



# Starting Strong IV

## Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care Country Note

### FINLAND

#### Summary

The Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*) is the national authority responsible for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Finland. A new act came into effect in August 2015 that has put the responsibility for ECEC curriculum development with the National Board of Education (*Opetushallitus*). Licensing, approval and monitoring of ECEC services and preschool education settings is done by local (municipal) authorities. Finland's national curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care cover all children until the age of 6, after which children have a pre-primary education year with a separate core curriculum before starting primary school. In Finland, service quality, staff quality and child development are commonly monitored. Regional state administrative agencies and local municipalities are responsible for monitoring ECEC settings and pre-primary education settings. As a result, monitoring practices differ between regions and municipalities. Minimum standards regarding staff-child ratios, health, hygiene and safety regulations, and staff qualifications are monitored and inspected at the municipal level. Inspections address staff quality and focus on the overall quality of the staff, use of materials, planning and time management, implementation of the curriculum, staff qualifications, teamwork and communication among staff and management, working conditions, and professional development opportunities. Internal self-assessments of staff performance are common in Finland, although the tools and instruments used for these are not prescribed and differ between settings.

Finnish settings most commonly use narrative assessments and observational tools to monitor children's development. Finland generally has a broad focus when observing and documenting children's development, ranging from literacy and numeracy skills to motor, socio-emotional and health development as well as children's well-being. Finland puts strong emphases on non-cognitive skills, because there are no goals targeted at children's learning in areas such as literacy or numeracy.

While Finland implements a wide range of practices to monitor quality in ECEC, several challenges remain. Firstly, there is no shared perspective for quality in ECEC. Setting out clear quality goals in a framework can overcome this. Secondly, Finland has no national monitoring system. Developing a national quality framework and standardising certain monitoring tools can create greater coherence in Finland's monitoring system. And thirdly, there is limited training on monitoring available which indicates a need for more in-service or on-the-job training.

The monitoring quality in ECEC country note for Finland is based on findings presented in the report of OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* that covers 24 OECD member and non-member economies. A separate OECD (2016) [Starting Strong IV Early Childhood Education and Care Data Country Note: Finland](#) provides an overview of ECEC policy inputs, outputs and outcomes in Finland.

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## Key messages

- **Finland has an integrated ECEC system, with one authority responsible for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).** At the same time, **responsibilities for monitoring have been decentralised to the municipalities.** Standard setting, financing and curriculum design for ECEC are also shared between different levels of government.
- **Service and staff quality are monitored for a variety of reasons:** accountability purposes (without sanctions or rewards), to inform policy making, to improve the level of service and staff quality and stimulate children's development, and to identify learning needs for both staff in children.
- **Inspections for service quality are usually published at the local level and primarily focus on structural aspects:** compliance with regulations regarding health, hygiene and safety regulations, staff-child ratios, and minimum staff qualifications.
- **A broad range of tools are used for inspections,** including: rating scales, checklists, observations, results of self-evaluations (if any are conducted), and staff and parental surveys.
- **Staff performance is monitored through inspections and self-evaluations.** Inspections focus on staff qualifications, but may also look at teamwork and communication between staff, work conditions, process quality, planning, and knowledge of subjects. Self-evaluation tools differ between municipalities or settings in Finland.
- **Frequency of monitoring service and staff quality is not regulated** and differs by municipalities.
- **Children's development and outcomes are mainly monitored to improve the quality of the setting, identify staff learning needs and enhance staff performance.** Monitoring also aims to identify children's learning needs and stimulate their development.
- **Finland takes children's views into account when monitoring quality and commonly makes use of narrative assessments to monitor child development,** such as storytelling instruments and portfolios, and **observational tools,** such as rating scales and checklists. There is no national testing of children in Finland.
- **There are several monitoring challenges in Finland.** These include the lack of a shared perspective on what quality in ECEC encompasses. Setting out clear, comprehensive, explicit quality goals in a framework can contribute to a mutual understanding of quality. In addition, Finland has no national monitoring system as monitoring is implemented at local level. Developing a national quality framework and standardising monitoring tools can help create more coherence in monitoring practices. Lastly, there is limited training on monitoring available which calls for a greater training offer on the implementation of monitoring practices.

## Introduction

The data and information in this country note for Finland are based on findings from the OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* report that covers 24 OECD member and non-member economies, the OECD Network on ECEC's Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development that was conducted in 2013 and validated in

2014/15.<sup>1</sup> A separate OECD (2016) [Starting Strong IV Early Childhood Education and Care Data Country Note: Finland](#) provides an overview of ECEC policy inputs, outputs and outcomes in Finland.

This country note primarily aims to provide opportunities for peer-learning by highlighting Finland's policies and practices for monitoring quality in ECEC settings and describing what other countries are doing in this area. It informs policy makers and the general public of the current international standing of Finland regarding key areas of monitoring quality in ECEC, of the types of challenges for Finland in monitoring quality, which have been identified by the OECD ECEC team in close consultation with the Finnish colleagues. It also provides insights from other countries to understand various approaches and practices used for monitoring quality.

This note distinguishes between the monitoring practices of three key aspects of quality: 1) service quality; 2) staff quality and performance; and 3) child development and outcomes. Some jurisdictions monitor all three aspects and some monitor only one. Sometimes aspects are integrated into the monitoring tool of another aspect, for example, curriculum implementation can be monitored when evaluating quality at a more general service level, or when assessing staff performance; and monitoring general staff performance can be part of the service quality evaluation procedure. Therefore, aspects of ECEC quality that are monitored are not mutually exclusive (see also Litjens, 2013).

In line with previous reports from the Starting Strong series, the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) “includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content” (OECD, 2015: 19). There are five types of ECEC setting in Finland. One is home-based family day care for all children below the age of 6, and there are four types of centre-based ECEC provisions, including: group family day care for all 0-6 year-olds, ECEC centres for 0-6 year-olds, open ECEC settings for 0-6 year-olds, and pre-primary education for 6-year-olds.

In this country note, Finland is compared with Ireland, New Zealand and Norway. These three countries were selected by Finland for specific country comparison. The settings covered in this note include full day care settings for Ireland, centre-based provisions (including education and care services for 0-5 year-olds, and kindergartens for 2-5 year-olds), playcentres for 0-5 years, and home-based care for 0-5 year-olds in New Zealand, and kindergartens (integrated age settings for 0-6 years) in Norway.

This country note first provides a review of key findings from the research literature, focusing on studies that examine how monitoring practices contribute to quality improvement, specifically in the areas of service quality, staff quality, curriculum implementation and child development and outcomes. The remaining sections focus on Finland's monitoring policies and practices, in comparison with Ireland, New Zealand and Norway. The sections address how quality is defined, the purposes of monitoring quality, areas and scope of monitoring, responsibility for monitoring, and approaches and procedures. The final part of the country note looks at the challenges for Finland and policy approaches that other countries have taken when tackling these issues.

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1. For the purpose of comparability across all participating countries the information collection underlying this report focused on the mainstream provision and therefore – in line with the work on ECEC by the European Commission (Eurydice) – excludes the information on settings providing services to children with special needs only, settings integrated into hospitals (and all other ECEC services targeting children with disabilities attributable to organic pathologies), orphanages or similar institutions. Responding countries and jurisdictions were asked to use, where possible, the school year starting in 2012 as a reference year for reporting statistics and data. Further information about the questionnaire and compiling procedures can be found in the full report (see OECD, 2015).

## Monitoring matters: Overview of research findings

- There is a significant body of research that shows the benefits of quality ECEC for child development (OECD, 2006). This body of research emphasises that the benefits of high quality ECEC are important for all children's outcomes, with evidence especially strong for disadvantaged children.
- Definitions of "quality" may differ between countries as it is a value- and cultural-based concept, and any definition of quality is subject to change over time (Kamerman, 2001). Service quality is usually defined by a set of structural (e.g. staff-child ratios) and process indicators (e.g. the quality of staff-child interactions) that contribute to practices that are markers of settings and staff performance.
- Staff quality is often linked to pre-defined criteria or professional standards (Rosenkvist, 2010). Child development encompasses various domains such as socio-emotional skills, health, motor skills, early numeracy, literacy and language skills. Quality indicators for children's development may be linked to pre-defined outcomes for different ages, learning standards, developmental goals or curriculum objectives. These outcomes can also be used over time to define the effectiveness of a setting and its staff (Rosenkvist, 2010).
- Service quality (including curriculum implementation), staff quality and child outcomes can be monitored using various practices and tools. It is often difficult to elicit the causality between monitoring and actual quality improvements; for instance, improvements in service quality are more likely to be the result of numerous policy developments.

