

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: FINANCING ECEC SERVICES

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OECD, Paris

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7TH MEETING OF THE OECD NETWORK ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: FINANCING ECEC SERVICES

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA **EDU/EDPC/ECEC/A(2010)1/REV3**

1. The Network **ADOPTED** the agenda.

2. ADOPTION OF THE SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6TH MEETING **EDU/EDPC/ECEC/M(2009)2**

2. The Network **ADOPTED** the summary record of the 6th meeting.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Through written procedures we have received a resignation notice from:

- Ms. Luisa Silva Ucha (Portugal)
- Mr. Keisuke Otani (Japan)

4. The Network elected the following officers to the bureau of the Network:

- Ms. Kari Jacobsen (Norway) – Chair
- Ms. Mugyeong Moon (Korea)
- Mr. Alexandra Marques (Portugal)
- Mr. Arturo Sáenz (Mexico)
- Mr. François Weldon (Canada)

4. OPENING REMARKS

5. Ms. Barbara Ischinger, Director of the Education Department, welcomed the participants and thanked all countries who have responded to the questionnaire for their valuable contributions. She stressed that financing ECEC services is an issue of high interest during the economic crisis. She reported the success of the 13th OECD-Japan Seminar “pursuing professional development and attaining programme management and leadership quality in ECEC”. She invited Ms. Kiyomi Akita, professor at the University of Tokyo to report on the seminar. Ms. Akita stressed that wide public support for investment in quality ECEC is needed for sustainable reforms.

6. Ms. Deborah Roseveare, Head of the Education and Training Policy Division, highlighted the themes running through the discussions at the OECD Japan seminar. She presented general information about the network and underlined the objectives of the meeting.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE MEETING: FINANCING ECEC SERVICES **EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)7**

7. Ms. Miho Taguma, Project Leader of the ECEC Network and the ECEC Quality project, in the Education and Training Policy Division, outlines sessions 6-8 and gave an overview of the country responses to the questionnaire. For session 6, she stressed the importance of data collection and explained constraints on data collection as well as countries’ strategies to address the constraints. With regard to

session 7, she gave an overview of financing resources for ECEC: governments, parents, private business communities, private for-profit enterprises, and social and international organisations. She also presented the main reasons for investment in ECEC. For session 8, she explained existing funding strategies which included parental leave benefits, cash benefits, tax credits, vouchers, direct funding, and universal and targeted funding. Additionally, she summarised the political decisions for public investment in young children in times of financial constraints.

6. WHAT DATA? FOR WHAT PURPOSE? WHICH DATA EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)7 FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON?

8. This session focused on reviewing available data on financing and costs of ECEC services, the quality of data and constraints on data collection. It also discussed relevant policy needs for international comparison.

9. Mr. Eric Charbonnier, Analyst in the Indicators and Analysis Division, presented data from *Education at a Glance* on pre-primary education, ISCED level 0. He explained that from 2011, ISCED 0 includes not only pre-primary education (from age 3 to entry into level 1) but also children younger than 3 years. He gave four reasons for the change: the ECEC provision is increasingly referring to educational goals; there is a trend toward a gradual extension of compulsory education at the pre-primary level; the changes in the scope of basic education; and the more integrated view towards education.

10. Mr. Willem Adema, Principal Administrator in the Social Policy Division, presented data on public support and noted that the composition of family and public spending on family support varies across countries and reported a slightly upward trend in public ECEC spending. Although enrolment rates in formal care among under-threes varies across countries, rates in pre-school education show less variation. He also presented the 2008 preliminary net childcare costs for lone and couple parents.

11. Ms. Nicole Bella and Ms. Anaïs Loizillon (UNESCO) presented UNESCO's international comparative data on financing ECEC. They stated that in general, countries have relatively low public spending levels on pre-primary education. They emphasised that use and allocation of money is important and explained the diverse direct and indirect financing mechanisms across countries. UNESCO concluded that the challenges in ECEC data collection are the quality of the data and ensuring that data fits within the idea of a holistic development. Additionally, tracking expenditures on the very young (0 to age 3) is difficult because there are fewer services for this age group at the international level.

