



Starting Strong IV

Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care Country Note

GERMANY

Summary

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*) is responsible for early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from birth until primary school age (6 years) in family day care and child day care settings in Germany. Responsibility for the licensing of family day care and child day care services is with either regional/state-level authorities or with local municipalities, depending on the *Länder* (16 federal states). Curriculum frameworks for ECEC are developed at *Länder* level; all *Länder* have an integrated curriculum for the whole ECEC age range and beyond, covering for instance ages 0 to 10 years.

Monitoring is the responsibility of *Länder* and local authorities. However, several instruments for the internal and external evaluation of quality in ECEC have been developed at the national level and served as a blueprint for provider-specific adaptations. Inspections are used to monitor service and staff quality and generally tend to have a broad focus, mostly on structural characteristics. Internal self-evaluations and parental surveys are also commonly used. Service quality inspections in child day care centres can apply a wide range of tools and instruments, such as observations, checklists, interviews, results of self-evaluations and parent and manager surveys, and analysis of internal documentation. This is often combined with internal tools, such as self-reported questionnaires, self-reflection reports, portfolios and checklists.

The monitoring of staff quality focuses on aspects such as staff qualification, process quality, use of material, time management, curriculum implementation, quality of instruction/caring, team work, communication and management. Inspections (external evaluations) of staff quality are very common, and tools used include observations, rating scales, checklists, interviews, results of self-evaluations and the studying of internal documentation. Internal monitoring procedures to monitor staff performance, such as self-assessments, are also commonly conducted. Direct assessments, narrative assessments, and observational tools may be used to monitor child learning and development in areas such as language and literacy skills, numeracy, practical skills, socio-emotional skills, motor development, autonomy and well-being.

Challenges for monitoring quality in Germany persist as no national monitoring system is in place and common monitoring practices do not always consider the views of all stakeholders.

The monitoring quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) country note for Germany 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. The focus of this note is on Germany's monitoring policies and practices in comparison with France, Finland and the Netherlands. A separate OECD (2016) [Starting Strong IV Early Childhood Education and Care Data Country Note: Germany](#) provides an overview of ECEC policy inputs, outputs and outcomes in Germany.

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Key messages

- **Responsibilities for monitoring and financing are at state (*Länder*) and local level**, while responsibilities for standard setting and curriculum development are only at *Länder* level.
- **Local authorities, jointly with ECEC providers, are responsible for ECEC monitoring and there is no national monitoring system in place.** The Local Youth Welfare Offices (*Jugendämter*) have a legal obligation to ensure that quality management systems are in place in ECEC settings. ECEC providers are responsible for evaluating, ensuring and developing quality in ECEC settings. In Berlin is the only *Land* where there is a systematic monitoring process in place.
- As part of Germany's National Quality Initiative, **several instruments for the internal and external evaluation of quality in ECEC have been developed** and served as a blueprint for provider-specific adaptations. However, **settings are usually free to decide which quality assessment tools or processes they apply** (e.g. external and/or internal evaluations). In some *Länder*, certain methods (e.g. parental survey) or instruments are recommended or may even be a pre-condition for acquiring public subsidies.
- **The training of external evaluators differs across ECEC providers.** On-the-job or in-service training is possible. For instance, external evaluators may be awarded a certificate of quality (*BETA-Gütesiegel*), a 10-day course that offers theoretical and practical training.
- **Local authorities are responsible for conducting inspections. They are used to monitor service and staff quality in family day care and child care settings and generally have a broad focus**, mostly on structural characteristics. Internal self-evaluations and parental surveys are also commonly used by inspections. Internal evaluations themselves are usually carried out by the manager of the centre, staff who have specific training for the job, or an external moderator.
- **Service quality inspections in child day care centres apply a wide range of tools and instruments**, such as observations, checklists, interviews, results of self-evaluations and parent and manager surveys, and analysis of internal documentation. This is often combined with internal tools, such as self-reported questionnaires, self-reflection reports, portfolios and checklists.
- **The monitoring of staff quality focuses on various aspects**, such as: staff qualifications; process quality, use of material; time management; curriculum implementation quality of instruction/caring, teamwork; communication and management. Inspections (external evaluations) of staff quality are very common, and internal monitoring procedures, such as self-assessments, are also conducted.
- **Direct assessments, narrative assessments, and/or observational tools are commonly used to monitor child learning and development.** Aspects commonly monitored are: language and literacy skills; numeracy; practical skills; socio-emotional skills; motor development; autonomy and well-being.
- **There is still no national monitoring system in ECEC**, which is a challenge rooted in the decentralised nature of the sector and the strong autonomy of providers in the area of monitoring. Clearer goals and a coherent framework could help overcome this lack of oversight. Furthermore, monitoring children's views is not yet a common practise in the country, but could yield valuable insights into children's ECEC experience.

Introduction

The data and information in this country note for Germany 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 2014/15.¹ A separate OECD (2016) [Starting Strong IV Early Childhood Education and Care Data Country Note: Germany](#) provides an overview of ECEC policy inputs, outputs and outcomes in Germany.

