmly in the areas of child protection, safety and health. From the information collected for the present study it is not possible to understand how the notion of care is interpreted within ECEC settings.

4.3. Initiatives for groups at risk

Initiatives targeted at children from at risk groups constitute one of the major axes which underpin current policy developments related to ECEC provision in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands, early childhood education, available for children from 2 to 6 years old, addresses particularly children from disadvantaged background; it is provided by preschool playgroups (children 2-3 years old) and primary school (*basisonderwijs* – children 4 and 5 years old). In the United Kingdom (England and Wales), free part-time places for 2-year-olds in disadvantaged areas have been introduced; pilot projects also exist in Northern Ireland where, additionally, public sector nurseries may accept 2-year-olds if they have places available. There are also some local arrangements which include under-2s such as the London childcare affordability programme.

All countries implement measures intended to benefit children who have developmental problems or educational difficulties. The measures adopted are usually based on universal provision of ECEC

accessible to all children. Nevertheless, a diverse range of measures exist which arise from countries' different economic and social conditions, the extent of their social welfare system, the degree to which their ECEC provision has developed and also from the thinking behind the measures. Two main trends exist.

In the first group which comprises the majority of countries, children at risk are considered to belong to a defined social, economic or cultural group (see appendix, table B on national definitions of children at risk) which is the basic criterion for intervention. In a smaller group of countries, support is based on the individual needs of children identified during the course of their education/instruction. For example, Swedish law states that 'Pre-schooling and welfare for schoolchildren shall be based on the needs of each child. Children who for physical, mental or other reasons need special support in their development shall be given the care their special needs demand'. This concept also exists in Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Norway. However, most European countries face difficult social challenges – for example, integrating immigrant or refugee populations – which are prompting the implementation of specific programmes in this area.

One or other of these schools of thought provides the basis for a variety of approaches which are not mutually exclusive. The approaches can be described as follows:

- Appointment of extra staff in mainstream settings which cater for all children but which also admit children with difficulties. For example, in Portugal a 'social mediator' is provided.
- Establishment of geographic areas as priority zones where special measures are taken in both the 0-3 phase and the pre-primary phase (Ireland, France, Cyprus, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)) or only in the pre-primary phase (Malta and Portugal).
- Implementation of special programmes, broken down according to their curricula, their type (such as compensatory programmes or the provision of specialist support) or even when they are applied (for example, the year prior to the start of compulsory education). Such programmes are mainly dedicated to language acquisition (mother tongue but mainly the second language) at pre-primary level (ISCED 0). Although less common, many countries also implement similar measures for younger children (0-3 years). In Spain, compensatory programmes, focused on language and other areas of the curriculum, are implemented in schools with a significant number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; at pre-primary level, children receive this support in the same class as other children in their group. Slovenia mentions special measures for ethnic minorities: the establishment of bi-lingual schools or providing bi-lingual staff in border areas with Hungary; Italian or Slovenian language schools for Italian minorities. Finally, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway pay special attention to the language process for children of the entire 0/1-6 age group. Since 2003, Denmark has focussed systematically on language development for immigrant children over the age of 3. In the Netherlands health centres for 0-4 year-olds advise parents of children at risk to enrol them in a programme implemented within childcare centres, such as *Kaleidoscope*, *Startblokken* or *Pyramide*, all three of which are focused on the general development of children with particular emphasis on language. In addition, specific programmes are implemented for these children in some municipalities. Playgroups which admit all children aged 2 to 4 give priority to children at risk. Such measures are used particularly in large centres of population where there is a high concentration of children at risk.

- The provision of separate settings/groups for children of the unemployed, refugees, Roma children, ethnic minorities, children in particular circumstances such as orphans or those separated from their family for some reason, for example, parents working abroad – as mentioned by Romania. In Spain, various initiatives, like itinerant classes, are targeted at children who are unable to receive normal schooling: children of seasonal workers or travellers or circus children. In the Czech Republic, the preparatory classes of basic schools (*základní školy*) exist for socially disadvantaged children in the year prior to the start of compulsory education. In Greece, Romania and Slovenia, attention is focussed on Roma children aged 3 to 6 and linguistic and cultural minorities; Finland has developed similar initiatives but for children aged 0/1-5/6. In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports provides financial programmes to support a variety of projects relating to the integration of Roma children.

Figure 4.5a: Measures targeted at children who are socially, culturally and/or linguistically disadvantaged. Accredited and subsidised provision for over 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
Additional staff in mainstream settings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Priority areas									●			●		●			
Global special programmes		●		●	●	●		●	●		●		●		●	●	
Programmes focussing on language	●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	
Separate settings/groups				●	●			●	●	●					●		

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/ WLS/NIR	UK- SCT	IS	LI	NO
Additional staff in mainstream settings	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Priority areas		●	●			●						●				
Global special programmes	●						●		●			●				
Programmes focussing on language	●		●	●			●		●	●	●		●		●	●
Separate settings/groups					●		●	●		●						

● Specific standards

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Czech Republic: Separate sections (preparatory classes of basic schools – *přípravné třídy základních škol*) are designed only for children in the year prior to the start of compulsory education (aged 5 or over).

Denmark: Concerning children at risk, the Danish government published in January 2006 a report on equal opportunities for all children. It is here stated that additional resources will be allocated to institutions with prevalence of children at risk. This government report advocates implementing specific projects aimed at supporting the learning abilities of children at risk.

Germany: Measures for groups at risk involve children aged 4 who have diagnosed language difficulties; intensive language lessons are given in small groups (North Rhine-Westphalia).

Estonia: Additional staff – depends on the size of the pre-primary institution, a speech therapist or a special education teacher works in every pre-primary institution. Programmes focusing on language: 'Estonian as a second language'. Separate settings are for children who are separated from their parents.

Spain: No separate settings but itinerant classes for itinerant population and hospital classes.

Italy: Special programmes for at risk groups are drawn up by specialists at the Local Health Agencies. For each child they also provide indications on how to behave with this child.

Cyprus: Children affected by serious problems, whether emotional or physical, benefit from support from non-qualified assistants.

Hungary: There is special staff for children with specific needs but this additional staff is not only for at risk groups. The same applies to special programmes. In kindergarten where Roma children do not speak Hungarian, a special language programme is offered (managed and organised at local level).

Netherlands: Municipalities decide which playgroups will be financed to allow them to provide pre-primary education and to recruit additional staff. Municipalities usually designate playgroups which have a high concentration of disadvantaged children.

Slovenia: Involves only Roma children.

Finland: Immigrant children of compulsory school age and pre-primary age may be offered instruction preparing them for basic education. The objective is to support the pupils' balanced development and integration into Finnish society and to give them the necessary skills to enable them to attend basic education. It equals the syllabus of half school year, and it is being lengthened to equal one year.

Figure 4.5b: Measures targeted at children who are socially, culturally and/or linguistically disadvantaged. Accredited and subsidised provision for under 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
Additional staff in mainstream settings	●	●		●	*	●	●	●	⊗	*	●	●	*		●	●	*
Priority areas					*				⊗	*		●	*	●			*
Global special programmes				●	*	●		●	⊗	*	●		*		●		*
Programmes focussing on language				●	*	●	●	●	⊗	*			*		●		*
Separate settings/groups	●		●		*			●	⊗	*			*		●		*

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/ WLS/NIR	UK- SCT	IS	LI	NO
Additional staff in mainstream settings	●	*		●	*		●	●		●	●	⊗	⊗	●	●	●
Priority areas		*	●		*							⊗	⊗			
Global special programmes	●	*			*	●	●		●			⊗	⊗			
Programmes focussing on language		*	●	●	*					●	●	⊗	⊗		●	●
Separate settings/groups		*			*		●	●	●	●		⊗	⊗			

● Specific standards * No central recommendations ⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE de): For children who are struggling, steps are taken to provide more individual assistance through employees of the DKF (*Dienst für Kind und Familie*), often even outside the ordinary structures.

Czech Republic: There are no special measures for at-risk children within the care provided in crèches. However services focused predominantly on them are based on field social services, on ambulatory care or on guidance. These children can be admitted to special settings or programmes primarily established for disabled children.

Denmark: In January 2006 the Danish government published a report on equal opportunities for all children. It is here stated that additional resources will be allocated to institutions with prevalence of children at risk. This government report advocates implementing specific projects aimed at supporting the learning abilities of children at risk.

Estonia: Additional staff – depends on the size of the pre-primary institution, a speech therapist or a special education teacher works in every pre-primary institution. Programmes focusing on language: 'Estonian as a second language'. Separate settings are for children who are separated from their parents or orphans.

Spain: Itinerary classes following itinerant population or hospital classes.

Hungary: There is special staff for children with specific needs but this additional staff is not only for at risk groups. The same applies to special programmes.

Italy: Special programmes for at risk groups are drawn up by specialists at the Local Health Agencies; they also provide advice on how to manage individual children.

Slovakia: Establishment of substitute education – children's homes, professional substitute education in family and 'independent educational groups'. These establishments fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): There are measures for under-3s but these are not shown here as most provision is in the voluntary and private sectors and is not directly subsidised.

Explanatory note

'Separate settings/groups' refers to specific initiatives for groups of children deemed to be at risk.

4.4. Partnership with families

ECEC settings do not always engage actively with parents in their children's early childhood education and care. The most usual form of contact between parents and educators is that of provision of information to parents, for example in the form of parent meetings or through giving them guidance and advice. Working with parents in other ways and creating a partnership approach is a systematic feature of early childhood provision in only a few countries. Austria explains its national situation by underlying that formal ways of working with parents (information evenings, etc.) still predominate in ECEC services. Nevertheless, awareness of and sensitivity towards this issue has increased in recent years. Examples of good practice can be found in many cases and some countries have adopted recommendations on partnership with parents. In Portugal, parent participation may take the form of parents coming into school to talk about their experiences, telling stories, etc. At the start of 2008, a new project entitled *Reading on the Move* involves a varied range of reading activities with a view to raising awareness among parents and children about learning to read. In the Netherlands, programmes for early childhood education usually contain a parent participation component (information meetings, parent visits in the group, materials for parents to take home and to work on together with their child). Playgroups inform parents about their child's development through notebooks or portfolios.

Parent-teacher meetings are reported as being an important form of contact with families in many countries for parents with children aged 3 and older. Providing advice to parents is a central characteristic in several countries for children under 3 years of age. In the Czech Republic, for example, partnership with families takes the form of guidance from the paediatric nurse on issues such as health and nutrition. Information provided to parents can also take the form of advice on options available to parents with respect to early childhood settings. Several national contributions report that this type of information is made available, for example in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) and in Ireland.

Parent membership of advisory councils or other bodies associated with early childhood settings is another form of parent participation reported by a number of countries. These bodies have different purposes. Some are set up specifically as a parent forum, such as in Norway where each kindergarten must have a coordinating committee who consists of parents, staff and owners. The parents' council comprises all parents or guardians and promotes their common interests. Danish day-care centres also have parent boards, which contribute to decisions on staff selection, expenditure and the principles on which educational activities are based in the setting. Parent bodies are also established in Latvia with similar responsibilities. Slovenia belongs to a group of countries with the systematic approach to partnership with families. The Pre-school Institutions Act (2006) explicitly determines the obligation of pre-school institutions to partnerships with families. Institutions must include in their annual working plans forms and programmes of partnership with parents. In each pre-school institution's management board there are also representatives of parents included. Each pre-school institution has a parents' council as advisory body.

In many other countries, parents are represented on bodies with broader membership. This is usually associated with school-based settings. In the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, for example, parents' representatives are mandatory members of 'participation councils' in schools, including pre-primary classes. Parents may also participate in school boards in Bulgaria. In Italy, parents are involved in 'collegiate bodies' and may put forward education-related proposals while in

Portugal consultative councils are elected every year with parent representatives in state-run nursery schools. In France, all day nurseries produce a development plan or specific service plan which outlines the role of families and how they may participate; in nursery schools, parents are involved in decision-making through the school councils to which they elect representatives.

In Spain, national laws establish the need for cooperation between schools and families, particularly at pre-primary level. These laws envisage various forms of cooperation: for example, promoting respect for the responsibility of mothers, fathers or legal guardians and encouraging their participation in the education process of their child; establishing school boards which include parents' representatives; implementing a wealth of practices encouraging the exchange of information between educators and parents, such as organising daily exchange periods focused on the progress of children and also organising parent meetings, and directly involving parents in the educational activities of their children (direct participation or financial assistance).

Some national contributions are quite specific about the nature of the duties towards families placed on those working with very young children. In Belgium (Flemish Community), care providers have to describe how they deal with complaints from parents and how parental satisfaction is measured as well as how parental involvement is established at a more general level. In Hungary, teachers are required to collect information about the child through interviews with the family and to provide personal feedback on his or her development.

A partnership approach between early childhood education and care providers and families, placing very clear duties on providers, is explicitly referred to in the national contributions from Finland and the United Kingdom.

In Finland, the statutory duty is to support the education of children in the home and to cooperate with parents and carers. The early childhood education and care partnership covers not only the attitudes of families and staff members towards education but also towards related practical, organisational arrangements so that the needs of all concerned are met. Staff have the primary responsibility for employing the partnership approach from the very beginning, taking into consideration each family's specific needs. This also enables early and accurate identification of an individual child's need for more targeted support in any area.

In the United Kingdom (England and Wales), the Childcare Act 2006 requires that parents are involved in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of services. In England, *Sure Start* Children's Centre programmes emphasize parent involvement, providing parenting support and facilitating access for training and development. Parents play a major role in running *Sure Start* local programmes and partnerships contain about 50 per cent parent/community members. In the United Kingdom (Scotland), establishing effective partnerships and regular communication is also required and education authorities have a duty to promote the involvement of parents in publicly-funded schools including in the early years' sector.

Specialised support services are generally available for at-risk families in some countries although the ways in which families are encouraged to access and use these services are not always clear.

A networking approach to the provision of support is being taken in a number of countries. In Estonia, cooperation networks between services such as health, education and legal services are being strengthened and a network of regional counselling and rehabilitation centres is being established to

provide counselling and other services for families with coping difficulties. In Ireland, many City and County Childcare Committees (responsible for strategic planning at local level) have developed Parents' Networks for all parents to meet and discuss concerns and issues pertaining to childcare. Some networks cater more specifically for particular groups of parents such as those bringing up their children alone. In the United Kingdom, a central policy aim has been to offer an integrated approach for the provision of support to families. Spain is introducing community assistance initiatives or services in areas which have centres with a large number of children at risk: these are intended as guidance services which will assume a teacher support role, monitor the progress of children and work with parents. Mention should also be made of the introduction of a mobile *Support Service for Immigrant Pupils*, responsible for encouraging the integration of immigrant children who do not speak Spanish.

Encouraging the involvement of families where there is risk or deprivation is an area where local NGOs and organisations are active, as in Lithuania, where various local projects put strong emphasis on family involvement, such as Roma families in Vilnius. In Belgium (French Community), some schools organise literacy classes or other initiatives for families on school premises.

Roma families are the focus of specific support in Greece, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia. Elsewhere, very little targeted support is reported for specific at-risk groups, although in Poland, at the request of parents of national minorities, special language sections within nurseries or schools or classes in religion may be organised.

CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Introduction

The education and training of staff is a fundamental issue for the quality of ECEC provision. It is one of the key factors which determine the successful integration of children from at risk groups. Studies carried out on this subject are identified in Chapter 1; most researchers agree that the training of adults/staff responsible for educational activities in ECEC should be at the bachelor level of higher education and should be specialised. Where this level of initial training has not been attained, continuing professional development is essential to provide the necessary professional skills required for the delivery of effective care; this is especially important with respect to the care of children at risk.

As the research results demonstrate, particular attention must be paid not only to the level of initial training offered to workers in the sector but also to the content and training methods used. Practical and theoretical training should be provided which prepares staff (teachers, educators etc.) for the demands of the profession and for the diverse tasks they must carry out. Work with young children requires staff to deploy a range of skills. Professional staff have a mission to educate and to socialise children, consequently, the ways in which adults relate to children are crucial: sharing games and activities with children; guiding them in their discovery of the world and of others; supporting them in their emotional and social development; introducing them to and initiating them in early learning activities (literacy, numeracy, science); awakening their cultural interests in music, drama, arts etc.; and encouraging and maintaining their curiosity in learning about their complex environment. Lastly, the attention to physical well-being and health is central to the care of children throughout the entire period of ECEC.

The complexity of the job must also be taken into account: the importance of dialogue with parents, understanding parents' needs and the difficulties they face in their daily lives, sensitivity towards the numerous social and personal problems resulting from the financial insecurity which affects the most disadvantaged families and, lastly, staff must also be aware of the many cultural differences which exist.

This chapter on the training of staff working in ECEC focuses on two questions:

- the level of initial training and the profile of staff employed in ECEC settings with particular attention paid to the staff involved directly in the activities with children (section 5.1);
- the provision of continuing professional development (section 5.2).

5.1. Initial training of staff

In most European countries, ECEC for the youngest children is in the throes of major changes: in some countries it is in the process of being set up, in others it is being extended or reorganised. These changes have been prompted by a range of factors which include the changing status of women in society and their role in the labour market, the needs of parents, the dissemination of research and reflection on the ways young children should be cared for. The debates between experts and professional staff in the sector are encouraged by various European networks dedicated to these issues. The European Childcare Network (EU) and Starting Strong (OECD ECEC Network) have fostered new initiatives and a degree of convergence across the whole ECEC sector in EU member states. Also worthy of note is the Child Centre for Children at Risk in the Baltic Sea Region, an organisational unit responsible to the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The systems of training of ECEC staff in European countries reflect these various movements.

The diversity of ECEC in Europe can nevertheless be generalized into two major organisational models. Most countries have two distinct paths of training – one for staff dealing with the youngest children (under 2 or 3 years) and another for the pre-primary sector (for children aged over 3-4 years), while other countries have a single training and professional profile for all educational staff across the whole of the ECEC phase.

5.1.1. Different training for the different age groups in ECEC

In most countries provision for the youngest children (under 2-3 years) and pre-primary provision (over 2-3 years) is under the jurisdiction of different public authorities (see national tables in Annex A) or different structures exist for different age groups.

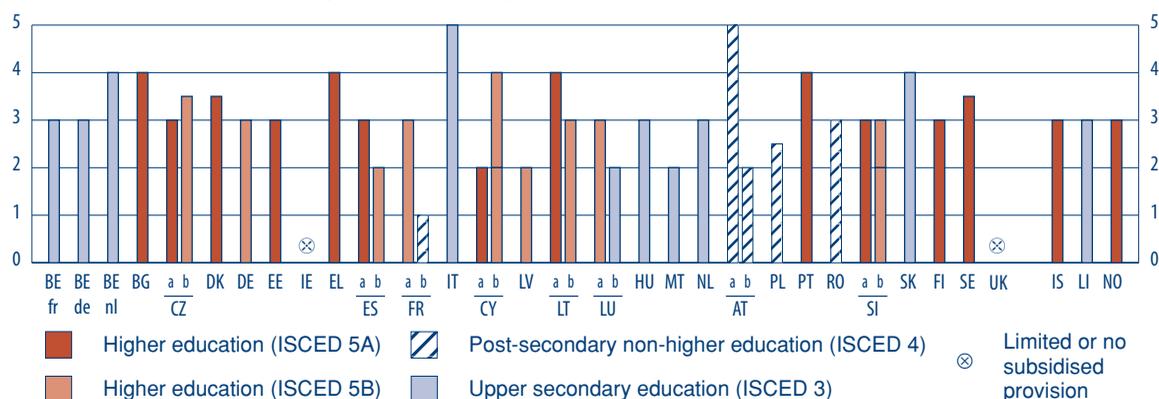
Staff caring for children under 2-3 years in day nurseries, in day care centres or playgroups usually subscribe to a tradition of health and social welfare. They work under the direction of a range of professionals in the socio-psychological and medical fields (doctors, nurses and paediatric nurses (*infirmiers/ères pédiatriques*) in Belgium (French-speaking Community) equivalent to *puéricultrices* in France, assistant social workers (*assistants/es sociaux/les*) or social-pedagogical professionals in Belgium (Flemish-speaking Community)). In addition a range of associated professionals such as physiotherapists, speech therapists and psychologists (who sometimes perform a counselling role) may also be involved. The supervisory and associated professional staff usually follow higher education courses of 3 or 4 years at ISCED level 5A or B.

Regular staff that take care of younger children (under 2-3 years old) are usually trained at ISCED level 3 or 4. These include *puéricultrices* in French and German Communities in Belgium, the *begleider* in the Belgian Flemish Community, mainly *auxiliaires en puériculture* and some *puéricultrices* (which usually occupy managerial positions) in France, playgroup workers qualified in socio-pedagogy in the Netherlands, nurses (medically-qualified) in Poland and Romania. In Romania, where an educational approach has been adopted in recent years, day nursery staff still usually receive paramedical-oriented training as a priority. In the French Community of Belgium, where 50 % of staff are qualified paediatric nurses (*puéricultrices*), posts may be filled with staff whose training is education-oriented. The professional profile of staff in day nurseries is therefore varied, yet their training is usually vocational (full-time or sandwich courses) and below the level of higher education.

Certain training courses are accessible to adult applicants and, in some cases, the courses may be specifically designed for them. In France, if a day nursery has more than 40 children, legislation requires the presence of an early childhood educator (*éducateur de jeunes enfants*) who is educated to ISCED level 5B and usually carries out the role of education coordinator. Since 2004 in the Czech Republic, paediatric nurses (*dětská sestra*) and general nurses have undertaken compulsory training at ISCED level 5A or B.

In addition, in all countries except Belgium, Estonia, Spain (in the level 0-3 years) and Romania staffing in ECEC settings also includes unqualified or less qualified assistants who carry out tasks related to the personal care of children. Educational work is confined to qualified staff while changing nappies, feeding and other diverse tasks are given to auxiliaries. It is therefore evident that there is a multiplicity of staff alternating in the provision of care which could result in a lack of continuity in children's learning and in building relationships – an area worthy of further study.

Figure 5.1: Minimum requirements for the level and duration of initial education and training for staff working with children under 2-3 years, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr): The information relates to the diploma in childcare required in publicly-subsidised settings. However, when a 50 % quota of staff who hold this diploma is reached, it is possible to appoint staff who have other types of training at the same level (training through sandwich courses or evening classes).

Belgium (BE de): *Kinderpflegerin* (nursery nurse) training is not provided in the German-speaking community. Students aged 16 must enrol in a college in the French-speaking Community to undertake such training.

Belgium (BE nl): *Begleider*: 7 years of secondary education or 1 200 hours of training in evening courses for adults (*promotion sociale*) required only in subsidised settings.

Czech Republic: (a) *bakalář* (bachelor); (b) *diplomovaný specialista* (qualified specialist). Before 2004, nurses were trained at ISCED level 3 (four years).

Denmark: Day nurseries and kindergartens employ people with the same type of training as unitary settings. The Figure refers to the qualification of 'Bachelor of Social Education' introduced in 2006. Assistants work alongside educators; they may be unqualified (usually temporary staff) or have followed an initial programme in education which takes 33.5 months (2 years and 9.5 months) (*pædagogisk assistentuddannelse*). Adults who have 1-2 years of relevant work experience can shorten the program 50-95 %.

Germany: The training of *Erzieher* (childcare workers) is also applicable to staff in day nurseries and *Kindergarten*.

