

**Report for SOW on the Financing of Early
Childhood Education and Care in Europe,
and, in particular, on the Training and
Remuneration of Childcare Workers and
its Costs.**

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Executive summary.

This report summarizes the wide variety of policies and practices in early childhood education and care (ECEC) to be found in Europe and OECD countries, highlighting the issues that are relevant to the terms of reference set out by SOW. It draws primarily on EU and OECD documentation as reference points for the discussion

A background preamble is presented as an essential background to discussing the policies and practices of all European countries, and in particular, of the four European countries, Finland, Germany Ireland and Norway, for whom an analysis was requested.

The background preamble covers the following issues:

- The nature of EU and OECD jurisdiction and influence
- Available data sources and their strengths and shortcomings
- A coherent approach across EU and OECD
- Levels of provision
- Quality of provision at a systemic level
- Changes in policy and provision
- Training issues; initial training, in-service or continuous training; impact of training on child outcomes.
- Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility
- Funding and governance

Four country profiles are presented, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Norway. These profiles cover the following issues:

- Structures of governance and financing
- Rationales for the distribution of costs
- Levels of provision
- Affordability
- Parental Leave
- Training issues – initial and continuous training, impact of training on child outcomes
- Working conditions, remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility
- Transformation- rapidity of change, strategies for making changes

Relevant examples of these issues in other countries are also considered.

Relevance to the USA

The final section of the report considers the relevance of these findings to the USA. The report notes that *equity* and *access* for *all* children are fundamental principles for European and OECD provision. Major changes would be necessary in the funding and organization of early education and care services in the USA, if it were to adopt a European or OECD trajectory for progress. In the more limited terms of securing the improvement of the training, remuneration and conditions of service for early education and childcare workers, most – but certainly not all- countries have experienced some difficulties, which can provide limited examples. However, the main barriers to improvements for early education and childcare

workers in the USA are likely to be the lack of coherent ECEC policies, the shortfalls in funding early childhood education and childcare, and the reliance on a poorly regulated private market.

ECEC provision in Europe and OECD countries

Background Preamble

The nature of EU and OECD jurisdiction and influence

The EU is a unique economic and political organization which operates according to the principle of subsidiarity; that is to say the European Union does not take action (except in the areas which fall within its exclusive jurisdiction concerning the customs union, free movement of peoples and social justice and human rights) unless it is more effective than action taken at the national, regional, or local level. Jurisdiction with regard to ECEC is shared between the EU and the Member States in specified areas including internal market rules; aspects of social and economic policy, and aspects of public health. EU actions can support, coordinate, or supplement Member State activities in terms of education and vocational training. The EU also has a strong research remit to underpin members actions and decisions in these and other areas. On the basis of these principles of shared jurisdiction and subsidiarity, the EU has issued a series of research reports, policy guidance and recommendations and directives to all member states on ECEC. These now constitute a substantial body of work outlining the importance of ECEC, and how it can be costed, delivered and monitored. The case study countries considered in this report will have contributed to this EU body of work, and been guided by its outcomes.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation founded in 1960 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy. It provides a platform to compare policy experiences. It seeks answers to common problems, identifies good practices and coordinates the domestic and international policies of its members. Most OECD members are high-income economies. The OECD has no jurisdiction over its members, but is widely recognized as a powerful and influential organization. As its membership overlaps with the EU, much of the available data is pooled between them. OECD also has a long-standing interest in ECEC and has been gathering data and publishing on this issue since 1982. Its series of reports *Starting Strong* are widely regarded as important landmarks in the field, and have influenced policy making in many countries.

Available data sources and their strengths and shortcomings.

The data used in this report comes mainly from two overlapping sources: *Eurydice*, the European Union educational statistical office¹ and from the OECD *Family Database*.² This data has been adjusted by Eurydice and OECD to take account of the very different early childhood education and care systems in each country. The OECD has recently updated and reorganized its database. (OECD 2017). This range of data is unique in its reliability, robustness, consistency and depth, and its accessibility. Because the EU and OECD data are designed for policy makers across many countries, the compilers are concerned to outline the assumptions made in gathering the data, and to highlight any shortcomings in approach, so that comparability can be highlighted. Most country based research, by contrast, ignores

particularity and makes implicit assumptions about the relevance and generality of the data, which are often not justified.³

However, it should be noted that statistical summaries are themselves short cuts and approximations, and even with close statistical attention, cannot fully represent the nuances of each member country's approach. One example of lack of nuance is in approaches to the private sector. OECD admit in their 2017 report that a weakness of their current work is not having adequate information and indicators to cover the variations in the private sector, and they are trying to develop them.

Currently, there is a rough classification between a state supported private sector and an independent private sector. An example of a state supported private sector would be in Norway, where more than 60% provision is in the private sector, but where it is very highly regulated - in terms of a fee cap for parents, control over who can open a business and what processes and fines are necessary if the business wants to close again. This is as well as tight regulation on training, staffing and curriculum matters. In return, the private sector earns grants, that is receives supply side funding, to help with running expenses. The Norwegian data has many subsections for describing the private sector⁴, which do not correspond to descriptions available in other countries. In the UK, by contrast, the basic distinction for analysis is between company provided childcare, defined as ownership of more than 5 nurseries) and sole traders (defined as ownership of 5 or less nurseries).⁵ Up until now state support in the UK has been demand led, that is individual parents have received vouchers or credits in order to pay the nursery fees, although this is changing as the UK has recently introduced an entitlement for 2 year olds to attend nurseries.⁶ Since the USA relies heavily on a private system, the lack of distinctions in the EU/OECD statistics about financial support given to this sector is a limitation in making extrapolations.

Early childhood education and child care in Europe: A coherent approach

The EU and OECD have adopted an approach which regards early childhood education and childcare (ECEC) in principle as *continuous and synonymous*. All the documents refer to ECEC, although the data makes distinctions between the ages of the children and the hours attended. This use of terminology means that there are no separate references to preschool, kindergartens, pre-K, day nurseries and the many other categories commonly used to describe provision for young children. It is assumed that educational facilities can provide some kind of care, and conversely childcare facilities, even for younger children, can be educative. This integrative approach has implications for staff training and employment.

A coherent approach to services also implies coherent government structures. There has been a move to co-ordinate services within a lead ministry or department, most commonly education, which has then taken over many of the functions previously held by social welfare and/or health departments. In some countries, most notably France and Belgium, there is still a governmental split between services for children under three and for children over three, but generally the need for close co-operation and co-ordination is widely accepted, both horizontally, across government, and vertically, between government and local authorities. Federal countries such as Germany and Spain devolve decision making and funding to the

regions but there are tensions concerning local autonomy, national guidelines and legal rights of access for children and parents.

Levels of provision

The EU in 2002 set access targets for early childhood education and care for at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and for at least 33 % of children under 3 years of age, to be implemented by 2010. These are known as the Barcelona targets. Recent reviews suggest most EU countries have now attained the targets, but by different routes, and in response to differing scenarios of supply and demand.⁷ The variation in systems (the way in which those systems dovetail with other societal norms and initiatives) is considerable, even if the superficial outcomes – numbers of children experiencing preschool provision – may be similar. In some countries, for instance Portugal and Nordic countries, access to ECEC provision is defined *as a legal right*, and both at national and local level demand must be met, and relevant resources provided.

Quality of ECEC services at a systemic level

Both OECD and the EU have been involved in defining the parameters of a *quality* ECEC service, over a considerable period of time. The most well-known of these quality documents is the OECD *Starting Strong*, published in 2006, which was based on detailed comparative case studies of 20 countries including the USA.⁸ The *Starting Strong* sequence of reports has been updated several times, and has now been broadened to include some Asian and Latin American countries.⁹ Detailed reviews of selected individual countries are also now available on the OECD database.

