

## RESULTS FROM TALIS STARTING STRONG 2018

The OECD Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS Starting Strong) is an international large-scale survey of early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff and leaders conducted in nine OECD countries. This note presents the findings for Iceland from the first volume of results on TALIS Starting Strong 2018, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care*.

### Iceland

#### Key findings

Compared to other participating countries, Iceland has a low percentage of staff with a level of education above secondary level (52%). In addition, a relatively low percentage of staff have received practical training (71%) and training specifically to work with children (64%).

In Iceland, more than in other countries participating in the Survey, larger shares of staff report using practices that facilitate children's socio-emotional development rather than practices that support children's numeracy development.

Staff in Iceland work, on average, with relatively small groups of children (16 children per group), but there are large variations across groups.

Communication with primary school teachers is more common in Iceland than in any other country (93%).

Compared to other countries, a large percentage of centres in Iceland includes high numbers of children whose first language is different from the language(s) used in the centre or with special needs. A relatively high percentage of staff report having received training to work with dual/second language learners as part of their formal training (52%) or professional development activities (35%). Staff consider supporting children with special needs as a top spending priority.

Iceland is one of the participating countries where the lowest percentage of staff report feeling valued in society (33%) and are satisfied with their salary (10%). Most staff are satisfied with their jobs (96%).

More leaders than in any other country indicate having responsibility for the appointment and recruitment of staff in Iceland (100%) and it is the only country in which leaders indicate managing staff as the main source of stress.

#### Highlights and policy implications for Iceland

##### ***Promote practices that foster children's learning, development and well-being***

TALIS Starting Strong data show that staff with more education and training specifically to work with children report using more practices that facilitate children's learning and development in a large range of areas. Compared to other participating countries, Iceland has the lowest percentage of staff with a level of education above secondary level (52%). In addition, a low percentage of staff have received practical training (71%) and training to specifically work with children (64%). The same results are also relevant for leaders: the percentage

of leaders with a high level of education (77% with a bachelor's degree or higher) is lower than in several other participating countries. However, a large percentage of leaders report having received training on pedagogical leadership (83%). Professional development activities are very common in Iceland, similar to other participating countries (87%).

In most participating countries, larger percentages of staff report using practices that facilitate children's socio-emotional development rather than practices that facilitate children's numeracy and literacy development. Iceland has particularly large gaps between the use of practices that foster socio-emotional and numeracy development. Similar to many countries, staff believe that practices facilitating oral language skills, the ability to co-operate easily and to think creatively are considered to be very important. Foundational cognitive skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and science are considered less important, suggesting a less holistic approach to children's learning and development than in some other countries.

Staff in Iceland work with relatively small groups of children (on average 16 children per group), but there is a large variation across groups. A relatively high percentage of staff (61%) indicate that having too many children in the group is a significant source of stress.

In contrast to most participating countries, practices engaging parents or guardians (e.g. providing workshops on child-rearing/development) are less well established. A relatively low percentage of staff have received training to work with parents/guardians as part of their formal education (72%) and 51% of staff report encouraging parents/guardians to engage in play and educational activities with their child/children at home.

Iceland has the highest percentage of leaders who report that their centre communicates with primary school teachers (93%). However, in comparison with other countries, a low percentage of staff report that their formal education (50%) or recent professional development activities (16%) included facilitating transitions across levels of education.

### ***Attract and retain a high-quality workforce***

Most of the staff (96%) and leaders (99%) are satisfied with their jobs, but Iceland is one of the participating countries where the lowest percentage of staff report feeling valued in society (33%) and are satisfied with their salary (10%). In line with these findings, improving salaries is indicated as a top spending priority by staff. Iceland has a relatively high share of permanent contracts for staff (78%).

Professional development can help staff keep motivated at their job but can also facilitate career progression. Although participation is common, more than half of ECEC staff in Iceland indicate that a lack of staff to compensate for their absences is a barrier to participation in Iceland.

### ***Give a strong start to all children***

A relatively high percentages of centres include a large percentage of children with special needs (24% of centres) or whose first language is different from the language(s) used in the centre (46% of centres). Iceland has one of the highest percentage of staff who report having received training to work with dual/second language learners as part of their formal training (52%) and professional development activities (35%). Compared to other countries, receiving training to work with children with special needs is reported to a lesser extent (71%). Supporting children with special needs is ranked as the second most important spending priority by staff.

Compared to other countries, small percentages of staff report using practices that support diversity, such as using books and toys from other cultures (33%).