This country note primarily aims to provide opportunities for peer-learning by highlighting Germany'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 Germany regarding key areas of monitoring quality in ECEC, of the types of challenges for Germany in monitoring quality, which have been identified by the OECD ECEC team in close consultation with the German 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). For Germany, this note provides data and information on child day care centres for all children under the age of six years, unless indicated otherwise. Germany is compared with the general findings of *Starting Strong IV*, and in particular with France, Finland and the Netherlands. These three countries were selected by Germany for specific country comparison.

In Finland, there are five types of ECEC setting. One is home-based family day care for all children below the age of 6, and there are four types of centre-based ECEC provision, 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. For France, this note focuses mainly on home-based family day care provisions for children up to age 2-3, centre-based community crèches for children from 0-2/3, and pre-primary schools (*écoles maternelles*) for children from the age of 3 (or 2 years in disadvantaged areas) until they start primary school at the age of 6. For the Netherlands, the information in this note refers to childcare centres for children from birth until 12 years, childminding for children up until the age of 5, playgroups for all children from birth until 4 (when free pre-primary education starts in the Netherlands), and targeted ECEC programmes for children aged 0-4 with a disadvantaged background.

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).

All data and information for countries refer to their most commonly or generally used practices and tools, unless indicated otherwise, as monitoring practices are usually not implemented nationally.

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 Germany's monitoring policies and practices, in comparison with Finland, France and the Netherlands. The sections address how quality is defined, 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 Germany and policy approaches that other countries have taken when tackling these issues.

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 (Kamerma, 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 setting 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 predefined 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 contribute 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, other 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 the 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 it 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 8 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

The literature indicates that it is critical to monitor quality at both the 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 Germany stands in international comparison

How quality is defined in Germany

In Germany, a definition of desired quality in ECEC has been developed through three mechanisms: law, a common framework, as well as state-level curricula. There is also a quality initiative that sets out quality criteria. Expectations of ECEC (as part of the general Child and Youth Welfare system) are provided in the Social Code Book VIII (*Sozialgesetzbuch*), where federal law stipulates that all young people have the legal right to be supported in their development and encouraged to become independent and socially competent personalities. The law also states that ECEC providers are obliged to equally support the education, care and upbringing of children, taking into account their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Children's individual interests and needs and their ethnic background also have to be considered.

In addition to the Social Code Book, all 16 *Länder* have their own ECEC curriculum. The overarching document for these curricula is the Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in ECEC Centres (*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*), an agreement on the most important basic principles guiding curriculum development. This framework emphasises the importance of a holistic approach in which education, care and upbringing are considered as inseparable elements of pedagogical practice. It indicates that a curriculum has to take account of the interests of children and should be relevant to their lives.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, together with 10 *Länder*, launched the National Quality Initiative in ECEC (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*) in 1999. As part of this initiative a set of quality criteria (21 quality areas) and instruments for internal and external evaluation within five sub-programmes were developed.

In France, quality is implicitly defined through minimum standards, curriculum, and a competency framework for staff. The minimum regulatory standards set out the aspects France regards as important for quality. The minimum regulatory standards set out the aspects France identifies as important for quality. The general guidelines for crèches (*Orientations générales pour les crèches*) sets out a general framework for childcare in France and covers quality standards regarding hygiene, safety, staff qualifications, size of the setting, size of each group, and the optimal conditions in which to foster the physical, intellectual and emotional development of children. In ECEC centres for children below pre-primary school age and family day care, the guidelines of public health and facilities (*Orientations du*

code de la santé publique et projets d'établissements) define the minimum requirements. Quality in pre-primary schools is defined by its curriculum, which sets out objectives for pre-primary education. This was revised in 2015 to have a greater emphasis on holistic development. A competency framework for kindergarten teachers defines their tasks and objectives. Both the curriculum and competency framework complement each other and define quality in pre-primary schooling in France.

