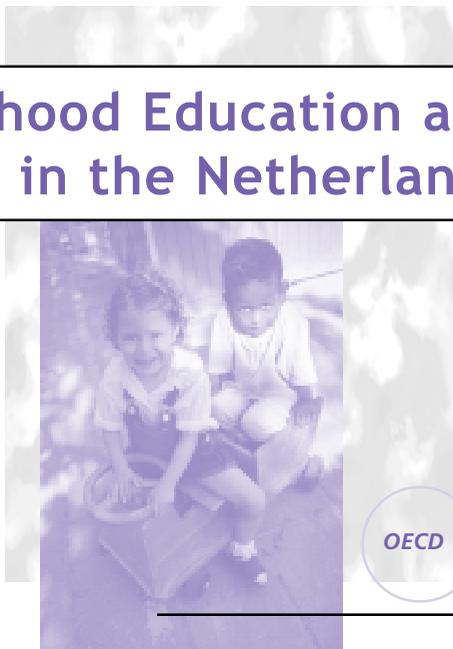


Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in the Netherlands



**Background report to the OECD-project
'Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy'**

The Hague, September 2000

Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport
Ministry of Education, Culture & Science

Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in the Netherlands

September 2000

This publication can be obtained by writing to
the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport,
Youth Policy Department
Postbox 20350, 2500 EJ The Hague, The Netherlands
or by fax: +31.70.34 05 410

Preface

On behalf of the Dutch Government, it is our pleasure to present, the background report on the Early Childhood Education and Care policy in the Netherlands within the framework of the OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Project*, which was launched by the OECD Education Committee in March 1998. We consider the project a welcome step forward in our shared effort to prepare young people for the twenty-first century.

Because the report speaks for itself with regard to facts and figures on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as it has developed over the years, we dedicate this preface to recent policy decisions directed at strengthening and, where necessary, broadening the impact of ECEC provision.

The foundations for lifelong learning are laid during each child's early years. This highlights the importance of good quality child rearing and the developmental conditions during these years for a child's future life. As more and more women participate actively in a booming economy, and as ECEC facilities for their families grow in number and quality, we are concerned for those at risk, especially among specific groups such as some ethnic minorities. This concern calls for additional policy measures.

As members of the present government, we have in fact put youth policy, including ECEC, higher on the political agenda: both at a national level and at regional and local levels. In line with the Dutch "*polder model*", i.e. building consensus among relevant stakeholders, this has resulted in an agreement on priorities in youth policy between the different government authorities under the personal leadership of Prime Minister Wim Kok. This agreement contains the following elements:

Firstly: we resolved to create an *integrated framework at all levels* for policies relating to young children in the age group of 0 to 6 years, thus heeding similar suggestions of the OECD review committee. Keywords in this line of thinking are *networking* and *interrelated policy chains*. These interrelated policy chains not only refer to health care, child day care, welfare and early childhood education, but also to parental support. Altogether, this should create quality care for all children and, where necessary, also give ample opportunity to identify the particular needs and problems of a child at an early stage. This will make it possible to co-ordinate and regulate supply and demand optimally.

Secondly: we have reached the conclusion that the time has come to implement experimental methods that have proven to be successful into the programmes of mainstream provision. We have therefore agreed on additional outcome-driven investments in the infrastructure.

In practice, this will mean expanding day care provision by spending a budget of € 100 million annually over a period of four years; providing, at the same time, a legal basis for financing, quality and the inspection of child care provision and a further reduction in the size of groups in the lower age ranges of schools (4-8 years) in order to give more attention to each child (expenditure € 500 million);

Additional measures are:

- a Strengthening youth health care by investing an extra € 15 million in the local infrastructure for preventive youth health care;
- b Providing extra money for participation in educational intervention programmes, targeting 2-5 year-old children at risk; (€ 35 million in 2000; to be raised further in 2001).

As a result of the aforementioned policy agreement, the additional investment in the ECEC-sector by the national government shall be matched by investments from the local authorities.

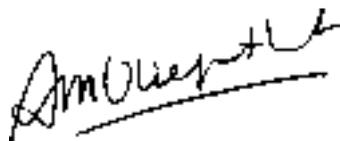
Thirdly, our ambition is to improve the cohesion, effectiveness and reach of ECEC provision substantially. We consider it important to motivate the other levels of government to share our ambition and our impatience to achieve results. In order to attain these goals, we will facilitate the local authorities as well as the ECEC services. Incentives will be provided to encourage the development of general awareness with respect to the importance of ECEC and the enthusiasm among both parents and people working with young children. We will also encourage the strengthening of infrastructure for the support of professionals through teaching, schooling and counselling, and by developing greater readiness to engage in interagency co-operation. Local policy makers will be assisted in playing the role of a broker in the local support system and in the communication system, e.g. by launching web sites.

However, we need to combine our ambition with realism. A challenge that we are facing now is the availability of sufficient and sufficiently qualified personnel at a time in which the labour market is tight. This means that we must also invest in all kinds of education (initial and in-service) and in recruitment.

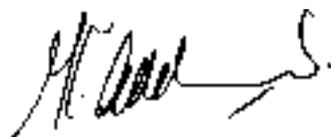
If all these plans become a successful reality, this will mean a major change in early childhood education and care policy and provision in the Netherlands. Many factors have contributed to this development. But we do recognise that the OECD played a significant role in this change because it did put the issue of ECEC on the international agenda. Some of these new policy developments will also address suggestions and concerns expressed by the OECD review team.

We should be happy if our report contributes to the exchange of information on developments in early childhood education and care policy within other countries. Most certainly, we look forward to other background reports as well as to the comparative report to learn from what other governments have done in this field. Therefore, we recommend the OECD to keep this subject on the agenda.

The State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport,
Margo Vliegthart



The State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science,
Karin Adelmund



Executive Summary

Cause

This background report was produced within the framework of the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Project. The goal of the review is to provide cross-national information to improve policy making in the area of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in all OECD-countries. Without this OECD-initiative, the present background report would not have been available.

Some basic facts and figures

In 1998, there were 1,369,000 children in the age range of 0-6 years in the Netherlands. This is 9% of the total Dutch population. The average size of the Dutch family is 2.1 children per household with children. Ethnic minority families have more children: on average 3.7 children per household with children, and ethnic minority mothers start having children at an earlier age. As a consequence, the share of ethnic minority children in the total population of 0-6-year-olds is increasing at a fast rate.

The vast majority of children (85%) grow up in a 'traditional' family, consisting of two married parents and one or more brothers and sisters. Thirteen percent of all children grow up in a single parent family and 1.5% have parents that live together but are not married. One in ten children remain an only child.

In recent decades, the age structure of Dutch society has been changing:

- There is a '*de-greening*' process, on the one hand – i.e. a decline in the proportion of youth in the total population – owing to the low fertility rate among the Dutch population;
- And, on the other hand, there is a '*greying*'-process – i.e. a growth in the proportion of elderly people in the total population – due to increased welfare and improved health services.

One of the implications of this development is that the demands on the social security system (e.g. old age pensions) and care (for the elderly) are going up while the proportion of working and tax-paying people, who have to sustain this system, is going down.

Studies into the wellbeing of children and statistical data on the school and work careers of Dutch youth indicate that 85-90% of Dutch youth is doing well. The remaining 10-15% are children and youth 'at risk', i.e. they have special needs and/or they have psychiatric problems and/or they live in very unfavourable family circumstances (child abuse, poverty). About 2-3% of (older) youth is considered to be seriously problematic and socially alienated: e.g. they are involved in serious (often violent or drug-related) crime, they have addiction and/or psychiatric problems and the like.

Dutch ECEC policy: main characteristics and recent developments

National ECEC policy and provision is a shared responsibility of several departments of the national government. The main national government actors are:

- The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), that has national tasks and responsibilities in the areas of childcare, parent support, child development programmes, youth health care, specialised youth care, youth work and sports;

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCenW), which is responsible for maintaining and monitoring the national system of mainstream and special education, pre-school education and educational disadvantage policy;
- The Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for the national system of child protection and fostering, and for crime prevention and combating;
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), responsible for policies concerning the combination of work and care tasks and the provision made for parents of young children that have or want to find a paid job;
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK), which is responsible for integration policies for ethnic minorities and for the Greater Cities Policy (GSB).

Decentralisation and deregulation

In recent years, the role of municipal authorities in the area of (a/o) ECEC provision and policy has become more prominent as a result of decentralisation measures.

From 1997 onwards municipalities have been given more responsibilities with regard to education and (primary) schools. The decentralisation of welfare policy started earlier - in the mid-1980s. Of course, the budget for decentralised policy and provision was also transferred from the national to the local level, in most cases as a block grant that was added to the Municipal Fund. In some cases, the decentralised budgets are earmarked, to ensure that local authorities will spend the budget on a specified provision or policy. Decentralisation of responsibilities from the national government to provincial and local authorities is an ongoing process that has not reached its limits yet.

As policy making is also being deregulated, the responsibilities and influence of other parties have increased. For instance, in the childcare sector the role of employers has become more prominent. Organisations of parents, labour unions and supporting institutes also are more involved in decision making. The general aim of the Dutch government is to move responsibilities back to where they belong: to those who are directly involved in providing ECEC services and those who benefit from them. Shared responsibility and self-regulation are important issues in this move towards decentralisation and deregulation of national government policy.

Nevertheless, the national government retains a number of responsibilities and tasks such as devising national rules and regulations (a/o legislation), developing and implementing national Policy Frameworks (in some areas of ECEC provision and policy), developing national standards and attainment targets (education), promoting innovations, national monitoring and evaluation, and controlling the quality of provision. The general principle behind the division of responsibilities between the different levels of government (national - provincial - local) is that of complementary administration: i.e. the national government covers those tasks that can be more efficiently organised at a national level.

At all levels of government there is an ambition to promote inter-sector and inter-agency co-operation and develop more comprehensive policy and programmes. In the area of ECEC, the recent development of the so-called BANS is important.

New Administrative Partnership Agreements: BANS

In the 1998 Coalition Agreement, the Dutch government announced a new way of dealing with the complementary administrative tasks of the different departments and levels of government. The basic idea is that for a number of policy areas, New Style Partnership Agreements (*Bestuurscoördinatie Nieuwe Stijl – BANS*) are drawn up, stating mutual policy goals, plans and agreements of the national, provincial and local governments. One of the selected policy areas is Youth Policy. The Ministry of VWS has an initiating and co-ordinating role to play in developing this Youth Policy BANS. At present, a shared view of youth policy is being developed and implemented. In this process, the group of 0-6-year-olds is given a high priority.

Local comprehensive policy

In addition to the recent BANS-initiative, there are several other national policy measures and programmes aimed at enhancing the development of comprehensive youth policy at the local level. Examples are the Local Preventive Youth Policy Project (OLPJ, see subsection 2.3.3), the National Policy Framework on Local Educational Disadvantage Policy (LBK-GOA, see subsection 2.1.2) and the Youth & Safety programme that is part of the Greater Cities Policy (GSB) of the national government.

Changes that shaped ECEC policy

In recent years, youth has regained its place on the Dutch political agenda. There is a growing awareness of the importance of youth to our present and future society. At this moment there is a broad political basis for the idea that society has to invest in youth and has to take youth seriously, not only for the sake of the young, but also for the sake of the sustainable development of a socially and economically flourishing society.

As a consequence, the attention given to the young child and the family is increasing as well. There is a growing emphasis on policy aimed at the young child and his/her family, with the objective of furthering favourable conditions for child rearing and giving children ample opportunity to develop themselves into responsible and self-supporting citizens in modern Dutch and international society.

Increased public and political attention for children and youth and their families is promoted by several trends and changes in present Dutch society:

- The development of the Dutch economy and labour market into a highly professional service and information society. This has important implications for the demands of the present and future labour market and therefore also for educational policy. The *Action Program Lifelong Learning* and innovative educational policy presently are being implemented with the aim of preparing today's youth for the society and labour market of the future. ECEC arrangements, especially those with educational goals, are becoming more important as a means to prevent youth from dropping out of the school system before they have acquired the minimum qualifications to enter the labour market. Research and experience indicate that extra efforts have to be made to effectively combat the social alienation of certain categories of ethnic minority youth. Integrated programmes, starting at an early age and actively involving the families, are needed.
- The rapidly increasing ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversification of the population of the Netherlands. Many people from ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands have a low socio-economic status, which puts their children at a disadvantage in school.

Due to higher fertility rates among ethnic minority mothers, the number of ethnic minority children is growing at a faster rate than the number of ethnic majority children. In some (urban, inner-city) areas, ethnic minority youth in fact already are in the majority.

The diversification of the population and the increasing cultural pluralism of society is having a great impact on the education system and on certain provision made for young children, such as pre-school playgroups (the use of other childcare facilities by ethnic minorities is relatively low). This at least is the case in metropolitan areas, where there is a high concentration of ethnic minorities.

- The increasing number of women (including mothers with young children) that start work or continue working after bearing children. As a consequence, the demand for professional care facilities for children of pre-school age and for out-of-school care for schoolchildren has risen considerably in the last decade. Central government has successfully implemented Childcare Incentive Schemes to drastically expand the capacity of these care facilities, but at this moment demand still exceeds the supply.

A second consequence is that the traditional gender-specific division of tasks in the private sphere is slowly starting to change. The division of paid and unpaid labour, of 'work' and 'care' within society and within families and other domestic partner relationships has in recent years received quite a lot of attention in public and political discussions. Government is currently preparing new legislation (Framework Act 'Labour & Care') aimed at widening the scope for all Dutch citizens to combine paid work with other duties and activities in the private sphere.

- On a more general level, concepts of child rearing and socialisation are changing. Although the family is still seen as centrally important and primarily responsible for the upbringing of children, there is a trend towards a new view of the socialisation of children being a *shared social responsibility*, involving many different parties, a/o the government.

This signifies and exemplifies a new direction in government policy, aimed at creating constructive communities of interest in which citizens, professional organisations and government participate on an equal basis.

- Policy makers tend to make greater use of scientific insights into the development of children as a basis for policy making. Recent influential studies that have a direct bearing on today's ECEC policy are a study on *Vulnerable Youth* (Schuyt, 1995), a study on *Youth and Family* (Junger-Tas, 1997) and a survey study on child rearing practices and conditions *Child rearing in the Netherlands* (Rispen et al., 1996).

Main types of ECEC provision

Government policy and provision directly concerned with ECEC can be described as being organised in three circles around the child and its family.

- The first circle contains *general provision*, which is open to all children in the age range of 0-6 years. These are: pre-school playgroups (for 2-3-year-olds), child day-care (0-3 years), out-of-school childcare (4-12), primary education (4-12 years) and youth health care services (0-18 years).
- The second circle contains provision and programmes for children and/or families that need extra support or attention to be able to fully participate in mainstream provision. The main *intervention programmes* relevant to ECEC are: child development programmes (or: educational support programmes) and parent support programmes.

- The third circle contains provision for specialised, intensive forms of help and support for children with special needs and/or serious problems. These include specialised youth care (a/o psychiatric and judicial care), schools for special education and child protection agencies.

The main types of provision in the first, second and third circle are described in detail in section 4 of this report.

In addition to the provision that directly target the child and his/her family, there are other arrangements that have a bearing on ECEC, i.e. legal and financial arrangements to support families in their child rearing duties, such as leave arrangements and subsidies. Policy and provision in this area are described in section 3 of this report.

Capacity and use of the general ECEC provision

The use of the general ECEC provision (first circle) varies, depending on the type of provision. The participation rate of parents and young children in MCH (Mother and Child Health care) is highest in the first year (95%) and then gradually decreases to 80% in the fourth year. The same applies to primary schools, which all children are legally required to attend from the age of 5. However, 99% of the four-year-olds are enrolled in primary education on a voluntary basis.

Other types of provision are used to a lesser extent, depending mostly on the needs of children and parents. Formal childcare is used by 17% of the 0-3-year-olds. Although the capacity of childcare has rapidly increased in recent years, the demand for professional childcare still exceeds the supply. The national government aims to close this gap through its policy to promote an increase of the capacity of this provision.

The use of pre-school playgroups (about 50% of the 2-3-year-olds) seems to be fairly stable. The future development of this provision depends to a large extent on municipal policy with regard to young children within the framework of local policy concerning education and welfare.

Quality standards and quality control

Quality standards have been developed for all types of ECEC provision and are generally concerned with physical, organisational and procedural conditions. Quality standards concerning pedagogical approaches are a recurrent topic of debate, but - partly because of diverging views on early childhood - they are rarely enforced.

In primary education, the Education Inspectorate plays an important role in determining and evaluating the quality of education for young children.

In the childcare sector, the pedagogical aspects of childcare are currently receiving more attention. The childcare sector is expected (in the near future) to maintain its own system for quality standards and quality control (self-regulation). At the moment a Temporary Decree concerning quality in childcare, issued by the national government, is used by municipalities as a quality control instrument. In the future, the national government will maintain central quality requirements by law.

In the youth health care sector (preventive health care for 0-18-year-olds), new legislation is being prepared with the aim of defining and standardising the basic package of services and aligning the activities of different organisations through the implementation of integral health dossiers for youth.

Tasks and training requirements

For most of the ECEC provision the tasks and the training requirements of early childhood workers are clearly defined. The majority of (paid) ECEC workers must have a qualification in higher professional education (HBO) or senior secondary vocational education (MBO).

Educational organisations offer a vast supply of in-service training modules for the ECEC sector. Changes in the ECEC system and in educational approaches lead to changes in the demands for in-service training. Some types of provision (especially pre-school playgroups) also employ non-paid volunteers and trainees.

Professional status and salaries

The job of working with young children is generally held in relatively low esteem. Nevertheless, salaries have recently been raised for workers in child day-care and pre-school playgroups.

In primary education, a shortage of teachers is imminent, partly as a result of the government's decision to reduce class sizes in the first four years of primary education.

Family involvement

The active involvement of parents in ECEC has increased in all types of provision. The formal participation and influence of parents in ECEC provision have been furthered by legislation. Among the organisations providing ECEC services there is a growing awareness of the importance of family engagement and support in order to improve quality and meet the needs of parents and children. In primary education, the role of parents is strengthened by the introduction of the new Act on Educational Quality. Under this law, schools have to account for their policy and for quality to parents, among other ways, through the publication of school prospectuses and school plans. All schools are required to have these from 1999 onwards. The Ministry of VWS has promoted innovation in the field of parent support and child development, whereby parents can receive help and support in educating their children. However, some parents lack the time, the self-confidence or the social or language skills to participate effectively. Parents of children in child day-care centres often find it difficult to combine such activities with their work. Ethnic minority and low SES parents often do not feel confident enough.

Funding

The funding of ECEC provision varies according to the type of provision. Childcare is financed by contributions from the government, both national and local (municipal authorities), from parents and from their employers. Pre-school playgroups are financed by municipalities, which may charge a fee to parents. Primary schools and special schools receive funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and may ask parents for a voluntary contribution. Young children's health care is partly funded through national social insurance (AWBZ), partly by the national government and partly by municipalities. Innovative programmes and pilot projects are mostly funded by the national government or - sometimes additionally - by provincial or local governments.

Evaluation and research

In the Netherlands, research outcomes, statistical data and other policy information instruments (such as national monitors) are increasingly accepted and used as a basis for policy making. The government has various sources of policy information at its disposal, including a number of national monitoring instruments concerning children, youth and youth policy.

There are several arenas where policy makers and youth researchers meet and discuss youth (policy) issues. In addition, there is an infrastructure for the co-ordination of research efforts in the area of youth and youth policy. These are described in section 5 of this report.

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Introductory remarks

This report is an adaptation and update of the draft background report 'Early childhood education and care policy in the Netherlands' that was prepared by Sardes Educational Services (Klopprogge et al., 1998) within the framework of the OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC¹) Policy Project*. This project was launched by the OECD's Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality or All*. In their communiqué, the Education Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access and quality in early childhood education, in partnership with families, with the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning. The goal of the review is to provide cross-national information to improve policy making in early childhood education and care in all OECD countries².

As part of the review process the Netherlands hosted a *review team*, composed of the OECD Secretariat and experts with diverse analytic and political backgrounds, for a ten-day intense case study visit (26 October - 4 November 1998). In the course of the visit, the review team interviewed many of the major parties involved in ECEC policy and practice and observed a number of examples of ECEC programmes in the Netherlands. On the basis of this information, the review team prepared the Country Note *Early Childhood Education and Care policy in the Netherlands* (OECD, September 1999).

Format of this report

Because the OECD aims to write a comparative report based on the Background Reports of the participating countries and the Country Notes of the review teams, the original Background Report followed a pre-designed format developed by the OECD. This adapted and updated version of the Background report builds on information provided by Sardes (Klopprogge et al. 1998), the OECD review team (OECD, the Netherlands, 1999) and more recent national developments in early childhood policy. It aims to give the reader a comprehensive account of the state-of-the-art and recent developments and innovations in ECEC policy and practice in the Netherlands.

Scope of the report

The review is concerned with the policy and provision for children aged 0-6 years. The focus is on the policy of the Ministries of Health, Welfare & Sport (VWS) and of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science (OCenW) and the provision and practices resulting from this policy. The report provides detailed information on the following forms of general ECEC provision: childcare, pre-school playgroups and primary education. Policy and provision in the field of youth health care, specialised youth care and special education are mentioned, but not described in detail. The same applies to the policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs (SZW), aimed at supporting parents in their efforts to combine work with the education and care of (young) children. The authors have attempted to present the most relevant information while keeping a balance between policy and provision.

Budgets are expressed in Dutch guilders and in Euros. One Dutch guilder equals about 0.45 Euros, 0.4 US dollars, 0.3 British pounds, 0.85 German marks, 3 French francs.

Acknowledgements

Several Dutch experts have commented on the draft version of the Background Report. The authors would like to thank the ministry officials who commented on the draft report, especially Ms Anke Vedder, Ms Una Huizinga, Mr Fokko Kool and Ms Trudy Hofstede (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport) and Mr Mark Weekenborg (Ministry of Education, Culture & Science). The authors would furthermore like to thank Professor Jan Rispens (University of Utrecht), Mr Jan van den Berg (Primary Education Process Management Team), Ms Ina Bakker (Netherlands Institute for Welfare and Care) and Mr Peter Lankhorst for their contributions to the report.

This final version of the Background Report was prepared by Ms Pauline de Savornin Lohman of DSP Research and Consultancy, in close co-operation with Ms Anke Vedder of the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport, who co-ordinated the contributions of government officials to the report and who made a major contribution to the final editing of the report.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the members of the OECD review team for stimulating and helping us to review and discuss our national ECEC policy and practices and to identify and clarify policy concerns and new challenges for the future.

1

Contexts and Current Provision

1 Contexts and Current Provision

This chapter describes the general context for policy on early childhood education and care. The history of the general provision that has been made for ECEC is described briefly (section 1.1), some facts and figures are presented (section 1.2), and then the main structure of provision (1.3) and common views and objectives in ECEC provision (1.4) are discussed.

1.1 A Short History of ECEC

Nineteenth century: private initiative

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first nursery schools were established to improve the education of children from poor families. These schools were aimed at preventing delinquency and promoting religious behaviour. At the same time they gave mothers the opportunity to take on a job. Another type of provision created in this period was the so-called 'matressenschool', where working-class women looked after the children of working mothers. These were often single or widowed mothers who were obliged to go out and work to support their families. At that time ECEC activities were strongly rooted in the private initiative (PI) of organised groups of middle class and upper class Dutch civilians and motivated by humanitarian and Christian ideals and morality.

Twentieth century: increasing government involvement

Starting from the turn of the century, the involvement and influence of the national government in the area of care and education of its citizens steadily increased. At first, government involvement was aimed at protecting children against abuse such as the exploitation of child labour. Some years later the basic right (and duty) of all Dutch children to participate in education was adopted as part of the Dutch Constitution. In the period after the Second World War, government involvement in the general welfare of the citizens and in the funding of the social service and organisations that provided welfare and care services rapidly expanded. The Dutch Welfare State reached its peak in the 1970s. By this time a complex and non-transparent network of identity-based organisations for care and welfare had developed in the Netherlands. The 1980s - partly forced by the economic recession - saw the beginning of a new era, starting in the field of welfare policy, marked by budget cuts, a decentralisation of responsibilities and deregulation.

