



European
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Recommendations from ECEC experts

Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators

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February 2018

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Background

This report was produced with the advice of the European ECEC experts¹ under the guidance of the European Commission and in the quality theme of Working Groups Schools. These early childhood education and care² (ECEC) experts set out to identify indicators which would complement the ECEC Quality Framework³ published in 2014.

The experts met in September and December 2017 and identified 22 indicators which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the ECEC system in each Member State and its capacity to support and promote the quality of ECEC provision and practice.

This report focuses on these indicators. It is advisory and is intended to:

- Encourage self-reflection and self-evaluation as critical processes in the development of high quality ECEC system(s); guide those who are responsible for selecting and using indicators for evaluating progress in the establishment and delivery of high quality ECEC;
- Support monitoring and measurement in order to improve the performance of the ECEC system(s).

¹ A list of the experts is included at the end of this report. Many of these experts were part of the Thematic Working Group which developed the ECEC Quality Framework.

² ECEC refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age - regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content - and includes centre and family day-care; privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision.

³ Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf This report was produced in 2014 by the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission.

Introduction

Learning and education do not begin with compulsory schooling – they start from birth. The early years from birth to compulsory school age are the most formative in children's lives and set the foundations for children's development and patterns for their lives. In this context, high quality ECEC is an essential foundation for all children's successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability.

Improving the quality and effectiveness of ECEC systems across the EU helps to secure sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth. Good quality and accessible ECEC systems are equally important for supporting all individuals to lead successful lives. The availability of high quality, affordable ECEC for young children continues to be an important priority for Member States and the European Union.

The Quality Framework was a significant step towards high quality ECEC and complements previous European initiatives⁴ which focused on access to ECEC and increasing the quantity of provision.

The Quality Framework is designed around the following principles:

- A clear image and voice of the child. ECEC services must support and promote the image of the child as a competent confident partner in their own learning and development. ECEC provision should be child-centred, acknowledge children's views and actively involve children in everyday decisions in the ECEC setting. Services should offer a nurturing and caring environment and provide a social, cultural and physical space with a range of possibilities for children to develop their present and future potential. ECEC services need to be child-centred, acknowledge children's views and actively involve children in everyday decisions in the ECEC setting. Services should offer a nurturing and caring environment and provide a social, cultural and physical space with a range of possibilities for children to develop their present and future potential.
- Education and care are inextricably linked concepts. ECEC should offer a holistic approach based on the fundamental assumption that education and care are inseparable processes in the lives of children;
- Partnership with parents and families. Parents and the family are the first and most important educators in a child's life. High quality ECEC will ensure that parents are respected as partners and their participation in ECEC provision and practice is facilitated and encouraged. Families are characterised by great social, socio-economic, cultural and religious diversity – and this diversity should be respected as a fundamental element of European societies. Within a context that can be set by national, regional or local regulations, the family should be fully involved in all aspects of education and care for their child;

⁴ Quantitative measures include the 2002 Barcelona European Council agreement that 'Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age'.

- Agreement that high quality ECEC services are central to ensuring that children have enriching, enjoyable early childhood experiences that are crucial in promoting children's development and learning, provide better preparation for pre-primary or primary schooling and, in the long term, enhancing their educational chances.

As set out in figure 1, the Quality Framework is based on five dimensions: access; workforce; curriculum; monitoring and evaluation; and governance and funding. It includes ten statements which invite Member States to strengthen the quality of their ECEC provision.

Figure 1. The Quality Framework for ECEC



The 2014 Quality Framework proposal from EU government experts identified actions that help to produce and assure high quality ECEC provision. These include actions which affect the inputs to ECEC, the structure of ECEC provision, the quality of the processes used in ECEC settings and the outcomes from ECEC provision. Each of these actions can be viewed as independent of each other but ultimately all require consideration in the promotion of a holistic approach to improving the quality of ECEC provision.

The Quality Framework acknowledges that indicators need to focus on more than one aspect of provision in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the quality of ECEC.

This report supports European level reflections on the quality of ECEC. It is set within a context of ongoing policy developments e.g.:

- In November 2017 the European Parliament, the Council and European Commission agreed to adopt the European Pillar of Social Rights. This set out the joint commitment of EU leaders to promote 20 principles which help to deliver new and more effective rights for citizens. Principle number 11 covers ECEC and notes that children have the right to affordable ECEC of good quality;⁵
- The plan to develop a European Education Area by 2025 recognises that good education during early childhood lays a solid foundation for learning at school and throughout life. The Communication to establish the European Education Area includes a proposal to prepare a Council Recommendation on ECEC quality.⁶

This report also acknowledges other initiatives to develop ECEC indicators such as:

- The OECD's work⁷ to prepare Starting Strong VI, the Education at a Glance 2018 Annual Report and the TALIS Starting Strong Survey;
- Eurydice's work on the second edition of Key Data on ECEC (2019), work on the Education and Training Monitor;
- The Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC project (CARE)⁸ which produced a framework for defining, implementing, and assessing accessibility, quality and wellbeing in European ECEC;
- The 2017 report⁹ from the Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET II) on the current state of national ECEC quality frameworks (or equivalent strategic policy documents) governing ECEC quality in Member States.

⁵https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

⁶ Future of Europe: Towards a European Education Area by 2025

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-4521_en.htm

⁷ For more information on the OECD's work in relation to ECEC see:

ecec@oecd.org, startingstrongsurvey@oecd.org, and www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood

⁸ <http://ecec-care.org/>

⁹ <http://nesetweb.eu/en/library/the-current-state-of-national-ecec-quality-frameworks-or-equivalent-strategic-policy-documents-governing-ecec-quality-in-eu-member-states/>

Proposals

The experts sought to identify, among many potential measures of quality, indicators that complement the 2014 ECEC quality framework, reduce the level of complexity and ambiguity, and are useful to Member States as one way to support improvements in the quality of ECEC provision. The indicators have been selected to operate at the system level though some may be useful in individual settings. The selection of the indicators took into account:

- The need to provide indicator statements relevant to each of the ten statements in the Quality Framework;
- The need to suggest indicators which were relevant for a majority of Member States;
- The value of encouraging self-reflection which extends beyond indicators in order to improve the quality of ECEC; the importance of promoting understanding of the key ideas and objectives in each of the ten statements;
- An agreement to focus on the quality of the processes which are used in ECEC.

The indicators support the evaluation, self-reflection and improvement of the quality of ECEC systems in accordance with the context of each Member States' national legislation and conditions of ECEC practice. They have the potential to serve as a 'toolbox' from which various users are invited to choose the indicators they consider most relevant to their particular system(s) and context. The indicators which have been selected are most appropriate for centre-based provision. However it is for policy officials in individual Member States to decide whether an indicator could be useful in measuring and recording the quality of other forms of ECEC.

Each indicator can be applied to provision for children from birth to the start of compulsory schooling. In some systems, especially those where there is a split in responsibility for policy¹⁰, it may be easier to create two measures for each indicator: one which covers provision for children aged from birth to three; and one for children aged from three to the start of compulsory schooling. Each indicator can be applied to provision which is organised in the private, public or voluntary sectors.

One purpose of developing indicators was to provide an opportunity to collect and disseminate data at the national, regional or municipal level. Wherever possible the

¹⁰ The Quality Framework defines split and unitary systems as follows:

Split system - ECEC provision is offered in separate settings for different age groups, often under different administrative structures. The age ranges vary between countries but usually covers 0/1 to 2/3 years and from 3/4 years up to start of primary schooling (usually 5/6 years).

Unitary system - Provision for all children from birth to primary school is organised in a single phase and delivered in settings catering for the whole age range. The age range is usually defined in the national or system context. Unitary systems are usually governed by one Ministry. Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission (2014) Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, p. 71, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf

indicators use existing definitions of technical terms (including those which were developed as part of the Quality Framework).

To support the use of each indicator, the experts identified guiding questions. These are designed to encourage self-reflection and assist users of this report in assessing the performance of their ECEC system(s). These questions will be particularly helpful when it is difficult or impossible to collect valid and reliable data on an indicator.