### *Effects of monitoring service quality*

Overall, research supports the idea that monitoring and evaluation contributes to improvements in the quality of ECEC services (Litjens, 2013). Without monitoring, it is difficult to ensure that services are meeting their goals and aims (Cubey and Dalli, 1996). Studies show that monitoring quality can be associated with increased programme quality, for example, adopting higher standards can lead to improved ratings for settings (Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2010; RAND, 2008).

There are a number of tools that can be used to monitor service quality, such as checklists, parental surveys, and rating scales. In the United States, ratings scales are frequently used to monitor quality. Some research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of rating scales, for example, the validity of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) (a rating scale) has been studied for its role as a tool to improve childcare quality. The study found that among providers using QRIS, service quality improved over time (Zellman et al., 2008). However, others studies have suggested that extensive co-ordination across services, agencies and data systems is required to attain this goal (Tout et al., 2009).

The effects of monitoring curriculum implementation are complex and although some studies indicate that such practices can lead to better staff quality and staff-child interactions (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2012), there is a clear gap in research about how the monitoring of curriculum implementation interacts with other monitoring practices of service and staff quality (OECD, 2012, Østrem et al., 2009).

### *Effects of monitoring staff quality*

The literature indicates that the quality of staff and their pedagogical activities have a large impact on children's well-being and development. It also suggests that the effective monitoring of staff quality is central to their professional development and improvement of ECEC services (Fukkink, 2011; OECD, 2012). From this research, however, it is difficult to draw wider conclusions about the impacts of monitoring staff quality (Litjens, 2013).

Monitoring staff quality usually involves observations or self-evaluations in combination with the use of rating scales, checklists or portfolios, and can be part of monitoring service quality (Isoré, 2009). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in centre-based preschool classrooms. It was found that the CLASS observation tool can help teachers and schools improve the quality of their interactions with students as it identifies what interactions are rated higher and provides an opportunity to identify what practices they can improve (CASTL, 2011).

Studies show that self-evaluation can be an effective tool to support professional development and increase the quality of the service (Picchio et al., 2012). Self-reflection processes enable staff to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (Isoré, 2009; Cubey and Dalli, 1996), and lead to a greater awareness of ongoing activities and pedagogical processes (Sheridan, 2001).

In Belgium, a process-orientated self-evaluation instrument for staff in care settings contributed to staff professional development and teamwork. However, findings from research in the United Kingdom were more ambiguous, concluding that there needed to be more emphasis on how providers implement self-assessment procedures and initiate changes in their practice (Munton, Mooney and Rowland, 1997).

### *Effects of monitoring child development outcomes*

Research indicates that monitoring child development and outcomes can play an important role in improving teacher practices and service provision. Researchers emphasise the need for age-appropriate monitoring tools and for the assessment of development to be ongoing rather than at a particular point in time. This is because the development of young children evolves at a rapid pace and ongoing monitoring can more accurately capture how a child is developing (Meisels and Atkins-Burnett, 2000; NICHD, 2002).

The results from monitoring child development can foster staff interactions with children and facilitate the adaptation of curricula and standards to meet children's needs (Litjens, 2013). There is some evidence of positive relationships between the use of non-formal monitoring practices such as observation, documentation through portfolios or narrative assessments, and improved child outcomes (Bagnato, 2005; Grisham-Brown, 2008; Meisels et al., 2003; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004).

Capturing children's skills and abilities at a single moment in time is a challenging proposition (Zaslow, Calkins and Halle, 2000). Brain sensitivity is higher and development more rapid in the period from birth to age eight than at later periods. To assess individual children's abilities in different domains, it is recommended that child outcomes are based on multiple sources of information, rather than single tests or monitoring practices, especially if assessment results are used for high-stakes decisions and tracking at an early age (NAEYC, 2010; Waterman et al., 2012).

### *Representing children's views in monitoring*

The importance of considering the view of the child in monitoring the quality of ECEC provision has been established, but more research and reflection on the validity of instruments and results and their effective implementation is needed (Meisels, 2007; NAEYC, 2010; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004). Research on children's self-perception suggests that their perceptions can provide information on their development in areas such as academic competence, achievement motivation, social competence, peer acceptance, and depression and aggression, which are also important areas for staff evaluations and monitoring of their performance (Measelle et al., 1998).

### *Summary*

As indicated above, the literature indicates that it is critical to monitor quality at both system and service level. Recent research studies provide some indication that monitoring the quality of settings,

staff and children's outcomes can lead to higher quality service provision. However, the literature also reveals some gaps and complexities in making causal links between monitoring practices and quality improvements. Further research into the effectiveness of monitoring tools across the three monitoring areas will provide a greater evidence base to help countries enhance quality in these areas.

## Monitoring quality: Where Finland stands in international comparison

### *How quality is defined in Finland*

Quality encompasses all the features of children's environments and experiences that are assumed to benefit their well-being and development (Litjens, 2013). These features include the use of a curriculum, staff characteristics, teacher or care giver behaviours and practices, and staff-child interactions, often referred to as process quality. Quality also includes structural features of ECEC settings, such as space, group size and safety standards (OECD, 2006; 2012). The literature points out that the definitions of quality differ between countries as it is a value- and cultural-based concept, meaning that definitions of quality tend to change over time (Kammerman, 2001). Most jurisdictions that participated in the *Starting Strong IV* study set out their definition of ECEC quality in their curricula or legislation. Alternatively they may set out quality expectations through minimum requirements or educational or developmental objectives for staff to achieve.

Quality in Finland is, like in most countries, implicitly defined through the minimum regulatory standards in place, which set out what aspects Finland regards as important for quality. Finland sets high expectations for the level of quality in ECEC and has high minimum staff qualifications, one of the most favourable staff-child ratios in OECD countries (OECD, 2012), and high requirements for safety and health and hygiene. Finland sets out its objectives for ECEC in the national curriculum guidelines for early childhood education and care (for 0-6 year-olds) and the core curriculum for preschool education (for 6-year-olds). These frameworks aim to provide uniform principles for high-quality activities, with a strong focus on what is expected from staff. In addition, the guidelines aim to enhance parental engagement in ECEC and stimulate co-operation with other early childhood services. Each municipality uses the frameworks to draft its own specific guidelines and local curriculum to meet the needs of their municipality and population (STAKES, 2005).<sup>2</sup> These frameworks complement the regulatory standards in setting out how quality in ECEC is defined in Finland.

In Ireland, quality is defined through regulations, a national quality framework, and a national curriculum framework. The Child Care (Preschool Services) (No 2) Regulations of 2006 govern early years services. They are deemed to be minimum requirements and have a strong focus on structural quality and health, safety, and the well-being of children aged 0-6 years. The regulations cover the health, welfare and development of the child, and management and staffing, among others. Ireland's quality framework for early years settings, *Siolta*, defines aspects that Ireland regards as important in providing quality education and care. It sets out the principles of ensuring a quality experience for early childhood education and consists of 16 standards and 75 components of quality. The standards cover topics such as the rights of the child, environments, play and curriculum. The framework is accompanied by a quality assurance programme that has been implemented in a small number of early years settings with the aim of helping settings enhance their level of quality. Participating settings undergo a process of self-evaluation, reflection, planning and implementing changes. With support from a professional mentor, settings are also required to develop a portfolio that describes and collects evidence of the quality of their practice. Based on the evaluation, good practices are identified and guidance is given to strengthen practices and further improve the level of quality.

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2. The National Board of Education has been in charge of curriculum development in Finland since August 2015.

In New Zealand, regulations indicate that all ECEC settings in the country have to implement *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum framework. The regulations, in combination with the curriculum framework, provide an indication of what constitutes quality for New Zealand. This is consistent with the majority of OECD jurisdictions, including Finland, where quality is defined implicitly through legislation or curriculum. The early childhood curriculum framework describes outcomes for ECE settings in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and gives staff pedagogical guidance on how these can be achieved.

In Norway quality is defined through legislation (the Kindergarten Act, *Barnehageloven*) and the country’s Framework Plan (*Rammeplan for barnehagens innhold o oppgaver*), which provides guidance on the content and pedagogical practices of kindergartens (OECD, 2015).

In some countries or municipalities quality is defined at the local rather than at the national level through national legislation or a national curriculum.