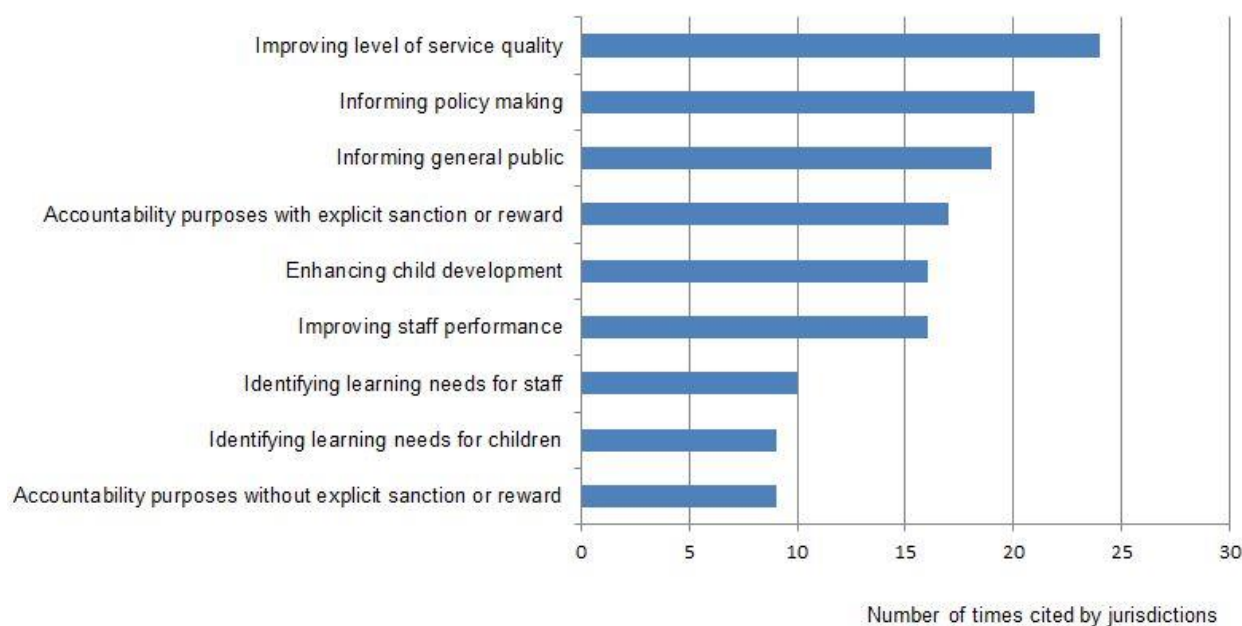
In Finland, quality is implicitly defined through the minimum regulatory standards in place that set out what aspects Finland regards as important for quality. Finland sets high expectations for the level of quality in ECEC. There are high minimum staff qualifications, one of the most favourable staff-child ratios in OECD countries (OECD, 2012), and high requirements for safety, health and hygiene. Finland sets out its objectives for ECEC through curriculum frameworks: 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 standard principles for high-quality activities and have a strong focus on staff and what is expected of them. The guidelines also aim to enhance parental engagement in ECEC and stimulate co-operation with other early childhood services. Based on the frameworks, each municipality develops its own specific guidelines and local curriculum to meet the needs of their municipality and population² (STAKES, 2005). These frameworks complement the regulatory standards in setting out what constitutes ECEC quality in Finland.

The Netherlands differs to the other three countries as quality is defined primarily through national standards that are monitored through inspections. There is no national curriculum in place, unlike in other countries. Instead, developmental goals have been developed for children aged 2.5 years and older in ECEC and targeted ECEC programmes are required to implement specific curricula that foster early child development. Health and education inspections have different sets of quality standards and monitor different aspects of quality. The health inspection (concerning all childcare facilities) focuses on the structural quality of the facility and the staff, while the education inspection places greater emphasis on pedagogical and educational aspects.

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

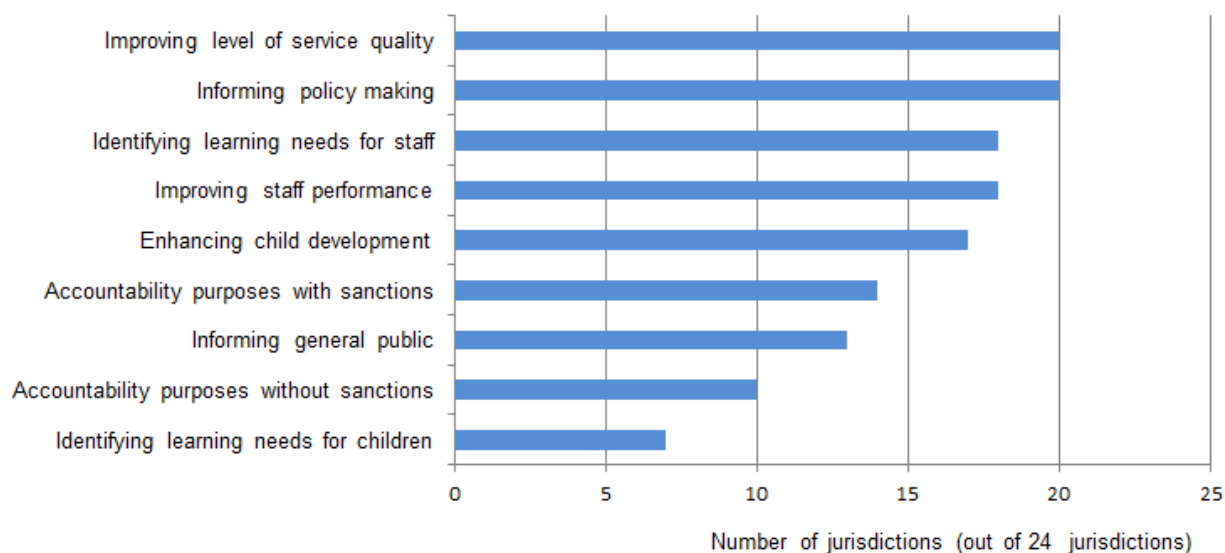
Countries reported various reasons for monitoring ECEC service and staff quality. Common reasons included: accountability with and without sanction or reward, informing policy making, informing the general public, improving the level of service quality, improving staff performance, identifying learning 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).

2. Since August 2015, the National Board of Education is in charge of curriculum development in Finland.

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>.