From the 22 indicators the experts identified ten which they believe are particularly important. These 'core' indicators are highlighted in red in the following pages of this report and many are illustrated with examples of current practice to show how national or regional policy promotes high quality provision. These core indicators respond to the ten statements in the Quality Framework.

The following indicators cover the five dimensions and the ten statements in the Quality Framework. In the following pages each indicator is explained and is accompanied by guiding questions to support reflection and self-evaluation on the extent to which the indicator is being met.

The 22 indicators for ECEC

Statement	Indicators
<p>Statement 1: Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children</p>	<p>Indicator 1 - The percentage of children who have publicly funded subsidised access to ECEC.</p> <p>Indicator 2 - For parents who earn the average national income, the percentage of their disposable income which is required to pay for ECEC services for one child who attends an ECEC setting for at least 30 hours per week.</p>
<p>Statement 2: Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity</p>	<p>Indicator 3 - A system-level policy to encourage disadvantaged families to use ECEC services.</p> <p>Indicator 4 - The percentage of children who attend ECEC regularly.</p>
<p>Statement 3: Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role</p>	<p>Indicator 5 - The percentage of staff working directly with children who have completed professional education relevant to their role in an ECEC setting.</p> <p>Indicator 6 - The percentage of staff who receive formal support for at least their first six months at work.</p> <p>Indicator 7 - The percentage of ECEC leaders working in an ECEC setting who have completed leadership training or have a recognised, relevant leadership qualification.</p> <p>Indicator 8 - The percentage of ECEC staff working directly with children who have received at least three months' relevant work experience as part of their initial training programme.</p>
<p>Statement 4: Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents</p>	<p>Indicator 9 - The average salary of ECEC staff employed in the public sector (with similar qualifications to primary school teachers) as a percentage of the average salary of a primary school teacher.</p> <p>Indicator 10a - The average ratio of children to all staff working directly with children.</p> <p>Indicator 10b - The average ratio of children to professionally trained staff working directly with children.</p> <p>Indicator 11 - The percentage of time assigned to staff for preparation and reflection i.e. when they are not working directly with children.</p>

<p>Statement 5: A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way</p>	<p>Indicator 12 – There is an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework for ECEC.</p> <p>Indicator 13 - The percentage of settings whose work with children is based on an ECEC curriculum framework.</p>
<p>Statement 6: A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice</p>	<p>Indicator 14 – The curriculum or other guiding documents requires staff to use feedback from children, parents and colleagues to systematically improve their practice.</p> <p>Indicator 15 - The percentage of primary schools which are required to use a curriculum which builds on children’s experiences of learning in ECEC.</p>
<p>Statement 7: Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice</p>	<p>Indicator 16 - Information on the quality of the ECEC system is used as the basis for improvement.</p> <p>Indicator 17 – Information on the quality of the ECEC system is publicly available.</p>
<p>Statement 8: Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child</p>	<p>Indicator 18 - The percentage of ECEC settings with monitoring systems which include a focus on the best interests of the child.</p> <p>Indicator 19 - The percentage of ECEC settings which use administrative and pedagogic data to improve the quality of their provision.</p>
<p>Statement 9: Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations</p>	<p>Indicator 20 - A formal set of arrangements enables parents and partner organisations to work with ECEC settings.</p>
<p>Statement 10: Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders</p>	<p>Indicator 21 – The age at which there is publicly funded subsidised ECEC provision for all children (at least 15 hours per week).</p> <p>Indicator 22 – The percentage of gross domestic product spent on ECEC.</p>

Statement 1: Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children

The potential benefits of high quality universal provision are particularly significant for children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups. ECEC provision should be made available from birth to the age at which children start compulsory school. To respond to parental circumstances and encourage all families to use ECEC services, provision needs to offer flexibility in relation to opening hours and the content of the programme.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to evaluate the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 1 - The percentage of children who have publicly funded subsidised access to ECEC.

There is agreement on the benefits of providing high quality ECEC to all children particularly those from disadvantaged families. Research findings have highlighted the following as the main barriers to participation in ECEC provision:

- The cost of provision is a barrier in most countries and is specifically important when ECEC is largely paid by parents. Provision which is paid for by parents can be in the private, public or not-for-profit sectors. The cost of ECEC is more significant in low-income households;
- The availability of ECEC provision which tends to be unequally distributed in urban and rural areas, in affluent and poor neighbourhoods, and across regions. This situation seems to be particularly exacerbated for 0-3 provision in the context of split systems¹¹;
- The inflexibility of ECEC facilities in relation to opening hours¹² and bureaucratic enrolment procedures (e.g. waiting lists, monolingual information leaflets and forms to be filled out etc.) which are a major deterrent to ECEC participation especially for minority ethnic families or marginalised groups¹³;
- The presence of rationing criteria that, in situations where there is a lack of provision, might give priority to children whose parents are in employment or to those who subscribe early to waiting lists¹⁴.

This indicator considers whether all families have access to ECEC. For families to use ECEC services the provision has to be both available and affordable. In some contexts

¹¹ Bennett, J. and Moss P. 2011. *Working for inclusion: how early childhood education and care and its workforce can help Europe's youngest citizens*.

Retrieved from: <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi/>

¹² Wall, K. and Josè S. J. (2004) Managing work and care: a difficult challenge for immigrant families. *Social Policy and Administration*, 38(6), 591-62.

¹³ OSCE (2010) *Mapping of participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education processes within the OSCE region*. Retrieved from: www.osce.org/odihr/73874

¹⁴ Vandenbroeck, M., De Visscher S., van Nuffel, K. and Ferla J. (2008) Mothers' search for infant child care: the dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental European welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(2), 245-258.

the amount of public funds available to individual families does not make ECEC affordable. This raises the question of whether measures are being taken to ensure that ECEC services are accessible and affordable to all families which wish to use the service. Measuring the percentage of families who actually receive (rather than having the potential to receive) financial support for ECEC is one way to monitor the inclusion of children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups.

Participation may be connected to a legal entitlement to ECEC – however such an entitlement may not always be associated with publicly funded subsidised access.

This indicator is supported by Eurydice¹⁵ data on the availability of free and fee-paying pre-primary provision. This data includes information on the factors which are taken into account when reductions or exemptions of fees are offered in public and private grant-aided ISCED 0 provision e.g. these include family income, the number of children, family status, geographical location and other factors.

This indicator provides an opportunity for Member States to produce their own target e.g. an annual increase in the percentage of children receiving publicly funded subsidised access to ECEC. It is also possible for Member States to agree a European target.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- The legislation pays special attention to disadvantaged children;
- Children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- The legislation addresses all known barriers to children's participation in ECEC;
- There are reductions to the cost or free provision of ECEC for children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised families;
- Every family which is entitled to publicly funded subsidised ECEC can find a place for their child/children;
- The size of the public subsidy is significant and sufficient to ensure that ECEC provision is affordable to all families wishing to use the service,
- If there is no legal entitlement to access ECEC services, what measures are being used to make ECEC provision affordable and accessible to all families.

¹⁵ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014) *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Free ECEC provision, by age and weekly hours, 2012/13, Monthly fees for younger children in the largest ECEC sector(s), in PPS, 2012/13, Pp. 84-89, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/166EN.pdf

Case study 1 – Portugal	Case study 2 – Luxembourg
<p>All socio-economically disadvantaged children and students attending public education institutions (starting from ISCED 0) are entitled to an additional allowance. This may be in kind (e.g. free transport, free meals, free additional hours in pre-school and primary school, free school materials) or in cash. Families have to present proof of their income on a yearly basis.</p>	<p>Parents who use ECEC centres receive subsidies via vouchers to 'buy' provision.</p>

Indicator 2 - For parents who earn the average national income, the percentage of their disposable income which is required to pay for ECEC services for one child who attends an ECEC setting for at least 30 hours per week.

