

# Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care: Eight policy measures from OECD countries





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# Foreword

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Dear reader,

Childcare workers lay important foundations for our children's education. Working as childminders, in daycare settings or in after-school care, they shape our children's first experience of education outside the family home, expanding their horizons, encouraging and empowering them. Our society needs these workers, desperately, and they need

us! To ensure every child has a chance to succeed, we need highly skilled and motivated early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff. Staffing pressures are already apparent in many areas and will remain a challenge for years to come – not just in Germany, but also in many other countries. It makes sense, therefore, to look at other countries' ways of addressing the workforce challenge: How do they manage to attract and retain skilled ECEC workers? What are their approaches and experiences?

The OECD has researched this with us and collated its findings into a comprehensive report on "Good Practice for Good ECEC Jobs". Drawing on that report, this booklet outlines eight policy measures from other countries. They show that better pay and better qualifications, more practical experience from day one, alternative pathways into ECEC, better working conditions, as well as promoting training and professional development all contribute to boosting the appeal and status of ECEC careers.

This is also reflected in the work we have been doing in the Federal Ministry. Our Good Daycare Act ("*Gute-Kita-Gesetz*") provides ten different action areas for the Federal States to

improve ECEC quality. One vital aspect of this is a highly skilled workforce. In summer 2019 we are also launching our Skilled Labour Initiative for Attracting Talent and Retaining Professionals in ECEC ("*Fachkräfteoffensive Erzieherinnen und Erzieher: Nachwuchs gewinnen und Profis binden*") to coincide with the start of the new apprenticeship year.

This initiative provides further incentives to attract skilled workers to the profession with paid apprenticeships, good on-the-job training and better career prospects to make professional development worthwhile. This is our contribution to addressing the shortage of skilled staff in early education. Children, families and childcare workers will all benefit from these investments. By investing in a solid foundation for early education, we ensure that every child gets the support they need, right from the start. So every child can succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Franziska Giffey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Dr. Franziska Giffey

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

# Introduction

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OECD countries face a persistent challenge in recruiting and retaining highly skilled early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff. Mindful of quality issues and the benefits that come with well-trained staff, OECD countries are increasingly demanding ECEC staff undertake extensive pre-service training and attain high-level qualifications before entering the sector. Many OECD countries have raised or revised minimum qualification requirements in recent decades. Indeed, several (e.g. France, Iceland, and Italy) even require pre-primary teachers to hold master's level qualifications. In-service training and professional development activities for ECEC workers are also receiving increased attention.