Estonia: Teaching staff are educated to the highest level (ISCED 5A) regardless of the type of institution (day nurseries or *kindergarten*) in which they work. Initial training can also take 5 years (master's degree). Staff responsible for healthcare are educated to a minimum of ISCED level 4.

Ireland: A recent study shows that 41 % of staff have a childcare qualification at ISCED level 3.

Greece: Education assistants or 'child keepers.'

Spain: (a) teachers specialised in pre-primary education; (b) professionals with the specialisation of Infant Education from Advanced Vocational Training. Drawing up and monitoring of the teaching plan is the responsibility of a teacher qualified in pre-primary education.

France: Three groups of staff work in ECEC: *puéricultrices* (childcare nurses) who have 4 years of training leading to ISCED 5B and usually are the management staff (not indicated in the Figure); (a) *éducateurs des jeunes enfants* (early childhood educators); and (b) *auxiliaires en puériculture* (childcare assistants).

Italy: A university diploma in education at ISCED level 5 is also applicable.

Cyprus: In addition to the two qualification categories indicated in the Figure staffing also includes assistants who hold a certificate of secondary education. (a) The Figure refers to a two-year certificate, but a four-year diploma is also applicable.

Lithuania: The Figure illustrates the situation up to 2008. From 2008 onwards, only one type of qualification exists, namely a professional bachelor qualification/degree (*profesijos bakalauro laipsnis*) at ISCED level 5B lasting 3 years.

Netherlands: Refers to the training of playgroup workers who can also work in day care settings. Assistants and/or volunteers also help out but their vocational training is not specified.

Austria: 'Pedagogues' that work in day nurseries as well as *kindergartens*.

Portugal: The Figure shows the initial training of early childhood educators (not education assistants).

Romania: Staff working in settings for under-3s is largely nurses with medical qualifications.

Slovenia: ISCED level 5B lasted two years before 1994. From 7 116 educators working in ECEC, 3 509 are preschool teachers and 3 607 are preschool teachers' assistants. Among the teaching assistants, 60.3 % have upper secondary education at ISCED level 3A, 10.4 % have higher level qualifications and 7.2 % are considered under-qualified.

Finland: In unitary settings which provide for children aged 1 to 5-6 years, basic training is either a bachelor's degree in social services with a specialisation in ECEC and social education or a bachelor's degree in education with the option of a master's degree (additional 2 years). These types of training lead to the qualification of *kindergarten teacher*. ECEC settings may also include class teachers who hold a master's degree in education (300 ECEC/5 years). As well as these staff, there are nursery nurses who are trained to ISCED level 3 in three years and assistants with a varied store of knowledge.

Sweden: As well as teachers and educators, there are assistants qualified to ISCED level 3.

United Kingdom (ENG): Each setting has a duty to ensure that those in charge are qualified to at least ISCED level 3A and that 50 % of staff also hold level 3C qualifications. Settings which do not currently meet the requirements must have plans in place to achieve these standards. **WLS:** It is intended that each setting should employ someone at supervisory level with at least a qualification at ISCED level 3A and that at least 80 % of staff must have ISCED level 3C qualifications or higher. **NIR:** 50 % of staff must have a qualification in education or childcare; each setting must have at least one person at supervisory level qualified to ISCED level 3A. **SCT:** Practitioners and support trainers receive vocational training as part of an apprenticeship programme. Usually training lasts 2 years at ISCED 3 level.

Liechtenstein: In *Kindertagesstätten*, 50 % of staff are teachers, social-pedagogical professionals and nursery nurses (*Fachperson Betreuung*). Only the training for these staff is listed in the Figure. Other workers include assistants and work placement students but their training is not specified.

Norway: Assistants also work in the sector but their level of training varies (ISCED 1-3).

Explanatory note (Figure 5.2)

When determining the proportion of professional training in the full period of initial vocational education/training, only the compulsory minimum curriculum for all prospective staff (teachers, educators, nursery nurses, etc.) is taken into account. Within this compulsory minimum curriculum, a distinction is drawn between general and professional/vocational training.

General education: The aim of these general courses is to provide prospective staff with a deeper knowledge of one or more subjects, as well as a good level of general knowledge and culture.

Professional/vocational theory: This training provides prospective education/care staff with theoretical insight into their future profession. It usually includes courses in psychology and teaching methodology.

Work placements refer to on-site placements that are supervised by the staff in charge of the setting concerned, with periodic assessment by the appropriate staff at the training institution.

Training for management staff, medical staff and assistants or auxiliaries is not included in the table but is explained where appropriate in the individual country notes.

Figure 5.2: Division between general education, professional/vocational theory and work placements in the minimum requirements for the whole initial training of staff working with children under 2-3 years, 2006/07

	Work placements	Professional/vocational theory	General education		Work placements	Professional/vocational theory	General education
BE fr	○	○	○	LT a, b	25 %		75 %
BE de	:	:	:	LU	:	:	:
BE nl	39 %	28 %	33 %	HU	66 %		33 %
BG	○	○	○	MT	800 hours	1 080 hours	
CZ	50 %	50 %		NL	960 hours (24 weeks)	:	:
DK	35 %	65 %		AT a	13.4 %	41.0 %	45.6 %
DE	:	:	:	b	23.3 %	76.7 %	(-)
EE	10 weeks	30 weeks	:	PL	≥ 25 %	≤ 75 %	0 %
IE	○	○	○	PT	14 %	86 %	
EL	○	○	○	RO	55 %	45 %	
ES a	18 %	82 %		SI a, b	60 %		40 %
b	14 %	86 %		SK	25 %	75 %	
FR a	60 %		40 %	FI	8 %	58 %	34 %
b	59 %		41 %	SE	20 weeks	120 credits	90 credits
IT	○	○	○	UK	⊗	⊗	⊗
CY a	14 weeks	65 credits	10 credits	IS	15 %	85 %	
b	28-30 weeks	99 credits	36 credits	LI	40 %	60 %	
LV	17.5 %	32.5 %	50 %	NO	20 weeks	135 credits	45 credits

⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision ○ Institutional and/or local autonomy : Data not available

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Czech Republic: Information relates to the training of general nurses (ISCED 5A) who may ultimately receive a paediatric nurse (*dětská sestra*) qualification as a result of specialist in-service training. The training must include 4 600 hours in total, of which practical training lasts 2 300-3 000 hours.

Estonia: Initial teacher training involves general training, specialist training and professional, theoretical training. Estonian legislation (Basic Requirements for the Training of Teachers) only specifies pedagogy, psychology and teaching methods (minimum 40 weeks) including work experience (minimum 10 weeks).

Ireland: Vocational Training Programmes validated by the National Awarding Body FETAC offer 30 % general education and 70 % work placements and professional/vocational theory. It includes at least four weeks of supervised work placements.

France: (a) the training of childcare assistants (*auxiliaire en puériculture*) involves 1 435 hours of theory and work placements but the ratio is not specified; (b) the training for early childhood educators (*éducateur de jeunes enfants*) involves 1 500 hours theoretical and vocational training but again the ratio is not specified. 15 months work placements over a period of 3 years training.

Hungary: Professional/vocational theory constitutes 39.6 %. The length of work placement is not defined but normally less than 26.4 %.

Netherlands: The division between practical and theoretical work varies. The figure indicates the minimum length of work placements for 'playgroup workers' training. The training of assistants and/or volunteers is not specified; it depends on the local authority in charge of the training.

Austria: (a) refers to 5 year training for 14-19 year-olds; (b) 2 year training.

Portugal: The Figure shows the initial training of early childhood educators (not education assistants).

Romania: Refers to the training of 'medical assistants' and (medical) nurses.

Slovakia: The training of (medical) nurses requires 1200 hours, but the time spent on theory and practical training or work experience is not specified. The time spent on work experience varies according to the year of training; in the 4th year it is 4 weeks.

Finland: 180 credits of which 120 are vocational and comprise 15 credit units. A credit represents 40 hours. This only relates to the Bachelor of Education university course. However, it is also possible to work as a 'kindergarten teacher' with a Bachelor of Social Services.

Liechtenstein: Only the training of early childhood teachers (*Fachperson Betreuung*) is shown.

Norway: 180 credits of which 45 credits pedagogy (general education), 105 credits of professional/vocational training like drama, maths etc., and 30 credits of deepening a specific subject, subject area or methods for working in ECEC that students may choose. The 20 weeks of work placement (practice) are integrated in the different parts of the studies.

Figure 5.3: Staffing structure in settings for children under 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT
Management staff with higher education qualifications	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	:	●	●	●
Qualified childcare staff	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	:	●	●	●
Qualified assistants/auxiliary staff				●	●	●			⊗	●	●	●	:	●	●	●
Unqualified assistants/auxiliary staff				●		●	●						:	●	●	●
Specialist peripatetic staff				●	●						●	●	:	●	●	●
	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Management staff with higher education qualifications	:	●		●	●	●		●	●		●	●		●	●	●
Qualified childcare staff	:	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Qualified assistants/auxiliary staff	:	●			●				●	●	●	●	⊗	●	●	●
Unqualified assistants/auxiliary staff	:			●	●	●	●				●			●	●	●
Specialist peripatetic staff	:				●	●		●	●		●			●		

⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision : Data not available

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Czech Republic: Staff in crèches (*jesle*) work with specialists but, in general, the specialists are not employed by the nurseries.

Estonia: The presence and number of other professionals (medical staff, assistants, maintenance staff) is decided by the institution and is largely determined by its size.

Spain: The guidance team is not part of the staff of the setting, they are members of external services and their intervention is determined by the needs of teachers, children or parents.

Lithuania: Includes assistants with various types of training: paediatric and general nurses, technical and kitchen staff.

Romania: According to a survey carried out in 2002, the composition of staff in day nurseries is: specialists educated to ISCED level 5 (2.6%), medical staff at ISCED 4 and 3 (32.2%); technical and maintenance staff trained to ISCED 3 (49.9%) (field of training not specified). The remaining 15% are maintenance staff. In addition, specialised assistance is provided for Roma children by teams of Roma staff.

Slovenia: The staff of each pre-school setting is composed of pre-school teachers and assistants, counselling and support staff (psychologists and/or educators and/or social workers and/or special educational needs specialists), nutritionists/health workers, technical and management staff. Each member of staff must hold an appropriate qualification.

Finland: Unqualified assistants/auxiliaries and specialists (with various qualifications) may assume the role of peripatetic special needs teacher who move between settings or schools.

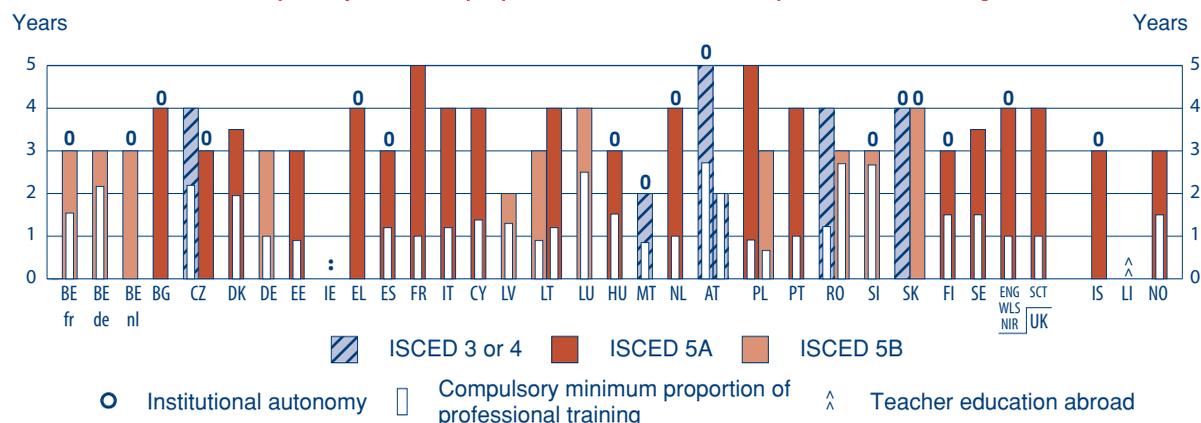
United Kingdom: Information on staffing structures is given in the footnotes to figure 5.1. In addition, in **ENG**, Early Years Professional Status has been introduced for those leading practice in full day care settings. Early Years Professionals have the same level of academic qualification as qualified teachers (a bachelor degree) but a different professional qualification.

SCT: qualified childcare staff and qualified assistants/auxiliary staff.

The core of the staffing structure in settings for children under 2-3 years (see Figure 5.3) is usually provided by adults with qualifications in education who generally deal with the full range of child-related tasks. They are sometimes assisted by auxiliaries who provide personal care for children. Teachers can also call upon the services of specialists such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, or specialist teachers to help children who have learning difficulties or children at risk. Staff in these settings are managed either by members elected from their peers or by managers appointed by the responsible authorities. In the latter case, the managers usually undertake specific management training.

As Figure 5.4 indicates, the training of staff is more homogeneous at pre-primary level (settings for children over 2-3 years). All professional staff in charge of activities with children are educated to higher education level at ISCED 5A or B with the exception of the Czech Republic, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR). In the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom two streams exist – one at higher education level and the other at upper secondary level. In Malta and Austria only training at upper secondary level is provided.

Figure 5.4: Level and minimum length of initial teacher education for pre-primary level (ISCED 0), and the compulsory minimum proportion of time devoted to professional training, 2006/07



Compulsory minimum proportion of professional training in percentages

BE fr	BE de	CZ	DK	DE	EE	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	FI	SE	UK ⁽¹⁾	UK-SCT	NO			
51.4	72.2	54.8	55.7	33.3	30.0	40.0	20.0	30.0	34.5	65.0	30.0	30.0	62.5	50.6	42.6	25.0	54.4	100	18.2	22.2	25.0	30.6	90.0	89.0	50.0	42.9	25.0	25.0	50.0

UK⁽¹⁾ = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE nl): Gradual implementation of at least 45 ECTS of in-class placements started in 2007.

Czech Republic: Teacher education may also last 3 years at ISCED level 5B.

Germany: The information refers to qualified youth or community workers (*Erzieher*), who do not have the status of teachers.

Bulgaria: Both tertiary provisions (ISCED 5B and ISCED 5A) exist, with the prevalence of the ISCED 5A.

France: Professional training occurs during the final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase lasting one year.

Netherlands: The proportion of professional training indicates an average, as institutions decide on the time devoted to professional training. The diagram relates to initial teacher education for the primary level (4-6 year-olds). Teachers can be assisted by teaching assistants who execute simple routine educational tasks and guide pupils in acquiring skills. Teaching assistants can also have caring and supporting tasks.

Austria: The first 4 years of the five-year education are ISCED 3, the fifth year ISCED 4. The two-year education is ISCED 4.

Slovakia: Providers may decide on the amount of professional training, but the minimum amount of in-class placements is defined.

Finland: Within the framework of national regulations, universities decide on the content and structure of their degrees, which results in variations in the proportion of professional training.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): The figure shows the consecutive training route for qualified teachers. Other routes exist. Classes for three and four-year-olds in maintained nursery schools and primary schools must be led by a qualified teacher but this is not a requirement for settings in the private and voluntary sector.

Explanatory note

When determining the proportion of professional training in the full period of initial teacher education, only the compulsory minimum curriculum for all prospective teachers is taken into account. Within this compulsory minimum curriculum, a distinction is drawn between general education and professional training.

General education: In the concurrent model, this refers to general education courses and mastery of the subject(s) that trainees will teach when qualified. The purpose of these courses, therefore, is to provide trainees with a thorough knowledge of one or more subjects and broad general education. In the case of the consecutive model, general education refers to the degree obtained in a particular subject.

Professional training: Provides prospective teachers with both the theoretical and practical skills needed to be a teacher. In addition to courses in psychology and teaching methods and methodology, it includes in-class placements. In a few countries, professional training takes the form of the final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase. The figures show only the compulsory minimum length of initial teacher education and, include the final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase only in those countries where it is considered integral part of initial teacher education.

The length of initial teacher education is expressed in years. For countries providing teacher education following different routes, only the most widespread route is shown.

In some countries, the amount of time in initial teacher education to be devoted to specifically professional training may be decided by the individual institution. The **autonomy of providers** may be total (meaning that no minimum amount of time is required). In these cases, only the symbol **0** has been added. However, autonomy may also be limited. In such instances, providers have to set aside a minimum amount of time for professional training as determined by the central/top-level authorities but may also increase the share of it if they wish. Here, the minimum proportion is shown, and the possibility providers have of increasing it is also indicated by the symbol **0**.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the distinction between the level of qualifications and the professional profile of staff working with children up to 3 years old and those working in the pre-primary sector (ISCED 0) also applies to the content of training. Broadly speaking, for the youngest children, training is largely practical, focussing on specific knowledge and its direct relevance to the job. At the pre-primary level, although practical work placements are involved, such placements are backed up by a range of general classes, and are intended to produce qualified generalist teachers or early childhood educators.

5.1.2. Same training requirements for whole ECEC phase

The same staff training requirements for the whole ECEC phase predominate in countries where ECEC is provided in unitary settings which usually accommodate the complete age range (0-1 year to 5-6 years). It is also present in some countries where provision for the youngest children is separated, but limited and/or very recent.

Countries that have unitary settings and a single staff training (for educational activities) and professional profile include Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway ⁽¹⁾. In these countries, both managers and staff who work directly with children are drawn from the education sector. Known as teachers or 'pedagogues', these staff have taken higher education courses (university or non-university level) usually lasting three and a half years (seven semesters) and covering general education (sociology, arts and sciences), professional studies including educational psychology and child development, and practical training with work placements in different types of settings.

In unitary settings the staffing also includes auxiliaries who may carry out the same tasks as other professionals or may perform a variety of tasks. Thus in Slovenia, the teacher is responsible for the curriculum and teaching materials but teachers and assistants work together planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum. In Finland, where the focus is on supporting the individual child, the role of auxiliaries is to assist the children and not to assist the teachers. The ECEC team constitutes a multi-professional community where tasks are not distributed on the basis of qualifications. In Sweden ECEC staff includes 'work groups' of child minders and pre-school teachers, whose competences and salaries vary. In Denmark, in addition to early childhood educators there are assistants who may be unqualified (usually temporary staff) or have only initial training in education (*pædagogisk assistentuddannelse*). Given the length of their training, educators have more responsibilities and play

(1) Spain is the only country that has separate qualification requirements between the two cycles of ECEC (children under- and above- 3 years old) even in unitary settings.

a more active part in planning activities and providing support to parents. As in countries where separate training programmes are provided, it is apparent that many different professionals are involved with children and staff may also alternate in their roles.

Auxiliary staff have different training backgrounds in different countries. For example, in Denmark, 18 months of vocational education or training in specialist adult evening classes; in Slovenia, training in upper secondary education or higher education; in Finland ISCED level 3 training for nursery nurses and a variety of training for auxiliaries; in Sweden, training is at ISCED level 3 and in Norway at ISCED levels 1-3. These training measures allow some countries to deal with the shortage of staff with higher level qualifications.

There are several countries that have separate provision for younger children, but employ the same types of professional staff as those in pre-schools (ISCED 0). Such situation usually prevails where provision for the youngest children is limited and/or introduced recently. Therefore, in Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, Austria and Portugal the differentiation of qualifications of staff working with younger or older children is not sensible or not yet developed.

In the United Kingdom (England) an integrated qualifications framework is planned to be in place by 2010. Early Years Professional Status has been introduced for those leading practice. Early Years Professionals have the same level – ISCED 5 – of general qualification as qualified teachers but a different professional qualification. Similarly, in Wales, a more strategic approach to workforce development across all children's service areas is being developed.

5.1.3. Training for dealing with children at risk

In most countries special and/or compulsory training for working with children at risk is an integral part of initial training (see Figure 5.5). Flemish-speaking Community of Belgium, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland and Norway also provide specialist training in this area. Several countries have not adopted a targeted approach to training for work with children at risk whatsoever (German-speaking community of Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Iceland). Yet, even in these countries some issues related to social risks may be covered. For example, in the United Kingdom (England) all qualified teachers are expected to know how to make effective personalised provision for all children, how to take practical account of diversity, and to be aware of the current legal requirements, policies and guidance on the safeguarding and protection of children.

Figure 5.5: Training of staff for work with children at risk over 2-3 years (ISCED 0), 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT
Integrated into initial training for all staff	●		●	●	●		●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●
Specialist training for some staff			●											●		●

	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Integrated into initial training for all staff		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●
Specialist training for some staff						●										●

Source: Eurydice.

Special training initiatives, usually in-service training, are in place in several countries (the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Finland) to help Roma children. In the Czech Republic, training intended to foster the integration of Roma children forms part of a government programme instigated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Here, the position of the teachers assistant can be established in a pre-primary class; training of this assistant is focused on education of children with special educational needs (including those at risk, e.g. also some Roma children). In Romania, Slovenia and Finland, assistants of Roma origin are trained and recruited to work with Roma children. In Finland the initiative is incorporated into the European project ROM-EQUAL. In Romania, assistants of Roma origin have been trained under the PHARE project 'Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma'. The quest for close cultural proximity between educators and children is mentioned explicitly only in the case of the Roma community.

5.2. Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development occupies a central place in supporting professionals. In-service training proves to be particularly complex in such a varied sector as ECEC. Moreover, in several countries continuing professional development is either evolving in tandem with the sector itself or it is in a process of transformation as a result of the emerging focus on education, especially in day nurseries.

Organisation of continuing professional development for ECEC staff varies greatly in European countries. Figure 5.6 summarises the current situation regarding staff working with children under 2-3 years. For this staff category continuing professional development is optional in slightly more than a half of the countries, and compulsory in the rest. Yet, it is important to note that the organisation of continuing professional development often depends of the initial level of staff training and type of job.

In countries where ECEC is provided in unitary settings which usually accommodate children from 0/1 through to age 5/6 and auxiliaries are initially trained to ISCED level 3 (Denmark, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway) in-service training is generally optional (Denmark, Slovenia, Sweden and Norway). For this staff group such training is compulsory only in Finland and Iceland. As part of its continuing professional development framework, Denmark offers unqualified staff the opportunity to obtain the necessary qualifications. Most unqualified staff therefore undertake the 'Initial Teacher Training Programme' (*pædagogisk assistentuddannelse*). Staff who have been working for

over 5 years in the sector can complete the programme in 2.5 years rather than the usual 3.5 years. Those who successfully complete the course can go on to study for a bachelor's degree in education and, subsequently, a master's degree as part of their continuing professional development.

In-service training for staff that are initially trained to ISCED level 3 or 4 and work directly with younger children is compulsory in Belgium, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovakia and optional in France, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia. Areas of training are either completely free to choose (Flemish and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, the Netherlands), or a limited choice may be available from a list provided by the responsible authorities (French-speaking Community of Belgium, Hungary and Romania). Only in Malta the topics of compulsory training are prescribed for this staff group.

All staff trained to ISCED level 5 may access in-service training, whether they are employed in the pre-primary sector (ISCED 0), in settings for younger children (under 2/3 years) or in unitary settings for the complete age-range. In-service training is usually provided on a voluntary basis (e.g. in Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and Norway). In Spain, even though in-service training is not mandatory for staff working in ECEC, the legislation states that continuing professional development entails both a right and a duty of all teachers. Therefore, all staff profiles (pre-primary and primary teachers, advanced infant education technicians, etc.) are required to undergo in-service training, which has a direct impact on their professional careers and salaries. Continuing professional development is compulsory in the Czech Republic for all staff in crèches and may include participation in university courses, involvement in research activities or seminars as well as self study. A similar training policy has been implemented for pre-primary teachers. Also in Lithuania, continuing professional development is compulsory for all staff categories working in ECEC settings, except auxiliaries (*auklėtojo padėjėjai*) that are initially trained to ISCED 3.

