Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

STRATEGIES TO TACKLE CHALLENGES IN ENGAGING FAMILIES IN ECEC

Challenge 1: Lack of awareness and motivation

Motivating parents to engage in the early childhood education and care of their children and encouraging centres to involve families is challenging due to a lack of awareness among parents, staff and centre management about the importance of parental involvement. In addition, there are insufficient incentives stimulating parents to become involved.

Making family engagement a policy priority, an obligation or right

- In **Finland**, parental engagement is included in different legislations. According to the Day Care Act, the objectives of day care are to support parents in raising their children and to promote children’s personal and balanced development together with their parents. The Basic Education Act, Section 3.1, mentions that “those providing education (including pre-primary education) shall co-operate with children’s parents”. In the *Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education* for six-year-olds, co-operation with parents is stated in Section 5.2 as an element of the curriculum which should be implemented in preschool. Parental engagement and partnership with parents are also highly raised issues in the *Finnish National Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care* (2005).

- In **Korea**, the Early Childhood Education Act (Article 5) and the Childcare Act (Article 6 through 11) stipulate parental involvement in the central and local ECEC policy committees and indicate that parents should be involved in these committees. Collaborating and communicating with parents are manifested as an important part of the quality assurance systems as well as pre- and in-service ECEC teacher trainings.

- In **Spain**, the participation of parents in schools and preschools is regulated by the Spanish Constitution of 1978 (Article 27.7). The Education Act 8 of 1985 also stipulates the right of parents to be involved in the planning of education of their children and in decision-making bodies. Preschools and schools are obliged to accept the involvement of parents in these activities. Additionally, the Act on Education of 2006 urges preschools and schools to promote participation of parents and staff in ECEC and education. The core curriculum for the second cycle of ECEC (pre-primary education for three-to-six-year-olds) also highlights the importance of parental engagement.

- The Child Care Act in the **Netherlands** requires all child care provisions to have a parent board. The board supports and monitors the quality in the provisions.
• In Slovenia, the Preschool Institutions Act states that preschools should implement parental involvement activities. It also defines the principals of parental involvement. Parents have the right to participate in planning the activities of preschool institutions and to participate actively in the centre’s educational activities. Parents also have a right to continuous information exchange with staff on the development of their child.

• Regulations in Flanders (Belgium) obligate child care facilities to have a policy in place that promotes parental participation. The regulations are less strict for independent (not subsidised) provisions than for publically subsidised centres. The new Child Care Decree (in development) will also make it compulsory for ECEC centres to provide parents the possibility to evaluate ECEC services.

• ECEC centres in the French Community of Belgium are legally obliged to give parents the opportunity to share their opinions and views on the centre’s care and educational provision. The board of directors of early childhood centres are also legally obliged to have parents and community members on the board. Moreover, the educational programme for child care providers emphasises the importance of engaging parents in ECEC.

• In Sweden and the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany), parents of children in preschools have a right to a minimum of one “development dialogue” per year in which ECEC staff discuss the development of the child with the parents. Parental engagement is also included as an aspect in Sweden’s Curriculum for the Preschool, which is a binding document.

• In Norway, to ensure opportunities for engagement and co-operation between kindergarten staff and parents, both the former 1975 and 1995 Kindergarten Acts and the current 2005 Kindergarten Act state that every kindergarten must have a parent council comprised of parent/guardians of all children in kindergarten and a parent-staff co-ordinating committee comprised of representatives of parents/guardians and staff so that each group is equally represented. The owner of the kindergarten can also be part of the committee. Parental engagement is integrated in the legislation through the purpose clause and the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens.

• Australia included parental engagement in their National Quality Standard Framework, obliging ECEC services to “form collaborative partnerships with parents and communities”.

• In Manitoba (Canada), under Manitoba Regulation 62/86, a child care centre is only eligible for grant funding if at least 20% of the membership on the board of directors is made up of parents or guardians of children in attendance at the centre. Therefore, publically funded child care centres are obliged by law to accept parents on the board of directors of their centre.

• Prince Edward Island (Canada) has made Parent Advisory Committees mandatory in all Early Years Centres. These committees provide direct input into the programmes and services being provided to their child and their family. Besides this, the holistic Early Learning Framework recognises parents as key in the overall health and well-being of their child.
- **Czech Republic** made family engagement part of their curriculum framework (*FEP*). The *FEP* states that the relationship between the school and the family should be based on mutual respect, understanding, helpfulness and co-operation. Teachers, therefore, should observe concrete needs of children and families and try to meet these needs. Besides this, parents have a legal right to be engaged in ECEC in the Czech Republic. Parents have a right to participate in school activities and be informed about them, and they have a right to be informed about the development of their child. Preschools also offer families advice on stimulation of child development.