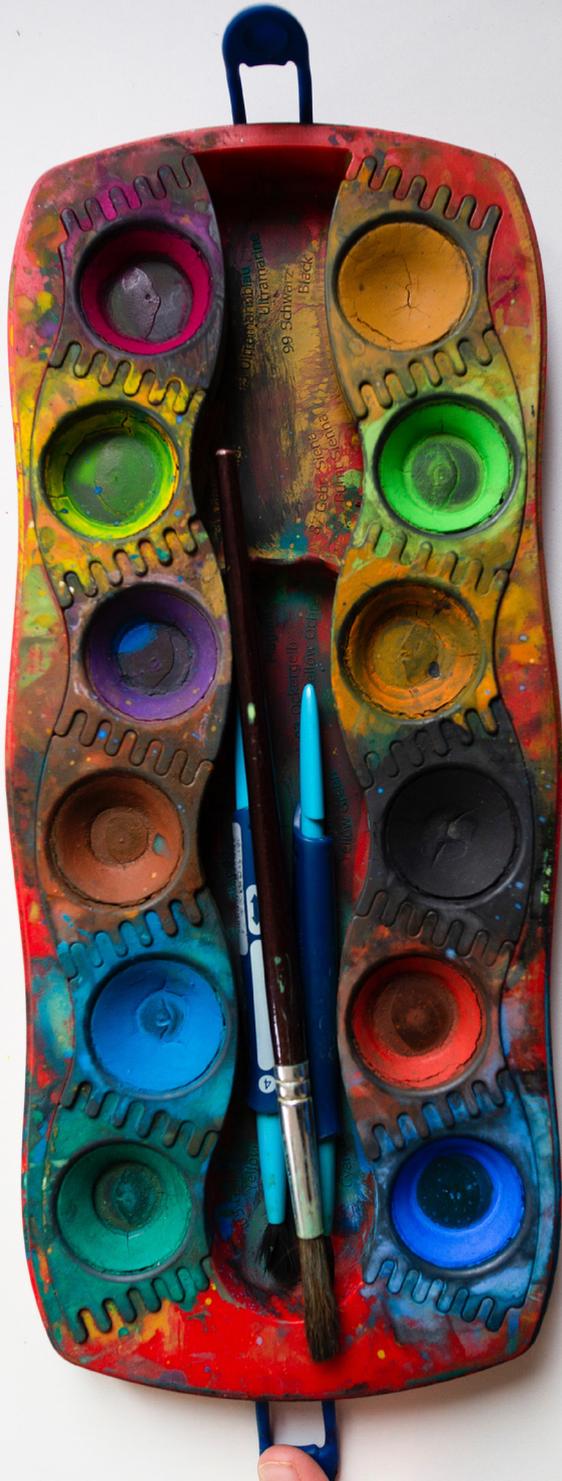
At the same time, however, many countries are struggling to attract and keep skilled staff in the ECEC sector. Many potential workers do not see ECEC as an attractive career choice, and efforts to bring skilled staff into the sector are often hampered by the low status of the profession and low pay on offer. Staff turnover rates are frequently high, and it is common to find workers leaving the sector for better pay, conditions, and career prospects elsewhere. Especially when coupled with an ageing workforce and general growth in demand for ECEC, these recruitment issues mean that many OECD countries are facing substantial shortages of skilled ECEC staff.

Germany provides one of the clearest examples of a country facing challenges in ECEC staffing. There, the expansion in 2013 of the ECEC guarantee to all children aged one and over, combined with demographic developments, means that the number of children in ECEC is expected to rise substantially over the next decade or so and, with it, the need for more staff. One estimate by Swiss consultancy firm Prognos suggests that Germany may need 372 000 additional ECEC staff by 2025 – far greater than the number of new entrants expected to graduate from pre-service training programmes in ECEC over the same period (about 181 000), leading to a shortfall of approximately 191 000 (Prognos, 2018).

What can countries like Germany do to build a highly qualified and well-trained ECEC workforce? What is the best route to increasing staff skills without exacerbating staff shortages? How can countries boost pay and working conditions in the context of limited resources? There is, unfortunately, no single silver bullet for constructing a high-quality workforce. Doing so requires a complex mix of policies to attract, recruit, train and retain workers. However, the experience of OECD countries provides a number of innovative and informative examples of good practice measures that can help countries find and keep skilled ECEC staff.

Based on the experience of countries from across the OECD, this booklet outlines eight good practice policy measures for improving the quality of the ECEC workforce. It covers policies and initiatives aimed at attracting and recruiting talented workers, discusses options for promoting pre-service training, and explores strategies for improving working conditions and worker retention. It draws in particular on selected policy examples from Australia, Denmark, England, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States.

Of course, different countries face different challenges, and not all policy measures will be equally relevant to all. Cross-country differences in governance structures, modes of provision (e.g. public- or market-based), the political and economic climate, and the existing state of the ECEC workforce mean that certain policy measures will be more relevant for some countries than for others. Nonetheless, given the scale of the challenge faced by many OECD countries, the lessons and measures outlined in this booklet provide useful information for many.



# Recent ECEC workforce initiatives in Germany

Germany is taking steps to address its ECEC workforce challenge. Alongside major government investment programs aimed at improving ECEC provision – as well as federal programmes targeted at, among other things, boosting access, promoting extended opening hours, and improving early language education – Germany has recently introduced a series of measures that look to increase the attractiveness of a career in ECEC and support the development of the ECEC workforce.