In the United Kingdom, staff who work with three and four-year-olds may or may not be qualified teachers. For qualified teachers, there is no legal minimum requirement for continuing professional development expressed in terms of hours, but professional development is supported through five statutory non-contact days and through measures such as performance management or review, a statutory process which aims to make plans for the individual's future development in the context of the school's needs.

Little information on whether or not training is provided free of charge is available. Hungary indicates that 80 % of the training cost is met by central funding while teachers contribute 20 %.

The time spent on in-service training varies considerably in European countries: from a few hours per year to 12 obligatory days per year, from 120 hours over 7 years to 160 hours over 5 years, etc. Some countries (the Czech Republic, Spain, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Romania) have a highly structured legal and organisational framework which determines admission criteria, how programmes are set up, methods, hours of training and training providers. In general, trainees choose the subject matter, most commonly from a list drawn up by local or regional authorities in consultation with staff.

For some countries, Romania and Spain in particular, continuing professional development reflects the changes taking place in the profession in line with ECEC policy changes. Therefore, in Romania, staff have to take part in courses to upgrade their qualifications or improve their knowledge regarding provision for the younger age group; significant changes have taken place in the structure and management of day nurseries as a result of new legislation. Such courses take account of new

approaches to ECEC and are provided on the basis of an assessment of training needs at local level. Management staff, education staff, and medical staff are legally obliged to undertake 40 hours of professional development annually.

Figure 5.6: Status and organisation of continuing professional development for ECEC staff working with children under 2-3 years, 2006/07

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT
Compulsory	●	●	●	●	●	:		●	:				:		●	●
Optional						:	●		:	●	●	●	:			
Prescribed topics						:			:				:			
Choice of topics from pre-determined list	●				●	:	●		:		●		:		●	
Open choice of topics		●	●		●	:			:	●			:	●		●

	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO
Compulsory	:	●	●		●		●	●			●				:	
Optional	:			●	●	●			●	●		●	⊗	●	:	●
Prescribed topics	:		●		●										:	●
Choice of topics from pre-determined list	:	●			●	●	●	●						●	:	●
Open choice of topics	:				●										:	●

⊗ Limited or no subsidised provision : Data not available

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr): Topics are decided by the minister and the department responsible for the sector.

Belgium (BE de): Topics are suggested by the settings but must be approved by the *Dienst für Kind und Familie* (DKF), a service within the ministry that encourages the establishment of ECEC settings and is responsible for their supervision, monitoring and support.

Belgium (BE nl): No legislation regarding the topics or the time to be spent.

Czech Republic: The continuing professional development of healthcare staff takes several forms. The training that must be accredited by the Ministry should be chosen from a predetermined list. Non-accredited training is free to choose.

Estonia: All teachers working in day nurseries or other settings must undertake 160 hours of professional development every 5 years.

Latvia: for primary school teachers who wish to work in pre-school education institutions in-service training courses on pre-school education methodology are compulsory.

Lithuania: At least five days of annual professional training for all staff categories except auxiliary staff (*auklėtojo padėjėjai*), which are initially trained to ISCED 3. No central regulations regarding CPD of auxiliary staff exist.

Malta: Figure refers to those who have compulsory training and follow prescribed topics. Those applying on a voluntary basis (optional) choose courses from a pre-determined list. Before the last agreement compulsory courses for those working with 3–5 year olds were held every two years. Now they can be called to attend every year and have other training on a voluntary basis.

Austria: Training regulated though local and provincial legislation; may be optional or compulsory depending on the region; 5 days per year. Topics covered in 2006 included management and intercultural training.

Netherlands: No prescribed topics (discretion of the competent authority).

Portugal: Information relates to early childhood educators (EPE). Training for auxiliaries is provided by specific settings.

Slovenia: Participation in professional development may give rise to promotion or salary increases.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): CPD is not compulsory. **SCT:** CPD is compulsory.

In line with the issues of integration highlighted by politicians and professionals, the continuing professional development topics include, for example, intercultural approaches; different approaches to second languages; teaching children with special needs; working with children at risk, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and Roma children; and teacher/parent relations. In recent years, Spain has established a set of priorities which include: the quality of management of educational institutions; equity; educational guidance and supervision; citizenship education; conflict resolution; a focus on diversity; health education; use of new technologies in education; foreign languages, science, environmental education; artistic and physical expression; fostering a spirit of enterprise and related skills; accident prevention and first aid, school libraries etc. In the Netherlands, specialist training is not required to start working in the *playgroup* programme which caters for children from poorly educated backgrounds but staff receive in-service training relating to the programme followed by the particular setting for example, *Kaleidoscoop* or *Pyramide*. Additional programmes which are focussed on the language development of young children are also available (*Taallijn*). In Slovenia, continuing professional development programmes use the *Supplement to the Pre-school Curriculum for Roma children* (also included in initial training programmes) and *Teach and play in a bilingual environment* which prepare staff for work with children at risk.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the various levels involved in the financing of early childhood education and care provision from central and/or local to family level contributions (through fees). The financial strategies in place to facilitate the provision for children from at risk groups (National definitions, see in Table B in Annex), are explicitly addressed. These specific financial measures are analysed through the resources distributed to early childhood settings and to professional staff working with children deemed to be at risk.

Financial assistance given to some families to pay fees (tax credits or exemptions/reductions in enrolment fees) is not dealt with in this chapter. They are analysed as part of the conditions of access to ECEC services in Chapter 3.

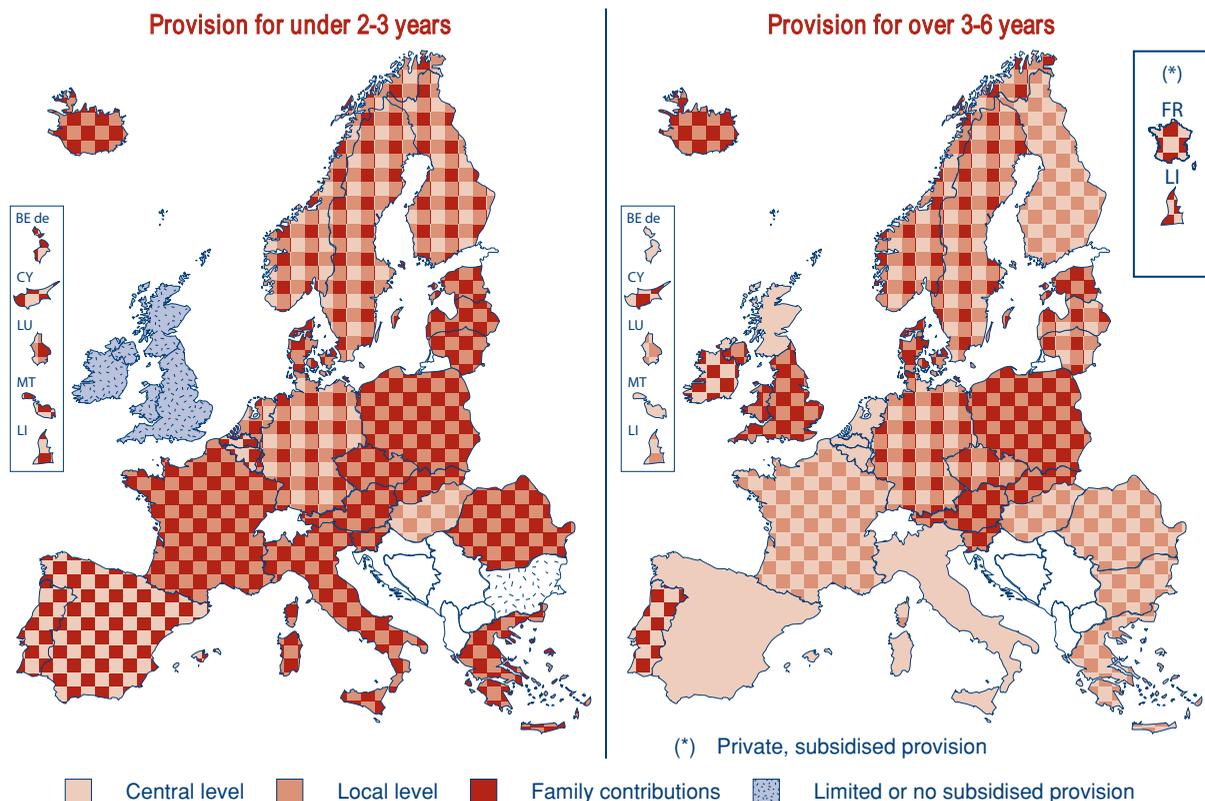
6.1. Responsibility for financing ECEC provision

All European countries finance or co-finance provision for early childhood education and care for over 3-year-olds (see Figure 3.1) and many countries cover all the costs (require no family contributions). Nevertheless, all countries apart from Hungary expect families to contribute to the cost of ECEC provision for the youngest children (0-3 years), even when subsidised ECEC exists. In most cases, co-finance is provided by a local body (councils or local authorities for the public sector, the church for the religious sector, or individuals). In a minority of countries (Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Liechtenstein and Norway) the budget is largely devolved from the central level to ECEC providers. Where the central level authority is involved, it is never the sole source of finance, with local authorities and/or families making up the funding. In the United Kingdom publicly-financed provision for the youngest age group is either lacking or is very limited in extent. Similarly, in some other countries (for example the Czech Republic, western *Länder* in Germany, Ireland or Poland) the poor coverage of ECEC for under-3s (see Chapters 2 and 3) renders public financing almost non-existent.

Central level authorities are more involved in the financing of provision for older children (3-6 years). Moreover, in about half of the countries where finance is allocated from the central level, the ECEC providers are financed exclusively from this source, and no family contributions are required. In ten countries – Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Iceland – the central level provides a smaller share of the funding, while only in Austria is the local level the main source of finance.

Although family contributions are solicited less at this stage than for younger children, they are still expected in many countries. Parental contributions are more often required in systems where finance is provided only at local level: however, in seven countries additional funding is sought from families where provision is mainly centrally financed (the Czech Republic (except for the compulsory final year), Germany, Cyprus, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden and Norway).

Figure 6.1: Finance of public sector and publicly-subsidised private ECEC settings: central level, local level and family contributions, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

Belgium (BE fr): For under 3-year-olds, the local level (municipalities) contributes, but provision is mainly centrally-financed.

Czech Republic: The compulsory final year of pre-primary education is free of charge.

Germany: In the publicly-subsidised private sector for 3-6 year-olds, other local bodies (churches, parents' organisations etc.) contribute as well as central level (federal or *Länder*) and local authorities (municipalities or communes).

Estonia: For both age groups, the central level covers the costs of teachers' continuing professional development. Legislation is due to be implemented in 2010 which will introduce centralised financing of the last year of pre-primary education. The aim is to allow the most disadvantaged children access to catch-up programmes. In addition a new scheme (2008-2011) 'A Kindergarten Place for every Child' will allocate central level funding to local authorities to open new pre-primary classes or to renovate existing schools as well as to pay staff. This funding will also enable local authorities to exempt disadvantaged families from making a financial contribution.

Ireland: State provides for primary schooling for 4 to 5 year olds.

Greece: The age groups are 0-4/5 years and 4/5-6 years.

Spain: The central level represents the Autonomous Communities. The state assigns part of the national budget to the Communities for education. The Ministry of Education has recently approved the first integral program to support the creation of new posts for children aged 0-3 years (2008-2012). This program will be financed 50/50 by the Ministry of Education and the Communities.

Cyprus: For children over 3 and less than 4 years and 8 months old, local authorities also contribute to the community network.

Latvia: Central level provides finance (expenditure on staff) for compulsory education (from the age of 5).

Netherlands: There are differences between subsidised and non subsidised playgroups (*peuterspeelzalen*) for 2-3 year-olds. Subsidised settings are funded by municipalities (40 %), parents (40 %), special projects (15 %), and the rest from various sources. Non subsidised playgroups are about 95 % funded by parents' contributions. Funding for child care (under 2-3 years) is divided between parents, governments and employers of parents. ECEC as part of primary education is fully funded by central government, directly to the schools/competent authorities.

Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Iceland: central level is also involved, but provides a smaller share of the funding.

Romania: For children aged 0-3, central level is involved but it is the local level which is responsible for the majority of expenditure (infrastructure, salaries, etc.). Central level intervenes more in the sector for 3-6 year-olds through infrastructure modernisation programmes.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): Free places are available for all 3 and 4-year-olds, but only on a part-time basis. In some settings, parents may top this up with additional fee-paying hours. All 5 and 6-year-olds (and 4-year-olds in Northern Ireland) are in compulsory full-time education which is free to parents, although fees may be charged for after school childcare. **SCT:** it is up to local authorities to provide monetary assistance for the care of under 3-year-olds if they so wish but they are under no central obligation to do so.

Liechtenstein: Publicly-subsidised private pre-primary schools (4-6 year-olds) are mainly funded through family contributions (up to 60 %).

Explanatory note

Where one administrative level provides the majority of funding (taking responsibility for the biggest areas of expenditure: equipment, buildings, staffing), it alone is shown on the map while a footnote specifies the other levels involved. Family payments towards the cost of meals are not taken into account.

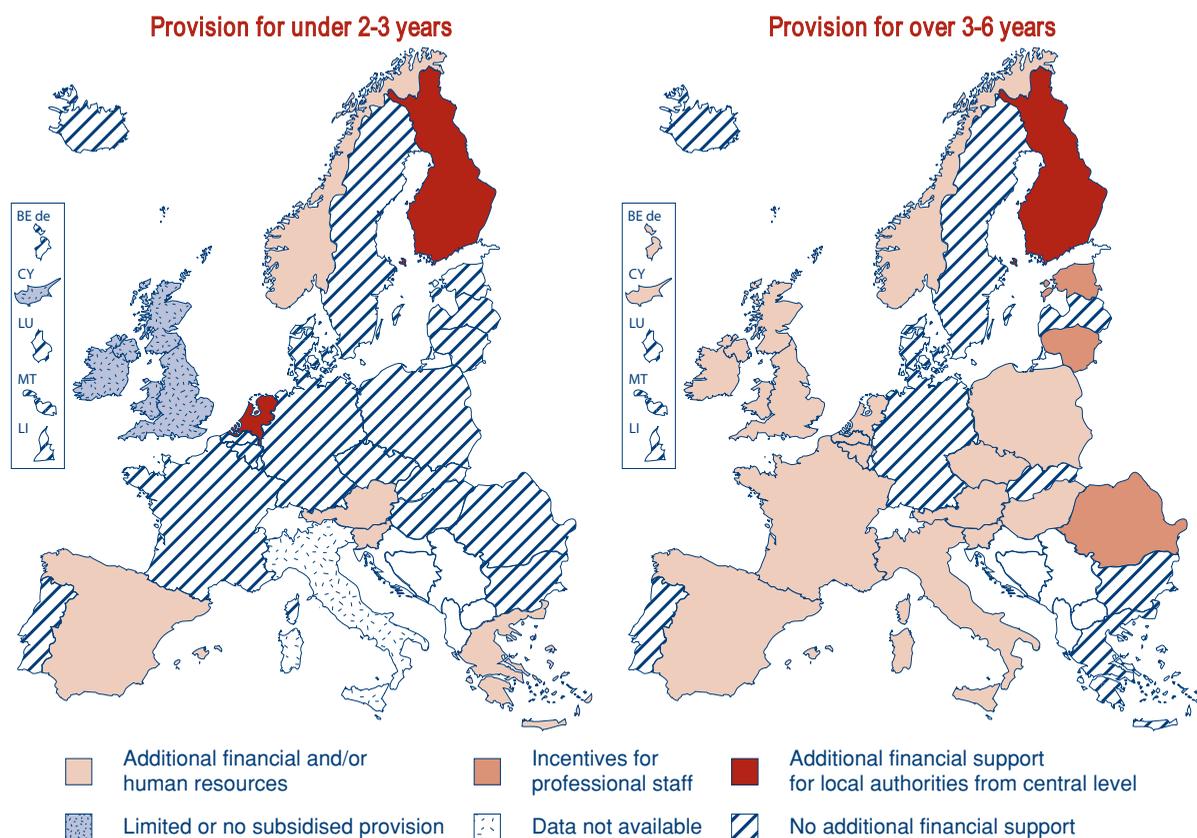
In the case of unitary systems (0/1-5/6 year-olds), both maps are identical except where pre-primary provision (or preparatory classes) also exists and differs regarding financing (Latvia and Finland). For more details see Figure 3.1.

6.2. Financing of provision for groups deemed to be at risk

A number of education systems take special measures to encourage the participation in ECEC of groups which they consider to be at risk. In many of these countries, these measures are realised through financial assistance made directly to households, for example through reduced taxes or exemptions, reductions in fees that may be charged by providers of ECEC, or special family allowances to cover these expenses. Other countries take different kind of measures. For example, financial measures are implemented in Greece and Cyprus whereby children between 4 and 6 years are provided with transport and meals if they travel far to their *Nipiagogeio*, while in Latvia some local authorities give priority to children from low-income families. However, these and other similar measures are not examined in this chapter, as the focus is on funding provided to ECEC settings and staff, rather than to families (see chapter 3).

Three main strategies are apparent for providing additional financial support to ECEC settings for the provision of services to at risk groups in Europe (Figure 6.2). The first and the most widespread model involves additional financial assistance to settings and/or additional staffing. The second model provides financial incentives for staff working with children at risk or in settings where the majority of children are from groups at risk. A last, less common, option can apply where the global local authority budget is allocated by the central level. The few cases include Finland or the United Kingdom (Scotland), where the allocation for the local authority takes regional demographic and socio-economic factors into account. In the Netherlands, a part of the budget devolved by central level through the VVE (Early Childhood Education) programme for 2-3 year-olds is ring-fenced: each municipality is free to decide where it will invest the money it receives so long as the programmes are intended for children considered to be at risk.

Figure 6.2: Strategies to provide additional financial support provision for 'at risk' groups, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice

Additional notes

Italy: Data regarding under 3-year-olds are not available because municipalities are responsible for this level.

Latvia: Additional financial support for local authorities from central level is provided for special pre-school education institutions.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): Subsidised provision for the under 3-year-olds is limited in extent, so is not shown in this figure. Where such provision exists, it is generally in deprived areas. **SCT:** it is up to local authorities to provide monetary assistance for the care of under 3-year-olds if they so wish but they are under no central obligation to do so.

There is a vast variation in the forms and conditions for additional financial support within the first model (additional financial assistance and/or staffing). In Spain, Hungary and Poland, schools which accommodate a large number of disadvantaged children aged 3-6 years receive additional funds from the central level. In Slovenia and Norway, language criteria govern the award of specific funds: minority language groups benefit in Norway, as do classes in Slovenia in which Hungarian, Italian or Romany are the predominant languages. Similar criteria apply to the preparatory classes in Finland where a specific subsidy is released to support the education of migrant children, including the teaching of their mother tongue. Austria also provides additional funding to settings for both age groups which admit large numbers of migrant children. In the Netherlands additional financial support for ECEC settings for 3-6 year-olds is based on the pupil population of so called 'weighted' children (i.e. children at risk because of parents' educational level). The total of weighted children determines the level of extra funding for ECEC.

Several countries provide explicitly for extra staffing. Additional staff for work with children at risk aged 3-6 in certain areas are provided in Spain, France (education action zones), Italy, and Cyprus (education priority zones). In other education systems, it is not the geographical location of schools but their actual pupil intake which determines whether additional teaching posts will be created. For example, the German-speaking Community of Belgium allocates extra teaching time to schools in accordance with the number of immigrant pupils. The socio-economic background of pupils is also used in the French and Flemish Communities as the basis for providing additional staff (see table B in the annexe for national definitions of children at risk). In the Czech Republic, an additional teacher's assistant post can be established for classes or groups where a child with special educational needs (including at risk groups) is educated. Socially disadvantaged children (aged 5-6, possibly 7 in case of postponement of primary education) may be also educated in preparatory classes (*přípravné třídy*) that aim to alleviate the impact of possible social differences. In Slovenia, classes with a high percentage of children from linguistic minorities are taught with reduced class sizes and given access to additional staff such as Roma assistants. Such measures aim to provide better quality services to children from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and may also provide an incentive to staff through the improved conditions.

With respect to the second group of measures only three countries offer financial incentives to professional staff to work with children at risk of exclusion, and only the older children (usually 3 to 6 year-olds) are targeted. Estonia offers increased salaries or a reduced working week without loss of salary. Lithuania also offers more attractive salaries for those moving to the most disadvantaged areas, while Romania has a similar policy for rural areas.

Overall in Europe, additional financial support for ECEC settings and staff is usually targeted at older children (3 to 6 year-olds). Central authorities are the most common source of financing, and no countries combine additional financial support for settings with an incentive scheme for professional staff.

However, for countries that provide direct assistance to the most disadvantaged families (through a reduction or exemption from fees – see Chapter 3) these measures occur systematically alongside the extra funding for the ECEC settings. In these countries, therefore, not only do parents have incentives to place their children in ECEC settings, but the settings themselves are given the financial or human resources to ensure that their needs can be appropriately met. Countries that provide additional financial support for ECEC settings and charge fees from families usually have a standard system for redressing inequality. The level of fee depends on the family income, with a majority of countries granting full exemptions for the most deprived.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Young children, school and society

For historical reasons, free compulsory schooling generally starts between the ages of five and seven in European countries.

History reveals that education systems have been constructed – at least in part – from the top down. The first universities appeared at the end of the thirteenth century. Soon afterwards, colleges began to appear, at least in France (royal colleges). The next main development takes place only in the sixteenth century when Jesuit colleges and other secondary education institutions appear. As for primary schools, their development is progressive. Many experiments in primary education were carried out in various parts of Europe from an early time. For example, Bell and Lancaster worked in England on "mutual instruction, and other small schools operated under the *Ancien Régime* in France. In England schools for religious instruction date back as far as the twelfth century. Nevertheless it is only in the eighteen and nineteenth century, for the pioneering countries, and the early part of the twentieth century for many others that primary education became compulsory in Europe. Overall, there appear to be two parallel evolutionary movements. The first can be characterised as 'top down', starting with the creation of universities and then addressing the basic education of children once they reach the age of reason (usually at 6 or 7 years of age). The second can be seen as 'bottom up' and addresses the educational needs of children from 6 to 15, responding to the concern to give everyone – whatever their situation at birth – a basic or elementary education. The first movement indirectly reflects an important reality: grosso modo, until the twentieth century, the school remained an institution serving the élite. In other words, while the school as a public organisation – under the authority of parish councils or others concerned with public welfare – already existed for several centuries, primary school as an institution legally and organically embedded in public authority, in the state, is a product of the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century could be considered as the century of education since it is characterised not only by the development of primary education but also by the extension of secondary education ⁽¹⁾ to the masses, and, more recently, the introduction of mass higher education. The significance of early childhood education (Luc, 1997) is that it will now become the foundation stone of education, reinforcing the historical process of opening education to all, including to those from the most deprived backgrounds.