Within the field of child development, quality in ECEC is conventionally defined in terms of the performance of the nursery or centre and the outcomes they achieve for children. Broadly speaking, conventional quality assurance systems cover measurements of process variables (how adults and children relate to each other) and structural variables (features of the environment which improve learning and ensure health and safety). The OECD and EU documents take this definition much further. They do not consider nurseries or childcare centres as single units, independent and isolated from each other. Instead the view is that quality cannot solely be measured on the level of the individual institution, although each nursery may be required to meet commonly agreed standards. Instead, the quality of ECEC is measured on a *systemic* level.¹⁰

The EU and the OECD have also produced a number of quality documents, outlining the *systemic* features of a quality ECEC service. OECD produced *Starting Strong II* in 2006, and have issued many documents subsequently, the latest being the 2017 document cited above. The EU has also produced a series of documents dating back to 1986 on quality systems. All these documents include a definition of key principles – equity and access; funding and governance; curriculum; environment; parental roles; support for vulnerable children and research and monitoring. Early childhood workforce policies, including initial and in-service training, working conditions and levels of remuneration, are regarded as an integral part of this definition of systemic quality.¹¹

Changes in policy and provision

In the last 20 years, changes have been driven by the women's labour market and the demand for childcare as much as by considerations of the benefits of early education, despite the relatively recent emphasis on early intervention¹². Pressures to increase childcare provision for working parents have been considerable. For the most part, these increases have been achieved through public sector, or public/private investments. Only three European countries, the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands have opted to rely exclusively on the private market to meet increased demand for childcare services, and in all three countries, children aged four years and older either go to state nursery education or to state schools. Services in Europe, especially for children over three, are firmly located in the public sector.^{13 14} In most countries, there is a view that market mechanisms, however superficially flexible, are unable to provide adequate guarantees for equity of access and quality of ECEC services, and that public intervention is necessary.¹⁵ One ECEC economic report takes a slightly more positive view of the private market and argues that if sufficient regulatory conditions are in place to ensure quality, the private market may make a contribution to meeting demand from higher income groups, but the case remains open.¹⁶

In some EU countries, especially France and Belgium, developments in ECEC have been gradual and cumulative, for over a century or more, rather than through transformative policy initiatives at a particular point. Changes almost always reflect "path dependency" and "institutional stickiness" and build on the structures and assumptions of the wider society.¹⁷ However, some countries have also made great leaps forward, increasing their provision substantially over a relatively short period of time. *In all cases*, long term and short term, increasing access has been seen *as part of wider programme of systemic change*. Typically, progress is uneven, as the various aspects of a systematic approach have to be worked out afresh in the light of each country's particular history and patterns of development.¹⁸

ECEC services targeted especially to the disadvantaged are relatively unusual in Europe partly because levels of poverty are relatively low. Instead the emphasis is on widening access to include all children, especially first generation immigrant children, and aiming for an inclusive service. This partly explains the disdain for the private market. Equitable access, a primary goal for both the EU and the OECD, is interpreted as meaning that *all* children, whatever their background circumstances, or their abilities or disabilities, should be entitled to the same levels and same quality of service. Both EU and OECD have additional published additional research studies exploring access to ECEC services by income quintile, and the extent to which universal services can be said to be of benefit to low income families.¹⁹ Broadly speaking, EU countries have made their changes to policy and practice in the light of the general precepts put forward by the EU and the OECD, and the funding has followed the political commitment.

Initial and In-service Training, and Relation to Child Outcomes.

As indicated above, increased demand for ECEC services has in most countries served as a prompt for wider systemic reviews of services, including the training, pay and conditions and the recruitment and retention of staff working in ECEC services. The EU has commissioned various European wide reviews of training for early childhood and care.²⁰ However, these

refer mainly to desired professional profiles and routes to competency.^{21 22 23} Other reviews indicate where training for early childhood education and care sits in relation to the organization of higher education within countries.^{24 25} The finding that there is a strong relationship between quality of staff and outcomes for children is widely accepted, although its precise parameters remain open.²⁶ The OECD has also issued a paper on the need to ensure a more highly qualified workforce, with appropriate remuneration and conditions of service, as part of a general systemic approach to quality.²⁷ There is also little comparative work on the transformatory effect when new training criteria are introduced, since training reviews have usually been part of wider systemic expansion. The OECD is currently considering extending PISA testing downwards, to cover 5 year olds, in order to provide benchmarks for countries about the efficacy and success of their early years policies as measured by standard literacy and mathematical measures, and work is currently going on to devise such measures.²⁸ The OECD has also commissioned an international survey on teaching and learning in ECEC which is due to report in 2019.²⁹ Currently there is relatively little information on the costs of ECEC training, which are difficult to separate out from other tertiary education costs.

Working conditions, remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility

There is widespread recognition that not only do staff have to be trained to a basic level and have the option of further in-service training to update and improve their skills, but that pay and conditions of service are crucial factors in the recruitment and retention of staff.^{30 31} In those countries where services are in the public sector, staff have nationally or locally negotiated pay scales, and are entitled to standard conditions of service for the sector, which includes holiday, sick pay, maternity leave and pension contributions.

Traditionally working with young children has been seen as women's work, and the profession is overwhelmingly female dominated, except in a few cases such as Denmark, where the job training usually includes out-of school services for older children, and where men tended to be recruited as a result.

The EU subscribes to the International Labour Organization (ILO) guide on labour laws in relation to early childhood personnel *Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel*³². The teachers unions' organization *Educational International* has also been concerned to represent early childhood workers in education across Europe and has expressed some concern about developments in the private sector which in their view have undermined the gains made for teachers.³³ In Denmark (as in New Zealand) there is a trades union specifically representing ECEC staff, which has had a considerable impact on services, arguing for more coherent ECEC structures, as well as for better pay and conditions of service.

The OECD Education at a Glance Indicators provide comparative data on pay equity with teachers or other professions. The starting pay grade depends on the classification of the ECEC system within the country, whether or not it is defined as education. In many countries state funded kindergarten or pre-primary teachers at the start of their career earn a similar amount or slightly less than a regular primary teacher, but the opportunities for increments to pay and career progression are usually better in the primary sector than in the ECEC sector.³⁴

If the system is classified as “care” and employs less well-qualified staff, pay is much lower, and conditions of work less generous, but pay and benefits would still be regulated in a state funded system.

In the private sector, there is some hostility towards trades unions, and towards negotiated pay settlements. It is regarded as being a matter entirely for the provider, to determine pay and conditions of service with employees. Pay and conditions are usually much worse than in the state funded sector, and the number of unqualified staff is much higher in the private sector. There is some limited evidence that owners of private nurseries would prefer cheaper staff over better qualified, but more expensive staff, in the private sector.³⁵ Governments may offer incentives, but these require monitoring. There is some evidence of higher turnover in the private sector, and more evasion of the requirements.

Management and leadership are increasingly highlighted as aspects of service delivery, affecting the viability and cohesiveness of the workforce. Other relevant conditions of work include group size, proportion of non-contact time, and staff facilities eg a staff room.

Funding and Governance

Increased demand for childcare has in most countries served as a prompt for wider systemic reviews of services, including the training, pay and conditions and the recruitment and retention of staff working in ECEC services. In a few countries with strong union representation this has led to pay increases (see above). National budgets for ECEC have risen commensurately across countries. OECD and EU both suggest that approximately 1% of GDP should be spent on ECEC services, although the distribution of that money is entirely a matter of in-country discretion. Expenditure profiles on ECEC differ a great deal, and vary according to the availability of wider social benefits such as maternal and paternal leave, income support and health coverage.

There is a view that governance is integral to costing, and co-ordinated, coherent and democratic governance of ECEC policy and provision is essential to any efficient and high quality system. There is a general acceptance within the EU and OECD that in principle an equitable and high quality service should be provided for *all* young children, and it is incumbent on governments to manage and fund the process, even if they do not directly provide services. Access and quality remain as goals for ECEC, even in those countries where implementation and funding fall short.