- **Síolta**, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education in **Ireland**, includes "Parents and Families". The framework states that parents and families should be engaged in the early education of their children and that "valuing and involving parents and families requires a proactive partnership approach evidenced by a range of clearly stated, accessible and implemented processes, policies and procedures".

- In **Poland**, various regulations ensure family engagement in preschool education. According to the School Education Act, parents in kindergartens may form a Parents Board, which shall be involved in a variety of decision making and consultation processes connected to, among others, the budget and education programmes and selection of the director of the institution (a representative of the Parents Board participates in the election commission). The Parents Board has a right to give proposals and share its views on all issues relating to kindergarten with the authorities of kindergartens as well as with local municipalities. Parents may also participate in a Kindergarten Board. Additionally, according to the Core Curriculum, teachers are obliged to inform parents about the kindergarten's activities, curricula, children's development and ways to stimulate children's development. Teachers shall engage parents in educational processes and encourage them to take part in decision-making processes in kindergarten and to actively participate in the work of the facility.

*Providing public financial resources to involved parents*

- **Mexico** provides parent associations with public financial resources, which they can spend on quality improvement measures in ECEC centres, such as building an extra room or buying better study supplies. This improves the quality level of the services and strengthens the role of the parent associations in the community.

- **Japan** provides financial remuneration to stimulate the participation of members in the education management council of community schools. The council consists of parents and other community members.

- In **Australia**, community playgroups are generally initiated by parents or caregivers and are supported by state/territory playgroup associations, funded by the Australian government. The government also funds supported, locational and intensive playgroups for children and families from disadvantaged groups. The government's Parental and Community Engagement Program also supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait families and communities to reach into schools and education providers and develop partnerships to enhance children’s educational outcomes. Australia also remunerates parents who work as tutors in the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters. Parents currently participating in the home-based intervention programme are given financial incentives to become future tutors.
In the **United States**, parents and community members participating in substance abuse prevention projects were paid a monthly remuneration for their efforts and work. In 1994, five Head Start programmes developed model substance abuse prevention projects with a goal to strengthen families and neighbourhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool children. The initiative, named Free to Grow, targeted families and neighbourhoods of Head Start children in an effort to protect them from substance abuse and its associated problems. A key success factor of these programmes was the substantial amount of funding, which made it possible to pay a monthly remuneration (USD 100) to parents and community members who were the main implementers of the programme.

In **Korea**, parents working as members of the Early Childhood Education Policy Committee or Childcare Policy Committee at the central and/or local government levels are remunerated USD 100 per committee meeting attended. This stimulates participation and ensures their professional commitment.

### Providing public financial resources to ECEC programmes

- **Japan** earmarked financial resources for nursery centres to promote the exchange of information on parenting and provided funding to pay for professionals providing advice on parenting.

- **British Columbia** (**Canada**) provides funding to Child Care Resource and Referral Centres, which provide support, resource and referral programmes for parents and child care providers on care and early education. They provide information to parents about available child care providers and ECEC centres in their community and assist parents in choosing quality child care arrangements. The provincial government has also provided funding to the BC Association of Family Resource Programs to support professional development and advocacy for approximately 270 Family Resource Programmes (FRPs). FRPs support parents’ engagement with their families and work with ECEC programmes to ensure best practices and consistency in family development, play-based learning, early literacy and learning, parent education and learning and information exchange.

### Engaging parents as providers or support to providers

- Parents in the **French Community** of **Belgium** can set up and run child care provisions. Parents in **Flanders** (**Belgium**) can be involved in centres’ activities like story-telling groups, organising a school party, participating in extra-curricular activities, such as field trips.