12. Ms. Tarja Kahiluoto (Finland) emphasised the importance of comparable, reliable and easily available data, as data is collected for the purpose of policy making. She suggested it would be interesting to analyze what types of financial systems produce good quality ECEC and promote equity/equality. Additionally, she proposed that data collection should include information on e.g. running costs of pre-school education; average day care costs to parents; and country's subsidies/allowance directed to families.

13. Ms. Marit Solheim (Norway) explained that Norwegian official data is not collected and broken down in the same way as OECD statistics due to the country's integrated ECEC system. Data on operating expenses are not separated by children's age and the care and education sector. These numbers are estimated when reporting to the OECD. She pointed out a need for data which makes it possible for integrated countries to make comparisons, since their data is often not comparable with other countries.

14. Ms. Teresa Salinas (Spain) explained that Spain has two ECEC cycles. Participation in the first cycle (0-3 years) is voluntary and half of the costs are covered by the Ministry of Education, regional governments and municipalities in 'Plan Educa3', which is a government plan to increase participation and provision. Participation in the second cycle (3-6 years) is mandatory and free of charge and is financed by the Ministry of Education and regional governments. Provision of both cycles is either public or private.

Due to the diversity in ECEC between autonomous communities, Spain experiences difficulties in data collection.

7. WHY INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE? FOR WHOM? EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)4
EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)7

15. The session focused on examining various outcomes of public investment in ECEC services and infrastructure.

16. Mr. Steven Barnett from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University presented the impacts of ECEC investment. He explained that public investment in ECEC contributes to educational success, economic productivity and decreasing government expenditures on crime, schooling, health care and social services. He reported concrete results of economic returns to pre-kindergarten for disadvantaged children from the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, the Chicago Child Parent Centres and the Abecedarian Project, and noted that based on other studies, ECEC is beneficial for all children with disadvantaged children benefitting most. He stressed the importance of high quality ECEC, well educated staff and good ratios, supervision, monitoring and well designed and implemented policies.

17. Mr. Koji Miyamoto, Analyst at the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, explained that ECEC improves individual's social outcomes e.g. by improved health development, a reduced likelihood of individuals engaging in criminal activities and stronger civic and social engagement, which significantly benefit the society as well. He emphasized that ECEC is an efficient and effective investment in developing early social skills that can reduce inequalities in social outcomes.

18. Mr. Robert Specterman (United Kingdom) explained that England makes use of analytical and academic evidence in political decision making. A study conducted by the Department for Education on the effectiveness of ECEC concluded that the length of participation in months per year has a greater impact on a child's early development than participation in hours per day. Therefore, the government decided to invest in additional free ECEC places for young children instead of investing in additional free hours. He also explained that local governments play a key role in managing the local ECEC market, but that a general framework has been set up at the national level. From 2004-2009, public spending on ECEC in England has experienced a nominal increase of 12% and is now 0.3% of GDP – excluding investments on Sure Start and the demand side.

19. Dr. Arturo Sáenz Ferral (Mexico) explained that since 2002 pre-school became obligatory for all children from the age of three. The government invested heavily in the development of pre-school: in 2009 \$4.7 billion has been spent. Since the implementation of compulsory pre-schooling, registration has grown by more than 1.1 million children. Now, the challenge is to increase the attendance of three-year-olds. The main reason to invest is to support labour market participation. For this, Mexico plans to educate 42,000 new teachers and create 38,000 new classrooms by 2015.

8. FINANCING MECHANISMS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)3
EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)5
EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)7

21. The session focused on mapping different financing mechanisms and funding strategies for ECEC services and infrastructure.

22. Mr. Henno Theisens, Analyst at the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, noted that OECD countries increasingly rely on market mechanisms to govern their education systems. He explained that market mechanisms are the dynamic processes that operate in markets, consisting of competition, consumer choice and organisational strategy. There are ideological discussions on the consequences of

market mechanisms in education e.g. whether they lead to quality, efficiency and innovation or not. However, the effects of market mechanisms are small, and more studies need to be conducted on this topic.