Accurate costing is contingent on having very clear parameters for service provision and delivery. The OECD and EU data specify such parameters, and have produced a series of background papers explaining the difficulties of costing exercises and how they have been resolved.³⁶ Expenditure profiles on ECEC differ a great deal, and vary according to labour market profiles³⁷ the availability of wider social benefits such as maternal and paternal leave³⁸, income support and health coverage. Most European countries have welfare safety nets of one kind or another, for lower paid or more vulnerable workers, which would automatically include low paid childcare workers.

One key issue for services is the level of child poverty, and the extent to which ECEC services are aimed at poor children, in order to compensate for poverty- it is a powerful

rationale for providing services in the USA where 23.1% of children are reported as living in poverty.³⁹

There is also recognition of the importance of labour laws in guaranteeing minimum pay and conditions of service, both for those using the service and those working in it, which also influences costs.⁴⁰ Balances can be struck over how costs are met -by parents, the state, (or inadvertently by an underpaid workforce). The 2010 OECD report gives a breakdown of amounts collected in parent fees in each country⁴¹ but this has quickly dated. As a rule of thumb, in most countries where parent fees are charged, they are means tested. On average fees represent 15% of household income, so the poorest and the largest families pay less, whether the service itself is privately or publicly provided (OECD family database).

Country Profiles:

The issues raised in the preamble have shaped the ECEC policy and provision in the four profiled countries. The report was asked to address the following issues:

- Structures of governance and financing
- Rationales for the distribution of costs
- Levels of provision
- Affordability
- Parental Leave
- Training issues; initial training, in-service or continuous training; impact of training on child outcomes.
- Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility, monitoring
- Transformation- rapidity of change, strategies for making changes

In addition, where appropriate, the report will cite relevant examples of governance, financing and training issues in other countries

Finland

Finland is a small country with a population of about 5.5 million people. It is the most sparsely populated country in the EU and has some very remote communities in the arctic north, including a very small indigenous nomadic Sami population. It has had a troubled history with its neighbour Russia. It was, for most of its recent history, a very poor nation, with many people living at subsistence level, but in the last 50 years or so it has become one of the richest and most egalitarian countries in the world, partly through sustained public investment in education.⁴² 5.3% of all children live in poverty and approximately 8% of the population are of immigrant origin.⁴³ The information in this section, as well as standard OECD and EU sources, comes from an especially prepared case study for the EU on quality in ECEC.⁴⁴

Finland: Structures of Government and Funding

Finland has a unitary system. All ECEC policy and provision is administered through the Education Department. Until 2013 ECEC was a responsibility of STAKES, the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs, with education input separately provided. Partly because of the EU emphasis on a unitary and cohesive approach to ECEC, the relevant functions of STAKES were transferred to education, although working through all the administrative details of the transfer has not yet been fully completed and there are still some anomalies. Children have a legal right to provision, and government at every level, and in whatever circumstances, must observe this and make appropriate provision.

ECEC policy in Finland is mainly decentralised. The ministries / central government are supposed to 'steer by information', while the 320 municipalities (in 2013) on paper have autonomy to design ECEC how they want. Municipalities have to remain inside the boundaries set by national policy, such as the universal right to access, the level of the fees,

the staff-child ratios, the national curriculum guidelines, premises, the minimal requirements for staff and the requirement of parental involvement in the programme. At a local level, each provider, in conjunction with parents, has to draw up an annual plan, and the provider is inspected annually by the municipality to check for adherence to the plan.

The level of detail in the specifications for ECEC, and the high standards required, may appear surprising to many countries with more laissez-faire systems.

Finland funds ECEC more generously than most countries, amounting to 1.3% of GDP (Approximately \$12,092 per child per annum). Parents are expected to contribute to costs, but their contribution is means tested, at about 15% of household income, up to a cap of E264. Low income parents do not have to pay. (The ECEC costs also include free meals and healthcare for children, and transport in remote areas). The parental contributions for day-care cover only about 15% of the total costs. The remainder of the costs, which is the largest burden of costs for providing ECEC lies with (local) governments. Municipalities pay approximately two thirds, and central government on third of the remaining costs.

Finland: Rationales for distribution of costs.

Finland takes very seriously the convention on the rights of the child, and is concerned that all children should be treated fairly, equally and appropriately. In addition, in Finland, as in other Nordic countries, there is an assumption that a comprehensive state social security system intervenes benevolently on behalf of citizens (unlike in the USA and other more liberal economies, where there is a powerful economic assumption that the state is inherently hostile and undermines initiative, and the lower the state expenditure, the better) Redistributive taxation has, in Finnish terms, produced a high functioning education system and a vibrant economy, with very few families experiencing poverty. Paying for ECEC is part of the wider assumption of state responsibility in the lives of citizens. The Finnish political system also endorses local autonomy, hence the very large number of self-governing municipalities for such a small country.

The national guidelines for ECEC offer the following rationale for the system ⁴⁵

“ECEC is a whole comprising the intertwining dimensions of care, education and teaching. Finland has formulated specific goals for its system of ECEC provision, which are interlinked:

- *Social policy (early prevention, equal opportunities for all);*
- *Employment policy (allow parents to work fulltime);*
- *Educational policy (contribute to education results).*
- *Family (support for families and equality between male/female)*
- *Equality (equal opportunities)*

Finland: Levels of Provision

All children in Finland have a legal entitlement of access to ECEC services. However, parental leave arrangements are generous. Finnish children are more likely to stay at home

during their first three years of life—when stay-at-home parents can collect a “home care allowance” of almost 300 Euros per month. This means demand for daycare for young children is relatively low, and arguably this is a cheaper solution than providing centre based care. The enrolment rate of children 0-2 in daycare is approximately 38%, and is not related to income.

School does not start until age 7, and parents can choose between a variety of ECEC arrangements. However, almost all these arrangements are in the public sector. There are a very small number of private providers (less than 5% of the total), and of fully trained and regulated child-minders (about 10% of the total) but they must adhere to all the standards and requirements described above. 68% of children attend formal centre based services, but this figure underestimates the variety of options, for instance various publicly supported part-time play arrangements for children at home.

For 6-year-olds specific pre-primary education programmes exist. They offer free, half-day preschool programs, which place a slightly greater emphasis on academic preparation and language development than typical child care. A majority of these programmes are offered in day-care centres to provide a full day of care that meets families’ child care needs. However, about 22% of 6 year-olds attend pre-primary education in a school setting., Some schools combine classes for pre-primary education and the first levels of primary education. There are national guidelines about the curriculum of pre-primary education; in terms of content there is no difference between the different kinds of provision. By age 6 more than 95% of children are in receipt of pre-primary education. All persons qualified as teachers receive the same initial starting salary – see below.

Finland: Affordability.

Whilst it is accepted that parents must meet some costs, the system is designed and funded to be affordable. As mentioned above, every provider must set fees according to household income, to a ceiling of E 264 per month with low income parents using the service free of charge. Affordability is not an issue in Finland.

Finland: Parental Leave.

As discussed above, leave arrangements are generous. Parents can take 17.5 weeks at approximately 78.5% of income, and a further 143 weeks at approximately 20% of income. There are also various additional child allowances. Fathers can take up to 6 weeks at 65% of pay.

Finland: Initial and In-service Training, and Relation to Child Outcomes.

In Finland, the teacher profession is highly valued in comparison to other countries.

Finnish daycare centres are integrated for education and care, and require staff with skills to cover the range of activities and topics and relationship skills for children aged 0-6. At the minimum, national laws prescribe that staff should have at least completed secondary

education, and one third of the staff must have a post-secondary higher education level degree at bachelor or masters level. Additional requirements may also be set by municipalities. Childminders required to have completed secondary education and to have vocational qualifications.