⁽¹⁾ Already developing strongly between the two world wars (the development of the American high school is perhaps the best-known example, but the phenomenon can be widely perceived elsewhere, as illustrated at the international conference of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) in 1934 whose theme was access to secondary education) the massification of teaching accelerated after the second world war.

There is a second reason why interest in the education of young children developed relatively late in our history; it relates to our concept of childhood and child development. The image of childhood and consequently its status has varied throughout the history of western society. Our society now knows that it is heavily dependent on its system of education. This was not the case particularly in the Middle Ages, when children naturally accompanied adults from the age of seven. An understanding of the particular nature of childhood and the development of a desire to provide a relevant education have influenced our culture only slowly. It has been a long road in understanding the full importance of the first years of life for the development of human beings ⁽²⁾. To summarise, it can be observed that for a long time children only became recognized as individuals at the end of early childhood (the age varying according to era and place) when they entered into adult life; for the children of the general populace, this was when they entered working life. Rousseau was to play a crucial role in our cultural history because, in his view, education began with the start of life, at birth ⁽³⁾. This is now a universally accepted truth.

It is to Rousseau that we also owe the division of childhood development into distinct stages, the first of which extended from birth to 2 years. During this period, the objective was to increase the physical resistance of the child (*l'infans*) so that it could survive. In particular, it was advisable to pay attention to the child's feeding – a task which naturally fell on the mother rather than a wet-nurse. The next stage was that of childhood (*puer*) which according to Rousseau lasted from 2 to 12 years. During this time he considered it too early to reason with a child or even teach it to read. This distinctive preliminary phase of development which lasts until age 2 or 3 seems to have deep roots in our cultural history. From an analysis of texts written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by various protestant authors and, above all, from an education textbook, '*The New England Primer*' which is estimated to have sold six million copies between 1687 and the first half of the eighteenth century in a relatively sparsely populated America, Thomas and Michel (1994) point out that it was standard practice to distinguish infancy (birth to 18 months or 2 years) from childhood (aged 2 to 5-7 years). During infancy, which was considered to last until the infant could walk and say a few words, the child depended entirely on adults to meet its physical needs. From age 2 to 5-7 years, it was believed that the faculty of reason had not yet developed and that instruction should be mainly religious and rest on discipline ⁽⁴⁾. It would not be until the twentieth century that an understanding of child psychology would reveal the psychological importance of the first years of life on both the emotional and cognitive development of the child.

A third factor – the economic factor – must be highlighted in order to understand the growth of interest in the education of young children from the beginning of the twentieth century. Diderot (1713-1784) had clearly understood the economic importance of caring for infants. In his '*Instructions for Midwives*', he explained that a nation was more prosperous the more hands it had for manufacturing goods and for bearing weapons in its defence. He made two recommendations: curb the infant mortality rate and

⁽²⁾ Even in the eighteenth century, Descartes considered that the main characteristic of the child was to err. In short, until the eighteenth century, young children did not count for much; the lack of interest shown in them by the medical field was symptomatic of this fact. Paediatrics did not emerge until the end of the nineteenth century. Similarly, children's place in literature was insignificant until the seventeenth century.

⁽³⁾ In the preliminary pages of *Emile* (Paris, Garnier Flammarion, 1966), he writes: 'Early education is the most important' (p. 35). And, later, 'We are born with awareness and from our birth we are affected in many ways by the things around us' (p. 38). And, again: 'education starts at birth' (p. 68).

⁽⁴⁾ For readers interested in deepening their knowledge of the history of childhood in the western world, we recommend the two volumes on this topic by Becchi and Julia (1998).

make more effective use of orphanages for abandoned children. This theory was to experience a second wind in the twentieth century with the economic theories of human capital and reserves of talent (Van Haecht, 1992). According to the first theory, the education system must receive investment in order to grow human resource capital and thereby profit the economic system. The theory of reserves of talent states that it is both possible and desirable that each nation should maximise its potential talent *through the optimisation and management of educational resources*.

This quick historical detour helps in understanding the growth of interest in the education of young children which has occurred since the start of the twenty first century. It has resulted from three main factors:

- Historical changes in education systems – as explained above – which were constructed from the top (university level) but have gradually spread downwards to embrace younger age groups.
- The extension of education to the masses or the democratisation of education inspired by the convergence of two ideas: the first one emanating from the humanist tradition whereby all individuals have the right to education; and the second, rooted in economic theory, which views children as a reserve of talent which must yield a profit.
- Changes in our view of childhood and, due to the development of child psychology, an increasing understanding of the importance of the first years of life.

This last factor now seems to have become the predominant issue. It is worthwhile considering that across all the countries covered in this study, there are approximately 15 % more children aged 3 enrolled in pre-primary education than there are mothers of 3 year-olds in work (see Figure 2.10). This clearly indicates that it would be over-simplistic to link attendance with maternal employment. From this, it can be assumed that the truly educational role of pre-primary institutions is increasingly recognized – at least with respect to 3 to 6 year-olds – since mothers entrust them with their offspring even when they are not in employment.

Settings for 3-6 year-olds, the first rung on the educational ladder

The movement to extend the education system downwards is particularly evident with respect to the 3-6 age group. From the evidence in Chapter 3 it could be considered that there is an agreement in most European countries that the various types of provision for this group constitute the first step on the educational ladder. There are several distinct trends. ECEC programmes for 3-6 year-olds exist in all European countries and at this level (ISCED 0), the mission to educate is clear and overrides the child-minding function related to parental employment. The aim everywhere is to stimulate cognitive, social and cultural development and to prepare children for early learning activities in reading writing and maths. Furthermore, staff working at this level of education have a pedagogy-related training which combines practical work experience with theoretical classes intended to produce qualified teachers or general educators. To sum up, the pre-primary level (ISCED 0) is characterised by a consistency in staffing – across most of Europe it involves teachers working in educationally-oriented teams and leading the majority of activities for children. This does not stop other assistants or professionals from contributing (physiotherapists, speech therapists or occupational therapists) or specialist teachers from providing recovery programmes or supporting children at risk and those with learning difficulties.

Another indication that services for 3-6 year-olds are considered to be the first rung on the educational ladder is the way in which these services are financed. In most European countries this phase is funded by central authorities. As shown in Chapter 6, it is rare (Austria only) that local funding is the sole source. Apart from ten countries, financial support comes mainly from the central level. However, it cannot be said yet that education is free in the same way as it is at primary level, except in about fifteen countries. Although families of 3-6 year-olds contribute less than families of the younger age group, about 16 countries still seek some form of parental contribution.

If attendance becomes compulsory at pre-primary level, even part-time (as it is now in some countries), then it would seem inevitable that provision will become free.

The provision of free education is a key issue particularly with respect to children at risk. There is an inherent contradiction in relying on ECEC provision to combat social inequality and school failure whilst, at the same time, seeking financial contributions from parents. Certainly, in many countries, assistance is provided to households with children in various forms, from reduced taxes to family allowances, reduced fees or even fees exemption for access to ECEC settings (see Figure 3.2). It is important, however, to assess in each case whether such financial help has the desired effect, namely to encourage the participation of children at risk in ECEC provision.

Whilst the participation of 4 and 5 year-olds in pre-primary provision is high in Europe, it is not maximised; 87 % for 4 year-olds and 93 % for 5 year-olds (see Figure 2.9). It would seem to be a positive sign that these rates are so high when there is almost no obligation for children to attend these settings before 5 or 6 years, but the question remains on the profile of children who do not attend and why. There is a strong possibility that these are often children from families at risk and, if this is the case, educational provision for this age group is not yet sufficient throughout the whole of Europe.

The budget allocated to this level of education (ISCED 0) provides an indication of the effort made by European countries to develop educational provision for this age group. Figure 2.12 shows the budget allocated in relation to GDP. The general trend is that spending on pre-primary education has evolved in a way which mirrors changes in the GDP; for most European countries spending was stable between 2001 and 2004. However, demographic changes can confuse the issue – if staffing increases or reduces while spending remains stable, it can result in a reduction or an increase in resources per capita. For this reason, the data in Figure 2.13 (expenditure per capita) is particularly useful. Except for Greece, the trend is for an increase between 2001 and 2004. In general, the countries of the EU are devoting more and more resources to this level of the education system. Altogether, these trends are rather encouraging. In the majority of European countries, educational provision for 4-5 year-olds is increasingly becoming the first rung on the educational ladder.

Provision for under-3s – still not fully recognized as a level of education

Provision for under-3s still varies a good deal from one country to the next and has still not been recognised by society as a fully-fledged level of education. There is one telling indicator – data on various aspects of this phase is either lacking or unreliable because it is not standardised. Eurostat does not therefore supply harmonised data on provision for 0-3 year-olds as regards participation in settings and, consequently, national data must be relied upon. Fortunately, such data is available for many countries and indicates that there are wide differences in provision between countries. At one

extreme, the Czech Republic has only 0.5 % of youngest children enrolled in an ECEC setting whilst, at the other extreme, the Nordic countries have participation rates above 50 %, reaching 83 % in Denmark.

A further indication of governments' lesser involvement in the care of the youngest children is the way in which this sector is financed (Chapter 6). In all countries, except in Hungary, parents are required to make a contribution to the costs of provision and, in most cases, public funding comes from local sources. Free provision is clearly a long way off.

However, policies which encourage access to the available services by the most disadvantaged can be observed in some countries. In Finland and Sweden, the right to daytime childcare services is guaranteed for all children: in Finland from the end of maternity leave or parental leave, and in Sweden from the child's first birthday. In Finland, it is the responsibility of parents to apply to the municipal authority for an ECEC place. The authority offers a place either in a day-care centre [or childcare centre] or in family day care. The service may be tailored to meet the needs of parents (including rotating care in the evenings and at weekends). Elsewhere, that is in most other European countries (particularly in Greece, Italy, Austria, Liechtenstein and nearly all Member States from Central and Eastern Europe), provision for 0-3 year olds reveals local differences since subsidised services are managed almost entirely by local authorities.

In a few countries, public provision for under-3s is practically non-existent. In addition to the Czech Republic, already mentioned, this is the case in Poland where the participation rate barely reaches 2 %. In Ireland, the situation is similar but the ministry for children and Youth Affairs has adopted a *National Childcare Investment Programme* (2006-2010) which aims to increase formal ECEC provision. In the Netherlands, although compulsory education begins at age 5 with the *basisonderwijs*, childcare is largely provided by the private sector. However, one of the objectives of central government is to ensure that disadvantaged children have access to pre-school education from the age of 2.

To eliminate or attenuate the effects that the lack of accessible services may have on the most deprived families, nearly all European countries have implemented financial aid planning (Chapter 3, section 3.3). In many countries the financial contribution from parents for ECEC services is calculated according to a scale based on parental income. The aim therefore is to ensure the accessibility of services to disadvantaged families. In the same spirit, in many countries, tax allowances are given to families to offset the costs of ECEC services. Romania provides vouchers for day nurseries to families which do not receive parental leave while in the United Kingdom families with low or middle incomes receive tax credits – the *Working Tax Credit Childcare Element*. In Spain, places are reserved for children at risk under the age of 3 and reduced fees are charged.

The attempts made by governments to ensure that ECEC settings take account of the specific needs of disadvantaged children may also take other forms. These are mainly pilot projects or experimental programmes and include, for example, the pilot projects *Centrum voor Kinderopvang* (CKO) [centres for integrated early childhood services] established in Belgium (Flemish Community). In France, true to the policy of targeting assistance on education action zones (*zones d'éducation prioritaire*), all children living in these zones are guaranteed a place in pre-primary settings from the age of 2. The Netherlands has adopted the aim of ensuring that during the period 2007-2011 all disadvantaged children aged 2-6 will participate in ECEC provision. To meet this ambitious objective, there is a policy

to give priority to children between the ages of 2 and 5 years who are at risk of educational disadvantage. The policy involves funding play centres (*peuterspeelzalen*) which provide children aged between 2 and 3 years with part-time day-care and primary schooling for 4-5 year olds. Hungary has set parallel objectives: since 2008, children from socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (usually determined by parental status and level of education) must be accommodated by the playgroup in their neighbourhood and given priority in other similar settings; non-municipal playgroups must reserve up to a quarter of their places for disadvantaged children. Portugal relies on settings specifically designed for disadvantaged children – social solidarity centres – together with social/cultural facilitators whose role is to ease the integration of migrant or ethnic minority children into school and non-school environments. Lastly, since July 2006 in Denmark, all types of care provision have been obliged to carry out environmental impact evaluations with the aim of ensuring that the care environment is favourable to the development of socially disadvantaged children.

All these initiatives are encouraging. They demonstrate an awareness amongst policy makers of the importance of this age educationally, and, more specifically, its importance in countering social inequality and poor educational outcomes. They attest to a political will to promote the participation of children under-3 from families at risk in ECEC. From now on, the questions that must be raised relate to the effectiveness of initiatives, that is, which ones really work and deliver the required results? However, apart from the English-speaking countries, the Nordic countries, Spain, France and the Netherlands, very few countries mention procedures for evaluating government policies encouraging access of the youngest children or give their results (Chapter 3, section 4).

A notable feature of the settings for 0-3 year olds in many countries is their previous function as childminding centres⁽⁵⁾. In many European countries, services for this age group still have an economic role – by assuming most often responsibility for looking after children both parents can work, this also has the effect of promoting greater equality between men and women in employment. It must be remembered in this regard that in some countries, putting the youngest (between 0 and 2 years) in an educational setting depends on whether the mother works.

While the role of looking after children remains apparent in the provision for the youngest children, there has been a welcome development in most European countries. An analysis of the regulations relating to provision for this age group (Chapter 4) reveals an increasing concern for education and social welfare. More precisely, objectives relating to the well-being of children – their emotional, physical and social development have been assigned to ECEC settings.

The training of staff responsible for the care of under-3s is usually within the tradition of health and social welfare (Chapter 5). Staff work under the direction of a range of professionals from the fields of psychology, medicine and social work. In some countries, other professionals (physiotherapists, speech therapists and psychologists) are called in to provide treatment on an ad hoc basis. The role of educational counsellor is often assumed by a psychologist.

⁽⁵⁾ Remember that, in effect, when day nurseries were established in the nineteenth century, they were given the role of childminding and safekeeping working class children. Freeing mothers from their responsibility to educate their children and enabling them to join the workforce, day nurseries were destined to perform a prophylactic role: to preserve young children from illnesses due to poor hygiene which, at the time, resulted in a high mortality rate.

Apart from the level of education of staff responsible for 0-3 year-olds, the main difficulty which still exists in most European countries is the lack of capacity (Chapter 3). Provision is particularly lacking in rural areas. For historical and political reasons there is also a shortage of places in Eastern and Central European countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland Romania and Slovakia) but it would be wrong to say that the problem lies in these countries only. The problem is more widespread and affects all countries with the exception of the Nordic countries.

The lack of provision affects parents' choice in deciding whether or not to look after their children at home and, consequently, affects the career development of mothers. This second issue will be examined later.

It is appropriate, therefore, to examine the obstacles to participation and factors which may prevent children from attending ECEC settings. These factors are varied. In the first instance there is the scarcity of provision and the fees charged. The opening hours of centres and how compatible these are with the working hours of mothers is another contentious point. Other factors operate in a more subtle way. Benefits provided for parents in the form of parental leave and/or allowances (Chapter 3, section 1) may impede participation even though sufficient services are available. In countries such as Estonia, Lithuania, Austria and even Romania, it appears as though the generous system of parental leave and allowances encourages parents to choose to look after children at home rather than use ECEC settings. This phenomenon can be reinforced when legislation requires a reduction in parental leave and allowances if the child attends an education/care setting, even if attendance is only part-time. In other countries such measures are more flexible in that parental rights are adjusted in relation to the number of hours a child attends a setting. However, in either case it would appear that these measures have a dissuasive effect on parents.

There is therefore a choice to be made with respect to children's policies. Norway's position highlights the issues faced. Families in Norway (as in Sweden and Finland) can choose to look after their 1-3 year-old in the home and receive cash payments rather than place their child in an education/care centre. In spite of this generous offer, it appears that fewer families take advantage of it when the number of ECEC places increases; in other words, when given the opportunity, the majority of parents resort to an education/care setting for their child. Furthermore, a national survey in 2002 revealed a negative correlation between the level of education and parental income and the take-up of these services. Low-income families use the education/care settings less and prefer to take advantage of the financial benefits of looking after their children at home.

The study carried out in the Flemish Community of Belgium also reveals the influences of the socio-economic and cultural status of families with respect to choices made in the education of young children. The survey conducted in 2004 shows that participation rates are lower among children from deprived ethnic minority backgrounds and those from single parent families. However, these groups benefit from a legal right to priority access. Such socially vulnerable families reject ECEC services due to formal and informal obstacles. Formal obstacles include waiting lists, the requirement for regular attendance and the obligation to respect the rules of the setting. The informal obstacles include the 'first come first served' system, the ways in which information about services is disseminated, the language used and the attitudes of staff ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ In 2004, Flanders launched the project Community Services in the Neighbourhood in order to solve some of these difficulties; an evaluation of the project showed positive results.

There is a political choice between promoting the care of the youngest children at home or encouraging participation in ECEC. If the choice is that children should be encouraged into education/care settings then the measures to be implemented are different from those needed for the alternative choice. In the first case, there is a need for more investment so that provision can be increased, access made easier, opening hours extended and improvements made in quality - particularly in the training requirements for personnel. If the alternative choice is made, parental long-term leave would need to be promoted and financial incentives given to encourage take-up. This political choice principally concerns children at-risk as research suggests that they get the greatest benefit from attendance at an ECEC quality setting. Home-based education, even when providing parental support, is usually not enough to close the educational gap.

The data presented in Chapter 2 are illuminating with respect to the inequalities between men and women at work particularly in households with at least one child. In these households, the female activity rate is significantly lower than the male's. It is not surprising that the differential is related to the age of the children in the household: when the youngest child in the family is under 2 years of age, less than 60 % of women state that they are in work or looking for work. This rate increases to 75 % when the youngest child reaches the age of 12. More precisely, the female activity rate shows a marked reduction when at least one child is under the age of 2. When the youngest child reaches the age of 3 the rate increases significantly. The existence of a child and its age has no effect on men's work activity: not only is their rate of activity systematically higher than women's but it also unaffected by the age of children in the household. This pattern can be observed, with some variations, throughout the majority of EU member states but particularly in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

The political decisions and measures taken with respect to the education of children under 3 years will determine whether the inequalities between men and women in employment persist or are reduced.

The unitary system – a way forward for the future?

If the separation between 0-3 and 3-6 year-olds is viewed in the light of our cultural history, it must be recognized that it is not founded on any scientific basis. Therefore it would seem a legitimate question to ask why the system for the education and care of young children remains divided into separate settings for those under, and those over, the age of 3. All European countries, without exception, have implemented accredited and subsidised ECEC services and yet, in most of them, this division persists. In contrast, in Latvia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway, education/care settings are organised only in a unitary structure. More precisely, in these countries, a single structure for all pre-school children exists which means that there is only one management team for children of all ages in each setting and, moreover, the adults responsible for educational activities have the same qualifications and salary scales whatever the age of the children they look after. In some countries, pre-primary preparatory settings for 5/6 year-olds are separate from the main structure. To complete the picture, in Denmark, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Lithuania unitary settings can be found alongside separate settings. It is progressively implemented in the United Kingdom (England). Does this signal an expansion of the unitary system? Only time will tell.

Countries which have adopted the unitary model have, in some form or another, recognised that all children have the right to a place in an educational setting. This is clearly the case in Finland, Sweden, Slovenia and Norway. In Finland, this right begins at the end of maternity or parental leave. In

Sweden, municipalities are expected to provide a place for all children from their first birthday. The Norwegian government aims to provide a guaranteed place in a ECEC setting to all children between 0 and 5 years since 2006. Similarly, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovenia guarantee provision for all children from the age of 1. In short, it would seem that the unitary model gives rise to guaranteed access to education/care services. It must also be noted that in most of the countries which have adopted this model, the opening hours are generally extended to meet the flexible working hours of parents.

The unitary system of education for young children also extends to the curriculum in these countries. Nordic countries have developed policies for the curriculum, its content and teaching methods which cover the whole ECEC age group. Such an approach means that these countries accord the same importance to education, socialisation and care throughout the entire period of the unitary system. The United Kingdom (England) has also started the introduction of a single quality framework for early learning and childcare from birth to age five, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-three and three-to-five provision.

Which approaches to education should be taken with young children?

For at least half of the twentieth century, ECEC has been the centre of educational debates which have pitted a child-centrist view (today characterised as socio-constructivist) against an instructionist view. It is therefore logical to use this template to analyse the various educational programmes established in different countries. Two teaching models based upon those established by the research world have been identified in the comparison of programmes in Chapter 4.

- Model A brings together educational provision which is centred on the notion of the development of the whole person and the promotion of learning through self-determined activity, spontaneous exploration and play. Interactions between peers and cooperative work are favoured and symbolic or pretend play is considered equally important as cultural learning. The role of adults is, on the one hand, to arrange the room, set out equipment for play and activities and organise the schedule and, on the other hand, to engage with the children in a manner which will encourage their cognitive and cultural learning (such as literacy, numeracy and science). Educators are seen as the means to guide and support children in their social and intellectual growth.
- Under model B early learning is inspired by the theories of education based on the transmission of knowledge and skills by the teacher. Language and academic skills linked to the primary curriculum are favoured. Teaching methods are based on direct instruction, directed activities and reinforcement; a structured and planned curriculum underpins the whole process.

Figure 4.4a demonstrates the overall supremacy of model A over model B. With respect to provision for 3 to 6 year olds, where a national curriculum is in place, model A predominates everywhere except in Italy. In few countries –particularly school structures– the curricula also reveal aspects from model B.

The predominance of model A in the curricula of education/care settings in European countries demonstrates the wide pedagogical consensus (mentioned by Leseman in Chapter 1) around the principles articulated by Bredekamp (1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) under the heading of ‘developmentally appropriate practice’. This view of the education of young children is also supported by the World Organisation for Pre-school Education (OMEP) whose members comprise some 60 countries worldwide including several European countries. However, the review of the research

literature in Chapter 1 demonstrates that it would be premature to conclude that the socio-constructivists had won out over the instructionist approach. On the one hand it must be recognised that the conclusions of studies varied depending on whether evaluations were carried out over short, medium or long term. Studies by Marcon (1999, 2000) revealed a complex pattern of results: the positive effects of one or another approach fluctuated according to the level of education during which the measures were implemented (Chapter 1). Ultimately, it appears that it is necessary to take account of the age at which a child experiences a particular educational approach. In drawing this conclusion Leseman relies on the study by Stipek et al. (1998). These researchers compared four groups of children mainly drawn from low-income and ethnic minority groups. Prior to their entry into primary school between the ages of 3 and 5 years, some of the children had attended a pre-primary setting whose teaching practices were broadly based on developmentally appropriate practice whilst others had undergone approaches which focussed on learning basic skills. Later, at the age of five or six, each of the groups were further subdivided so that half of group 1 in the previous stage were subjected to teaching approaches which favoured their social and emotional development and the other half to an approach focussed on learning basic skills. The results were particularly interesting and deserve to be recalled here. Children who until the age of 5 had benefited from developmentally appropriate practices performed well both academically and socio-emotionally during their primary education whichever type of setting they attended during the third year. However, it also seems that an academic approach in an educationally-oriented setting at the age of 5 or 6 engendered slightly better academic results than those who, during all three successive years, underwent programmes based on the socio-emotional approach. Moreover, no negative effects were detected on the socio-emotional level. In short, it is tempting to conclude that there are positive effects from the academic approach linked to basic skills around the age of 5 or 6 if it follows two years pre-school learning which encourages socio-emotional development.