Chief among these measures is the new Act on Good Day Care Facilities (*Gesetz zur Weiterentwicklung der Qualität und zur Teilhabe in der Kindertagesbetreuung*, or *Gute-KiTa-Gesetz* for short), under which Germany is set to invest an additional EUR 5.5 billion in ECEC between 2019 and 2022. Under the Act, the federal states (*Länder*) are free to choose from a tool kit of ten different fields of action for improving quality, including measures aimed at attracting and retaining ECEC staff. The federal government then enters individual contracts with each of the 16 *Länder*, setting out which concrete measures will be taken by the Land. Other measures include the recently announced “Skilled Labour Initiative”, which looks to increase the attractiveness of ECEC training by raising the standards of workplace-based learning and offering apprenticeship pay during pre-service training, as well as to strengthen the profile and status of ECEC workers by establishing bonus payments for staff who undergo professional development activities and/or take on special responsibilities. Two European Social Fund programmes (“*Chance Quereinstieg*” and “*Männer in KiTas*”) also aimed to encourage both women and men to switch to careers in ECEC.

With these measures, the federal government is looking to build on and reinforce the many years of efforts undertaken by the federal states, local authorities and providers to improve the quality and availability of ECEC and boost the attractiveness of ECEC as a career.

## Measure 1

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# Engage in efforts to promote the status of ECEC jobs

Compared to competing occupations such as nursing and primary and secondary teaching, jobs in early childhood education and care often suffer from a lack of status and recognition. All too often, ECEC work is seen by the public as a vocation rather than a profession, and careers in ECEC as low status with only limited appeal.

In many cases, the low status of ECEC is related to the perception that it is low- or un-skilled work. As with many other occupations traditionally regarded as 'women's work', the skills and talents of ECEC staff are often under-valued. This is particularly the case for the care-oriented day care sector aimed at children under age three, despite growing evidence on the importance of the high quality early years education for child development.

One way to boost the status of ECEC workers is to increase staff qualifications. Many OECD countries now require that pre-primary teachers hold qualifications similar to those for primary teachers, usually at university level. However, qualifications for staff in the day care sector are often still low. Increasing education levels for at least some staff in the day care sector could help boost recognition and status.

However, not all ECEC staff need to be educated to university level before entering the sector. Studying for university-level qualifications is costly and can act as a barrier to entry for new staff. Moreover, many existing but unqualified staff already have extensive knowledge and skills. For these staff, a better approach might be to introduce qualifications or certification that signal and recognise existing competencies. Australia's Recognition of Prior Learning process provides one such example (see next page).

Another option for boosting status is to use media campaigns to increase public recognition of ECEC work. For example, between 2012 and 2014, Norway ran a national recruitment campaign named "The Best Job in the World is Vacant", with the aim of raising the status of ECEC and attracting new staff. The campaign established regional networks, tasked with developing local measures. One of these local networks (in Oslo and Arkeshus) ran education fairs and organised career days for trainee ECEC teachers.

## Australia's Recognition of Prior Learning process

Australia's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that recognises existing skills, knowledge and experience gained through working and prior learning, so that students looking to attain a vocational ECEC qualification do not have to demonstrate the same competencies again during their course. This helps experienced but unqualified staff have their skills recognised and allows early childhood workers become qualified ECEC professionals without needing to undertake a full ECEC training programme.

Students looking to use RPL submit evidence of prior learning and experience to an assessor, who considers whether they can be recognised as equivalent to units on the given course. Examples of evidence that can be submitted include references from current or previous employers, proof of past training, copies of relevant certificates, diplomas or other qualifications already attained, and reflective journals and log books of responsibilities in an ECEC facility. It is possible for students to gain qualifications entirely through the submission of RPL evidence, as long as they demonstrate all competencies required for the given qualification.

Sources: AQF, 2012; DoET, 2017.

## Measure 2

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# Improve remuneration for ECEC staff

Related to the low status of the profession, wages and salaries in ECEC have historically been and, in many cases, continue to be very low, especially for staff working in care-oriented services aimed at children under age 3.

