



Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON: MINIMUM STANDARDS

Findings

- Minimum standards are generally set for structural quality indicators, such as staff-child ratio and indoor and outdoor space. Different standards are often set for different ECEC settings or different age groups of children.

Staff-child ratio

- Children in kindergarten and preschool (or children in the older age bracket¹) tend to have less staff per child than those in care centres (or children in the age category zero to three²) (Figure 1). This goes well with the research finding that closer supervision and care matter more for younger children than older ones (see “Research Brief: Minimum Standards Matter”).
- Across 19 OECD countries³, on average, it is regulated that a kindergarten or preschool staff member can have, at most, 18 children; while a child care staff member, on average, can have only seven children at most in a child care centre.
- Family or domestic care services tend to be regulated with stricter staff-child ratios than kindergarten/preschool or child care centres, and there is little data available on family day care. The average ratio, among the countries with available data, is five children per staff (Figure 2).

Space per child

- In general, indoor space requirements are largest for family day care, followed by child care centres and kindergarten/preschool (Figure 3). The OECD average for regulated indoor space per child is set at 2.9m² per child for kindergarten/preschool, while it is 3.6m² for care centres. The OECD average outdoor space requirement per child is 7m² in kindergarten, while it is 8.9m² in child care (Figures 4).
- A wider range can be found across countries for outdoor than indoor requirements for both kindergarten and childcare centres.

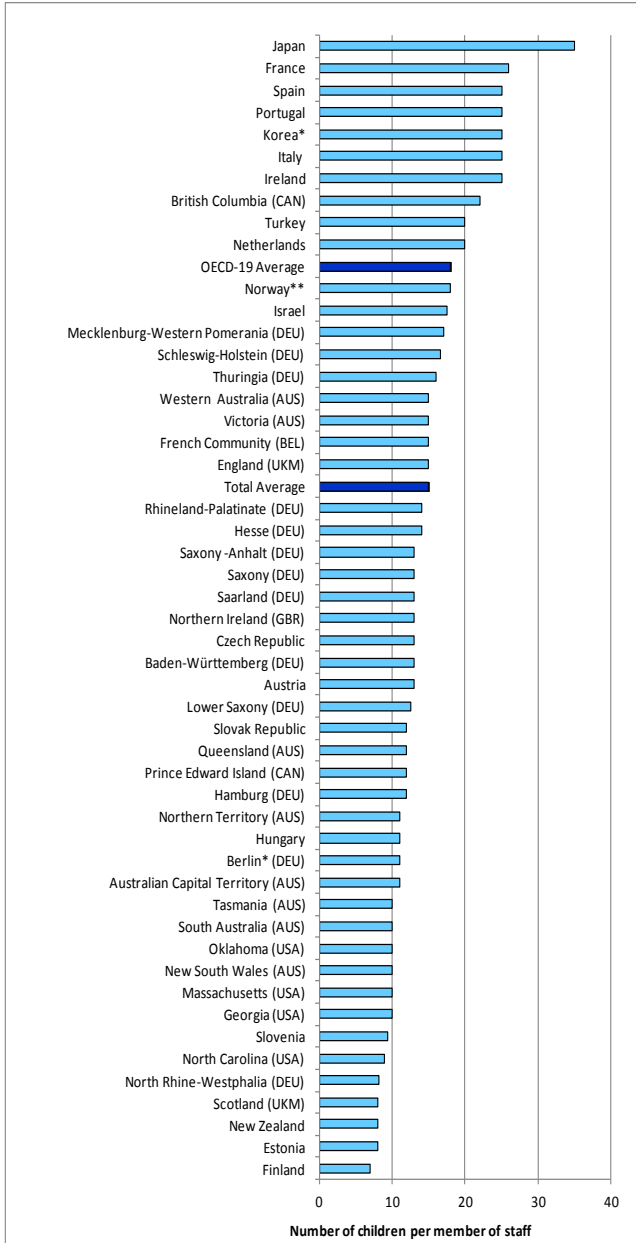
¹ When referring to kindergarten or preschool in countries with an integrated ECEC system, data refers to the children in the older age bracket of ECEC, *i.e.*, children from the age of three to the age that primary schooling starts (unless indicated otherwise).