Figure 2. Purposes of monitoring staff quality

Note: Purposes of monitoring staff quality are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdiction 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>.

Service quality

All four countries monitor quality to improve the level of service quality. Germany also aims to improve staff performance and inform the general public. Finland and the Netherlands also monitor service quality to improve staff performance, and France aims to inform the general public. Finland, France and the Netherlands monitor service quality to inform policy making and for accountability purposes (without sanctions or rewards in Finland and France, while these are possible in the Netherlands). Finland monitors service quality to identify the learning needs of staff and children and to enhance child development.

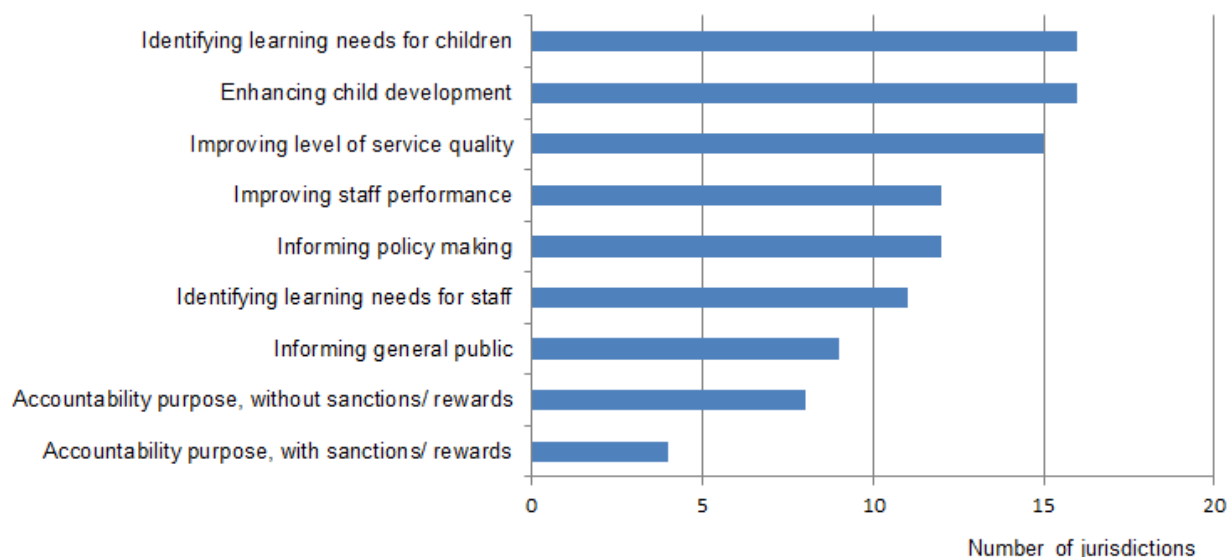
Staff quality

Staff quality is monitored in all four countries to improve the level of service quality and staff performance. In Germany these are the only reasons for monitoring staff quality. Finland, France and the Netherlands also monitor staff quality for accountability purposes (rewards and sanctions are only used in the Netherlands) and to inform policy making. Finland and France monitor staff quality to identify staff training needs in order to enhance child development. Finland is the only country out of the four that monitors staff quality to identify the learning needs of children.

Child development

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). Figure 3 provides a complete overview of purposes.

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>.

Germany monitors child development for three purposes: 1) to enhance staff performance; 2) to identify the learning needs of staff; and 3) to enhance child development. Finland and France also monitor child development to identify the learning needs of staff, and Finland to enhance child development. Finland and France monitor child development to identify the possible learning needs of children. France also monitors children's early development to inform policy making and the general public, and to improve the overall level of quality. Information on the purposes of monitoring child development is not available for the Netherlands.

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 Germany, due to the federal system where responsibility for monitoring is at the regional and municipal level, local authorities are responsible for conducting inspections.

Berlin is the only *Länder* where there is a systematic monitoring process in place. Nine accredited evaluation agencies are commissioned by ECEC providers to carry out evaluations of childcare centres in Berlin. Internal evaluations are usually carried out by the manager of the centre, staff who have specific training for the job, or an external moderator. The Berlin institute for quality development in day care centres (*Berliner Kita-Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung*, BEKI) has trained pedagogues to support staff teams through internal evaluations on behalf of the Berlin Ministry of Education, Youth and Sciences. This Ministry is responsible for the accreditation and co-ordination of the evaluation agencies. It also co-ordinates the schedules and publishes the results.

Monitoring in France is conducted at the national level, where the Ministry in charge of the respective setting is also responsible for monitoring. This is the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*) for ECEC settings for under 3-year-olds, and the Ministry of National Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*) for children in pre-primary education. 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 the Netherlands, municipal health offices inspect childcare settings and playgroups, and the Inspectorate for Health and Education monitors all ECEC services for disadvantaged children.

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). All four countries make use of inspections to monitor service and staff quality. Internal self-evaluations are also commonly used, although only to monitor staff quality in Finland and the Netherlands (not service quality). Parental surveys are commonly used in Germany and Finland to monitor service quality, and in France and the Netherlands they can be used to monitor staff and service quality (see Table 1).