Changing views and changes in the system

The first ECEC (private) initiatives in the field of childcare were partly motivated by practical needs (i.e. mothers having to earn the family income) and partly inspired by moral concerns of middle and upper-class citizens about the moral standards of lower class children and their families. Accordingly, the ECEC activities were directed at looking after children of working mothers and at correcting children from 'anti-social' families and teaching them Christian values. Until the Second World War, this quite patriarchal position was the dominant view of the function and goal of ECEC provision.

New types of provision: pre-school playgroups, child day-care and out-of-school care

The idea that childcare provision should aim to *promote children's development*, instead of just looking after them and/or correcting them, became more prominent in the 1960s. Around 1965 the first *pre-school playgroups* emerged, where children aged 2-3 years played two or three times a week in the company of other children of the same age in a safe environment. These playgroups were child-centred and not intended as a provision for children of working parents. In the 1970s, the number of playgroups rapidly expanded. Other types of provision for childcare were established in the same period. The most important of these were *family day-care* (where private individuals work in their own homes looking after the children of other people), centres for *child day-care* and *out-of-school childcare*. Until 1990 the capacity of these types of provision was fairly limited. However, as the number of working women increased in the 1980s, child day-care provision came to be seen as an important contribution to the process of creating equal opportunities for women. As a result, provision and provision-policy became less child-oriented and more focused on the needs of mothers (and the labour market).

Nursery schools

These schools for 4-5-year-olds were given official status by the Pre-school Education Act (1956). However, views of nursery school education changed in the course of time and increasing importance was placed on promoting the development of young children. In 1974, the Act was adapted and the accent on activities and materials was replaced by an emphasis on fostering children's overall development. Since 1985, nursery schools and primary schools have been integrated into a new-style primary school that caters to the entire 4-12 age group. This change was inspired by the view that the development of children is a continuous process; the new-style primary school seeks to guarantee that educational activities are geared to this continuous process.

1.2 Basic Facts and Figures

Before going into the subject of this report - ECEC policy and provision in the Netherlands - some basic facts and figures concerning young children and their situation in Dutch society are presented in this section. This provides the background for understanding and correctly interpreting the information on ECEC policy.

1.2.1 Demographic Data (also see: appendix 1)

In 1998, there were 1,369,000 children in the age range of 0-6 years in the Netherlands. This is 9% of the total Dutch population. In 1998, there were 84,000 families with at least one child in the age range of 0-5 years. The average size of Dutch family (2,1 children per household with children) has not changed over the last decades. The fertility rate among Dutch women is relatively low (1.56) and the average age of mothers when they have their first child is relatively high (29 years). Ethnic minority families have more children: on average 3.7 children per household with children, and ethnic minority mothers start having children at an earlier age. As a consequence, the share of ethnic minority children in the total population of 0-6-year-olds is increasing at a faster rate than the share of ethnic minority population. A vast majority of children (85%) grow up in a 'traditional' family, consisting of two married parents and one or more brothers and sisters. Thirteen percent of all children grow up in a single parent family and 1.5% have parents that live together but are not married. One in ten children remains an only child.

In recent decades, the age structure of Dutch society has changed:

- There is a *'de-greening'* process, on the one hand – i.e. a decline in the proportion of youth in the total population – owing to the low fertility rate among the Dutch population (1.56 children per woman in 1997);
- And, on the other hand, there is a *'greying'* –process – i.e. a growth in the proportion of elderly in the total population – due to increased welfare and improved health services.

One of the implications of this development is that the demands on the social security system (a/o old-age pensions) and the care system are increasing while the proportion of working and tax-paying people, who have to sustain these systems, is going down.

A positive aspect for today's youth generation is that, for most of them, their prospects on the job market are very positive – at least as long as the current favourable economic developments continue.

1.2.2 Ethnic Minorities

Although the Netherlands has always been an immigration country, today's Dutch society is much more heterogeneous than it ever has been. After the Second World War, the Netherlands experienced several periods with a strong influx of people from other countries:

- Between 1945 and 1948 about 110,000 immigrants came to the Netherlands from Indonesia, partly former civil servants and army personnel who had worked for the colonial administration.
- In the 1950s, new waves of immigrants from Indonesia reached the Netherlands.
- Another wave of immigrants from former Dutch colonies came from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles Islands in the Caribbean. Large numbers of these immigrant groups started to arrive from 1970 on. They were *de jure* Dutch citizens and could immigrate to the Netherlands without any obstacles.
- Labour immigration to the Netherlands started in the 1950s, mainly from Mediterranean countries. During the 1960s the Dutch government drew up recruitment agreements with Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, Morocco, Yugoslavia and Tunisia. In 1973, the number of immigrants from recruitment countries amounted to 128,500. Some of the immigrants from the northern Mediterranean countries returned to their country. Of the immigrants from Turkey and Morocco, the vast majority stayed in the Netherlands. Many of these invited their families to the Netherlands and decided to settle in the Netherlands for good. In 1996, 272,000 people were living in the Netherlands of Turkish origin and 225,000 of Moroccan origin.
- *Refugees* have been coming to the Netherlands for ages. There has been a sharp increase in the influx of refugees since the end of the 1970s. The yearly number of asylum seekers fluctuates, but on average it has been showing a sharp increase, averaging nearly 40,000 a year in the period 1993-1995. Asylum seekers come from a great number of countries and areas. There is a continuous political debate in the Netherlands about procedures and legislation for asylum seekers.
- Not all immigrants are officially treated as minorities. In Dutch policy, the following *ethnic minority groups* are mentioned: people of Surinam, Turkish, Moroccan, Antillian/Aruban or Tunisian origin, people from the Northern Mediterranean countries and the Cape Verdian islands, as well as Chinese and Vietnamese people. Officially recognised refugees and asylum seekers who are allowed to stay in the Netherlands are also regarded as minorities.
- The number of people staying illegally in the Netherlands is difficult to estimate. Estimates for 1995 varied between 30,000 and 150,000.

On 1/1/1998 there were over 62,000 ethnic minority children (according to the above mentioned definition) in the age group of 0-4 years living in the Netherlands and over 65,000 in the age group of 5-9 years.

1.2.3 Raising Children in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a reputation for being generally progressive and liberal in its social organisation. However, if we look at the division of labour between the sexes, the social organisation of child rearing and policy on childcare provision, our country has been lagging behind as compared to the situation in many other European countries. In recent decades, and especially in the period after the Second World War it has become common practice in Dutch society for mothers of (young) children to stay at home and raise the children, and for fathers to earn the family income. As a result, the participation rate of Dutch mothers - and women in general - in the labour market was low as compared to other European countries. This social and economic organisation of the family (the so-called 'bread-winners model') was supported by government - e.g. through taxation laws favouring families with one person earning the family income - and widely accepted by Dutch citizens.

In a 1965 survey for example, over 80% of both women and men disapproved of women with school age children taking a job and nearly 100% of men and women disapproved of placing young children in a childcare centre (Van Praag, 1997).

The view that bringing young children to a provision outside the home is not harmful to them and may even benefit their development has only recently begun to gain support, particularly in the 1990s. Recent survey results show that nowadays less than 20% of the Dutch population disapproves of working mothers and 50% disapproves of placing children in a child day-care centre (Van Praag, 1997). But still there are groups in the Dutch population who resent the idea of mothers of young children going out to work. This is especially true for the social categories that were the last ones to enter into the breadwinners model (i.e. low SES groups).

Data and research findings on the 'average' Dutch family

A recent and authoritative large-scale study (Rispen et al., 1996) provides evidence of common child rearing conditions and practices in the Netherlands.

- Most families (90% or more) are stable and well organised. These families have a clear set of rules concerning the division of tasks and responsibilities amongst the family members. Parent-child interaction is intense. Mutual support, frankness and 'togetherness' typify the communication and interaction patterns in the majority of Dutch families.
- Dutch parents are 'child rearing optimists': they attach much importance to the family as major factor in the socialisation of children. In their opinion, the family is (far) more important and influential than other contexts and sources of child socialisation such as child day-care or the school.
- The vast majority (80%) of parents also has a positive image of their own competencies in raising children.
- In raising their children, most parents are orientated towards encouraging the personal development of their children. They especially value and monitor the social and moral development of their children. Autonomy, independent judgement and a sense of social responsibility are more important values to parents than conformity, obedience and competitiveness. The value orientation of parents is not gender specific: Dutch parents have the same socialisation values and goals for boys and girls.

- The behaviour of parents in parent-child interaction can be described as ‘authoritative’ (as opposed to authoritarian): a combination of showing support and affection for the child and exertion of control through communication and inductive disciplining. Authoritarian control through punishment/reward and exertion of power is rare (though not absent) in the majority of families. The authors conclude that family relations in these families are genuinely warm and loving. Discipline is exerted through talking and bargaining.
- In the study, little evidence was found of class differences in child rearing values and practices. Parents from upper class families differed slightly from the rest in the respect that they seemed to show less emotional support and affection towards their children. Parents from lower class families were more prone to use authoritarian methods of control (punishment and reward).
- The study found no evidence of sex stereotyping in the values and ambitions parents have in raising their children: boys and girls are treated on an equal basis.
- In the survey, no support was found for the popular hypothesis that many parents in modern society suffer from feelings of insecurity in raising their children and are in need of extra support. If parents need extra support and information on child raising issues, they tend to turn to their partner and other people in their social environment. Less than 10% of the parents has at some time sought professional support or counselling from a paediatrician or a child psychologist.

Note: the survey study focused on determining the ‘average’ child rearing conditions and practices in the Netherlands. The authors indicate that for about 10% of the families this quite positive picture of the average Dutch family does not apply. These families are described as unstable and chaotic. The study however does not present more detailed information on these families.

Child rearing practices in ethnic minority families

Studies into child rearing practices in ethnic minority families indicate that, in comparison to the Dutch child rearing style, ethnic minority parents place more stress on obedience and respect and tend to make greater use of authoritarian techniques of disciplining their children (punishment and reward). Parenting styles are more gender specific: values, goals and ambitions are different for boys and girls. This parenting style is especially noticeable in Turkish and Moroccan families. On the other hand, it is widely recognised that immigrant families generally provide a warm, secure and caring family environment for their children. Recent research into rearing styles of certain categories of ethnic minority families (Moroccan and Surinam, Creole) indicates that these styles are gradually changing and becoming more like the Dutch rearing style (Distelbrink, 1998 and Pels, 1998).

According to some studies, ethnic minority families attach less importance to monitoring the cognitive development of their children: many parents in these groups see the school as primarily responsible for the scholastic achievements of their children. Although these studies are small in scale and of a qualitative nature, these research findings are supported by statistical data on school performance and the school dropout rate of children from ethnic minority families.

The social significance of education

Dutch society places a strong emphasis on formal education. The average level of education among the Dutch population has steadily risen over the course of the 20th century.

Today 45% of pupils enter a higher form of education (higher professional education [HBO] or university [WO]) after finishing secondary school (OECD-average: 33%). On the basis of education statistics, the expectation is that a five-year-old entering the school system will remain in the educational system for 17.5 years (OECD-average: 16.4 years)³. Since 99% of children enter school at the age of four, the actual expectation is that they remain in the educational system for 18.5 years on average.

For a long time girls were less highly educated than boys. Girls now reach the same educational level as boys or higher, although there are still differences in the type of qualifications they obtain: girls are less inclined to take on technical subjects or mathematics.

1.3 Overview of the Main Provision made for ECEC

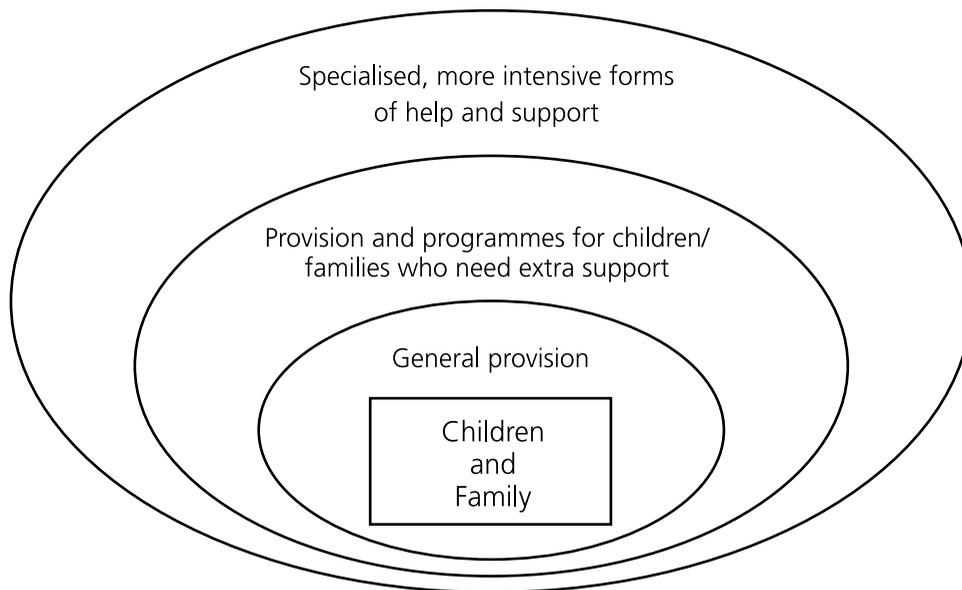
In chapters 3 and 4 of this report, we will elaborate on the specific arrangements and provision that are relevant to ECEC policy. In this section, an overview of provision is presented to give the reader an impression of the diversity and complexity of ECEC provision in the Netherlands.

At first a distinction has to be made between three types of provision and arrangements in this area:

- 1 Provision directly targeting the young child and/or his/her family, offering them care and/or education service (see subsection 1.3.1 and chapter 4);
- 2 Provision supporting the aforementioned ECEC service and ECEC policy making (see subsection 1.3.2);
- 3 (Legal) facilities and arrangements of a more conditioning nature, offering general (material) support for families with young children (see subsection 1.3.3 and chapter 3).

1.3.1 ECEC Provision for Young Children and their Families

Direct provision of service in the area of ECEC is organised in three circles around the child and his/her family. The first circle contains *general services* that are, in principle, meant for all children in the age range of 0-6 years. These are: pre-school playgroups (for 2-3-year-olds), child day-care centres (0-3 years), out-of-school childcare centres (4-12 years), primary education (4-12 years) and youth health care services (0-18 years). Within the category of general provision, primary education and youth health care services can be considered to be *basic*, since they accommodate *all* children in the target group. The second circle contains provision and programmes for children and/or families that need extra support or attention to be able to fully participate in mainstream provision. The main *intervention programmes* relevant to ECEC are: educational compensation programmes and parent support programmes. The third circle contains provision for specialised, intensive forms of help and support for children with special needs and/or serious problems. These include specialised youth care (including psychiatric and judicial care), schools for special education and child protection agencies. In section 4 of this report, a detailed description of the general provision (first circle) and the main intervention programmes (second circle) can be found.



1.3.2 Provision for support of ECEC Services and ECEC Policy Making

Support for ECEC is organised at national, provincial and municipal levels.

- At the national level the Ministry of VWS subsidises the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW), which is the main organisation for support in the welfare and care sector.
- The Ministry of VWS also subsidises the Foundation Averroës, which is responsible for the development and implementation of a number of ECEC intervention programmes in the Netherlands.
- National educational institutes, such as the national educational advisory centres, support schools at the national level. These are funded by the Ministry of OCenW. The education of children aged 2-6 years is gaining a more prominent place in the services offered by these institutes.
- The provincial authorities and the three large metropolitan areas are responsible for the organisation and funding of support services for local or regional agencies working with children, especially in the field of welfare and care (provinciale steunfuncties). A number of these organisations are very active in promoting and supporting regional and local ECEC policy and practice.
- At the local level, many of the larger municipalities have welfare support organisations that can provide local ECEC services and the local authorities with expertise on ECEC policy and practice. There are however no systematic data available on the availability of ECEC expertise in these organisations.
- Since 1997, municipal authorities also have the responsibility of maintaining school advisory centres that provide educational support and advice to schools and pupils/parents. These local school advisory centres have recently started to develop expertise on ECEC because the municipalities now have more responsibilities in this area (especially reduction of educational disadvantages).

1.3.3 General Legal Facilities and other Arrangements for Families

In addition to the institutions that provide support, care and education for young children and/or their families, there are a number of laws, regulations and arrangements that are aimed at providing (mainly material / financial) support for families with (young) children. The main provision in this area is described in section 3.1.

1.4 Common Understandings of Early Childhood Education and Care

Although the Netherlands are a small country, it is not easy to portray 'common understandings' in the field of ECEC. There are in fact several, partly opposing views on the significance of early childhood, on what is good and important for young children and on how early childhood education and care should be organised. Differences of opinion are clearly visible amongst ECEC professionals and researchers and are the basis of a lively and continuing debate. As a consequence the Netherlands have a rich variety of programmes and methods in the ECEC sector, based on different views on early childhood and the way ECEC services should be organised. In the Dutch context, this situation is not uncommon and therefore gives no reason for great concern. The Dutch are generally tolerant of differences of opinion and are skilled in finding pragmatic solutions that are acceptable to all involved. This is, in short, the basis of our famous 'poldermodel'. It should be noted that in recent years there has been a growing willingness to co-operate and co-ordinate between different sectors of government, resulting in various interdepartmental policy notes, such as in the area of ECEC policy. This enhances the development of common understandings of ECEC practice and policy in both the political and administrative arena as well as in day-to-day practice.

1.4.1 Common Views and Objectives in the General Provision made for ECEC

Childcare : child day-care centres, family day-care and pre-school playgroups

It is considered important that childcare provides a caring, stimulating and safe environment for children. Children are expected to develop normally if they are given the opportunity to explore their environment and world on their own. Working with groups of children on the basis of pre-set goals is not widespread. Pre-school playgroups seem to be more inclined to use methodical approaches, but are at the same time afraid of becoming too 'school-like'. Debates about whether and to what extent childcare provision should follow an explicit pedagogic approach have been going on for years and at times become very emotional.

Primary school

In the junior department of primary schools (groups 1 and 2 - ages 4-5), the tradition of nursery schools is still influential, which means that a lot of time is spent on play and expressive activities. Since nursery and primary schools were integrated in 1985, a more continuous educational path is being developed, e.g. a more systematic approach to literacy and numeracy education, and by implementing child observation systems in order to detect developmental problems at an early stage.

A general policy aim in Dutch education policy is that all Dutch citizens should have equal access to education, regardless of their social background. However, research in the 1960s indicated that children from working-class families were much less successful in school than children from middle-class families.

Working-class children were therefore considered to be 'at risk' of failing in education and a policy was developed to reduce the disadvantages of these children. In the 1970s, the *Educational Priority Policy* (Onderwijs Voorrang Beleid - OVB) was extended to include the growing numbers of children from ethnic minority groups, who were considered to be 'at risk' due to their limited Dutch language proficiency, the generally poor educational level of the parents and differences between the minority cultures and the dominant culture. From that time on, numerous projects and programmes have been developed to combat the educational disadvantages of children entering primary school. Also, a new system of additional funding for schools with low SES and ethnic minority pupils was implemented (pupil weighting system: see section 4.4).

Over the years it has become apparent that interventions aimed at reducing educational disadvantages can only be successful if they start when the children are still very young and when the parents actively support the interventions. This resulted in a growing interest in early childcare provision (especially playgroups) as a useful way to educate young children and to signal and prevent disturbances in the development of young children, while involving their families in the process.

Note: not all experts support the view that it is useful to administer educational programmes to very young children of a pre-school age in order to prevent disadvantages at the time they enter into the formal school system. Some experts argue that starting education too young can disturb or endanger the social and emotional development of young children.

Intervention programmes

Comparable objectives (i.e. reducing disadvantages and supporting children and families at risk) are pursued by home-based or centre-based intervention programmes, targeted at children and families that are in need of extra help and support. Many of these programmes have been developed since 1990 and, after a period of experimentation, are now being implemented on a small or medium scale. Some of these programmes aim primarily to improve children's language and cognitive development (*child motivation or child development programmes*), with the additional goal of involving and supporting the parents. There are also programmes that aim specifically at providing parent support and intervening in the balance of risk factors and protective factors in families (*parent support programmes*). Child development programmes and the parent support programmes spring from different traditions in policy making, but in practice there may be elements common to both types of programmes. Many home-based and centre-based programmes have been developed within the framework of educational disadvantage policy and target ethnic minority children and Dutch low SES children. However, some programmes are also used with children from middle-class families or in schools with a predominantly middle-class population.

Balance model

In the area of parent support, the balance model (Bakker et al., 1997) is often used as a frame of reference. The dynamic processes between the child, the parents and the environment constitute a central element in this approach. Risk factors and protective factors are specified at micro, meso and macro levels. Risk factors may lead to stress related to the responsibilities of the child and the parents. Protective factors can strengthen the competencies and resources that enable parents and children to cope with responsibilities and risk factors. The balance model works from the assumption that child-rearing problems generally are part of a wider context of family or social problems.

In addition, the quality of child rearing is not solely dependent on the competencies of parents – the social context plays an important role as well. Therefore, problems in child rearing should be tackled from a broader perspective and should not be limited to the micro level of the child and his or her parents. Parent support on the basis of the balance model also takes into account the child-rearing conditions and aims at improving these conditions (i.e. furthering positive conditions and reducing risks). The balance model, among other things, directs attention to the importance of the social support network around the family, and this offers points of departure for the development of policy and practices in the area of child development and parent support programmes.

2

ECEC (related) Policy and Division of Responsibilities

2 ECEC (related) Policy and Division of Responsibilities

In this chapter the main, current ECEC policy is described in section 2.1. This is followed by short description of national policy and other developments that are relevant to and supportive of the development of ECEC policy (section 2.2). In section 2.3 the division of policy responsibilities between the different departments of the national government and the different levels of government is presented.

2.1 Current Policy in Early Childhood Education and Care

2.1.1 Current Motives for ECEC Policy

Policy in the area of ECEC serves the interests of several stakeholders, each with their own motives to promote ECEC provision and policy. The main stakeholders and motives are:

- Parents: providing qualitatively good, professional day-care and out-of-school care services is clearly in the interest of (working) parents.
- Employers / economic interests: increasing the capacity of child day-care and out-of-school care has a direct effect on the availability of parents (especially mothers) for the labour market.
- Education: participation of children 'at risk' in ECEC facilities can contribute to the improvement of children's learning achievements and socio-emotional development, and thus to the reduction of the educational disadvantages of children when they enter school.
- (Youth) welfare: participation of children in pre-school playgroups and child day-care facilities has a positive effect on the socialisation and socio-emotional development of children, and thus contributes to social integration. Pre-school playgroups may also have the objective of getting in touch with parents and strengthening social cohesion in the neighbourhood.
- Public order and crime prevention: support for parents in effectively socialising their children will reduce the alienation and delinquency of children at a later stage, and area-based ECEC services can contribute to social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

ECEC and the labour market: promoting women's participation

One important government policy objective is to enable mothers to participate in the labour force. The Dutch government has reserved a budget of up to 250 million guilders (€ 114 million) for expanding the capacity of childcare provision, with the explicit aim of increasing participation in the labour market. The primary goal is to expand capacity for children up to 12 years, but there will also be experimental provision for children aged 12-16 years.

ECEC and reducing disadvantage and alienation

More explicit child-oriented motives for ECEC are included in educational disadvantages and crime prevention policy. According to the Education Council, pre-school, early school and out-of-school activities should contribute to the improvement of children's learning achievement by focusing on the cognitive domain,

language development, and social and emotional development. These ideas fit in with the tradition of Dutch educational disadvantage policy, where fostering the development of young children was always considered crucial.

Reports and policy papers on crime prevention are markedly similar in content to those on educational disadvantages.

From both angles there is a great deal of support for programmes targeting young children and parents 'at risk' as a means to foster the development of young children and to promote parental involvement. In addition to the childcare sector, the early childhood health care centres are considered to be of great value because they potentially reach all families with young children. Although their role is primarily to monitor children's health and to advise parents on issues concerning health, nutrition, child development and child-rearing practices, these centres are increasingly focusing on children and families at risk, to whom they may offer extra care and support (*plus-functions*).

Welfare policy and ECEC: promoting social cohesion and integration

In the context of (local) youth policy and social integration policy, much emphasis is placed on the importance of providing social support for families and children. Parent support is regarded as an important instrument to help parents to socialise their children and, thus, to strengthen social cohesion. Pre-school playgroups are seen as important agents in reaching parents (especially from ethnic minority groups) that have a low participation rate in other facilities. Because these facilities are organised at the neighbourhood level, they can function as a meeting place for socially isolated families and thus strengthen social cohesion.