Employees are required by law to spend between 3-10 days in continuous training every year, in order to renew and develop professional skills. This requirement is also reflected in the national curriculum. These training days are usually provided at a municipal level.

All staff are expected to follow the national curriculum. The central statement of principle in the curriculum is “*the promotion of children’s growth into humane individuals and ethically responsible members of society, by guiding them towards responsible action and compliance with generally accepted rules and towards appreciation for other people*” The curriculum includes mathematical and literacy activities, but also an emphasis on the environment. *The objective is to learn and appreciate the natural and man-made environments, and to recognize the effects of their own actions on their immediate environment.* Children are typically expected to spend a minimum of two hours a day outside (whatever the weather in such a northern climate). Municipalities may adapt the curriculum to meet local needs but must stay within its broad precepts.

PISA results at 15 suggest that the quality of ECEC is an important factor in Finland’s position for many years at the top of the OECD league table for education performance.

Finland: Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility

Preschool teaching is an attractive career path because of its high status, and good working conditions. There are nationally agreed rates of pay and working conditions, which include sick pay and holiday leave. As a result, access to training courses is highly competitive, and only the best 10-20% of applicants are accepted.

The starting salary for those with a teaching degree, whether in a daycentre or in a school, is very slightly less than that of a primary teacher. Salaried staff receive regular increments, which rises by more than one third over ten years, slightly less than in other parts of the education sector. However, the ECEC staff only earn .82% of staff in the tertiary sector. There seems to be no particular discomfort with this situation, possibly because pay and conditions are good at this level, even if not as high a standard as elsewhere.

There is no national inspection or monitoring system, partly because so much is invested in the competence of staff to carry out self-assessment, and because the municipalities closely oversee provision. The costs are shared between the government and municipality (see above) on a per capita basis as a rights based system. It is not a contractual system, where daycare centres have to demonstrate worth in order to receive money.

Finland: Transformation

Finland’s progress has been slow, careful and incremental over a considerable period of time. Possibly the biggest change was the decision in 2013 to transfer services that had been rooted

in a social welfare approach to education. However, this was handled without any notable disruption.

Finland is an interesting example of what can be achieved with political will and public support. There is a consensus amongst all stakeholders that ECEC services are worthwhile and worth paying for through taxation. The OECD uses a long-term measurement, attendance at preschool and mathematical performance at age 15 on the PISA test, to try to ascertain whether or not early attendance at preschool has made a difference to long-term child outcomes. In Finland, the effect of ECEC services is equivalent *to a full extra year at school*.⁴⁶ The ECEC services are highly respected by government, users and employees alike, and produce extremely good results for children.

Germany

Germany is a large European state, with a population of about 82 million people. It was created (or recreated) in 1990 when the former East German republic, heavily influenced by Soviet Russia, was amalgamated with West Germany. East Germany had the highest levels of ECEC provision in the world, whilst West Germany had low levels of provision and low aspirations. Reconciling the different kinds of ECEC provision in east and west Germany continues to shape government reforms. Germany is a relatively wealthy and egalitarian country. 8.5% of children live in poverty.⁴⁷ Germany in recent years has had an influx of immigrants and refugees. About 14% of the population were counted as immigrants in 2013, but this figure has risen sharply.

The information in this section comes from the OECD Germany Country note (2017), the EU case study on Germany (2015), and a recent review by Klinkhammer and Riedel on current progress on ECEC in Germany.⁴⁸

Germany: Structures of Government and Funding

Germany is a federal country, divided into 16 Länder or states. The Länder are further devolved into municipalities, who have executive powers in setting up and regulating provision through the municipal Youth offices (Jugendamt). There is considerable difference across Germany in the levels of provision and in the standards required in terms of staff ratios, group size and other standard indicators.

The federal state has no education functions, and no direct jurisdiction over services, but retains some social and welfare guidance functions. All ECEC provision is ultimately under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Most Länder have comprehensive part-time kindergarten provision for children aged 3-5, but until relatively recently had little provision for children under three or for working women. The Family Ministry took the lead in urging the Länder to meet the EU target of 33% of places for children under three to meet the needs of working parents. The *Daycare Expansion Act* was introduced in 2005. But progress was slow, since, except in the former East Germany, provision for young children under three was regarded as a welfare service primarily for families unable to cope. Also the funding of the new initiative was not made

clear. The government then introduced the *Child Care Funding Act* ('Kinderförderungsgesetz', KiFöG) in 2008, which specified an individual entitlement to a childcare place for every child aged 1 and 2 years.

The expansion target defined by the Federal government was to provide places for 35 % of children under three years or a total of 750,000 ECEC places. There was a timeline of 5 years for the Länder to enact the policy. During this period parents' access to and demand for childcare was closely monitored in yearly surveys in order to take local variations in demand into account; the Länder have some leeway in meeting the targets.

The legal entitlement put the municipalities under enormous pressure as it became mandatory for them to ensure that ECEC was available for all children from the age of one whose parents applied for a place – regardless of the employment or training situation of the parents.

The government spends approximately .8% of GDP on ECEC services, or the equivalent of \$9167 per child per annum. 17-21% of the cost of ECEC service is raised from parents' fees, since even in kindergartens parents are charged. Parents pay approximately 18% of household income on fees, and this is means tested and controlled, with waivers for the poorest families. The considerable financial investments which were required for ECEC expansion were calculated on the basis that around 30% of the new ECEC places would be created in the less costly sector of family daycare. However, it proved difficult to recruit adequate numbers of childminders, and many local authorities were reluctant to promote this usually less qualified form of childcare. As a result, the overall share of family daycare remained well below the initial expectation; in 2015, the latest figure available, family daycare accounted for 14% of all ECEC places.

Germany: Rationales for distribution of costs

West Germany previously had a traditional familial view of services, where men were breadwinners and women stayed at home, and part-time social pedagogic kindergarten services for children aged 3-5, complemented the traditional view of the family. East Germany had more robust views about the place of women in the labour market and the need for ECEC services. Germany over the last 10-15 years has adopted a social investment approach and there has been a fundamental shift from private to public responsibility in the upbringing of children throughout Germany. Women's work is regarded as essential to the economy, and their participation is enabled through the provision of childcare services; and there is a recognition that early education is an important first stage of education, enabling children, especially disadvantaged children and refugees, to perform better in formal school. The Government is struggling with the many issues that this poses: the legislation imposing requirements on the different levels of Government, in increasing provision to meet demand; and the consequent balance of funding between Federal levels, Länder and municipalities. It is also concerned with ways to achieve upgrading the educational input and co-ordinating it with the childcare services.

Germany: Levels of Provision

- *Kinderkrippe* (creche): specifically designed for babies and children up to three years. It is not free and costs may vary according to region.
- *Kindergarten*: *Kindergarten* (for children between 3–6 years) is not a part of the regular public school system and is not required or free. Tuition is normally based on income. Space is often limited. It is not mandatory, but the majority of three to six year olds attend them.
- *Kitas* (*Kindertagesstätte*, children's daycare center): offer after-school and sometimes pre-school activities for children, for quite young children up to age 11 or 12 years. Fees apply and they are a popular form of daycare in Germany.
- *Schulhort* – after-school daycare for primary school pupils

Most of the kindergartens are publicly provided, but other services are provided by non-profit organizations such as churches, the Red Cross and other voluntary and community organizations, or trades unions. There are very few for-profit services, despite efforts by some municipalities to encourage them. This may be because the legal and regulatory requirements, particularly those concerning fees, limits profits, or else the municipalities are not authorized to fund or subvent private provision. As noted above, childminding or family daycare is not a popular option.