² When referring to child care in countries with an integrated ECEC system, data refers to the children in the youngest age group of ECEC, usually zero-to-three-year-olds (unless indicated otherwise).

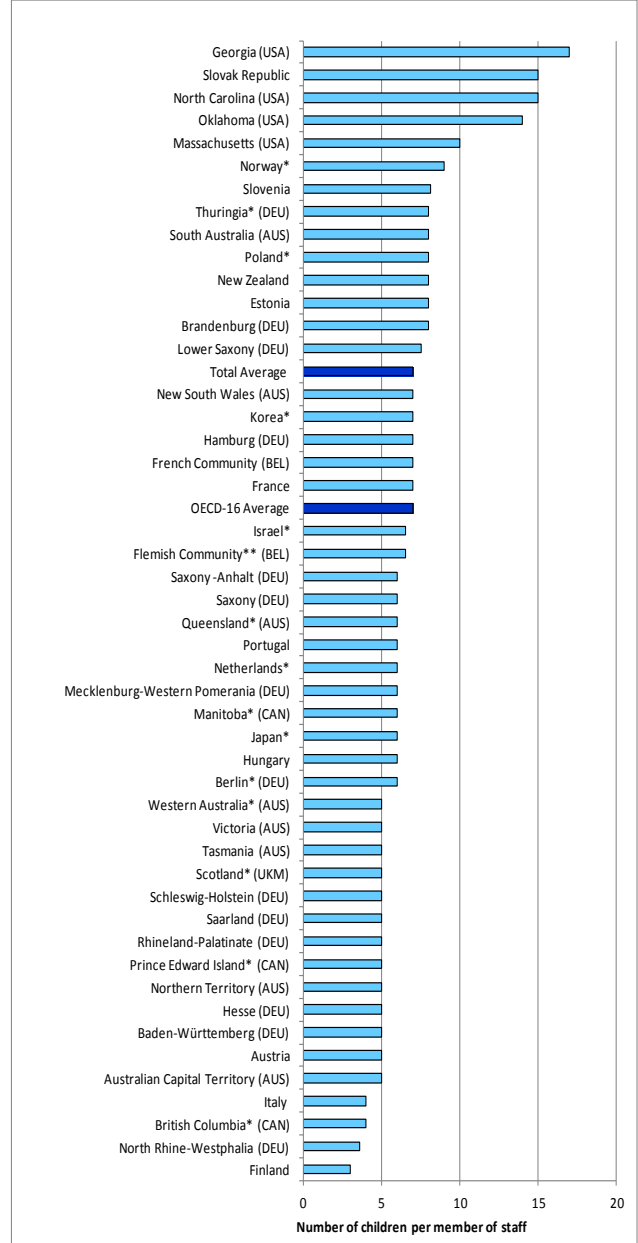
³ OECD averages are only based on data reported for OECD countries in the respective figures, excluding regions and territories. Data from jurisdictions and regions, as well as countries, are included in the Total Average.

Figure 1. Regulated maximum number of children per staff member in ECEC

Panel A: In kindergarten or preschool (three years to compulsory schooling age for integrated systems)



Panel B: In child care (zero-to-three-year-olds for integrated systems)



* Jurisdictions with separate regulations for staff-child ratio for different age groups, the data given is based on: 3-6-year-olds attending for 5-7 hours per day regarding Berlin; and 4-year-olds regarding Korea.

** The figure for Norway applies only to qualified kindergarten teachers, whereas regulation stipulates that if other staff will also be present in the kindergarten setting, the number of children per member of staff is effectively lower. The figure for Norway is based on regulation for 3-6-year-olds.