**Why countries monitor the quality of services, staff and child development**

Countries reported various reasons for monitoring ECEC service and staff quality. Common reasons included: accountability with and without sanction or reward, informing policy making, informing the general public, improving the level of service quality, improving staff performance, identifying learning needs for staff, and enhancing child development and identifying children’s learning needs. In all countries, improving service quality is the main purpose for monitoring both service and staff quality, followed by informing policy making. Monitoring service and staff quality is not usually conducted in order to identify learning needs for children or for accountability purposes without any sanctions or rewards. It is common to monitor service quality to inform the general public, including the users of ECEC settings, while this is fairly uncommon in monitoring staff performance (see Figure 1 and 2).

**Figure 1. Purposes of monitoring service quality**



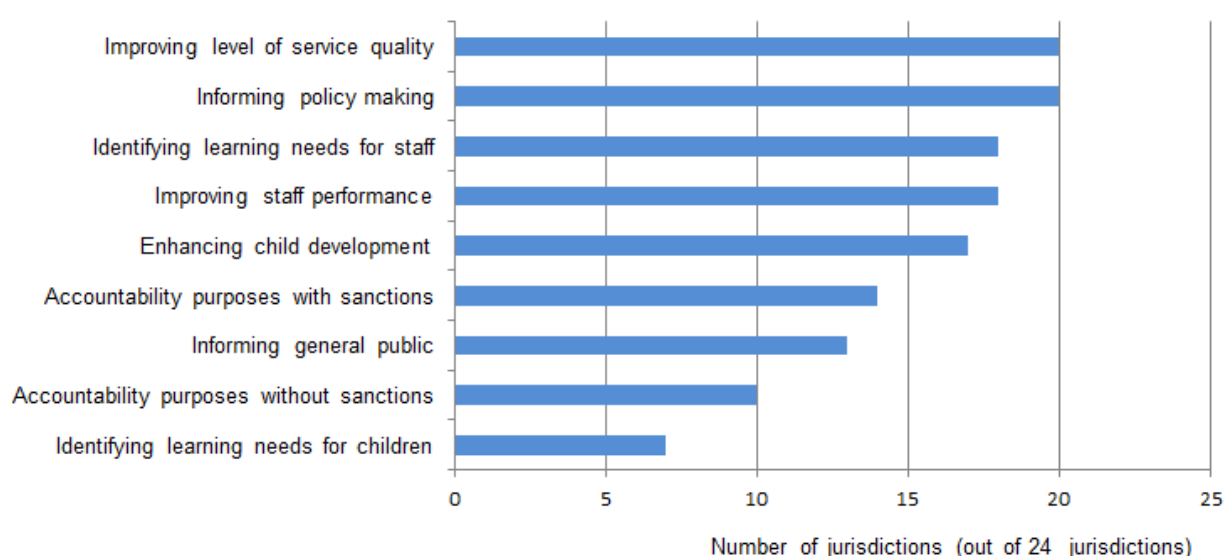
Note: Purposes of monitoring service quality are ranked in descending order of the number of times they are cited by jurisdictions.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 3.1, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243059>.



In Finland, Ireland and Norway, the purposes for monitoring service quality are similar to those for monitoring staff quality. Finland, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway all monitor for accountability purposes, although in Finland it is without sanctions or rewards. In addition, all four jurisdictions monitor service and staff quality to inform policy making, improve the level of service quality, and enhance child development. Finland and Norway stand out in that they also monitor service quality to identify the learning needs of children. Finland also monitors service quality to enhance staff performance (as do New Zealand and Norway), to identify the learning needs of staff, and to identify the learning needs of children (as does Norway). Norway also monitors staff quality to analyse what training needs staff may have. New Zealand monitors service quality for a wide range of purposes that are mostly in line with those of Finland, but its main aims are to identify the training needs of staff and to enhance staff performance.

**Figure 2. Purposes of monitoring staff quality**



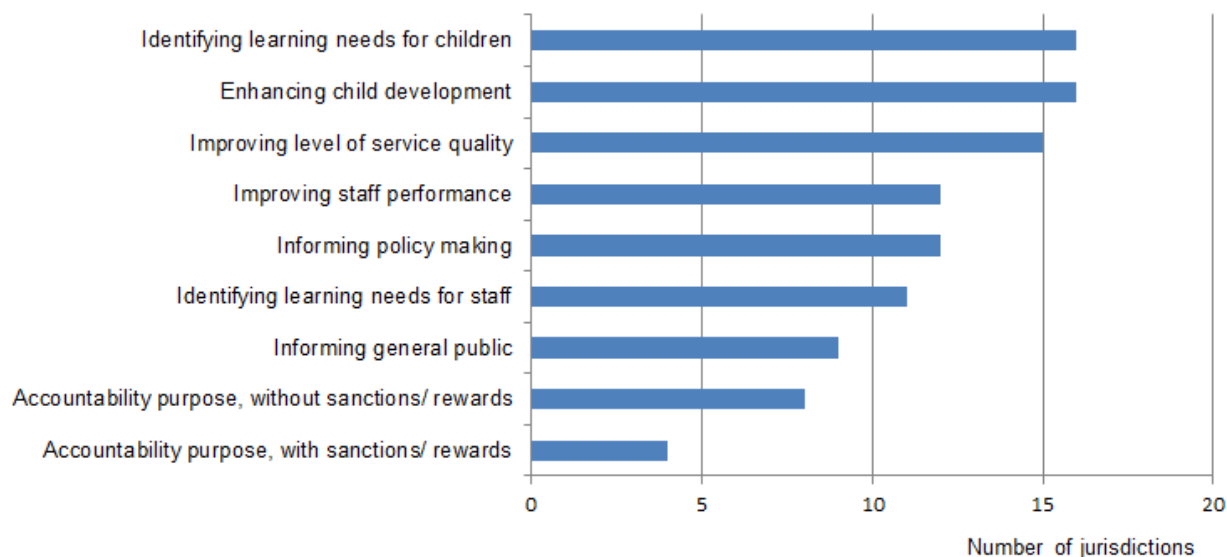
Note: Purposes of monitoring staff quality are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdictions that cited these purposes.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 4.1 OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243203>.

While the research literature suggests that child development outcomes are not usually used as a way of monitoring quality, many countries do monitor child development for various purposes. In line with the potential benefits suggested by research, the most commonly named reason for monitoring child development and outcomes is to enhance child development (16 jurisdictions out of 24), to identify the learning needs for children (16) and to improve the level of service quality (15).

Finland, New Zealand and Norway monitor child development to enhance service quality and identify children's learning needs in order to provide them with additional support when needed. Finland also monitors child development to improve staff performance and enhance child development (as does Norway), and to identify areas in which staff may need some training or support (as in New Zealand) (see Figure 3 for a complete overview of purposes). Ireland indicated that the monitoring of children's development is done at the setting level, which means that no information on child monitoring in Ireland is available.

Figure 3. Purposes of monitoring children's development



Note: Purposes of monitoring child development are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdictions that cited these purposes.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 5.1. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243334>.

### Monitoring practices

Countries use various approaches and practices for monitoring service quality, staff quality and child development. The practices used for monitoring service and staff quality can be either external or internal. The external monitoring of quality is done by an external agency, evaluator or office that is not part of the ECEC setting being monitored. In Finland, due to the decentralised system where the responsibility for monitoring is at the regional and municipal level, regional state administrative agencies are responsible for conducting inspections, together with the municipalities and settings. Inspections are conducted when a complaint or problem has been identified in an ECEC setting.

In Norway, municipalities are responsible for carrying out inspections. This is similar to Germany's monitoring system. In Ireland and New Zealand, a national agency is responsible for conducting external evaluations or inspections: in Ireland, this is the Child and Family Agency (for full day care services); and in New Zealand it is the Education Review Office (ERO) for all ECEC settings. Internal monitoring practices are conducted by evaluators who also work in the setting, such as managers and practitioners. Internal evaluations for service quality are common in Norway and New Zealand, and for staff quality in Finland, New Zealand and Norway.

External monitoring practices include: inspections, surveys and peer reviews (when conducted by, for example, a teacher from another ECEC setting). Internal practices include: self-evaluations, peer reviews, and tests for staff (for staff quality only). External inspections and internal self-evaluations are the most common methods or practices used to monitor service and staff quality. Finland, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway all conduct external inspections. However, in New Zealand these only focus on service quality, whereas in the other three countries they also cover overall staff and service quality (see Table 1). Many countries use self-assessments to monitor service and/or staff quality, including Finland (for staff quality), New Zealand (for both) and Norway (for both). New Zealand indicated that staff appraisal reviews, indicated as peer reviews in the table below, are commonly conducted by leaders or managers, while in Finland parental surveys are used to monitor service quality.