Because of the very local nature of provision there has been leeway to experiment. One of the best known of these experimental programmes in the 1990's was that of the city of Frankfurt. It decided to celebrate its 1000th anniversary, by launching a world-wide architectural competition to design 24 new kindergartens on unpromising disused sites in low-income neighbourhoods. They are iconic buildings, reflecting the kind of architectural and financial attention usually lavished on banks! The kindergartens offered full-time care and out-of-school provision for children 3-12, and had a spec which included environmental renewal, and adult-free spaces for children.⁴⁹ The Frankfurt programme inverted utilitarian notions of spending on welfare projects. However the capital investment programme was not matched by investment in staff, and there were reports that staff felt out of their depth in such lavish surroundings!

Germany): Affordability.

Fees are controlled at a municipal level, and on average parents pay 18% of household income on fees. There are various schemes to subvent costs for refugees and other disadvantaged groups. The take-up of ECEC services is slightly more prevalent amongst higher income households, but that is partly historical. Affordability is not a significant issue in Germany

Germany: Parental Leave

The system in Germany is relatively generous. There is 14 weeks maternity leave at full pay, and a further 44 weeks parental leave at 65% of pay. This means there is less demand for the most expensive places for children under one. Fathers can take up to 8.7 weeks at 65% of pay.

Germany: Initial and In-service Training, and Relation to Child Outcomes.

The social pedagogic tradition of kindergarten provision in Germany, which is shared in a number of Northern European countries, most notably Denmark, emphasizes a holistic and relationship-centred way of working in care and educational settings with people across the lifecourse. (German education has been characterized by its vocational education system which is a separate stream from academic education, and is more akin to an apprenticeship to prepare young men and women for work in their chosen trade). The state-recognized educators who make up the overwhelming majority of the childcare profession have a 3 year vocational training at postsecondary (ie post 16) school level. There are also new graduate level courses for ECEC. It is not clear how graduates of the new graduate study routes fare on the labour market, given that services are closely linked to the vocational pedagogic training. Up to now, the proportion of ECEC staff with a three year post 18 academic qualifications is marginal, 5 % throughout Germany.

The Länder have competence for regulating the minimal level of educational qualifications. The 2008, as a follow on from the child care funding legislation, required Länder to stipulate staff requirements. Staff working in childcare must have completed at least the three year post 16 vocational training. (Primary teachers by contrast require a masters degree) The use of support staff in childcare is limited by law, and cannot comprise more than half the staff. Support staff are not required to have specialized pedagogic training, but they are required to undertake continued professional development, and to try to obtain required vocational qualifications based on prior experience and in-service training. However the final say on their training and employment remains with the municipalities.

The annual number of hours in direct contact with children in Germany is calculated by OECD as 1482 hours per year compared with the OECD average of 1005 hours per year. (Comparative figures on free/preparation time is for a limited set of countries only, and does not include the other three countries discussed in this report.)

Germany: Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility

Staff remuneration and conditions of work are negotiated at municipal level, but since almost all provision is funded by the municipality, the municipality generally exerts some control over pay and conditions. Even if there is considerable variation across municipalities, it would be seen as unacceptable, in the German context of Labour law, not to offer regular and stable employment conditions, including holidays, sick pay and pension contributions. A recent Government sponsored survey of a sample of 6000 ECEC staff suggested that there was a direct link between working conditions, remuneration, and job satisfaction and turnover.⁵⁰ The OECD notes that there are likely to be some problems of staff turnover and attrition of workers, unless qualifications and training are improved. As noted below, this is being currently considered in Germany.

Most staff are represented by trades unions, and in 2015 there was widespread strikes and action about pay and conditions – it was a time of general labour unrest in Germany. In view of the OECD comments, further action on pay and conditions may be in the pipeline.

Germany: Transformation

There are many tensions within ECEC services in Germany. These include the separate inheritances of East and West Germany; the relative roles of the Länder, the Municipalities and the Federal government in making reforms and financing them; and the role of education in a service that operates under the auspices of a family and welfare ministry. There is currently a lively debate about future developments, in particular, about the quality of ECEC services. All ECEC services are based on a social pedagogic model, rather than on an educational one, and there has been relatively little emphasis on learning compared with other countries. In addition, since the Länder and municipalities have autonomy in providing ECEC services, there are considerable differences in the standards required. In 2014 a new national quality initiative led by the minister for the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in collaboration with the 16 state ministers, aimed to develop national goals for the improvement of the ECEC sector over the next decade and put forward proposals for financing quality improvements. It set up a working group which reported in November 2016.

The working party reached agreement on the shared dimensions and objectives of quality, their content and the financing of the implementation of the quality improvements. The working party also made a public political declaration on the need for a stronger financial commitment of the federal government. The working group is expected to prepare a proposal on the further design and implementation of the process of quality improvements in the different fields of the ECEC sector by spring 2017. If these recommendations are enacted in a national law, then services may change a good deal and become more educationally orientated (and more expensive to run). At the time of writing, no decision has been taken. This educational emphasis is not welcomed by all stakeholders. There is a children's rights lobby who argue that from a social pedagogic perspective, any form of testing, and assessments which compare children's performance against predefined norms, or targeted measures to speed up school-readiness, are of dubious value compared with the current freedoms children experience.

Germany has tried to co-ordinate and overhaul its ECEC services, but since there is not an unambiguous public or political consensus about new directions (unlike in Finland and Norway where there is more or less complete consensus), reforms have been slow, two steps forward and one step back. Determined government action has pushed through reforms, aided by an investment in research and monitoring of services, to determine their effectiveness. Future reforms are also likely to depend on research evidence.

Ireland

Ireland is a small island country with a population of 4.77 million, and high levels of income inequality. 8.4% of children live in poverty⁵¹, and about 11% of the population are from immigrant backgrounds. It has been one of the least compliant countries in terms of adhering to EU ECEC policy directives and recommendations. However, at the level of advocacy, philanthropy and research, Irish groups and individuals have been closely involved in ECEC developments, and have contributed substantially to policy work. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) which was initiated by

Irish politicians and is based in Dublin⁵² has taken the lead in researching the working conditions and remuneration of ECEC staff.

A full, comprehensive and up to date thematic review of ECEC provision in Ireland has been provided by the OECD.⁵³ There is an earlier 2014 EU Eurydice review. These documents have been the major sources for this report.

Ireland: Structures of Government and Costs

Ireland does not have a co-ordinated structure for ECEC. The education and care of children up to age 4 falls under the responsibility of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Department of Education is responsible for all school based provision. Ireland is a small country and there is no local authority or regional jurisdiction.

Provision is mainly delivered by a diverse range of private, community or voluntary organisations in settings known as crèches, nurseries, pre-schools, naíonraí (Irish language pre-schools), playgroups and day-care services. However, there is also a system of regulated home-based care, called childminding. All children aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months are entitled to a free pre-school year that can be delivered in centre- or home-based settings. There is some controversy about the viability of this proposal, partly because of the uneven distribution of privatized and community services, but also because the costings are regarded by many providers as insufficient for service provided. From age 4, children may be enrolled in infant classes in primary schools, which are formally regarded as primary education (ISCED 1). While primary education starts at age 4, schooling only becomes compulsory when children reach age 6

98% of the provision for children three and under is in the private sector, and minimally regulated. As a result of this lack of co-ordination, and fragmented service provision, very little data is collected. There are no government expenditure figures, no information about the balance of public/private investment, and no information about per capita costs. This lack of hard data extends to most areas of policy and practice.

Ireland: Rationales for the Distribution of Costs

A recent trenchant criticism of Government policy – or the lack of it – was put forward by Ireland’s foremost advocacy group Early Childhood Ireland This states that:

Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) acknowledges the improvement in State spending on childcare in recent years. In 2015, the Government provided approximately €260 million in funding with the vast bulk, approximately €246 million, invested directly into three State subsidised early care and education (ECE) support programmes: the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme; the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, and the Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) programmes. This progress must however be viewed against that fact that prior to 2010 the State invested almost nothing in the care and education of pre-school aged children in Ireland. As such, the level of investment is continuously playing catch up and, as reflected by the statistics, the ECE sector remains chronically under resourced. At 0.3% of GDP², Ireland’s investment in childcare falls well short of the

0.8% average investment across the OECD, and the UNICEF international benchmark for ECE sector investment of 1% of GDP.