In past years, objectives with regard to social cohesion and social integration have received a great deal of attention in policy making, both at the national level and the municipal level.

Support for community-based approaches: the role of community members

Given the strong trend towards professionalism in education and welfare work (including ECEC), the potential role to be played by local communities and community members in providing support for families and ECEC has largely been ignored in the past by policy makers and professionals alike. Now that tide is clearly turning. Concern about the deterioration of social cohesion in local communities and new perceptions of the relationships between government, social services and citizens have inspired a renewed interest in community-based approaches.

In the social policy in the near future, as laid down in government documents, much attention will be given to supporting and strengthening the '*social infrastructure*' of local communities. In this view, formal and informal initiatives and actions of community members are of crucial importance to enhance the social cohesion and self-reliance of the members of community. One of the concrete initiatives that is currently being taken by the Dutch government in the area of ECEC is to promote an *area-based approach to ECEC*, targeting families at risk according to the 'Communities that Care' model, which has been successfully implemented in the United States.

2.1.2 Current Objectives and Target Groups of ECEC Policy

Current objectives and target groups of ECEC policy can be found in a number of recent policy plans issued by the national government.

Policy Note 'Towards a Solid Basis' (1998)

In 1998, the State Secretaries of VWS and OCenW and the Minister of Justice presented a policy note describing their views on the significance of parent support and child development programmes and services as a means of preventing social drop-out of youth and reducing juvenile crime. The policy note states that the prevention of social alienation among youth should start at an early age, especially for those children and families 'at risk' that make insufficient use of general facilities and intervention programmes for children and families. In these 'hard to reach' (socially isolated) groups, certain categories of ethnic minority families are clearly overrepresented. General provision, such as the early childhood health care centres, child day-care, pre-school playgroups and schools for primary education, plays an important role in the provision of parent support services and child development programmes. These general facilities are area-based and are generally sufficiently available in local communities. In addition, several intervention programmes for young children and their families have been developed that have proven their effectiveness.

There are, however, major problems in (mainly urban, inner-city) areas with a high concentration of socially disadvantaged families. The available services in these areas do not always reach the population that is most in need of their support - this requires an extra effort. The offer of services is often scattered (non-transparent) and not coherent, which is especially unfavourable for potential clients with little knowledge of and experience with the Dutch welfare system. In addition, the services in these areas do not have enough capacity (money and manpower) to meet the complex needs and demands of their clients. Clients in these multi-problem areas need more attention and care (*plus-functions*) than the services can provide for. Municipalities are supposed to play a central role in directing the local services and facilities and organising comprehensive local ECEC provision (basic functions and plus-functions), but local authorities often lack expertise and steering instruments to effectively play their role as directors. In the policy note, propositions are made to achieve a more comprehensive and more effective area-based approach to parent support services and child development programmes targeting families at risk.

Policy Note 'Childcare' (1999)

In a recent policy note (June 1999) from the Secretaries of State of the Ministries of VWS, SZW and Finances, the plans for the future of childcare provision are presented.

- In the period 1999-2002, a further expansion of the capacity of child day-care provision is planned, parallel to an improvement in the structure of the sector. This includes the expansion of out-of-school care for school children. The estimated costs (including tax facilities) for the national government amount to approx. 1 billion guilders (€ 455 million) over a four-year period.
- The policy aim is to expand the existing 89,000 child day-care places (i.e. 66,000 for 0-3-year-olds and 23,000 for 4-12-year-olds, estimates of 1997) by 71,000 places to make a total of 160,000 places. Employers are expected to contribute in financing 55% of these additional places.
- In addition to these quantitative measures, measures will be taken to further improve quality control, pedagogic innovation and parent participation in child day-care.

- Tax facilities for employees and employers will be expanded and improved with the aim to lower the threshold for using formal childcare services. The estimated costs are 375 million guilders (€ 170 million) for 4 years.

National Policy Framework for Local Educational Disadvantage policy (LBK-GOA)

Recently (1998) national policy concerning the reduction of educational disadvantage has been largely devolved to local government. Municipalities are now obliged to develop and implement a local policy plan on educational disadvantage (*Gemeentelijk Onderwijs Achterstanden beleid - GOA*) as part of a broader local educational policy plan. The national government remains responsible for the overall outcomes of the policy in this area (i.e. setting goals and determining priorities, monitoring and evaluation of policy).

The national government (Ministries of OCenW and VWS) supports local authorities in their policy making through a National Policy Framework (*Landelijk Beleidskader - LBK*) on local educational disadvantage policy. In the National Policy Framework, the national government states that ‘...policy to reduce and combat educational disadvantage can only be successful if there is a co-ordinated approach directed at a number of crucial moments in the development and education of youth, starting in the *pre-school period* and ending at the stage where they enter the labour market’. With regard to the education of young children, this policy framework states the following:

“The objective of this compensatory policy is to improve the starting conditions of children at primary school entry by:

- increasing co-operation between schools, pre-school playgroups and childcare centres with the aim to prevent delays in the development of the children;
- enhancing the expertise of staff working with young children.

This makes it necessary to exchange information about future pupils of primary schools, to promote systematic planning and to further educational expertise in pre-school provision, to implement programmes and instruments that foster pre-school children’s language development and to provide support to parents through home-based programmes.”

In the national framework, the following goals for the policy on educational disadvantage are defined:

- Implementing pre-school and early-school education programmes, especially for ethnic minority youth;
- Implementing measures to improve proficiency in the Dutch language, especially for non-Dutch speaking children;
- Reducing the number of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems that are referred to special education;
- Reducing the number of pupils who leave school without proper qualifications;
- Promoting equal participation of all pupils in all types of follow-up education (secondary and tertiary);
- Monitoring the implementation and outcomes of local educational disadvantage policy.

2.2 Wider Support for ECEC Policy: Policy on Children and Families

Current ECEC policy is part of and is supported by a wider policy context concerned with the rights and position of children and the family in Dutch society. There is, however, no such thing as one comprehensive policy for children or families in the Netherlands, and there is no separate Minister or policy-unit for the Family, as is the case in a number of other European countries.

Children and families are the subjects of policy at various levels and from various angles. Recently several initiatives have been taken to create a more comprehensive national policy approach towards children and families. This signifies that the (rights of the) child and the role of the family in the socialisation of the child are becoming more central policy issues in the Netherlands.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)

In 1995, the Dutch government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, entailing the duty of drawing public attention to its contents (among other ways, through a national campaign). The rights of the child to grow up in a supportive home environment and government's obligation to support and condition parents in their child-rearing tasks, as stated in the Convention, have become one of the core starting points of the national government's policy concerning the family.

In 1997, a national report on the progress of the implementation was completed, and was commented on by the UN Committee for The Rights of the Child in October 1999. In the report on the Netherlands, the Committee welcomed the commitment and efforts in achieving a commendable degree of enjoyment of the rights of children by children and recommended, among other things: that adequate measures be taken to ensure that medical advice and treatment remain confidential for children of appropriate age and maturity; that a breastfeeding promotion campaign be undertaken, stressing its advantages and the negative impact of substitutes; that efforts be continued to prevent bullying in school, in particular to strengthen structures to enable children to participate adequately in addressing and resolving that problem (UN Committee on Rights of the Child concludes twenty-second session, United Nations, Press Release, 8 October 1999).

Policy Note 'Family' (1996)

In September 1996, the Dutch government produced the Policy Note *Family*, stating the view of the national government on the definition and social functions of the family, the main reasons for government involvement with the family and major policy aims and measures concerning the family. Important aspects of this policy note are:

- *All households* with one or more adults taking care of one or more children are defined as a family, meaning that families with two same-sex parents, single parent families, foster and stepfamilies should be treated as equal to traditional families.
- Within the government policy framework concerning the family, special attention should be paid to the *child rearing core function* of the family.
- Government involvement in the child-rearing practices of the family can be legitimised on two grounds: (1) the importance of socialisation practices for the future continuity and development of Dutch society (investing in the future) and (2) the government's duty to protect the weak i.e. children's rights to a safe and healthy (family) environment and equal opportunities for all children to develop themselves and participate in Dutch society.

Accordingly national government tasks in this area are threefold:

- 1 Creating favourable *conditions for families* to realise their core function: caring for and educating their children (i.e. child day-care, leave arrangements, social security, etc.);
- 2 *Supporting and consulting/advising* families in their child-rearing tasks, both generally (primary education, early childhood health care centres) and specifically (parent support programmes, special education, specialised youth care, etc.);

- 3 *Active intervention* whenever the core function of the family is seriously threatened, especially when the rights and developmental possibilities of children are endangered (i.e. child protection measures).

Policy Note 'Towards a new balance between labour and care' (1999)

The Dutch Government is currently preparing a new Framework Act *Labour and Care*. In this new legislation, existing laws and regulations concerning policy and provision to further the economic independence of all citizens and to combine paid work with other important aspects of life (especially: care for children, care for other relatives and education) will be integrated and harmonised. The aim is to devise a comprehensive set of regulations concerning leave arrangements, part-time work and facilities to save leave days for a long-term leave, e.g. a sabbatical period. In addition, the government will encourage the further development of flexible working hours and modern work patterns, the accommodation of school opening hours to parents' work schedules and the creation of more opportunities for women to enter or re-enter the labour market. The Dutch government has announced that the above-mentioned Framework Act on Labour and Care will include wider possibilities for care leave (to take care of sick children or other family members).

The Framework Act is based on the advice of the Committee on *Future Scenarios on the Redistribution of Unpaid Labour (1995)*, that favours the so-called 'Combination Scenario' for the future social organisation of work and care duties by men and women. The basic idea is that men and women should have equal opportunities to combine paid work with care activities. Given the present situation (where women still spend less time on paid work and more time on caring activities) this implies that women will be encouraged to participate more (hours) in paid labour, while men are encouraged to take on more caring duties.

Incentive Scheme Day-planning

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) has launched this incentive scheme to encourage government bodies, companies and other organisations to experiment with measures to facilitate employees in combining paid labour with care tasks. A special project bureau is responsible for implementing the scheme. During the experimental period (1998-2002) the Dutch government will invest 60 million guilders (EUR 27 million) in the scheme.

2.3 Responsibilities for ECEC

The division of tasks and responsibilities in the area of ECEC over various departments and administrative levels has changed considerably in the last decade, owing to a process of decentralisation and deregulation of central government policy. The decentralisation of welfare and care policy started in the 1980s, while the decentralisation of educational policy did not take place until the mid-1990s. At the same time, a process of deregulation has started which also affects many sectors of government. Decentralisation and deregulation were based on the view that decisions on necessary provision and the quality control for processes and products can best be done by those directly concerned at a local or regional level.

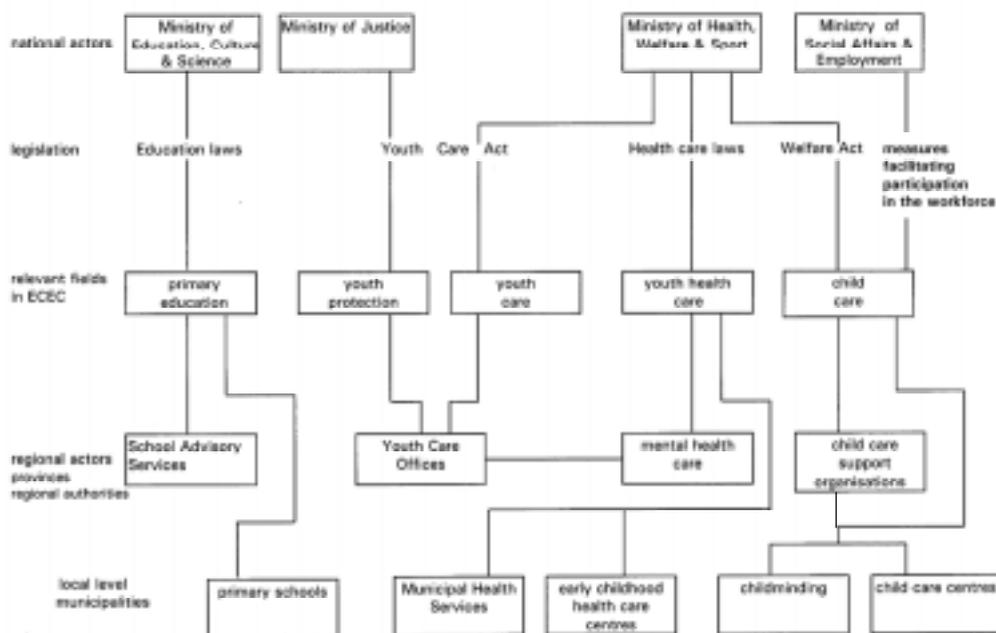
In *welfare and care policy*, many responsibilities have been transferred to other levels of government (provinces, municipalities) that became responsible for planning and maintaining the welfare and care system. The providers of welfare and care services were made responsible for ensuring the quality of their work.

The decentralisation of responsibilities in youth care (to provinces and municipalities) was accompanied by budget cuts and a process of major restructuring of the regional specialised youth care provision, which is still underway.

In the field of *education*, schools (i.e. school boards) have become more autonomous and are given more opportunities to determine their own policy, for instance, with regard to spending and personnel policy. Municipalities have acquired greater responsibilities in educational policy, giving them a wider scope for developing effective local educational policy. As a consequence of decentralisation, municipalities and provinces have become much more active in policy making in the areas of welfare, education and (youth) care. The national government supports and directs these policy making efforts, among other ways by producing national policy frameworks that are to be used as guidelines for local or regional policy making.

The current division of tasks and responsibilities is pictured in the figure below.

Actors in ECEC in the Netherlands



Intermediaries: VNG and IPO

The Union of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the Inter Provincial Platform (IPO) play an important role as intermediaries between central government and local and provincial government.

- The VNG confers with the ministries and regularly develops and disseminates policy making instruments for municipalities. These instruments can take various forms, for instance model regulations, training courses or staged plans for policy development.
- The twelve Dutch provinces and three metropolitan areas are responsible for curative specialised youth care and the development of youth care offices. Provinces confer within the framework of IPO.

New Administrative Partnership Agreements: BANS

In the 1998 coalition agreement, the Dutch government announced a new way of dealing with the complementary administrative tasks of the different departments and levels of government. The basic idea is that, for a number of policy areas, New Style Partnership Agreements (Bestuurs Accoorden Nieuwe Stijl – BANS) are drawn up, stating mutual policy goals, plans and agreements of national, provincial and local governments. One of the selected policy areas is Youth Policy. The Ministry of VWS has an initiating and co-ordinating role to play in developing this Youth Policy BANS. At present a shared view on youth policy is being developed and implemented. In this process, the group of 0–6-year-olds is assigned a high priority.

2.3.1 Central Government's Responsibilities

At the national level, a major role is played by the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport (VWS), the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science (OCenW), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (SZW).

Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport (VWS)

Although many of the responsibilities for youth welfare and care have been devolved to other administrative levels (provinces/large cities and municipalities), the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport has a number of central responsibilities and tasks in the fields of:

- (Youth) welfare, including pre-school playgroups;
- Childcare (child day-care, out-of-school care and family day-care);
- Parent support;
- Specialised youth care i.e. curative youth care, mental health care, youth protection and judicial youth care;
- Youth health care;
- National and international youth policy.

Responsibilities for specialised youth care are partly shared by the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport and the Ministry of Justice: youth protection and judicial youth care fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

General central tasks and responsibilities of VWS in these areas involve:

- Conditioning the national system (laws and regulations, the national support and research infrastructure);
- Designation and implementation of national policy frameworks or guidelines for provincial/local government (including in the area of childcare, preventive youth care, specialised youth care and educational disadvantage policy);
- Innovation: promoting experimentation and dissemination of new working methods;
- Monitoring trends and highlighting new developments;
- Complementary responsibility for tasks that cannot effectively be dealt with at other administrative levels;
- Interdepartmental co-ordination of national youth policy;
- Co-ordination of national and international research on youth.

Ministry of Education, Culture & Science (OCenW)

This Ministry is responsible for national educational policy. These include: defining attainment targets (minimum curricular standards) for primary and secondary education, supporting and organising the educational system, monitoring and evaluating national developments and education policy.

Policy areas of OCenW that are especially relevant to ECEC are:

- Reduction of class size, in combination with other measures to improve the quality of primary education.
- Reduction of educational disadvantage (GOA), including development and dissemination of programmes and projects aimed at the reduction of educational disadvantages and the National Policy Framework (LBP-GOA) for municipalities concerning local policy on educational disadvantage.
- Policy to improve parent involvement and active participation in the education of their children, including a national guide on primary education for parents, national regulations for schools concerning the publication of a school guide and the installation of a complaints committee for parents.
- Special education policy for children in need of special care and attention, including (re)integrating children with learning and behavioural difficulties into mainstream schools (*Going to School Together*) and policy concerning made-to-measure education for children with disabilities through a personal budget (*Backpack - Rugzak*).

A tradition of co-operation between the Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and Health, Welfare & Sport has developed since the 1970s. Educational disadvantage policy and early childhood programmes are the joint responsibility of these ministries.

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice is among other things responsible for the national child protection system (national and regional Councils for Child Protection, fostering agencies), for dealing with juvenile delinquents (judicial care) and prevention of and research into juvenile delinquency.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK), has a co-ordinating role to play in one of the central parts of the Greater Cities Policy, i.e. the *Youth and Safety program*. A recent report on 'Youth and Family' (Junger-Tas, 1997), commissioned by the Ministry of Justice, stresses the importance of effective early childhood socialisation by the parents as one of the most important factors in preventing social alienation (school dropout, delinquency) of youth at a later age.

According to the report, effective crime prevention should start in early childhood, among other ways, through early childhood education and effective parent support programmes. A comprehensive and consistent, area-based child-and-family policy is advocated. As a consequence, the Ministry of Justice is becoming a partner in national policy concerning ECEC.

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK)

This Ministry is among other things responsible for national policy concerning public order and safety. In 1998, a new ministerial post was created, with responsibility for the Greater Cities Policy (*Grote Steden Beleid - GSB*) and Integration Policy (previously: ethnic minority policy). The new Minister is attached to the Ministry of BZK.

In 1998, the Ministry of BZK, in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice, published a memorandum on 'Delinquency in Relation to Ethnic Minorities' (*CRIEM*), containing policy recommendations to combat and prevent involvement of ethnic minority youth in criminal activities. In this report, the importance of effective early childhood care and education support (especially parent support and child development programmes) is stressed as a factor contributing to the prevention of social alienation among ethnic minority youth. Expansion, intensification and quality improvement of these services are necessary, according to the memorandum.

Ministry of Social Affairs (SZW)

The Ministry of Social Affairs is less directly involved in ECEC provision and policy. Its involvement is mainly in the area of conditioning families to effectively combine work and with the care for (young) children. See the new legislation concerning 'Labour and Care' (section 2.2) and the overview of provision for parents in chapter 3 of this report.

In addition, the Ministry of SZW has a separate Subsidy Scheme for Childcare, aimed at single parents on social security, as part of the general policy to enhance economic independence and reduce reliance on social security.

2.3.2 Responsibilities of Provincial Government and the Three Metropolitan Areas

The main ECEC responsibilities of the twelve Dutch provinces and the three metropolitan areas (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague), which have the same status as provinces in this respect, are:

- Regional planning, organising and funding facilities for specialised, curative youth care (third circle);
- Organising and maintaining regional front offices for specialised youth care;
- Maintenance of the regional support infrastructure in the area of welfare and care.

In addition to their planning, organising and funding duties, provinces are supposed to develop regional views and policy concerning specialised youth care provision, in close co-operation with municipalities, providers of care, health insurance companies and the users of care.

Since provinces are responsible for *curative* youth care and municipalities are responsible for *preventive* youth care, provinces are supposed to align their policy with the municipalities in their region. Some of the provinces and cities invest in innovation of care methods and processes through (co-)funding of experiments and pilot projects in specialised youth care.

2.3.3 Responsibilities of Local Government

In the ongoing process of decentralisation, local authorities are confronted with new responsibilities and tasks in the field of youth welfare, childcare, preventive youth health care, education, labour market policy and crime prevention.

They also organise and fund activities concerning amateur art, artistic and cultural education, library work and sports. Municipalities are responsible for the implementation of a number of national acts and schemes, such as:

- The Childcare Incentive Scheme;
- The Collective Prevention Act (WCPV);
- The framework Act on Local Educational Disadvantage Policy (LBK-GOA);
- The Youth Employment Guarantee Act (JWG), recently integrated into the Act on Integration of the Jobless (WIW).

In addition, local councils develop and implement welfare policy for specific target groups. For example, many of them promote and fund facilities and services for young people of foreign backgrounds, for young homeless and runaways, etc.

In the field of education, local authorities are also responsible for upholding the Compulsory Education Act,

A new role for local authorities

One of the main aims of the devolution of duties and powers to local authorities is to provide them with a wider policy scope for identifying local needs and demands and finding appropriate responses. Deregulation and financial discretion for local authorities are paramount in the decentralisation policy.

The main decentralising operations relevant to ECEC are:

- In 1987, local authorities became, under the Welfare Act, responsible for policy on child day-care and out-of-school care, family day-care, pre-school playgroups, social-cultural work, non-formal youth education and community work.
- In 1989, local authorities became responsible for tasks concerning preventive public health care, including preventive health care for 4–18-year-olds.
- In 1995, local authorities were given responsibility for local preventive youth policy (see below).
- In 1996, local authorities became responsible for the quality control of the childcare sector.
- In 1998, a number of duties in the field of education were devolved to the local authorities, including the prevention of school dropout, policy on educational disadvantage (GOA), the provision and housing of education, monitoring and taking care of truants, offering additional courses for children and adults of foreign backgrounds and pupil transport.

A new challenge: direction

As the number of policy areas under local administrative discretion increases, local authorities are required to draw up their own policy and face new administrative challenges. This certainly also relates to the great importance attached to an integrated approach to current social problems in municipalities. Integral policy making and implementing proceedings always require numerous other parties to be involved, such as youth welfare, education, health care, housing organisations, voluntary youth organisations, etc. Moreover, local authorities can, less and less, dispense with the say of local residents nowadays: citizens must be allocated their positions in policy development and implementation.

Development of Local Preventive Youth Policy

In 1994, a project team for the Development of Local Preventive Youth Policy (OLPJ) was set up by the Ministry of VWS to develop and implement a 3-year national programme (1995-1998) aimed at promoting the development of preventive youth policy by local authorities.

This programme used a broad interpretation of the concept of prevention. Preventive youth policy should not restrict itself to stopping youth problems from getting worse, it should also enhance general opportunities for all young people to interact with agents and participate in activities in their direct social environment. Promoting the social and political participation of young people in the local community is one of the key elements of the programme.

The activities of the OLPJ project team were aimed at the creation of grassroots support and policy backing from *all* Dutch local authorities.

In the project, a wide array of instruments and methods was developed and disseminated among all Dutch municipalities to support them in devising and implementing a comprehensive preventive local youth policy. Evaluation studies of the project indicate that the project was effective in directing attention of local authorities towards youth and enhancing local policy making in these areas. The project was financed by the Ministry of VWS (10.5 million guilders, € 4.3 million over a three-year period).

As a follow-up to the OLPJ project, the Ministry of VWS has recently launched a new project with the aim to provide made-to-measure support to local authorities in further developing and implementing local youth policy. The implementation of this project is co-ordinated by the Union of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). The Ministry of VWS has made a yearly budget available of 3 million guilders (€ 1.4 million) during the project period (1999-2002).



Family Engagement and Support

3 Family Engagement and Support

As was mentioned before, government policy and provision directly concerned with ECEC can be described as organised in three circles around the child and its family.

- The first circle contains *general facilities*, that are (in principle) open to all children in the age range of 0–6 years. These are: pre-school playgroups (for 2–3-year-olds), child day-care (0–3 years), out-of-school childcare (4–12 years), primary education (4–12 years) and preventive youth health care services (0–18 years).
- The second circle contains provision and programmes for children and/or families that need extra support or attention to be able to fully participate in mainstream provision. The main *intervention programmes* relevant to ECEC are: (educational) development programmes and parent support programmes.
- The third circle contains specialised, more intense forms of help and support for children with special needs and/or serious problems. These include specialised youth care (a/o psychiatric and judicial care), schools for special education and child protection agencies.

In addition to these services, which directly target the child and his or her family, there are laws and regulations that are aimed at supporting families in their child-rearing duties. The main arrangements in this area are described below (section 3.1). The chapter continues with a description of family engagement in ECEC policy and provision (see section 3.2), and concludes with a description of educational facilities for parents (section 3.3).