Low wages damage the ECEC sector's ability to recruit new staff. It is not just that potential recruits may prefer to work in better paying occupations; for many, the low wages on offer in ECEC act as a firm barrier to a career in the sector. Evidence from OECD countries suggests ECEC staff are often in a position of high financial insecurity. One staff survey in Australia suggests many ECEC workers are only able to continue in their position because family members 'subsidise' their wages by contributing a disproportionate share to household expenses.

Many OECD countries are making efforts to increase pay for ECEC workers, especially at the pre-primary level. It is increasingly common for countries to align wages for pre-primary teachers with those for teachers in primary education. Indeed, today, in 19 OECD countries, statutory starting salaries for pre-primary teachers in the public sector exactly match starting salaries for primary teachers. However, there is less evidence of a trend towards improved wages for workers in care-oriented services aimed at children under age three.

Resource constraints are a key challenge in improving ECEC staff pay. Depending on the exact nature of the system, budgets are often constrained by limits on the fees that can be charged to parents and/or by the level of subsidies received from public bodies.

In this context, countries looking to improve ECEC staff pay may want to target wage supplements at staff with particular qualifications or characteristics or to use wage increases to help with other strategic objectives. New Zealand, for example, has since 2005 operated a supply-side funding system that allocates greater resources to centres with greater numbers of qualified and registered ECEC teachers, with the aim of allowing services to offer higher wages to highly-skilled staff (see Measure 3). Sweden's Teacher Salary Boost initiative, launched in 2016, offers a second interesting example (see next page).

## Sweden's *Teacher Salary Boost* programme

In autumn 2016, Sweden introduced the "Teacher Salary Boost" (Lönelyftet) programme – a government-funded programme aimed at increasing the salaries of the most talented and highly skilled pre-primary and primary teachers.

Under the scheme, certain teachers are selected for a salary increase of on average SEK 2 500–3 500 (EUR 230–330) per month. The municipality or the school or centre leader decides how many and which teachers are qualified to receive a salary increase through the Teacher Salary Boost scheme, with guidance suggesting selection should be based on staff skills and qualifications. Municipalities are also required to allocate resources according to the needs and conditions of children. The programme has the explicit goal of raising the recognition of the profession in order to recruit more teachers, to motivate new groups to become teachers, and to encourage existing staff to stay in the profession.

Swedish authorities are currently in the process of conducting an in-depth evaluation of the programme, with the final report expected in 2021. An early evaluation, published in 2017, pointed to very high take-up. The evaluation found some pessimism on the part of administrators around the benefits of the programme, mainly due to the limited scope and size of the government grant. However, more time is needed to judge the full impact on job satisfaction and retention.

Source: Statskontoret, 2017.

## Measure 3

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# Implement strategies to boost ECEC staff qualifications

Pre-service education and training is central to the construction of a skilled and knowledgeable ECEC workforce. Although qualifications by themselves do not guarantee high quality teaching, studies from across the OECD demonstrate that better educated staff are generally better able to deliver high-quality early childhood education and care.

One of the most straightforward ways to boost staff education levels is to raise pre-service training and minimum qualification requirements. Several OECD countries have raised minimum qualification requirements in ECEC in recent decades, especially at the pre-primary level. Indeed, a clear trend has emerged in many countries to align pre-primary and primary teaching qualification requirements. Today, in 17 OECD countries, both pre-primary and primary teachers are required to hold a bachelor's level degree. In a further six OECD countries, both require a master's degree.

However, there are costs to increasing qualification requirements. For instance, higher qualifications are likely to lead to demands for higher wages. This needs to be managed carefully to avoid putting financial pressure on providers and/or increased costs being passed on to parents. From a workforce perspective, there is also some risk that increasing minimum qualification requirements could deter potential staff from entering the sector. And in the short term, it may be difficult to accommodate large numbers of new students within existing pre-service training institutions.