23. Mr. Robert Myers, Researcher on the costs of ECEC in Mexico, explained that a wide variation of ECEC services exist, which makes it difficult to construct and interpret general figures on ECEC spending. Studies rarely include costs of resources that are covered by direct payments or through donations of materials or time. The results of a micro study in eight Mexican pre-schools on costs of ECEC resulted in disparate figures, which showed how difficult it is to pin down a specific cost estimate and how much the estimates depend on methods and assumptions applied. He concluded that it is important not to combine cost data from programs that are very different in order to arrive at average per child costs.

24. Mr. Kathrin Bock-Famulla, Project Manager at the Bertelsmann Stiftung, presented the Stiftung's formula funding approach which is a function of the operating costs of an individual ECEC facility. The formula is composed of multiple mathematical formulae by which the financial resources to be made available to an ECEC facility are calculated. The formula can help ensure a certain level of quality and calculate resource management for preventing waste of public funds.

25. Ms. Ngaire Hosking (Australia) explained that child care provision in Australia has a strong emphasis on provision by private-for-profit providers. Government subsidies are largely in the form of fee reimbursements to parents. One of the major corporate providers was ABC, which provided 25% of all child care services in Australia. In 2008, the provider collapsed. To keep centres open that might otherwise have been closed, the government provided financial support after which the majority of centres were sold to other providers. As a result from the collapse of ABC, monitoring of child care centres has been strengthened. GoodStart, a not-for-profit syndicate, has been established afterwards with philanthropic investment and a loan from the Australian government and has taken over a significant number of ABC learning centres.

26. Dr. Viera Hajdúková (Slovak Republic) explained that kindergartens are a part of the Slovak school system. The country adopted a new law, the Education and Training-Education Act in June 2008. Children aged 5-6-years-old and children with postponed compulsory school attendance can attend ECEC free of charge. The kindergartens are partly funded through taxes. She explained that the country is currently working on improving the financial evaluation of teachers. There is also a political discussion on whether to make the year before compulsory schooling, when children are 5 years old, compulsory for all children as well.

27. Ms. Christele van Nieuwenhuyzen (Flanders, Belgium) explained that to improve accessibility, priority rules have been introduced in the accredited and subsidized child care services. Additionally, the system of income related parental contributions has been extended, in which the government compensates for the loss of income. Accredited crèches and family day care services are fully subsidized. Flanders is planning to revise the child care financing system in 2012. The revisions should include the introduction of a system of licenses, and no longer a distinction between accredited and independent child care services. Flanders plans to implement the same minimal quality requirements for all providers and have an equal funding system for all child care services.

9. ROLE OF ECEC IN RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS **EDU/EDPC/ECECD/RD(2010)7**

28. The session focused on country experiences in responding to the economic crisis regarding ECEC.

29. Dr. Jacqueline Jones (United States) explained that there is an inter-agency collaboration between the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services on ECEC. Both departments provide financial support to different early learning programmes. She noted that the impact of the

economic crisis on ECEC is visible in a reduction of the number of children in child care programmes, an increased number of vacancies in the sector, and closure of some childcare programmes. Additionally, many programmes are facing budget cuts to early learning programmes. The U.S. emphasises the importance of collecting, interpreting and evaluating evidence of learning in order to make informed judgments. Most States in the U.S. have Early Learning Standards that define what children should know and be able to do and Program Quality Standards, a set of standards that describe programme quality. However, there is no national set of early learning standards. She concluded that ongoing professional development and monitoring and evaluation are important in meeting these standards.

30. Mr. Darragh Doherty (Ireland) explained the Irish early childcare supplement, which was a universal benefit for families with children below 6 years. The benefit did not support the ECEC sector since the supplement could also be spent on non-ECEC expenses. For this reason, a new ECEC scheme was introduced. This supports children who would otherwise not attend pre-school and families in covering the costs of ECEC. It maintains employment in the sector and creates higher standards for services. The scheme will be consolidated between 2010 and 2012. He emphasised that implementation success factors include: linking policy with a credible implementation plan, demonstrating that the proposal meets needs that the general public supports and understanding the key deliverables for the Finance Ministry.