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
Germany	X	X (Service)				X
France	X	X				X
Finland	X	X (Service)				X (Staff)
Netherlands	X	X				X (Staff)

Notes: In Germany, data refers to child day care centres, although inspections can also be used to monitor service quality in family day care provisions. 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 France, self-evaluations are used most commonly in crèches and family day care.

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 Germany, all three practices are used to varying degrees across ECEC providers and settings. The use of portfolios, which capture information on children's development in a holistic and continuous way, is also common. France commonly uses narrative assessments, mainly portfolios, in combination with observational tools, such as checklists. 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. The Netherlands tends to use observational tools for monitoring child development and outcomes (OECD, 2015).

Areas and scope of monitoring

There are a number of different areas that can be monitored in relation to service³ and staff quality.⁴ 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 ICT skills.

Service quality

All participating 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.

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
Germany	Child day care centres and family day care	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Finland	All ECEC settings	X		X	X		X					
France	Community crèches and family day care	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
	Pre-primary school	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		
Netherlands	All ECEC settings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				

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>.

Germany's inspections of child day care and family day care settings generally have a broad focus, and the only aspects not commonly monitored are human and financial resource management (see Table 2). The other three countries also monitor regulatory aspects such as staff-child ratios, space, and health and safety regulations. The Netherlands has a similar focus as Germany, although working conditions and curriculum implementation are not commonly monitored as there is no national curriculum for ECEC. In France, crèche and family day care inspections have a stronger focus on structural aspects than inspections of pre-primary schools. In both settings, staff-child ratios, space requirements, health and hygiene and safety regulations are monitored, while in childcare settings, minimum staff qualifications, working conditions and human and financial resource management are also monitored. In French pre-primary schools, implementation of the curriculum and staff planning are monitored, in addition to the regulatory aspects. Inspections in Finland focus solely on regulatory aspects, including staff-child ratios, health and hygiene regulations, safety requirements and minimum staff qualifications

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

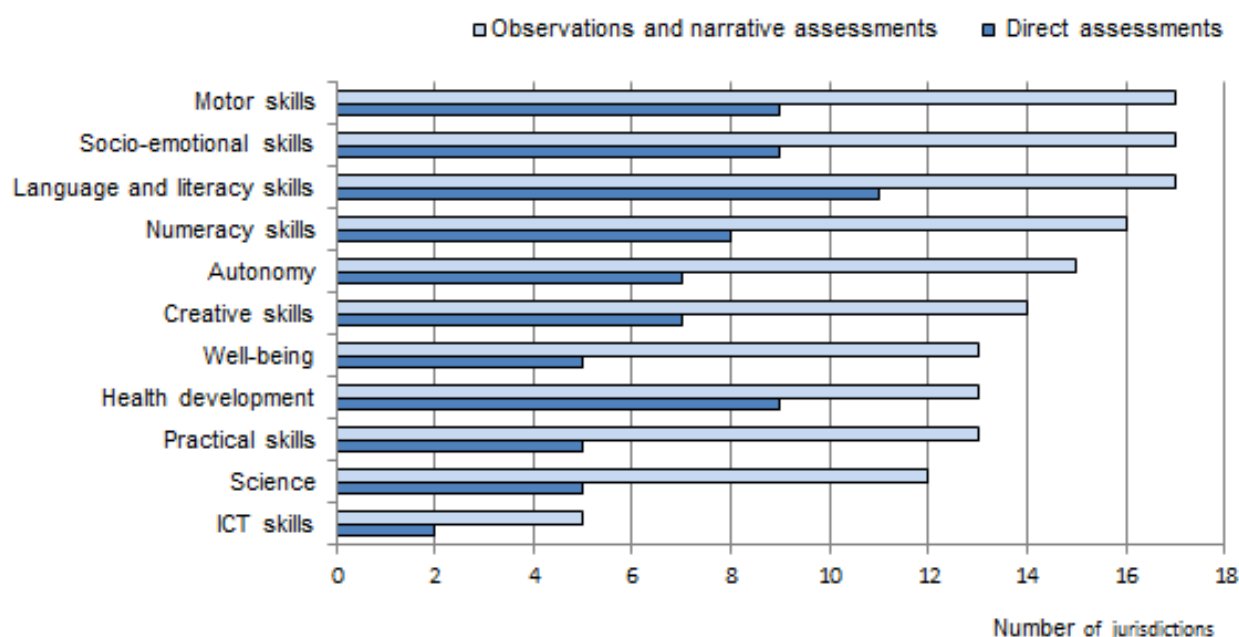
Germany and France both have a broad scope for monitoring staff quality through inspections. Similar aspects are monitored in French childcare settings and German child day care provisions, including curriculum implementation and the management and leadership of staff, but with the exception of professional development opportunities of staff and knowledge of subjects. Germany's self-evaluations tend to have a similar focus as their inspections, but do not usually monitor staff qualifications or overall staff quality. France monitors process quality, the materials in use, overall