One option in this situation is to moderate the requirement, typically by specifying that only a certain share of staff or only staff in certain roles (e.g. centre leaders) need to hold the required qualification. Another is to stagger the implementation of the new requirement. For example, in the mid-2000s, New Zealand gradually introduced requirements on the share of qualified and registered staff in teacher-led ECEC services, rising from 50% in 2007 to 80% in 2010 (see next page). Together with other reforms, the introduction of the target led to a steady and sustained increase in the number of qualified and registered teachers in ECEC.

# New Zealand's Pathways to the Future plan for ECEC

In 2002, New Zealand introduced Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki, a 10-year strategic plan describing strategies for the improvement of early childhood education services. A range of measures emerged from the plan, including policies to boost participation, to promote process quality, and to better support community-based services. At the centre, however, were two initiatives aimed at increasing the number of qualified and registered staff in ECEC.

First, the government set out targets that required teacher-led services to have at least 50% or more of regulated staff that are qualified and registered teachers by 2007, rising to 80% by 2010 and 100% by 2012. (The government abolished the latter target in 2010, on the basis that eight-in-ten is a sufficient ratio of qualified teachers). Second, to help compensate providers for the additional costs involved with employing greater numbers of registered staff, the government implemented a new system of supply-side public funding for ECEC with greater resources directed to centres with greater numbers of qualified staff.

Available evidence suggests that, together with other initiatives, the registered teacher target and new funding system were successful in promoting the number of qualified staff in ECEC. Between 2004 and 2005, the share of qualified and registered teachers in teacher-led ECEC services jumped by 15 percentage points, from 37% to 52%. By 2013, it had climbed to 75%. In the same year, as many as 94% of teacher-led centre-based services had 80% or more qualified and registered teachers.

Sources: MoE, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011; Meade et al., 2012; MoE, 2013; MoE, 2019.

## Measure 4

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# Increase emphasis on practical experience in pre-service ECEC training

Pre-service training in ECEC requires a mixture of theory and practice. While classroom-based learning on the theory of ECEC is important, trainee ECEC workers also need real-world experience and the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a practical setting. Practical experience provides new staff with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the dynamics of teaching in context and helps lessen the need for an adjustment period when first entering employment.

Many OECD countries already include practical experience and workplace-based learning in their pre-service training programmes. Modern training programmes combine extensive coursework and classroom-based learning on how to teach with an extended period gathering practical experience inside ECEC settings. During this time, students are able to familiarise themselves with the ECEC environment, put acquired knowledge into practice, and to develop their own strategies and innovative practices.

Several OECD countries provide good examples of integrating practical experience into pre-service training. Denmark provides one of the most comprehensive examples – there, student ECEC teachers must complete the equivalent of more than one year of practical placements (see next page). Other examples include Norway, where student ECEC teachers must complete at least 100 days practical placement; Italy, where the master's level pre-primary teacher training programme includes 600 hours of compulsory placement; Sweden, where students training to become ECEC teachers complete 20 weeks of practical placements; and Germany, where details of the post-secondary level pre-service ECEC teacher training programme vary across Länder but often include one-year of practical placement, sometimes with payment.

# Practical placements in Denmark's ECEC pre-service training programme

In Denmark, to become an ECEC teacher, students must complete a three-and-a-half-year bachelor's degree, a third of which consists of practical placements inside of ECEC settings. The aim is not just to help students gain experience, but also to acquire real-world knowledge and an understanding of what teaching involves on the ground.

The practical placements take place in four blocks. The first lasts for 32 days with students working an average of six hours per day. The second and third last for six months at an average of 32.5 hours per week. The fourth and final placement lasts for only 16 days, during which students collect empirical data for their end-of-study thesis. During the first and second placement, the provider and a supervisor from the student's university evaluate performance internally. During the third, an external examiner is also present.

Students receive payment throughout the practical placements. For the first and fourth placements, students receive a state-funded student grant. During the second and third, students are paid by the provider.

A qualified ECEC teacher supervises students throughout the placement. Supervision and guidance is provided both informally throughout the day, and more formally through planned meetings. Estimates suggest that these meetings last for an average of one hour per week. Placement supervisors receive a small wage bonus for the role. In 2014, the bonus was about EUR 550 for a six-month placement.