Based on a detailed study of research in the field, Leseman (Chapter 1, p. 15) proposes the following hypothesis which may also be read as a recommendation:

Education programmes for very young children (under 5) should work predominantly in a child-centred, developmental way, whereas programmes for older children between 5 and 6 years may introduce academic subjects in a more planned, teacher-directed curriculum without having negative social-emotional consequences. A later emphasis on academic skills, after a predominantly developmental approach that focused on fostering of social-emotional competence, may even provide better support for the transition to primary school.

This combination of a developmental approach (model A) and structured activities focussed on basic skills (model B) can be explained in another way. It has become current, in cognitive psychology, to distinguish between two forms of learning: one is indirect or incidental and the other direct. The first one occurs in situations where the child interacts with others or acts jointly with others (Bruner's concept of *joint activity*). In such situations, the people involved have a common focus of attention but there is no deliberate intention to teach anything in particular. These are real-life situations. In contrast, direct learning is driven by an intention to teach and therefore entail a more or less rigid structure in order reach the intended objectives. It is through indirect learning that children learn to speak, but a procedural system also develops here which includes executive functions and meta-cognitive abilities. Executive functions mainly include controlling impulses, inhibiting dissident ideas and planning actions. Meta-cognition consists of cognition on the cognitive processes: they lead a child not only to reflect on the workings of the mind but also to detect the best strategies for

remembering how to do something in the future, to learn lessons etc. Executive functions as well as meta-cognitive abilities are necessary for academic learning which is processed in a direct way.

The hypothesis could be made that model A promotes the development of the executive functions and meta-cognitive capacities necessary for academic learning which, in turn, require a degree of structure as well as the repetitions necessary to build the automatic reflexes indispensable for reading, writing and maths.

Ultimately, it would appear that there is an urgent need to leave behind the continuing but sterile debate on the validity of the two educational models; the main priority is to combine them to achieve the best results for children.

Reducing the gap in educational outcomes resulting from socioeconomic inequalities through high-quality ECEC and support for parents

This idea is not new. Children from low-income families, ethnic minorities, immigrant families and single-parent families perform less well at school and, as a result, see their chances of successful careers jeopardised. In order to achieve equity, but also for social and economic reasons (Heckman, 2006 cited by Leseman in Chapter 1), it is important to reduce the gap in outcomes and, from this perspective, the development of high-quality education and care services for young children seems to provide a promising route.

Logically, it is legitimate and from a scientific point of view it is essential to ask questions how to reduce the gap in educational outcomes that result from socioeconomic inequalities. This is exactly what Leseman does in Chapter 1. His detailed review of the literature reminds us of the negative impact that a range of socio-economic factors can have on children's psychological development and chances of success at school. These include: poverty; belonging to disadvantaged social classes; functional illiteracy and low levels of educational attainment of parents; un-skilled, low-paid work; and religious traditions associated with a cultural life where literacy is not highly regarded. These factors are probably inter-related. Illiteracy usually accompanies a low level of educational attainment and a lifestyle where literacy has little importance. A low level of education generally correlates to low-income. In a secondary analysis of the PISA 2000 data, Crahay & Monseur (2006) demonstrated that in all participating countries there is an effect of the interaction between the socio-economic variable on the one hand and the 'language spoken at home' or the 'place of birth': when the socio-economic variable is controlled, the impact of the other two variables is negligible. Moreover, as Walberg & Tsai (1983) have shown, in view of the way our schools and society work, educationists should be wary of the Matthew effect – the people on whom nature, social origin, or development conditions have bestowed greater talents will benefit more from the education system than others. This virtuous circle has, unfortunately, a corresponding vicious circle: those whose conditions of development have provided few advantages risk finding themselves in less favourable conditions at school than middle class children. Leseman also laments this phenomenon when he states: 'many studies reveal that low-income families and those from ethnic minorities tend towards services and provision of inferior quality' (p. 9). If this negative spiral is to be broken, high-quality ECEC provision must, logically, be the first step in attacking this problem.

The stakes are high. According to the calculations produced for this study, (Chapter 2), 17.2 % of European households with one child under the age of 6 are living below the poverty line. This

European average hides significant disparities and there is particular cause for concern in countries where more than 20 % of households with a child under the age of 6 are living below this line. These include: Estonia (22.2 %), Italy (21.1 %), Lithuania (22.8 %), Luxembourg (20.1 %), Poland (25 %), Portugal (21 %) and the United Kingdom (22.6 %).

Looking at the wider picture, in all European countries, apart from Sweden and Norway, 10 % of households with a young child under the age of 6 are living below the poverty line. This indicator is particularly important as, according to the most relevant research, the poverty factor overrides all other risk factors. This conclusion was affirmed already in 1974 by Bronfenbrenner in a report written for the United States Office of Child Development and entitled *Is Early Intervention Effective?* More precisely, on the basis of research evidence, he explained that in a situation of poverty, the energy of parents is completely devoted to finding the means to survive and this inevitably has repercussions on children's education. As also Leseman highlights in his review of literature (Chapter 1):

'Parenting requires a strong child-centred motivation, often at the expense of parents' own concerns. However, an increased number of risks that cannot be dealt with effectively cause chronic stress among parents (also referred to as 'allostatic load'). This leads to a shift in the balance between child-centred and self-centred goals, influencing subsequent child rearing negatively'.

This chronic stress may also explain, at least partially, the relative ineffectiveness of home-based pre-primary programmes⁽⁷⁾. The meta analysis by Blok, Fukkink, Gebhardt & Leseman (2005) which compares these programmes with the combined centre-based/parental support programmes demonstrates the superiority of the combined formula.

On balance, research in the field delivers a clear message. There should be no conflict between providing support for parents and centre-based pre-school education. For children of families with difficulties, the most effective programme is one which combines high-quality education/care settings with support for parents. Review of the literature clearly shows that the most effective intervention programmes '*involve intensive, early starting, child-focused, centre-based education together with strong parent involvement, parent education, programmed educational home activities and measures of family support*'⁽⁸⁾.

There are many authors who underline the importance of involving parents in the process to maintain the effects of education in ECEC settings. However, national policies often pay only lip service to such principles. Furthermore, in a majority of countries, partnerships with families are limited to providing information and advice. In particular, this is the aim in parents' meetings. Without denying the relevance of such activities (especially with respect to health and hygiene matters as practised in the Czech Republic), it must be recognised that parents are rarely involved in the care and education provided by settings as shown by the overview in section 4 of Chapter 4. However, there are some signs of an increased awareness and gradual change. On the one hand, specialist services are available to families at risk in several countries, even if the ways in which families can call upon these

⁽⁷⁾ Leseman makes specific reference to the following programmes: *Parents as Teachers Program* (PAT) in the USA; the *Home-based Instruction Programme for Pre-school Youngsters* (HIPPY), in Israel, Netherlands, and Turkey and USA); the *Mother (or Parent) Child Home Programme* (MCHP or PCHP, USA, Bermuda and Netherlands).

⁽⁸⁾ This is the case particularly in the following programmes: *High/Scope Perry Pre-school Project*, *Syracuse Family Development Research Project*, *Yale Child Welfare Project*, *Abecedarian Project*, *Project CARE*, *Infant Health and Development Program* et *Chicago Child-Parent Centres Programme*, as well as the *Project for the Early Improvement of the Potential of Children in Turkey*.

services and use them remains a little vague ⁽⁹⁾. On the other hand, official reports (notably in Austria) have assessed the situation in a very objective way and recognise the need for innovation in this area. Here and there, new initiatives are being launched. In some countries (notably Bulgaria, French Community of Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Norway), they take the form of consultative committees or other bodies linked to education/care settings. In France, each day nursery must draw up a development plan or specific service plan which outlines the role of families and how they participate. In Portugal, parent participation may take the form of coming into the setting to talk to children about their experiences, telling folk tales etc. This was the intention of the 'Reading on the Move' programme set up in 2008.

The national contributions of the United Kingdom and Finland discuss the partnership between the staff of the ECEC setting and families and describe the role of each party. In the United Kingdom (England and Wales), the *Childcare Act* 2006 requires that parents are to be involved in the planning, development and provision of services. In Scotland, it is also expected that care services establish effective partnerships and regular communication with parents ⁽¹⁰⁾. In Finland, it is a statutory duty for early childhood professionals to support education within families and to cooperate with parents. The intention is that the specific needs of each family are taken into account and, in partnership with parents, the needs and problems of each child are identified as early as possible so that the most appropriate provision can be made ⁽¹¹⁾. No doubt these ways of working foreshadow a networking approach to the provision of support for families. This kind of approach is outlined by several countries, Estonia and Ireland in particular, where cooperative networks between the various services which deal with young children are in place. Such examples illustrate the increasing concern shown in some countries for an integrated approach to parent support and, consequently, to young children.

Regarding the process by which education in ECEC settings combined with support for parents produces long term benefits, the contribution of Schweinhart & Weikart (1985, 1993 and 1997) is interesting. Reporting that children from ethnic minority backgrounds perform well at school when they have benefited from pre-primary education even though the effects of such compensatory actions on IQ quickly fades, these researchers formulated the hypothesis that this timely increase in the cognitive capacity of pupils has positive social effects and, ultimately, positive effects on their chances of success at school. Disadvantaged children who have benefited from a pre-primary programme start primary school with improved attitudes to school. These attitudes impress their teachers who therefore have higher expectations of them in comparison with those disadvantaged classmates who have not benefited from pre-school education. Aware that adults have high hopes of them, the children work hard to confirm these positive expectations. In short, children of ethnic minority backgrounds who start primary school with sharper cognitive abilities will, through the quality of their participation in class, encourage positive expectations from teachers. Children will be aware of the positive image teachers have of them and they will therefore adopt good attitudes and behaviour. The positive image which teachers have of these pupils will also influence parents' aspirations for their children.

⁽⁹⁾ As in Greece, Romania and Slovenia where special provision are made for Roma families.

⁽¹⁰⁾ It is interesting to note that, in England, parents take a major role in the local *Sure Start* programmes. Partnerships consist of 50 % parents and 50 % community members. The experimental nature of this programme will probably impact on wider policies which will be launched in the future.

⁽¹¹⁾ Pre-primary teachers in Hungary are also responsible for collecting information on children through interviews with families and must provide development reports for individual children.

Ultimately it would seem logical to conclude that the education of young children engenders long term effects. It directly influences children's cognitive abilities and motivation and influences, in a direct or indirect way, family attitudes towards education. Lastly, in a clearly indirect way, it also influences the quality of the interactions which will benefit children throughout primary and secondary education.

The 'winning formula' consists in combining care and education of the young child in a formal setting with support for parents. Research still needs to identify the precise nature and characteristics of the parental support which should be provided in European countries. Doubtless, it should involve work on the beliefs of parents and their understanding of what the education of young children should be. Although the research results do not provide a completely consistent picture, there does appear to be a promising way forward. Researchers have identified two main belief systems: 'traditional collectivist' and 'modern individualist' (see Palacios et al., 1992; Triandis, 1997; as cited by Leseman in Chapter 1). Parents who adhere to 'traditional collectivist' beliefs, that is to say a pattern of understanding which is characterised by *'the fact that the interests of the individual child are subordinated to the interests of the greater social unit of the (extended) family and local community'* seem to offer less stimulating development opportunities than parents who hold the opposite view. However, there is still much to discover regarding the type of parental support needed and how it should be targeted in European countries.

In concluding this study, it is important to remember another statement noted in Chapter 1:

The effects of centre-based care on children are increased if a centre's quality is higher, if children participated before starting school for a longer period and more intensively – thereby receiving a greater 'dose' – and if children come from families with a poor informal education environment, thus indicating a compensatory effect.

Essentially, this quote defines the conditions to be met if ECEC services are to be effective and raises three issues:

- accessibility of services,
- training of staff working in ECEC settings,
- improvement in working conditions.

To ensure participation over a long period and regular attendance by children, settings must be accessible to all and especially to very young children from families at risk. One of the problems associated with accessibility is the length of opening hours – they must be compatible with parents' working hours. While the problem of accessibility in terms of the volume of provision is more or less solved for 5 year-olds, this certainly is not the case for 0-3 year-olds and even 4 year-olds in some countries. It has already been mentioned above that participation of 4 and 5 year-olds is high in the vast majority of countries even though it is not at its maximum level. This raises the question why some children do not attend; the suspicion being that those who do not participate are mainly children from families at risk. If this is the case then measures must be taken to solve the problem – such measures have already been introduced in some European countries (Chapter 3). With respect to 0 to 3 year-olds, it is important to stress that, in many European countries, the volume of provision seems insufficient. From the evidence in this study, significant financial investment and the creation of early childhood education/care settings would be needed. This could entail the creation of a unitary system of early childhood education and care with settings which accommodate the entire age group for 0/1 to 5/6 years.

The best means of ensuring the educational quality of education/care settings is by providing high quality training for staff which covers teaching skills, cultural awareness and health and hygiene issues. Chapter 5 shows that there is still much to be achieved in this area, particularly with respect to staff working with the younger age group. The improvement of quality through initial training and continuing professional development is crucial and is a determining factor with respect to the quality of activities provided for children, which, in turn, impacts upon the effectiveness of ECEC provision ⁽¹²⁾.

A favourable child/adult ratio is also crucial in ensuring the quality of interactions between educators and children. It helps to create a climate of emotional security, allows teachers to be responsive to the needs of children and able to support and comfort them when they have difficulties and frustrations or are in distress, it enables teachers to be non-intrusive, to encourage verbal exchanges and to stimulate children's intellectual curiosity. Various studies ⁽¹³⁾ discussed in Chapter 1 support these conclusions. It must be noted again that, in this respect, staffing levels are not favourable in all European countries (Chapter 4, section 1) and such decisions are often left to local authorities (no national standards exist).

Research in the field of ECEC reveals strong, clear conclusions which underline the importance of the accessibility and quality of services for the education and care of young children. Most significantly they provide a message of hope: through providing high-quality centre-based education for young children it is possible to combat social inequalities in education.

Gradually, these research conclusions are being translated into the educational policies of European countries. These policies demonstrate a clear desire not to separate the 'target groups' from the rest of the population but to offer universal provision (see Figure 4.5) for all children, whatever their origin, in educational settings whose qualified workforce is trained to deal with the full range of children's individual needs.

⁽¹²⁾ The impact of ECEC is slightly less positive in large-scale programmes than in experimental programmes. Most authors explain this by the fact that the quality of large-scale programmes is slightly lower and these programmes do not guarantee optimal conditions for education and care. The problem is initially one of training and supervision of staff.

⁽¹³⁾ Notably the, Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; NICHD Early Child Care Network, 2002; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abott-Shim, 2000.

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GLOSSARY

Country codes

EU-27	European Union
BE	Belgium
BE fr	Belgium – French Community
BE de	Belgium – German-speaking Community
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta

NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom
UK-ENG	England
UK-WLS	Wales
UK-NIR	Northern Ireland
UK-SCT	Scotland
EFTA/EEA countries	The three countries of the European Free Trade Association which are members of the European Economic Area
IS	Iceland
LI	Liechtenstein
NO	Norway

Statistical code

: Data not available

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is an instrument suitable for compiling statistics on education internationally. It covers two cross-classification variables: levels and fields of education with the complementary dimensions of general/vocational/pre-vocational orientation and educational/labour market destination. The current version, ISCED 97 ⁽¹⁾ distinguishes seven levels of education (from ISCED 0 to ISCED 6). Empirically, ISCED assumes that several criteria exist which can help allocate education programmes to levels of education. Depending on the level and type of education concerned, there is a need to establish a hierarchical ranking system between main and subsidiary criteria (typical entrance qualification, minimum entrance requirement, minimum age, staff qualification, etc.). The following levels are distinguished:

- ISCED 0: Pre-primary education
- ISCED 1: Primary education
- ISCED 2: Lower secondary education
- ISCED 3: Upper secondary education
- ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education
- ISCED 5: Tertiary education (first stage)
- ISCED 6: Tertiary education (second stage)

This study takes into account ISCED levels 0 and 1 only. Full details are given in the following paragraphs:

ISCED 0: Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction. It is school- or centre-based and is designed for children aged at least 3 years

ISCED 1: Primary education

This level begins generally between 5 and 7 years of age, is compulsory in all countries and generally lasts from four to six years.

⁽¹⁾ <http://unesco.org/en/pub/pub0.htm>

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ANNEXES

Annex 1:

Table A: Public authorities with responsibility for ECEC 2006/07

The age range given is limited to the 0-6 years cohort, even when older children fall within the competence of the responsible body.

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
BE fr	<p>Parliament and Government of the French Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet of the Minister of Childhood, Youth Aid and Health (for childhood, 0-12 year-olds) • Cabinet of the Minister in charge of Compulsory Schooling; (2 ½-6 year-olds) • Ministry of the French Community 	<p>Ministry of the French Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate General for Compulsory Schooling • Directorate General for Youth Aid <p>Governmental agency: Office for Birth and Childhood</p>
BE de	<p>Parliament and government of the German-speaking Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet of the Minister of Social Affairs in collaboration with the department of the Ministry; (0-3 year-olds and 3-6 year olds, but mainly the younger age-group) • Minister in charge of Schooling, in collaboration with the department of the Ministry; (3-6 year-olds) 	<p>Ministry of the German-speaking Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dienst für Kind und Familie</i> with the Department of the Ministry <i>Abteilung Beschäftigung, Gesundheit und Soziales</i>. Private organisations or individuals offering ECEC structures. • Department of the Ministry <i>Unterricht und Ausbildung</i>. • Organising bodies of pre-primary schools or sections of grant-aided education (communes or private bodies)
BE nl	<p>Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Health and Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for childcare for children before the age at which they attend pre-school and out of school care for children who attend pre-school • (Children from 0 to 6) <p>Flemish Ministry of Education and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for education; (2 ½-6 year-olds) 	<p>Kind en Gezin Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for childcare <p>School boards, with support from their networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for education
BG	<p>Ministry of Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (0-3 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Education and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (3-7 year-olds) 	<p>Ministry of Education and Science</p> <p>Regional Inspectorates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for Education <p>Regional Inspectorates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for ensuring health, sanitary and hygiene requirements are observed <p>Municipalities</p>
CZ	<p>Ministry of Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (0-3 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for pre-primary education, including education of socially disadvantaged children; (3-6 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for social services for at-risk children 	<p>Municipalities</p> <p>Municipalities and Regional Authority</p> <p>Regional Authority and Municipalities</p>

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
DK	Ministry of Social Welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-6 year-olds) 	Municipal authorities
DE	Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) Länder and Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) Ministries of Youth and Social Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	Länder and communities
EE	Ministry of Social Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for social welfare; establishing health protection requirements for child care institutions; (0-7 year-olds) Ministry of Education and Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the composition of the framework curriculum for pre-primary education; issuing education licences to child care institutions; participating in state supervision over the education and schooling provided in pre-school child care institutions; (0-7 year-olds) 	Local authorities
IE	Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs (DSFCA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for social welfare Department of Health and Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme of Health Care Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of childcare places Child protection and welfare Department of Education and Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curricular Framework for Early Learning Quality Framework for Early Years Education Provides for Primary Education for children from the age of 4 upwards 	Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs (DSFCA) Health Service Executive City and County Childcare committees Health Service Executive National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Department of Education and Science Department of Education and Science
EL	Municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (18 months-5 year-olds) Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (4-5 year-olds) 	Municipalities Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs
ES	Ministry of Education and Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for general guidelines on compensating inequalities Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for childcare and protection 	Autonomous Communities Municipalities

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
ES	<p>Autonomous Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for developing national legislation so as to adapt it to their own territory <p>Municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> also responsible for designing measures to protect children at risk; (All bodies responsible for 0-6 year-olds) 	
FR	<p>Ministry of Social Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-2 year-olds) <p>Ministry of National Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2-6 year-olds) 	<p>Regional and local authorities (<i>collectivités territoriales, communes, départements</i>)</p> <p>State services at regional level</p>
IT	<p>Ministry of Public Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-6 year-olds) 	<p>Municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) <p>Peripheral educational authorities and schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds)
CY	<p>Ministry of Labour Welfare Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Education and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3 to 5 years and 8 months) 	<p>Welfare Department</p> <p>Ministry of Education and Culture</p>
LV	<p>Ministry for Children and Family Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the state programme for the improvement of status of children and families, and the coordination of the cooperation of state and local government institutions in the protection of the rights of the child and family; (0-6 year-olds) <p>Ministry for Education and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for policy in the field of child education and ensuring the accessibility and quality of education; (1-6 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for state policy in the field of child and family social security, social insurance and benefits, social assistance and care, and organises and coordinates social services and assistance; (0-6 year-olds) <p>Ministry of Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for policy in the field of child health care, and the organisation and coordination of child health care; (0-6 year-olds) 	<p>Local governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide assistance and support to families with children; organise primary health care for mothers and children; provide for pre-school institutions; ensure extra-familial care for those children, who permanently or for a time, are without their own family, or who for their own best interests may not be left with their own family. <p>Institutions subordinated to relevant ministries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for implementation and organisation of social services.
LT	<p>Ministry of Education and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1-7 year-olds) 	<p>Municipalities/Local education authorities</p>
LU	<p>Ministry of the Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for nurseries (public or private); (0-3 year-olds) <p>Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	<p>Ministry of the Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) <p>Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds)

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
LU	Communal council, political body, supported by the School Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	<i>Communes</i> (management and administration of pre-school education and organisation of out-of-school activities)
HU	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) Ministry of Education and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	Local authorities
MT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible both for the child care centres (0-3 year-olds) and the Kindergarten centres (3-4 year-olds) 	Kindergarten centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are run by the state and private sectors, The child day care centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are run by the private sector.
NL	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for general guidelines Municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for specific policies 	Mainly local authorities
AT	Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the training of kindergarten pedagogues Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for youth welfare laws, policies for childminders, family allowances and childcare benefits Provincial governments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for kindergarten and crèche laws; (1-6 year-olds) Municipalities, churches and other private providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the establishment and maintenance of kindergartens and crèches; (1-6 year-olds) 	Ministry of Education and of Social Affairs Provinces (<i>Länder</i>): Kindergartenfachberater Municipalities Kindergarten head teachers
PL	Ministry of Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) Ministry of National Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-7 year-olds) 	Health Care Institutions (<i>Zakłady Opieki Zdrowotnej</i>) Local education authorities (<i>gminy</i> = 'school running bodies') and Regional Education Superintendent Offices (<i>kuratoria oświaty</i>)
PT	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-3 year-olds) Ministry of Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-6 year-olds) Ministry of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Institute for Social Security Ministry of Education/Regional Directorates of Education/School Clusters Municipalities
RO	Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for social protection aspects Ministry of Education, Research and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for educational aspects 	Labour and Social Protection Departments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for social protection aspects County School Inspectorates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for education aspects

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
RO	Ministry of Public Health responsible for care and nutrition aspects; (All above for 0-3 year-olds) Ministry of Education, Research and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds) 	County Public Health Departments responsible for care and nutrition aspects; (All above for 0-3 year-olds) County School Inspectorates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (3-6 year-olds)
SI	Ministry of Education and Sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1-6 year-olds) 	Ministry of Education and Sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for pre-school programmes, inspection, inclusive pre-school education, pre-school education of ethnic minorities, Roma children Municipalities, Headteachers and Councils of pre-school institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the enrolment of children, working positions, staff, premises, equipment and self-evaluation
SK	Ministry of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2/3-6 year olds) 	Municipalities
FI	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for day care services; (0-6 year-olds) Ministry of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for pre-primary education; (6-7 year-olds) 	Municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mainly responsible Finnish National Board of Education and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Stakes) which is the National Institute for Health and Welfare since January 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for developing national core curriculum and coordination of national development projects
SE	Ministry of Education and Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1-6 year-olds) 	Municipalities
UK-ENG	Department for Children, Schools and Families Department for Work and Pensions Local Authorities, Children's Trusts	Responsibility is shared between national and local government and external partners.
UK-WLS	Welsh Assembly Government Local Authorities, Local Authority Children's and Young People's Partnerships	Responsibility is shared between national and local government and external partners.
UK-NIR	Department of Education Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety Department for Employment and Learning Department for Social Development Education and Library Boards, Local Childcare Partnerships	Responsibility is shared between national and local government and external partners.
UK-SCT	The Scottish Executive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The age range is 0-5 for child care and 3-4 specifically for pre-school education. Primary school begins at age 5. 	Local authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mainly responsible for implementing <i>Sure Start</i>, pre-school education and other early childhood policies Voluntary sector bodies

	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Designing ECEC Policies	Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for Implementing ECEC Policies
IS	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (0-5 year-olds) 	Municipalities
LI	Ministry of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (4-6 year-olds) Office of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (4-6 year-olds) 	Office of Education (especially the Inspectorate)
NO	Ministry of Education and Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for <i>barnehage</i> (kindergartens) and special education Ministry of Children and Equality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for child welfare, the cash benefit scheme, family allowance, and parental and adoption benefits Ministry of Health and care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for health Ministry of Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for tax deductions; (All bodies responsible for 0-5 year-olds)	Municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for <i>barnehage</i> (kindergartens), special education help, child welfare services, mother and child health services Local Work and Welfare Offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for parental and adoption benefits, family allowance and the cash benefit scheme

Table B: National Definitions of Children at Risk

Belgium – French Community

There is no special definition to describe children 'at risk'. However, several measures have been introduced to ensure equality of access to provision officially approved and subsidised by the French-speaking Community. In particular, methods have been devised to calculate the (means-tested) financial contribution of parents so that it is easier for children from families at a socio-economic disadvantage to secure access to ECEC settings and home childminding facilities. In the field of education, there are positive discrimination measures whereby schools receive supplementary means both in terms of human resources and material. So, for children aged 3 to 6, settings receive financial compensation when they serve children from disadvantaged areas (children living in a neighbourhood with low rates of income per inhabitant, low levels of qualifications, high unemployment and poor standard of housing).