* Jurisdictions with separate regulations for different age groups, the data given is based on: Berlin (DEU), 2-3-year-olds (attending 5-7 hours per day); British Columbia (CAN), 0-3-year-olds; Israel, 2-3-year-olds; Japan, 1-2-year-olds (while the country has different ratios in place for different ages: the ratio for age 0 is 1:3; age 1-2, 1:6; age 3, 1:20; and age 4, 1:30 – only data regarding 1-2-year-olds is included in the figure); Korea, 2-year-olds; Manitoba (CAN), 2-3-year-olds; Netherlands, 2-3-year-olds; Norway, 0-3-year-olds; Prince Edward Island (CAN), 2-3-year-olds; Queensland (AUS) 2-3-year-olds; Scotland (UKM), 2-3-year-olds; Thuringia (DEU), 2-3-year-olds; Western Australia (AUS), 2-3-year-olds. For Poland, when there is a disabled child in the playroom, the ratio is set at 1:5.

**Subsidised facilities only

Note: Countries who reported averages for staff-child ratio instead of a minimum requirement in the Survey have not been included in the graphs, as averages do not constitute a regulated minimum requirement. When regulated ratios were indicated as maximum number per children per multiple staff members (e.g., 2:15), the number included in the figure has been calculated based on the maximum number of children for one member of staff (e.g., 2:15 has been re-calculated into 1:7.5).

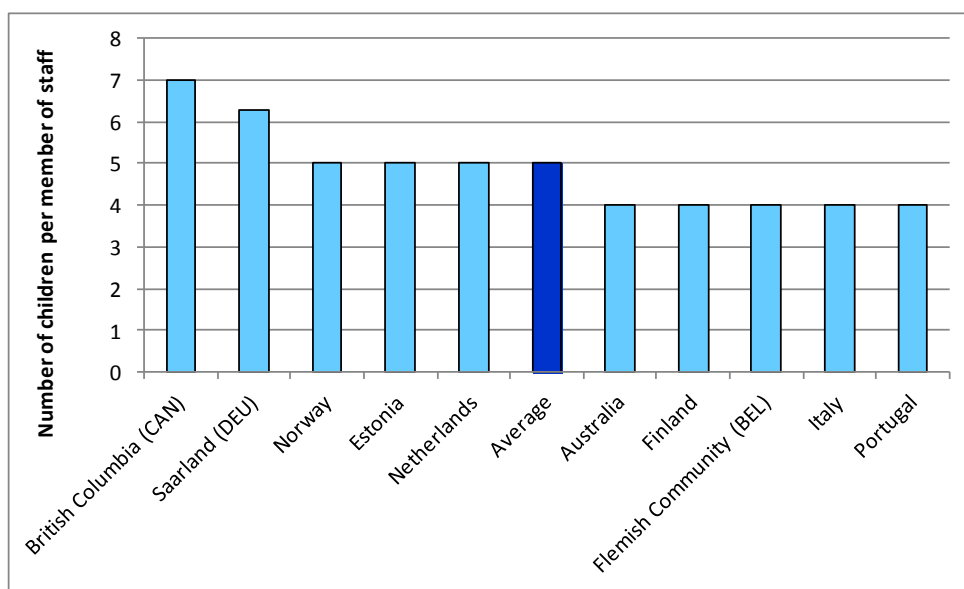
Note on Panel A: OECD-19 Average is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

Note on Panel B: OECD-16 Average is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Austria, Flemish Community (BEL), French Community (BEL), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

The Total Average is based on data for all countries and jurisdictions included in the respective figures.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care’s “Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal”, June 2011.