3.1 Arrangements for Families with (Young) Children

One of the three main government duties towards the family, as stated in the 1996 policy note *Family* (see section 2.2), is to create favourable conditions for families to perform their core functions (i.e. socialising their children). The main arrangements are:

- Arrangements for part-time work;
- Leave arrangements;
- Protection of mother and child arrangements;
- Tax arrangements;
- Other (financial) arrangements and subsidies.

Note: the government is preparing new legislation on the issue of combining paid work with other duties (such as childcare). In the proposed new Framework Act Labour & Care, the existing arrangements are integrated and harmonised (see section 2.2).

3.1.1 Part-time Work

The right to work part-time has been a subject of much discussion in recent years. Working parents (especially working men, who more often have full-time jobs) can be hindered in their wishes to spend more time with their families because their employer does not allow them to work part-time.

The government recently submitted a legislative proposal (Adjustment of Working Hours Act (*Wet aanpassing arbeidsduur* - WAA) that aims to offer employees and civil servants a legal right to adjust their working hours. The employer is required to honour such a request unless, on the basis of important business or service interests, this cannot be expected of him. The adjustment of working hours can pertain to a reduction or an increase in working hours. On 26 October 1999 the Second Chamber of Parliament approved the legislative proposal and it was submitted to the First Chamber for a hearing.

3.1.2 Leave Arrangements

Maternity leave

Regulations concerning leave after or before childbearing have been in existence in the Netherlands since 1989. Since 1990, working women are entitled to 16 weeks of paid leave: 6 weeks of pregnancy leave and 10 of maternity leave. Women are free to choose whether to stop working 4, 5, or 6 weeks before the calculated day of delivery and may add the amount of pregnancy leave not taken to their maternity leave. This is funded under the Sickness Benefits Act.

Self-employed women are entitled to 16 weeks of pregnancy and maternity pay, depending on the income and up to a maximum of 100% of the statutory minimum wage. This is funded under the Self-employed persons Disablement Benefits Act (WAZ). Entitlement to the pregnancy and maternity payment is also regulated by this law.

Delivery leave

The partner of the mother is entitled to delivery leave. The length of this leave has not been established, but will be determined in consultation with the employer. In the new Framework Act Labour & Care, a paid delivery leave of 2 days will be provided for the partner.

Parental leave

Parental leave was introduced in 1991. Every employee who has to care for a child under the age of 8 is entitled to unpaid parental leave for a part of the working time. The general rule is that an employee taking parental leave must continue to work for at least twenty hours per week. Employees can make use of their entitlement to parental leave for a continuous period of up to six months. These arrangements can be adapted, depending on what the employer and employee agree upon. Some collective agreements on terms of employment include continuation of a part of the wages. Facilities for parental leave are used by 27% of women, as opposed to 11% of men. Parents of adopted children can also claim parental leave. Facilities for parental leave are used by 37% of the women and 13% of the men entitled to parental leave (source: SCP, Emancipation Yearbook 1999).

The Career Interruption Financing Act.

The Career Interruption Financing Act took effect on 1 October 1998. This Act offers employees and civil servants who interrupt their careers to provide care or to study - under certain conditions - a financial contribution of up to fl. 960 per month for a minimum period of 2 and a maximum period of 18 months. The Act does not provide a right to a leave, but offers a financial contribution if the employer and employee reach agreements with one another concerning this leave.

A condition for this financing is that the employer must appoint a replacement (who is entitled to benefits). This requirement does not apply to palliative leave (leave to care for and lend succour to a terminally ill person in his/her last stage of life).

Leave to care for the ill

In exceptional situations, employees are entitled to take leave, for instance, to care for children or other family members who have fallen ill. Some collective labour agreements include arrangements for longer leave to take care of ill relatives. In the proposed new legislation, the possibilities of care leave arrangements will be extended.

3.1.3 Protection Arrangements

Statutory provision protecting the health of pregnant working women

Employers are legally required to ensure that the health of pregnant employees is not endangered by work or working conditions. This responsibility continues for some time after the birth of the baby.

Breast feeding

Employers are obliged by law to allow mothers to breast-feed and/or to express milk for their baby up to 9 months old and to provide a lockable room for this purpose (on request). The amount of time spent on breast-feeding or expressing milk is maximised at 25% of the total working hours per day. The employee retains her full salary.

3.1.4 Tax Arrangements

Under certain conditions, parents can deduct part of their expenses for childcare from their income tax. Two conditions, among others, are that it concerns a licensed childcare centre and that the expenses are above a certain (income-related) minimum. Single parents have special tax facilities. For these parents the part of the income that is exempted from taxation is higher than for two-parent households.

3.1.5 Other (Financial) Arrangements and Subsidies

- All parents with one or more children living at home are entitled to *child allowance* to cover part of the costs of raising children. Child allowance is not dependent on family income. The average amount of child allowance is 1,200 guilders (€ 545) a year for a child under the age of 6; 1,450 guilders (€ 659) for a child aged 6–11 years and 1,710 guilders (€ 777) for a child aged 12–18 years. The allowance covers about one quarter of the real costs of bringing up a child, ranging from 41% for low-income families to 17% for high-income families. Currently proposals are being discussed to raise child allowances for low and medium income families.
- Single parents receive an extra tax allowance of 6,566 guilders (€ 2,985). Working single parents with children under 12 years of age receive an additional allowance of 12% of their income from labour, with a maximum of 6,566 guilders (€ 2,985). The minimum social benefit for single parents (90% of the minimum income) is higher than that for single people (70%), but lower than the rate for two-parent families (100%).

- For single parents on a social security income, who want to (re)enter the labour market, the Ministry of SZW makes a contribution to the costs of childcare.
- Children can be co-insured in public health insurance at a low fee.

3. 2 Family Engagement in ECEC Policy and Provision

3.2.1 The Role of Parents

In recent years, attention for the engagement of families (especially parents) in ECEC policy and provision has been increasing. Government welfare policy for the 1990s did state that the needs, wishes, personal solutions and strengths of the people using welfare provision (pupils, clients, patients and - in the case of young children - parents) should play a greater role in policy decisions about the content, quality and quantity of welfare services. This policy priority is rooted in the austerity policy of the 1980s, which have instigated a major cultural change in the Dutch welfare state. Continuous funding of welfare organisations is no longer self-evident and there is a greater concern for efficiency and effectiveness, output control and financial accountability. Furthermore, in funding policy a change is taking place from an exclusive focus on the supply side to an increased interest in the demand side (a demand-based or needs-based approach).

With regard to ECEC, this shift in emphasis means that the active involvement of parents and families of young children that make use of ECEC provision should become a central issue in ECEC policy. This means that a major cultural shift has to be made: clients of ECEC are no longer treated as more or less passive 'subjects' but are welcomed as active parties in decision making processes, along with local governments and private organisations providing the ECEC services. Thus, ideally, the former 'clients' will become *partners and co-producers* in the field of ECEC-provision⁴.

This shift in culture is not easily made. Although progress is being made in several areas of ECEC provision, the influence of parents and families on policy decisions concerning ECEC provision and on the content, quantity and quality of services is often still limited.

Act on Participation of Clients of Care Services

In 1996, the 'Act on the Participation of Clients of Care Services' was introduced. The Act applies to publicly funded welfare agencies and public health services. This includes:

- Child health care;
- Pre-school playgroups
- Publicly funded child day-care and out-of-school care.

The Act states that the organisations to which the Act applies are obliged to establish a client council, representing the client population, to further the common interests of the clients. The client council has the right to advise the organisation on any subject of concern to the clients of the organisation. The organisation is obliged to ask for advice on the following subjects:

- Changes in organisational goals, co-operation or merger with other organisations, moving or restructuring of the organisation;
- Appointment of directors or managers of the organisation;
- Policy concerning clients' rights and complaint procedures;

- Policy concerning nutrition, safety, health, hygiene, recreation and entertainment, spiritual and social support for clients;
- Policy concerning quality management and control of the care for clients.

Furthermore, the organisation is obliged to supply the client council with the information they need to prepare their advice, to consult at least once with the council before taking a decision and to inform the council of its decisions.

3.2.2 Barriers to Parent Involvement

Barriers to parent involvement can be found in the organisations involved with ECEC (local authorities and private organisations) and in the parents concerned.

The main barriers within the organisational system are:

- Resistance to involving parents/families in policy development and decision making processes (negative attitudes).
Government officials and professionals sometimes feel insecure when having to deal with their 'clients' on a more equal basis. These people often claim that parent involvement is non-productive and that policy development and decision making should be left to 'us - the professionals'.
- Insufficient knowledge of practical methods to organise parent/family involvement effectively. Local authorities and private organisations often have difficulty finding the right way to address parents and to involve them effectively in their ECEC policy.
- Insufficient resources (time, money) to organise parent involvement. In many organisations, the resources for 'overhead' tasks, such as organising parent involvement, are limited or non-existent.

Barriers on the side of parents/families are:

- Practical obstacles: working parents, especially, often find it impossible to combine their work commitments with active involvement in ECEC services, e.g. because meetings are planned during their working hours.
- Difficulties with communication: parents from (first generation) ethnic minority groups can have problems communicating with the ECEC workers, because of differences in language and cultural background and values.
- Low priority / lack of interest: according to ECEC providers, many parents are not interested in being more actively involved in their children's ECEC provision. These parents rely on the local authorities and the organisations involved to provide adequate ECEC services. This attitude is more frequent among ethnic minority and low SES parents.

Although many obstacles can be identified both in the policy and organisational context of ECEC, and on the side of parents, the general picture is that parent involvement is gradually increasing. Strategies and circumstances conducive to this development include:

- The introduction of government regulations concerning the participation of clients/parents in the care sector and in education;
- Government-funded experiments with various methods and forms of parent involvement in ECEC provision, and the dissemination of the resulting methods;

- Improved information to parents on the availability, quality and costs of ECEC options (see below);
- A general, gradual change in the relationship between citizens and the welfare state, i.e. diminishing dependence on government and increasing reliance on civil initiative.

3.2.3 Information to Parents

The availability and accessibility to parents of information on ECEC options varies according to the type of provision. The information is generally limited to availability, accessibility and costs of provision. Information on the quality or effectiveness of ECEC provision is not often available. In the field of education, however, efforts are made to provide parents with information on the school's effectiveness.

- In the field of (primary) *education*, information provision to parents has improved in recent years. National government regulations have played an important role in this development: for instance, from January 1999 primary schools are obliged to produce a yearly school prospectus for parents, containing information about the organisation of the school, educational goals, curriculum, etc. From January 2000, primary schools also have to provide information on their effectiveness, i.e. the achievements of the pupils.
- Informing parents about the costs and availability of *childcare provision* is the responsibility of municipalities and childcare services. In most municipalities, information on publicly funded childcare and family day-care is amply available and easily accessible. Information on private (commercial) childcare services is generally not included in the municipal information.
- Informing parents about *preventive youth health care* services is the responsibility of municipalities and the organisations involved. In most municipalities, information on these services is amply available and accessible in Dutch as well as in other languages, such as Turkish and Moroccan.
- Information on the local or regional supply of *parent support and educational support* services and programmes is often scattered, unsystematic and not easily accessible for parents. In many places, efforts are being made to improve the provision of information on these services and to co-ordinate the demand and supply of these services.

3.2.4 Expectations of Parents

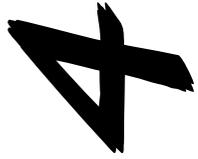
Parents' expectations of ECEC are rarely systematically investigated. Research evidence on this subject is scarce and limited in scope and generality. Recently, research into the expectations of parents with respect to primary and secondary schools has been published in a draft version. Therefore some information on parents' expectations is available.

- Recent research into parents' expectations of *childcare services* shows that parents generally trust the childcare organisation to take good care of their children, i.e. to provide a safe environment where children are fed and where they can sleep and play. Parents generally do not assign an important pedagogic or educational function to childcare centres. Hence, most parents feel no need to discuss their own pedagogic and educational ideas and principles with childcare staff.
- Research into the *expectations of childcare among ethnic minority parents* in Rotterdam indicates that the majority of these parents (who are underrepresented as clients of childcare services) would like to make use of childcare services under certain conditions. To this group of parents the educational aspect of childcare is very relevant, and they would like the childcare provision to be directly linked to primary schools.

- Parents are generally content with their relationship with the *school*, although they are less content when the upbringing of children is concerned. They would like to receive more information about the pedagogical principles and views of teachers and the school.

3.3 Other Facilities to Serve the Needs of Parents

Parents can make use of a range of services in the area of formal and non-formal education, ranging from vocational training and language courses to personal development or parenting skills. Ethnic minority parents can enrol in Dutch language classes and in courses to become familiar with Dutch society. These courses are subsidised by the government and generally have a low threshold. In September 1998, a new law on the integration of newcomers was enforced. Both newly arrived immigrants and, at a later stage, immigrants who have been in the Netherlands for some time are required to follow a course that will facilitate integration into society, including learning the Dutch language. Educational and personal development activities for parents are often combined with facilities for childcare during the hours when the parents are attending these activities. Also, pre-school playgroups are sometimes used as a stepping stone to reach parents and motivate them to take part in educational or personal development activities.



A Closer Look at the Main Types of ECEC Provision

4 A Closer Look at the Main Types of ECEC Provision

In this chapter, we take a closer look at the main forms of ECEC provision for young children.

First, detailed information is given on the general provision in the first circle around the child and his or her family:

- Childcare (section 4.1),
- Pre-school playgroups (section 4.2),
- Preventive child health care (4.3) and
- Primary education (4.4).

Subsequently, the general characteristics of the main options in the second and third circle around the child are described, i.e. intervention programmes (section 4.5), special education (4.6) and specialised youth care (4.7).

4.1 Childcare

Until the 1990s, the childcare sector in the Netherlands was underdeveloped compared to many other West European countries. This situation started to change in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1995 the Dutch government invested over 1,335 million guilders (€ 607 million) to promote the expansion of formal childcare capacity under the Temporary Childcare Incentive Scheme (*Tijdelijke Stimuleringsmaatregel Kinderopvang*).

The incentive scheme included day-care, half-day-care and family care.

The childcare policy of the past years has the following characteristics:

- The primary aim of this policy is to support and enhance participation in the labour market of mothers of young children. Figures on the development of participation in the labour market of mothers of young children in recent years indicate that the policy has been very successful in this respect. The figures in the tables below indicate that labour participation of women is still increasing in recent years (a) and that an increasing proportion of women with young children is working (b). Labour market participation of single mothers is still lower than the participation of mothers in two-parent families.

Table 4.1 Labour market participation of women

a Women in general

	1995	1996	1997
Women 15-64 years (x 1000)	5.169	5.184	5.209
Labour participation(x1000)	2.529	2.586	2.696

Source: CBS, 1999.

b Mothers of young children

	1986	1994
	child < 6 years	child < 6 years
Single mothers	16%	26%
Mothers in two-parent families	21%	42%

Source: SCP, 1997.

- The policy starting point is that childcare provision is a shared (financial) responsibility of government, companies (employers) and parents (employees). Municipalities make subsidised child places available to parents who do not qualify for a place paid for by their employer. Parents contribute as well - the height of the parent fee depends on the family income. Companies contribute by hiring or buying childcare capacity for their employees, who in turn pay a parent contribution. Current policy is also characterised by decentralisation of the implementation. Since 1996, the funds of the childcare incentive scheme 1990-1995 are transferred to the Municipal Fund (*Gemeentefonds*).
- It is an incentive policy. The government reserves funds and urges other parties to provide money as well. One of the aims of the Childcare Incentive Schemes is to extend child day-care via extension of childcare places financed by employers (companies). Figures show that this goal has been reached: in 1997, the contribution of government to the total costs of formal childcare provision was down to 35%, with companies paying 21% and parents 44% (see table 4.5 below).

The national government incentive schemes for childcare have been very successful: in a few years time, thousands of childcare places have been realised. In fact, a new economic sector was created with a turnover of millions of guilders. In 1997, the turnover showed a total of 1.33 billion guilders (EUR 0.60 billion) in which 25,800 people were employed.

According to the data of the national monitor on childcare provision in 1997 (SGBO, 1999), 88% of the municipalities that responded to the questionnaire have realised provision for childcare, i.e. child day-care centres and/or family care agencies, within the boundaries of the municipality. If we take into account the municipalities that do not have childcare provision within their boundaries, but participate in a regional childcare network, the total proportion of municipalities with childcare provision is 95%. In addition, 57% of all municipalities have provision for out-of-school care.

Table 4.2 Development of childcare provision, 1989-1997

a Number of childcare places, 1989-1997

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0 - 3 years	17,624	56,806	59,487	62,079	66,078
4 - 7 years	3,624	13,943	14,718	17,001	17,200
Total	21,248	70,749	74,205	79,080	83,278

b Number of childcare places per 100 children, 1989-1997

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0 - 3 years	2.34	7.25	7.54	7.79	8.53
4 - 7 years	0.46	1.91	1.97	2.19	2.24

c Number of children in childcare (and % of all children aged 0-3 / 4-7), 1989-1997

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0 - 3 years	34,783	87,955	106,378	115,336	125,699 (17%)
4 - 7 years	9,858	13,579	17,051	20,690	26,517 (3,4%)

Source: SGBO monitor 1997 (1999)

4.1.1 Main Categories

There are many types of childcare: private and public, formal and informal, home-based, centre-based or company-based. Most of the public childcare centres are independent, non-profit foundations.

The main types of *formal* childcare services are:

- Child (half) *day-care centres*, catering for children from the age of six weeks up to 4 years, offering childcare on weekdays for 8 or more hours continuously (day) or for at least 5 hours a day (half-day);
- *Family day-care* provided by individuals who care for children at their own homes, where these services are mediated through an official family day-care agency;
- *Out-of-school care centres*, open to children aged 4–12 years before and after school hours (and sometimes during lunchtime), during free afternoons and mostly also during school holidays.

Informal childcare is usually provided by someone from the family's social network (family, friends and neighbours). Research indicates that 83% of parents make use of paid or unpaid informal types of childcare, often in combination with the use of formal childcare (Groot & Maassen van den Brink, 1996).

4.1.2 Availability and Access

There are 548 municipalities in the Netherlands. At the end of 1997, 95% of them offered some form of formal childcare for 0–3-year-olds, within their own boundaries (88%) or in a regional connection (7%).

At the end of 1997 there were 2,711 facilities for formal childcare:

- 1,499 child day-care centres for 0–3-year-olds;
- 479 combined childcare centres for 0–12-year-olds (i.e. child day-care and out-of-school care);
- 462 centres for out-of-school care (4–12-year-olds);
- 271 agencies for family day-care.

In 1997, a total of 37,799 children (0–7 years) were on a waiting list for childcare.

Since 1993, the number of children on a waiting list for childcare has been steadily decreasing, see table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Number of children on a waiting list for childcare

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0-3 years	45,852	51,896	46,776	44,320	32,237
4-7 years	8,466	5,966	5,825	6,392	5,562
total	54,318	57,862	52,601	50,712	37,799

Opening hours

On average, child day-care centres are open for 10 hours on workdays. The average for out-of-school care is 3.6 hours during schooldays, 6.5 hours on Wednesdays and Fridays when many young children leave school at 12.00 or 12.30 a.m. and 10 hours during school holidays (Monday-Friday). Opening hours are usually limited to the daytime. In some sectors, there are (company-based) childcare services that are open 24 hours a day, e.g. for employees of hospitals and public transport companies.

Most provision are open 51 weeks per year - they only close during national holidays.

Accessibility

Families with an average or above-average income are overrepresented among the clients of childcare (see table 4.4). This is related to the fact that formal childcare provision targets working parents.

Table 4.4 Family income of clients in childcare

Net family monthly income		Use
Lower income	Less than Dfl. 1,500	1%
	Dfl. 1,500-1,600	4%
	Dfl. 1,600-2,600	10%
Middle income	Dfl. 2,600-3,600	21%
	Dfl. 3,600-4,600	29%
Higher income (including double-income families)	Dfl. 4,600-5,000	11%
	Dfl. 5,000-6,000	14%
	Dfl. 6,000-7,000	6%
	Dfl. 7,000-8,000	3%
	Over Dfl. 8,000	3%

Source: *Research voor Beleid, Leiden 1995*

In principle, there should be no financial barriers to using childcare provision, since the parent contribution is income-related. See appendix 3. In addition, the Ministry of SZW contributes to meeting the childcare costs of single parents on a social security income.

However, not all parents want to make use of formal childcare. This is sometimes in contradiction with their (sub)cultural values concerning the division of labour between the sexes, the role of mothers in caring for young children. Not everybody is convinced that (formal) childcare is an acceptable alternative to the care a mother and housewife can provide.

4.1.3 Responsibilities

Childcare provision was regulated in the new Welfare Act and was devolved to local government in 1987. At the same time, the national budget for childcare provision was added as a block grant to the Municipal Fund. From 1987 on, municipalities have been responsible for organising a coherent and sufficient supply of local childcare services that are of good quality. Companies have also become important stakeholders in childcare policy. They can arrange for so-called 'company places' in public or private childcare centres and they can set up their own company-based childcare services.

At the national level the Ministry of VWS and the Ministry of Social Affairs (SZW) co-operate in devising legislation and national policy plans (e.g. concerning the national volume of child places). The Ministry of VWS acts as a co-ordinator.

4.1.4 Regulations

At present, childcare is regulated by the Welfare Act (1994) and the Temporary Decree on Quality Regulations for Childcare (1996) that, among other things, defines criteria on staffing and housing, see section 4.1.5. Child day-care organisations have to meet these requirements in order to obtain a licence from local government. Also, the national government is preparing legislation on childcare (*Act Basic Provision Childcare*), also see section 4.1.9.

4.1.5 Quality

The Welfare Act, which regulates the childcare sector, states that the primary responsibility for the quality of the offer and organisation of welfare services lies with the sector itself. Because the childcare sector was relatively new and growing at a fast rate in the mid-1990s, the sector was allowed 5 years time to develop and implement its own quality system. During this transition phase local authorities could regulate quality in the childcare sector through a *by-law* (*gemeentelijke verordening*), in which they could lay down basic quality requirements that applied equally to the subsidised and non-subsidised places in childcare. To support the municipalities, national government devised a *Temporary Decree on Quality Regulations for Childcare*, stating the basic quality requirements that municipalities were obliged to incorporate in their childcare quality regulations. In addition, the Union of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) has devised a model by-law for municipalities. The basic quality requirements cover, among other things, maximum group size, child-staff ratio, housing, hygiene, safety, the use of certified playing materials, training requirements of staff and parent involvement.

Maximum group size is dependent on the age of the children: the maximum size for a group of 0–1-year-olds is 12 children, whereas the maximum group size for 4–12-year-olds is 20. The number of workers per group is also dependent on the age structure of the group. Regulations on child-staff ratio are also included in the Childcare Salaries Decree, which applies to the whole childcare sector, stating that at least one group leader should be available for the care of:

- 4 children under 1 year of age;
- 5 children aged between 1 and 2;
- 6 children aged between 2 and 3;
- 8 children aged between 3 and 4;
- 10 children aged between 4 and 12.

A childcare centre also has to provide for a safe outdoors playing area and for adequate sleeping facilities for children of ages 0 to 4.

The Temporary Decree formally took effect on 1/1/1996 and will expire in 2001. All municipalities should have a by-law concerning quality in childcare by 1/1/1997.

Local authorities are obliged to enforce the national quality requirements. Childcare provision has to meet the requirements of the municipal by-law in order to acquire a licence from the local authorities. Making use of licensed childcare is a prerequisite for companies and parents to be eligible for tax facilities.

In 1998, the Ministry of VWS investigated the extent to which municipalities monitored their childcare provision. Some of the main findings are (ES&E, 1998):

- 99.5% of municipalities with childcare provision have issued quality regulations;
- In 12.5% of these municipalities the by-law had not yet been aligned with the Temporary Decree (as was required per 1/1/1997);
- About 75% of the municipalities have adopted the model by-law of the VNG;
- 97% of the child care centres known to municipalities have obtained a licence;
- Approx. 80% of the municipalities annually inspect the subsidised and non-subsidised (company/private) childcare centres.