quality of teaching and teamwork and communication among staff, time management and planning, staff knowledge of subjects, the professional development of staff. Curriculum implementation and child development outcomes are also monitored as part of staff quality in French pre-primary schools; whereas staff qualifications and working conditions are only inspected in childcare settings. Finland's inspections commonly focus on process quality, the materials in use, staff qualifications, overall quality of teaching, curriculum implementation, time management and planning, staff knowledge of subjects, working conditions and the professional development of staff. Inspections in the Netherlands have a narrower focus than self-evaluations and address the following aspects: staff qualifications, process quality, the use of materials, time management and planning, teamwork among staff, and staff knowledge of the subjects they teach. In addition, self-evaluations in the Netherlands address the implementation of the curriculum and overall staff quality (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 (see Figure 4 below). In German child day care centres and French pre-primary schools, aspects commonly monitored are: language and literacy skills, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, motor development and autonomy. In Finland, all developmental areas included in Figure 4 may be monitored, except for ICT skills. In the Netherlands, the focus of child development monitoring is commonly on language and literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional and motor skills (OECD, 2015).

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 developmental 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 across countries. These generally involve the ministry in charge of ECEC (national or regional), an independent national agency, and/or local authorities.

In Germany, local authorities are responsible for developing a monitoring system for their municipality. However, the Child and Youth Welfare Statistics in Germany generate data that allow policy makers to evaluate the quantitative growth, staff and employment conditions, and other structural features of the ECEC sector, such as opening hours, age and the ethnic background of children. As part of Germany's National Quality Initiative, several instruments for the internal and external evaluation of quality in ECEC have been developed by different groups of ECEC researchers, on the initiative of and with funding from the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. These instruments have served as a blueprint for provider-specific adaptations.

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. In the Netherlands, the monitoring system is developed and implemented co-operatively between government, sector-based partners, scientists, inspection services and enforcement services. In France, the monitoring systems for childcare settings (community crèches and family day care) and pre-primary schools were developed by different authorities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health developed the monitoring system for childcare settings at the national level, and PMI services (mother and child protection services) and the Family Allowances Fund (*Caisse des allocations familiales*) are involved in developing the local monitoring system. The Ministry of Education developed the system for pre-primary schools.

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.

Germany has an integrated system at the federal level, with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth responsible for ECEC. However, most responsibilities for ECEC in Germany are decentralised to the state level and local authorities. Finland also has an integrated ECEC system, with the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*) responsible for ECEC. France has a split system, with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health responsible for all children below pre-primary school age, and the Ministry of National Education responsible for pre-primary education. The Netherlands also has a split ECEC system, with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid*) responsible for children in childcare and playgroups up to the age of 4, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen*) responsible for children in kindergartens (pre-primary education) aged 4 and older, as well as for all targeted ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children.

Standard setting and curriculum development in Germany is done at the state or regional level, while responsibility for the financing and monitoring of ECEC is shared between regional authorities and local municipalities. Standard setting is done at the national level in Finland, while responsibilities for financing and curriculum development are shared between the national and municipal level. Curriculum frameworks in Finland are designed at the national level, and municipalities and all public and private ECEC settings are required by law to adopt and adapt the national curriculum framework and guidelines. In France, the national level is responsible for monitoring, while standard setting, curriculum development and the financing of ECEC are a shared responsibility between the national government and local authorities. Monitoring in the Netherlands is mainly a national responsibility, while ECEC financing comes from national and regional authorities. Minimum regulatory quality standards are set at the national level. Since there is no national curriculum framework in the Netherlands, curricula are mostly developed at the setting level.

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 participating countries, the funding sources for monitoring quality differ depending on the type of setting. Family day care and child day care centres in Germany mainly receive funding from local authorities, which is complemented by some private funding for child day care centres. In France, pre-primary schools are mainly funded by national public funding, while childcare is funded by the national and local authorities, as well as private funding (i.e. contributions from parents). In Finland, the National Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) (*Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus*) has been responsible for national evaluations of ECEC since August 2015, and funding for monitoring is from national public sources. However, evaluations of individual settings remain the responsibility of municipalities and are funded at the municipal level. In the Netherlands, monitoring is funded by the national government and local authorities (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 majority of the 24 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/evaluators can focus on various skills or aspects of ECEC. In Germany, since there is no uniform system of monitoring, the training of external evaluators differs across ECEC providers, although there are possibilities to receive on-the-job or in-service training. One example of training for external evaluators is the certificate of quality (*BETA-Gütesiegel*), a 10-day course that offers theoretical and practical training. The courses are designed for professional advisors for ECEC services, experienced ECEC staff, and staff concerned with internal quality management. Participants receive provider-specific handbooks and guidelines to help them monitor quality.

In France, those with external evaluator roles (such as inspectors) and internal evaluation roles (such as staff conducting self-assessments) can receive on-the-job or in-service training on monitoring and evaluation. In the Netherlands, external and internal evaluators are trained on the topic of monitoring and evaluation during their pre-service education, but can also receive specific on-the-job or in-service training. Finland is the only country out of the four compared in this report where training on the specific topic of evaluation is not common. Some evaluators have specific formal training, but it is not systematic (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
Germany	External assessors		X	
	Internal assessors	X		
Finland	External assessors	X		
	Internal assessors	X		
France	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors			X
Netherlands	External assessors		X	X
	Internal assessors		X	X

Note: In Finland, some evaluators have some evaluation training, but the training is not systematic at the national or municipal levels.