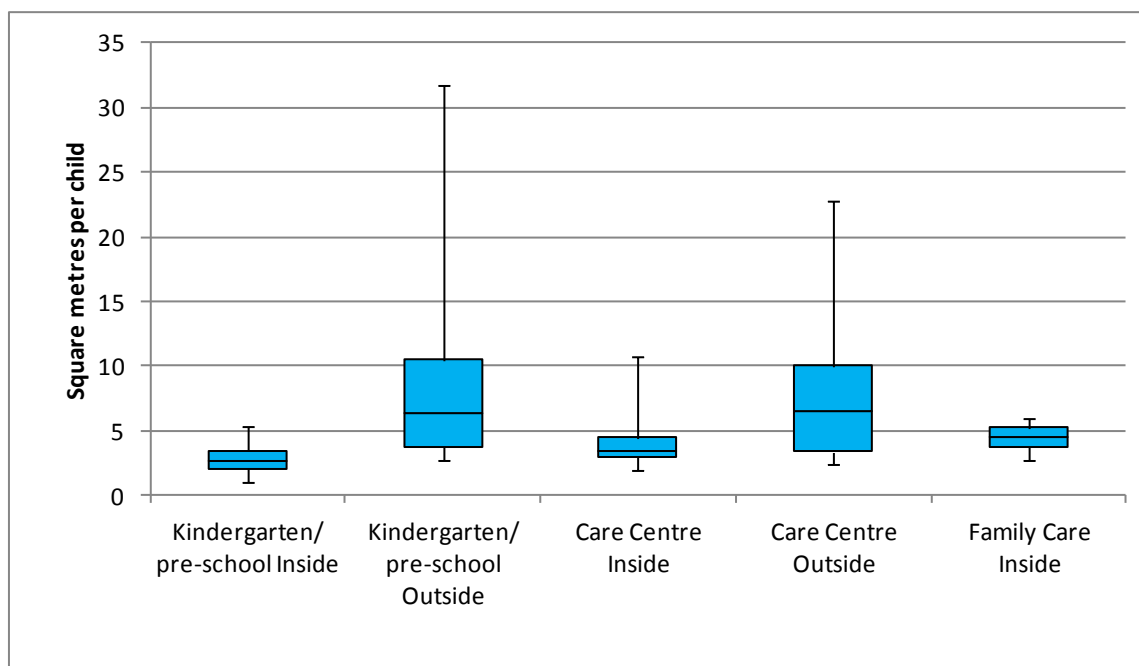
Figure 2: Regulated maximum number of children per caregiver in family or domestic care



Note: Countries who reported averages for staff-child ratio instead of a minimum requirement in the Survey have not been included in the graphs, as averages do not constitute a regulated minimum requirement. For Australia, the figure is based on the maximum number of children per caregiver in family day care for children below the compulsory schooling age. For the Flemish Community of Belgium, data regards subsidised Family Day Care Centres only.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care’s “Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal”, June 2011.

Figure 3. Minimum required space per child across different types of ECEC



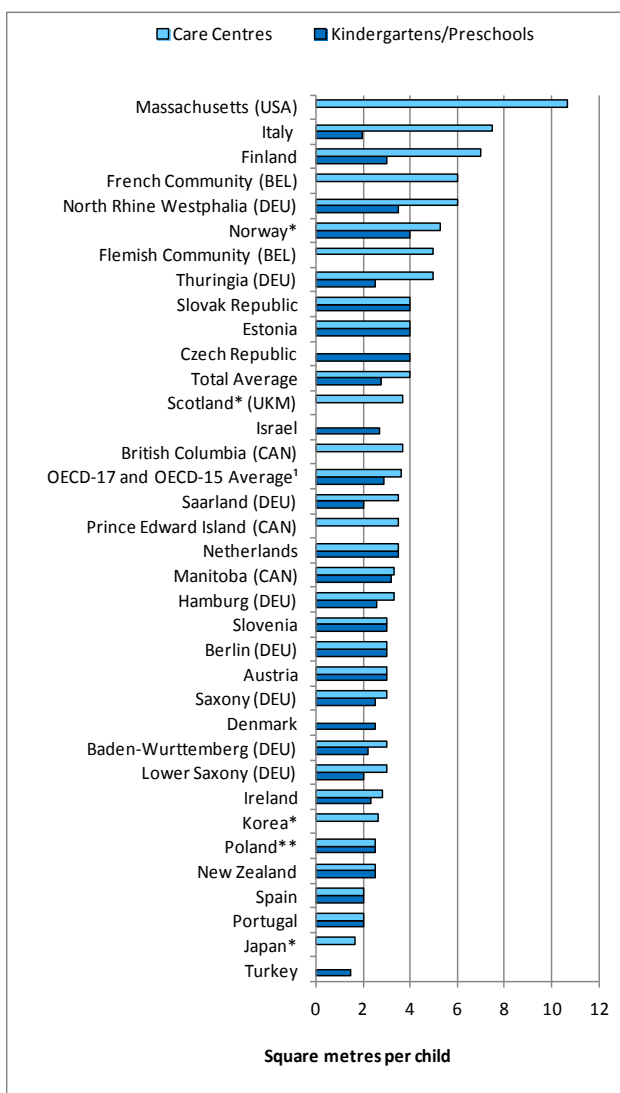
Note: Horizontal black lines mark the median value in minimum space; vertical black lines show the range (difference in smallest and largest value of minimum space requirement between countries). Reported averages in the Survey have not been included in the graphs, as they do not constitute a minimum requirement. Based on Survey responses from the following countries or regions:

- For Kindergartens Inside: Austria, Baden-Wurttemberg (DEU), Berlin (DEU), Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hamburg (DEU), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lower Saxony (DEU), Manitoba (CAN), Netherlands, New Zealand, North Rhine Westphalia (DEU), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Saarland (DEU), Saxony (DEU), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Thuringia (DEU) and Turkey.
- For Kindergartens Outside: Baden-Wurttemberg (DEU), Berlin (DEU), Czech Republic, Estonia, Israel, Italy, Lower Saxony (DEU), Netherlands, New Zealand, North Rhine-Westphalia (DEU), Norway, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Saarland (DEU), Saxony (DEU), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Thuringia (DEU) and Turkey.
- For Care Centres Inside: Austria, Baden-Wurttemberg (DEU), Berlin (DEU), British Columbia (CAN), Estonia, Finland, Flemish Community (BEL), French Community (BEL), Hamburg (DEU), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lower Saxony (DEU), Manitoba (CAN), Massachusetts (USA), Netherlands, New Zealand, North Rhine Westphalia (DEU), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Saarland (DEU), Saxony (DEU), Scotland (UKM), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Thuringia (DEU).
- For Care Centres Outside: Baden-Wurttemberg (DEU), Berlin (DEU), British Columbia (CAN), Flemish Community (BEL), Italy, Korea, Lower Saxony (DEU), Manitoba (CAN), Massachusetts (USA), Netherlands, New Zealand, North Rhine-Westphalia (DEU), Norway, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Saxony (DEU), Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Thuringia (DEU).
- For Family/Domestic Care: Estonia, French Community (BEL), Italy and Slovenia.

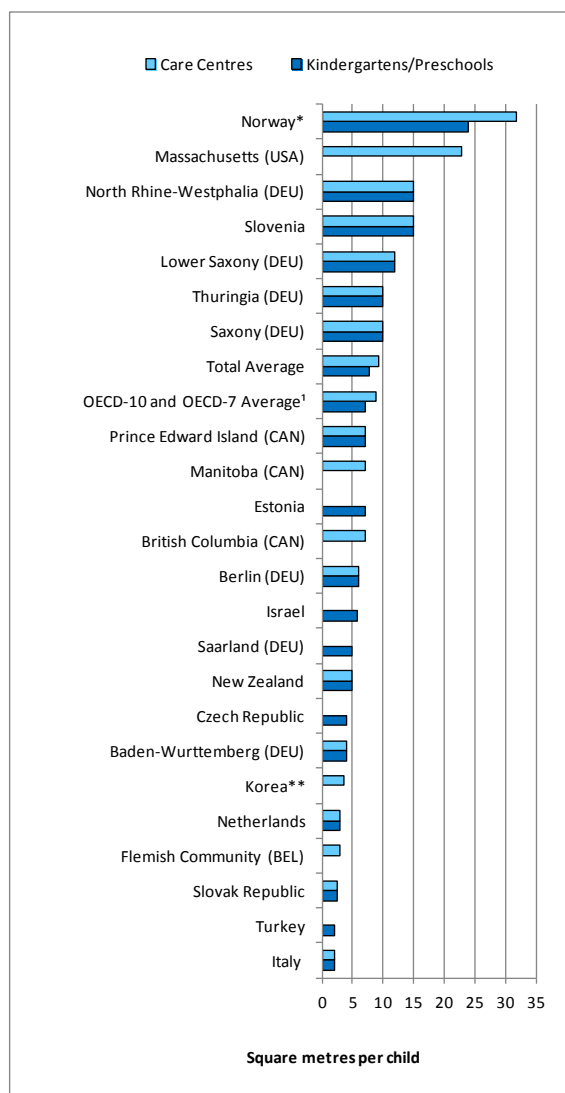
Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

Figure 4. Minimum space requirements as m² per child in kindergarten/preschool and childcare centre

Panel A: Indoor space requirements



Panel B: Outdoor space requirements



* Jurisdictions with separate regulation for different age groups, the data given is based on: Ireland, 1-2-year-olds for care; Japan's data regards infants only; Norway, 0-3-year-olds for care, and 3-6-year-olds for kindergarten; Scotland 0-3-year-olds.