- In **New Zealand**, parents can run play centres as parent co-operatives. Parents are then closely involved in both running the centre and working with the children during session times. Typically they are open for one to five sessions each week to provide play, social and learning opportunities for children. These play centres are often less formal than other Early Childhood Education (ECE) services in New Zealand. All early childhood education services, including parent-led play centres, can receive an ECE Funding Subsidy. They are eligible for up to six hours each day and 30 hours each week of ECE Funding Subsidy for each licensed child place. This funding offsets the cost of providing early childhood education and care, so that parents do not need to pay the full amount. The services receive this funding directly from the Ministry of Education.
- **Korea**, parents can set up and run a parent co-op child care by forming a union of 15 parents or more (Enforcement Rules of the Childcare Act, Article 9). Such a facility is managed in the same way as other child care centres. Based on the policy for facilitating parental engagement, which has been implemented at city, provincial and local education offices since 1997, parents running a co-op child care facility receive training on the features of child development and learning activities. After completing this training, parents are eligible to serve as volunteer assistants at kindergartens. The purpose of this training is to utilise parents as assistants in overpopulated classrooms, and at the same time, foster well-balanced personality development in children and provide them with safe education. The classroom teachers also receive similar training so that the teachers and parents can provide pedagogical activities in a consistent manner.

- In **Norway** and **Sweden**, many parents establish and run kindergartens. They receive earmarked funding for this as well as guidance material. In 2005, 14% of all Norwegian kindergartens were run by parents. The number of parents running kindergartens has gone down to 11.6% since the right to a kindergarten place was introduced in 2009. In Sweden, parents can run preschools as “parent-co-operatives”. In 1983, the government made state grants available to parental co-operatives. In 2009, Sweden had just over 900 preschools with 21,000 children run by parent co-operatives (4.6% of all children in preschool).

- In **Germany**, parents can set up and run their own child care centres. They also receive public funding for their institutions. In 2010, 4,423 of the 50,849 kindergartens, which is 8.7%, were driven by parents.

- In **Spain**, parents can help in teaching lessons supporting staff in their tasks while experiencing what their children are being taught.

- Parents in the **United Kingdom** can start a registered child care service at their home. These childminders provide child care in their own home, looking after small groups of children (up to six at a time).

- In **Ireland**, parents can either run their own playgroup (private playgroup), or they can co-operate in a parent committee and run a playgroup together (community playgroup). A private playgroup is run by an individual, often in a private home. On the other hand, a community playgroup is organised and run by a committee of parents. In the latter, parents other than the manager can be actively involved in the planning of such playgroups and provide support to and participate in the activities. The emphasis in a playgroup is on the total development of the child by providing him/her with an environment with ample opportunity for exploration and discovery. There is no formal teaching of academic skills. Ireland gives both public and private providers of playgroups the opportunity to receive public funding for starting up a playgroup. The level of funding will be determined by the number of places the group proposes to provide, whether there is a need for such facilities in the area and several criteria set locally, which differ per region or municipality.

- **Japan** offers a “day in the life of a nursery teacher” experience to parents. Parents can voluntarily do an “internship” for one day in an ECEC centre and work as a nursery teacher to better understand the profession and be involved in the education of their own children. This also promotes trust between the nursery centre and parents.
Mexico offers parents the possibility to volunteer in the ECEC centre. A popular activity is parents giving a “class” on what their profession is about and what kind of work they do and demonstrating the work to the young children – making it an interactive event.

In Slovenia, parents can participate in the planning and preparation of preschool activities such as sports days and cultural events. It increases mutual understanding and respect between staff and parents regarding each others’ views on child development.

Engaging parents in an advisory or management body for ECEC policies and services

Norway has established a national advisory board of parents for ECEC called FUB. The board makes parents’ voices heard in contemporary ECEC policies and secures parents’ perspectives in the development of ECEC. The board also provides the Ministry with advice on the co-operation between kindergarten and family homes. Each ECEC provision is required to have a parent council. This council has the right to express an opinion on all matters of importance relating to parental relationships with the kindergarten.

In Germany, ECEC facilities provide assemblies where parents and staff meet. These serve to inform parents concerning organisational and ECEC issues. Parents also typically elect advisory boards that represent all parents and thereby allow them to participate in important matters. In most states, parental councils with advisory functions are established at the municipal and state levels.

In Portugal, the National Confederation of Parents Associations has been established, comprised of not-for-profit parent associations. Their goal is to congregate, co-ordinate, stimulate, argue for and represent the local and regional associative movements of parents at the national level. Furthermore, it acts as a social partner for governing bodies, local authorities and institutions to enable and facilitate the execution of parental rights and duties with regard to kindergartens and schools. Portuguese parent associations are also represented in Municipal Education Councils: bodies that promote the co-ordination of education policies within the municipality in co-operation with education agents and social organisations.