Source: 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 Germany and France a wide range of tools and instruments can be used for inspections. In Germany inspections of child day care services include: parental surveys, surveys taken by inspectors, rating scales, and results of self-evaluations. Similar tools are used in France, as well as observations, checklists (in childcare only), interviews, surveys taken by management/staff, and analysis of internal documentation. In the Netherlands, surveys taken by inspectors, rating scales, checklists, observations, and interviews are common tools used during inspections of childcare centres, playgroups, and targeted ECEC programmes. In Finland, no data collection instruments are prescribed and therefore differ across municipalities or ECEC settings (OECD, 2015).

Internal evaluation is often used in combination with external evaluation/inspections to monitor service quality, which is the case in French and German childcare settings. There are various internal evaluation tools used to monitor service quality across ECEC settings. The most common self-evaluation tools used 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. In Germany and France, self-reflection journals and self-reported questionnaires are the most commonly used tool. In Germany, these tools can be complemented by portfolios and checklists. When self-evaluations of service quality are conducted in the Netherlands and Finland, the tools used vary between settings as the settings decide which instruments they use.

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 Germany, observations, rating scales, checklists, interviews, results of self-evaluations, and the studying of internal documentation may be used. In France and the Netherlands, similar tools are used for inspections of staff quality and service quality. In targeted ECEC programmes in the Netherlands, results of self-evaluations may also be used. In Finland, instruments or tools are not prescribed for monitoring staff quality, as with service quality, and therefore the instruments are decided by municipalities or settings.

Internal monitoring procedures are also conducted for staff quality. In all four countries, self-assessments are commonly used to monitor staff performance, although only in childcare settings in France and Germany. In Germany and Finland, each setting can decide on the tools and instruments used for staff self-evaluations, meaning that tools or instruments for self-evaluations differ between municipalities or settings. Checklists are commonly used during self-evaluations in the Netherlands. In France, self-reported questionnaires and self-reflection journals are most commonly used, as is the case with service quality (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 the 24 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. Germany, Finland and France report using both narrative assessments and observational tools when monitoring child development in ECEC, while France commonly uses portfolios and checklists (see Table 4). Germany also commonly uses tests for children or screening instruments, for example to detect any developmental delays in language development. In Finland and Germany, storytelling and rating scales are also used. In the Netherlands, only checklists are used when monitoring child development (OECD, 2015).

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

	Direct assessments		Narrative assessments		Observational tools	
	Tests for children	Screening	Storytelling	Portfolios	Rating scales	Checklists
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X
Finland			X	X	X	X
France				X		X
Netherlands						X

Note: 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.

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>.

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. In Germany there are no particular regulations regarding the frequency of monitoring, except in Berlin, where the Berlin Education Programme (*Berliner Bildungsprogramm*) requires that ECEC centres are externally evaluated every five

years. Internal evaluations are seen as a continuous (yearly) process. The frequency in Finland differs by setting as monitoring occurs on the basis of complaints. In France, service and staff quality are monitored once every two to three years. In the Netherlands all settings are, in principal, monitored once per year. However when settings perform very well, this frequency can be reduced (OECD, 2015).

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 Germany, ECEC settings can decide whether they wish to share the monitoring results with the public. In France, monitoring results usually remain internal documents, while in the Netherlands and Finland, external evaluation results are made public.

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 Germany, settings that underperform have to take measures to improve their level of quality. In Finland, licenses can be revoked and services closed if an ECEC setting drastically underperforms on a continuous basis. In France, settings are required to address their shortcomings by, for instance, participating in training. A follow-up inspection or evaluation is also planned and, in extreme cases, a setting may be closed. In the Netherlands, underperforming settings may be required to take measures to address shortcomings. Management/staff may also be obliged to participate in training, or a follow-up inspection may be planned. In severe cases, a setting may be closed and a license revoked.

Challenges and policy options

All countries face challenges in monitoring, some of which are shared by different countries. 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 Germany. Germany's challenges include:

1. **No national monitoring system in place.** ECEC providers have full autonomy in deciding what monitoring practices and tools are used, which results in differences in monitoring quality practices, and even provisions, across Länder.
2. **Monitoring children's views.** This can provide additional insights into how children experience ECEC and into what aspects can be improved to enhance children's experiences, as well as to improve the quality provided. This is currently not a common practice in Germany.

Challenge 1: No national monitoring system in place

In Germany, ECEC provisions have autonomy in designing and implementing monitoring systems, which results in differences in monitoring quality across *Länder*. Childcare centre service providers have significant autonomy to design their own process for monitoring service quality. They can choose whether external or internal practices are used and what instruments are used. As a result, there is a wide variation in the practices and tools used. Because of these differences in monitoring practices between settings and *Länder*, there has been debate in Germany about the potential need for quality regulations at the national level. The results from the annual surveys of Child and Youth Welfare Statistics (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistiken*) raised awareness about the differences between regions regarding quality aspects, such as staff-child ratios. Debate about the need for improved quality and consistency in monitoring processes relates to different areas of quality monitoring, including ECEC curricula, unfavourable working conditions for staff, and attitudes of staff towards their work.