Source: Litjens and Taguma, 2017; Oberhuemer and Schreyer, 2018.

## Measure 5

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# Provide alternative pathways into ECEC

In most OECD countries, specialised ECEC pre-service training is lengthy. This is especially the case at the pre-primary level, where pre-service training often lasts for three, four or even five years. These courses are key for preparing future ECEC workers. However, their duration places limits on the number of potential workers that can apply. Young people keen to head straight into work, graduates with degrees in unrelated disciplines, and older workers with relevant skills from other occupations may all be put off by lengthy pre-service training.

Countries can widen the pool of potential new workers by providing alternative educational pathways into the sector. For examples, one option is to offer apprenticeships, whereby trainees combine work with practical on the job training and study. This is likely to be particularly attractive to younger workers without the qualifications needed to enter full pre-service training programmes.

Older workers require a different approach. One strategy is to offer accelerated programmes to prospective staff with relevant experience or relevant but not directly applicable qualifications. Sweden, for instance, recently introduced a 'fast-track' training programme for potential pre-primary and primary teachers with a migrant background and a teaching qualification from another country.

Another is to offer similarly accelerated programmes that recognise and validate skills and competencies gained outside of ECEC and/or attract workers with valuable but unrelated experience. As just one example, in England between 2007 and 2014, university graduates with degrees in any discipline had the opportunity to attain so-called Early Years Professional Status – an award given to graduates in ECEC following a period of placement, training and assessment (see next page). Among other objectives, the goal of the award was to encourage graduates to enter ECEC. To a large extent, the programme was successful in this aim – in the five years following the introduction of the EYPS award, the share of graduates in private full-day care centres more than doubled

# England's *Early Years Professional Programme*

In 2007, England introduced its Early Years Professional Programme (EYPP), a series of measures aimed at bringing university-educated staff into the dominant private, voluntary and independent (PVI) ECEC sector. Among other measures, this included the introduction of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) award. The aim at the time was to require all day care centres to have at least one university-educated member of staff with accredited EYPS by 2015.

EYPS was not a qualification in its own right. Rather, it was an award given to staff with university-level qualifications (in any discipline) following a period of placement, training and assessment. University graduates not already working in the sector could attain EYPS through a one-year training programme.

The EYPP had several objectives. As well as bringing graduates into the sector, it was hoped that the introduction of the EYPS award would help contribute to the professionalisation of ECEC jobs, improve options for career progression, and help challenge early years practitioners' perceived lack of status. It was also hoped that workers with EYPS would use their skills to improve practice and help other workers develop.

By many measures, the EYPP was successful in achieving several of its aims. Following the introduction of the EYPP, the share of staff in private full-day care centres with at least a university degree more than doubled, from 5% in 2008 to 13% in 2013. The share of senior managers with a degree also increased, from 17% in 2008 to 33% in 2013. An evaluation commissioned by the United Kingdom's Department of Education found that the EYPP had a very positive impact on workforce development, and that attaining EYPS has helped many staff improve their own sense of status. A second study focusing on process quality found that gaining a member of staff with EYPS was associated with a significant improvement in quality.

Sources: Mathers et al., 2011; Hadfield et al., 2012; Brind et al., 2014.

## Measure 6

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# Expand efforts to encourage men to enter the ECEC workforce

Bringing men into ECEC work carries multiple benefits. On a staffing level, encouraging men to consider a career in ECEC could expand the pool of available workers, easing staff shortages. From a quality perspective, male ECEC workers are increasingly recognised as having the potential to improve process quality and child development and learning, particularly in the development of attitudes towards gender roles. Research also shows that male workers are well-received by female colleagues.

Despite the benefits, the number of men in pre-primary and day care positions remains very low. On average across the OECD, just 3% of pre-primary teachers are men. The profession's often low social status is one reason lying behind this, as is low pay. Yet better salaries and higher social status are unlikely to be sufficient to close the gender gap. Gender perceptions of appropriate careers and who makes for an appropriate carer also form barriers to men in ECEC.