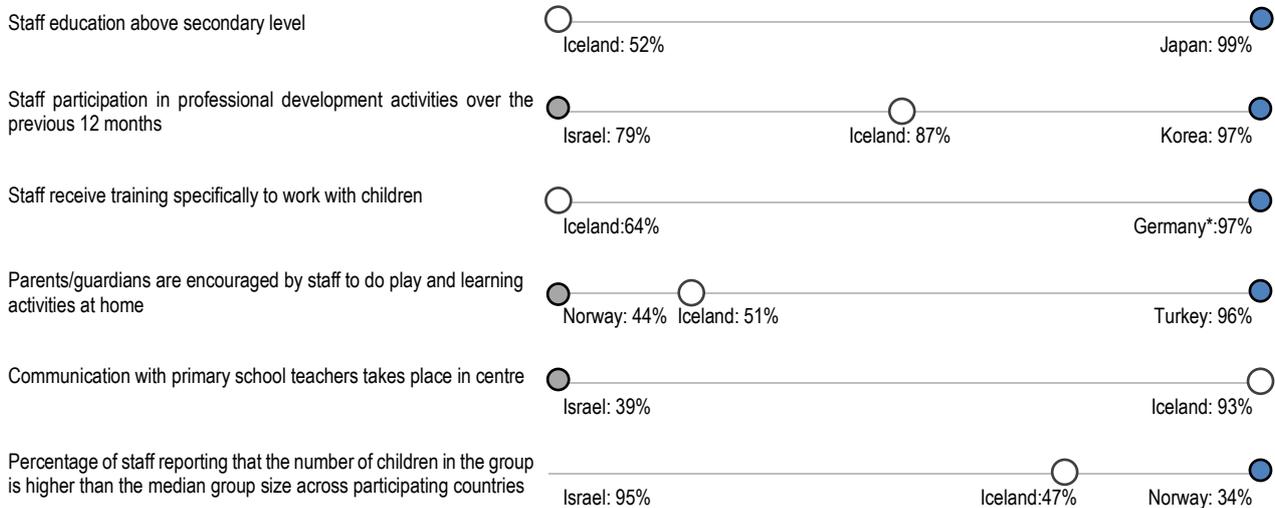
### ***Ensure smart spending in view of complex governance and service provision***

A relatively small percentage of leaders indicate having responsibilities for the budget allocation within the centre. In contrast, Iceland stands out as having the largest share of leaders who indicate having responsibility for the appointment and recruitment of staff (100%). Iceland is also the only country in which leaders indicate managing staff as their main source of work-related stress. Staff absence is the top barrier to leaders' effectiveness according to leaders, which is also the second largest source of stress for leaders. More than half of the centre leaders indicate receiving inspections regarding process quality at least once a year.

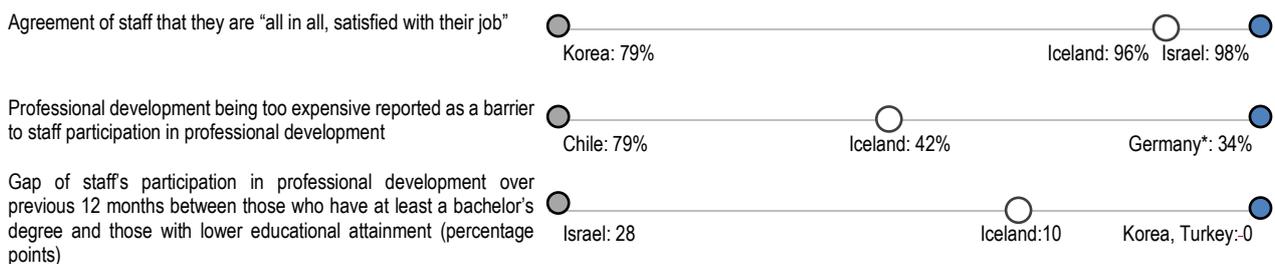
## How does Iceland compare?