ECI also acknowledges the significant package of childcare measures worth €85 million as part of Budget 2016. Many of the changes introduced in Budget 2016 come into effect from September 2016 and we know that the first €85 million of funding provided in Budget 2017 is already required by DCYA to meet the full year costs of implementing these measures.

Despite the improvement in investment, Ireland is spiralling further into a two pronged childcare crises. A crisis in sustainability for the ECE sector and a crisis in affordability for parents.⁵⁴

In this analysis, as in most others, Ireland has neglected to take a policy overview, and has only funded services on an ad hoc basis. The services are not planned, but have grown up by default, without much governmental interest and a view that ECEC is not a priority for the use of taxpayers' money. As a result, services exhibit many shortcomings of availability, quality and cost.⁵⁵

In so far as there are any policy assumptions, it is that the market is the best or easiest way to match supply and demand. The government has agreed to subvent fees to nursery owners to meet the free 3hrs per day during term times for children aged 3 , but without ensuring availability of places, or undertaking an analysis of the fees charged by owners, many of whom are unhappy with the proposal.⁵⁶ There is also the unresolved question of low pay and insecure conditions of service for workers, and high turnover of staff.

No other European country, even those with substantial private markets like the UK and the Netherlands, has such an ad hoc system of policy and provision, or lacks data to this extent. The absence of research and monitoring to inform policy-making is conspicuous.

Ireland: Levels of Provision

Ireland has subscribed to EU ECEC policy to the extent it acknowledges the Barcelona targets and has provided free care and education for children aged 3 for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week during school terms. However, it does this through per capita subventions for children attending private facilities, which are regarded as insufficient by many providers. The provision is unevenly distributed, and is based in wealthier areas. Quality controls are weak, and the provision is of very mixed standards. Nevertheless, participation of children two and under in formal care is 30% and rises to 46% for children aged three years. As over 60% of mothers of young children are in the workforce, this indicates a shortfall in supply and/or a high use of unrecorded informal care. The take-up of formal care is mostly by higher income quintiles, which suggests problems of affordability as well as access. Monitoring data on the new 15hour per week subventions for three year olds is not currently available.

56% of children aged four attend free primary school, but by 5 years 92% children attend free primary school. This compares with OECD averages of 71% and 86% respectively. In most countries, free primary schooling begins later, when children are deemed more ready for a formalized environment.

Ireland: Affordability

98% of formal care before school is in the private for-profit sector. There are two international commercial chains operating in Ireland, but most provision is in the hands of small operators who own one or two nurseries. This means that the amount parents pay is not controlled but left to market forces. OECD estimates that parents pay 65% of an average wage for a child place, much higher than the EU average of 15% and the OECD average of 25%. The situation is particularly bad for single parents, who find it very difficult to meet costs, even with other tax and benefit concessions.⁵⁷ This correlates with figures showing higher uptake of provision amongst higher quintile households. Poor families cannot easily afford to pay for ECEC services. Affordability is a major issue in Ireland.

Ireland: Maternity Leave and Parental Leave.

Ireland offers 26 weeks maternity leave at 34% of full pay (or 8.9 weeks at full pay) This is within the EU and OECD average. However, unlike other EU countries, Ireland does not offer any parental leave – that is additional paid or unpaid leave whilst children are very small, or for other family purposes such as children's illness. (In many EU countries parental leave can be shared between partners).⁵⁸ Nor does it offer any father's leave. In Ireland the demand for places for children under one is heavy, possibly because there are no parental leave arrangements. There appear to be many informal arrangements of questionable quality for very young children

Ireland: Initial and In-service Training, and Relation to Child Outcomes.

Five job types are commonly used for staff working in the ECEC sector across OECD countries: childcare worker; pre-primary teacher; primary teacher; kindergarten teacher; family daycare worker, pedagogue, and auxiliary staff. Ireland does not provide official information about any of them and is conspicuously absent from OECD tables. Early Childhood Ireland provide a guide to those considering work in childcare.⁵⁹ There is a basic national qualifications framework, for vocational courses, but there is no link with pay, working conditions or remuneration which remain entirely a matter for nursery owners. In 2016, a registration requirement was introduced nurseries must employ level 5 qualified staff (the highest level of the vocational training or BA teacher educators) for those working directly with children, but this depends on adequate monitoring and sanctions for non-compliance. There are suggestions that qualification requirements are more honoured in the breach, and there is a preponderance of young unqualified staff.⁶⁰

There are also a small number of degree level courses, but it is difficult to know what employment opportunities are available to graduates, since the government does not offer any incentives to employ graduate staff. Early Childhood Ireland mention that there are grandfathering schemes to mentor staff and enable them to become better qualified, but at present there do not appear to be any financial incentives either for employers or for staff to improve qualification levels; rather the reverse.

The Education Department has introduced a national curriculum, *Aistear in Action*, and a toolkit has been developed for implementation in private settings. These curricular guidelines were the result of a collective effort, and are admired within Ireland, but again their uptake within private settings is dependent on adequate monitoring, and on having staff who know what they are doing.

The OECD use a long term measurement, attendance at preschool and mathematical performance at age 15 on the PISA test, to try to ascertain whether or not early attendance at preschool has made a difference to long-term child outcomes. For Ireland it makes no difference, suggesting, amongst other factors, ECEC provision is of too low a quality to make a difference to children.

Ireland: Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility

Since remuneration rates, working conditions and turnover are not monitored, it is not possible to say whether providers are making an effort to recruit trained and knowledgeable staff. Despite the efforts of Early Childhood Ireland, which is a membership organization of providers, and which is concerned to raise standards, it is unclear whether or not standards have improved. The OECD 2017 Country Note suggests that monitoring procedures are insufficient to judge.

Ireland: Transformation

Ireland offers no positive lessons in transformation. It is more the case that any changes that have happened have come through the considerable efforts of local and national organizations and advocacy groups, in the face of Government reluctance to act. There are occasional scandals of child maltreatment in nurseries, which attract attention for a short while, and which groups try to use as a lever for reform. Ireland is illustrative of the difficulties faced when there is little government commitment, meagre funding, and most provision is privately provided. Affordability is not determined with parents needs and ability to pay in mind; and there are no systematic costings of services; There has been work on instituting a curriculum with only minimal resources to for implementation, and only short-term and voluntary teacher training in order to implement it. The curriculum is not linked to training or staffing in any systematic way, and it has been left up to voluntary organizations to try to make changes. Expectations of the system and educators are misaligned with structure and financing. Compared with the government led, long-term, systematic, well-funded, carefully researched systematic changes in ECEC in other European countries, Ireland's record is considered by many to be rather dismal.

Norway.

Norway is the world's richest country, thanks to the Government control of oil and gas industry profits, and to careful exploitation of fishing stocks. It has a highly dispersed population of about 5.2 million, of whom about 75,000 are indigenous Sami people, living in the arctic North and in the capital, Oslo. Recent government statistics show that the number of immigrant children and children with immigrant parents has grown by 144% between 2001 and 2014, with Asia and Africa being the most common regions of origin. In 2013,

126,100 children, 18% of all children born in Norway, had immigrant parents. The increase in the number of immigrants has been especially marked in Oslo, but smaller municipalities have also experienced increases, for instance in coastal areas where workers have been recruited for fishing. Norway is concerned to provide care and education which is sensitive to the needs of its diverse groups of children.

Taxation is high, and there is relatively low income inequality. Only 6.1% of children live in poverty. Like other Nordic countries, Norway is a social welfare state, offering free healthcare and a comprehensive social welfare system.

The main source of information for this report is the 2015 OECD Thematic review on Norway⁶¹

Norway. Structures of Governance and Funding.