Common practices used in other countries to overcome the challenge of different monitoring practices within a country include: developing a national quality framework to set out the quality goals for ECEC, drafting a central monitoring framework, or standardising monitoring tools. The practices from other countries are further explained 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.
- In **Ireland**, *Siolta*, 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. *Siolta* 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 *Siolta* Quality Assurance Programme has been implemented, staff begin with a baseline assessment of how good their practice is 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.

Developing a central monitoring framework

- **Norway** acknowledged that its lack of a comprehensive monitoring system meant that it did not have adequate information on the quality of all its kindergartens. As a result, in 2013 the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) was asked to develop a national quality assessment system for kindergartens. One of the main objectives of the system is to increase accessibility to reliable information on the ECEC monitoring as the basis for a more informed discussion at all levels. It also aims to develop an online publication of statistical indicators for kindergartens.

Standardising monitoring tools

- 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 standardised set of indicators, which they use to evaluate settings and their performance.

Challenge 2: Monitoring children's views

Monitoring child development in ECEC settings is crucial for both ECEC staff and parents to gather information and knowledge on children's skills and development. However, monitoring children's views in particular is not yet a common practice in Germany.

Research highlights that it is difficult to capture the full extent of children's abilities and skills in a single snapshot, which is why many OECD countries monitor child development at different points in time or continuously through observational and narrative assessment techniques. Monitoring children's views provides information on children's development, but it also contributes to a better understanding of how children experience ECEC, which can result in quality improvements. The involvement of children in monitoring practices can provide valuable insights into how children experience certain pedagogical practices, which contributes to improved child development experiences.

Research suggests that children's voices should be recognised and that they can provide useful information about their own experience in ECEC, as well as wider societal issues (Clark, 2005; McNaughton, 2003; Sorin, 2003). Children's perceptions can provide additional information on their own academic, socio-emotional and mental development. These areas are also important in staff evaluations as such additional information can help improve staff practices to better support children's early development (Measelle et al., 1998). Box 1 provides a case study from Finland, one of the few countries that currently monitors children's views.

Box 1. Monitoring children's views in Finland

Finland provides an interesting example of how monitoring children's views can be used to inform policy making. In 2013/2014, a large survey of parents was conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*), to inform the preparation of a new law on the ECEC sector. The process also included interviews with children to ensure that their voices were being heard; the first time this had ever been done in the preparation of a new law. Finland reports that the emphasis put on hearing children's opinions stemmed from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To inform the revision of the legal framework, 48 children across the country were interviewed in their ECEC setting, either by their own teachers or other staff. The interviews sought to reveal information about how children experience their days and practices in ECEC and what meaning they attribute to its different aspects. To express their opinions, children used photographs they had taken and drawings they had made to discuss with staff what they appreciated in ECEC and what they did not like and wanted to change.

Finland reported that children emphasised the importance of being able to participate in activities with their friends. They particularly liked being allowed to play and move. They also enjoyed games involving physical activities. On the question of the ECEC environment, they considered their bed and the sleeping room unpleasant, i.e. the rooms where activities and free movement are restricted. Long sedentary periods were also seen as unpleasant. Children reported that they expect personalised care from adults and that they mediate when differences in group situations emerge. While overall children enjoy being in ECEC, they asked for more time for play, movement and physical activities, as well as to be able to make use of modern technology. Activities regarded as important by staff and adults, such as long morning meetings in a circle, were not regarded by children as at all meaningful and important.

For the ministry, this represents valuable feedback from the users of the ECEC services under their responsibility that can contribute to their evaluation. The findings also encourage Finland to involve children more often in the development of practices.

Source: Draft case study provided by Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and edited by the OECD Secretariat.

Involvement of children in monitoring practices can provide valuable insights into how children experience certain pedagogical practices, which can contribute to improved child development experiences. Other countries have also implemented measures to collect information on children's experiences.

Include children in evaluations and monitoring practices

- In the **Czech Republic**, children's views in public settings are taken into account as part of the school external evaluation, when children's well-being is assessed. Based on these reports, a comment about the atmosphere in the school is included in the public school inspection report. Internally, schools may also monitor children's well-being and happiness when conducting their self-assessments.
- In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, children's views are monitored in both family day care settings and day care centres. Though not compulsory, tools have been developed to enable family day care providers and day care centres assess how children experience the settings. The Self-Assessment Instrument for Care Settings (SiCs) starts by scanning well-being and involvement and helps to identify factors in the environment that may affect them. MyProfile, originally developed as ZiKo-Vo for family day care providers, helps practitioners in all kinds of settings for young children monitor children's development. Both instruments help the settings monitor each child and tailor their approach to the child's individual needs. Additionally, for preschool children (3-5 year-olds) a more extensive monitoring system is available: POMS, the Process-Oriented Monitoring System.

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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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