

Enhancing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Project Methodology

To deliver the expected outputs, the “Enhancing Quality in ECEC” project will undertake specific tasks in four phases:

Phase I: Developing the Knowledge Base (Q2 2010 – Q2 2011)

Phase I will aim to establish a solid knowledge base on quality in ECEC, building on existing work and research on quality. The knowledge base will include most relevant policy options that will encourage quality and factors that affect quality. It also aims to lay out the project’s analytical and logistical framework. This phase will undertake three tasks:

Stock-taking of definitions of quality and quality indicators

The purpose of this exercise is to develop some core systemic indicators that would apply regardless of the system and other indicators that might be more specific to programmes and delivery methods. This exercise will start by examining the quality indicators, certain requirements, minimum standards that are in use but will relate them to the different ways in which ECEC is delivered in countries. Quality would be defined by positive and large effects of system indicators on child outcomes. An analytical framework would be developed for this.

Literature review on “what works in raising quality in ECEC” and statistical analysis

This exercise will identify policies and factors that may affect quality in child outcomes within the defined framework. This will include a review of ECEC policy evaluations in the field, longitudinal studies, certain requirements for quality, practices in ECEC to enhance child outcomes for 21st century skills, *etc.* This will also include statistical analysis using international data and/or national data to examine the effect of participating in ECEC on child outcomes in later stages of life.

Country questionnaire and country responses

To streamline the data and information collection process, this project will focus on asking questions focusing on “policy implementation” while “statistical data on quality” will be collected through the exercise of the Network’s updating country profile and the DELSA’s Child Database. The project will also draw on findings from the Network meetings. For example, the 5th Network meeting already provided country experiences that identify challenges, factors at play and policy tools to achieve the goal to **“improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff”**.

Phase II: Developing the Policy Tool Box (Q3 2010 – Q2 2011)

Phase II will aim to translate and transform the knowledge base into a box of practical policy tools for policy makers. There are two main outputs of the project in this phase:

- Output 1: Policy Tool Box
- Output 2: Country-specific policy profile

Phase III: Policy Forum(s) (Q1 2011 - Q2 2011)

In each country that opts for a policy forum, one or more forums can be organised in the country. In some countries quality in ECEC, in part or in whole, often falls under regional rather than national level responsibility. Subject to the approval of national authorities, it may make sense for the region(s) rather

than a country to participate in the exercise and be the subject of policy forum(s). The number will depend on the decision of the national and, if relevant, regional governments.

The forum would be developed in conjunction with the authorities (national and, if relevant, regional governments). As mentioned earlier, specific objectives, the expected role of the OECD in forums, and expected outputs will be suggested by the country and be mutually agreed by the Secretariat.

In this phase, the OECD will aim to work with individual countries in collaboratively analysing policy design and implementation. This collaboration would include the major stakeholders, recognising that their involvement is critical to both finding the best policy design and getting the buy-in necessary for successful implementation. There is one major output of the project in this phase:

- Output 3: The policy forum(s) and the summary of the forum(s)

Step 1: Planning with Country

The country and the OECD will mutually agree on the focus (key policy issue) of policy dialogue, target stakeholders, logistics and timeline. Countries are expected to clarify country context (political dimensions, stakeholder involvement, *etc*) to make the forum(s) most useful, relevant and politically pitched at the right level.

The OECD will: i) conduct a preparatory country visit and carry out a needs assessment with the country; ii) resent the OECD's country-specific policy profile for the country; iii) prepare a policy forum strategy plan, based on the agreed focus and timeline.

Step 2: Conducting one or more policy forums

Each forum would typically be a two-day event with a maximum of around 100 participants (the details to be mutually agreed with the country). Some countries may wish to hold only one policy forum, while others may wish to hold more than one, aiming to build consensus or establish networks at different levels (national or state), with different target groups (policymakers, kindergarten/centre owners, researchers unions, *etc*), or conduct repeat events to widen coverage and include more participants.

Step 3: Delivering a post-forum summary

The OECD would prepare a summary of the discussions at the forum(s). Depending on the different needs and contexts of the country concerned, the nature of the summary may vary. It can be an objective summary record of the forums; a list of agreed principles, priorities and action plans among stakeholders; an OECD's assessment on implementation; the OECD assessment on priorities to tackle for the country; *etc*.

Phase IV: Roundtable and synthesis (Q3 2011 – Q4 2011)

Phase IV aims to take stock of individual country experiences with policy forum(s) and analyse what are the success factors and obstacles in implementing policies to raise quality in ECEC. Countries that did not carry out policy forums are also invited to participate to share their country experiences in policy implementation in this area. The major output of the project in this phase:

- Output 4: Round table discussion on implementation

The discussion can be synthesised into a short publication or a proceeding of the meeting if ample country examples are shared from which general lessons are drawn that are beneficial for all countries.