To ensure that children can be enrolled in, and therefore benefit from high quality ECEC provision, it has to be affordable for their families. This indicator measures affordability and provides an opportunity for Member States to set a target and measure change from one time period to the next.

The indicator can be used when either the state or individuals cover the cost of ECEC provision e.g. in some systems the state (either nationally, regionally or locally) subsidises or pays for provision; however in other countries the level of state subsidy is low and parents cover the majority of the costs of ECEC.

There are technical difficulties associated with producing one number to represent the cost of ECEC e.g. there can be significant differences for families who use urban or rural provision, and provision for children below or above three years of age.

The indicator is based on the cost of ECEC for 30 hours/week¹⁶ as this matches the information collected in surveys by The European Union's Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). In addition, to the EU-SILC surveys, some Member States will be able to use OECD data from the:

- Family Database¹⁷ - child care fees for two year olds attending accredited ECEC services as a percentage of average earnings;
- Doing Better for Families¹⁸

¹⁶ Flisi, S., Meroni Elena, C and Vera-Toscano, E. (2016) 'Indicators for early childhood education and care', JRC technical reports, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016, p. 18,

https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/JRC102774_Indicators%20for%20early%20childhood%20education%20and%20care.pdf

¹⁷ OECD (2017) 'Family database', Paris: OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm> Gross fees for two children (aged 2 and 3) attending full-time care at a typical childcare centre, as a percentage of average earnings, 2015. Indicator Code: PF3.4

- 1) net child care costs for dual earning families as a percentage of the average wage;
- 2) net child care costs for single parent families as a percentage of the average wage.

Member States may wish to set an annual target based on a percentage figure or a reduction in the percentage of disposal income which is required to pay for ECEC services for one child who attends an ECEC setting for at least 30 hours per week.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering the extent to which the arrangements differ between:

- Children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- Single parent families and other families;
- Families living in an urban and rural environment.

Statement 2: Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity

Successful inclusion in ECEC is based on:

- Promoting the benefits of ECEC by collaborating with local organisations and community groups;
- Approaches which respect and value the beliefs, needs and culture of parents;
- An assurance that all children and families are welcome in an ECEC setting/centre;
- A pro-active approach to encouraging all parents to use ECEC services;
- A recognition that staff should be trained to help parents and families to value ECEC services and to assure them that their beliefs and cultures will be respected - this training can be supported by parenting programmes which promote ECEC;
- Close cooperation between staff in ECEC centres, health and social services, local authorities and the school sector.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

¹⁸ OECD (2011) 'components of net childcare costs for couples where both male and female earn 100% of average wage' 'Doing better for families'. Paris: OECD, p. 168. http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/doing-better-for-families_9789264098732-en#page4

Indicator 3 - A system-level policy to encourage disadvantaged families to use ECEC services.

As set out in indicator 1, there are significant barriers facing children from disadvantaged families. The EU's report on ECEC for children from disadvantaged backgrounds¹⁹ notes that the children who are particularly exposed to the risk of poverty include those from large, low-income families; households with a migrant background; Roma children; street children and those who are exposed to a series of social risks such as homelessness, violence and trafficking.

All children, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, benefit from high quality ECEC provision. This indicator, rather than measuring how many children use an ECEC service, identifies whether there is a policy (or a number of policies) in place. The existence of a policy is the first step in monitoring and promoting the use of ECEC services by children from disadvantaged families.

The target for this indicator would be for each system to say 'yes'. However because many Member States have more than one ECEC service/system, it is likely that the response to this indicator will be 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'only met in some situations'.

It is possible for each Member State to use a different way to describe disadvantaged families. As there are many European definitions of disadvantaged families, the ECEC expert would encourage each Member State to use one of these European definitions.

Guiding questions

As this indicator is likely to lead to the answer 'yes', it is worth considering the following guiding questions to broaden and deepen reflection and internal evaluation:

- Is there a system-level agreement on the definition of disadvantaged families?
- Does the policy include all groups of children from disadvantaged families?
- Is the policy to encourage the use of ECEC services well-known?
- Has the policy led to an increase in the number of disadvantaged families using ECEC services?
- Children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- Does the policy include outreach services or other activities to encourage participation?
- Is there training for staff in ECEC providers to enable them to promote their services to disadvantaged families?

¹⁹ Page 7. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/school/doc/ecec-report_en.pdf.

Indicator 4 - The percentage of children who attend ECEC regularly.

This indicator is related to the existing European benchmark for 'at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education'²⁰. It is also connected to the 2017 proposal to prepare a Council Recommendation on a quality framework for ECEC, accompanied by a common benchmark that invites Member States to offer places to at least 95% of children between three years of age and the mandatory school age²¹. Even though this indicator measures the quantity rather than quality of ECEC, it has the advantage of aligning the existing European benchmark with the Quality Framework.

There are technical issues to overcome to ensure greater precision on using this indicator. Each Member State is invited to define their own understanding of 'regularly' e.g. is there agreement on the number of hours per week, the number of days/week, the number of days that are missed, the number of weeks in the year etc. In addition, there is a need to agree whether the percentage is based on all children in society; those who (under the Member State's rules) are eligible for an ECEC place; or those who are registered and attend an ECEC service etc.

As with all indicators, this is a system-level measure. This indicator should not require the collection and collation of attendance records' in individual settings. There are two sources of information which can be used for this indicator: EUROSTAT and The European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) which is based on a relatively small sample and this makes analysis more difficult. These have data on:

- The percentage of the children aged between four and the starting age of compulsory primary education who participate in ECEC;²²
- Participation/enrolment in education (ISCED 0-4);²³
- Formal childcare by age group and duration - percentage of the population in each age group;²⁴
- The average number of weekly hours of formal care²⁵ by age group – this covers children with or without formal care²⁶. This includes data on the duration of

²⁰ European Commission (2009) Strategic framework European education and training, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

²¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-490_en.htm

²² Eurostat (2017) % of the age group between 4-years-old and the starting age of compulsory primary education, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tps00179>

²³ Eurostat (2015) 'Participation/enrollment in education', code: educ_ipart, most recent year: 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=EDUC_IPART

²⁴ EU-SILC, Eurostat (2017) Formal childcare by age group and duration – percentage of each age group, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_caindformal&lang=en

²⁵ Formal childcare refers to:

- education at pre-school or equivalent;
- education at compulsory education;
- child care at centre-based services outside school hours;
- child care at day-care centre organised/controlled by a by public or private structure.

Other types of care refer to:

- child care by a professional child-minder at child's home or at child-minders' home;

provision (less than 30 hours a usual week; 30 hours or more a usual week), age of the child (0-2 years; three to the admission age for compulsory school; admission age for compulsory school to the age of 12) and country.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering the extent to which attendance differs between:

- Children who are under and over three years of age;
- Children from single parent and other families;
- Children from families living in an urban and rural environment;
- Boys and girls;
- Children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised families, and other families.

Case study 3 – Germany	Case study 4 – Ireland
<p>There is regular monitoring of children’s access and participation in ECEC through the annual data collection of Child and Youth Welfare Statistics (<i>Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik</i>). In addition, to participation, information is collected on the migration background and the spoken family language.</p> <p>In addition, the German Youth Institute has conducted an Annual Parental survey since 2007 - this collects information on parental use of childcare and their wishes in relation to ECEC.</p> <p>These statistics provide a clear picture on the attendance of children, patterns of attendance and the wishes of parents.</p>	<p>Ireland’s Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)²⁷ was introduced in 2015. This national initiative supports children with a disability and enables them to participate fully in the Free Preschool Education Programme.</p> <p>AIM seeks to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience which ensures that every eligible child can meaningfully participate and benefit from high ECEC.</p>

- child care by grand-parents, other household members (outside parents), other relatives, friends or neighbours.