Flanders (Belgium) has set up Local Consultative Forums for child care and out-of-school care, and these include professionals, centre managers, parents, local administration servants and other stakeholders. Within the Forums, stakeholders can share their opinions, ideas and concerns regarding child care. The Forums function as a municipal advisory body and give advice on child care to the local administration/authority. There are currently 301 Forums in Flanders. Besides this, parents can become a member in the school board, school council and parent council of pre-primary schools and be involved in decision-making processes. Parents can also participate in a parent association, which is a more informal form of involvement.

In Japan, a system of school management councils (community schools) was introduced in 2004. Parents and local residents have the opportunity to participate in the management of preschools and are assigned certain tasks and responsibilities regarding the management of the centres.

In Korea, the Early Childhood Education Policy Committee and Child Care Policy Committee at the central and local government levels are obliged to involve parent
representatives in decision-making processes of policy planning and execution. In addition, child care centres with at least 40 children are required to have a child care centre management committee to advise and deliberate the issues related to service operations. Starting from 2012, as a follow-up of the Plan for the Advancement of Early Childhood Education, individual kindergartens are also legally obliged to have a management committee consisting of five to nine representatives of parents and teachers. Representatives review issues concerning regulation revisions, budget, curriculum implementation, meals, etc. They are expected to elicit more parental engagement and promote transparency in the operation of private kindergartens as well as contribute to the development of more tailored services that better meet local needs.

- **Portugal** has a strategic governing body named Conselho Geral (General Council). The Council is represented by early education teaching staff, parents, local authorities and the local community. This governing body approves, by voting procedures, the internal school rules and regulations and strategic and planning decisions. ECEC staff, parents and community members choose which individuals or community organisations will be a member in the General Council.

- Early Year Centres in **Prince Edward Island (Canada)** are to institute Parent Advisory Committees in their centres. These Parent Advisory Committees are to help centres make decisions around centres’ communication with parents and any non-regulated decisions that are to be made around the Early Years Centres.

- Parents in **Slovenia** can participate in two different councils related to preschool institutions: the preschool institution council and the council of parents. Preschool institution councils are composed of staff, parents and the municipality. The duties of the preschool institution council include the appointment and dismissal of the head of the preschool institution; adoption of the annual programme of the preschool institution and the annual work plan; and discussing complaints from parents. The councils of parents were formed to represent parental needs. Parent councils can share their opinions on proposed development plans and annual programmes of work, discuss educational problems, discuss parents’ complaints and elect representatives for the councils of preschool institutions.

- Educational institutions, including pre-primary schools, in the **French Community of Belgium** are obliged to have a Participation Council in which educational staff, parents and members of the civil society can participate. All parents have the right to become a member of the council and the parental members are being elected by other parents for two years. Within the Council, the educational project of the institution can be discussed and changes can be proposed. The Council is an advisory organisation and has no decision-making rights.

**Engaging parents in setting the curriculum**

- **Finland**'s *Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education* (2010) states that it is important to provide parents and guardians with opportunities to participate in setting objectives for, planning and evaluating the educational work within pre-primary education. Parents in Finland are involved in the development of the educational plan of their child. Parents set the objectives of the educational plan of their child in co-operation with ECEC staff. Also, parents and ECEC staff work together to plan on how to achieve these objectives. This stimulates engagement of parents and encourages further involvement since they
are familiar with the curricular plan of their child. Staff also inform parents about the curriculum in the centre and provide parents with advice on how they can implement elements of the curriculum at home.

- In **Korea**, the national kindergarten curriculum review committee includes parent representatives as its members.

- In **Spain**, parents are directly involved in setting the teaching-learning processes as part of the curriculum staff are using in preschools. Parents are also involved in setting the educational plan, in collaboration with teachers, for their children.

- **Japan** included parental engagement in their kindergarten curriculum (*Course of Study for Kindergartens*). The curriculum states that kindergartens should give consideration to “deepening the understanding of parents of the importance of early childhood education by creating opportunities for information exchange with parents, and developing activities for both the parents and children”.

- Parents in **Norway** are actively involved in establishing the annual plan for pedagogical activities in Norwegian kindergartens. The co-ordinating committee of each kindergarten draws up this annual plan and includes parents as its members.