**Table 1. Monitoring practices for service and staff quality**

	External practices			Internal practices		
	Inspections	Surveys	Peer reviews	Peer reviews	Tests for staff	Self-assessment/evaluation
<b>Finland</b>	X	X (Service)				X (Staff)
<b>Ireland</b>	X					
<b>New Zealand</b>	X (Service)			X (Staff)		X
<b>Norway</b>	X	X (Service)				X

*Notes:* In Finland, external monitoring practices take the form of inspections only in response to complaints. For internal monitoring practices, municipalities make the decision themselves, although self-assessments are frequently implemented. In New Zealand, external inspections of service quality, but not staff quality, are conducted. Peer reviews refer to staff appraisal reviews of ECEC staff conducted by leaders and/or managers.

*Sources:* OECD (2013), Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, Network on ECEC, OECD, Paris OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, Table 3.2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243065> and Table 4.2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243213>.

Direct assessments, observational tools and narrative assessments are commonly used to monitor child development. Direct assessments test children at a certain point in time, while narrative assessments, and usually observational tools, monitor children's development on an ongoing basis. In Finland, child development is monitored at the municipal and setting level. The practices implemented to monitor children's development are decided at the setting level, although narrative assessments and observational tools are commonly used. New Zealand mostly uses narrative assessments, such as learning story frameworks and portfolios. In Norway and Ireland, the practices implemented to assess child development are decided at the setting level and therefore differ between regions and provisions (OECD, 2015).

### *Areas and scope of monitoring*

There are a number of different aspects or areas that can be monitored in relation to service<sup>3</sup> and staff quality.<sup>4</sup> When monitoring child development, other aspects more directly related to outcomes, skills, and aptitudes a child can develop are monitored. These include language and literacy skills, numeracy skills, socio-emotional skills, motor skills, autonomy, creative skills, practical skills, health development, well-being, science skills, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills.

### *Service quality*

All jurisdictions indicated that regulatory aspects of service quality are monitored during inspections. Safety regulations are most frequently monitored (in 23 out of 24 jurisdictions), followed by health and hygiene regulations (22) and staff qualifications (22). Staff-child ratios (21) and space requirements (19) are also commonly monitored. Working conditions are not frequently monitored as part of service quality. Finland is the only country of the four that does not commonly monitor the planning of work, or staff and financial resource management during inspections (see Table 2).

3. For service quality, these aspects are: staff-child ratios, indoor/outdoor space, health and/or hygiene and safety regulations, learning and play materials, minimum staff qualifications, planning of work and staff, the working conditions for staff, implementation of the curriculum, human resource management and financial resource management.

4. For staff quality, these aspects are: staff qualifications, process quality, use of materials, time management, knowledge of subjects, overall quality of teaching/caring, teamwork and communication skills, communication between staff and parents, management and leadership, working conditions, professional development opportunities and child outcomes.

Table 2. Aspects of service quality monitored through inspections

Jurisdiction	Type of setting	Staff-child ratios	Indoor/outdoor space	Health and/or hygiene regulations	Safety regulations	Learning and play material in use	Minimum staff qualifications	Planning of work/staff	Working conditions	Curriculum implementation	Human resource management	Financial resource management
<b>Finland</b>	All ECEC settings	X		X	X		X					
<b>Ireland</b>	Full day care	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
<b>New Zealand*</b>	All ECEC settings	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<b>Norway</b>	All ECEC settings	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X

Note: \*For New Zealand, data on inspections refer to the inspections conducted by ERO and do not refer to the inspections conducted by the Ministry of Education for licensing purposes. The aspects monitored through inspections for licensing purposes are different. In New Zealand, ERO has evaluation indicators in place for its reviews of education and care centres, kindergartens and playcentres. ERO also has separate evaluation indicators for its reviews of *Kōhanga Reo* (Maori language nests). ERO has recently revised its evaluation indicators for reviews of home-based services and is in the process of revising its indicators for hospital-based early childhood services.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 3.3, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243071>.

All four countries monitor staff-child ratios, health and hygiene regulations, safety requirements and minimum staff qualifications. Finland's inspections have a strong focus on regulatory aspects. Inspections in the other three countries commonly focus on additional aspects, including financial resource management and planning of work. Ireland and Norway monitor space requirements, while Ireland and New Zealand commonly inspect the learning materials in use and human resource management. New Zealand and Norway also pay attention to curriculum implementation. Similar aspects to inspections may be monitored during self-evaluations, although they usually pay stronger attention to communication among staff members and with parents, and collaborations (OECD, 2015).

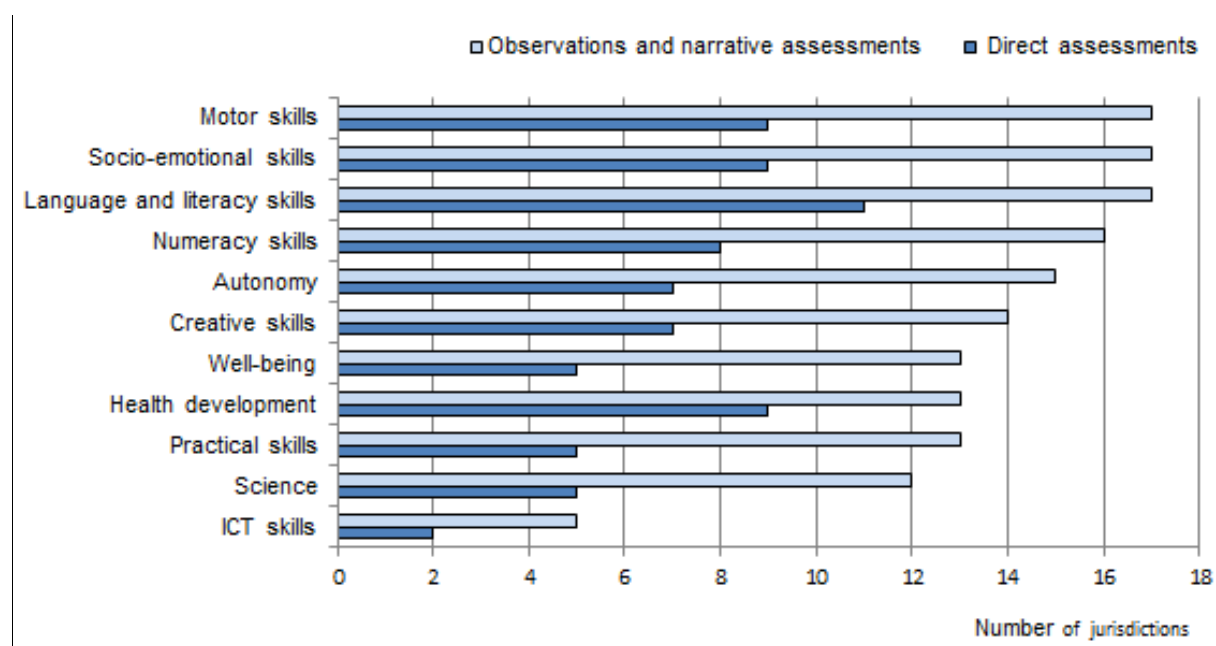
### Staff quality

Staff quality is monitored at the municipal level in Finland and monitoring generally has a broad focus, such as:—process quality, the implementation of the curriculum, overall quality of teaching and teamwork and communication among staff. It also addresses the use of materials, time management and planning, and staff knowledge of subjects. Finland is also one of few countries where inspections commonly monitor working conditions and professional development opportunities for staff. In New Zealand, ERO monitors early childhood services' systems and processes for performance management of staff, including staff appraisal. ERO does not conduct individual staff assessments, which are conducted internally in ECEC settings, but it does investigate the quality of the systems and processes for staff appraisal. Any matters of compliance are reported to the Education Council, which is responsible for teacher registration and ongoing certification. The performance appraisal system in an ECEC setting focuses on the implementation of the curriculum, the overall quality of teaching and instruction, teamwork and communication, communication between staff and parents, management and leadership, and overall process quality. Norway's inspections of overall staff quality focus on fewer aspects: staff qualifications, curriculum implementation, overall quality of teaching and caring, and management and leadership. Ireland's inspections of staff quality focus mainly on staff qualifications (OECD, 2015).