²⁶ EU-SILC, Eurostat (2017) ‘Average number of weekly hours of formal care by age group – children with or without formal care’;

http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_camnforall&lang=en

²⁷ <http://aim.gov.ie/>

Statement 3: Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role

Recognising the professionalism of the ECEC workforce is important in improving the quality of provision. Professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff pedagogy and children's outcomes. Developing high quality education and training programmes for all staff working in an ECEC context (e.g. preschool teachers, assistants, educators, family day carers etc.) helps to create a shared agenda and understanding of quality.

The experts agreed that four indicators can be used to evaluate the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 5 - The percentage of staff working directly with children who have completed professional education relevant to their role in an ECEC setting.

The research shows that professional training and the qualifications of staff are important in predicting the quality of provision. This indicator provides a proxy measure of the quality of staff activities with children. It is based on the assumption that high quality initial and/or continuing education leads to well-qualified staff who use their training at work. In some systems there is less emphasis on qualifications as relevant experience is seen as equally valid for some ECEC roles.

This indicator measures the number of staff who have actually completed relevant professional training. This data will be easier to collect if there are requirements or expectations relating to professional education or training. There is information relating to this indicator from the European Commission (which lists country specific qualification requirements²⁸) and, for some countries, there is data from OECD Education at a Glance statistics on:

- The percentage of staff in the pre-primary and primary sectors with minimum requirements²⁹;
- The percentage of staff with tertiary education³⁰.

²⁸ European Commission (2014) 'Minimum required level and minimum length of initial education for staff working with younger children in centre-based ECEC settings, by staff category 2012/2013', in 'Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe', Brussels: EACEA, p. 100, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/166EN.pdf

²⁹ OECD (2012) 'Pre-service teacher training requirements in public institutions, 2010' and 'Requirements to enter the teaching profession in public institutions, 2010', in OECD (2012) Education at a glance, Paris: OECD, pp. 497-499, https://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_e-book_EN_200912.pdf

³⁰ OECD (2012) 'Percentage of teacher stock with this type of qualification – pre-primary education', in OECD (2012) 'Education at a Glance' Paris: OECD, p. 497. https://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_e-book_EN_200912.pdf

It would be relatively easy for each Member States to set a target for this indicator. It could be a target based on a percentage or a percentage increase in the number of professionally trained or qualified staff per annum or over a longer period.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- Staff who work with children under and over the age of three;
- There are requirements or expectations relating to the percentage of staff with a relevant qualification at EQF Level 6 or above;
- ECEC assistants and staff with more pedagogic responsibilities;
- The breadth of the definition of staff working directly with children;
- The balance between initial and continuing education/training;
- Whether professional experience is as important as qualifications when recognising the competence of ECEC staff.

Case study 5 – Italy	Case study 6 – France
<p>ECEC teachers working with children aged three years and over are required to have at least five years of university education. This corresponds to ISCED 7 (Master’s degree level).</p>	<p>For children under the age of three in nurseries and other ECEC settings (<i>‘crèches et autres structures collectives’</i>) no qualified staff member is required in settings catering for up to 24 children. In settings with 25 to 49 children, at least a 0.5 post must be held by a staff member with a tertiary qualification in education (a minimum of three years at ISCED 6). In settings with 50-69 children, a full-time post must be held by a staff member with this level of qualification. For all children attending pre-primary education (<i>‘école maternelle’</i> from the age of two) at least one full-time post must be held by a staff member with a tertiary qualification in education.</p>

Indicator 6 - The percentage of staff who receive formal support for at least their first six months at work.

This indicator acknowledges that better supported staff provide a better service to children. This support could be based on mentoring, coaching, professional supervision, weekly team meetings, observation and discussion of practice, or other measures. There are many technical details to discuss e.g., what would be seen as support; who could provide support; do those who provide support have to be trained; does support have to last for an agreed number of hours/week; are part-time staff included etc.

Information on formal support for new staff is rarely collected at the system level. In many countries there is no formal or informal system for new staff to receive support and this indicator may not be widely used. It is likely to require detailed and new data collection processes in many countries/systems.

Deciding on a target could be difficult, even though in some Member States the provision of support (it may be described as an induction programme) for new staff is seen as routine. The indicator specifies support for six months and this may be longer than the usual practice in some Member States. It would be possible to specify a target based on increasing the percentage of staff who receive support by an agreed amount each year or over a longer period.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system and particularly as this is a difficult indicator to evaluate, it is worth considering the following questions:

- Are ECEC settings required to provide induction for newly appointed staff?
- If yes, are there guidelines for ECEC settings/services to support this process?
- Is this a legal requirement or recognised within the legislation?
- Are there different arrangements for different groups of staff?
- Is support linked to a probationary period of employment?
- Are there different arrangements for staff working with children under three years of age and children aged over three;

Indicator 7 - The percentage of ECEC leaders working in an ECEC setting who have completed leadership training or have a recognised, relevant leadership qualification.

This indicator is directly related to the quality of provision as better trained leaders are more able to organise and manage ECEC services. The focus is on pedagogic leadership in an ECEC setting, rather than financial or organisational leadership. The indicator contains two options which reflect different practice in Member States i.e. some countries do not require or expect ECEC leaders to complete a recognised leadership qualification.

There is a broad range of leadership training and qualifications available qualifications may be accredited or approved; training may be formal, informal or non-formal; and leadership training may not lead to a professional qualification. There are questions about whether the outcomes of training are assessed. Even though there is a wide range of opportunities for developing leadership skills in ECEC, the research emphasises the importance of leadership in ECEC settings as contributing to high quality³¹.

Each system in each Member State will have their own understanding of 'a relevant' leadership qualification. There could be further work at a European level to gain greater clarity on this aspect of the indicator.

Member States are encouraged to set their own target for this indicator – this is likely to be based on increasing (by an agreed amount each year or over a longer period) the percentage of leaders who have received training or have a relevant qualification. There is limited opportunity to consider a European target because the policies associated with ECEC leadership differ across Europe.

Guiding questions

To support this indicator, where there is a system based on qualifications, it is worth considering:

- What is the European Qualification Framework level of the ECEC leadership qualification(s)?
- How long would it normally take to complete an ECEC leadership qualification?
- Is there one, or many, qualifications which could be taken by ECEC leaders?
- How are ECEC leaders supported (both professionally and financially) to complete a qualification?
- Are there different arrangements for staff working with children under three years of age and children aged over three?

To support this indicator, where there is a system based on training, it is worth considering:

- How is an ECEC leader supported during the training?
- What is the normal amount of time/week which is allocated to leadership training?
- Is training mainly 'on-the-job' or 'off-the-job'?
- Does the training include assessment of the leaders' skills and competences?
- Are there different arrangements for staff working with children under three years of age and children aged over three?

³¹ Hujala, E. and Eskelinen M. (2016) 'Researching leadership in Early Childhood Education.' Leadership Tasks in Early Childhood Education , in *Researching Leadership in Early Childhood Education*, Tampere: Tampere University Press, 213-34, http://ilrfec.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art_12Hujala-Eskelinen.pdf

Indicator 8 - The percentage of qualified ECEC staff working directly with children who have received at least three months' relevant work experience as part of their initial training programme.

This indicator is a measure of the extent to which the initial training of ECEC staff prepares them for employment. Work experience (a work placement or internship) is one way to ensure there is a close connection between initial training and employment. The indicator does not comment on the content of the training or the quality of the work experience. However it does consider the extent to which new staff understands the demands and expectations of their future job.

For Member States where there is central guidance (e.g. standards, a curriculum framework, agreed learning outcomes etc.) on the design of initial training programmes, agreeing a target could be straightforward. In systems where individual training providers determine the structure, outcomes and content of the training programmes it will be more difficult to use this indicator.

Data on the structure and content of initial ECEC training programmes is available but it is unlikely to be collected and analysed at the system level. In systems where the requirements for initial training are set, or guided, centrally it will be easier to collect the data. However, in systems where individual training providers designs their own programme, data collection and analysis will be complex³².

As this indicator covers all ECEC staff, there is a wide range of initial training programmes to consider. The three month expectation could therefore apply to programmes which:

- Last for one, two, three or more years;
- Focus on vocational or professional roles;
- Are work-based or centre-based;
- Are full-time or part-time;
- Take account of prior learning and experience.