Indicators pre-primary education (ISCED 02): **Bottom** **Top**

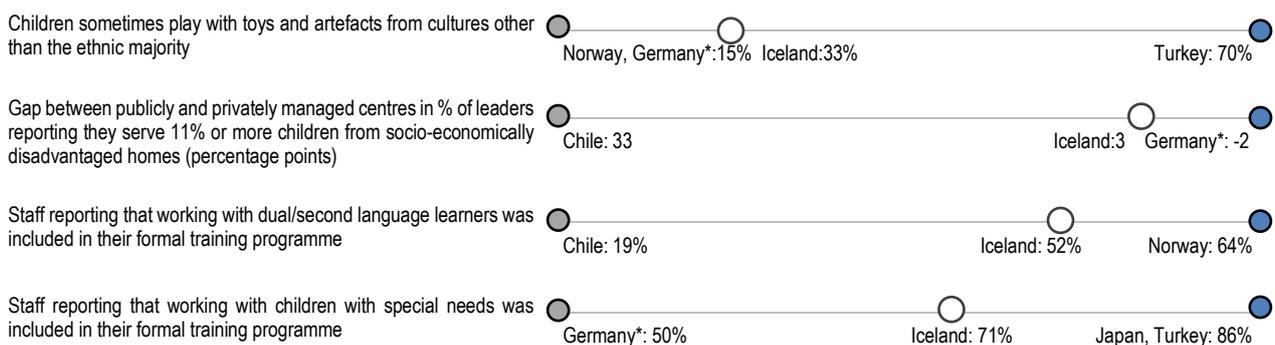
### Promote practices that foster children's learning, development and well-being



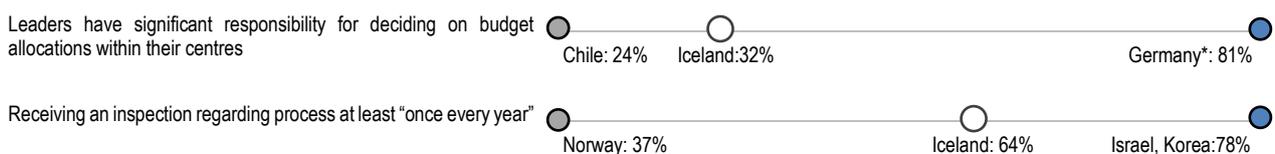
### Attract and retain a high-quality workforce



### Give a strong start to all children



### Ensure smart spending in view of complex governance and service provision



Top spending priority indicated by staff in case of a 5% budget increase: **Improving ECEC staff salary**

Top barrier to leaders' effectiveness in their centres, according to leaders: **ECEC staff absence**

Note: \* Estimates for sub-groups and estimated differences between sub-groups in the TALIS Starting Strong 2018 data need to be interpreted with care.  
Source: TALIS Starting Strong 2018 database.

## Policy pointers for Iceland

- Ensure that pre-service and in-service education and training programmes for staff lead to a common understanding of developmentally appropriate ways to support children's learning.
- Review ECEC staff financial packages to ensure that they can attract and maintain a high-quality workforce in the sector.
- Ensure that pre-service and in-service education and training programmes for staff lead to a common understanding of successful ways to engage parents.
- Ensure that practices for working with children with special needs and working with dual language learners are included in pre-service and in-service staff training.
- Compensate for staff absence to allow time to participate in professional development and encourage flexible forms of training.
- Engage in dialogue with leaders to investigate staff management problems and develop strategies to alleviate them

## What is TALIS Starting Strong and how does it apply in Iceland?

TALIS Starting Strong is an international, large-scale survey of staff and leaders ECEC. TALIS Starting Strong uses questionnaires administered to staff and leaders to gather data. Its main goal is to generate robust international information relevant to developing and implementing policies focused on ECEC staff and leaders and their pedagogical and professional practices, with an emphasis on those aspects that promote conditions for children's learning, development and well-being. TALIS Starting Strong data are based exclusively on self-reports from ECEC staff and leaders and, therefore, represent their opinions, perceptions and beliefs.

TALIS Starting Strong 2018 includes nine countries: Chile, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Norway and Turkey. All of these countries collected data from staff and leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED level 02) settings typically serving children aged 3 to 5. In addition, four of the nine countries (Denmark, Germany, Israel and Norway) collected data from staff and leaders in settings serving children under age 3. Only data on centre-based provision are reported in the first report volume and this country note.

The Survey aims to obtain a representative sample in each participating country of staff and leaders for each level of ECEC in which the country participated. In Iceland, 204 staff members and 178 leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED level 02) settings completed the TALIS Starting Strong questionnaires. TALIS Starting Strong covers preschool settings (Leikskoli) in Iceland, which target all children aged 1-5.

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**Note regarding data from Israel:** The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## References

OECD (2019), *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/301005d1-en>.

**For more information on TALIS Starting Strong 2018** visit <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/oecd-starting-strong-teaching-and-learning-international-survey.htm>.

Data can be found also on line by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

**Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using:** <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

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