### Child development and outcomes

Among the participating countries, the most common aspects of child development monitored are language and literacy, socio-emotional skills and motor skills. Language and literacy skills are more commonly monitored through direct assessments than socio-emotional and motor skills. Observations and narrative assessments, rather than direct assessments, are more likely to be used to assess children's development. At the setting level in Finland, all areas of child development (listed in Figure 4), except for ICT skills, are commonly monitored. In Norway, all areas may be monitored but will vary across municipalities. In New Zealand and Ireland, the areas assessed vary by setting and within settings.

**Figure 4. Areas of early child development monitored, by monitoring method**



Notes: Developmental areas are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdictions that cited observations and narrative assessments to monitor development areas.

Information on the use of direct assessments and observations and narrative assessments to monitor developmental areas is based on 21 jurisdictions.

Sources: OECD (2013), Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, OECD Network on ECEC, Table A5.1, OECD, Paris; OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Chart 5.3, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243423>.

### Monitoring system design, responsibilities and evaluator training

#### Design

Various stakeholders are involved in the design and monitoring of ECEC services. These generally involve the ministry in charge of ECEC (national or regional), an independent national agency, and/or local authorities.

In Finland, there is no one single national monitoring system in place; municipalities themselves are responsible for developing their own monitoring system. However, Finland acknowledges the importance of a national monitoring system, and the new ECEC Act (*Varhaiskasvatustaki*), which came into effect in August 2015, indicates that all ECEC settings should be internally and externally evaluated at the municipal and setting level. The National Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) has been responsible for planning national evaluations of ECEC since August 2015 (Act on ECEC).

In Norway, municipalities hold overall responsibility for developing monitoring systems, however, the Ministry of Education and Research develops guidance material on the process of the inspections. In New Zealand, ERO designed the monitoring system in consultation with the Ministry of Education. ERO is responsible for evaluating and publicly reporting on the quality of education and care of children in all New Zealand schools and early childhood services. ERO has an ongoing programme to review its evaluation methodologies. In 2012-13 it revised its methodology for centre-based services, and it has recently reviewed its methodology for reviews of home-based education and care services. It is currently revising the way it reviews hospital-based education and care services, which are a small but unique part of its ECE sector. The current Irish monitoring system is designed by the Child and Family Agency, the body responsible for ensuring compliance with the legislation. The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education forms the basis of the monitoring system. It was developed in 2006 by the then Centre for Early Childhood Development in Education, which was an agency under the Department of Education and Skills. This national quality framework document frames the quality standards, regulations and components on which inspections are based and to which each ECEC setting must adhere.

### *Responsibility*

Among the 24 participating countries and jurisdictions, half have integrated systems of governance for ECEC, and half have split systems of governance. In integrated systems, the responsibilities for childcare and early learning are within one ministry or authority, and ECEC services generally provide integrated care and education. In split systems, the responsibilities for childcare (usually for children 0 to 3 years) and early education (generally for children aged 3 or 4 and above) are split between different ministries or authorities. There also tend to be different providers for childcare and early education. Finland, New Zealand and Norway have an integrated ECEC system, with one ministry responsible for ECEC. Ireland has a split system, where the Department of Health and Children is responsible for all children below the age of 4 in ECEC, and the Department of Education and Science is responsible for 4-6 year-olds in ECEC. Responsibilities for certain aspects of ECEC, such as financing or curriculum development, are often at the regional or local authority level.

In Finland and Norway, responsibilities are shared between the central and municipal levels. Standard setting is done at the national (central) level in Finland, while responsibilities for financing and curriculum development are shared between the national and municipal level. The curriculum frameworks in Finland are designed at the national level but municipalities and all public and private ECEC settings are required by law to adopt, and adapt, the national curriculum framework and guidelines. In Ireland and New Zealand, responsibility for certain aspects of ECEC quality (financing, minimum standard setting, curriculum development and monitoring of quality) are held at the central government level. In New Zealand, ERO is responsible for monitoring all types of ECEC services. ERO largely recruits review officers (evaluators) from the education sector who have a background in management/leadership and/or teaching in schools or early childhood services. In Ireland, the Health Authority is the regulatory body responsible for setting standards, and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (under the Department of Education) is responsible for curriculum development.

Funding for monitoring ECEC services in OECD countries comes from a mix of public and private sources. Public funding can be from national, regional or local/municipal governments. In some countries, the funding sources for monitoring quality differ depending on the type of setting. In Finland, the National Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) has been responsible for national evaluations of ECEC since August 2015, and funding for monitoring comes from national public funding. However, evaluations of individual settings, planned and conducted by themselves, remain the responsibility of municipalities and are funded at the municipal level. In Ireland and New Zealand, the monitoring of ECEC is financed by public funding at the central level (OECD, 2015).

### Qualification and training of evaluators

Research suggests that evaluators need to receive training to apply monitoring practices and tools to ensure these are properly understood, and that practices result in consistent and objective judgments (Waterman et al., 2012).

In the vast majority of jurisdictions, pre-service education or training, on-the-job training or other types of training are offered to evaluators. Two-thirds of jurisdictions (16) reported that external assessors/evaluators receive on-the-job or in-service training. Training for assessors can focus on various skills or aspects of ECEC. Finland does not provide specific training for external or internal assessors/evaluators (see Table 3). Some evaluators have specific formal training, but it is not systematic. In New Zealand, ERO places a strong emphasis on the importance of continuous learning and ERO evaluators receive on-the-job or in-service professional learning and development. Evaluators also have the opportunity to undertake further tertiary-level study in evaluation. ECEC professionals and managers with evaluator roles also receive evaluation training, although this training differs from the training for ERO evaluators. Norway prepares external evaluators mainly through on-the-job training, while staff are prepared for evaluations during their pre-service education programme (OECD, 2015).

**Table 3. Training of external and internal evaluators**

		No, not specifically	Yes, through pre-service education/training	Yes, through on-the-job or in-service training
<b>Finland</b>	External assessors	X		
	Internal assessors	X		
<b>Ireland</b>	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors	a		
<b>New Zealand</b>	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors			X
<b>Norway</b>	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors		X	

Notes: In Finland, some evaluators have some evaluation training, but the training is not systematic at the national or municipal levels. In Ireland, internal evaluations are not commonly used, although as part of the new *Síolta* National Quality Framework, settings will implement self-evaluations. However, this has only been implemented in a small number of settings so far.

Sources: OECD (2013), OECD Network on ECEC's Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, OECD, Paris; OECD (2015) Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), OECD Publishing, Paris, Tables A2.4 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243001> and Table A2.6 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243026>.

### Implementation of monitoring practices

#### Monitoring tools (instruments)

##### Service quality

The main practices used to monitor service quality are external evaluations/inspections and parental surveys, as well as internal self-evaluations. There are various tools that can be used to carry out these practices.

In Finland, data collection instruments are not prescribed and therefore differ between municipalities or ECEC settings. In Norway, surveys taken by inspectors, checklists and parental surveys are commonly used in combination with interviews and analysis of internal documentation. Ireland and New Zealand both commonly use interviews and observations. In New Zealand this is complemented by results of self-evaluations, and, in Ireland by checklists and analysis of internal documentation (OECD, 2015).

Internal evaluation is often used in combination with external evaluation/inspections to monitor service quality, which is the case in New Zealand and Norway. There are various internal evaluation tools used to monitor service quality across ECEC settings. The most common self-evaluation tools are self-reported questionnaires/surveys (12), self-reflection reports/journals (12), checklists (11), and portfolios (8). Video feedback is used in three jurisdictions: the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Sweden. The data collection processes or instruments used to carry out internal evaluations in New Zealand vary across settings. This is also the case in Norway, where individual settings have discretion to determine which collection processes or tools are used.

### Staff quality

In many countries staff quality is monitored in the same way as service quality and includes a mix of external and internal practices. However, there can also be differences in the focus, aspects monitored and instruments used.

External monitoring and evaluation practices of staff quality include inspections, parental surveys, and peer reviews. Similar to the monitoring of service quality, inspections (external evaluations) of staff quality are undertaken in all 24 jurisdictions. In Finland, no instruments or tools to monitor staff quality are prescribed (as with service quality) at the national level and the instruments used to monitor staff quality are decided by municipalities or settings.

Internal monitoring procedures are also conducted for staff quality. In Finland, Norway and New Zealand, self-assessments are commonly used to monitor staff performance. Tools or instruments for self-evaluations differ between municipalities or settings in Finland. In New Zealand, peer reviews conducted by managers and leaders are used. In New Zealand, ERO reviews the systems for staff appraisal in ECEC settings, but does not evaluate the performance of individual staff. The monitoring of individual staff quality in New Zealand is conducted at the setting-level, and teacher criteria indicate which requirements staff should meet. The evaluation processes used for peer reviews in New Zealand are: observations, results of the staff member's self-evaluation, analysis of staff documentation, and portfolios prepared by staff. Peer reviews are not commonly used in Ireland, Norway and Finland. Portfolios are used for staff self-evaluations in New Zealand, together with self-reflection reports or journals. In Norway, portfolios are also commonly used during internal staff evaluations, alongside self-reported questionnaires, checklists, and video feedback (OECD, 2015).

