

## How can early childhood education and care be improved?

While many OECD countries have raised participation and public investment in ECEC, there is little information on what quality dimensions are most important for ensuring children's development, learning and well-being. In particular, there is no comprehensive, comparative data on:

- types of ECEC settings and their effectiveness;
- the best age for children to start ECEC;
- duration and intensity of ECEC to optimise learning outcomes;
- workforce working conditions and qualifications;
- pedagogical practices that work best;
- data and monitoring on quality;
- diversity and equity issues in ECEC.

The OECD addresses these issues and helps countries to implement high quality ECEC systems through:

- **peer-learning** amongst policy advisors and researchers at OECD ECEC Network meetings;
- **data collection** on participation in ECEC, learning and well-being environments and workforce working conditions and qualifications;
- **thematic studies** and **country reviews**.

### OECD ECEC Network

- For the development and implementation of its work on ECEC, the OECD has worked closely with the OECD ECEC Network since 2007, aiming to assist countries in developing effective policies and practices in ECEC by:
  - sharing information on policies, practices and research;
  - identifying areas where further research and analysis is required;
  - assessing the need for new data development.
- The Network consists of representatives from OECD countries, and it also welcomes observers from partner countries and economies, as well as relevant international organisations. The Network meets once or twice a year.

For any questions or to express interest, please contact: [ecec@oecd.org](mailto:ecec@oecd.org)

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/earlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm>

# Starting Strong

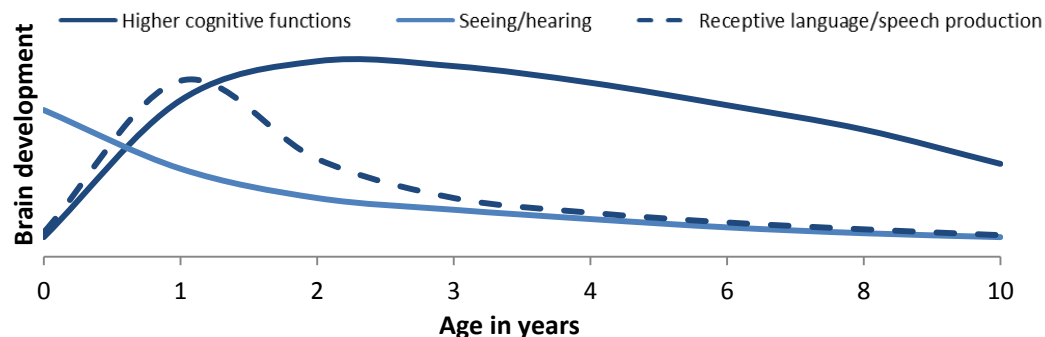
## Improving the impact of early childhood education and care



## Why does early childhood education and care matter?

- Participating in early childhood education and care (ECEC) enhances children's development, learning and well-being in the short term and in the long run.
- According to PISA 2015 results, 15-year-old students who attended pre-primary education outperform their peers who did not by the equivalent of more than one year of formal schooling, across all socio-economic groups.
- A growing body of research suggests that the benefits of ECEC are especially strong in the case of disadvantaged children.

### Association between participation in ECEC and children's development, learning and well-being



Source: Adapted from National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000), From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood.

### Research shows that process quality, such as the quality of staff-child interactions and developmental activities, is the primary driver of gains in children's development through ECEC

- Evidence shows that children in ECEC settings with more positive staff-child interactions have higher levels of emerging literacy and numeracy skills, as well as better behavioural and social skills.
- Recent research suggests that process quality matters more for better child learning and development than structural quality by itself, e.g. staff-child ratios, group size, etc.

#### OECD Child Well-Being Portal

- The [OECD Child Well-Being Portal](#) is a platform for conducting policy-oriented research on enhancing child well-being and promoting equal opportunities among children. As policy interventions for children in OECD countries increasingly overarch traditional policy fields, demand has grown for better comparative information across a range of outcomes concerning the lives of children.
- The [OECD Child Well-Being Data Portal](#) gathers data on children's well-being and the settings in which children grow up. It provides information on children's home and family environments, their health and safety, their education and school life, their activities and their life satisfaction. It also links to information on public policies for children.

## OECD ECEC work at a glance

The OECD has been conducting reviews of countries' ECEC policy challenges for more than 20 years, which resulted in the Starting Strong series volumes I through V (2001-2017), offering an international perspective of ECEC systems, advancing policy analysis and developing new data to provide valid, timely and comparable information in order to help countries improve their ECEC systems. The OECD continues to advance its work through the following ongoing activities:

### ECEC Policy review: Quality Beyond Regulations – Starting Strong VI

**Objective:** Support countries in making well-informed decisions to improve ECEC quality, in particular process quality, and to address ECEC quality through policy, in order to ensure better child development, learning and well-being.

**Method:** Literature review, meta-analysis of quality dimensions (2018 report on "[Engaging young children](#)"), policy survey, multidimensional framework on quality.

**Timetable:** Phase I (2017-2018), phase II (2019-2020) and international synthesis report Starting Strong VI (2021).

### TALIS Starting Strong Survey: a comparative study on staff quality and the quality of the learning and well-being environment

**Objective:** Collect data on staff and leader characteristics, their pedagogical and professional practices, and the learning and well-being environment in ECEC centres.

**Method:** The first international survey of ECEC staff and leaders.

**Timetable:** 2018 (main study in 9 countries); 2019-2020 (reporting).

### International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study

**Objective:** Provide robust empirical information and in-depth insights on the social, emotional and cognitive development of children, helping countries to build a common language and framework to share best practices and improve children's early learning outcomes and overall well-being.

**Method:** Comprehensive overview of children's early learning and environment through direct and indirect assessment and contextual background questionnaires.

**Timetable:** 2018 (main study in 3 countries); 2019-2020 (reporting).

### Country policy reviews and country notes

**Objective:** Provide countries with policy advice and in-focus comparative data.

**Method:** Tailor-made, independent reviews of countries' policies and practices in response to individual country priorities and/or overview of OECD ECEC data for the selected country in international comparison.

**Timetable:** Ongoing, timelines to be negotiated bilaterally.