31. Ms. Julie Keenan (New Zealand) explained that despite the recession, the government has decided to increase its ECEC funding with \$200 million by 2014. Reasons for this are the government's policy to increase teacher numbers and fund more of the costs, the high birth rates and children attending ECEC for more hours per week. The 2010 budget includes new targeted participation initiatives, and it removed extra funding to centres with a high number of qualified staff. She stressed that ECEC can have impressive economic payoffs and investment in the young is warranted because it is evident that early skills enhance to foster later skills.

10. PROGRESS ON THE ECEC PORTAL

32. The session focused on the completed sections of the ECEC portal and the progress of the Child Well-Being Module.

33. Ms. Miho Taguma set the scenes for sessions 10-12. She explained that the expected outputs of the project "Encouraging quality in ECEC" are a Policy Tool Box for all countries and country-specific policy profiles and policy forums for countries with voluntary contributions. She presented the revised timeline and invited countries to participate in the pilot survey and the final survey. Additionally, countries participating with voluntary contributions are requested to answer the needs assessment survey and take part in informal meetings to ensure they will get what they need. Countries that opt for a forum are asked to start preparing country visits.

34. Ms. Ineke Litjens, Consultant at the Education and Training Policy Division, explained that the ECEC portal will include results from the Network questionnaires and data from different OECD sources. The portal will include 8 sections that will each contain a range of indicators with data for all countries at one glance. Each indicator will have an explanatory sheet including country or sector specific information, definitions, methodologies, key findings and comparability and data issues. It is a one-off project and will be first used as an internal working tool. After country validation of the data, the information can be made available online. The information in the portal will be used for the development of the Toolbox and will feed into other OECD sources.

34. Mr. Dominic Richardson, Administrator in the Social Policy Division, explained that the Child Well-Being Module consists of three comparative sections and country specific sections with incomparable information on governance issues and policy changes and national specific data collections. He explained that the Module is not a one-off project and that all data will be quality tested. He added that incorporating

the ECEC Network information will be mainly in early childhood inputs and contexts and in country-specific sections.

11. PROGRESS ON THE PROJECT “ENCOURAGING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE” **EDU/EDPC/ECEC(2010)3**

35. Ms. Miho Taguma presented the preliminary analytical framework of the “Encouraging Quality in ECEC” project. She stressed that to improve quality in ECEC, it is essential to align separate, complementary policy tools. She set out a conceptual framework to analyse effective environments and interactions between input (policy) and output (child outcomes), in which quality indicators can be categorised into family factors, process factors at ECEC institutions, and structural factors. She also presented the preliminary framework of the Policy Toolbox, which includes: a) setting explicit policy goals, b) legislation for access, quality and equity, c) regulations of ECEC services, d) standards, curricula and pedagogy, e) teacher education, professional development and working conditions, f) funding and costing, g) monitoring, research and evaluation, and h) parental support.

36. Ms. Ineke Litjens presented the main findings of the literature research, providing an overview of factors influencing quality and child outcomes. She explained that there are different approaches to improving parental involvement, curricula approaches and pedagogical practices, pre- and in- service education, training and staff’s working conditions, which are often related to the country context. It was found that flexibility, co-operation between different stakeholders, educating staff and clarity of objectives are key success factors of implementation.

36. Mr. Alastair Blyth, Analyst in the Education Management and Infrastructure Division, explained that the role of the physical environment is to support the activities and needs of the users. The characteristics of the physical environment include the location, accessibility, safety, flexibility, scale and visibility. Buildings should enable the teachers and carers to carry out their work with as little stress placed on them by the environment as possible. Implications on policy level are related to spacing standards, maintenance and the use of facilities outside school hours.