### Child development

Across participating countries, monitoring child development and outcomes is mostly done through internal practices, with an important role also taken by external agencies. This is in line with the fact that in many countries, the monitoring of child development and outcomes takes place more frequently than in other areas, often on a continuous basis or several times per year. The three main tools used to monitor child development are: 1) direct assessments (tests of children and screening); 2) narrative assessments (storytelling and portfolios); and 3) observational tools (rating scales and checklists). As Table 4 shows, there is some variation in the combination of tools used.

The majority of jurisdictions use observational tools (primarily checklists), however these often vary by type of ECEC setting. Narrative assessments are also common, while direct assessments through testing and screening are used less often. Finland reports using both narrative assessments and observational tools, although the tools used in practice are determined by individual settings and municipalities. In Norway, settings can decide which instruments they use to monitor children's assessment. In New Zealand, portfolios and storytelling methods are most commonly used to assess and monitor child development. Direct assessments through testing are not used in any of these four countries (OECD, 2015). In Ireland, no instruments and tools are prescribed for monitoring child development and no data on the most common tools used is available at national level.



Table 4. Child development monitoring tools in place, by country

Country	Direct assessments		Narrative assessments		Observational tools	
	Tests for children	Screening	Storytelling	Portfolios	Rating scales	Checklists
<b>Finland*</b>			X	X	X	X
<b>Ireland</b>	a					
<b>New Zealand</b>			X	X		
<b>Norway**</b>	Settings decide what tools to use					

Notes: \*In Finland, all monitoring tools/instruments of child development are used, but municipalities decide what to use, and there is no standard national test for children. \*\*In Norway, narrative assessments and observational tools are most common. Direct assessments are mostly used outside ECEC settings, in health checks or special needs assessment.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 5.2, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243347>.

Finland provides an interesting example of how monitoring children's views can be used to inform policy making. As part of the development of a new law in Finland, 48 children across the country were interviewed in their ECEC setting, either by their own teachers or other staff. These interviews sought to reveal how children experience their ordinary days and practices in ECEC, and what meaning they attribute to different elements of, and items in, ECEC. To express their opinions on ECEC, children took photographs, made drawings and, on this basis, discussed with staff what they appreciate in ECEC and what they do not like and would like to change. For the Ministry, this represented valuable feedback from the users of the ECEC services, which contributed to their evaluation (OECD, 2015).

### *Frequency*

Service quality is generally monitored a set number of times by the responsible monitoring body. Frequency of monitoring often varies across different types of ECEC. Frequency in Finland is monitored based on complaints, and therefore differs across settings. In Norway, the frequency of monitoring service quality is not regulated. In Ireland, an inspection takes place once every year to two years. In New Zealand, the frequency of ERO's external evaluation depends on the last monitoring result. In centre and home-based services, ERO provides a judgment about "how well placed the service is to promote positive learning outcomes for children". If the service is very well placed, the next ERO review is in four years; if well placed in three years; if the service requires further development a review will take place within two years; and if not well placed the Ministry of Education will be asked to reassess the service's license. The process for determining the frequency of reviews differs for home-based care, where reviews occur every 3 years or 12 months, depending on the last review result.

Staff in New Zealand ECEC settings are usually internally evaluated once per year. In Finland, monitoring occurs after complaints have been received by regional state administrative agencies. In Norway and Finland, this is not regulated and it is up to the setting to decide how often staff are assessed. Child development is, in general, monitored more frequently, usually on a continuous basis through observations and/or contributing to portfolios.

### *Use of results and consequences*

The results from monitoring have to be made public in most jurisdictions (16 out of 24), however, not always for all types of ECEC. In Finland, evaluation results have to be made publically available. In Norway, results of inspections are available to the public upon request. Aggregated results of staff evaluations are usually available to the public, while individual staff evaluations are not due to privacy matters. In New Zealand, ERO reports for individual early childhood services are publicly available and ERO also publishes national evaluation reports. The national evaluation reports provide system level information in relation to specific topics, inform policy decisions and provide ECEC services with examples of good practice. Feedback indicates that the findings of these reports are used to inform

practice and as a basis for self-review in early childhood services (OECD, 2015). Inspection results have to be made available in Ireland.

Countries take various actions or impose consequences when the results from monitoring service quality do not meet the minimum standards set by the service or body responsible. Actions can include funding cuts, follow up inspections, obligatory staff training, or closure of services. There can also be positive outcomes for services from monitoring results, for example, services can have a competitive advantage compared to other services, or remuneration can be increased in line with monitoring outcomes.

In Finland and Norway, licenses can be revoked and services closed if an ECEC setting drastically underperforms on a continuous basis. In New Zealand, the potential consequence from a poor ERO evaluation result is initially a follow-up inspection. ECEC services that underperform are required to address their issues and work with the Ministry of Education to develop an action plan. Only when no improvement is shown, or when settings frequently do not meet the ERO standards, can the Ministry reassess the setting's license and decide whether or not it should be closed.

### Challenges and policy options

All countries face challenges in monitoring, some of which are shared by different countries. The practices that countries have implemented suggest ways of overcoming the challenges of monitoring quality. The examples cited in this section were selected to provide insights into policies and practices in other countries that may provide a source of inspiration for Finland. Finland's challenges include:

1. No shared, explicit definition or perspective for quality in ECEC.
2. Differences in monitoring practices across regions.
3. Limited training available for monitoring quality.

#### *Challenge: No shared perspective for quality in ECEC*

Finland indicated that it is difficult to target evaluations when there is no shared perspective of quality in ECEC. Setting out explicit comprehensive quality goals would help to clarify the quality goals that Finland strives to achieve in ECEC settings. Three examples from other jurisdictions are outlined below:

Setting out explicit, clear and comprehensive quality goals in a framework

- All states and territorial governments in **Australia** agreed in July 2009 to an overarching National Early Childhood Development Strategy (Investing in the Early Years) to ensure that by 2020, all children in Australia have a chance at the best start in life and a better future for themselves and the nation. As part of this initiative, all jurisdictions signed the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care in December 2009, in explicit recognition of the importance of high-quality, accessible and affordable ECEC for children and families. The National Partnership Agreement falls under the umbrella of the broader National Early Childhood Development Strategy.
- **The French Community of Belgium** drafted the Code of Quality of Care (*code de qualité de l'accueil*) at the community level, which set out for all childcare providers the principles of quality care for children aged 0 to 12. The code is laid down in the French Community's Decree of Government, which was enacted in December 2003. To provide consistent high-quality childcare, every childcare provider is required to implement certain quality aspects in accordance with the code.

- In **Ireland**, *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework, has been designed to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in ECEC settings. It was published in 2006 following a three-year developmental process that involved consultation with more than 50 diverse organisations representing childcare workers, teachers, parents, policy makers, researchers and other interested parties. *Síolta* is comprised of three distinct but interrelated elements: principles, standards and components of quality. The 12 principles provide the overall vision of the framework, while the 16 standards and 75 components allow for the practical application of this vision across all aspects of ECEC practice. In settings where the *Síolta* Quality Assurance Programme has been implemented, staff begin with a baseline assessment of their practice and then develop a plan for improvement. As a follow-up measure they must show how they have improved the quality of their practice through a portfolio of evidence.

### **Challenge: Lack of a national monitoring system**

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) (*Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus*) has been responsible for evaluations of ECEC at the national level since August 2015. However, municipalities remain responsible for evaluating individual ECEC settings within their municipality. Since the monitoring of individual ECEC settings is decentralised to municipalities, differences occur across municipalities in terms of the areas and aspects of quality that are monitored, and how they are being monitored.

This same issue is seen in Italy where there is no monitoring system at the national level to cover its various ECEC settings. Italy is now aiming to set up an integrated 0-6 ECEC system and, within this, a specific uniform quality monitoring and evaluation system. The aim is to make the local, fragmented system more systematic and coherent at the national level by developing a system for monitoring qualitative aspects that includes: children's non-cognitive competencies, such as well-being and approaches to learning; developing a system that can pass on relevant information to decision-making bodies in the delivery of ECEC; and planning a monitoring system that will not interfere with the delivery of ECEC services but will instead promote their continuous improvement.