Belgium – German-speaking Community

There is no special definition to describe children 'at risk'. However, several measures have been introduced to ensure equality of access to provision officially approved and subsidised by the German-speaking Community. In particular, methods have been devised to calculate the (means-tested) financial contribution of parents so that it is easier for children from families at a socio-economic disadvantage to secure access to ECEC settings and home childminding facilities.

Belgium – Flemish Community

There is no special definition to describe children 'at risk'. However, several measures have been introduced to ensure equality of access to formal provision (parental contribution ruling, priority to certain care applications, flexible and occasionally needed child care, etc.).

Bulgaria

Children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian are considered to be at risk. Other criteria relate to the family situation and the psychological and physical well-being of the child: being an orphan or separated from parents; victims of violence, abuse or exploitation (from within the family or outside of it); children growing up in a situation which is considered dangerous for their physical, mental, moral or social well-being; and finally, children with a physical or mental disability or those with a chronic illness.

Czech Republic

While there appears to be no general definition for 'at risk' children between birth and the age of 3, groups such as socially excluded or endangered children and the families of immigrants may be included. In the case of those aged over 3, the Education Act defines 'socially disadvantaged' children as asylum seekers or asylum holders, children for whom institutional education has been ordered, or those whose family environment suffers from social and cultural deprivation. Several national strategies focusing on various 'at risk' groups exist, including the National Family Policy Concept, the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion, the Care Strategy for Endangered Children and Children Living Outside their Families, the Concept of Roma Integration, and the Concept of Immigrant Integration within the Territory of the Czech Republic.

Denmark

No formal definition is given. However, attention is paid to the environment of children in day care facilities by means of learning plans and child environment impact assessment in order to promote the development of socially disadvantaged children and counter social exclusion.

Germany

No formal definition is given. However, one of the aims of the Standing Conference 'Framework for early Education in the Pre-school Sector' is 'the specific promotion of children with development risks who are in danger of disability'.

Estonia

An official definition of 'risk' does not exist, but the target groups or children at risk who need additional support for their development have been determined. These groups are children living in poverty, children without parental care and children belonging to a national minority and/or other minority groups.

Ireland

Risk is defined in terms of poverty and social exclusion. The 1997 definition states that 'people are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, social and cultural) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society

generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.'

Greece

Special education caters for persons with lower performance levels at school because their mother tongue is not Greek, children who suffer from socio-economic disadvantages (immigrants, children from single parent families, the children of repatriates, children without parental care, etc.), children with mental or body disabilities, or even pupils with special cognitive abilities and talents who do not need special educational treatment.

Spain

Children at risk include the following groups: adopted minors or minors in foster care; adolescents settling in into working life; mistreated minors; offending minors; minors liable to social disadvantage and social exclusion; minors prone to absenteeism and school failure; immigrants; unaccompanied foreign minors; minors who consume toxic substances; children from single-parent families or who suffer family break-up; children with disabilities; minors in hospital or those with chronic illnesses; and children from minorities. Clear objectives set explicitly for all such groups are summarised in a Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs document entitled 'Foundations for the Design of an Integral Strategy for Children and Adolescents at Risk and for the Socially Disadvantaged'. Furthermore, a royal decree in 1996 identifies children at risk of failing at school as: children who have difficulty in accessing or attending school regularly for social or geographic reasons; children who belong to disadvantaged ethnic or cultural minorities and children who are unable to have a normal school life due to personal, family or social reasons.

France

The term 'at risk' is hardly ever used and never appears in official documents: its use is limited in particular to the health field. The OECD transnational category is equivalent to so-called category IV used in France. It consists of skilled and unskilled workers, farm labourers, retired salaried staff or workers, unemployed people who have never worked, and professionally inactive persons. The term is used collectively to describe all children whose parents belong mainly to this category, or neighbourhoods or catchments areas in which the proportion of people in this category is significantly greater.

Italy

'Risk' is usually associated with situations of socio-cultural deprivation.

Cyprus

'At risk' children are defined as follows: children whose physical, mental, social and emotional health and welfare are endangered as a result of their unfavourable socio-economic background and limited early educational experiences; children who come from homes with social problems, which are under the supervision of the welfare services (e.g. homes in which the parents are on state support, suffering from mental illness, or in prison, or in which the family has broken up, as well as single parent families); children whose parents are political asylum seekers; and children from disadvantaged groups (such as economic immigrants, with different cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic backgrounds).

Latvia

The term 'child from a group at risk' is used to refer to a child who is in a critical situation owing to his/her state of well-being or health, or way of life. Thus children from low-income families, disadvantageous families and those who break the law, etc. belong to 'at risk' groups. The term 'disadvantageous families' refers to those whose circumstances are unlikely to favour the development of children due to parental misconduct or negligence.

Lithuania

The following risk groups are identified: children growing up in socially vulnerable or socially excluded families; children with parents whose rights are restricted; orphans and children from rural backgrounds; the children of migrants and immigrants; and children from national minorities (e.g. Roma).

Luxembourg

'At risk' children are essentially those of immigrant origin whose mother tongue is not Letzeburgesch.

Hungary

The concept of 'children at a disadvantage' is generally linked to the economic or educational status of their parents, although other (cultural) factors are referred to in development programmes and policy statements. Children who suffer from socio-economic and/or cultural disadvantages are dealt with extensively under the Hungarian legal framework. Two types of social/economic/cultural disadvantage are defined: children with disadvantages and children with multiple disadvantages. Firstly, children whose families receive financial assistance for their education (allocated on the basis of per capita income) or those who are under the protection of the courts. Secondly, children with multiple disadvantages relating to the first criteria who also have parents who have not been educated beyond primary level or children in foster care.

Malta

An official definition of 'risk' is not applied to children directly but high-risk socio-economic areas are recognised and identified. In the state school sector, disadvantaged children from such areas are given appropriate support by social workers whenever serious problems are identified in the early years. No support is offered specifically to take account of the cultural and/or language factors affecting children from ethnic groups.

The Netherlands

The national definition states that the parental level of education is the only criterion for determining whether children are 'at risk'. Ethnicity was formerly a criterion but the definition has recently been changed. More specifically, a two-tier risk weighting is applicable such that the weighting is 0.3 if both parents have experienced junior secondary vocational education (LBO/VBO/MBO) but have progressed no further, and 1.2 if one parent experiences only primary education and the other progresses no further than LBO/VBO/MBO. Municipal authorities and school boards are free to determine which children may participate in early childhood education for those at risk of educational disadvantage. In most cases, the national definition is adhered to.

Austria

There is no formal national definition of 'children at risk'. The concept is commonly used for children from low socio-economic (with regard to poverty, unemployment, broken families, negligence etc.) or migrant background.

Poland

No formal definition is given. The risk factors which may be detrimental for the development of young children include poverty and unemployment, which in turn exacerbate family conflicts, contributing to social exclusion and other social problems.

Portugal

No formal definition is given. There are early signs of a growing tendency to broaden the term 'children at risk' and certain policies – such as early intervention – to cover children from groups at a socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic disadvantage.

Romania

There is no official national definition of 'at risk children', although the concept is often applied to various measures aimed at supporting children in difficult situations or from vulnerable groups. 'At risk children' covers a broad range of circumstances and risk itself is seen more in terms of categories than in individual terms, with criteria related to family/parental circumstances.

Slovenia

At national level, there is no generally applicable operational definition of 'risk', although definitions of single concepts exist in specialised literature. Concepts such as 'disadvantaged', 'vulnerable', and 'minority' groups are also used. 'At risk' pre-school children include those with special needs, those from the Italian and Hungarian minorities and Roma children. In addition, the Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016 is concerned with socially disadvantaged children, those who are victims of neglect and violence, children with special needs, Roma children, unaccompanied children and those with behavioural problems.

Slovakia

No formal definition is given. Experts agree that the origin of various associated with emotional imbalance, neurosis, apathy, lack of care, parental unemployment, Romany families and immigrants, etc., may be traced back to the early stages of a child's development. In such cases, a positive climate in pre-primary provision may to some extent compensate for insufficient family care.

Finland

There is no national definition of risk. Creating equity is not a question of one specific practice or another but is a complex web of practices interacting with and facilitating each other. However, the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education in Finland (2000) and the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (2003) acknowledge the need to support certain children, such as Sami, Roma and migrant children, although the possible need for support is assessed on an individual basis. Childcare professionals thus treat children as individuals and interdisciplinary teams are available to support each child.

Sweden

No specific definition is given. However, the Education Act (1997: 1212) states that: "Pre-schooling and welfare for school children shall be based on the needs of each child. Children who for physical, mental or other reasons need special support in their development shall be given the care their special needs demand'. Children in need of special support may include those with psycho-social or other problems, such as difficulty in concentrating, who have special rights in the childcare system. Otherwise special targeted policies for specific groups of children in pre-school activities are rare.

United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland

In England, the focus is on identifying children at risk of not doing well with respect to any of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being. *Every Child Matters* is a comprehensive cross-governmental programme of reform for children's services, including health, family support, childcare and education services. The aim is to improve these outcomes for all children and also to narrow the gap in outcomes between those who do well and those who do not. The programme therefore includes universal services but also greater support for those in most need, with an emphasis on protecting vulnerable children and ensuring that children do not fall through the net.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has seven core aims for all children in Wales; to ensure that all children have: a 'flying start' in life; a comprehensive range of education training and learning opportunities; enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation; have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; are treated with respect and have race and cultural identity recognised; have a safe home and community; are not disadvantaged by poverty. A number of outcomes have been identified for each aim, and the focus is on identifying children at risk of not achieving these outcomes. As in England, there are universal services but also greater support for those in most need, with an emphasis on protecting vulnerable children and ensuring that children do not fall through the net.

In Northern Ireland, the ten year strategy for children and young people aims to ensure that children and young people are: healthy; enjoying, learning and achieving; living in safety and with stability; experiencing economic and environmental well-being; contributing positively to community and society; living in a society which respects their rights. The aim of the strategy is to improve outcomes for all children and to narrow the gap between those who do best and those who do worst. The strategy will be delivered through the provision of universal services, supported by more targeted responses to safeguard children most in need.

United Kingdom – Scotland

There is no national definition of risk in the terms used in this report – i.e. at risk of exclusion due to social disadvantage. There are statutory definitions which may apply to provision for some children considered 'at risk'. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places duties on local authorities for children 'in need'. Children in need are those who have not or are not likely to achieve or maintain reasonable health or development or whose health or development could be seriously impaired if services are not provided; or children who are disabled or adversely affected by the disabilities of others. In terms of accessing ECEC, authorities have criteria for assessing children and families. In general, factors such as whether a child has special needs, substance misuse in the home, domestic violence in the home, mental health (of children and parents) and whether a child is 'looked after' will be taken into account.

Iceland

There is no special definition for children at risk between birth and the age of 5, which is based on disadvantages related to socio-economic, cultural or language factors. The Pre-primary School Act states that children in need of special support are entitled to the help they require within pre-school, with guidance from a professional advisor.

Liechtenstein

No formal definition is given. In public nursery schools, children from immigrant families are among the 'at risk' groups.

Norway

There is no special definition of 'risk' but the term is normally understood to cover the children of poor parents and children whose parents are unable to take care of them, as well as those from ethnic and cultural minorities. According to Section 5-7 of the Education Act (Act 17 July 1998 No. 61 relating to Primary and Secondary Education), children with specific needs have a legal right to special education/special educational help before school age. The most common reason for giving children special educational help is that they have communication and language problems, but many of these children also have difficulty in moving or concentrating, or suffer from mental difficulties or psychosocial problems.

Annex 2:

National Framework on Early Childhood Education and Care

(Content under the responsibility of Eurydice National Units)

All the national authors are acknowledged at the end of the report

Short descriptions available for:

Belgium – Flemish community	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Malta
Czech Republic	The Netherlands
Germany	Austria
Estonia	Poland
Spain	Slovenia
France	Finland
Cyprus	The United Kingdom –England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Latvia	Norway

Belgium – Flemish community

There is a **clear division between child care and education**. Child care is the responsibility of the agency *Kind en Gezin* which falls under the authority of the Minister for Welfare, while the Education Department, headed by the Flemish Minister for Education and Training, is responsible for nearly all aspects of education policy. Education and care in Early Childhood (ECEC) is divided into the following two areas: care for children from birth to 3 years and out-of-school-care for children from 2.5 years to 12, and pre-primary education for children from the age of 2.5 years. Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18.

The **child care sector** is an integrated system with no separate provisions for children at risk. About 7.3 % of children born in 2007 were born into an underprivileged family (4 828 children). In Flanders deprivation is mainly an inner-city problem and a significant number of deprived families are immigrants. Almost 60 % of the children in underprivileged families were born to mothers who are not of Belgian nationality. Use of child care by ethnic minority children and children from underprivileged families under the age of three is much lower than in the population as a whole (2004), and children in single-parent families also make less use of child care than the general population (2004).

Research has shown that it is not the cost of child care alone that plays a part, but also **formal and informal ('cultural') barriers** that socially vulnerable groups in particular come up against. Formal barriers include waiting lists and the requirement for regular attendance and respecting rules in childcare. Informal ('cultural') barriers also play a part. These include the way in which child care is publicised, the language spoken in the child care facility and the cultural background of the staff. These barriers often lead families from ethnic minorities and underprivileged families to perceive child care as being 'something that isn't for us'.

Different measures to boost participation of at-risk children in child care include:

- The ruling on parental contribution: in subsidised care facilities, parents pay a contribution in proportion to their income.

- Priority given to certain applications for child care (e.g. from low-income families or for children of single-parent families).
- Community and neighbourhood services: in order to reduce the informal barriers for the target group, half of the staff members come from at-risk groups themselves and the working method very much involves the participation of parents, children and community.
- Flexible and ad hoc child care.
- Reorganisation of child care in the next few years: 16 pilot projects were approved to find out how larger local or regional cooperation can guarantee accessible child care.

Nursery education forms a part of basic education which runs from the ages of 2.5 to 12 (primary education is for children between 6 and 12). The only general prerequisite for nursery education is age. Children with specific educational needs can attend special nursery schools. Attendance is not compulsory. However, as nursery school is the key to increase chances of success at school, many efforts are made to encourage parents to send their children to nursery school. Admission to Flemish nursery education is free. Schools cannot charge fees and everything that is necessary for attaining developmental objectives must be offered by the school free of charge. For any extras (*inter alia* magazines, extramural activities), schools are allowed to charge parents a maximum of 20 EUR per year. In order to support underprivileged parents a system of study grants exists.

Each nursery school decides how to divide young children into groups. Most schools use a year group system. Government grants, teaching times and operating budgets depend on the number of pupils. The government has also drawn up **developmental objectives**. These are minimum targets regarding the knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes that educational authorities consider children should have acquired at the end of nursery school. Developmental objectives have been designed for physical education, musical education, Dutch, environmental studies and introduction to mathematics. These developmental objectives can be converted into concrete curricula by the school (although in practice this is mostly by the educational networks).

Most pupils progress from nursery school to primary school at the age of six (or, more precisely on the first of September in the year they turn six) although they can also do this at the age of five or seven, at the parents' discretion.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria is divided into 28 regions and 264 municipalities. The **public education system** includes kindergartens (*detska gradina*), schools and education services. Bulgarian is the official language in kindergartens.

There are **state, municipal and private kindergartens**. The state kindergartens are regarded as being of national importance and therefore are directly funded by the central authorities, the Ministry of Education and Science or other ministries and bodies. The municipal kindergartens may be opened, transformed or closed upon an order issued by the mayor of the municipality following a decision of the Municipal Council. The funds for Education and Care in Early Childhood (ECEC) provision for the municipal kindergartens are allocated at local level by municipalities. Private nurseries (*detska yasla* – for children from 10 months to 3 years old) and kindergartens are not subsidized from the public funds.

Kindergartens may be **full-day, half-day or weekly**. They are intended for children aged 3-6/7 years old, until their enrolment in primary school. Full-day and weekly kindergartens can also accommodate nursery groups for the youngest children aged 10 months up to 3 years old, until the age they start first grade (unitary settings). Public support for children in state and municipal kindergartens comes from the public budget at central and municipal level respectively. Parents pay fees to the extent determined by the Municipal Council, in compliance with the Local Taxes and Fees Act.

Children are enrolled in kindergartens only if their parents or guardians so wish. Parents or guardians are also free to choose which kindergarten their child attends. During the school year 2007/2008 74.8 % of children aged between 3 and 6 years are enrolled in kindergartens (National Statistical Institute). Under the National Education Act, as of the 2003/04 school year, it is **compulsory for all children** (at six years olds) **to attend a preparatory year group** (*podgotvitelna grupa*) **either at kindergarten or at primary school**, where they acquire early education and care, specially designed and intended to prepare them for primary school.

The state educational requirements for pre-primary education, training and care define the study content of pre-primary education. For the purposes of the education and care of children in compulsory **preparatory groups at kindergartens**, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed and introduced different modules: one for children who have already attended kindergarten; one for those who have never attended kindergarten and a special one for children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian. There is a special legal provision in place stating that children aged 3-6 who do not have sufficiently good command of Bulgarian must attend additional 'classes' in order to pick up the language. This **Bulgarian language training** follows a specially designed methodology.

Children with special needs are entitled to receive education and care in mainstream kindergartens. Kindergarten heads are legally required to enrol children with special needs and those deemed to be 'at risk' along with other children. Exceptions from this rule, allowing children to be enrolled in 'special' settings providing early education and care, may be made only in very few cases:

- if all other possibilities for enrolling these children in mainstream public kindergartens (state or municipal) have been exhausted;
- if the parents express such a wish in writing.

The minimum education and training required for **teaching staff** employed to provide early education and care for children in kindergartens and nurseries. The initial education and training is provided by higher education institutions and the prospective teachers must acquire at least a 'Professional Bachelor in Education' degree or Bachelor degree (4 years at ISCED level 5A). There are also centres for in-service training for teachers working with younger children deemed to be 'at risk', opened by the Ministry of Education and Science as specialized units, and others operate within the structure of the universities, providing training courses.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, **Early Childhood Education and Care** (ECEC) in accredited facilities differs for the youngest children (up to the age of 3) and for those in the age group 3-5 (pre-primary education). There are two types of institutions managed by different sectors for these children – crèches (*jesle*) and nursery schools (*mateřské školy*). Pre-primary education comes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and is subject to the 2004 Education Act. Care in crèches comes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Conditions of care and education are the same for both public and other facilities (e.g., church and private); there is a difference in their funding. The institutions are mostly public, the majority of them being established by municipalities

Since 1989 and in the years that followed, the number of institutions and places for the youngest children up to the age of 3 in **crèches** has been considerably reduced. In 2006 there were 48 crèches with 1537 places (e.g., for 0.5 % of children in this age group). The state mainly supports care in the family via maternity and parental benefits and leave. Crèches are not funded by the central government: the expenses are covered from the budget of the organising body and by parents (fees). There are no central limitations for the fees. The education focuses on personality development. Most staff are childrens' nurses.

Pre-primary education for children before the age of compulsory education (6 years) in **nursery schools** has a long tradition and is highly developed. Attendance is not compulsory, but 79.2 % of 3-year olds, 92.6 % of 4-year olds and 95.8 % of 5-year olds attend a nursery school (data for the year 2007/08). It is possible to accept younger children (they form about 20 % in proportion to the age group of 2-year olds). Currently there are also older children (about 20 % in proportion to the age group of 6-year olds) whose school attendance has been deferred, usually at their parents' request. The teachers have a teaching qualification at the ISCED level 3A or 5A/B. Parents of children attending public schools can be asked to pay a maximum of 50 % of the running (not educational) costs covered by the organising body. The last year before compulsory education is guaranteed and is free of charge. Full day service, which is the most common form, usually comprises 6.5 to 12 hours depending on local conditions. The education is based on the Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education, which was approved in 2004, and has been obligatory for schools since 2007/08. Every school has its own school educational programme. Pre-primary education has the following main objectives: a child's development and its ability to learn, enabling children to acquire the basic values on which our society is based, to become independent and to be able to express themselves as individuals in relation to their surroundings.

Children (3 years and older) with disabilities and disadvantaged children (i.e., including the socially disadvantaged – at-risk children) are integrated in the mainstream nursery schools or there are schools specially established for disabled children, e.g., children with visual impairment. Since 2001 preparatory classes (*přípravné třídy*) can be established at basic schools (*základní školy*) – ISCED 1+2 – for socially disadvantaged children during the year prior to their starting compulsory school. Around 2 % of pupils entering compulsory education come from these classes. For disabled as well as at-risk children in nursery school or preparatory class a teacher's assistant can be employed.