In addition to the government, the sector itself has to monitor and improve its quality: they are primarily responsible. The sector has, with financial support of the national government (VWS), developed quality standards based on daily practice and formal regulations. These standards are aligned with the international ISO standards. In the development process, the developers have garnered support for the standards among the childcare organisations, parents, funding agencies and other parties relevant to the childcare sector. The childcare services that meet the required standards receive a certificate. In the years to come, an increasing number of childcare services are expected to acquire the certificate, but participation in the certification process is on a voluntary basis and childcare organisations can choose to remain outside this system. Therefore, national legislation, which applies equally to all organisations involved, remains important as a basis for the whole sector.

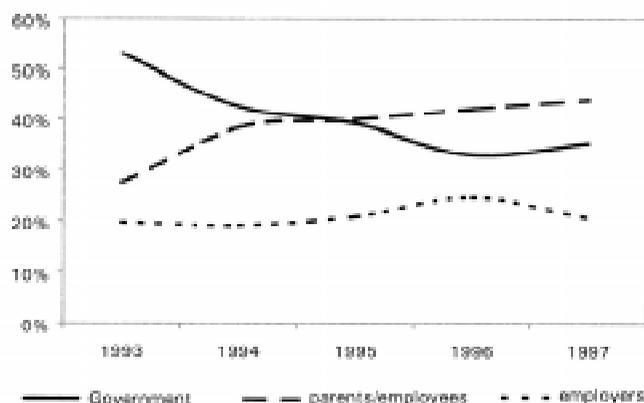
4.1.6 Funding

Childcare places can be financed in several ways:

- 1 Company places: employers rent childcare places for their employees and employees pay a part of the costs (parent contribution) to their employer. Employers can deduct 30% of the net costs from the tax paid on the employee's wages. In some sectors, there are special childcare funds, as part of the Collective Labour Agreement (CAO) for that sector.
- 2 Subsidised places funded by local government: municipalities fund places in childcare that are open to parents who do not qualify for a place paid for by their company and to parents who do not (yet) have a job. These parents also pay a parent contribution.
- 3 Subsidised places funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the municipal social security agencies - for children of single parents on a social security income. These parents usually do not pay a parent contribution.
- 4 Private places: parents rent a place and pay the full costs of the place. The amount that exceeds the normal parent contribution may be eligible for income tax deduction, depending on the parents' income.

The figure below gives an impression of the development of the contributions of different parties in recent years.

Contribution in childcare by the three parties, 1993-1997



Parent contribution

The Ministry of VWS, in co-operation with the Union of Municipalities (VNG), issues a yearly table for determining the level of the parent contribution to childcare. The parent contribution is related to the family income. Although employers and municipalities are not obliged to use this VWS/VNG-table, the majority (over 80%) does so.

See appendix 3.

Subsidised places

At present, funding of *subsidised* places in childcare is based on:

- Subsidies from the Ministry of Social Affairs - for single parents on a social security income who want to return to the labour market (since 1996);
- (Temporary) subsidies of the Ministry of VWS for daycare and out-of-school care, since 1997;
- Additional money from the Municipal Fund.

Tri-partite funding

The Childcare Incentive Schemes acknowledge three stakeholders as being (financially) responsible for this provision: government, employers and parents. At first the government contributed most to the funding of childcare, but now parents and employers have become more important. In 1997, national government paid 35% of the total costs of formal childcare provision.

In the years 1992-1995, municipalities spent 170 million guilders (€ 77 million) on childcare, in addition to the national budgets of the Incentive Scheme. In 1996, their expenditure on childcare remained at this level, in 1997 the expenditure of municipalities on childcare was 156 million guilders (€ 71 million).

Table 4.5 National budgets in millions of guilders

	Incentive Scheme Childcare	Municipal Fund (earmarked for childcare)	Incentive scheme Out-of-school care	SZW-funds for low income parents	WVA (since 1996)	Income tax returns to parents (estimate)
1990	149					
1991	201					
1992	252					
1993	265					
1994	234					
1995	234					
1996		195		72	40	30
1997		192	40	87	46	39

Source: *SGBO Monitor 1997 (1999)*

The WVA is a tax facility for employers, introduced in 1996, with the aim of encouraging employers to rent or create childcare places for their employees. The table below shows the costs of childcare with and without tax facilities.

Table 4.6 Contributions of government, parents and employers (1997), in millions of guilders.

	before WVA and tax returns		after WVA and tax returns	
Government (national and municipal):				
costs of overhead and non-used places	60.0	4%		
Government (national and municipal):				
costs of subsidised places	328.3	25%	473.3	35%
Parents / employees	624.8	47%	585.8	44%
Employers (excluding employees' contribution)	320.8	24%	274.8	21%
Total	1,333.9	100%	1,333.9	100%

Source: SGBO Monitor 1997 (1999)

4.1.7 Staffing

Staff roles and salaries

In childcare centres, there are generally two levels of staff functions: head of childcare centre(s) and leader of a group of children. These two functions exist in several varieties.

Table 4.7 Functions in childcare

Function	Training requirements	Job description	Salaries per April 1999	
			min.	max.
Head AA	HBO (higher professional education)	Develops and carries out the day-care centre's childcare policy, conducts the financial and personnel policy under the final responsibility of the governing body or the general director. Manager of a childcare centre with 8 or more groups.	Dfl. 4,845 (€ 2,202)	Dfl. 5,577 (€ 2,535)
Head A	HBO	General characteristics as above; manager of a childcare centre with 5-7 groups	Dfl. 4,528 (€ 2,058)	Dfl. 5,269 (€ 2,395)
Head B	HBO	General characteristics as above; manager of a childcare centre with 3-4 groups	Dfl. 3,910 (€ 1,777)	Dfl. 4,638 (€ 2,108)
Head C	MBO/HBO + (post)MBO management training	General characteristics as above; manager of a childcare centre with 1-2 groups	Dfl. 3,502 (€ 1,592)	Dfl. 4,312 (€ 1,960)
Group leader	MBO/HBO (middle/higher professional education)	Looks after and supports the children on a group and individual basis. Is responsible for a safe and stimulating group atmosphere and for contacts with parents.	Dfl. 2,846 (€ 1,294)	Dfl. 3,805 (€ 1,729)
Group assistant	no formal requirements	Assist the group leader in simple tasks and chores. Assistants can only be employed through a Job Creation Scheme and are additional to the formally required staff ratio.	Dfl. 2,488 (€ 1,131)	Dfl. 3,088 (€ 1,403)

In the sector of family day-care, there are - besides the family day-carer - the administrative functions of intermediary, sector head, co-ordinator and director.

Table 4.8 Functions in family day-care

Function	Training requirements	Job description	Salaries per April 1999	
			min.	max.
Director	HBO	Management of the family day-care office	Dfl. 4,312 (€ 1,869)	Dfl. 5,577 (€ 2,535)
Co-ordinator	HBO	Takes care of the optimal functioning of a smaller, independent family day-care office with a maximum of 75 child places	Dfl. 4,111 (€ 1,869)	Dfl. 5,269 (€ 2,395)
Sector head	HBO	Supervises intermediaries, allocates work, safeguards quality	Dfl. 4,111 (€ 1,869)	Dfl. 5,269 (€ 2,395)
Intermediary	MBO/HBO	Recruits family day-carers, mediator	Dfl. 3,088 (€ 1,404)	Dfl. 4,955 (€ 2,252)

Family day-carers

Family day-carers can either work as independent self-employed service providers or they can be employees of a family day-care agency. When these agencies do not draw up labour contracts with family day-carers (i.e. they do not act as employers), they cannot exert quality control on the work of the family day-carer. The VOG has developed a model for family day-care agencies that stresses their intermediary function.

Salaries

The regulations governing the remuneration of childcare workers are laid down in the Childcare Salaries Decree, which is part of the collective labour agreement (CAO) for the welfare sector. The decree is generally binding for the childcare sector, including private centres and company-based centres. The CAO contains requirements concerning, among other things, the child-staff ratio; the staff's share in management and qualification criteria.

Aims, expectations and perceptions

The chief aim of childcare work is to look after children during their parent's working hours in a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. But expectations of childcare centres also include providing education and fostering the child's development. For a long time, the job of working with young children was held in low esteem. The comparatively low salaries reflected this view. In 1997, however, salaries of childcare workers were raised and in 1998 new terms of employment were defined, which will result in more differentiated jobs that may open the opportunity for better career prospects.

Training

With the exception of the training course for Childcare Worker at secondary vocational (MBO) level, there is no specific training course for workers in childcare centres. Some educational organisations offer courses in childcare or childhood education.

At this moment, the existing training provision for early childhood workers does not match the growing expectations of society regarding this type of work and do not prepare workers for the social problems they may encounter in their work. An attempt is being made to tackle this problem through administering in-service training courses.

4.1.8 The Role of Parents

Parents are an important funding party in the childcare sector (mainly through the parent contribution), along with the government and employers. And they are, of course, primarily responsible for the welfare and education of their children. Clients of childcare (i.e. parents) are organised in the national organisation *BOINK*, which receives financial support from the Ministry of VWS. The Act on Participation of Clients of Care Services (1996, see section 3.2.1) also applies to the clients of (publicly funded) childcare centres. This implies that these centres have to establish a client council that can advise the organisation on any subject of concern to the clients.

4.1.9 New Developments

MDW-Working group on Childcare

With a view to the Market Operation, Deregulation and Quality of Legislation (*Marktwerking, Dereguleren en Wetgevingskwaliteit – MDW*), the Dutch government installed a working group with the task of analysing the present system of childcare and developing alternatives for the future. The report (1998) of the working group described the main problems in the childcare sector, i.e.:

- Capacity problems and financial thresholds for parents;
- Flaws in efficiency and market operation;
- Deficiencies in the table for parent contribution;
- The existing quality regulations are not of a structural nature;
- The legal and administrative infrastructure is non-transparent and needs improvement.

The working group concluded that a major renovation and restructuring of the sector is necessary and it went on to describe three possible scenarios for the future organisation of childcare: (a) childcare as a collective provision, (b) private funding of childcare, (c) a growth perspective. The last scenario was seen to be the most promising one.

The starting point of the growth perspective scenario is the shared responsibility of government, parents and employers in providing childcare of good quality. This should be laid down in law. The national government should be responsible for: quality care, facilitating parents and employers, determining the level of parent contribution, and the provision of childcare for specific target groups. Local authorities are responsible for implementing national childcare policy and for developing and implementing local childcare policy in relation to local social and economic needs and demands.

The working group also states that childcare should primarily be seen as a means to increase the labour market participation of parents, but that connections should be made with the care and welfare sector (youth care, ECEC intervention programmes and sports). This should improve quality.

The general conditions and requirements for the services offering childcare should be mutually aligned and standardised for all organisations, i.e. quality regulations, labour conditions and access to financial support and other supportive facilities and arrangements of national or local government.

In addition, a separate Collective Labour Agreement (CAO), specifically for this sector, should be drawn up. The government is currently following up the recommendations of the MDW-working group.

The government is preparing legislation on childcare (*Basic Provision of Childcare Act*), because the existing organisational, financial and legal arrangements for childcare are considered insufficient to regulate this rapidly expanding sector effectively. This act will regulate the structure of the childcare sector, the division of responsibilities, quality and quality control and financial arrangements. The national government will retain responsibilities in the field of overall quality control and monitoring. Moreover, tax benefits for employers will be simplified (based on a fixed amount per employee) and (tax) benefits for parents will be extended and maximised. The income-based parent contribution will be calculated from the taxable income and will be included in the legislation.

In addition, measures will be taken to expand the capacity of childcare provision radically:

- In 1997, the national government introduced the Temporary Out-of-school-care Incentive Scheme 1997-2000. During this period, the national government will invest 244 million guilders (€ 111 million) in order to create 26,000 out-of-school-care places for 4–12-year olds.
- In the recent Policy Note on Childcare (1999), government plans concerning the further expansion of the childcare sector are presented. The 1997 plan for the expansion of the out-of-school-care places is integrated into this plan. According to the plan, an additional amount of 606 million guilders (€ 276 million) will be invested in a further expansion of out-of-school-care and childcare for 0-3 year olds by 45,000 places.
Within the total volume of 71,000 new childcare places, the aim is to realise 32,000 subsidised places (45%) and 39,000 non-subsidised places (55%).

In September 1999, a motion was adopted in parliament stating that an additional yearly budget of 85 million guilders (€ 38 million) must be invested in the childcare sector with the aim to

- a further expand the volume of childcare places and improve opening hours (20 million guilders, € 9 million);
- b reduce the costs of childcare for middle and low income families through tax measures (50 million guilders, € 23 million) and
- c alleviate current problems in the building of new childcare centres (15 million guilders, € 7 million).

4.2 Pre-school Playgroups

Pre-school play-groups for 2–3-year-olds came into being in the 1960s. This was motivated by two trends. On the one hand, there was the arrival of large-scale newly built areas for ‘breadwinner’ families, where non-working mothers were left to fend for themselves and their children in a local community that had not yet developed social bonds - the so-called ‘dormitory towns’.

In addition, the average Dutch family size decreased (the median being: 2 children per family), which reduced the availability of playmates within the home and its direct environment.

This urged parents (and especially mothers) of young children to create new safe havens where their children could play and meet playmates. They started to organise area-based playgroups, mostly run and financed by parents themselves. Parallel to this, local welfare organisations initiated playgroups that were specifically targeting disadvantaged children and families, with the aim of reducing disadvantages and enhancing social cohesion (i.e. the play-group as a meeting place for socially isolated mothers).

In today's society, these two different backgrounds of pre-school playgroups are still visible, though to a lesser extent. The first kind of playgroup makes greater use of volunteers and generally is of a more informal and less professional nature. The welfare-based playgroups are generally more professional, functions and training requirements are clearly defined, and their approach is more explicitly pedagogic and educational.

Most playgroups are established by private bodies and have the legal status of foundations. Many of these foundations are independent, others are part of a larger co-operative structure, usually a childcare organisation or a general welfare foundation.

4.2.1 Availability and Access

Pre-school playgroups are usually open two or three days a week, between 2.5 and 4 hours per day.

Table 4.9 Pre-school playgroups: target groups and actual use

Type of provision	Age group	Total number of participating children
Playgroups (including playgroups in community centres and cultural centres)	2—3 years	198,300

In 1995, there were 3,900 pre-school playgroup centres, attended by nearly 200,000 children, meaning that almost 50% of all children in this age group make use of this provision. There is, however, much variation between municipalities.

Because there is no national legislation for pre-school playgroups, it is local policy that sets the rules for accessibility and quality. Generally speaking, in smaller communities a higher proportion of young children visit pre-school playgroups than in the larger cities. Although pre-school playgroups generally have a low threshold, some ethnic groups (especially Moroccans) are underrepresented. Still, these playgroups reach more ethnic minority parents than the childcare provision.

4.2.2 Regulations

As was described before, pre-school playgroups stem from two different traditions. The playgroups that were initiated by parents and that were (co-)funded and/or certified by municipalities have always been part of local policy and funding. Pre-school playgroups that are part of a larger welfare foundation (community work) fall under the general Welfare regulations (CAO), including salary arrangements, qualifications and function descriptions.

Until 1987 local welfare work was (co-)financed by the national government through the *Rijksbijdrageregeling Sociaal Cultureel Werk* (RBR-SCW). This RBR-SCW was integrated into the Welfare Act of 1987 and national funds for welfare provision were added as an earmarked budget to the Municipal Fund. Nowadays, the funds for this provision are added as a block grant to the Municipal Fund.

In contrast to childcare, there is no specific national regulation or legislation covering pre-school playgroups.

4.2.3 Quality

Most municipalities have municipal regulations to ensure the quality of provision (mostly the same as for childcare centres). Inspections are usually carried out by the Municipal Health Care Service (GGD).

Pre-school playgroups can also, on a voluntary basis, participate in the certification process for childcare services (see subsection 4.1.5). The sector has formulated a separate set of assessment criteria for pre-school playgroups concerning a/o procedures for registration and placement of children, the quality of the services and evaluation, quality care and control, personnel policy, the physical environment and playing materials, systematic adaptation to new needs, regulations and management of documents.

4.2.4 Funding

Pre-school playgroups are for the greater part funded by municipal authorities.

The costs of a playgroup place can vary widely, depending on the number of professional (paid) staff involved, housing costs, etc. Municipal authorities may use the VWS/VNG table as a basis for calculating parent contributions, or they may make up their own rules for charging parent contributions. There are also playgroups fully funded by parents.

4.2.5 Staffing

Staff roles and salaries

In pre-school playgroups, there are generally two staff functions: playgroup leader and assistant. Larger playgroup organisations (with several playgroups), often also employ a head of the organisation.

Pre-school playgroups fall under the collective labour agreement (CAO) for the welfare sector. This CAO has a number of salary regulations (e.g. for childcare centres), Until 1998 there was no separate salary regulation for pre-school playgroups.

Pre-school playgroups that are part of a larger welfare organisation generally follow the salary regulations for this sector. And pre-school playgroups that are part of a childcare organisation generally follow the salary regulations for childcare organisations.

In 1998, a Salary Decree for independent foundations for playgroup work was drawn up, that however only defines the function of playgroup leader (i.e. job description, required qualifications and salary). Employees who are already working in these independent foundations before January 1st 2000 are not obliged to acquire the required qualification. In that case, the maximum salary is set at Dfl. 3,502 (€ 1,592).

Figure 4.10 Functions and salaries pre-school playgroup leaders

Function	Training requirements (required per 1-1-2000)	Job description	Salary per April 1999	
			minimum	maximum
Leader	MBO/HBO (middle/higher professional education)	Offers activities to children that are in line with their age and abilities	Dfl. 2,846 (€ 1,294)	Dfl. 3,805 (€ 1,729)

The salaries in the table are based on a full working week of 36 hours. However, the majority of playgroup leaders work on a part-time basis (on average 15 hours per week). Furthermore, the salaries of playgroup leaders are based on the number of hours the leader works with the children. The number of hours for which a leader is formally appointed often does not include the time spent on meetings, contacts with parents and in-service training. See also appendix 2, table 1.

Many facilities make use of non-paid workers: trainees and, above all, volunteers. The number of these non-paid workers is much higher in playgroup centres than in childcare centres. See also appendix 2, table 2.

Aims, expectations and perceptions

The core function of playgroups is to provide a safe place where young children can meet and play with playmates. Nowadays, there are two different views of the additional value of these playgroups. On the one hand, it is argued that playgroups should have a more educational function and that the role of the playgroup leader should include more than 'merely' looking after children and encouraging them to play. On the other hand, there is the view that playgroups should play a more prominent role as care-providing institutions. These differences of opinion can be found among parents and among policy makers. In the Educational Disadvantage Policy, playgroups are increasingly pictured as an instrument for children at risk to prepare them for primary school (also see: section 2.2, National Framework for Local Educational Disadvantage Policy).

Training and career prospects

The fact that early childhood workers are not generally perceived as professionals is reflected by the training provision available to them. There is no specific training course for workers in playgroups, except the two-year training course for the Childcare Worker at MBO-level.

There is, however, a considerable supply of in-service training courses, in which a training institution organises a training course on a particular subject requested by the centre. There are, for instance, in-service training courses in first-aid for children, the importance of children's playing, communication with parents and methodological pedagogic work with young children. For example: the NIZW has developed the SPEEL – project (based on the Effective Early Learning method) to improve the quality of playgroups. The work in playgroups offers limited career prospects. A playgroup leader is also allowed to work in a childcare centre (horizontal mobility) or can be promoted to the post of head (vertical mobility). The fact that there is hardly any differentiation in the tasks performed by early childhood workers, in combination with the low salaries, can have an adverse effect on staff motivation.

4.2.6 Programme Content and Implementation

Pre-school playgroups in inner-city areas have more experience than childcare workers do in working with children from ethnic minority and low SES families. This may partly be explained by historical reasons, since the roots of many playgroups lie in community work and many of these playgroups aim to support and promote children's development.

In pre-school playgroups, so-called '*plus functions*' have been developed. These are aimed at promoting the development of children at risk, with a particular focus on language development. This requires a lot in terms of staff training, numbers of staff, opening hours and the availability of materials. For many pre-school playgroups it is difficult to develop a plus function because they are unable to meet these demands.

4.2.7 Future Prospects

On behalf of the new Framework on Local Educational Disadvantage Policy (LBK-GOA), municipalities are expected to formulate their policy targets. With regard to the education of young children at primary school entry, the policy framework states the following:

"The objective of compensatory policy is to improve the starting conditions of children at primary school entry by:

- increasing co-operation between schools, pre-school playgroups and childcare centres with the aim of preventing delays in the development of the children;
- enhancing the expertise of staff working with young children.

This makes it necessary to exchange information about future pupils of primary schools, to promote systematic planning and to further educational expertise in pre-school provision, to implement programmes and instruments that foster pre-school children's language development and to provide support to parents through home-based programmes."

For the pre-school playgroups this implies that they are expected to align their work with other ECEC general provision and that they have to further improve the quality and professionalism of their work.

However, it is debatable whether the current organisation and funding of playgroups (by municipal authorities) can ensure that the quality of provision meets the high expectations of local educational policy, parents and schools. Furthermore, playgroups reach only a part of the 2–3 age group. There is a need for training, improvement of housing and equipment, and improvement of the content of services linked to school programmes and adapted to the needs of the children and their parents.

In 2000, a two-year project will be carried out by the Employers' Organisation VOG aimed at promoting the quality of playgroups. Attention will be given to matters of organisation, public relations and the linking of services.

4.3 Preventive Child Health Care

Preventive health care for children is divided into three parts:

- 1 Perinatal health care (maternity home help);
- 2 Pre-school health care;
- 3 School health care.

In this section, we focus on pre-school and school health care.

4.3.1 Availability and Access

Pre-school health care: MCH

Pre-school health care for 0–3-year-olds is provided by nurses and doctors working in Mother and Child Health Care (MCH), a division of the home care organisations (*thuiszorg*). Towards this end, these organisations maintain area-based, specialised early childhood health care centres (or: MCH clinics). The total number of these centres in the Netherlands is about 1,500. The centres, among other things, administer vaccinations, they screen the health and general development of young children, and inform and advise parents on subjects concerning health, nutrition, child development and pedagogic questions. Especially during the first year, contacts between parents and babies and the centres are frequent.

School health care

Preventive child health care for schoolchildren (4–18-year-olds) is provided by the Municipal Health Service (GGD) under the Collective Prevention Act (WCPV). Almost all school health services provide three examinations of all individual children between the ages of 4 and 14 years. The children are tested for hearing and vision, general physical development and posture, and they receive a general medical examination. In addition, specific actions are taken at the schools in relation to health, health risks and (preventive) health education. This *School Health Policy* is a group approach for all school children. Health education is provided in special projects which include lessons about lifestyle and the hazards of smoking, drinking alcohol, drug abuse and unsafe sex. Currently, the school health services are concentrating more on children at risk. These children can be identified by teachers, through the medical examinations, during school visits and/or by questionnaires on general well-being. These children are approached individually or in groups and are offered additional care. A group approach is often used in special schools, because pupils of these schools have more health problems than children in mainstream education. Also, parents of children at risk (especially ethnic minority parents) are offered various courses in pedagogic and educational training with the aim of improving the health status of their children.

Actual use of the preventive health provision

Early childhood health care centres are visited by nearly all children and their parents, at least to receive the required vaccinations (see table 4.11). After the first year, the participation rate decreases to 80% by the fourth year.

Through the school health policy, most schoolchildren are reached.

Recently, government decided to abolish the entrance fee for the early childhood health care services (about 55 guilders, € 25) in order to further improve access for all parents.

Since 1/1/1999, the parent entrance fee has been abolished.

Table 4.11 Vaccination in the Netherlands (1994)

Age	Number	percentage of age group
0-2	591,038	95.8
3-5	580,137	94.5

Source: Health Care Inspectorate, 1997

4.3.2 Regulations

The Collective Prevention Act (WCPV) describes the responsibilities of municipalities in preventive public health care. Preventive health care for 4–18-year-olds falls under the scope of the WCPV, but early childhood health care has a separate status. The youth health care sector is currently developing a standardised basic offer for the whole age range of 0 to 18 years. Parallel to this, one comprehensive health dossier will be implemented. Currently, the possibility of bringing pre-school early childhood health care also under the scope of the WCPV is being discussed. This would widen the scope for municipalities to implement a comprehensive preventive health care policy for all children in the age range of 0–18 years.