It may not be easy to compare data between systems with different initial training programmes. In some situations work experience is offered on the training provider's premises – it is a form of simulation rather than time spent with an employer. A decision would need to be made about how this is included in the indicator.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- Work experience is a specified requirement of professional education and training for staff in ECEC services?
- The work experience is relevant to the individual's future ECEC role?

³² OECD (2017) 'Family database', Paris: OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

- The trainee receives supervision during their work experience in order to support self-reflection?
- The work experience is assessed?
- Staff in the ECEC setting receives guidance and training on how to support trainees during their work experience?
- There are different arrangements for staff working with children under three years of age and children aged over three?

Statement 4: Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents

Good working conditions benefit staff, contribute to their retention and reduce levels of staff turnover. Working conditions can be affected by policies which focus on the structural quality of ECEC provision. These include arrangements on the size of a group; children to adult ratios; working hours; and wage levels. These policies can help to make employment in an ECEC context a more attractive option.

The experts agreed that three indicators (one of which has two sections) can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 9 - The average salary of ECEC staff employed in the public sector (with similar qualifications to primary school teachers) as a percentage of the average salary of a primary school teacher.

This indicator is one way to gauge the status and value of the ECEC sector (for children under and over the age of three) by making a direct comparison with the primary school sector. The indicator compares average salaries of those working in the primary school and ECEC sectors. Although it is not directly related to the quality of ECEC provision, staff motivation and the level of staff turnover are influenced by salaries.

The indicator focuses on the public sector because there are more likely to be regulations relating to salaries - there may be no explicit expectations of salaries for professionally trained staff in the private or voluntary sectors. In addition, data is more likely to be available in the public sector – for countries/systems with a significant amount of private sector and/or voluntary sector provision comparable data will be scarcer.

For some Member States the collection of data can be based on existing information e.g.

- OECD Starting Strong III³³

³³ OECD (2012) 'Remuneration of ECEC staff', in OECD (2012) 'A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care.' Starting Strong III Paris: OECD p.181 http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/starting-strong-iii_9789264123564-en#.We4fCtKWzFI

- 1) Average wage of ECEC staff compared to the minimum wage (multiple of the minimum wage);
 - 2) Average wage of ECEC staff compared to primary school teachers (multiple of their wage);
- OECD Education at a Glance³⁴ and Eurydice³⁵ - minimum and maximum annual statutory salary for pre-primary teachers.

Setting a European target for this indicator would be difficult because of the variety of policies in Member States.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- Primary school teachers and ECEC staff have similar terms and conditions of employment, security of employment and progression opportunities;
- The initial qualifications of ECEC staff (covered by this indicator) and primary school teachers are similar; the entry requirements for their initial training programmes are similar; and whether they have similar responsibilities when they are employed.

Case study 7 – Portugal

All pre-school teachers working in a public setting have similar terms and conditions of employment, security of employment and progression opportunities as the basic and secondary teachers. The salary and entry requirements are identical.

³⁴ OECD (2012) 'Annual statutory teachers' salaries in public institutions at starting salary, after 10 and 15 years of experience and at the top of the scale, by level of education, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for private consumption, for pre-primary education', in OECD (2012) 'Education at a Glance' Paris: OECD, p. 467: https://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_e-book_EN_200912.pdf

³⁵ Eurydice (2016) 'Minimum and maximum annual basic gross statutory salaries for full-time teachers in public schools compared to per capital GDP at current prices (ISCED 1, 2 and 3) in EUR, 2015/16', 'Teachers' and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe 2015/16', in Eurydice (2016) Facts and Figures. p14 <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8b7fc491-9aea-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Indicator 10a - The average ratio of children to all staff working directly with children

Indicator 10b - The average ratio of children to professionally trained staff working directly with children

Better staff ratios allow more time for staff to provide individualised support for all children. And, in most ECEC systems, one or both of these ratios is monitored as there are recommendations or requirements for children to staff ratios at the setting or system level. There is no consensus across Europe on the 'best' ratios and there is a debate as to whether it is always a good idea for the ratios to be lower. Decisions on changing ratios, either at a setting or a system level will be influenced by contextual factors in each ECEC system. However it is important to note that the child centred approach which is at the heart of the Quality Framework is difficult to put in place with large groups of children and low staff numbers.

The indicator is directly related to the quality of provision. It has two sections and individual systems may wish to use one or both sections. These two sections reflect the fact that in some systems there are regulations on the number of professionally trained ECEC staff but not the overall staff to child ratio.

The ease with which data can be collected depends on whether there are regulations or recommendations in place, whether these are set at the system or local level, and whether they cover all staff or those with a professional responsibility.

There is some data which could be used:

- OECD Education at a Glance – the average number of children per member of staff (for primary education);³⁶
- EUROSTAT - ratio of pupils and students to teachers and academic staff by education level and programme orientation – pre-primary education³⁷.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- The definition of 'working directly with children';
- The arrangements for children under and over three years of age;
- Whether there are rules on the size of each group of children;

³⁶ OECD (2012) 'Average class size in primary education 2000, 2010', in OECD (2012) 'Education at a Glance' Paris: OECD, p. 440. https://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_e-book_EN_200912.pdf

³⁷ Eurostat (2017) Code: educ_uoe_perp04, last year available: 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_childhood_and_primary_education_statistics

- Whether different ratios are used to support children from disadvantaged or marginalised families, or children with special needs.

Indicator 11 - The percentage of time assigned to staff for preparation and reflection i.e. when they are not working directly with children.

This indicator is one way to measure workload and the time available for ECEC staff to prepare and reflect on their work with children. The indicator is based on the idea of 'non-contact' time – this will need more discussion to ensure there is agreement on interpreting this indicator.

Time which is allocated for work (but not directly with children) could be defined at a national, regional or local level, and there may be significant differences for staff working in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In most ECEC systems the concept of non-contact time is only relevant for staff with a pedagogic role. In addition, there may be significantly different arrangements for staff working with children from birth to three and from three to the start of schooling; and for professionally trained staff and other staff.

This data is likely to be difficult to collect and analyse if it is not covered by legislation, regulation or system-level expectations. In some systems data³⁸ may be available through ECEC staff representative groups or trade unions.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering:

- How best to gather data e.g. should a sampling approach be used as it is more feasible than a census;
- The structure of the working day for staff in ECEC services – how do different types of staff have access to non-contact time to support their work with children e.g. through planning and review processes
- Whether the curriculum framework requires staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their work with children;
- Are there different arrangements for staff who work with children under and over the age of three?

³⁸ An example of data for other levels of education is included in: OECD (2012) 'Percentage of teachers' working time spent teaching, by level of education (2010) for primary to secondary education, in OECD (2012) 'Education at a Glance' Paris: OECD, p. 477.
https://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_e-book_EN_200912.pdf

Statement 5: A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way

Children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language development are important aspects of ECEC. The curriculum should set common goals, values and approaches which reflect society's expectations about the role and responsibilities of ECEC settings in encouraging children's development towards their full potential. All children are active and capable learners whose diverse competences are supported by the curriculum. At the same time, the implementation of the curriculum needs to be planned within an open framework which acknowledges and addresses the diverse interests and needs of children in a holistic manner. A well-balanced combination of education and care can promote children's well-being, positive self-image, physical development and their social and cognitive development. Children's experiences and their active participation are valued, and the significance of learning through play is understood and supported.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 12 – There is an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework for ECEC.

This indicator analyses the basis for the curricula which are used in individual ECEC settings. The existence of a curriculum framework or set of education guidelines (which informs the curricula in individual ECEC setting) provides guidance to providers and assurance to parents.

