Unequal use of childcare services in the EU

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EU context

- *Europe 2020*
  - 75% employment rate
  - Reduction in poverty and social exclusion
  - Reduction in school drop-outs
- *Barcelona targets on ECEC*
  - 33% of children below 3 years old
  - 90% of children above 3 years old
- *Social Investment and Recommendation on Investing in Children*
- *Gender equality*
- *Country-specific recommendations*
Reasons for childcare

1. Childcare enables parents to work, and

2. Childcare provides children with stimulating environment to develop various psycho-social and cognitive skills
Mothers' employment rate compared to other women and fathers (people aged 25-49 years), 2013.

Source: Eurostat, LFS
Employment rate of mothers by education level, 2014

% of mothers 25-49 years old

High education
Low education

ER Target 75%

Source: Eurostat, LFS [lfs_hheredch], Lithuania refers to 2009 data
Data

- **EU-SILC**
  - Education at pre-school
  - Childcare at centre-based services
  - Childcare at day care centre
  - Professional child-minders

- **EU-SILC 2016 ad hoc module**
  - Unmet needs for childcare
  - Affordability of services
Achieving the Barcelona targets of childcare

Target 33% for children less than 3

Target 90% for children more than 3
Use of childcare and mothers' work
More evidence needed: What is the relationship between the use of childcare services and child well-being?
Two dimensions:

1. Equal access to services
   - Parents’ employment

2. Equal use of services
   - Social investment
Equal access to ECEC services

- Availability
- Affordability
- Good quality

→ Better work incentives, improved family income and living standards, strengthening gender equality
Equal use of ECEC services

- High overall participation
- Distribution of use

→ To be interpreted together with leave arrangements and other cash benefits as well as labour market options
→ Breaking the cycle of disadvantage, focus on children's rights
Unequal use of childcare (2013)
Recent changes in equality of use
Alternatives to childcare

- Care allowance
- Family care and other informal care
- Subsidies for purchasing care services

- What implications "freedom to choose" can have?
Conclusions: analytical issues

- What obstacles there are to use ECEC?
- How to improve access of low SES children?
- Solving the chicken-and-egg problem
- What is the causal relationship between childcare use and income? And how do these relate to child well-being and development?
- Cost-effectiveness of childcare policies, how to study them (RCTs, quasi-experimental designs)
Conclusions: data issues

- Private financial cost of childcare for parents
- Other costs related to childcare (opportunity cost)
- Quality of childcare
- Well-being of children in childcare
Conclusion: policy issues

- Can there be conflicts between children's interests and parent's work?
- How to solve these potential conflicts?
- How to assure that more spending in ECEC increases participation of children from low SES?