4.3.3 Quality

Although the quality of the individual products and services rendered by the health care centres is generally considered to be good, there are quality problems in the MCH services in the areas of registration, management information, training and support. An important quality aspect is the (ongoing) development of a standardised basic offer to all children in Mother and Child Health care, as part of the standardisation process for preventive youth health care for 0–18-year-olds. This is supported by the national government. The national government also promotes quality in the health care sector by encouraging the health services to focus on the needs and wishes of clients, e.g. by organising parent consultations and surveying clients' needs. A recent evaluation study of the preventive youth health services indicates that (in 1995) 86% of home care services have consulted clients to evaluate their services and that most (85%) have adjusted their policies accordingly. Of the Municipal Health Services, only 25% have consulted their clients to establish their needs and evaluate the services.

4.3.4 Funding

The health care system in the Netherlands is mainly financed from three sources:

- Compulsory health insurance (covering 63% of all Dutch citizens);
- Private health insurance (covering 36% of all Dutch citizens);
- The Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (*AWBZ*), that is financed by a compulsory premium levied together with the income tax.

Among others, the *AWBZ* also covers the preventive health care for children of 0–3 years old.

School health care (4–18 years) is directly financed by municipalities, under the Collective Prevention Act (WCPV). National budgets for school health care are added to the Municipal Fund.

4.3.5 Future Prospects

On the basis of two evaluation studies of the accessibility and effectiveness of the early childhood health care sector, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of VWS recently (1999) issued a report on Mother and Child Health care (MCH). The report mentions a number of measures that will be taken to further integrate MCH and school health care, including financially, as well as measures to enhance the position of MCH within the health care sector and to improve the quality of the organisations concerned. It is expected that the further implementation of comprehensive dossiers for all 0–18-year-olds will also enhance the alignment of MCH and school health care provision.

The government's coalition agreement states that early childhood health care centres, as well as childcare centres and pre-school playgroups, can play an important role in identifying and contacting children at risk (of disadvantage) and their families, especially since these types of provision reach almost 100% of the population. In the near future, this can create new opportunities and tasks for the preventive child health care sector.

4.4 Primary Education

Education is compulsory for children in the age range of 5–16 years. This is laid down in the Compulsory Education Act. From the age of 4 children are allowed to enter primary education and, in practice, most children (98.6%) do so. The general aim of primary education is to enhance the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of adequate social, cultural and physical skills.

Attainment targets

Since 1993, attainment targets have been formulated for primary education. These targets indicate what pupils should be taught in primary school. For instance, they should learn how to do calculations with money, how to read simple tables and graphs, how to use a dictionary, etc. The National Institute of Curriculum Development (SLO) has formulated guidelines for schools in order to ensure that children achieve these attainment targets.

Pupil weighting system

What primary schools can offer to young children is partly determined by the composition of the school population. This specific feature of educational policy in the Netherlands is called the 'pupil weighting system'. Each pupil is assigned a 'weighting', dependent on the education level of the parents. For Dutch children of parents with an average or above-average level of education, the weighting is 1.0; for children of Dutch parents with little education it is 1.25; for ethnic minority children it is 1.9. The cumulated pupil weightings are used to determine the number of teachers that can be appointed at the school. This means that schools with a large proportion of children at risk have more teachers than schools with mainly Dutch middle-class children. This system was introduced as part of the former Educational Priority Programme (OVV) and is now used in this context in local educational disadvantage policy. According to evaluation studies, the system operates quite well as an instrument to allocate resources in schools where they are most needed. It does, however, not always result in better education for children at risk, e.g. better language education.

Class size

The national government has announced that average class sizes will be reduced in the coming years, particularly the classes of the youngest pupils. This new policy is a response to the advisory report of the Committee on Qualitative Aspects of Class Size in Primary Schools⁵, published in 1996. This policy is currently being implemented and is aimed at a major reduction of class size for 4–8-year-olds to accomplish a teacher: pupil ratio of 1:20 by 2003. The Ministry of OCenW structurally is investing a budget of up to 1 billion guilders (€ 455 million) in this new policy.

4.4.1 Availability and Access

In 1997-1998, there were 7,253 schools for primary education (for 4–12-year-olds) in the Netherlands. The population of pupils amounted to 1.5 million children. The average number of pupils per school was 210. Only part (33%) of the primary schools in the Netherlands are public (i.e. accessible to all children and not bound to a certain orientation), the remaining schools are mainly of a Catholic (30%) or Protestant (30%) affiliation.

The Dutch constitution (art. 23) states that education in the Netherlands is free. This implies that all schools (public and private) are equally funded, providing they comply with the Education Act.

Most primary schools are organised in 8 separate year levels or ‘groups’. Many schools combine groups 1 and 2 into one group for children of ages 4 and 5. For young children, a school day may last 5.5 hours a day at the maximum. Children have to go to primary school 3,520 hours during the first four years (an average of 880 hours a year) and 4,000 hours during the last four years (an average of 1,000 hours a year). School boards are free to determine the opening and closing hours and the division of time over the years. Most schools open at 8.30 or 8.45 a.m.

Primary schools are obliged by law to make it possible for children to eat lunch at school, if parents request this. School boards have to make a room available for this purpose. Responsibility and costs remain with the parent; parents may have to take turns supervising the children that stay at school during lunch hours. Schools have to insure the children for damage they might cause.

Access to school vs access to education

Access to primary schools, of course, is in principle without restrictions. Parents are free in their choice of school, but church-affiliated schools formally have the right to refuse access to children of a different faith. Public schools are obliged to accept all children. Primary schools are generally available a short distance from children’s homes. Parents of children who visit a school more than 6 kilometres away from their home are entitled to a (partial) compensation for the costs of travelling. A regulation, which would increase the costs of parents, was proposed to parliament in the autumn of 1998.

Although access to school is available to all children, the question can be asked whether all children have equal access to the *education* to which they are entitled. Several studies (a/o Harskamp and Pijl, 1991 and Schonewille & Van der Leij, 1995) found that primary school teachers of 4–5-year-olds spend much of their time on classroom management. Particularly in classrooms with many children at risk, management activities took up much of the teachers’ time, while there was relatively little time left for instruction, stimulation and feedback. In classrooms with a majority of ethnic minority and low SES Dutch pupils, the children received individual instruction, questions or feedback for only 2.5% of the time.

The proposed decrease in class size can be expected to have a favourable effect on the amount of attention and individual instruction young children will receive from their teachers.

4.4.2 Regulations

Until recently, national laws and regulations in the education sector were very specific and detailed, covering all aspects of the education system, except those aspects of education that are considered to be part of the freedom of education, i.e. appointment of staff, choice of methods and materials, pedagogy and didactics and the founding of new schools.

In the last decade, schools have been given increasing autonomy. National and municipal authorities are at present more concerned with accounting systems for schools, in which the outcomes of education are central, than they are with the regulation of processes.

In short: schools have more freedom to do what they want, but they are also held more accountable for what they achieve. However, there are still plenty of regulations that schools have to abide with. For example, there are specific statutory regulations concerning the conditions under which young children are taught in primary schools, including regulations on toilet provision (height), size of windows, etc. Regulations regarding *the quality* of primary education are not considered a matter for the schools themselves. In the Dutch system, everyone is free to provide education, but schools are only entitled to government funding if they meet certain standards of quality. These standards are laid down in the law. The Education Inspectorate checks whether schools comply with the laws and regulations of government.

4.4.3 Quality

The content and quality of the education for young primary school children (ages 4–5) have been a subject of discussion for several years. The integration of former nursery schools and primary schools in 1985 was opposed by many teachers working with young children. It was feared that the specific characteristics of nursery school education would disappear in the new-style primary school.

Evaluation of the integration and the introduction of standards

In 1990, the Advisory Committee on Primary Education concluded that the integration of nursery and primary schools had been achieved, but that not all new-style primary schools were managing to provide adequate support for young children. There was still a lack of continuity between the education of children in primary groups 1 and 2 (ages 4–5) and groups 3–8 (ages 6–12). In 1992, the Education Inspectorate published the report *'Good education for young children'*, which includes standards and characteristics to assess the quality of education for 4–7-year-old children. In 1993, the Inspectorate evaluated in 80 primary schools to see to what extent they met the standards for good education. The results were reported in *'The state of education for young children'* (1994). According to that report, instruction in primary schools is only partially adapted to the development of young children. On the other hand, schools offer sufficient variety in types of activities, as well as a caring and safe pedagogical climate. After 1995, the standards of the Inspectorate were adapted.

School prospectus and school plan

Discussions on quality and parent participation in primary schools have resulted in a law that requires primary schools and secondary schools to publish two quality documents as of 1 January 1999. One is a school prospectus, which should inform parents about how the school works and which must be published every year.

The other is a school plan, which describes the school's policy for the next four years. Another important innovation is that schools are now obliged to make data on pupils' achievements available to the public (including in the school prospectus). This is a very sensitive issue in the Dutch education sector. The government's aim is to hold schools strictly accountable for the results they achieve, for instance with regard to the language development of ethnic minority children.

Monitoring

Monitoring the quality of education, including the education of young children, is a responsibility of the municipal authorities. The law on local educational disadvantage policy is very explicit in this respect. Discussions on how to develop a monitoring system are going on between the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science and the Union of Netherlands Municipalities; some municipalities have taken the initiative of developing a monitoring system themselves. It is expected that it will take some time before adequate monitoring systems will be operational.

Finally, the recent decision of the government to invest considerable sums in reducing class size in primary years 1–2 may mark the beginning of more far-reaching pedagogical changes in primary education, since class sizes have for a long time hindered pedagogical innovation.

4.4.4 Funding

In 1997, total expenditure on primary education amounted to 9.7 billion guilders (€ 4.4 billion), of which 7.8 billion was spent on regular primary education and 1.9 billion on special education. Staff costs accounted for 84% of the total expenditure. Per-pupil expenditure was 5,200 guilders (€ 2,364) in regular primary education and 15,800 guilders (€ 7,182) in special education. Per-pupil expenditure was low compared to other developed countries.

Table 4.12 Per-pupil expenditure (in US dollars), 1994.

	Pre-primary	Primary
Netherlands	2,840	3,010
Belgium	2,390	3,350
Germany	4,600	3,350
France	2,980	3,280
Denmark	4,420	4,930

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture & Science, 1998.

Schools may ask parents for a voluntary parent contribution to finance specific activities. These contributions may be spent on festivities, provision during lunch time, materials or extra personnel. The usual voluntary parent contribution is 60 guilders (€ 27) per year.

4.4.5 Staffing

Staff roles

The main functions in primary education are those of head, deputy head and teacher.

Figure 4.13 Functions, training requirements and tasks

Function	Training requirements	Job description/tasks
Head	PABO ⁶	Tasks: to supervise the daily running of the school; to direct the work of the teachers; to formulate and carry out the school's educational policy; personnel management; to consult with the teachers; to maintain external contacts
Deputy Head	PABO	Tasks: to replace the head when absent; to contribute to the development of the school's educational policy; to consult with the teachers; to maintain external contacts; to assist the head, to teach pupils
Teacher	PABO	Tasks: to teach a class of pupils; to attend and contribute to staff meetings; to maintain contacts with parents

Aims, expectations and perceptions

The role of primary school teachers is of course to teach, but also to educate children and to prepare them for the future. What should be the core task of the teacher is a subject for an ongoing, lively debate. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the effective school movement was very influential in the Netherlands and, as a consequence, much emphasis was placed on the task of teachers to achieve results in language proficiency and mathematics. Recently, the social function of schools and the contributions of teachers to social integration have (once again) come to receive more attention. Compared with other workers in the ECEC sector, the status and expectations of primary school teachers are much higher. Accordingly, their wages are higher (though still low compared with many other OECD countries). Moreover, in-service training is mandatory for teachers and budgets for in-service teacher training are available (see below).

Training

Primary school teachers are trained at Primary School Teacher Training Colleges (*PABO*, i.e. training at the HBO - higher vocational training - level). These colleges offer full-time and part-time courses at HBO level. Students may also take a short course. They can specialise in working with young children (4–7), or older children (8–12) and in in-service training courses for children with special educational needs. During their training at the PABO, all students have periods of teaching practice in primary schools. In addition to basic training, there is a regular provision of in-service training courses for primary school teachers. The aim of these courses is to broaden teachers' knowledge, skills and insights or to deepen professional attitudes.

The financing of in-service teacher training is governed by law. Every year, the government gives the competent authority of publicly and privately run schools a budget for the in-service training of teachers. With this the schools are free to hire training services from any institute.

Thus, the Dutch educational support system has changed into an open, market-oriented system that takes into account the needs of schools by allocating budgets to schools for hiring the training services they are in need of. Funds for the local educational support services (SBD's) have been devolved to local government (since 1997). These funds generally are not channelled to the schools.

Career prospects

The career prospects of teachers improved dramatically in 1998. Whereas, until recently, many teachers were unemployed, the demand for teachers is now exceeding the supply. It seems likely that, as a result of the reduction of class size in primary schools, in the next ten years everybody with a teaching qualification will be able to find a job. In fact, all people with teaching qualifications or teaching experience received a letter from the previous government asking them if they were interested in re-entering the teaching profession. Enrolment in the PABO training is on the increase after years of decline.

Professional and public status

Teachers are employed by the school's governing body. In the case of public schools, this may be the municipality. When appointing staff, the governing body is obliged to abide by the employment conditions set by the government. Policy concerning employment conditions is largely determined by the government. For some years a discussion has been underway concerning the status of teachers in society. The "Dynamic Teaching Forum" (*Forum Vitaal Leraarschap*) has initiated several activities to improve the image of teaching and raise the public status of teachers.

Salaries

Teachers in primary school have better salaries than staff of childcare centres and pre-school playgroups. The present lack of teachers may have consequences for the salaries and work conditions of teachers.

Table 4.14 Salaries in primary education

Functions	Salary
Teacher	Dfl. 3,911 - Dfl. 5,600
Head	Dfl. 4,058 - Dfl. 6,300

In comparison with other OECD-countries, teacher starting salaries are at the average OECD-level but Dutch teachers experience less development in their salaries than do their colleagues in comparable OECD-countries. Dutch teachers also teach comparatively more hours to larger groups - the Dutch class sizes are above the OECD-average.

4.4.6 Programme Content and Implementation

In education, the principle of freedom of education means that schools are free to determine the content of education. They are required to devote a minimum number of hours to specific subjects, such as language or mathematics, and they have to help children reach the attainment targets. But they still have a great amount of freedom to determine the content of education. There are no prescriptions regarding the use of particular textbooks, methods or test instruments or for the design of the curriculum.

In the decentralised areas of educational policy (i.e. local educational disadvantage policy (GOA) and language teaching to ethnic minorities (OALT)) the delicate balance of power between local governments and school boards is still being tested. There seems to be a general consensus that municipal authorities can decide what schools should accomplish, while school boards and schools retain their considerable autonomy in deciding how this should be accomplished.

For example, a municipal authority may state that the average vocabulary of ethnic minority children of a certain age has to increase by 5%, or that by 2002 the number of early school leavers has to be diminished by 40%. The municipal authority is expected to strive for consensus with school boards on the goals of education. The schools decide how to reach these goals.

In primary schools, methods for working with children from different backgrounds are more firmly established than in childcare centres. The law on primary education requires schools to follow an intercultural and a child-centred approach. No such requirement is included in the regulations for childcare centres.

4.4.7 The Role of Parents

Primary schools and special schools are obliged by law to establish a participation council (*MZR*) that includes parents and teachers and that advises the head or the management team on school policy. The members of the council are elected by the parents. In addition, most schools involve parents in extra-curricular and festive activities such as school outings and school parties, monitoring during lunch breaks, traffic warden, reading stories, managing the school library, after school activities, etc. This kind of parent involvement in schools appears to be diminishing: an increasing number of formerly active parents (mostly mothers) lack the time to engage in these activities because they now have paid jobs.

4.5 Intervention Programmes

General characteristics

In addition to general ECEC provision, there is a great variety of specific ECEC programmes and services targeting children and/or families that need extra help and support. A rough distinction can be made between *child development programmes* that are primarily designed to promote children's (cognitive) development, and *parent support programmes*. These programmes can have two different goals; either the provision of general family support in difficult circumstances (e.g. illness, psycho-social problems) or the enhancement of the parenting skills of the child's caretakers. Some parent support programmes combine both goals.

Parent support services are often an integral part of the system of local youth policy. The services are provided by staff of pre-school playgroups, early childhood health care centres, primary schools, etc. Sometimes support is provided by youth care organisations. Intervention programmes can be either home-based or centre-based. The child development programmes "Steps" were initially targeted at children from minority groups. Since minority children were strongly underrepresented among the users of childcare provision, a budget was made available to realise home-based programmes for this group. Most of the intervention programmes are designed for children and/or families at risk.

Programme development

In the early 1990s, several ministries supported or even initiated the development of experimental programmes in local pilot projects. The national government also took care of the dissemination of the experiences in these projects, with an eye to furthering the development and implementation of these programmes by local government and other organisations in the ECEC field. The main funder of the development and dissemination of intervention programmes is the Ministry of VWS.

Most of the national child development programmes have been developed by the Averroès Foundation or Sardes Educational Services; while most parent support programmes are developed by the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW). Several of these intervention programmes have been or are being evaluated, and most have proven to be (at least partly) successful in reaching the programme's goals. At this moment national policy is orientated towards implementing the existing programmes in municipalities and regions.

Appendix 4 gives an overview of the ECEC intervention programmes that have been developed in a national context.

Programme implementation

As a consequence of the decentralisation, municipalities are free to choose whether and which programme will be implemented. The national government can monitor and encourage the use of intervention programmes, but cannot enforce them.

Municipalities and local organisations may also develop their own, made-to-measure, intervention programmes.

Practice in the 1990s has proven that it can be difficult to make the transition from experimental programmes to regular practice, even though there are abundant indications that quality improvements can be gained by integrating the methods of some of the intervention programmes into the regular practice of general ECEC provision.

4.5.1 Regulations

Regulations concerning experimental projects and programmes depend on the type and content of the project or programme. Most intervention programmes are not subject to the general regulations set by ministries or municipalities, but only to the internal rules of the project itself and the general conditions as stated in, for example, the Welfare Act. When experimental programmes make use of existing facilities, the normal regulations for these facilities must be respected, although some leeway is allowed in the interpretation of regulations if this is required by the content of the programme.

4.5.2 Staffing

It is not possible to give an overview of qualification requirements for staff in experimental programmes, because the use of staff and volunteers differs greatly between programmes. An interesting phenomenon is the combination of the use of para-professionals in some of the programmes of the Averroès Foundation and job creation programmes. In some programmes, 30 to 80% of the costs of para-professionals are financed in this way, while at the same time the career prospects of the women involved are enhanced.

4.5.3 The Role of Parents

In many parent support and child development programmes, the active involvement of parents is crucial, as most programmes focus on the child as well as on the parents. The 'Steps' programmes have a particularly strong focus on parents; their main aim is to enhance parents' capacities to prepare their children for primary school. Support for parents in stressful family situations receives increasing attention in parent support programmes.

Some projects involve parents in the role of para-professionals: after a short training period, these parents provide support to other parents, notably parents from the same (ethnic) background. Generally speaking, there is an increasing tendency to develop approaches that are flexible and tailored to the needs of individual families, such as home-based projects and other family-oriented programmes.

4.5.4 Funding

As was mentioned before, the national government has initiated and funded the development of a number of intervention programmes. When intervention programmes are implemented at the local level, municipalities are the main funders of these programmes. At present, three quarters of all programmes are completely or partly financed by municipal authorities. The most frequent combination of funding sources is the municipal funds and a job creation scheme. A quarter of the programmes are still financed or co-financed by the Ministry of VWS.

In 1994, the *Para-professionals Jobs Scheme* was launched. This plan was part of the agreement of the national government, employers and trade unions concerning the development of wages in the welfare sector. The plan aims at increasing the labour market participation of ethnic minority women in the field of welfare. In subsequent years, several other measures were taken to cover the costs of local staff. According to the Averroës Foundation, up to mid-1998 a total of 479 jobs were realised within the Steps programme.

The funding of home-based projects by municipalities has improved the recruitment of target groups to this type of provision, but the projects still reach only a limited part of the target groups (see table below).

Table 4.15 Number of participants/children per programme by ethnicity in 1997/1998

	Instapje	Klimrek	Opstap renewed	Opstapje	Spel a. Wagen	Spel a. Huis	Stap In	Stap Rond	total
Turkish	-	10	2549	685	-	223	-	-	
Moroccan	-	10	1234	440	-	150			
Dutch	-	8	1254	358	4	92			
Surinam	14	-	502	131	-	29			
Somali	-	-	79	64	-	43			
Other	15	28	616	347	34	205			
Unknown	10	19	490	214	23	371			
TOTAL	39	75	6705	2239	61	1113			10230
1997/98									
Start 1998	10	-	529	249	-	139			929
growth %	+26%	-	+8%	+11%	-	+12%			+9%
TOTAL	49	75	7234	2488	61	1252			11159
1998/99									

Source: Averroës Operations project registration, 1998.

4.6 Special Education

The Netherlands has an elaborate special education system⁷.

This system includes provision for vulnerable young children, i.e. pre-school children with developmental difficulties.

Availability and access

There are 965 schools for special education (primary and secondary), with 121,000 pupils who need special attention due to disabilities and/or disorders. About 5% of all children of school age participate in special education. Since referral to a special school usually takes place after some years in primary education, the percentage of 4–6-year-old children attending a special school is a mere 1%.

Policy

Policy for children with special needs is not linked to educational disadvantage policy. The former is based on individual child characteristics, the latter on socio-economic characteristics of the parents. An important aim in the Dutch educational policy is to curb the growth of the special education sector by improving options for children with special needs in mainstream schools and setting up co-operative networks of mainstream and special primary schools.

Back to school together (Weer Samen Naar School -WSNS)

In August 1998, a new law on primary education came into force requiring all primary schools and 'special schools for primary education' (a new name) to participate in co-operative school clusters in order to offer each child the care he needs. Each cluster must be self-sufficient, which means that it has to cater to all children with special needs, who are registered at the schools participating in the network.

Backpack

Disabled children however, visit more specialised schools, which do not participate in the WSNS-clusters. For disabled children new possibilities are developed with the aim to (re-)integrate these children in regular schools as much as possible. In the near future, these children will receive a pupil-bound budget (Backpack), that enables them and their parents to make a choice between regular education with additional help or special education.

Role of parents

Many schools for handicapped children also offer support and training to parents to help them care for and educate their handicapped child at home. There are support programmes for parents of visually handicapped children, children with hearing handicaps and speech impairments, children with learning difficulties, etc. It is to be expected that, in the near future, attention for the support of parents with children with special needs will increase, since one of the government's policy aims is to reduce referral of these children to special schools and (re)integrate these children in mainstream education and care. These developments offer parents possibilities for their disabled child to visit a regular school nearby. The child and the school will receive additional help of specialised school teachers.

4.7 Specialised Youth Care

In the extensive field of care services and facilities for children with serious problems, a number of distinctions can be made (also see appendix 5). Firstly, there is a difference between voluntary care, involuntary care and mental health care. In voluntary care, children and/or parents take the initiative to ask for help or at least give their consent for the help offered. In the case of involuntary care, children and/or parents are assigned a form of care, mostly on the basis of a court order concerning protection of the child. Mental health care for children is usually offered on a voluntary basis. Secondly, there is a distinction between curative care provision and preventive care provision. Under the Youth Care Act (1990), which governs the (re-)organisation and implementation of specialised youth care, most parts of voluntary youth care have been decentralised. The provinces and three metropolitan regions are now responsible for the planning and funding of curative youth care provision at a regional level. Municipalities have a directing role to play in developing local policy concerning local *preventive* youth care provision. Central government is responsible for establishing national frameworks for local preventive youth policy and national and regional youth care planning.

Access

In the near future, specialised youth care must be provided through a single regional office - a Youth Care Front Office - to which all young people in need can turn for referral and assessment.

4.7.1 Types of Provision

Specialised youth care services include:

- ‘Ambulatory’⁸ facilities, such as emergency lines for children, Centres for the Prevention of Child Abuse (AMKs), Youth Counselling Centres (JACs) and youth divisions of mental health institutes.
- Facilities for day treatment, Boddaert Centres (out-of-school care for children with psycho-social problems) and medical day-care centres (MKDs) for children whose development is hindered by a combination of developmental, physical and psycho-social factors and unfavourable family circumstances.
- Residential facilities, such as diagnostic observation centres, homes that replace the family, centres for special treatment, medical children’s homes, boarding schools for intensive treatment, detention centres, facilities for crisis care and family homes.
- Foster care facilities, e.g. foster home agencies and institutes for therapeutic foster care.
- Child protection facilities, including child protection boards (that advise the juvenile court), guardianship and family supervision agencies (that carry out court orders) and Placement Bodies, that make proposals for the placement of children in foster homes and in semi-residential childcare facilities.
- Children and youth departments of psychiatric hospitals.