As a first step, countries looking to encourage men to enter ECEC should consider running information and awareness campaigns. This includes not only recruitment campaigns targeted at male students and other potential male applicants, but also campaigns aimed at changing norms around men as caregivers among hiring managers, parents, and the wider public.

Networking, mentoring, and peer-to-peer support schemes are a second possible measure. These programmes are commonly used to help women to enter, remain, and advance in domains that are traditionally male-dominated, such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). They are likely to be equally valuable for supporting men working in female-dominated areas, such as ECEC.

A third option might be to consider affirmative action in the hiring process, as has been used in Norway, for example (see next page). However, these kinds of measures should be used only as a temporary measure in the transition to a more gender-balanced workforce.

# Affirmative action to get men into ECEC in Norway

Norway has made sustained efforts to improve the gender balance of the ECEC workforce over the past three decades. As far back as 1990, the Norwegian government introduced a range of measures aimed at encouraging men to enter the sector, including the development of networks for male workers, conferences on the issue, and the preparation of documents and videos to stimulate discussion.

In 1997, Norway launched the first of a series of action plans to bring men into ECEC including, among other measures, a goal of men making up at least 20% of the ECEC workforce by 2000. In 1998, the government agreed that positive action could be applied to the recruitment of men into ECEC jobs – the first time that positive action had been applied to men. More recently, regulations have been introduced to promote male recruitment, including an affirmative action policy favouring a male candidate if two applicants have same qualifications.

While Norway has not yet met its own target for a 20% male workforce, its measures have contributed to a steady increase in the male share of ECEC workers. Statistics Norway reports that male employees in ECEC rose from 9.9% of the total kindergarten workforce in 2015 to 10.1% in 2016 and 10.3% in 2017, albeit with these male employees still under-represented among kindergarten teachers (7.9% are men) and centre leaders (8.3%), and over-represented among assistants (10.8%) and in other roles (24.1%). Norway also reports that the proportion of male students registering for kindergarten teacher education has increased in recent years, though the dropout rate is still higher for men than for women.

Sources: OECD, 2001; Engel et al., 2015; SSB, 2019.

## Measure 7

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# Increase efforts to improve ECEC working conditions

Working conditions play an important role in the recruitment and particularly retention of ECEC workers. ECEC staff considering leaving their jobs often point to stress, burnout and poor support as key reasons. Indeed, research shows that workers reporting emotional exhaustion and/or poor working conditions are more likely to express an intention to leave than others.

Working conditions can be influenced through the setting of minimum regulatory standards, such as those governing the number of children per staff member and the space for a given number of children. Lower child-to-staff ratios provide more opportunities for meaningful interaction between staff and children, but also affect the working environment. Research shows that staff feel more supported and less stressed when responsible for a smaller group of children.

By their nature, lower child-to-staff ratios are likely to lead to increased staff costs. One option for countries with limited budgets is to introduce responsive child-to-staff regulations that adjust according to the needs and characteristics of staff and children. In England, for instance, child-to-staff ratios have been set to respond to the age of children and the qualifications of staff employed in the class- and playroom (see next page).

Besides minimum standards, organisational features such as leadership and relationships with colleagues are also important for staff retention. Management support, in particular, is key. Evidence shows that staff who report little support from management also express lower job satisfaction and perform their teaching and care-giving tasks less well than those who receive greater support. Autonomy and independence are important too. In one study of ECEC workers in Australia, staff with a greater degree of influence and those working in settings with a flatter organisational structure often reported a stronger intention to stay. Foremost among these practices was increased work-time autonomy, including control over schedules and working hours (McDonald, Thorpe and Irvine, 2018).

## Responsive child-to-staff ratios in England

In England, minimum statutory child-to-staff ratios in early years settings respond not only to the age of children (as is common in OECD countries), but also to the qualifications of staff employed in the class- and playroom. The stipulated ratio for 3- to 6-year-olds is 13 when there is a qualified teacher or equivalent in the group, but this decreases to 8 when there is no qualified teacher or equivalent present. For 2-year-olds the minimum ratio is 4 children per member of staff, and for children under 2 it is 3 per member of staff. As a result, England has one of the lowest statutory child-to-staff ratios for very young children (under age three) in the OECD, and below average ratios for slightly older children, too.