**Supporting and training staff to engage parents**

- In **Norway**, the former Ministry of Children and Family Affairs established the parental guidance programme (1995-98). In 2006, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training created the handbook “*Children in Multilingual Families*”, which provides parents with answers to frequently asked questions about children’s bilingual or multilingual development. In addition to offering advice to parents, it also helps staff in day care centres respond to parents’ questions and reflections on the bilingual development of their children. It includes examples and articles on how to involve parents actively in language stimulation.

- Information material on involving parents in preschools in **Sweden** has been developed by the National Agency for Education and distributed to ECEC centres, e.g., a booklet focusing on resources in language stimulation presents examples and articles on how to actively engage parents in language stimulation both in and outside preschools.

- The **Netherlands** is upgrading the training level of staff in child care to a minimum qualification level instead of having unqualified staff working in child care next to qualified staff. The training includes an aspect on parent engagement, and it is expected that this stimulates staff to encourage parental engagement and increases the quality level. The training upgrade started in 2007 and runs until 2014, costing EUR 55 million. Additionally, in 2009, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science requested the ITS (Dutch research institute) to design a brochure called “Action Plan to optimise parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE)”. With this brochure, ECE centres can set up plans to increase parental engagement.

- In **Germany**, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth established a programme promoting specialised child care centres for language and integration. The government is providing a total of EUR 400 million to subsidise as many as 4,000 child care facilities throughout Germany. With these funds, selected facilities
can hire additional child care staff who devote their time to activities and special services that promote language learning. Activities include providing individual children and groups with language-learning support as well as monitoring and documenting the children’s language development. The activities also include advising the child care team on language-learning issues and emphasise working with parents. Therefore, additional staff are enabled to actively engage parents in daily issues of speech and language development.

- The initial training curriculum for ECEC teachers in Korea includes parent involvement and family and community co-operation courses as selective courses (three credits each). In addition, practitioners enrolled in qualification level advancement training for kindergarten teachers (grade one), directors and assistant directors are mandated to take a “Parent Training and Counselling” course as part of their education programme. The family and communication co-operation course includes information on parent involvement programmes; parent counselling; and theory and practice of parent-teacher communication.

- Portugal and Finland developed training opportunities dedicated to how staff can encourage and improve communication with parents of children. In both countries, this is included in the initial education of ECEC workers and in continuous on-the-job training as well.

Providing support materials to parents

- Slovak Republic provides families with counselling by ECEC staff on how to implement home learning activities and gives them curriculum materials to ensure parents carry out the activities correctly.

- The Netherlands hands out materials to parents, such as story books and CDs, to encourage parents to organise activities with their children at home that stimulate language development.

- Under the strategy of Spain’s Educa3 programme, which includes enhancing the number of ECEC places for zero-to-three-year-olds and stimulating quality in ECEC, a website is being developed, which will provide parents with learning resources and materials as well as advice from experts on issues regarding early childhood education and development.

- Parents with children in preschools in Czech Republic receive advice and counselling from preschool staff on how to be more engaged in the early education of their child and how they can stimulate early child development. Additionally, preschools provide various advisory documents on parenting and stimulation of learning to parents, including methodological materials and lending them children’s books.

- In the French Community of Belgium, the website www.parentalité.be provides information to parents on various aspects of child development. It was created by the Observatory for Children, Youth and Youth Assistance with the aim of supporting parents in the upbringing of young children. The website is now administered by the ONE (Department for Birth and Childhood).
• **Norway** and the **United States** provide parents with materials to stimulate them in implementing qualitative home learning activities: giving parents story books to read from, CDs with children songs and online curriculum material, such as *Curious George* in the United States, which is based on the animated television series of *Curious George* and provides examples of home activities that play and early development. The *Curious George* initiative is partially funded with public federal funding. Additionally, the American website of *Sesame Street* lists a range of activities and resources parents can use in their home environment to stimulate early child development. The activities and resources are often accompanied by a video or linked to an episode which provides play-based learning opportunities for children. The site was set up with partial funding from the United States federal government and still receives federal funding. Several longitudinal studies on the effects of watching educational programmes, including *Sesame Street*, on child development have been conducted during the last forty years. These studies found that early viewing of educational children’s television, and *Sesame Street* in particular, appeared to contribute to children’s school readiness. Children performed significantly better than their peers on age-appropriate standardised achievement tests of letter-word knowledge, mathematics skills and vocabulary size.