There is a long-standing tradition of local self-government and decentralisation in Norway which also applies to the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. Norway has 19 counties and 428 locally governed municipalities, which vary widely in population size and geographical area. Oslo is both a county and a municipality. Both the county and municipal councils are formed of popularly elected representatives. The central government is represented at the county level through county governors.

Norway also has a long tradition of ECEC services. It received a favourable OECD review in 2004, but has moved on considerably. In the last 10 years, Norway massively increased the state grants tripling the granted amount between 2000 and 2012 to NOK 36 billion (or 1.4% of GDP) so all children would be covered.

One of the ongoing debates in Norway was the extent to which the private sector should be supported in the drive to expansion.⁶² As noted in the introduction to this report, “private sector” is variously interpreted in different countries. In Norway, more than 60% of provision is in the “private sector” (which is subdivided in Norway into 40 different kinds of provider!) but grants are only given to those private kindergartens who fully comply with the legislation, including fee controls. The 2003 law stipulated that private and public kindergartens should have equal access to public funding, obliging municipalities to gradually increase grants to private kindergartens up to the level of grants to municipal centres. Public grants covered only 56% of their operating costs in 2000, but rose to 85% by 2012. in 2014.

In 2005, a further Kindergarten Act was introduced. Among other changes, it adjusted the division of responsibilities between different levels of administration and reinforced the municipalities’ long-standing responsibility for kindergartens, supervised by the county governor. In 2006, to ensure greater coherence between educational institutions and to acknowledge kindergarten as first stage in the process of life-long learning, responsibility for ECEC was moved from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens was revised in 2006. It sets out guidelines regarding the values and purpose of kindergartens, their curricular objectives, and educational approaches. This was followed, in 2007-10, by a national strategy for raising staff competence, which was accompanied by a recruitment

initiative (2007-11) An individual legal right for children from the age of one to a full-time place in ordinary kindergarten or family kindergarten entered into force in 2009.

In the national budget for 2015 the Norwegian parliament (Storting) increased state grants to introduce a nation-wide subsidy schemes for low-income families from 1 May 2015 so that these families will pay a maximum of 6% of their income for a place in kindergarten. Free core hours in kindergarten for children aged 4-5 were made available for non-working low income families.

Norway has also passed legislation to ensure closer co-operation between kindergartens, schools, the child welfare service, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (Arbeids-og velferdsetaten or NAV), health clinics, and the police. Since the municipalities are in charge of most of these services at the local level, they are in a crucial position to ensure their co-ordination. In 2012, kindergartens were included in the portfolio of the Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet), in addition to primary and secondary education. This directorate is responsible for the evaluation of the education system through the National Quality Assessment System and through the commissioning of research.

This rather complex account is an indication of the prominence of ECEC issues in the public eye. ECEC services have evolved through constant debate and discussion, and continuous monitoring and research, so that adjustments are continually being made. Norway has been extra-ordinarily responsive to societal change.

As noted above, Norway spends 1.4% of GDP on ECEC services, one of the highest figures in the world. Per capita spending is over \$13,000 per child per annum.

Norway, Rationales for the Distribution of Costs.

Norway has a strong commitment to child rights. The legislation insists on the right of the child (not only the rights of the parents) to ECEC services. Norway has a world renowned Child Rights centre at one of its leading universities, Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU). The government has funded a great deal of research into the understanding and practice of child rights. This child rights perspective, and concern about children's daily, lived lives, has shaped ECEC services.

Norway similarly has a commitment to gender equality, and ECEC services have also been developed in order to ensure women can play a full and equal part in society.

There is widespread public consensus about the importance of services, so much so that they crop up in popular literature as a normal feature of the fabric of everyday life.⁶³

As noted above, there have been debates about the role of the private sector in Norway, and the tensions between a vigorous market economy, and the importance of guaranteeing affordability and quality to children and parents, which resulted in the peculiarly Norwegian compromise of a heavily controlled but large private sector.

Norway, Levels of Provision

There are three types of kindergartens in Norway. Ordinary kindergartens (barnehager) can be public or private. They offer half-day or full-day service all year round for children between zero and five years of age. Family kindergartens (familiebarnehager) are based in private homes, where an assistant works with a maximum of five children, supervised and mentored by a qualified kindergarten teacher on a weekly basis. Open kindergartens (åpne barnehager) are part-time drop-in centres with programmes for parents and children to participate in together, led by a qualified kindergarten teacher. While a place in kindergarten is a statutory right for the child, participation in ECEC is voluntary. In 2013, 90% of children between the ages of one and five, including 97.5% of 5-year-olds, participated in ECEC. Due to Norway's generous paid parental leave, only 3.2% of children under one were in kindergarten.

All formal provision is well-staffed, well-designed, and has generous outside space; adapting to the cold Norwegian climate, is regarded as an important aspect of learning, and all children spend a minimum of two hours a day outside in all weathers.

Norway. Affordability.

There is no problem of affordability in Norway.

Norway Parental leave

Mothers are entitled to maternity leave of 13 weeks at 97.9% of salary and parental leave for a further 78 weeks at 41% of salary. Fathers are entitled to 10 weeks leave at 97.9% of salary.

In 1998 a cash-for-care benefit for families of 1-year-olds was introduced, extending to 2-year-olds in 1999. It granted families a monthly flat-rate allowance if their children were not benefiting from subsidised kindergarten provision. In contrast to the parental leave scheme for parents of children under one, this benefit is not conditional on prior labour-force participation. In the beginning, when it was still difficult to access kindergarten places for children under 3, the benefit proved very popular and the vast majority of parents of children born after the introduction of the reform received the benefit, suggesting that it was in demand across social groups. Uptake peaked in 2000 when more than 80% of 1-year-olds and more than 70% of 2-year-olds were beneficiaries. It subsequently decreased in line with the expansion of kindergarten places, by as much as 46.5% between 2007 and 2013. The duration and value of the benefit are subject to a controversial debate in the country, partly because they appeared to increase the isolation of immigrant families. In 2012, after participation in kindergarten had risen, the benefit was again limited to 1-year-olds. In some communities, cash-for-care supports mothers who choose to care for children at home rather than enter the labour force because the only available employment is distant from the community. Cash-for-care also has a lower cost to the municipality than a kindergarten place.

Norway: Initial and In-service Training, and Relation to Child Outcomes

Norway has long been concerned with strategies to increase the number, qualification levels, stability and diversity of pedagogical staff. It has had various recruitment drives, to meet

changing conditions of work in some areas. The proportion of male staff has also increased and useful revisions have been made to kindergarten teacher education itself, with a new framework introduced in 2010. All staff have standard (Norwegian) conditions of work, including regular salaries, hours of work, sick pay and holiday pay and pension entitlements, and maternity and parental leave rights.

The Kindergarten Act states that head teachers and pedagogical leaders must be trained pre-school teachers or have other college education that gives qualifications for working with children and pedagogical expertise. Pre-school teacher education is a three years university college study with bachelor degree. Pedagogical leaders without pre-school teacher education must have further education in teaching in kindergartens. According to regulations there must be one pedagogical leader per 7 – 9 children under the age of three and per 14 – 18 children over the age of three. Approximately 30 per cent of these were trained pre-school teachers. Approximately 13 per cent of the head teachers and pedagogical leaders were not educated pre-school teachers and had dispensations from the educational requirement.

There are specialised courses for pedagogical leaders and head teachers, and training programmes for pedagogical staff with lower qualifications who seek to raise their competence and foster diversity. However, the majority of assistants continue to lack relevant qualifications. The practice of allowing kindergartens dispensations from staff qualification requirements in remote or difficult areas is problematic.

In family day care (see above), local managers of family daycare are not required to be qualified kindergarten teachers, but regulated family day care has to be supervised by a qualified kindergarten teacher on a regular basis.