This indicator is based on a broad understanding of what may be considered as a curriculum framework – in some systems such a framework (in ISCED 0.1) may be a set of educational guidelines which serve a similar purpose³⁹. Given the range of ways in which a curriculum framework can be defined, it will be important to agree to use the definition within the Quality Framework. This refers to 'a holistic approach to ECEC is child-centred and means paying attention simultaneously to all aspects of a child's development, well-being and learning needs including those which relate to social, emotional, physical, linguistic and cognitive development'⁴⁰. The curriculum framework can be seen as setting the vision for the achievement and experiences of children who participate in ECEC.

³⁹ The Quality Framework defines a curriculum framework as follows: A curriculum framework (which can be a national, regional or local arrangement) expresses a set of values, principles, guidelines or standards which guides the content of and approach to children's care and learning.

⁴⁰ Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission (2014) Proposal for key principles of a quality framework in Early Childhood Education and Care, p. 10, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf

Even though the analysis of this indicator is based on a 'yes' or 'no' response, there may be differences between provision for children aged from birth to three, and from three to compulsory school age. In addition, there may be differences between the public, private and voluntary sectors. These differences may lead to a broader range of responses to this indicator e.g. 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'only met in some situations'.

The data is likely to be comparable across Member States – so long as there is no attempt to define the curriculum or explain what is included or covered in the provision.

There is some data for this indicator. This is available from:

- Since 2015, Eurydice network provides yearly data on the existence of 'curriculum or educational guidelines' for the DG EAC publication 'Education and Training Monitor'⁴¹. A comprehensive overview of educational guidelines in European countries, including title (including references), age coverage, content (main principles, broad aims, learning objectives, activities, etc.) and special support measures will be published in the forthcoming Eurydice report Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2019.
- OECD Starting Strong III⁴² which provides information on some Member States' provision e.g. – the existence of a curriculum framework, age coverage and title;
- OECD Starting Strong III⁴³ and Eurydice⁴⁴ - general curriculum content or educational guidelines (child outcomes, values, objectives etc.).

Data is more likely to be available for the curriculum which is used for children aged from three to the start of compulsory schooling.

This indicator lends itself to a European target which could be high e.g. at least 80% of provision is covered by an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether there are different arrangements for:

⁴¹ Distinction is made 'between the entire ECEC phase (from birth to the start of compulsory education)' and 'children aged 3 years or more'. See the last publicly available data in European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe – 2016. Eurydice Background Report to the Education and Training Monitor 2016*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

⁴² OECD (2012) 'A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care.' Starting Strong III Paris, OECD p.81-96 http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-iii_9789264123564-en

⁴³ OECD (2012) 'A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care.' Starting Strong III Paris, OECD p.81 http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-iii_9789264123564-en

⁴⁴ Eurydice – National Information Sheets, Facts and Figures 2014/15. Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe.

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9bea1249-8cf6-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>. European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014) *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

- Children under and over the age of three;
- Settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Indicator 13 - The percentage of settings whose work with children is based on an ECEC curriculum framework.

This indicator measures the number of settings which use a curriculum framework, and is closely associated with indicator 12. Collecting and analysing the data on this indicator may show differences between:

- ECEC for children aged from birth to three, and from three to pre-primary/primary school age;
- Settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The ease with which data can be collected and analysed will be dependent on the requirements or expectations surrounding the use of an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework e.g. in some situations there may be monitoring or inspection arrangements in place to check whether individual settings base their work on the system-level expectations or requirements. It will be difficult to collect data when decisions are made locally.

The data should be comparable across Member States so long as there is no attempt to agree the content of an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework.

It will be difficult to set a target because some countries require 100% of ECEC settings/contexts to use an agreed curriculum framework. In other systems, decisions are made locally.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether the data shows different arrangements are in place for:

- Children under and over the age of three;
- Settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Case study 8 – Belgium (fr)

Since 2003 there has been an expectation that each setting operates in line with a 'quality code' This includes each setting preparing its own pedagogical project which takes account of:

- The needs and wellbeing of children;
- Collaboration with parents;
- The needs of professional staff;
- Networking with stakeholders.

The pedagogical project is used to promote quality and provides the basis for self-evaluation and discussion with inspectors, parents and other stakeholders.

Statement 6: A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice

A curriculum can stimulate the creation of shared understanding and trust between children; and between children, parents and ECEC staff which encourages development and learning. At a system or national level a curriculum can guide the work of all ECEC settings and contexts – and at a local or setting level, it can describe the practices and priorities in the context of each centre. An essential factor in developing a collaborative approach to the curriculum is the ability of individual staff to analyse their own practice, identify what has been effective and, in partnership with their colleagues, develop new approaches based on evidence. The quality of ECEC is enhanced when staff discusses the implementation of the curriculum within the context of their centre/setting and take account of the needs of the children, their parents and the team. The curriculum can enhance this approach by promoting children’s learning through experimentation and innovation; and encouraging cooperation with parents on how ECEC provision contributes to supporting children’s development and learning.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 14 – The curriculum or other guiding documents requires staff to use feedback from children, parents and colleagues to systematically improve their practice.

This indicator emphasises the extent to which staff are expected to evaluate and improve their practice. It assumes that staff have systems in place to record the effectiveness of their practice; use this information to reflect on different ways to improve their practice; and put in place these new approaches. It does not describe or analyse the range of approaches that individual staff use to improve their practice. This makes it easier to use the indicator as measurement requires an analysis of the curriculum expectations rather than individuals’ practice.

It is based on the assumption that the quality of provision is improved when there are clear expectations that ECEC staff have a responsibility to make changes and improve their practice to support children’s development and learning. The indicator is connected to indicator number 19 which focuses on the ECEC providers’ responsibilities to improve the quality of provision.

The intention would be for this indicator to lead to a ‘yes’ response for each curriculum. However because many Member State have more than one ECEC curriculum, it is likely that the response to this indicator will be ‘sometimes’, ‘partially’ or ‘only met in some situations’.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether there are different arrangements for the curriculum which is offered:

- To children under and over the age of three;
- In the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Case study 9 – Ireland	Case study 10 – Denmark
<p>In 2006, the national quality framework⁴⁵ for early childhood education was published. This is a self-evaluation tool for early years' services which is based on the principles of reflective practice. It encourages regular cycles of review and planning of practice as a fundamental principle of quality improvement. The curriculum is one of 16 national standards for quality. A national programme of mentoring and support has been developed to support and encourage the implementation of self-evaluation in early years practice.</p>	<p>The Daycare Act stipulates the inclusion of children's perspectives on their learning environment and in the evaluation of the pedagogical curriculum.</p>

Indicator 15 - The percentage of primary schools which are required to use a curriculum which builds on children's experiences of learning in ECEC.

This indicator seeks to measure the ease with which children are able to move from ECEC settings to their primary school. Transition from ECEC to primary school has to be managed carefully to ensure continuity and progression in children's learning and development. This is best achieved when children's early experiences in their primary school align with their experiences in ECEC. One way to achieve a smooth transition is by requiring schools to use a curriculum which builds on the experiences, pedagogy and child-centred learning environment used in ECEC settings.

The intention would be for this indicator to lead to a '100%' response as every pre-primary and primary school is required to use a curriculum which builds on children's learning experiences in ECEC. However because many Member States have more than one ECEC curriculum and many curricula for schools, it is likely that the response to this indicator will be 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'only met in some situations'.

⁴⁵ www.siolta.ie

This indicator is difficult to measure when decisions on the curriculum are made locally.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether there are different expectations for:

- Schools in the private and public sectors;
- Pre-primary and primary schools;
- Children who have not used ECEC services.

Statement 7: Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice

Systematic monitoring of ECEC allows for the generation of appropriate information and feedback at the relevant local, regional or national level. This information should support open exchange, coherent planning, review, evaluation and the development of high quality ECEC at all levels in the system. Monitoring and evaluation is more effective when the information collected at a provider/setting level is aligned with the information collected at a municipal, regional and system level.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 16 - Information on the quality of the ECEC system is used as the basis for improvement.