In addition to the national quality framework described under challenge 1, countries have also developed standardised monitoring tools.

### *Standardising monitoring tools*

- In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, a standardised tool, known as the CIPO model, is used to perform inspections in kindergartens. It has been used since 1991 and was approved as part of the Resolution of the Decree on the Quality of Education in 2010. CIPO stands for its four components: context, input, processes and output. Each of the four components is broken down into a number of indicators based on the parameters that are found, through research or experience, to influence the quality of education. The model allows the inspectorate to focus on outputs supported by the process indicators without resulting in a process evaluation. This makes it possible to respect the school's autonomy and its pedagogical project and activities, while judging its output in a standardised manner within the specificity of each school.
- In **England (United Kingdom)**, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspectors adhere to a standardised inspection procedure set out in a document published by Ofsted that outlines the expected inspection process in detail. Inspectors have a set of indicators, which they use to evaluate settings and their performance.
- In **Germany**, providers can freely choose the quality assessment tools or schemes they apply. However, they often base the quality monitoring system on monitoring tools that are aligned with provider-specific value profiles and priorities. One of these standards is the DIN ISO

9000, as formulated by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO), an independent, non-governmental membership organisation and the world's largest developer of voluntary international standards. The ISO 9000 family of standards addresses various aspects of quality management and provides guidance and tools for organisations that seek to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customers' requirements, and that quality is consistently improved. The *Deutsche Institut für Normierung* (DIN) is the German institution responsible for ISO standards. The Kindergarten Evaluation Scale (*Kindergarten-Einschätz-Skala* or *KES*), a German adaptation of the Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) developed by the German pedagogical professor Wolfgang Tietze, is also used. KES was revised in 2001, becoming the KES-R, and is currently under further revision. At present, it contains 43 different rating indicators linked to physical, social, emotional and cognitive areas. It aims to capture all the factors that immediately influence the experience of children in ECEC settings. Germany also uses the Crèche-Scale (*Krippen-Skala* or *KRIPS-R*) to support pedagogical quality in ECEC settings, which is based on the American Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). KRIPS includes 41 indicators that provide a comprehensive overview of pedagogical process in day nurseries. In addition, many other tools are used, such as a quality instrument developed to measure quality in the context of the "situational approach", which is popular in Germany.

### **Challenge: Limited training on monitoring**

In Finland there is no systematic monitoring training available, especially for staff with internal monitoring responsibilities. Several countries faced a similar challenge and now provide on-the-job or in-service training to staff to prepare them for their evaluation tasks.

#### *Providing on-the-job or in-service training*

- In **Luxembourg**, all teachers receive on-the-job training for drafting school development plans and evaluating regularly whether objectives have been attained.
- **Mexico** has several different ECEC institutions that all provide a form of in-service training for evaluators, particularly in IMSS (*Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social* or Mexican Social Security Institute) settings where internal evaluators are called "zone co-ordinators". They receive constant training through training courses, a national event held once a year, video conferences and at IMSS training centres.
- In **Chile**, ECEC institutions train their assessors in implementation skills so that they can correctly use monitoring instruments to evaluate ECEC services. In addition, the Quality Agency (*Agencia de la Calidad*) also trains evaluators on theories and technical knowledge in monitoring quality, implementation skills, and how to interpret the monitoring results.
- **New Zealand** implemented *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Assessment for Learning, in which teachers are expected to develop effective assessment practices that meet the aspirations of the *Te Whāriki* early childhood curriculum policy. The national government offers training on this assessment practice to ECEC staff. The curriculum programme is also evaluated in terms of its capacity to provide activities and relationships that stimulate early development. Children and parents can help in deciding what should be included in the process of assessing the programme and the curriculum.

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## GLOSSARY

**Autonomy:** The ability of a child to undertake activities, tasks etc. without the help of others (mastery of skills), to make his/her own decisions, and to express his/her own opinions or ideas, feel secure and have confidence in his/her own ability.

**Appraisal:** The review of a preschool teacher's or educator's work by the centre management, an external inspector or by his or her colleagues. This appraisal can be conducted in a range of ways, from a more formal, objective approach (e.g. as part of a formal performance management system involving set procedures and criteria) to the more informal, more subjective approach (e.g. through informal discussions with the teacher).

**Assessment:** Judgement on individual progress and achievement of goals. It covers classroom/playroom-based assessments as well as large-scale, external assessments and examinations and refers to the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. Assessment can focus on the individual learner and staff (adapted from OECD, 2013). Assessment can be direct or indirect and its use formative or summative.

- **Direct assessment:** Assessments that look at concrete outputs of learning, i.e. the measurable and demonstrated knowledge and skills of children/staff.
- **Indirect assessment:** Assessments that examine indicators of learning and gather information through feedback, e.g. in surveys or interviews (adapted from Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2007).
- **Formative assessment:** Assessments that frequently or continuously (not at one point in time only) and interactively assess child development and progress with the purpose of understanding and identifying learning needs and adjust instruction and teaching methods accordingly (adapted from OECD, 2005, and Litjens, 2013).
- **Summative assessment:** Assessments that measure learning results at the end of a certain time period to obtain summary statements. These can be used e.g. for holding staff and settings accountable for providing quality ECEC or as a method to identify whether children have learning disadvantages (adapted from OECD, 2005, and Litjens, 2013).

**Assessor (or evaluator):** A person or organisation/company that conducts assessment or evaluation on the effectiveness or the level of quality of someone or something, e.g. level of service quality, staff performance, effective curriculum implementation, child development/outcomes.

**Checklist:** A list of items, tasks or steps to be taken in a specific order to be checked or consulted. In ECEC, this can be used to assess or evaluate the developmental status of children, staff performance and the quality of ECEC services by observing compliance with regulations. This may also include a series of tasks, skills and abilities to assess children's development or knowledge, such as "Child can count to five" or "Child is able to play independently" (OECD, 2012).

**Creative skills** (e.g. art, music, dance, imagination): Children's capacities and competencies to generate ideas and feelings, use imagination and convey thoughts and experiences in many forms of expressions, including artistic skills (e.g. painting, drawing, handicrafts, etc.), musical skills (e.g. singing,



playing an instrument, recognising songs, etc.). It also refers to the capacity to observe and reflect; explore on their own, and search for their own answers and solutions.

**Curriculum implementation:** The actual use in practice (practical application) of the curriculum by ECEC staff, managers and children. This refers to the way in which the concepts of the curriculum are put into effect, and how they are used in practices and activities by staff and children, how they are interpreted, how they are used in development and learning, and how they influence teaching, caring and interactions between staff, and between staff with children.

**ECEC setting:** A place where ECEC is delivered. Also referred to as ECEC centre or provision. With regard to ECEC settings, two types of provision can be distinguished: **centre-based/ school-based** and **home-based** (as defined by Eurydice, 2013).

**Evaluation:** Judgements on the effectiveness of ECEC settings or ECEC systems, policies and programmes (adapted from OECD, 2013).

**Evaluator:** See definition of **assessor**.

**External monitoring practices:** See definition of **monitoring practice**.

**Government:** The entirety of the executive at all levels of governance, at national, state, regional and local level.

**Health development:** The physical health status of a child, encompassing physical well-being only (adapted from WHO definition, 2006). Mental, emotional and social development are in this definition excluded – these are included in the definition of **socio-emotional skills**.

**Information and communications technology (ICT):** The teaching and learning of technological and digital skills. Creating and developing the capacity to use digital and technological environments for development, communication and knowledge creation. Digital environments refer to computers (including laptops, tablets, iPads, netbooks, smart boards etc.) and computer games, the Internet, television and radio, among others.

**Inspection:** The process of assessing (inspecting, investigating) the quality and/or performance of institutions, staff, services and programmes by those (inspectors) who are not directly involved in the ECEC settings being monitored, and who are usually specially appointed to fulfil these responsibilities.

**Instrument (or tool):** A means used for monitoring or material that is used to conduct the monitoring process. Examples of instruments or tools for monitoring include checklists, rating scales and surveys.

**Integrated system:** The responsibilities of ECEC services are under one (leading) authority (at the national and/or regional level), e.g. the education Ministry, Ministry of social welfare or another authority.

**Internal monitoring practices:** See definition of **monitoring practice**.

**Language and literacy skills:** Children's productive and receptive language skills on all levels: syntax (ability to form sentences), morphology (ability to form words), semantics (understanding the meaning of words/sentences), phonology (awareness of speech sounds), pragmatics (how language is used in different contexts), vocabulary. It also refers to children's (precursor) literacy skills, that is to say, all the skills related to reading and writing, such as recognising and writing letters and words, understanding pictures, etc.