4.7.2 Access

National policy is aimed at improving access to youth care through aligning and streamlining the assessment and admission process. The implementation of regional front offices plays an important role in this process. Another aim is to enhance the use of provision such as ambulatory help and day treatment facilities instead of (expensive) residential treatment. At the same time, money is invested in meeting the (rising) demand for intensive, often residential help for young people with serious problems.

Through effective preventive policy, aimed at early recognition and intervention in children's and families' problems and improvement of ambulatory services, the government hopes - in the long run - to be able to reduce the demand for intensive residential youth care facilities. At this moment, however, demand still exceeds supply and in some sectors of specialised youth care the waiting lists are impressive.

Table 4.16 Actual use of specialised youth care facilities, 1997

type of provision	age 0-6 years	age 6-12 years
Preventive	1,373	4,740
'ambulatory' regional	4,356	11,116
'ambulatory' national	347	761
day treatment	245	3,847
Foster care	1,320	2,313
Foster care national	201	267
Residential regional	276	819
Residential national	1	8

Source: SRJV, 1998

4.7.3 The Role of Parents

The attention paid to the parents of children in specialised youth care and the extent of support provided to them varies greatly between the various youth care organisations and between different types of help. Generally speaking, there is a tendency to increase the involvement of parents in the treatment of their children - partly due to new regulations concerning client information and client rights and partly due to the acknowledgement that the family environment is of crucial importance to the further development and future perspectives of these children. It is to be expected that, in the near future, attention for the support of parents will increase, since one of the government's policy aims is to reduce the number of children referred to intensive forms of specialised youth care. Through the substitution of residential (day and night) care by less intensive types of youth care (ambulatory care, day-care, part-time care) more children with special needs will remain in the home environment for at least part of the day or week.

4.8 Concluding Remarks

There is a strong tendency in today's ECEC provision policy to enhance the alignment and integration of different ECEC services and organisations. This is not only motivated by organisational and financial considerations such as creating more transparency, reducing overlap and making the system more (cost) effective. There are also serious considerations regarding content at the base of this policy. It is considered important to develop a pedagogic continuum for children, in which care and education are offered in a transparent, comprehensive and consistent fashion. The development of children should be the subject of continual attention and monitoring, with the aim of preventing the accumulation of problems.

Services integration and administrative co-operation are important instruments to realise this. On a local level, the national government supports this process, among other ways, through providing made-to-measure support for municipalities that are developing and implementing local preventive youth policy (follow-up OLPJ - see subsection 2.3.3).

Services integration can also be seen as a means to accommodate the system to the real needs and wishes of children and their parents. The model of the 'one-counter front office', to which children and parents can turn with their questions and which offers services in an integrated fashion, is being adopted ever more widely. Integration of services requires active networking and close co-operation between different organisations and often between different sectors. Services integration is well on its way in the specialised youth care sector (including mental health care for youth, child protection and regional welfare services for youth): a national network of regional one-stop Front Offices for (potential) clients of the specialised youth care sector is currently being realised. In addition, several experimental projects are being set up with the aim of developing integrated care programmes for multi-problem youth and their families.

Also in the fragmented 'sector' of parent support services, initiatives are being taken to implement one local or regional front office for all parents with questions concerning the upbringing of their children. These front offices (*steunpunten opvoedingsondersteuning*) then try to provide an integrated answer to the questions and problems mentioned by the parents.

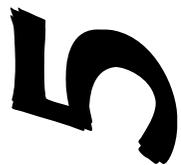
Another example of services integration that is particularly relevant to ECEC provision is the Broad-Based School.

The Broad-Based School

Common provision for educational and welfare services are being set up as broad-based schools. There are many different types of broad-based schools, but all are based on the idea of service integration: educational facilities, recreational facilities, childcare services, child health services, etc., are integrated in an area-based network or even in one multifunctional building. The development of broad-based schools can be seen as a consequence of the decentralisation policy: it is a typical bottom-up initiative. This accounts for the wide variety in arrangements and goals of broad-based schools in different municipalities. There are, however, some key driving factors.

In many cases, the school is the only remaining social institution that still relates to all citizens – in many communities (and especially urban areas) the church does not have this socially binding function anymore. This makes the school the obvious centre and starting point for community based action. Schools are the place where (other) services and organisations can find and reach all children and youth. Schools are confronted with a wide variety of social problems among their pupils, which often need solving before the child can fully participate in education, e.g. children have to feel safe, should not be hungry or too tired, etc. Schools are, however, not equipped to solve these (family) problems and need to co-operate with other services in this respect.

Schools are increasingly seen as and functioning as childcare institutes: they enable parents to go out to work. This relatively new demand on schools does not coincide with the way schools are organised, e.g. school opening hours and lunch arrangements. Therefore schools look for possibilities to link with other professional services, such as out-of-school care and educational and recreational services, in order to provide for children during the entire workday of their parents.



Evaluation and Research

5 Evaluation and Research

In the Netherlands, youth research encompasses the age group of 0–25-year-olds. Most of the research is carried out by psychologists, sociologists and educational researchers at universities or university-related institutes. But a growing number of commercial research institutes is now also involved in youth research. Research findings and other objective data (e.g. registration data) are an increasingly important basis for policy making in the Netherlands. This is enhanced by the fact that (since the devolution of many tasks in the area of ECEC to provincial and local governments) one of the main tasks of the national government is the monitoring of local and regional developments on a national scale. There is also a growing recognition of the importance of reliable research data to policy decisions and to innovations. As a consequence, prominent youth researchers are more often invited to join steering committees or task forces on youth policy issues.

In this chapter, an overview is presented of the types of information available to (national) ECEC policy makers. First we discuss the different types of research on ECEC policy and provision and present some recent examples (section 5.1). Next we take a look at other sources of information that have a relevance to ECEC policy, because they are used as a basis for policy making or for monitoring national developments in the area of ECEC (section 5.2). In the final section (5.3), we outline the national infrastructure for youth research.

5.1 Types of Research on ECEC Policy and Provision

Research into ECEC policy and provision can be divided into four main categories:

- 1 Evaluation studies on ECEC provision, such as studies on the impact of ECEC intervention programmes and studies on the quality of childcare and its effects on children;
- 2 Evaluation research on the effectiveness and/or goal attainment of national ECEC policy, commissioned by the national government or other (national) organisations;
- 3 Research into the development of ECEC provision at a local level (number, types, offer, capacity, funding, local policy, etc.) commissioned by national or local government;
- 4 Academic (fundamental) research on early childhood (e.g. family conditions, upbringing styles, parent-child interaction, needs of parents, etc.) carried out by universities and university-related institutes.

5.1.1 Programme Evaluation

Programme evaluation research is a structural part of the '0–18 years policy programme' of the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport. This programme has been developed within the wider context of national policy to combat educational disadvantages. Within the framework of the Ministry's programme evaluation, research is conducted into several intervention programmes and their effects (e.g. the 'Steps' child development programmes), into the possibilities of improving the quality of playgroup provision and into the extent to which intervention programmes are incorporated in local policy. Various university institutes have conducted these studies.

In addition, several experimental ECEC intervention programmes have been evaluated or are being evaluated on their effects. For instance, the Ministries of VWS and OCenW have commissioned research into the effects of the experimental Pyramid and Kaleidoscope programmes. Since many of the recently developed ECEC programmes are based on existing programmes developed abroad (whose effects have been documented), the evaluation studies of these programmes are often of a formative nature, i.e. aimed at further improving programme implementation. Also, the satisfaction of programme participants can be the object of an evaluation study.

5.1.2 Policy Evaluation

Although most evaluation studies in the area of ECEC focus on the evaluation of specific projects or programmes, there are some examples of evaluation studies with a more general focus on the impact and/or goal attainment of national ECEC policy.

Evaluation of educational policy in general

The Education Inspectorate reports on the state of the art in education on a yearly basis. The national bureau for social-cultural planning (SCP) addresses the developments in education too, for instance in the yearly report on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. These evaluative reports and educational policy makers make use of longitudinal studies of the educational development of cohorts of children. Especially the secondary analysis on these data is very informative for policy making.

Evaluation of Educational Priority Policy

The former national Educational Priority Policy programme (OVV) has been the subject of an extensive evaluation, commissioned by the Ministry of VWS and the Ministry OCenW (Mulder, Tesser and Vierke, ITS, 1997). Within the framework of this evaluation, longitudinal cohort studies have been set up that continue after the decentralisation of priority policy. Starting in 1988, data have been collected on a biannual basis in 500 regular primary schools, 100 special primary schools and 200 primary schools with a more than average proportion of children at risk. Information collected about pupils includes information on language and mathematics proficiency, wellbeing, intelligence, gender, family background, etc. Information is also collected about teachers (organisation and instruction). Both schools and pupils are followed in a two-year cycle of data collection. However, children under the age of 6 are not included in these cohort studies.

Research into the effects of general ECEC provision

Recently, a new project based on these cohort studies was started at the University of Amsterdam. The basic question addressed in this project is: what is the effect of participation in pre-school provision (i.e. pre-school playgroups, child day-care and child development programmes) on the cognitive and socio-affective development of children at ages 5 and 7. The differential effects of the economic-financial, social and cultural characteristics of the family will be included in the analyses.

5.1.3 National Inventory Studies

Since the responsibility for most of the general ECEC provision has been decentralised, with central government retaining a monitoring task, the national government regularly conducts inventory studies to monitor the developments at a regional or local level.

Subjects generally are: the volume and organisation of provision, the use of provision by different groups of the local population, the financing of provision, local provision policy and the needs and demands of municipalities.

Over a number of years data have been collected on the supply and demand for childcare and the financing (costs and benefits) of childcare centres, mostly commissioned by the Ministry of VWS. They cover a range of subjects related to childcare, such as the expansion of the number of places, changes in the use of provision, job schemes, the participation of women in the labour market and the relationship between income tax and the use of child care.

Other recent examples of inventory studies commissioned by the Ministry of VWS are:

- Research on pre-school playgroups, organisations and policy in Dutch municipalities (DSP, 1999);
- Research on quality control and quality assurance in child day-care (ES&E, 1998)
- Research into the functioning of early childhood health care clinics (Mother and Child Healthcare - MCH).

The findings and recommendations of the research reports are taken seriously and used as a basis for policy making.

5.1.4 Academic Research into Early Childhood and ECEC Provision

The Universities of Utrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, Nijmegen, Groningen and Tilburg have set up departments or university-related institutes that specialise in youth research.

Part of the research described above is carried out by these academic organisations on the basis of additional subsidies provided by the national government and/or national institutes (second flow of funds) or on the basis of contracts with other parties (third flow of funds). This type of research is closely linked to the (policy) needs and demands of the organisations and institutes funding the research. In addition, more fundamental research on early childhood and ECEC is conducted and financed from the regular funding of universities. However, the volume of this type of academic research is rather small. The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which funds and programmes fundamental academic research, has given little priority to research on early childhood and ECEC research.

Given the growing interest in early childhood and ECEC on the political level, it is to be expected that this situation will change in the near future. The fact that the NWO has recently installed a working group on family and youth research, with representatives of universities and commercial research institutes, also points in that direction. This working group is studying the possibilities to start a major research programme on youth and child rearing.

5.2 Other Sources of Information: Statistical and Registration Data and Monitoring Instruments

In addition to the research findings described above, there are several organisations that gather and publicise statistical data and registration data on youth and youth provision on a regular basis. These data are used as a basis for policy making and some of these data can be used to monitor developments in the area of early childhood and ECEC provision.

5.2.1 Main Providers

The main providers of statistical and registration data are:

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)

This bureau collects a great variety of (e.g. demographic) data on the Dutch population based on the registration documents of municipalities. The CBS also carries out a permanent survey of living conditions (*POLS – Permanent Onderzoek Leefsituatie*) and gathers survey data on items such as living conditions, health, crime, labour and lifestyles. The CBS collects national data on youth protection, based on the registration of the judicial system and the regional Child Protection Boards.

The Internet address of the CBS is: <http://www.cbs.nl>

The Social Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP)

This bureau surveys the use of a large number of social and cultural services by the Dutch population (*AVO – Aanvullend Voorzieningengebruik Onderzoek*). The SCP also publishes (on a biannual basis) prestigious reports on childhood, families and youth. These reports analyse the situation and development of Dutch youth and youth policy, mainly on the basis of available research conducted by other institutions. The Internet address of the SCP is: <http://www.scp.nl>

The National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM)

Every four years this institute publishes national data on the health condition of the Dutch population and the expectations for the future. This information is used by the Ministry of VWS as a basis for determining the priority issues in public health care policy for the years to come.

5.2.2 Policy Information Systems

Another source of information for policy making is based on the (client) registrations of provision and services in the ECEC area. Sectoral policy information systems provide information on trends and patterns in the actual use of provision, the demand for services (i.e. waiting lists) and on demographic and social characteristics of the users. Registration data on the use of provision in specialised youth care are published on a yearly basis. Organisations in the voluntary youth care sector provide registration data to the Foundation for Registration of Youth Services (Stichting Registratie Jeugdvoorzieningen SRJV). Based on this data the SRJV produces yearly, national reports on the use of these services, the age and sex of the clients and the type of offer to these clients.

School health care services systematically collect data on the health of school children, participation of children in health care provision, backgrounds of children and parents and client satisfaction. In addition, there are national information systems that provide information on the use of and demand for specific services by youth, such as registration data from the regional youth protection boards, the Centres for the Prevention of Child Abuse (AMKs) and the organisations for the care of addicts.

There is a national registration of the participation of children in primary schools and special primary schools. These data can be analysed for all kind of purposes and in many ways. For instance to get an overview of the number of children with weightings higher than 1,0 in certain areas and schools. In addition to the general registration, a longitudinal cohort study (PRIMA-cohort), that has been in existence for many years now, allows for in-depth studies and trend analyses.

5.2.3 Monitoring Instruments

Both in the welfare and in the education sector, efforts are being made to develop monitoring systems covering entire policy sectors. This has proven to be a complicated matter and it is expected that it will take some years to develop adequate systems and even longer to implement them. The main parties involved in developing such systems are: the Ministries, the Union of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and relevant field organisations.

National Youth Monitor

In 1999, the CBS has combined its data and other information on youth in a National Youth Barometer with the title '*Youth: facts and figures*'. The national Youth Barometer is published every other year. In the years in between, the SCP issues a report (thematic study) on youth. These publications taken together are the National Youth Monitor.

This initiative is part of a national monitoring project initiated by the national Committee Youth Research (CJO – see paragraph 5.3.1). The monitor covers youth from 0–25 years. In addition to demographic data, the Barometer presents statistical information on the situation of youth in the areas of the family, housing, education, labour, income, leisure, health and wellbeing, crime and social participation.

Monitor local youth policy

Recently, the SCP started to monitor the development of local youth policy (target groups, provision and services, finances, etc.).

Pupil survey (Scholierenonderzoek)

Every two years a large-scale national survey among school pupils in the age of 12 to 18 years is held by the national organisation NIBUD. This survey is commissioned by the CJO and the SCP. The survey includes questions concerning the situation of youth, risky behaviour, youth participation etc. Currently plans are being developed to extend the survey to younger children.

Study on the family (Signalement gezin)

Every two years the Netherlands Family Board (Nederlandse Gezinsraad) publishes the so called '*Signalement Gezin*', which is a study on the social situation of the Dutch family.

Emancipation monitor

Several years ago, the cabinet announced its intention of commissioning the development of an emancipation monitor. With the help of the monitor, the process of emancipation within society could be followed, particularly in relation to the policy being conducted. For the time being, the monitor covers the areas of employment, care and incomes, political and social decision making, education and violence. The development of the monitor has since started.

Monitoring of intervention programmes

Monitoring instruments have been developed for the home-based programmes (Averroès-MIS) and for Kaleidoscope (COR). The Averroès Foundation has a management information system for monitoring home-based intervention programmes. Local programme co-ordinators are requested to supply the data.

Monitoring of school children

The Ministry of OCenW regularly publishes statistical information about primary education. Recently the Ministry asked a committee of experts for advice on the possible introduction of a primary school entry test. This would make it possible to collect data on the level of development of all children at age 4. However, the advice of the committee was not univocal. Moreover, many people have doubts about the forecasting value of such a test. School health care services systematically monitor the health of all school children (ages 4–18).

5.3 Research Infrastructure

The Ministry of VWS has a co-ordinating responsibility in the area of youth research. Towards this end, the Ministry - in the 1980s - initiated two national committees on youth research: the PCOJ (Programmerings-college Onderzoek Jeugd) and the CJO (Commissie Jeugd Onderzoek), see subsection 5.3.1. In addition, there are several independent organisations (subsidised by the national government) that play a role in the dissemination of research reports and other kinds of information concerning youth and youth research. Institutes in this area are: the SJN (*Youth Information Foundation - Stichting Jeugdinformatie Nederland*) and the NIWI (*National Information and Documentation Centre for the Social Sciences*) - see subsection 5.3.3.

5.3.1 Programming Youth Research

Two committees play a central role in the national programming of youth research: the PCOJ and the CJO.

PCOJ

This is a national platform, composed of experts in the area of youth(-policy) and youth policy makers. Currently, the main topics discussed in the PCOJ are: 'social alienation of youth' and 'parenting and supporting families'. The committee is subsidised by the Ministry of VWS and the Ministry of Justice. The main task and aim of the committee is to encourage research that has a direct relevance to those who work with youth and to make research results more available to them.

CJO

This is an interdepartmental committee on youth research. All ministries involved in youth policy participate in the CJO (i.e. Ministries of VWS, OCenW, Justice, Social Affairs, Internal Affairs, etc.). The Ministry of VWS is the main funding agent and co-ordinates the activities of the CJO. The CJO regularly publishes a programme on youth research. The programme is geared towards current policy questions concerning children and youth at risk. The CJO also organises symposia and participates in international studies and activities. The CJO is responsible for the National Youth Monitor described in section 5.2. The CJO also manages knowledge and information concerning youth on the interdepartmental level.

In addition to these committees, several other committees and advisory bodies play a role in setting the national agenda for youth research:

- The PEWA (Projectgroup Evaluation Welfare 0-18-year-old Ethnic Minorities), that was formerly linked to the University of Leiden, and now is part of the Verwey-Jonker Institute. The PEWA is active in the area of welfare research, especially in its relation to education. The PEWA has a/o published reports on the possibilities of pre-school and early-school education and on the relations between educational institutes and ethnic minority families.
- The *Education Council*: this is a permanent advisory body that advises the Minister of OCenW on educational policy and legislation. It also advises municipal authorities about local education policy.
- The *Council for Social Development (RMO)*: this permanent advisory body advises the Minister of VWS on policy matters in the area of welfare and care.

Networks and meetings

At this moment, youth researchers in the Netherlands are more frequently involved in advisory boards and committees concerned with youth. In addition, youth researchers, youth policy makers and youth organisations meet regularly on a number of occasions to discuss relevant policy topics. For instance:

- The CJO and PCOJ regularly organise meetings to present new studies;
- there is a national network of family researchers;
- In 1995 and 1999, national symposia on youth research and youth policy took place, organised by PCOJ, CJO, NIWI and/or the Verwey-Jonker Research Institute;
- The University of Nijmegen annually organises a symposium on family and youth research;
- Every two years youth researchers from the Netherlands and from Germany meet to discuss current youth policy and research topics.

5.3.2 Management and Dissemination of Research Information

National directory

For over ten years now, the Netherlands has had a national directory on youth research. This directory includes 1,600 descriptions of current youth research projects, 2,200 youth research reports, 200 data sets and a profile of 60 research institutes and 350 youth researchers. The directory is managed by the PCOJ and the NIWI. The directory is available on the Internet and also contains abstracts in English. The Internet address is: <http://www.niwi.knaw.nl>

The Youth Information Foundation (SJN)

The SJN Youth Information Foundation, funded by the Ministries of VWS and Justice, is the national organisation that collects and disseminates all kinds of information on youth and for youth. The SJN publishes a monthly national journal on youth research ('*Flits*') containing reviews of research projects and project plans and reviews of important events in the area of youth and youth research. Much of the SJN information is available on the Internet and the SJN web site also contains links with other sites relevant to youth policy and provision (including intervention programmes, preventive youth care and specialised youth care).

The Internet address of the SJN is: <http://www.sjn.nl>

A

Appendix

Appendix 1

Demographic Context of ECEC

Total number of inhabitants in the Netherlands in 1996 and 2010

1996	15,567,100
2010	16,470,300

Total number of children born alive in the Netherlands 1996 and 2010

1996	189,500
2010	168,900

Single parent households

The following table shows the actual number (1996) and the prognosis (2000 and 2010) of single-parent and two-parent households with children and the percentage of single-parent households as a percentage of the total number of households with children.

Table 1: Percentage single parent households with children in 1996, 2000 and 2010

	1 July 1996	1 Jan. 2000	1 Jan. 2010
Single-parent households	335,000	314,000	294,000
Two-parent households	2,065,000	2,080,000	2,111,000
Total number of households with children	2,400,000	2,394,000	2,360,000
% single-parent households of total	14%	13.1%	12.5%

Table 2: Number of young children by age in 1998 and 2010

	1 January 1998	1 January 2010
age 0 years	192,308	169,789
1	191,191	171,953
2	191,890	174,627
3	197,246	177,695
4	196,732	180,938
5	198,600	184,158
6	201,177	187,162
Total number of 0–6-year-olds	1,369,144	1,246,322
Total number of inhabitants	15,654,192	16,470,339
% 0–6-year-olds of total	8.7%	7.6%

Table 3: Number of young children and gender in 1998 and 2010

	1998	2010
Total number of 0–6-year-olds	1,369,144	1,246,322
- boys	700,519	637,646
- girls	668,625	608,676

Table 4: Number of foreign young children in age groups 0–4 and 5–9 in 1996 and 2010

	1996			2010		
	0-4	5-9	Total	0-4	5-9	Total
<i>Turkey</i>	31,200	29,000	263,500	18,100	24,100	341,500
<i>Morocco</i>	27,900	26,200	218,200	23,100	25,900	308,200
<i>Surinam</i>	17,300	21,200	250,500	14,000	17,700	330,900
<i>The Netherlands</i>						
<i>Antilles and Aruba</i>	5,200	5,500	67,700	4,700	6,100	83,700
<i>Indonesia and the former Dutch East Indies</i>	1,700	2,800	220,000	600	700	181,200
<i>OECD-countries</i>	11,700	12,900	340,200	9,500	9,700	413,100
<i>Other (poor) countries</i>	29,800	27,500	354,400	58,100	63,300	82,800
<i>Total</i>	124,800	125,000	1,714,400	128,100	147,700	2,486,300

Appendix 2

Staffing in Childcare

Table 1: Childcare staff in 1995 - numbers of full-time and part-time posts

	total number	day care centre A	day care centre B	play- group A	play- group B	other
	28,049	2,468	6,160	3,985	4,156	11,280
heads without care-giving tasks	1,721	267	413	54	98	889
full-time	312	52	108	3	4	145
part-time, 15 hours per week	1,137	164	280	18	29	646
part-time, less than 15 hours per week	272	51	25	33	65	98
heads and nurses with care-giving tasks	23,741	1,981	5,091	3,726	3,754	9,189
full-time	2,967	275	1,231	53	28	1,380
part-time, 15 hours per week	12,579	1,410	3,344	664	913	6,249
part-time, less than 15 hours per week	8,195	296	516	3,009	2,814	1,560
ancillary staff	2,067	153	493	161	253	1,007
other staff	520	67	163	44	51	195

A = one facility

B = several facilities

Table 2: Numbers of childcare staff in 1995

	Total number	In childcare centres		In playgroups		Other
		A	B	A	B	
tenured	28,049	2,468	6,160	3,985	4,156	11,280
paid, but non-tenured	1,154	100	138	348	131	437
Volunteers	13,550	260	147	6,987	4,799	1,357
Trainees	6,743	737	1,219	1,231	893	2,663

A = one facility

B = several facilities

Table 3: Volume of paid work hours in childcare

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0 to 3 years	118,678	361,740	399,311	435,429	457,237
4 to 12 years	13,722	55,632	64,678	80,667	102,591
Total	132,400	417,373	463,989	516,096	559,828

Source: SGB0 Monitor 1997 (1999)

Table 4: Volume of voluntary (non-paid) hours in childcare

	1989	1993	1995	1996	1997
0 to 3 years	12,940	4,735	10,925	13,944	2,966
4 to 12 years	659	973	1,456	2,416	629
Total	13,599	5,709	12,381	16,360	3,595

Source: *SGBO Monitor 1997 (1999)*

Appendix 3

Parent Contribution

The VWS Advisory table parent contribution Childcare, 1999

The table is a facilitating device for municipalities and childcare organisations. Since it is an advisory table, municipalities (for subsidised childcare) and employers (for company childcare) are free in their decision whether or not to use the table. The table is also the basis for the fiscal evaluation of the costs and financial compensations for childcare. In the new childcare legislation (*Act Basic Provision Childcare*), the height of parent contributions will be regulated by law.