This indicator is likely to be widely used as most (if not all) Member States use information to improve the quality of the ECEC system. Individual systems will base their improvements on a wide range of evidence sources – sometimes the evidence is based on an external view on practice and outcomes from individual settings; and sometimes the evidence is based on settings' self-evaluations reports. The focus of this indicator is on whether the data is used, rather than how it is used to improve quality (there will be many different ways to collect and use data at the system level).

The indicator measures the existence of a quality assurance system rather than the quality of provision. To ensure continuing improvements in quality it is essential that there is a well-functioning quality assurance process which is based on planning high quality provision; implementing these plans; monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these plans; and making changes to provision. These 'feedback loops' provide the basis for developing a quality management system.

The indicator is straightforward, relatively inexpensive and easy to use as it is based on the system level approach to quality improvement. As many Member States have more than one ECEC system, it is possible that the response to this indicator will be 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'only met in some situations'.

If there was a target at the European level it would probably need to be that 100% of systems use data to improve the quality of the ECEC system(s).

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether there are different arrangements for ECEC provision which is offered to children under and over the age of three. It is also worth considering:

- To what extent is the collection of data based on self-evaluation (or self-assessment);
- Whether the data collected at the provider/setting level can easily be collated at the system level to support improvements;
- Whether there is system-level guidance to ECEC provider/settings on what data should be collected to support improvements in quality at the system level;
- Whether the quality assurance system is based on using pedagogic and administrative data to improve the quality of provision?
- Whether there are different arrangements for provision covering children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- How quickly data is used to strengthen the quality of ECEC provision.

Case study 11 – Ireland	Case study 12 – Belgium
<p>In 2015 The Department of Education and Skills commissioned the development of an inspection for improvement system for those early-years services which delivered the universal free preschool programme. This inspection model⁴⁶ would reflect the system which operated in the wider school system and would aim to promote self-evaluation as well as the systematic external evaluation of the quality of practice in early years services. The Framework for Inspection incorporates national and international evidence on best practice in ECEC and evaluation and monitoring for improvement.</p>	<p>The MeMoQ⁴⁸ project developed a pedagogical framework and three instruments to measure, monitor and improve quality. The project included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The creation of scientific way to measure (for the first time) the state of play regarding the pedagogical quality in childcare settings in Flanders; ▪ An instrument to monitor the implementation of the pedagogic framework, - which could be used as part of an inspection process which evaluated the pedagogical quality in individual settings and identified those aspects that need

⁴⁶ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/A-Guide-to-Early-years-Education-focused-Inspection-EYEI-in-Early-years-Settings->

In January 2018 the first composite report⁴⁷ of the findings of this initiative were published and demonstrated a strong welcome by the ECEC sector and by parents and policymakers. All reports on early years services generated through this inspection initiative are published on the DES website in order to promote openness, transparency and accountability across the ECEC system.

improving;

- A self- evaluation instrument (with the same content as the monitoring instrument) for every individual childcare setting to use to evaluate and improve the pedagogical quality of their own setting.

The MeMoQ project aims to improve the pedagogic quality of all childcare settings in Flanders by providing instruments for external and internal evaluation.

Indicator 17 – Information on the quality of the ECEC system is publicly available.

The availability of information on quality of the ECEC system is an important element of establishing and promoting quality. Transparency and public accountability can stimulate a greater focus on high quality. The indicator would be relatively straightforward to use as information can be collected through an analysis of publications. There are questions about the type and amount of information that is published, whether the information is quantitative; whether the data is produced annually and whether it is easy to make comparisons from one time period to another. The indicator does not say anything about what information is made available.

Even though the indicator is likely to lead to a yes/no response, there may be other answers such as 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'it depends'. The indicator focuses on the system level; it does not require or measure whether individual settings or providers make data information to the public, stakeholders and users of ECEC.

There could be a European target – this could be that 100% of systems make data available on quality of the ECEC system

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering

⁴⁸ Measuring and Monitoring Quality in childcare for babies and toddlers: universities of Ghent (under the supervision of Prof. Michel Vandebroek) and Leuven (under the supervision of Prof. Ferre Laevers).

⁴⁷<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/a-review-of-early-years-education-focused-inspection-april-2016-%E2%80%93-june-2017.pdf>

the type of information that is publicly available. Is information available:

- On the quality of ECEC provision at the system level?
- On the outcomes achieved by the ECEC system?
- On an annual basis?
- In a form that can be easily understood by members of the public?
- In an easily-accessible on-line format?
- Without any charges to access the information?
- For provision covering children under three years of age and children aged over three?

Statement 8: Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child

Monitoring and evaluation processes are conducted to support children, families and communities. All stakeholders, including ECEC staff, should be engaged and empowered during the implementation of any monitoring and evaluation process. While monitoring can focus on the quality of inputs, structures, processes or outcomes; a focus on the interests of the child and staff engagement strengthens the quality of the processes used in ECEC settings.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 18 - The percentage of ECEC settings with monitoring systems which include a focus on the best interests of the child.

This indicator focuses on whether ECEC provision focuses on the needs of the child. It is set at the policy level and analyses the requirements placed on ECEC providers – this is not the same of measuring the number of providers who actually monitor the quality of their provision⁴⁹. As such this indicator is easier to measure as it does not require detailed data collection processes. Even when systems have monitoring processes in place, they may focus on collecting information to support adults and provision: this indicator asks whether the monitoring activities focus on the best interests of children and supports their well-being.

This indicator does not specify how often the monitoring takes place; who undertakes the monitoring and whether the monitoring is internal or external. This allows for a wide range of approaches and makes comparisons more difficult. This indicator is linked to

⁴⁹ This approach focuses on the system level requirements rather than practice. The same approach is used in indicator 5.

indicator 14⁵⁰ which focuses on whether the curriculum encourages individual staff to improve their practice.

The intention would be for this indicator to lead to a 100% response as all providers should be expected to monitor the quality of their provision in order to support the best interests of the child. However because many Member States have more than one ECEC system (and the arrangements for providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors may be different) it is likely that the response to this indicator will be less than 100%.

It would be relatively easy for each Member State to set a target for this indicator. This could be a percentage or a target based on increasing the percentage of providers required to monitor the quality of provision by x% per annum or over a longer period.

There is some data available from OECD (Starting Strong III) on the monitoring instruments which are used to evaluate the level of service provision⁵¹.

Given the range of ways in which monitoring can be defined, it will be important to agree to use the definition within the Quality Framework⁵². This states that 'in an ECEC context monitoring refers to the continuous and systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative data which supports a regular review of the quality of the ECEC system. It is based on pre-agreed quality standards, benchmarks or indicators which are established and modified through use.'

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering:

- The frequency of the monitoring which is required;
- Whether monitoring is based on an internal or external process;
- Who is required to be involved in the monitoring;
- Whether there are different arrangements for provision covering children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- How the views of children are taken into account in the monitoring process.

⁵⁰ Indicator 14 - The curriculum requires staff to use feedback to systematically improve their practice?

⁵¹ OECD (2012) Starting strong III: a quality toolbox for Early Childhood, Education and Care', Paris: OECD, pp. 285-264.

⁵² Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission (2014) Proposal for key principles of a quality framework in Early Childhood Education and Care, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf

Indicator 19 - The percentage of ECEC settings which use administrative and pedagogic data to improve the quality of their provision.

This indicator focuses on whether information and data that is acquired through monitoring and evaluation is used to improve the quality of provision. (This indicator can be seen as connected to indicator 14, which considers whether the ECEC curriculum requires staff to improve their own practice through reflection.) The use of data to improve provision is a sign that an ECEC provider has a quality assurance process based on continual improvements.

The intention for this indicator would be to lead to a 100% response as all providers should be expected to use data from the monitoring process to improve the quality of their provision. However because many Member States have more than one ECEC system (and the arrangements for providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors may be different) it is likely that the response to this indicator will be less than 100%.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering:

- Whether improvements in quality are undertaken on an annual basis;
- Whether the outcomes of the improvements are monitored and evaluated;
- Who is required to ensure that the improvements are effective;
- Whether there are different arrangements for provision covering children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- Whether the quality of the data is sufficiently valid, accurate and reliable to use as the basis for improving the quality of provision;
- How the improvements benefit children.