Germany

Today, external supervision in day-care centres or by caregivers at home (*Tagesmütter*) is regarded as an essential part of the education system for children in the **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)**. Under the Child and Youth Welfare Act of 1990, day-care centres for children are called upon to encourage a child's development into a responsible and autonomous member of the community. This duty includes instructing, educating and caring for a child and relates to a child's social, emotional, physical and mental development. The Child and Youth Welfare Act was amended within the framework of the Maternity and Family Welfare Act of July 1992 and expanded to include the legal right, introduced on 1 January 1996 and in force without restriction since 1 January 1999, to a *Kindergarten* place for all children from the age of three years until they start school.

Based on this legislation, **day-care centres** should be aiming to support and supplement a child's upbringing in the family and to assist the parents in better reconciling employment and child rearing. In terms of pedagogy and organisation, the range of services offered should be based on the needs of the children and their families. Qualified staff should enable children to discover the world through play and develop their abilities and skills. Under the responsibility of the *Kindergarten*, the transfer of children to primary school in line with their level of development should be improved.

Currently, the federal government in cooperation with the *Länder* and local authorities fosters the **expansion of day care for children until age three**. According to the Children's Advancement Act, which will enter into force by the beginning of 2009 at the latest, day care for children until age three should be extended by 2013 in such a manner as to meet the actual needs of parents and their children. By 2013, every third child under the age of three should be provided with day care facilities. Thirty percent of the new day care places will be provided by caregivers at home. At the same time, a legal claim to day care facilities will be introduced. Under this Act, the *Länder* are required to give concrete form to the general outlines of the law e.g. quality and quantity through their own legislation.

In addition to quantitative expansion, the quality of support in day-care centres for children as well as the qualification of caregivers at home should be ensured and further developed through pedagogical concepts and evaluation measures. Currently, special importance is attached to **measures for the improvement of linguistic competence of children** from the age of three as soon as pre-primary education starts. In all *Länder*, development and implementation of educational plans, as well as educational concepts, for the ECEC sections of day-care centres for children are either in preparation or have already been carried out, taking especial account of the promotion of linguistic competence. In the majority of the *Länder*, particular importance is attached to improving the linguistic competence of children with migrant backgrounds. In about half of the *Länder*, the measures also include their parents.

Another priority is to improve the **links between ECEC institutions and primary schools**, which is also aimed at flexibilisation of the school entrance phase. In particular, the objective is to strengthen collaboration between daycare centres for children and the primary sector. In order to guarantee the continuity of early education between the ECEC sector and the primary sector, in 2004, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Conference of the Ministers of Youth together adopted a framework for early education in the ECEC sector, as well as a recommendation to strengthen and further develop the overall relationship between education, upbringing and supervision.

Estonia

In Estonia, a **child protection system** has been created that is directed at all children. The system operates on two levels: **at state level and at municipal level**. State child protection includes legislative, investment and supervision activities financed from the state budget and the social fund for the organisation of children's health care, education, work, rest, recreational activities and welfare. The Ministry of Social Affairs co-ordinates activities in relation to state child protection. Child protection provided by local governments is the organisation of and supervision of child protection and assistance by local government social services departments.

Starting in the 1990s, families with children have been supported by partially compensating the costs of caring for, raising and educating children. There are six types of **benefits**: maternity benefit, paternal benefit, parental benefit, universal family benefits, tax credits and vacation benefits.

Pre-primary institutions fulfil the task of children's day care as well as education and schooling, but they are not part of the formal school system. It is not obligatory to attend a pre-primary institution. Pre-primary education may be acquired also at home and is the responsibility of parents or guardians.

Local government is obliged to provide all children aged 1-7 with an opportunity to attend a pre-primary institution. This obligation includes children with physical, speech, sensual or intellectual disabilities or those who need special help or special care. This will enable children from families with socio-economic problems to participate in pre-primary education, create preconditions for the early detection of a child's special needs and for supporting development, and ensure equal opportunities to all children for a smooth transfer to primary school. In order to ensure the possibility of attending a pre-primary educational institution for all children, local municipalities receive support from the state budget for the creation of kindergartens (*lasteaed*) places and the modernisation of childcare institutions, as well as comparability of kindergarten teachers' salaries with the salaries of basic school teachers. Children who have attained the age of compulsory school attendance are admitted to school without any pre-selection tests: a school is required to ensure a study opportunity for each child subject to the obligation to attend school who resides in the catchment area of that school.

Childcare services and the requirements related thereto are laid down in the Social Welfare Act. Childcare services are directed to the person bringing up the child, which can be a parent, guardian, or caregiver in the family. It is considered as an extra care opportunity for those who cannot find a place in pre-primary education for their children or prefer this type of care for different reasons.

If the need for ECEC institution places exceeds the available possibilities, local municipalities support parents financially in organising child minding. Minding children with severe disabilities is supported by the state budget.

Spain

In Spain, pre-primary education (*Educación Infantil*) has been strongly promoted in the last decades as it is considered as an educational level with a marked preventive and compensating nature. **Pre-primary education** constitutes the first level of the Spanish education system. It is **divided into two cycles** (0-3 and 3-6 years), therefore this level encompasses from the first months in a baby's life to the age of six, at which compulsory schooling starts. The educational attention in both cycles is different in many aspects (qualifications required for teachers, curriculum, guarantee of free posts only in the second cycle, etc.). However, they also have many aspects in common (same general aims, general content/experimental areas, etc.)

The **pre-primary education policy**, in terms of general principles and goals, is established by the central government for the whole stage (0-6 years). For the 3-6 years cycle there is a national core curriculum as well as regulations on the organisation and functioning of schools established at central level. On the other hand, both the curriculum and the organisation of the first cycle (0-3 years) have been the full responsibility of the Autonomous Communities since the approval of the 2006 Education Act.

The rate of **participation** in the educational system of children aged 3 to 6 is almost 100 %, while the participation rate of ages 0-3 is increasing (it reached an average of 18 % in 2007). Most of the provision is either public or private publicly funded. Education has been free of charge for all children in the second cycle (3-6 years) since 2005, but not in the first cycle (0-3 years). In Spain, early childhood providers generally offer a 'full day provision', this is, extensive opening hours that take account of the needs of working parents. Spain has adopted a comprehensive approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC) (although not always provided through unitary settings) by recognising that such provision constitutes the first step on the educational path.

The 2006 *Lei Orgánica de Educación* (LOE) states that the first cycle of pre-primary education must be provided by **teachers** specialised in pre-primary education, by professionals with the equivalent Bachelor's degree, or by other properly qualified staff (currently, advanced pre-primary technicians). In all cases, drawing up and monitoring the teaching plan must be under the responsibility of a qualified teacher specialised in pre-primary education or with an equivalent first-cycle degree. On the other hand, teachers of the second cycle of pre-primary education must be teachers specialised in pre-primary education or staff who hold an equivalent Bachelor's degree. These teachers may be supported by pre-primary education teachers specialised in other areas when it is required.

Several **measures** have been put in place **to promote the access and presence** of children aged 0 to 6 in the educational system, such as: increasing the number of available places; balancing the distribution of children from socially and culturally disadvantaged groups between public and private publicly funded schools; offering grants for pre-primary education pupils (amounts depending on the family income, among other); priority of access to publicly funded pre-primary schools for children of working parents; priority of access to funded pre-primary schools for children from families with low incomes; and, reserved places and reduction of the cost of schooling for children 0-3 at risk. Compensatory measures are applied in those schools attended by a high percentage of children from disadvantaged background. Moreover, there are measures addressed to children who cannot follow the regular schooling (e.g. hospitalized students, children of itinerant workers). In addition, flexible organisational solutions are designed for pupils in rural areas.

There are different administrative levels involved in the **financing of the provision of ECEC**: central, regional, local and/or family contributions. There are in addition some strategies to support the provision for children from groups at risk, including additional financial and/or human resources.

France

Childcare policy in France forms part at the same time of family policy, social and employment policy and education policy. The demographic growth observed for several years now and the fairly high level of women in work are largely explained by the country's family policy and specifically the childcare policy in place for over 40 years and which represents 1.8 of gross domestic product.

As regards children under three, the aim is so far as possible to **promote freedom of choice for parents**, that is to say, to allow parents to choose to look after the child, and where necessary to stop work in order to do so, or to entrust the child to others and carry on working. The broad lines of the policy are therefore as follows:

- to enable couples to have the number of children they want: surveys show that the number of children is slightly less than parents want, and that the options available for childcare play a significant role in this;
- to promote equality between men and women, women's work and a balance between family, work and community life;
- to promote the development of children and their social and cultural awareness;
- to support parents in their educational role;
- to combat exclusion and contribute to equality of opportunity and social development.

As regards children between three and six, the aim is **to give them all a place at nursery school** (*école maternelle*). At the same time as being a favourable environment for the development of all facets of a child's personality – emotional, social, intellectual and physical, etc. – nursery school is regarded as an indispensable stage in schooling, the one which is decisive in getting a successful start. Parents value attendance at nursery school as an opportunity for their children, as well as a form of free child care. Nursery schools contribute to the target of equality, as a time and a place where major difficulties which could hinder education can be spotted and prevented, they constitute a decisive stage in making up language gaps before a child learns to read, and they socialise children, enabling them to become schoolchildren before going to primary, school.

A few figures:

Socio-demographic context in France:

- Total population: 61.6 million
- Number of births: 807 000 in 2005; 774 000 in 2000; 729 000 in 1995
- Fertility rate: 1.92
- Female employment rate 24/49 age group: 82 %
- Percentage of children under six where both parents work: nearly 60 %.

For around 2.4 million children aged between 0 and 3:

- 250 000 crèche places, 190 000 children under 2 at nursery school
- 64 000 places at childcare centres (childminders employed by the State and supervised by a headmistress)
- 353 000 practising childminders (working in their own homes)
- 55 000 people employed by parents to look after their children at home.

In total, 46 % of children receive a form of childminding with State help (54 % with the 2 years at nursery school). However, nearly 10 % fail to find a satisfactory childcare solution.

For around 2.4 million children aged between 3 and 6:

- 17 773 nursery schools giving places to all children

Sources:

Education et accueil des jeunes enfants, pages 14 and 15, downloadable:
<http://www.travail.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport.pdf>

For the figures: Introduction to the Plan petite enfance, page 4:
http://www.lagazette-sante-social.com/complementsWeb/GSS_nov06/plan_petite_enfance.pdf

Cyprus

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Cyprus have been developing rapidly since the 1970s as a result of the growing recognition of the importance of the early years in the subsequent development and education of children. It has also been a means to relieve and support refugee families and children among the 200 000 displaced people following the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Although the **concepts of care and education** should coexist and be integrated in all kinds of pre-primary provision, in Cyprus they are **separated** due to British influence on the one hand – Cyprus was a British colony for over half a century – and as a result of existing tradition and administrative structures on the other. Most day nurseries (*Nipiokomikoi Paidokomikoi Stathmoi*) are therefore private and operate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. They offer care and supervision for children aged 0 to 4 years and 8 months. Nursery schools (*nipiagogia*) are public, community run or private sector and are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture. For children aged 3 to 5 years and 8 months, nursery schools also offer educational programmes. If there are any vacant places in nursery schools, they are offered to younger children. Priority is given to children at risk from very low income families, from families with four or more children, children of political asylum seekers and refugees and children with special needs. Depending on the circumstances in each case, these children may also be entitled to a reduction of fees or to free attendance.

Children aged 3 to 4 years and 8 months can attend either nursery school or a day care centre, depending on what their parents decide. Although private day care centres and private nursery schools provide for the needs of working parents through extended programmes, the Ministry of Education and Culture is developing and testing a pilot programme for all-day public nursery schools that will be free for children of compulsory school age and of low cost for children aged 3- 4 years and 8 months.

Since September 2004, **pre-primary education** in Cyprus has been **compulsory and free for children aged between 4 years and 8 months and 5 years and 8 months** (and optional for children aged from 3 to 4 years and 8 months). This enactment of the law has been a milestone in the development of pre-primary education on the island, not only in the sense of safeguarding accredited programmes for the vulnerable early years but also by providing equal educational opportunities to all children regardless of their socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic origins.

Through early intervention and Education Action Priority Zones, accredited programmes provide for special educational needs and individual differences and at the same time compensate for the poor educational experiences of children at risk. Another step forward is the reduction in class sizes from 30 to 25. As of the school (academic) year 2008/09, this is a legal requirement. **Disadvantaged children, children with special needs, and children considered to be at risk** are in mainstream schooling but attend programmes differentiated by specialists and with fewer children per class (twenty in the Priority Zones and up to six in special units in regular schools). Extra hours are provided for language classes for non native speakers. Community nursery schools (introduced in 1989), in cooperation with their parent's association, can establish nursery schools with a subsidy from the

Ministry of Education and Culture. The aim is to promote equal educational opportunities and quality educational programmes for young children in small, remote rural communities and in disadvantaged areas populated with a high percentage of refugees and working mothers.

The extension of free and compulsory education to all children from the age of 3 years and 8 months is the target and vision of the newly elected government of Cyprus. At the same time, the focus regarding the care and supervision of children in day care centres is on accreditation of the qualifications of caregivers, improvement of premises and equipment and enhancement of the quality of the programmes offered.

Latvia

Legislation stresses the **'readiness for school' approach** in early childhood education (The Education Act of 1999). This is emphasised regarding non-mandatory Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from the age of one to five, when the Act speaks about 'preparation for the acquisition of basic education by five year and six-year old children' (amendments since 2002).

On the other hand, in public discourse ECEC institutions seen as means of helping working parents. When the demographic crisis began in Latvia (at the end of 1980s – the beginning of 1990s) the birth rate has decreased each year since then with the exception of the few last years, when the number of newborns has again been rising slowly, causing **a lack of places in childcare institutions**. However, experts predict that the birth rate increase will not continue in the future, and Latvia is under threat of depopulation. However, in order to maintain the increase in the birth rate it is necessary, in the opinion of experts, to develop actively a network of ECEC institutions – the further development of provision is a factor in improving employment and the upbringing of children. If parents can access both spheres then families will probably bring up more than a one child, for two or three-child families are required to maintain the population.

Beside the shortage of available places in kindergartens (*bērnudārzis*) another problem is **a shortage of teachers**. Since 2007 persons qualified as primary teachers may work also in ECEC institutions. Primary teachers who have started work in ECEC institutions are obliged to take continuing professional development courses (72 hours). Higher educational institutions which offer ECEC teacher study programmes are eligible to provide such continuing professional development courses. In Latvia, municipalities are responsible for providing children with ECEC institutions. Salaries for teachers engaged in mandatory education programmes for five and six-year olds are paid from the central budget. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Science proposed that salaries for all teaching staff in ECEC institutions (enrolling 1-6-years old children) be paid from the state budget. However this reform for the time being been postponed by the Government.

Limited opportunities to obtain ECEC services and insufficient preparation for primary school are typical problems of the **children of at-risk families**. Children from families where one or both parents are alcoholics or drug addicts, or where the parents have a low level of education, and children from low-income families often do not attend ECEC settings. In many municipalities, when enrolling children in mainstream ECEC settings, priority is given to children from at-risk families. Municipalities make decisions based on applications by a social service agency or family court. There is no problem for providers in responding to demand for sensitivity to ethnic and linguistic differences. Many groups are integrated, especially in the capital Riga.

The Latvian National Development Plan 2007-2013 states that: 'The country's task is to give every individual [...] access to pre-primary education in all the regions of Latvia.' The document emphasises that it has to be ensured that all groups of inhabitants have an equal opportunity to acquire pre-primary education. It has been declared at central level that **the national task is to encourage development of a network of ECEC institutions and alternative child-care services**.

Lithuania

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) are offered to children aged from one to seven years and is an integral, yet not compulsory, part of the education system. Though defined as ECEC this stage is even so composed of two parts which serve different purposes:

- **pre-school** education from the age of 1 year to 5-6 years: to help children satisfy their inherent, cultural, including ethnic, social, and cognitive needs;
- **pre-primary education** from 6 to 7 years: to help children prepare for successful schooling in accordance with the primary education curriculum.

Provision of pre-school and pre-primary education is an **independent function of municipalities**. Therefore, the degree of accessibility and quality level (especially to children of high risk groups) may show considerable variation across different municipalities.

In 2006, 19.3 percent of children aged from one to three participated in pre-school education programmes and 64.2 percent of children from three to six years old. At the national level, measures have been implemented aimed at encouraging **the participation of at-risk children** in pre-school and pre-primary education. Pre-school and pre-primary education groups in rural areas are supported financially, and positions for psychologists, social pedagogues, special needs teachers in kindergartens and educational psychology services for work with at-risk children have been created. Children from disadvantaged families are offered free meals. Flexible provision is offered (e.g., several hours per day, several days per week, weekend and other types) and various forms of complex services are provided simultaneously to a child and its family. Multiple measures related to at-risk children are implemented by municipalities.

The **National Minority Integration into Lithuanian Society Programme** is being implemented. Children of migrant workers and immigrant families are provided focussed language training and with social and cultural integration programmes. A separate national project is targeted at the social, cultural and educational integration of Roma children. There are plans to commit the support received from the European Structural Funds in the period from 2007-2013 for that purpose.

At national level, the **quality of education** is ensured through the following **measures**:

- a maximum group size per adult, hygiene and safe environment requirements have been fixed;
- pre-primary education is offered in accordance with the General Pre-Primary Education Programme and applying the Pre-Primary Education Standards approved by the Minister of Education and Science;
- pre-school and pre-primary education programmes are provided by teachers with advanced vocational or higher education and a teaching qualification. Their professional development (five days yearly) is mandatory, as is also a teacher attestation every five years to assess teachers' performance.

The national level statistics provide only general figures reflecting the provision of pre-school and pre-primary education. By 2009 it is planned to create **indicators for monitoring pre-school and pre-primary education** in municipalities and to conduct monitoring of pre-school and pre-primary education in municipalities against the indicators every three years.

Malta

Pre-primary education for 4 year olds in Kindergarten centres has been provided since the late seventies, extended to 3 year olds in 1988 and lowered to 2 years 9 months in 2007. Child Care for 0 to 36 months in child day care centres is a more recent addition to the education services. Two policy documents, 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' and 'Early Childhood Education and Care' have been published to improve practice in all areas.

Most parents choose to send their children to Kindergarten centres notwithstanding that this level of education is not compulsory. Parents have free choice (state or private) of provision which is free in state and church schools and thus there are no barriers to **access to early childhood education and care** (ECEA). State Kindergarten centres are available to all in every town and village to ensure ease of accessibility. The duration of provision differs in both the state and private sectors.

Children's participation in Kindergarten centres is over 95 % but not so high in **child day care centres**. One reason is that working mothers prefer to leave their very young children with family members. Another reason is the financial aspect, although working parents and employers have various benefits to help with the cost of provision. Concessions for workers in the private sector are presently at the discretion of employers. Parent participation includes representation on school councils, attendance at open days and opportunities to meet the school team.

With regard to the **quality in ECEA**, the child/adult ratio for both Kindergarten and Child care group is determined and regulated by the Education authorities. Health and safety issues are monitored in state schools and in the private sector when and if required. The curriculum for both groups focuses on a holistic approach. Important milestones for all children are also indicated.

Specific provisions for children at risk are not yet in place; however, programmes with parental participation are organised to help young children prepare for academic and social success in school. Support **staff** is engaged for children with special needs. Both Kindergarten assistants and child carers follow a vocational course at Diploma level to be able to qualify for working with young children 0-5 years. However, with effect from school year 2015/16 a first degree in the area will be required. Qualifications issued by institutions of higher education duly recognised by the Education authorities are accepted.

In-service courses, seminars, school-based staff development sessions and parents' meetings are held to keep kindergarten assistants and parents **abreast with current teaching methods and strategies**. Sessions in parenting skills are organised in schools with speakers being experts in the field.

ECEC in state schools is funded by central government. Maltese and EU nationals, and foreign children who satisfy specific criteria, do not pay any tuition fees in state schools, but other foreign children pay fees every three months. Fee-free tuition in church schools is possible because these are subsidised by the State. All children attending independent schools pay fees approved by the Minister of Education. Child Day Care centres are privately run without any **funding**, except for parents' fees. Three particular centres provide child care service (for children aged between 18 months to 3-5 years) that is free for those who receive social assistance benefits and/or live on the minimum wage, but there are fees for those who have higher incomes.

State Kindergarten centres are attached to Primary schools thus contributing towards a smooth transition from kindergarten to compulsory schooling. Children in the private sector might attend a different setting altogether, although some centres work in liaison with feeder schools.

Since the introduction of Kindergarten centres, participation and investment in early childhood education have seen a significant increase. Child Care is a relatively recent phenomenon in Maltese society and has yet to be further developed in all areas. It is developing fast however and measures are being taken to provide this service to all parents who require it.

Netherlands

Separate provisions are arranged for childcare and early childhood education in The Netherlands. Childcare is provided by childcare centres and childminders, for children from 0 to 4 years. The principal goal is to enable parents to combine raising children with a job. For children from 4 to 12 years there are out-of-school centres. Early childhood education is available for children from 2 to 6 years, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. children of parents with a low

level of education). It is provided by *peuterspeelzalen* ⁽¹⁾ (children of 2 and 3 years) and *Scholen voor basisonderwijs* ⁽²⁾ (children of 4 and 5 years).

Starting point for **childcare** is a joined responsibility of (central) government, employers and parents. Childcare is, however, not a task of the central government. The central government gives the framework – by legislation – for quality, inspection and funding. The local government is responsible for maintaining the quality requirements, which it delegates to the municipal health authority (GGD). Parents can apply for financial aid to the central government. The system assumes the contribution of the employer (compulsory since 1997); the contribution is paid to the parents as part of the child care allowance. Specific target groups (e.g. students, job-seekers, newly arrived immigrants) can apply for supplementary aid to the municipality. All financial aid is income related.

Child care is settled in the **Law on Child Care** (*Wet kinderopvang*), which **central aims** are:

- more possibilities for parents to combine work and care for children;
- funding through the parents to stimulate the institutions' awareness of price and quality;
- a uniform national system for funding, quality and inspection to avoid differences between municipalities.

THE FORMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDCARE CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FORMAL AND NON FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS.

Formal arrangements

The formal childcare included in the Law on Child Care comprises:

- **day nurseries**, (called 'crèches' as well), for children from the age of 6 weeks till 4 years and opened from 8.00 to 18.00, with an average of 10 hours care per day. The number of them gives care for longer periods and within flexible hours or for 24 hours. The maximum number of children per group and per qualified staff member increase with the age of the children: 12 children per group, under 12 months and 16 children, under 4 years (no more than 8 children under 12 months); 4 children per qualified staff member, under 12 months; 5 children aged 1 to 2; 6 children aged 2 to 3 and 8 children aged 3 to 4.
- **out-of-school care** for 4 to 12 years old attending primary school:
 - 4 to 8 years, maximum of 20 children with one qualified staff member for every 10 children
 - 8 to 12 years, maximum of 30 children with one qualified staff member + extra staff member or another adult.
- **registered childminder** for 0 to 12 years old, with a maximum of 4 children (own children not included), can be available during evenings, nights and at week-ends and are selected according to fixed regulations and mediate between childminders and parents. Childminding through registered institutions is part of the Law on Child Care.
- **parents' participation crèches**, in which parents share the care for children. These crèches have to comply with regulations.