These ratios are strict and binding. They apply at all times and in all centre-based settings. For group settings providing overnight care, the relevant ratios continue to apply and at least one member of staff must be awake at all times. Staff aged 16 or under cannot be included in the ratio (and must be supervised at all times). Students on long term placements and volunteers (aged 17 or over) and staff working on ECEC apprenticeships (aged 16 or over) can be included in the ratios if the service provider is satisfied that they are competent and responsible.

Ratios for family care workers (childminders) are slightly different. An individual family care worker may care for up to six children under aged 0-7 at any one time. However, of these six children, a maximum of three can be “young children”. (Children are classified as “young children” up until 1 September following their fifth birthday). A maximum of only one child under age 1 is allowed at any one time.

Sources: Wall, Litjens and Taguma, 2015; Litjens and Taguma, 2017; DfE, 2017.

## Measure 8

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# Strengthen policies to encourage in-service training and professional development

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff is only one part of building a high-quality workforce. Existing staff need opportunities for in-service training and professional development to allow them to stay abreast of the latest advances in teaching and care practice, to update them on changes to curricula, and to help improve skills and competencies.

A major challenge in promoting in-service training and professional development is encouraging and incentivising staff to enrol. In the absence of support, ECEC staff may feel they do not have the time or resources to attend training activities. Providers themselves may also be unwilling to let staff attend training if resources are stretched. And there are practical considerations too – in the context of staff shortages, it may be difficult (and costly) to find substitute workers.

OECD countries have adopted a variety of measures aimed at promoting participation in in-service training and development. One option, already used in several countries, is to make in-service training and professional development mandatory. In general, this is more common for teachers at the pre-primary level than for staff in care-oriented services aimed at children under three.

Other options include providing financial support to cover the costs of training and earnings foregone, as well as study leave. In Sweden, for instance, under the Boost for Preschool training programme that ran between 2009 and 2011, ECEC staff participating in university courses continued to receive 80% of their salary.

Some countries also provide cash or career incentives to staff who engage in professional development, such as wage increases or new career opportunities. In the United States, for example, several programmes from around the country provide scholarships and wage bonuses to staff engaging in education, training and professional development (see next page for one example). Evidence suggests these programmes help encourage staff to participate in education and training, and may also boost staff retention.

# ***The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) early childhood programme in Wisconsin, U.S.***

The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) early childhood programme is a state-run initiative designed to improve the qualifications, wages, and retention of ECEC workers. The programme began in North Carolina in 1990 but has since been introduced in other states across the U.S., including Wisconsin.

The T.E.A.C.H. early childhood programme in Wisconsin offers scholarships to support ECEC teachers in taking college courses, and financial incentives to stay in the sector afterwards. The programme requires recipients to agree to remain in their jobs for six months to one year following completion of their contract, after which they typically receive a bonus or raise from their employer and a bonus from T.E.A.C.H.

The primary goal of the T.E.A.C.H. early childhood programme is to support training and professional development among staff, and one evaluation of the programme (run between 1993 and 2003) found that, by several measures, it has been successful in this aim. Roughly half of staff receiving T.E.A.C.H. scholarships had not been in training or professional development in the year prior receipt, suggesting the programme was effective in supporting and encouraging training among staff motivated to do so. Completion rates were also high. Three-quarters of staff awarded scholarships to study infant care courses went on to complete the course, as did 85% of those awarded scholarships for administration courses.

Improvements also extended to retention: T.E.A.C.H. recipients had an average annual turnover rate of 12%, corresponding to less than one-third the annual turnover rate across the state of Wisconsin as a whole. Even among those who left their jobs, a majority (57%) stayed in the ECEC field. Only 7.6% of recipients actually left the ECEC field altogether.

Source: Adams et al., 2003.

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