Statement 9: Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations

Given the cross-sectoral nature of ECEC provision government, stakeholders and social partners need to work together to secure the success of ECEC services. Legislation, regulation and guidance can be used to create clear expectations about the importance of collaborative working which supports high quality outcomes for children, families and local communities.

The experts agreed that one indicator can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 20 - A formal set of arrangements enables parents and partner organisations to work with ECEC settings.

This indicator considers partnership working from the perspective of parents and stakeholders. It looks at the extent to which they are aware of how to work with staff and leaders in ECEC settings. The indicator can be measured through an analysis of documentation. The indicator can be seen as the start of a process of fully engaging with stakeholders in order to ensure that ECEC services focus on children's needs. A collaborative approach which is built on the views of stakeholders and partner organisations is more likely to lead to improvements in the quality of ECEC provision.

Systems in each Member State will have their own understanding of 'a formal set of arrangements'. There could be further work at a European level to gain greater clarity on this aspect of the indicator; however, each ECEC system may prefer to develop its own understanding.

Even though the indicator is likely to lead to a 'yes' or 'no' response, there may be differences between ECEC for children aged from birth to three, and from three to pre-primary or primary school age. In addition, there may be differences between the public, private and voluntary sectors. These differences may lead to a broader range of responses to this indicator e.g. 'sometimes', 'partially' or 'only met in some situations'.

There could be a European target which specifies that every system has a formal set of arrangements for working with stakeholders.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering:

- Whether the formal set of arrangements are published and easily accessible for parents, staff, partner organisations and other stakeholders;
- How often the arrangements are updated;
- Whether the arrangements cover ECEC providers who work with children aged from birth to three, and from three to pre-primary or primary school age;
- Whether there is a broad and inclusive definition of partner organisations;
- The frequency of the collaboration;
- Whether collaboration covers the design, delivery and monitoring of ECEC;
- Whether data on collaboration is collected from each ECEC setting;
- How data on collaboration is collated to provide a system-level response.

Case study 13 – Portugal	Case study 14 – Germany
Parents and stakeholders have a formal role on the governing body of public school clusters.	All settings have a parental council or board that formally represents the interests of parents. They usually have an important role in relation to parental

In addition, the curriculum guidelines for ECEC clearly state there is a need for the continuing involvement of parents as the main educators and stakeholders in the classroom.

initiatives and meet regularly with the leader of the setting and staff (the frequency depends on the provider).

Every curriculum framework has a section on cooperation with parents and other stakeholders. This ensures parents have a formal role within ECEC provision. Some *Länder* also require providers and settings to conduct parental surveys as part of their formal arrangements e.g. in Bavaria these surveys are mandatory and are used to evaluate the quality of ECEC settings.

Statement 10: Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders

Structural or legislative arrangements support access to ECEC by giving families the right to access affordable ECEC provision. Approaches which support progress towards the universal availability of ECEC recognise that additional funds can support access for children from disadvantaged groups such as migrant, disadvantaged or low-income families. Monitoring the uptake of ECEC ensures that funding is used effectively. In order to make progress towards a universal entitlement to provision measures to emphasise the attractiveness and value of ECEC services need to be in place.

The experts agreed that two indicators can be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met.

Indicator 21 – The age at which there is publicly funded subsidised ECEC provision for all children (at least 15 hours per week).

This indicator is based on the assumption that if publicly funded access is available from a lower age, there will be a greater take-up of ECEC provision. It is based on 15 hours provision per week – this differs from indicator 2 which is based on 30 hours.

This indicator is available from Eurydice, which since 2015 provides yearly data on the starting age of universal legal entitlement to ECEC for the DG EAC publication 'Education and Training Monitor'⁵³. The hours of weekly entitlement are available in the latest

⁵³ The latest publicly available data is published in European Union, 2016. Education and Training Monitor 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016_en.pdf

background report⁵⁴. Further data on targeted legal entitlement (for certain groups of children), the types of financial support available to all families with children in ECEC and with children “at risk” will be published in the forthcoming Eurydice report Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2019. Eurydice will develop an indicator on affordability (which affects access) with information on the minimum and maximum monthly fee of public and subsidised private ECEC.

In theory, it is relatively easy for each Member State to produce a target. However, it will be difficult to agree on a European target due to the wide range of policies affecting parental leave and ECEC.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering whether:

- There is a universal entitlement to ECEC services;
- There is access in every part of the country e.g. in rural and urban areas;
- There are different arrangements for provision covering children under three years of age and children aged over three;
- Parents have a choice about which ECEC service to use.

Indicator 22 – The percentage of gross domestic product spent on ECEC.

The focus of this indicator is on public expenditure on ECEC - the share of gross domestic product (GDP) would not include expenditure by individuals on paying for ECEC⁵⁵. This indicator is used in many countries and there is data from OECD’s Education at a Glance data - Total public expenditure on pre-primary education as a percentage of total public expenditure.⁵⁶

As a great deal of work has taken place to define terminology associated with this indicator, it would be best if the existing European definitions were used. For the OECD this means that public expenditure on early childhood education and care covers all public spending (in cash or in-kind) towards formal day-care services (e.g. crèches, day care centres, and family day care, generally aimed at children aged 0 to 2, inclusive) and pre-primary education services (including kindergartens and day-care centres which

⁵⁴ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe – 2016. Eurydice Background Report to the Education and Training Monitor 2016*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

⁵⁵ This is in line with Statement 10 of the Quality Framework which states that ‘Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders’.

⁵⁶ OECD (2017) Educational finance indicators: *Public expenditure on education as percentage of total government expenditure*, last year available: 2015, http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=EAG_FIN_RATIO_CATEGORY

usually provide an educational content as well as traditional care for children aged from 3 to 5, inclusive)

In theory, it is relatively easy for each Member State to produce a target e.g. a percentage annual increase in the gross domestic product that is used on ECEC. Gaining agreement on a European target would be a slow process as this could have significant financial implications.

Guiding questions

To support the application of this indicator to your ECEC system it is worth considering the:

- Percentage of total public funds increases each year or over a longer period;
- How funding is divided between provision for children aged under and over three;
- Availability of public funds is affected by changes in:
 - 1) The number of children in the ECEC age range;
 - 2) The staff/children ratios (indicator 10);
 - 3) The training/qualifications expected from ECEC staff (e.g. indicators 5, 6 and 7).

The core indicators

Each indicator has been selected to support the monitoring and reporting of the quality of ECEC provision. Member States, and other users of the report, are invited to select those indicators which are most useful in their context.

From these indicators, the experts identified the following ten (a core group) which appear to be particularly useful in judging and reporting on the quality of ECEC provision.

- Indicator 1 - The percentage of children who have publicly funded subsidised access to ECEC.
- Indicator 4 - The percentage of children who attend ECEC regularly.
- Indicator 5 - The percentage of staff working directly with children who have completed professional education relevant to their role in an ECEC setting.
- Indicator 9 - The average salary of ECEC staff employed in the public sector (with similar qualifications to primary school teachers) as a percentage of the average salary of a primary school teacher.
- Indicator 13 - The percentage of settings whose work with children is based on an ECEC curriculum framework.
- Indicator 14 – The curriculum or other guiding documents requires staff to use feedback from children, parents and colleagues to systematically improve their practice.
- Indicator 16 - Information on the quality of the ECEC system is used as the basis for improvement.
- Indicator 19 - The percentage of ECEC settings which use administrative and pedagogic data to improve the quality of their provision.
- Indicator 20 - A formal set of arrangements enables parents and partner organisations to work with ECEC settings.
- Indicator 22 – The percentage of gross domestic product spent on ECEC.

Taken together, these core indicators provide a holistic measurement of all aspects of ECEC quality as described in the ten statements in the Quality Framework.

Experts

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