The formal child care not included in the Law on Child Care is:

- the **playgroups** (*peuterspeelzalen*), for children aged 2-4, with an average of 12 to 15 children per group. Open to all children who can go twice a week, for 2 or 3 hours and run by qualified staff. The primary objective is educational: to stimulate children's socio-emotional and motor development. Municipal priority rules may give preference to children on socio-medical grounds or to children with (potential) development disadvantages.

⁽¹⁾ Playgroups offering part-time day-care.

⁽²⁾ Institutions providing 8 years of full-time primary education for pupils aged 4 to 12.

Non formal arrangements include lunchtime supervision or informal childcare by parents, in families.

Pre and early childhood education is targeted at children aged 2 to 5 who run the risk of educational disadvantage. This target group consists of children with poorly educated parents (among them the majority of the children from ethnic minorities). The aim is to tackle educational disadvantage at an early age. Educational programs for children younger than 4 are provided by *peuterspeelzalen*. Early childhood education continues during the first two years of primary education. Since August 2006 municipal authorities have been responsible for the ECEC, while schools have to assume responsibility for subsequent early childhood education.

The segregation between childcare and early childhood education is not as strict as it used to be. Since 2004 each childcare centre has to have a pedagogical plan. Some childcare centres have started working with programmes for early childhood education. In July 2007 the government announced that provisions for childcare and early childhood education will be 'harmonized'. This does not necessarily mean full integration. An important goal is to make early childhood education available for all children who need it, thus as well for children at childcare centres.

Austria

Austria is a federal state composed of nine federal provinces or *Bundesländer*, each with its own parliament and government. The **provincial governments** have **full responsibility** for the organisation, regulation and funding of **Early Childhood Education and Care** (ECEC) services. Provincial laws specify the legal requirements for the major child care institutions, regulating such matters as operational schedules, employment of qualified personnel, standards of buildings and facilities etc. The Austrian ECEC system is, therefore, highly decentralised.

A **strong social pedagogical tradition** with a broad and integrative concept of ECEC characterises the Austrian approach to young children. All of the nine provincial kindergarten laws postulate the social pedagogical approach 'learning through playing', and the aim to complement family education. The concept of 'free playing' (children decide how they want to spend their time for certain periods of the day) as well as a 'child oriented' attitude (corresponding to the individual needs, development and talents of the individual child) are therefore central elements. There is no explicit federal curriculum for the pedagogical work in ECEC services but a great variety of concepts which are based on traditional working methods in the kindergartens and crèches as well as on newer approaches.

Monitoring of structural and process criteria at institutional level is the responsibility of the heads of the centres. According to the provincial laws the provincial inspectors ensure monitoring of kindergartens and crèches. Pedagogical matters and in-service training is also regulated through provincial laws or municipal regulations. Most of the provincial governments offer in-service training that is free of charge.

The ECEC system is very largely public or non-profit. According to Statistic Austria (2007), only 4.6 % of all services are run by private providers. The major centre-based services are Krippen (crèches) for children up to 3 years, Kindergärten (kindergartens) for children generally from 3 to 6 years and mixed-age groups (mostly situated in kindergartens) for children from 1 to 6 years (and sometimes up to 10 years). Enrolment rates indicate a significant increase during the last 10 years for children aged 3 to 6.

Services are highly **subsidised and affordable to parents**, who pay on average 15 % of the costs (child care included). The fees are usually on a sliding scale according to the net household income. The amount of the contribution varies between the provinces and depends on the extent of care. Substantial federal childcare benefit and parental leave measures are a significant feature of Austrian social policy. 3.3 % of GDP is spent on families with young children, which places Austria immediately after the Nordic countries in terms of support for young children and families. (OECD, 2006)

There is no common definition of 'children at risk' used in Austria with regard to the OECD reference category C. All provinces have established **programmes for children and parents with migrant backgrounds**. Financial resources from the provincial governments are used for additional staff in settings with higher numbers of non-German speaking children, for staff with migrant language skills or specially trained staff to promote German language skills as well as for relevant offers for in-service trainings for early childhood pedagogues.

A federal, cross ministerial initiative to **improve German language skills** for children from non-German speaking backgrounds has been introduced in 2005. Since then school registration takes place one year before children enter compulsory primary school. Alongside the early registration an assessment of the child's language proficiency takes place and, if necessary, specific measures integrated in mainstream provisions are offered free of charge. In 2008 this approach has been expanded for all children with language deficits. Furthermore a national curriculum for early language promotion, specific training modules for kindergarten pedagogues and tools for the assessment of language proficiency in kindergartens have been introduced.

References:

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<http://www.sprich-mit-mir.at>

Poland

In Poland **Early Childhood Education and Care** (ECEC) from birth to the age of entry into compulsory school education, i.e. 7 years, is provided in crèches (*złobki*) for children aged 0-3 years and in nursery schools (*przedszkole*) for children from 3 years of age to the age of entry into primary school. Both crèches and nursery schools may be public or non-public institutions. Some nursery schools have set up crèche sections.

Crèches are part of the healthcare system; these are institutions offering healthcare services which include disease prevention and provision of care for children of up to 3 years of age while they parents or guardians are working. Only children of working parents are admitted to crèches. Crèches exist only in cities and towns, in particular big cities. In 2005 only a small proportion of children, i.e. ca 2 % of children aged 0-3 years, were attending crèches.

Crèches offer the following services in accordance with standards set by the age of the child: provision of meals, care and nursing services, sleep and rest hygiene, organisation of indoor and outdoor child-rearing and learning games, disease prevention measures, health promotion activities and corrective-remedial measures, and provision of emergency medical care. Crèches organise **care-related activities only** and do not carry out any learning programmes. Activities stimulating the development of children and learning-oriented activities are organised by child-minders on an occasional basis and are not part of any structured programme.

At the end of 2005, Poland had 371 crèches, including 356 public ones administered by local governments and 15 non-public ones. Moreover, there were 130 crèche sections in nursery schools, including 118 in public nursery schools and 12 in non-public nursery schools. In 2005, crèches had in total 22 913 children, including 1 381 children of 0-1 year of age, 5 962 aged 1 year, 10 833 aged 2 years and 3 913 aged 3 years; 824 of them attended non-public crèches. The **demand** for this type of care provision **is growing every year**.

Nursery schools are part of the educational system. A nursery school is the main setting for pre-primary provision. The network of nursery schools is complemented by nursery sections within primary schools. Pre-primary education is provided for children aged 3 to 5 years. Six-year-old children are

required to complete a preparatory year for primary school in a nursery school or section. Public nursery schools, including those with integration sections and special nursery schools, are established and administered by communes (the lowest-level local government units).

Pre-primary education covers activities supporting the development and education of children from 3 years to the age of entry into primary education. **Learning activities** in a nursery school are organised in accordance with the core curriculum for pre-primary education established by the Minister of National Education: a nursery school aims to support and guide the development of children in accordance with their abilities and potential for development within the context of relations with the socio-cultural and natural environment. Nursery schools and nursery sections in primary schools create conditions enabling children to achieve 'school readiness'. Pre-primary education plays a key role for disadvantaged children. A stimulating educational environment is the only chance for them to reduce the destructive impact of poverty. The main dividing line between areas with widespread and limited availability of pre-primary provision runs between big cities and rural areas. The overall participation rate in pre-primary education for children aged 3 to 5 years was 41.0 % in the school year 2005/06. However, it varied from 58.4 % in urban areas to a much lower rate of 19.1 % in rural areas. Compulsory fees are another barrier restricting access to pre-primary education for children from families in a difficult financial situation.

Decisions concerning the number of public nursery schools and the number of places in these nursery schools are taken by individual communes. The disproportion between the small number of nursery schools and the demand for this type of provision is a widespread problem. All children, regardless of whether or not their parents are working, are admitted to nursery schools and nursery sections in primary schools. Limits are set only by the small number of places as compared to demand; where this is the case, priority is given to six-year-old children and then to children of single parents and disabled people. Only children enrolled in the compulsory preparatory year for primary school (6 year-olds), had full **access to pre-primary education** in the school year 2005/06. The number of crèches and nursery schools is not sufficient to meet the demand. However, the Ministry of National Education proposes to lower the age of starting primary education, so that compulsory full-time education in primary school will concern children starting at the age of 6 years. The year 2008/09 has been nominated the Year of Kindergarten Kid and new forms of ECEC are offered (children's clubs or nursery centres). Children aged 3-5 will be offered better access to ECEC. As of 2009/10 all five-year-old children will have the right to pre-primary education. Starting 2010/11 all five-year-olds will be obliged to undergo a year of preparation for primary school.

Slovenia

Slovenia has a unified and integrated system providing education and care to children from the age of one (following the end of maternity leave) to the age of six (when children must enter the compulsory school). Slovenia also has a relatively dense and easily accessible network of **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)** institutions. Provision of is based on and guided by the following principles: democracy; pluralism; autonomy, professional skills and responsibility of teaching staff; equal opportunities for all children and parents with due consideration of interpersonal diversity; the right to choose and the right to diversity, as well as maintaining the balance between different aspects of the child's physical and mental development and growth.

The **education system** is governed by the Pre-school Education Institutions Act and the Organization and Financing of Education Act (both adopted in 1996, last amended in 2008). Parents have the right to choose the institution and programme which correspond to their personal interests and needs. A large majority of young children in Slovenia attend public ECEC institutions; the remaining 1.7 % attends ECEC programmes offered by privately-owned providers.

Significant conceptual changes and system reforms have been introduced during the last decade in order to increase the diversity of available ECEC programmes, while permitting the foundation of

privately-owned institutions. It has been confirmed that education and care for young children of the highest quality represents a wise investment in the future with a high return. Consequently, the new regulation decreased the maximum number of children per group and/or per adult, thus ensuring improved spatial conditions. Minimum qualification requirements for ECEC teachers have also been raised and now comprise the completion of a professional (or higher) study programme. Whereas the previous curriculum for ECEC was structured in detail and based on standardised group activity, the new curriculum is far more flexible and better suited to correspond to specific development needs of each individual child.

Public **ECEC institutions** are founded and financed by the local communities and through parents' contributions. The latter vary from 0 to 80 % of the full costs, depending on income level. Families are entitled to receive additional support in the form of tax deductions, child allowances and reduced pricing of ECEC services for the second child. ECEC institutions are organized as independent institutions or integrated units within basic schools. Another option includes the provision of childcare in a childminder family or at the child's home. Privately owned institutions are entitled to receive funding also from the public budget.

ECEC institutions and private providers, holding a public concession, must follow the '**National Curriculum for Pre-school Education Institutions**' adopted in 1999. The primary goal of ECEC institutions is to provide each child with a development-stimulating-learning and socialisation. Thus, the curriculum stresses that it is of significant importance to recognise and consider individual child's development potential and to preserve the specific characteristics of early learning and teaching.

ECEC curriculum is designed for children from **two main age-groups**. The first group includes children from the age of 1 to 3 (max. 12 children/group), while the second includes children from the age of 3 to 6 (max. 22 children/group). Groups are either homogenous or combined (composed of children of all ages, from one to six). Each group is instructed and managed by the ECEC teacher, who must hold at least a Bachelor's (or higher) degree, in collaboration with the assistant holding at least a qualification awarded upon the completion of a 4-year upper secondary education programme in the field of ECEC. The education process is also supported by members of highly trained and dedicated professional staff (specialised in counselling, special needs education, nutrition, health and personal care).

The vast majority of children (95.2 % in 2007) attend full-day programmes, which comprise from 6 to 9 hours of activities per day; including four meals and time dedicated to rest and sleep. Other programmes provided include half-day and/or shorter arrangements. ECEC institutions are usually open from 9 to 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, over the entire year. The proportion of **children attending ECEC programmes** is continuously increasing. In 1980, only 38.4 % of all young children attended ECEC institutions, while the proportion increased to 64.8 % in 2007.

Finland

In Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC), **equity** is pursued through means of a set of interacting and mutually supporting practices and policies. The most important features are early identification of individual needs, curricula and guidelines, partnerships and multidisciplinary ECEC staff. Every child has a right for day care and pre-primary education. Local authorities have an obligation to arrange an ECEC place for the child when the parents so wish. The two principal documents guiding the provision of ECEC are the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education and the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Each child entering into ECEC has an **ECEC plan** designed together with the guardians of the child, teachers and other staff, and in some cases professionals outside of the day care centre, on an individual basis. There are projects that supplement the basic methodology, targeted at various groups, but they are less important than the everyday work done on an individual basis. Other measures fostering access to ECEC services for all include the income-based fee-system of day care,

and the family allowance in day care, and free pre-primary education for six-year olds along with free transport and meals.

The assessment of the **child's support needs** is prepared together by parents and education personnel taking previously assessed support into account. A child may need support in the areas of physiology, information, skills, emotional and social development. Children in pre-primary education are entitled to free pupil welfare services. The need for support may also arise in situations where the child's growing environment endangers or does not protect his/her well-being and development. The ECEC plan includes determining and organising the child's need for support, so as to enable children to participate in group activities as fully as possible, and there is normally no segregation of children into different groups. Support can be organized by an assistant, a special kindergarten teacher or by a special teacher.

The **ECEC staff** form a **multi-professional community**, where the tasks are not clearly categorised by qualifications. Assistants are involved in the same tasks, but their emphasis is on supporting individual learners. The child-care professionals can draw their resources not just from different educators but also from social workers, representatives of health and mental health systems and other support that may be considered necessary.

The concept of '**educational partnership**' emphasising the role of guardians is one of the major principles in ECEC with both guardians and education staff committed to supporting the child's growth, development and learning, though practices that enforce dialogue, trust and mutual respect. Starting from day care, the early education and care plan is drawn up for each child together with the guardians. Drawing up a personal plan is a common practice also in pre-primary education. Guardians are also involved in making the curricula and guidelines. It is acknowledged that in multicultural situations this partnership is particularly important.

Apart from children with special needs the official documents on ECEC specify **four groups of children, whose needs have to be taken into special consideration**, namely Sami children, Roma children, sign language-using children and immigrant children. The aims for their education include multilingualism and multiculturalism, identity and cultural awareness. One of the objectives for all children is strengthening children's cultural identities, together with their understanding of their own cultural heritage and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the education for immigrant children of pre-primary age can be organised in conjunction with other pre-primary education, in the form of preparatory instruction for basic education or as a combination of these. The term 'at risk child' is never used while the possible need for support is assessed on an individual basis.

United Kingdom

England

Until relatively recently, the provision of publicly-funded education and care for children below compulsory school age (five) was a matter for local decision. Many local authorities provided nursery schools and nursery classes for children over the age of three, and/or admitted children to primary school at the age of four, but they were not obliged to do so and provision was patchy. Outside the public sector, some children attended private fee-paying nursery schools and classes. Many more attended voluntary sector playgroups, which kept fees affordable by relying on volunteer and community support. Full-time day-care, where available, was provided mainly by the private sector and paid for by parents. Voluntary and private sector provision was regulated and inspected in respect of the quality of care provided but not in respect of the educational programme.

In 1998, a statutory duty was placed on local authorities to ensure the provision of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in their area. In 1999, the *National Childcare Strategy* was published. This aimed to raise the number of childcare places available, make childcare more accessible and

affordable, and improve the quality of care across different types of setting. Childcare tax credits were introduced for low and middle income parents.

An entitlement to part-time ECEC was introduced for all four-year-olds in 1999 and for all three-year-olds in 2004. Free provision has since been extended to some two-year-olds in deprived areas. The necessary expansion of places was achieved in part by providing funding for places in the voluntary and private sectors. The funding was accompanied by new national guidance for over-threes which ensured that the public sector and the funded voluntary and private sectors were working to the same national curricular goals. Under these arrangements, working parents were now able to access a free early education place and top this up with additional fee-paying hours. This place might be in the same setting that also provides for under-threes, in a similar model to the 'unitary settings' described in the chapter 3.

From April 2008, local authorities have a new duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. This means that they are expected to facilitate and support the private and voluntary sectors, not that they must provide the childcare themselves (although they may do so in certain circumstances).

The new quality framework for early learning and childcare, the *Early Years Foundation Stage*, is mandatory from September 2008. It brings together learning and development and welfare requirements regardless of the type, size or funding of the setting. It forms a single framework of requirements from birth to age five, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-three and three-to-five provision.

These developments in education and care form part of a wider programme of reform which emphasises the integration and improvement of all services for children and families, including health and family support as well as education and childcare. The aim is to improve outcomes for all children and also to narrow the gap between those who do well and those who do not. This means combining universal services with greater support for those in most need. There is an emphasis on protecting vulnerable children and ensuring that children do not slip through the net. These aims are expressed in the *Every Child Matters* framework which sets out five outcomes for all children: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being. For the early years, the Sure Start programme makes an important contribution to delivering these outcomes; a network of Sure Start Children's Centres provides a range of integrated services designed around local needs, but including early education, health and family support services as core elements.

Wales

A distinctive feature of provision in Wales is that the Welsh Assembly Government believes that the Welsh language is an integral part of the Welsh national identity and acknowledges that its aim of creating a bilingual society must be rooted within early years education. There is additional support for providers who can contribute to providing bilingual or Welsh medium education and care.

As in England, until relatively recently, the provision of publicly funded education and care for children below compulsory school age (five) was a matter for local decision. Many local authorities provided nursery schools and nursery classes for children over the age of three, and/or admitted children to primary school at the age of four, but they were not obliged to do so and provision was patchy. Outside the public sector, some children attended private fee-paying nursery schools and classes. Many more attended voluntary sector playgroups, which kept fees affordable by relying on volunteer and community support. Full-time day-care, where available, was provided mainly by the private sector and paid for by parents. Voluntary and private sector provision was regulated and inspected in respect of the quality of care provided but not in respect of the educational programme.

1998 saw the publication of the *National Childcare Strategy in Wales*. This aimed to benefit children and support working parents by ensuring good quality, affordable childcare for children in every

community. The strategy for Wales was introduced within a UK-wide framework of government initiatives, such as childcare tax credits for low and middle income parents.

Also in 1998, a new statutory duty was placed on local authorities to ensure the provision of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in their area. An entitlement to part-time ECEC was introduced for all four-year-olds in 1999 and for all three-year-olds in 2005. The necessary expansion of places was achieved in part by providing funding for places in the voluntary and private sectors. The funding was accompanied by new national guidance for over-threes which ensured that the public sector and the funded voluntary and private sectors were working to the same national curricular goals. Under these arrangements, working parents were now able to access a free early education place and top this up with additional fee-paying hours. This place might be in the same setting that also provides for under-threes, in a similar model to the 'unitary settings' described elsewhere in this report.

Provision of childcare remained uneven, however. The Welsh Assembly Government set out actions to address this in its 2005 childcare strategy, and subsequently committed, in its 2007 coalition agenda for Wales, *One Wales*, to 'progressing the provision of universal, affordable childcare ... including extended free high quality childcare for two year olds in areas of greatest need'. From April 2008, local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents.

From September 2008, all children's learning from age three to seven is being brought into a single statutory *Foundation Phase* curriculum. The new curriculum emphasises learning through play and first hand experiential activities and allows time for children to consolidate their learning before moving on to the next stage of development.

These developments in ECEC form part of a wider programme of reform which emphasises the integration and improvement of all services for children and families, including health and family support as well as education and childcare. The aim is to improve outcomes for all children and also to narrow the gap between those who do well and those who do not. This means combining universal services with greater support for those in most need, with an emphasis on protecting vulnerable children and ensuring that children do not slip through the net. Two programmes which play an important part in delivering these outcomes for young children are Cymorth (the Children and Youth Support Fund, 0-25 years) and Flying Start, the initiative for the youngest children (0-3 Years), which invests intensively in the most disadvantaged areas.

Northern Ireland

Provision in Northern Ireland shares some features with that in England and Wales. In Northern Ireland an expansion of part-time Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) places over the last decade was achieved by government funding of places in a range of settings including the voluntary and private sectors. All funded providers are expected to follow the same curriculum guidance and are subject to inspection. Northern Ireland also shares the UK-wide framework of childcare tax credits for low and middle income parents which can be used to access full-time day-care places provided by the private sector.

However, there are also some important structural differences. Children in Northern Ireland reach compulsory school age earlier, at four years two months. Provision of ECEC is not a statutory requirement in Northern Ireland. However, the Government has set a target to provide one year of ECEC experience for every child whose parents want it and participation in the immediate pre-primary year is now almost universal.

In the most disadvantaged areas, Sure Start local programmes have been established for children under the age of four and their families. These programmes are a partnership of statutory, voluntary and community organisations. They are designed to meet local needs while containing the core elements of early education, health and family support.

Currently the Department of Education is leading on the development of a 0-6 strategy which will link education and care to improve outcomes for children.

Norway

The primary legislation for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Norway is the Act no. 64 of 17 June 2005 relating to Kindergartens (the Kindergarten Act). The major service provided are the Kindergartens, for children from 0/1 to 5 years (parental leave is approximately one year), offering full time, part time or family day care under supervision of a trained pre-primary teacher. The compulsory school age is six years old.

There were almost 15 000 new kindergarten places in 2006. By the end of 2007 there were almost 250 000 **children in kindergartens**. 84 per cent of all children between 1 and 5 years had a place in a kindergarten. The coverage was 69 per cent for 1-2 year olds and 94 per cent for 3-5 year olds ⁽³⁾. Children with special needs or children at risk are integrated into the mainstream ECEC system. If children need additional support, it is usually given in kindergarten. Special groups for children with specific needs are very rare.

Concerning **parental involvement**, all parents have a legal right to take part in each kindergarten's parents' council, and parents are represented in every kindergarten's co-ordinating committee, consisting of parents, owner and staff. The maximum cost for parents is NOK 2330 per month (approximately 270 Euro). There are national regulations concerning maximum fees, reduction for siblings, free places for children from low-income families.

Kindergartens' staff is composed of head teachers, pedagogical leaders and assistants. Kindergartens are required to have adequate pedagogical and administrative leadership. Pedagogical leaders must be trained ECEC teachers, with a 3-year tertiary university college degree (bachelor). Kindergartens employed 75 800 people in 2007, which is an increase of 6 145 persons since 2006. Two thirds of all employees are assistants and pedagogical leaders, which makes them the two main occupational groups in the sector. 35 911 employees work as assistants and 16 155 employees work as pedagogical leaders. 91 per cent of all kindergarten employees are women.

Regarding the **child-staff ratio**, for children 0-3 years, the ratio is 7-9 children per trained ECEC teacher, for children 3-6 years, the ratio is 14-18 children per teacher. In addition, sufficient staff must be in place to be able to carry out satisfactory pedagogical activity.

The **Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens**, an additional regulation to the Kindergarten Act (established by the Ministry in March 2006) provides guidelines on the values, content and tasks of kindergartens. The Plan describes the social role of kindergartens. Kindergartens' programmes shall be built on a holistic pedagogical philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and linguistic skills, as well as seven learning areas, are also important to the pedagogical environment.

The Plan emphasises the importance of adults' attitudes, knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society. The plan focuses both on the present and on the future. The framework plan underlines the unique nature of the educational activities of kindergartens. An annual plan, which is drawn up by the kindergarten's joint committee, sets out the specific work of each individual kindergarten.

⁽³⁾ Source: Final figures, 2007. Statistics Norway and KOSTRA.

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EN



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