37. Ms. Christina Barfoed-Høj and Mr. Lars Bahn (Denmark) explained that measuring and evaluating child outcomes is a challenge in Denmark. The country started a national documentation project to measure the effects of investment in ECEC on child outcomes. Based on the available data, 24 indicators were designed; however, the available data did not include sufficient information to develop outcome indicators. Designing these would be costly. Instead, a parent survey will be sent out to a representative sample of parents. This survey should provide information on children’s well-being, social development and competences.

38. Ms. Alexandra Marques (Portugal) explained that all Portuguese teachers start with an early childhood education degree and have the same working conditions and remuneration levels as primary and secondary teachers. Continuous training is mandatory for 25 hours per school year and is offered in different lengths and formats. The current strategy to improve teaching practices is the distribution of implementation guides for teachers on curriculum guidelines. In addition to this, there is a project on the implementation of a collaborative process of self-evaluation with guide books for professionals on quality evaluation and assessment.

39. Ms. Angiolina Ponziano (Italy) noted that when defining quality it is important to have a monitoring system that includes the needs of users, staff members, policy makers and other stakeholders. She presented the different factors at structural level that affect child outcomes. At policy level, she emphasised that upgrading teachers’ and parents’ knowledge on child development is important, in addition to curriculum planning and collaboration with stakeholders.

40. The preliminary framework of the Policy Toolbox was generally supported. A few countries suggested the themes to focus on "quality" aspects. The Secretariat agreed to refine the framework. It was agreed that: 1) any intermediary outputs concerning the Policy Toolbox, Policy Profiles and ECEC Portal will be used as working tools internal to ECEC Network members and 2) the final products will be made available to the public following the procedure for OECD outputs, i.e. to ask for validation of delegates before releasing them in the public domain. The literature overview was also generally well received. Some countries expressed their concerns regarding the focus on child outcomes, while others believed that more non Anglo-Saxon research work should be included. It has been agreed that the literature overview will be revised. Countries are invited to provide comments in written procedure.

12. DRAFT COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PROJECT "ENCOURAGING QUALITY IN ECEC" EDU/EDPC/ECEC(2010)2

41. The Secretariat presented the draft questionnaire for the pilot run of the ECEC Portal and the project "Encouraging Quality in ECEC", which seeks country experiences on effective policy implementation.

42. Based on country comments, the Secretariat agreed to revise the draft questionnaire. It was decided that definitions of unclear concepts (e.g. quality, home visits) will be included. Additionally, several countries indicated that they do not wish to focus on child outcomes while others stressed the importance of focusing on child outcomes. The Secretariat agreed to take the balance but mapping such different approaches in itself is a point of international comparison. It has been agreed that the pilot run of the questionnaire will start in July. Countries that have an interest in participation are invited to contact the Secretariat.

13. THE WAY FORWARD

41. Ms. Kari Jacobson, the Chair of the Network, announced that the theme for the next meeting is "Curriculum and Pedagogy". The meeting is scheduled for 6-7 December in Paris, followed by an informal meeting on 8 December. She commented that sharing internal information, expert perspectives and country experiences on financing ECEC services was a constructive way to gather useful knowledge and learn from other's practices. She invited countries to answer to the needs assessment survey and the questionnaires of the Network and the Quality project. She reminded countries that are participating with voluntary contributions to define the scope of the policy profile and/or forum and to start preparing preparatory country visits for the forum in collaboration with the Secretariat.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

42. Ms. Deborah Roseveare presented the results of the priority ranking exercise of themes for the Network meetings in 2011. She explained that "parent and community involvement" and "vulnerable children and families" are the topics that were rated highest; however, when similar themes are grouped together, the ratings of other themes could be higher. Some countries expressed their concerns with regard to including minorities into "vulnerable families". From a political point of view, this was not always appreciated. The Secretariat agreed to take this comment into account. The themes for the 2011 will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Participants List for 7th Meeting of the Network on Early Childhood
Education and Care**

**Liste des Participants pour 7eme Réunion du Réseau sur l'accueil et
l'éducation des jeunes enfants**

21/6/2010 - 22/6/2010

All Sessions

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