** In Poland, the indoor space requirement for Care Centres and Kindergarten Points/Centres for a maximum of 5 children is set at 16m². For each additional child, the minimum indoor space requirement is 2.5m² per child. Kindergartens have higher and more detailed standards for public buildings, around 2.5 to 3m².

¹ OECD-17 Average refers to indoor space requirements for kindergarten/preschool; OECD-15 Average refers to indoor space requirements for child care.

Note: Japan's indoor requirements are set at 1.65m² per child for toddlers and 1.98m² per child for infants. In addition, space for kindergarten is regulated as 180m² per class and number of classes x180+100m² if the number is more than 2. Since the indoor space for kindergartens depends on the number of classes, the country is not included in this figure for kindergarten.

* For Norway, the figure for care centres is based on regulation for 0-3-year-olds, whereas the kindergarten figure is for 3-6-year-olds. The minimum outdoor space requirement in Norway is six times the minimum requirement for indoor space.

** Korea has a set space requirement per child for care centres but employs a formula for regulating space in kindergartens; therefore, only a minimum requirement for care has been included in the figure.

¹ OECD-10 Average refers to outdoor space requirements for kindergarten; OECD-7 Average refers to outdoor space requirements in child care.

Note: Japan's minimum outdoor requirements depend on the number of classes, and the country is therefore not included in this figure. The regulation of outdoor space for child care is referential standards. For kindergarten, it is regulated by the number of classes. If it is one class, 320m²; two, 420m²; three classes or more, 400m² +80x (the number of classes-3).

Note: Reported averages in the Survey have not been included in the graphs, as they do not constitute a minimum requirement.

Note on Panel A: OECD-17 Average regarding indoor space requirements for kindergarten/preschool is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey. OECD-15 Average regarding indoor space requirements for child care is based on the following countries: Austria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain.

Note on Panel B: OECD-10 Average regarding outdoor space requirements for kindergarten/preschool is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Czech Republic, Estonia, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey. OECD-7 Average regarding outdoor door space requirements for child care is based on the following countries: Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey.

The Total Average is based on data for all countries and jurisdictions included in the respective figures.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

For more detail, see the Survey Response Table on "Minimum Quality Standards" (Excel file) in the online Quality Toolbox at www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood/toolbox.

Definitions and methodology

Minimum standards are often referred to as structural inputs that can enable "adequate" or "good enough" quality ECEC provisions. The data is broken down into three major types of ECEC and can be defined as follows:

- **Centre-based day-care:** encompasses all child care that is provided outside the home in licensed centres. The services provided can be full- or part-time and are most commonly referred to as nurseries, day care centres, *crèches*, playschools and parent-run groups. All respondents enrol children from the age of zero in centre-based care services.
- **Family day care:** is traditionally provided in a home setting. This can be at the childminder's home or at the child's own home where a qualified or registered childminder looks after the child. Among respondents, all family day care services begin at birth (0+ years), with the exceptions of Mexico and Norway, where child care is available from birth but where most children start attending day care at the age of one.
- **Preschool early education programmes (Kindergartens):** includes centre- or school-based programmes designed to meet the needs of children preparing to enter primary education. In most countries, these programmes include at least 50% educational content and are supervised by qualified staff. With the exception of countries with an integrated ECEC system such as Norway, New Zealand and Sweden, which provide integrated pedagogical settings covering age zero or one to compulsory schooling age, almost all respondents enrol only an older age bracket in kindergartens/preschools – usually from three or four years of age until compulsory primary schooling starts.

The findings presented here are based on data from the OECD Network on ECEC's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal" (2011) and on the OECD's desk-based research. For each graph and table, the countries or regions for which data is used are listed (if not presented in the graph).