Introduction to the 9th Meeting of the OECD Network on ECEC: Family and Community Engagement

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The 9th Meeting of the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care, 4-5 July 2011
Objectives

- Set the scene for the experts’ presentations and for the discussions in breakout sessions (Item 5 and 6)

- Introduce the findings on “family and community engagement” – one of the policy levers of the Quality Policy Toolbox (Remaining levers to be introduced in Item 8)
Outline

1. Scope, definitions, and types of family and community engagement
2. What is at stake? Some food for thought?
3. What does research say – about its effects
4. What is the international overview?
5. What challenges are countries facing? What strategies are countries using to tackle the challenges?
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Scope

Family engagement
• Parents, siblings and other family members
• But our focus is “parental engagement”

Community engagement
• Neighbours
• But we will also include NGOs, private foundations, faith organisations, child and youth organisations, etc.

Definitions

Family engagement
• Formal and informal relations that parents have with ECEC services

Community engagement
• Formal and informal forms of input and contributions between communities and ECEC services
Types of engagement

*Child-focused*
- Communicating
- Parenting
- Stimulating child development at home

*Centre-focused*
- Volunteering
- Decision making
- Collaborating
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Amount of time children spend with their families and neighbors and **types of interactions** with them have changed along with....

- Changing family structures
- Increasing maternal employment
- Increasing immigration
- Increasing child poverty
- Etc.

**Some food for thought.....**
Falling fertility rates - smaller family compositions

Notes: 2007 for Belgium and Canada; 2008 for Australia, Germany, Greece, and Iceland.
Getting marriage at an older age – older parents
Age at first marriage 2008

Note: * Data refers to 2007 for Italy, France and Belgium; 2006 for Ireland, Spain and Switzerland.
Increasing immigrant populations
– more immigrant parents

Note: International migrants are defined as individuals whose country of birth is not that in which they reside.

For better economies, more maternal employment is encouraged.

- Formal/informal care & out of school hours care services
- Parental leave entitlements
- Flexible and equal employment opportunities and benefits for women

Maternal Employment Rates per Age of Youngest Child:

Data on employment rates is available on the OECD is available at www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database
For children under age 3, on average 30% of children are enrolled in ECEC services.


Source: OECD Family Database, May 2011.
For children at age 3, on average about 50% children are enrolled in ECEC services.
For children at age 5, on average around 90% of children are enrolled in ECEC services.

Source: OECD Family Database, May 2011.
Percentage of children aged 3-5 enrolled in out-of-school-hours care services

Source: National Authorities from OECD Family Database, January 2011.
Parent’s position in raising children is changing. Questions:

• **What is the role of public policy? To what extent should ECEC policy respond to these changes?**

• **What returns can we expect with the intervention focusing on family and community engagement?**

• **On “family and community engagement”, what are the challenges in governance, funding and coordination (Item 5) and in implementation (item 6) for effective family and community engagement?**
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Parental engagement is important.....

- *For parents*: a fundamental right and obligation for parents
- *For staff*: partnership with parents
- *For child*: later academic success, social development and adaptation in society.

Community engagement is important...

- *As a connector*: families, ECEC and other services for children
- *As a social network*: support parents in reducing stress & making smart choices
- *As part of an enabling mechanism* for social cohesion, mutual trust and social control
What aspects matter most?

- Home learning environment

**Impact of home learning environment (HLE) on English and Mathematics attainment at age 11**

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<th>Mathematics</th>
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• Parenting and parental knowledge about child development

• Better communication and strategic partnership between parents, communities and ECEC services

• Strategic partnership with wider communities
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Involving parents in the decision-making bodies is the most typical strategy

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## Similar trends for community engagement

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Parental engagement

Challenge 1: Lack of awareness and motivation

*Strategy options*

• Making family engagement a policy priority, an obligation or right
• Engaging parents in evaluating ECEC services
• Etc...

Challenge 2: Communication and outreach

*Strategy options*

• Using written forms of dissemination
• Creating a central information contact point
• Etc...
Challenge 3: Time constraints

*Strategy options*

- Changing the regulations on operational hours
- Guiding ECEC centers to make flexible times for contacts and communication
- Etc...

Challenge 4: increasing inequity

*Strategy options*

- Providing home visits
- Providing parenting training
- Etc. ..
Community engagement

Challenge 1: Lack of awareness and motivation

*Strategy options*

- Providing financial resources to engaged communities
- Encouraging private foundations to support ECEC services
- Etc...

Challenge 2: Communication and outreach

*Strategy options*

- Training staff on how to engage communities
- Encouraging ECEC centres to meet with community members
- Etc...
Challenge 3: Dysfunctional communities

Strategy options

• Developing community childcare centres in the target areas
• Targeting low socio-economic neighborhoods
• Etc.

Challenge 4: Cooperation with other services and other levels of education

Strategy options

• Encouraging cooperation between ECEC and primary school
• Bridging between ECEC centres and different community services
• Etc.