Child day-care for 0-3-year-olds

Net family income per month (Dfl.)	Monthly parent contribution for the first child (in Dfl.)				
	Number of days per week that the child is in day-care				
	1	2	3	4	5
1683 or less	19	41	60	81	101
1684 – 1788	27	52	80	105	132
1789 - 1893	34	63	97	128	160
1894 - 1998	39	75	113	152	190
1999 - 2103	44	88	132	175	218
2104 - 2208	50	100	150	199	249
2209 - 2313	56	111	167	222	279
2314 - 2418	61	122	186	247	308
2419 - 2524	66	136	202	270	339
2525 - 2630	72	148	220	295	367
2631 - 2735	81	159	240	317	399
2736 - 2840	86	170	257	344	428
2841 - 2945	92	184	274	365	457
2946 - 3050	98	195	292	390	486
3051 - 3155	103	207	309	413	516
3156 - 3260	109	218	328	437	547
3261 - 3365	115	231	347	461	577
3366 - 3470	120	243	363	485	606
3471 - 3575	126	255	380	509	635
3576 - 3681	134	266	399	531	664
3682 - 3786	139	278	416	556	695
3787 - 3891	145	291	435	580	725
3892 - 3996	151	302	453	604	755
3997 - 4101	157	313	469	627	783
4102 - 4207	162	326	488	652	814
4208 - 4312	168	339	507	675	844
4313 - 4417	174	349	524	699	873
4418 - 4522	182	361	542	722	903
4523 - 4627	187	371	560	746	932
4628 - 4733	193	386	577	770	962
4734 - 4838	198	398	596	794	992

Net family income per month (Dfl.)	Monthly parent contribution for the first child (in Dfl.)				
	Number of days per week that the child is in day-care				
4839 - 4934	204	409	613	819	1023
4944 - 5048	210	419	630	839	1050
5049 - 5153	216	431	649	864	1080
5154 and higher	221	445	665	887	1110

Parent contribution for other types of childcare

The parent contribution for other types of childcare is calculated as a percentage of the amounts mentioned in the table above, taking into account the family income and the number of days a child makes use of the childcare service.

Type of childcare	Parent contribution
child day-care (5 – 10 hours per day)	100%
child half-day care (max. 5 hours per day)	66%
out-of-school care	66% of contribution child daycare centres
after-school care (after school and during holidays)	50%

Families with more than one child in childcare

When more than one child of a family is making use of childcare services, the child that spends most hours in childcare is considered to be the 'first child'.

On the basis of this child the basic parent contribution is calculated. For the second child, third child etc. the parent fee is 33% of the fee for the first child.

This applies to families with a net monthly income of Dfl. 2,736 and higher.

Families with a monthly income between Dfl 1,684 and Dfl 2,736 the standard parent contribution is Dfl. 118 per month for a full-time childcare place.

For families with a monthly income below Dfl. 1,684, a standard rate of Dfl.101 per month is charged for a full-time child day-care place.

Family day-care

There is no separate advisory table for family day-care. The childcare advisory table can be used as a basis for calculating the parent fee for family day-care services.

Parent contribution for pre-school playgroups

There is no advisory table concerning parent contribution for pre-school playgroups that are part of the municipal welfare provision.

A recent survey into municipal policy on pre-school playgroups (Hilhorst et al., DSP 1999) indicates that 72% of the municipalities exerts influence on the height of the parent fee for subsidised playgroups. In 61% of the municipalities the parent fee is income-related. In the remaining (mostly smaller) municipalities a standard parent fee is charged.

A case study of 4 municipalities indicated that the minimum parent contribution varies between Dfl. 20 and Dfl. 69 per month, while the maximum varied between Dfl. 42.50 and Dfl. 102.70 per month.

Appendix 4

Overview of Home-based and Centre-based Intervention Programmes

Child development programmes

- 1 *Instapje* - aimed at Surinam and Antillian children aged 12-24 months and their parents. The aim is to improve the quality of parent-child interaction. Intensive and easily accessible for families that meet the criteria of the target group. Number of participants in 1996/1997: 83.
- 2 *Klimrek* - the Dutch version of Phyllis Levenstein's Mother & Child Home programme for children aged 2-4 years from disadvantaged families. The aim is to promote verbal interaction between mother and child and to support parents in their role as educators. A play instructor visits the family once or twice per week. Number of participants in 1996/1997: 159
- 3 *Spel aan huis* (playing at home) - a programme that seeks to promote children's development through play and by involving the parents in play activities. The programme targets children at risk aged 1-4 years in families with other children younger than 12 years. Families are visited by para-professionals (higher education students). Varieties of the programme have been developed for gypsies/caravan dwellers and refugees and for centre-based implementation. Number of participants 1996/1997: 795
- 4 *Opstapje* - A programme aimed at fostering the development of knowledge and skills in children at risk (more specifically ethnic minority children) aged 2-4 years. Mother and child perform playful activities that prepare the child for the behaviour and skills needed in primary school. Participants are encouraged to enrol their child in pre-school playgroups. Every week, participating families receive a 30-minute visit from a para-professional volunteer from the same ethnic group as the participants. There are also biweekly group meetings. Number of participants in 1996/1997: 2,165
- 5 *Opstap renewed* - The Opstap programme was based on the Israeli Hippy project. Opstap renewed has been developed by a group of Dutch institutes. The goal is to improve the educational opportunities of 4-6-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds by fostering the children's cognitive and language development as well as aspects of their socio-emotional development (curiosity, problem solving, task orientation and enjoying learning). Para-professionals, recruited from the programme's target groups, visit the families and there are regular group meetings. The materials cover a period of two years. The programme has a clear, fixed structure. Number of participants in 1996/1997: 6,459.
- 6 *Overstap* - This programme aims at improving the reading levels of 6-7-year-old children. The children practise at home with their parents what they have learned at school. Words and concepts taught at school are repeated in a variety of playful contexts. Oral language proficiency is improved by reading aloud stories to parents. The programme is offered by schools and teachers in the home language. Initially, the programme was only open to schools with at least 20% ethnic minority children. Since 1996/1997 all interested schools may buy the programme. In 1996/1997 the programme reached about 10,000 children.
- 7 *Stap Door!* - This programme is meant for pupils in primary year 4 at schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged children. It aims at improving the reading comprehension and social skills of these children through tutoring by older children (11-12 years) from the same school.

Parents are also involved. In 1996/1997 the programme was still experimental and reached 1,850 children. Many schools are on a waiting list to join the programme.

- 8 *Stap rond* - This programme is based on the Turkish Mother Enrichment programme. The aim is to inform mothers about the education of their children and to increase their educating skills. It is delivered by para-professional workers. 240 mothers participated in 1996/1997.
- 9 *Stap In* - This is a programme to enable parents to choose between provision for young children in the neighbourhood or municipality. The target groups are parents who are not familiar with child development programmes or parent support programmes.
- 10 *Pyramid and Kaleidoscope* - These are experimental programmes commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport and the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science in response to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Pre-school Education. Kaleidoscope is based on the American High Scope programme for disadvantaged 3–6-year-olds in pre-school playgroups and primary schools. The programme seeks to promote children's development through active learning. Pyramid is based on Robert Slavin's *Success for All* programme and seeks to stimulate children in all areas of development. It is partially structured and makes use of tutoring methods. The programmes both aim to reduce educational disadvantages. They are monitored by the Committee on Pre-school and Early School Education. An external evaluation has been taking place since the programmes were started.
- 11 *Boekenpret* (fun with books) - This is a centre-based and home-based reading promotion programme for disadvantaged children aged 3 months to 6 years. The children and their parents are reached through early childhood health care centres, child care centres, pre-school playgroups, libraries and primary schools. Many activities are co-ordinated by libraries. The development of the programme was sponsored by the Dutch Reading Foundation. In 1998 over 7,000 children participated.
- 12 *KEM* ('pre-school children and multi-lingualism') - This programme has been developed for Turkish and Moroccan children aged 0–4 years in child care centres, their parents and staff. It aims to improve home language and Dutch language proficiency. The experiences of staff are central to the programme (NIZW).
- 13 *Speel* - Based on the English Effective Early Learning project, this project aims to strengthen the pedagogical qualities of pre-school playgroups. Playgroup staff conduct a self-evaluation of their work in pre-set stages. The programme is still experimental, but expanding to a growing number of municipalities.

Parent support programmes

- 14 *Opvoeden zó* - An adaptation of the American programme 'Winning', this programme consists of five or six meetings with parents of 3–12-year-old children about child-rearing. A special version of the programme has been developed for ethnic minority parents. The programme is semi-structured and uses video material. Professionals of easily accessible provision, such as staff of childcare centres, district nurses and teachers, run the programme. A follow-up to the programme with three or four additional group meetings has been developed, focusing on how to deal with problem behaviour of children.

- 15 *Families First* - In this programme a 'family helper' provides intensive support for 15 hours per week to families in a serious crisis situation. The objective is to keep the family together and prevent children from being placed outside the home.
- 16 *Moeders informeren moeders* ('Mothers inform mothers') - In this programme, first-time mothers are visited once a month for 18 months by an experienced mother from the same neighbourhood. The focus is on questions about child-rearing and care.
- 17 *Wij moeders* (We, mothers) - In this programme, para-professionals ('go-between mothers') invite about six mothers for a meeting and discuss child-related issues relevant to the mothers themselves. The programme is run in areas with little social cohesion.
- 18 *Home Start* - Volunteers offer support, friendship and help to families with young children.

Plus-functions

- 1 *Crèche-plus* - A provision offering care for groups of 2–4-year-old children of parents with (temporary) serious problems. This provision is situated somewhere between childcare and youth care provision.
- 2 *GGD-plus* - This is a service of Municipal Health Services (GGDs), consisting of information meetings for groups of Turkish and Moroccan mothers of children aged 0-2 years. The meetings are conducted in the mothers' home language and address issues related to health and child-rearing.
- 3 *Stop* (Parent support) - These are easily accessible information and counselling agencies, based on co-operation between several organisations with expertise in supporting parents. This service is meant for parents with educational problems that are not too serious.

Other

- 4 *Buurtnetwerken Jeugdhulpverlening* (Neighbourhood Networks for Youth Welfare) - These are small-scale networks of people who work with the children and youngsters in the neighbourhood on a daily basis. There are networks of this kind in many Dutch municipalities. The aim is to spot problems at an early stage, to find a response to these problems and to develop an appropriate strategy for solving them. Participants in these networks are usually teachers, staff of childcare centres, physicians, social workers, nurses, school counsellors and police officers. Network meetings are organised once or twice a month. Participants discuss the problems they have encountered and try to find a solution. Both new and familiar problems are discussed. Indications of problems seem to be most frequently brought up for discussion by primary school teachers. The types of family problems that are discussed most often are: social isolation, drug addiction and crime, situations of neglect and maltreatment, and problems related to housing or money. The most frequently discussed problems related to children are: emotional and behavioural problems, suspicion of maltreatment or incest, incapacity of the parents to provide education and neglect. (Tilanus, 1997).

Appendix 5

Youth Care

Youth care is meant for children and young people who experience problems or shortcomings in their upbringing and growth towards maturity. In youth care several sectors co-operate, i.e. voluntary care, mental health care and child protection. Currently, care for youth with a slight mental handicap is also considered part of youth care. Youth care is organised on a regional basis, with provinces and the three metropolitan areas having responsibility for providing a coherent supply of youth care services. Youth care has Front Offices on a regional basis that are responsible for the registration of clients, pre-diagnosis, providing non-intensive help, diagnosis, indication, referral, placement and case management (De Savornin Lohman, 1998 and Clarijs, 1997).

Curative and preventive care

Regional youth care is sometimes described as '(specialised) curative care', as opposed to (general) preventive care. Municipalities are responsible for policy and provision in the area of local, preventive youth care – as part of their supervisory role in local preventive youth policy. Regional curative care is linked to preventive youth policy at the local level. Relevant links with preventive youth policy for 0–6-year-olds include: parent support, childcare, physical and public health care and local educational policy.

Access to youth care

Access to youth care is channelled per region through a front office: the Youth Care Office. People can turn to the Youth Care Office for referral and assessment. "The Accessibility Project Group - set up by the Direction in General Youth Care Steering Group - has identified and defined the functions ranging from diagnosis and assessment to allocation and placement. The regionally based Youth Care Office, which is intended to improve access to general youth care and to assume its co-ordination, will adopt these functions. Such offices opened in all regions of the country during the first months of this year" (De Savornin Lohman, 1998).

A principle in youth care is the 'as-as-as-as-principle': care should be given as near to home as possible in a form that is as non-intensive as practicable, during a period that is as short as feasible and should commence as early as possible. In practice this means, for instance, that if a child has been placed in foster care, all the other possibilities are (or have appeared to be) insufficient. In other words, non-intensive community-based preventive services are more common than the more intensive forms such as foster care.

Voluntary youth care

The facilities for young children in this field are foster care and medical child day-care centres. Facilities for foster care offer children admittance into foster homes and support children, foster parents and (step)parents in parenting and care. Medical child day-care centres accommodate young children whose development is threatened by disturbances caused by a combination of physical or mental and social factors. These centres offer multi-disciplinary care and have their own educational facilities for older children.

Youth protection

Youth protection includes all legal forms of intervening in family situations in cases where there is a serious threat to a child involved. "This is the case when:

- a child is mentally or physical abused or neglected by his/her parents
- there are serious conflicts between a child and his/her environment, or a child is in danger
- a minor seriously or repeatedly commits a criminal offence
- parental authority is missing" (Clarijs, 1997).

The intervening child protection organisations are: the regional Boards for Child Care and Protection and agencies for foster care. These agencies prepare the placement of a child into a foster home and they are the main bodies for recruiting and selecting foster homes. These agencies also carry out court orders to place parents under guardianship.

The Child Care and Protection Boards are public bodies, which come directly under the Ministry of Justice. The board, among other things, advises the juvenile court judge in cases of divorce or other events in which a major change takes place in the care of children. The board also advises the public prosecutor in juvenile criminal cases. The board supervises foster homes as well. These organisations are not allowed to intervene in family situations without the approval of the Magistrate in a juvenile court. The Magistrate in a juvenile court can take three measures:

- 1 to place the parents/caregivers under supervision (parents have limited say);
- 2 to take away parental rights (parents lose say, but remain liable for support);
- 3 to deprive parents of their parental rights (i.e. parents lose all say).

Mental youth health care

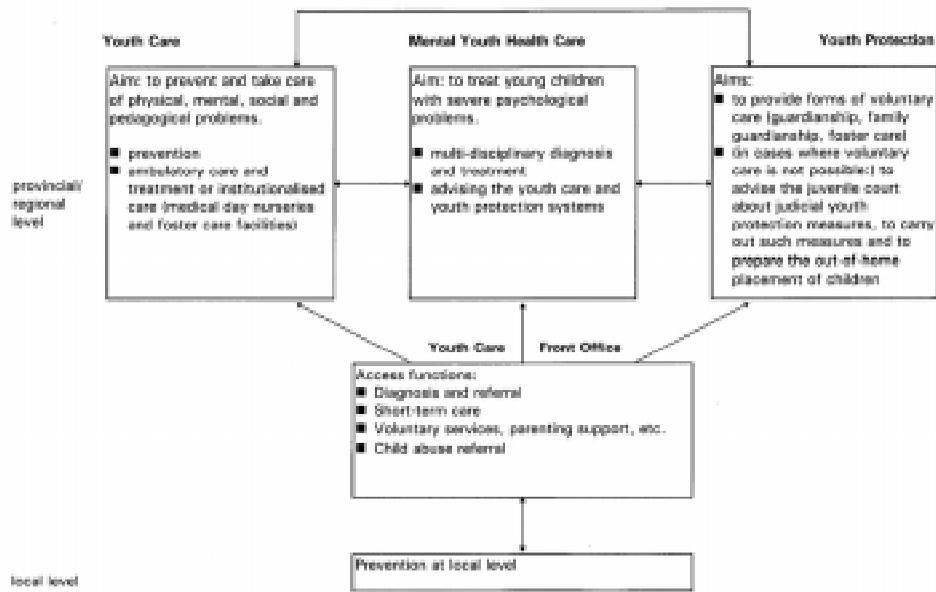
Youth health care within the framework of specialised youth care is mental health care⁹. This type of care is provided by two types of provision:

- RIAGG's (regional institutions for ambulatory mental health care) help children with psychiatric and psycho-social problems, such as phobic fears, depressions, neurosis, psychosis, etc. Clients generally live at home, in a foster family or in a foster home.
- KJP's (psychiatric clinics for children and youth) cater to children with serious personality or behaviour disorders. The children are accommodated in groups (leefgroepen). Admission can be both voluntary and involuntary.

Both facilities are financed by the General Act on Exceptional Medical Expenses (AWBZ). "Although these facilities do not fall under the Youth Care Act, they are recognised as 'placing organisations'" (Clarijs, 1997).

An extensive network

The field of general youth care consists of an extensive network of players and provision at different levels for the care of children and young people. The following scheme shows this network:



Glossary

Averroès Stichting (Averroès Foundation)

National subsidised institution that develops and implements child development and parent support programmes for the 0–7 age group.

basisschool (primary school)

The 'basisschool' includes the former nursery school and old-style primary school and caters to children from 4–12 years; attendance is compulsory from age 5; formal reading instruction and arithmetic starts in primary year (group) 3 (age 7).

brede school (broad-based school)

School providing, in addition to its regular teaching task, a range of services to the neighbourhood community (library, sports and other leisure activities, training courses for children and adults); the additional activities take place after school and involve co-operation with volunteers and professionals.

buitenschoolse opvang (out-of-school care)

Provision where children - generally of working parents - can stay before school, during lunch hours, and after school. Provides childcare during school holidays.

bureau jeugdzorg (youth care office)

Regional front office to which young people in need can turn for assessment and referral to a specialised youth care agency.

buurtmoeders (para-professionals)

Mothers who assist in the implementation of home-based intervention programmes; after a short training course, the mothers provide support to the families participating in the programme; the para-professionals usually come from the same ethnic background as the parents they support.

consultatiebureau (early childhood health care centres / clinics)

Local, area-based centres that monitor the development of children aged 0–4 years and offer vaccinations; they also inform and advise parents about general health and developmental issues, nutrition and child-rearing pedagogic matters.

gastouderopvang (family day-care services)

Provision where a person (family day-carer) looks after someone else's child either at the home of the family day-carer or the home of the child; this service is co-ordinated and supervised by a professional agency.

GGD (municipal health care centre)

Municipal institution that monitors the health and development of citizens, including children (from age 4 on).

Halve-dag opvang (half-day childcare) childcare provision for children aged between six weeks and 4 years, open at least 5 hours a day on weekdays (half-day); this provision is intended for children of working mothers.

Hele-dagopvang (day childcare centres) childcare provision for children aged between six weeks and 4 years, open on weekdays for 8 or more hours continuously; this provision is intended for children of working mothers.

Kaderwet Arbeid & Zorg (Framework Act Labour & Care)

Legislation proposed by the new government, intended to enhance the possibilities for all citizens (men and women) to combine work with the care of children

kinderopvang (childcare)

General term referring to all types of provision and services where parents can bring their children to be looked after by adults; such services may also be provided by schools outside school hours.

kleuterschool (nursery school)

see: basisschool

lokaal onderwijs achterstanden beleid (local educational disadvantage policy)

Local educational policy, devised by the municipal authorities (following consultation with school boards), aimed at reducing educational disadvantages.

medische kinderdagverblijven - MKD's (medical children's homes)

Day-care centres for children with severe developmental problems or family problems .

Nederlands Instituut voor Zorg en Welzijn - NIZW (Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare)

National subsidised institution providing support to agencies working in the fields of care and to welfare agencies; the NIZW also develops parent support programmes

onderwijsraad (Education Council)

Permanent advisory body that may make recommendations on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister of Education. There are a large number of cases prescribed by law in which the Minister must consult the Education Council; the tasks of the Council include advising the Minister about the broad outline of educational policy and legislation and advising municipal councils about local education policy.

ontwikkelingsstimulerings programma (child (development) programme)
Intervention programme aimed at promoting the development of children.

opvoedingsondersteuning (parenting support)
Support for parents aimed at helping them to raise and educate their children.

Onderwijs Voorrangs Beleid - OVB (Educational Priority Policy programme)
Previous national policy programme aimed at reducing educational disadvantages. Under this policy programme, schools received additional staff and funding, depending on the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in their school population. In Educational Priority Areas schools and other institutions combined forces to combat disadvantages. The OVB has been succeeded by the 'local educational disadvantage policy' (lokaal onderwijs achterstanden beleid)

peuterspeelzaal (pre-school playgroup)
Childcare provision intended to offer children a place where they can play together, to foster their development and to prepare them for primary school; playgroups are supervised by playgroup leaders (peuterspeelzaalleidster).

peuterspeelzaalleidster (playgroup leader)
Person in charge of a group of children in a pre-school playgroup centre.

regeerakkoord (coalition agreement)
Document in which the government outlines its policy intentions for the coming period of government (four years).

RIAGG (regional institute for mental health care)
National network of regional institutes that provide ambulatory mental health care for all citizens, including young children. Most RIAGG's have a separate children & youth department. RIAGG's also have preventive tasks.

Sardes Educational Services
National non-subsidised agency providing a range of services (e.g. consultancy, project management, development work) in the fields of education and welfare.

schoolbegeleidingsdienst (school advisory office)
Subsidised regional service providing support, advice and training to schools.

steunpunt opvoedingsondersteuning (regional front office for parent support)
Regional service for parents with questions about child-rearing and education; the aim is to offer a service where parents and children can ask questions of any kind without first having to find out what agency would be able to help them. The front office may help clients on the spot or may refer them to a specialised agency.

Stimuleringsmaatregel Kinderopvang (Childcare Incentive Scheme)

National scheme launched in 1990 to increase the number of places in childcare through financial contributions and tax measures encouraging municipal authorities, employers and parents to create or make use of child places in formal day-care provision.

stimuleringsprogramma (development programmes)

See: ontwikkelingsstimuleringsprogramma.

Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten - VNG (Union of Netherlands Municipalities)

National body that acts as intermediary between central government and municipalities; the VNG also develops instruments to assist municipalities in local policy making.

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Notes

- ¹ In the remainder of this report the abbreviation ECEC will be used for Early Childhood Education and Care.
- ² The Netherlands is one of the twelve countries participating in the review between 1998 and 2000. The others are Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Netherlands was the first country to be visited by a review team.
- ³ Education at a glance. OECD indicators 1998. Ministry of OC&W, Zoetermeer, 1998.
- ⁴ Parent/family involvement in ECEC policy should not be confused with parent/family involvement in ECEC services and programmes. In many parenting support and educational support programmes, the active involvement of parents is central to the programme. In that context the parents/families are part of the client system, they are the 'object' of the services offered, and they are not seen as 'co-producers' of these services.
- ⁵ This committee was installed by the State Secretary for Education, Culture & Science in February 1996 to make recommendations about class sizes in primary education.
- ⁶ Primary School Teacher Training College
- ⁷ There are special schools for children with a hearing impairment, children with severe speech disorders, visually handicapped children, physically handicapped children, children in hospitals, chronically sick children, children with moderate learning difficulties, children with severe learning difficulties, severely maladjusted children, children with learning and behavioural difficulties, children in schools attached to pedagogical institutes, children with multiple handicaps, and pre-school children with developmental problems.
- ⁸ The term 'ambulatory' refers to services that are not residential or semi-residential.
- ⁹ Other forms of health care, such as physical and public health care, are part of local health care.