Norway: Working conditions and remuneration of staff, recruitment and retention, staff mobility

Teachers in kindergartens receive high wages compared with their counterparts in most of Europe, but this is still about 85% of what teachers in primary schools earn. Despite job security and good working conditions, the ECEC system still suffers from persistent shortages of qualified staff and the sector offers staff insufficient status, pay and career options. To some extent this disparity can be addressed by further adjustments to the legislation and it is currently under consideration. But there are shortages in teacher recruitment generally, which reflects the nature of the high wage Norwegian economy and its highly competitive job market.

Norway – Transformation

Norway has been continually adjusting and developing its provision over a long period of time, and it is generally regarded as an outstanding system, despite its remaining shortcomings. Norway illustrates the need for continual adjustment and refinement for a workable ECEC system. Change cannot be achieved overnight; and a truly comprehensive system which meets the needs of all children, requires continuous and active government commitment.

Other relevant examples of European Countries.

All European countries have attempted, to a greater or lesser degree, to develop their ECEC services over the last 10-20 years, with Norway and Finland at one end of the scale and Ireland at the other. The Netherlands presents an interesting example of an exception to the general trends. The Netherlands is a densely populated country of 17 million and a prosperous high wage economy with a low level (6.1) of child poverty. There are very strong patterns of part-time work – most women, and some men, with young children work part-time.

All children aged four go to free, state provided nursery school. Services for children three and under were either in grant aided voluntary sector daycare centres, or part time municipal playgroups. Minimal qualifications were required for the sector (3 years upper secondary). In 2005 the Government decided to promote private for-profit sector care, as a more efficient way to match supply and demand. It abolished direct grants to childcare centres, and introduced parent subsidies to pay for childcare, and reduced regulatory requirements, which were in any case cursory and administered by health authorities. The private for profit market grew substantially, but since parents were entirely free to choose how to spend their subsidies, there was also a considerable amount of fraud. This system was gradually tightened up and regulated.⁶⁴ In 2012 the subsidies given to parents was substantially reduced, representing a 20% increase in costs for single parents, and a 33% increase in costs for two parent families. A further robust study in 2013 tracked the impact of these subsidy reductions. It found that the use of daycare fell by 3% and quality fell significantly, as operators cut costs in order to survive. In addition, the distribution of centres shrunk, and only those in “thick markets” were likely to survive.⁶⁵ A major private nursery chain of 113 nurseries went bust, and a rescue deal had to be negotiated with new investors.

This example illustrates what happens when an ECEC system is starved of funds, and in particular when operators cannot maintain accustomed levels of profits. Quality inevitably goes down and distribution is more uneven. In other countries quality has gone up as investment has increased, as has accessibility for poorer families. But the relationship is not straightforward, since the wider societal circumstances of income levels and distribution, and working patterns, and education and welfare support, contribute to long term as well as short term outcomes.

Relevance to the USA.

These very different examples of case studies from Europe illustrate the wide range of approaches countries bring to ECEC services, ranging from a laissez faire approach in Ireland, to concentrated and intensive intervention in Finland and Norway. Three of the countries considered here are very small countries, where there is less diversity, and where it is easier to legislate. Germany, the largest country considered, and a federal state, has experienced difficulties in introducing legislation. Nevertheless, it has persisted, and further major changes to do with staffing, are likely. All four countries have developed their provision in the light of EU and OECD guidelines and recommendations

The wider social and economic circumstances of a country influence provision. In particular, a key issue is the level of child poverty. All four case study countries have managed to offset child poverty with a variety of welfare measures, including health care and various family and child benefits. ECEC provision is seen as part of this spectrum of child support, in order to reduce inequality and support social cohesion and inclusiveness. None of the services considered here are targeted services, designed for specific groups of children; they are available to all children and mostly used by them – although less so in Ireland than in the other three countries. But in all these countries there have been efforts to direct resources to prepare staff for working with very diverse groups of children, from the Sami in Norway to the latest influx of refugees in Germany.⁶⁶

In many EU countries, pay, remuneration, and working conditions of ECEC staff reflect national and international labour laws. Staff are offered standard negotiated contracts which offer relatively good working conditions. It is possible to do this because provision is under the direct control of local authorities – or in the case of Norway, these conditions are imposed on the private sector as a condition of funding. In those countries where there is a sizeable, and more lightly regulated private sector, like Ireland, the position of staff is more precarious. Workforce representation and unionization has been an influential factor in some of the countries considered.

The direct relevance of these case study examples to the USA is necessarily very limited. The USA has a population of 323.1 million, and is a very large, federally governed country. However, the USA is a member of the OECD, and stands to benefit from its work in the field of ECEC. Ten years ago the OECD report *Starting Strong II* made the following comments about the position of the USA in terms of its adherence to international standards: *Quality in childcare can be very weak, especially for the 0-3 age group and regulations in many States may set standards far too low even for health and safety issues; there is an urgent need to address access issues and take a more proactive stance towards child poverty and diversity and that serious weaknesses occur in the initial and continued training of staff at all levels. In order to address these issues the responsibility to provide political leadership, funding, clear policy goals and frameworks rests with government, both at a federal and state level.*⁶⁷ The then US government noted and accepted these comments from the OECD. Whilst improvements have clearly taken place in this period, the situation still appears to be very problematic.⁶⁸

Given that a significant rationale for providing ECEC services in the USA is to offset the very high rates of child poverty (23.1%), to lessen the need for remedial education, and to lower incarceration rates, it seems extraordinarily inefficient to have a system of laissez-faire,

barely regulated, private services staffed with ill-qualified and ill-paid women, at prices which are barely affordable to parents. The lessons from Europe, and in particular the case studies detailed here, illustrate that it is possible to have fair, comprehensive, affordable and non-discriminatory ECEC services for *all* children, in a wider context of supportive public welfare services. It is possible, even in radically and rapidly changing circumstances, and in remote and dispersed locations, to work towards providing high standards and comprehensive provision. It is possible to create a trained workforce that is adequately remunerated and enjoys decent working conditions. In short, the lesson from Europe is that ECEC services require political and economic backing, and continuous principled, systemic development, in response to changing circumstances, in order to offer a high quality service to children and their families.

Unfortunately, the Cassandra like conclusion to this report is that without such backing, and without public and political consensus, the prospects for improvement in the USA are poor. From the point of view of an outsider to the USA, there are no little tricks and turns, no borrowed ideas, and no small-scale innovations at the level of providers, that can make up for the shortcomings of a starved system. Individual centres may perform well and achieve good results, even in a weak system, but individual excellence cannot substitute for systematic failings which exclude the poorest and most marginal children and those who care for them. It may be that, given the autonomy of the USA states within the federal system, an individual USA state could be persuaded to take on the challenge of offering a systemic model of ECEC development, along EU and OECD lines, and its initiative could be very closely monitored and researched. But there would be a great many hurdles to overcome.

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42 national units based in 38 countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme (28 Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey); and a coordinating unit based in the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels

² The database brings together information from various national and international databases, both within the OECD (see related OECD databases) and external organisations. The database currently includes 70 indicators under four main dimensions: (i) structure of families, (ii) labour market position of families, (iii) public policies for families and children and (iv) child outcomes.

Each indicator typically presents the data on a particular issue as well as relevant definitions and methodology, comparability and data issues, information on sources and, where relevant, includes the raw data or descriptive information across countries.

³ For instance, the claims made by Heckman et al about the economic returns from early intervention cannot easily be generalized to other countries, where more egalitarian systems of provision exist. The three longitudinal cost-benefit studies, the Ypsilanti project, the Abecedarian, and the Chicago study, on which Heckman has based his micro-analysis, reflect times and circumstances which do not pertain outside of the USA. See Penn, H, Burton, V., Lloyd, E, Mugford, M, Potter, S and Sayeed, Z (2006), *A Systematic Review of the economic impact of long-term centre-based early childhood interventions*. Research Evidence in Education Library. London: Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. 2006 www.eppi.ioe.ac.uk

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