• The **United Kingdom** launched *CBeebies* in 2002. *CBeebies* is a television channel produced by the BBC, a British public service broadcaster, aimed at children age six and under. The channel launched a website with activities (such as games, songs and print-outs) related to the programmes, which parents can implement with their children at home. In 2011, the BBC launched a new micro site called *CBeebies Grown-ups*, full of advice and help for parents in bringing up children and toddlers. The BBC, *CBeebies* included, is funded publicly through charging homes a television licence fee, which is set by the national government.

• Parents in **India** whose children attend child care are given age-appropriate toys and booklets with information and example activities to enhance early development at home.

**Engaging parents in evaluating ECEC provisions**

• **Japan** introduced school evaluation in 2007. Evaluation councils are made up of persons related to the kindergarten, such as parents and local residents. They evaluate the results of the self-evaluation assessments as implemented by the kindergarten staff and decide whether they agree with the self-evaluation exercises or not. This is done through observing the kindergarten’s daily activities and analysing the information exchanged with parents and community.

• In **Korea**, a Parent Monitoring Group has been managed by local governments since 2005. This group aims to improve the public service function in operating child care centres, and it evaluates relevant projects/programmes and policies. Parents working as members of this group visit the child care centres in question, observe/monitor their activities and provide child care policy recommendations to the government. Such monitoring takes place at least once a quarter, and the term of group membership is two years.

• In **Finland**, the *National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC* states that parents and children must be involved in the evaluation of curricular activities. Parents are expected to monitor and evaluate the attainment of the goals set in the curriculum.
The new Child Care Decree (in development) of Flanders (Belgium) will make it compulsory for ECEC centres to provide parents the opportunity to evaluate ECEC services. In addition to the external evaluations by an authorised organisation, each child care facility will have to send out an evaluation and satisfaction survey to parents. The parental survey is part of centre’s self-assessment assignment with the goal to improve quality provision. The facilities will also have to implement a procedure on how to accept and process complaints.

Norway’s Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens states that parents have to be actively encouraged to take part in quality monitoring and reviewing the kindergarten activities. The most common methods of parents reviewing kindergartens are through meetings organised by kindergarten staff and sending out surveys. Eighty-five percent of Norwegian kindergartens make use of the surveys.

Every parent in Slovak Republic is invited to evaluate the quality of the ECEC provision either directly by sharing opinions with staff, or indirectly, through surveys and questionnaires. Parents can also express their opinions on the quality of ECEC provision through the School Council in which parents have representatives as well.

Assessing and evaluating family engagement

In Australia, as part of assessment and rating against the National Quality Standards, long day care, family day care, preschool and out-of-school hours care services will be assessed from 2012 onwards on how well they maintain collaborative partnerships with families and communities. Additionally, an evaluation of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters programme is currently being conducted. A report on the evaluation findings is due at the end of 2011.

British Columbia (Canada) has evaluated its StrongStart Early Learning Programmes. The evaluations show that parents highly value their involvement and see a significant effect on their children and an increase in their own sense of ability to support their children’s development and learning. British Columbia plans to continue monitoring parent satisfaction over time.

In Korea, parental involvement is one of the quality indicators for both kindergarten evaluation and child care accreditation. Indicators include the links between ECEC institutions and families and communities, the various available parent education services and forms of communication with families. In addition, kindergartens are required to conduct a questionnaire regarding parents’ satisfaction with the quality of the service.

Within the inspection framework of Early Childhood Institutions in the Netherlands, aspects regarding parental involvement and informing parents about the development of their child are included. The Dutch Education Inspectorate assesses whether these institutions involve parents sufficiently.

The Institute of Evaluation in Spain carried out a pilot evaluation of family engagement in preschool and school to analyse which forms of parental involvement parents are most satisfied with. It was found that parents are most happy with the parent-teacher meetings of the preschools and schools to discuss child development. The evaluation also found that, although 87% of preschools and schools have parent associations, only
8.5% of parents participate. This evaluation provided insights as to how parental engagement can be stimulated and what aspects of parental involvement could be improved.

Encouraging private foundations to support parental engagement

- In Japan, Sony established the Sony Foundation for Education. Its Early Development Activity Centre conducts an extensive programme of activities in its quest to make science widely known among the public, to foster well-balanced personality development in young individuals, and to educate the general public about the importance of building a healthy relationship between parents and children. The achievements of the various programmes and the lessons learned about child rearing are shared in various ways with parents, the community and child care workers. The Foundation started Photo Contests for parents with an aim to stimulate their interest in child rearing and their engagement in children learning science.