**Local level or local authorities:** The local level is a decentralised level of ECEC governance. It is located at city/town level in the vast majority of countries. In some countries, the municipalities take the main responsibility for ECEC.

**Minimum quality standards:** The minimum benchmark for structural aspects of ECEC settings to ensure a minimum level of quality. These are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated relatively easily (e.g. staff-child ratio, space, group size and qualifications of ECEC staff).

**Motor skills:** The ability to perform complex muscle and nerve acts that produce movements, the ability to co-ordinate the body. It refers to both fine and gross motor skills and awareness of their own body. Fine motor skills include small movements such as drawing and writing, crawling or putting shoes on. Gross motor skills are large movements like walking and kicking, running and cycling.

**Monitoring:** The process of systematically tracking aspects of ECEC services, staff, child development and curriculum implementation, with a view toward data collection, accountability and/or enhancing effectiveness and/or quality.

**Monitoring practice:** The main activity/ies involved in monitoring, such as inspections or self-assessments. There are two different types of monitoring practices:

- **External monitoring practices:** Any monitoring practices conducted by evaluators/assessors/actors who are not part of the ECEC service that is being monitored. These can include inspections, surveys completed by people who are not employed by the ECEC setting that is being monitored, or peer reviews conducted by external staff (peer review of a person working in one ECEC setting by a person not working in that ECEC setting).
- **Internal monitoring practices:** Any monitoring practices conducted by evaluators/assessors/actors who are part of the ECEC service that is being monitored. These can include self-evaluations of staff working in ECEC settings (teachers, managers, care givers, etc.) or peer reviews conducted by internal staff (among colleagues in the same setting).

**Narrative assessments:** Descriptions of the development of a child through narratives/stories. Narrative assessment is a more inclusive approach to assessing child development, as it involves not only professionals but also the children's work, and can also include inputs or feedback from parents. It is a combination or package of what a child has done and learned, such as examples of drawings and exercises, feedback from staff, and staff planning or example practices. Portfolios or storybooks of children's development are well-known examples of narrative assessment practices (see also **portfolio** and **storytelling**).

**National level/national authorities** (also referred to as **central level or central authorities**): The authorities responsible for ECEC within a single country that is at the highest level of governance. Depending on the governance structure of the country, such as a federal structure of education governance, those authorities may or may not exert the key power of decision over ECEC policies and implementation. Examples for such authorities include the United Kingdom and Belgium.

**Numeracy:** The ability to reason and to apply simple numerical concepts and understand numbers. Basic numeracy skills consist of knowing and recognising space, shapes, location and direction, the basic properties of sets, quantity, order and number concepts, time and change, being able to count, to comprehending fundamental mathematics like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

**Observation:** Observation is a method to collect information on a subject from an outsider's perspective. It can be used for a specific purpose (e.g. inspection, peer review) or can be open-ended (e.g. to document a child's progress for parents).

**Peer review:** an assessment process of a colleague's work and practices. This can be done internally (by an internal colleague or a manager) or externally (by a colleague or a manager not working in the same setting).

**Portfolio:** A collection of pieces of work that can tell a story of child/staff progress, or achievement in given areas.

**Practical skills:** Skills that involve active involvement of a child and refer to only those skills that children need in daily life such as lacing shoes, brushing teeth, etc.

**Process quality:** What children actually experience in their programme – what happens within a setting, such as interactions between educators and children. It also consists of the relationships with parents, available materials and professional skills of staff.

**Rating scale:** A set of categories designed to elicit information about a quantitative or a qualitative attribute. A common example is the 1-10 rating scale, in which a person (evaluator or assessor) selects the number that is considered to reflect the perceived quality or performance of the subject being monitored.

**Regional level/regional authorities:** A decentralised level of governance. It is located at state or province level in the vast majority of countries, and can be referred to as e.g. communities, *Länder*, cantons, states, etc. Regional authorities in federal countries are often responsible for ECEC in their particular region. Examples for regional level authorities are England, Scotland and the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium.

**Regulations/recommendations:** Different kinds of official documents containing guidelines, obligations and/or recommendations for ECEC institutions. **Regulations** are laws, rules or other orders prescribed by public authority to regulate conduct. **Recommendations** are official documents proposing the use of specific tools, methods and/or strategies for teaching and learning. Their application is not mandatory (as defined in Eurydice, 2013).

**Review:** The process of examining, considering and judging a situation or process carefully in order to see, for example, if changes are necessary, analyse strengths and weaknesses, and look for improvement.

**Science skills:** All scientific subjects such as geography and natural science, as for example interest in and understanding of different cycles in nature, but also in the development of scientific knowledge, question scientific phenomena and the ability to draw conclusions about scientific subjects. Science also refers to the development of awareness of how science and technology shape and affect our material, intellectual and cultural environments and the ability to understand that we all are a part of nature's cycles.

**Screening:** A tool designed to identify problems or delays during normal childhood development. Usually involves a short test to tell if a child is learning basic skills when he or she should, or if there are delays. It can include some questions the professional asks a child or parent (depending on a child's age) or can involve talk and play with the child during an examination to see how he or she plays, learns, speaks, behaves and moves. Screening is often used to identify delays or problems, including learning disabilities, speech or language problems, autism, intellectual disability, emotional/behavioural conditions, hearing or vision impairment or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

**Self-evaluation (or self-assessment):** The process in which an ECEC setting evaluates its own performance regarding the accomplishment of certain goals or standards, or a process in which staff members assess their own skills and capabilities as a way to monitor progress, attain goals and foster improvement.

**Sensitivity:** The quality of understanding how a child feels and the staff member's responsiveness to children's needs and emotions. The ability of a person (in this case a staff member) to respond and interact in a way appropriate to the age of the child and with care, warmth and attentiveness (adapted from Macmillan, 2014).

**Service quality:** The level of quality at setting/provision level. It is the level of quality provided by an ECEC setting, and refers to all the features that are regarded by a country/region/local authority to be of importance for quality, children's environments and experiences that are presumed to be beneficial to their well-being. This most often includes the use of a curriculum, staff characteristics, teacher or caregiver behaviours and practices, and the staff-child interactions that form the core of children's ECEC experiences, referred to in the literature as process quality. In addition, quality in most countries involves structural features of the setting, such as space, group size and other standards or regulations, e.g. safety standards (NCES, 1997; OECD, 2006; OECD, 2012).

**Socio-emotional skills:** The emotional and social development of a child. It includes children's ability to express and regulate emotions, children's relations with others (including peers), play with others (including peers), self-concept, development of personality identity, self-efficacy and the personality of a child, which shapes his/her thinking, feeling and behaviour. It also refers to co-operation and solving problems together. Examples of socio-emotional development include the forming and sustaining of positive relationships, experiencing, managing and expressing emotions, and exploring and engaging with the environment.

**Split system:** ECEC services are governed by different ministries or authorities at national/regional level. In many countries with a split system, policies for "care" and "early education" have developed separately and fall under the responsibility of different authorities. Child care and early education is provided as two different services and for different age groups. For instance, "child care" for younger children refers most commonly to children of under age 3 and "early education" most commonly to children of 3 years or older.

**Staff-child ratio:** The number of children per full-time member of staff. This can be a maximum (regulated) number, which indicates the maximum number of children that one full-time member of staff is allowed to be responsible for, or an average, that is, the average number of children a full-time staff member can be responsible for. Ratios can be either for main staff only (such as teacher or caregiver), but can also include auxiliary staff, such as assistants.

**Standardised test:** A test designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures and interpretations are consistent and administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner (OECD, 2012; Zucker, 2004). This means that the same test is given in the same way to all test takers. Standardised assessments are usually administered to large groups of children, and mainly for the purpose of measuring academic achievement and/or comparing members of a cohort (Rosenkvist, 2010) (see also **test**).

**Structural quality:** Quality aspects that consist of "inputs to process-characteristics that create the framework for the processes that children experience". These characteristics are not only part of the ECEC location in which children participate, but part of the environment that surrounds the ECEC setting, e.g. the community. They are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated, although they may include variables that cannot be regulated.

**Test:** A formal assessment, often administered on paper or on the computer, intended to measure children's knowledge, skills and/or aptitudes. Tests can be either standardised or not (see also **standardised test**).

**Tool:** See definition of **instrument**.

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