

Starting Strong Mapping quality in ECEC

Methodology

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The [Starting Strong VI: Supporting Meaningful Interactions in Early Childhood Education and Care](#) publication and accompanying [Starting Strong: Mapping quality in Early Childhood Education and Care](#) website represent the culmination of the *Quality beyond Regulations* policy review undertaken by the OECD between 2018 and 2021.

This policy review sought to foster an understanding of the different dimensions of quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC), focusing on process quality in particular. Process quality encompasses children's daily interactions through their ECEC settings – including with other children, staff and teachers, space and materials, their families and the wider community – which are directly linked to their development, learning and well-being.

Data informing this website and the report were derived from two principal sources, developed specifically for the policy review:

1. A policy questionnaire distributed to the OECD ECEC Network.
2. Complementary country background reports (CBRs) completed by countries that provided additional support to the project.

Administration of the policy questionnaire

Between April and October 2019, the OECD Secretariat distributed a policy questionnaire to the OECD ECEC Network, a knowledge-sharing platform for national, regional and local policy makers working on developing ECEC policies.

In total, 26 countries completed the policy questionnaire, resulting in a rich database of information on ECEC systems around the world and their efforts to promote high-quality ECEC as of the year 2019 (Table 1). Given the complex architecture of ECEC systems, the review collected information for different curriculum frameworks (56 in total) and ECEC settings (121 in total) in place within participating countries and jurisdictions.

Guided by the project's data collection framework, and following a glossary provided by the OECD Secretariat, the substantive sections of the questionnaire collected information on the following areas:

- background information on settings and curricula
- curriculum and pedagogy
- initial education, professional development and working conditions of the ECEC workforce
- contextual information (e.g. governance, standards and funding).

Following the administration of the policy questionnaire, the OECD Secretariat reviewed responses from participating countries, and, in cooperation with the OECD ECEC Network, streamlined the data, organising them along a set of indicators. These indicators are presented as part of a multi-dimensional map of quality in ECEC on the *Starting Strong* website and the *Starting Strong VI* publication. All indicators are available for download from the website.

The indicator development was guided by the members of the OECD ECEC Network and discussed at the meetings of the network between May 2020 and March 2021. Individual data tables for the sets of indicators were shared with and verified by participating countries and jurisdictions.

Table 1. Countries and jurisdictions having responded to the policy questionnaire

Australia	Chile	Luxembourg
Victoria	Czech Republic	Mexico
Belgium ¹	Denmark	Norway
Flemish community	Estonia	New Zealand
Canada ¹	Finland	Poland
Alberta	France	Portugal
British Columbia	Germany	Slovak Republic
Manitoba	Bavaria	Slovenia
New Brunswick	Berlin	South Africa
Nova Scotia	Brandenburg	Switzerland
Nunavut	North Rhine-Westphalia	Turkey
Ontario	Iceland	United Kingdom ¹
Quebec	Ireland	England
Saskatchewan	Israel	
Yukon	Japan	

1. Countries that responded to the questionnaire only at jurisdictional level.

Note: Not all countries and jurisdictions responded to all questions and for all types of settings.

Scope of the policy questionnaire

Country coverage

ECEC systems are often decentralised, with authority for different types of settings or particular aspects of ECEC provision falling to different levels of governance. In federal countries, the mix of responsibilities between national governments and subnational entities (e.g. provinces, states, cantons) can make understanding ECEC systems even more complex from the perspective of international comparisons.

Given the goal of providing internationally comparative data, the policy review and related policy questionnaire focused on collecting national data from all participating countries. However, for federal systems, information was also collected on sub-national jurisdictions within countries.

Settings, curricula and age groups

Consistent with previous OECD work on ECEC, the data collection for the *Quality beyond Regulations* policy review included all settings belonging to countries' regulated ECEC systems: childcare, *crèches*, kindergarten, nursery or preschool, integrated centre-based ECEC, and home-based care. Countries were asked to report information on all settings regardless of type, funding, opening hours or programme content, provided that they were subject to certain rules, minimum standards or were otherwise regulated.

Staff roles and development in setting types

The professionals working in ECEC systems have many different roles and titles, including pre-primary school teachers, pedagogues, care workers, educators and counsellors. To address the workforce development policy lever of the *Quality beyond Regulations* policy review, it was deemed necessary to consider these different staff roles and the different types of ECEC settings in which they work.

To collect data that are meaningful across countries and address the different roles of staff across settings, the policy questionnaire asked countries to report on workforce development policies based on the structure of their ECEC systems. That is, countries with an integrated system serving children aged 0 to 5/primary school entry were asked to report on workforce development policies for centre-based ECEC within this integrated system. While countries with a split system were asked to report policies relevant for centre-based ECEC settings separately, first for those serving children under the age of 3 and second for those serving children aged 3 to 5/primary school entry. All countries were asked to report on workforce development policies relevant for home-based or family childcare settings.

In addition, countries were asked to report on workforce development policies for three categories of staff:

- **Teachers and comparable practitioners:** ECEC staff with the most responsibility for a group of children at the class- or playroom-level. They may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners or pedagogical staff in pre-primary education, while the term teacher is almost universally used at the primary level.
- **Assistants:** ECEC staff whose role is to provide support to the teachers or lead staff member with a group of children. They usually have lower qualification requirements than teachers, ranging from no formal requirements to, for instance, vocational education and training.
- **Leaders:** ECEC staff with the most responsibility for the administrative, managerial and/or pedagogical leadership at the centre. As part of the leadership role, centre leaders may be responsible for the monitoring of children, the supervision of other staff, contact with parents and guardians, and/or the planning, preparation and carrying out of the pedagogical work in the centre. Centre leaders may also spend part of their time working with the children.

Although these staff types are not exhaustive, they capture the majority of staff within ECEC centres across countries and are consistent with the primary categories used in the OECD TALIS Starting Strong survey.

Application of standardised age groups to settings and curricula

Standardised age groups were allocated to the different curricula and settings to facilitate the use of information, to enable comparisons across age groups within and across countries (or jurisdictions), and to ensure consistency with the development of ECEC indicators as part of other OECD databases such as Education at a Glance.

The same standardised age groups were attributed to curricula and settings based on the following rules:

- **Age 0 to 2:** if the majority of years of a setting or curriculum target or cover ages 0 to 2. This includes settings or curricula which start after 0 years (e.g. 12 weeks, 3 months, etc.) and end up to age 3.
- **Age 3 to primary school entry:** if the majority of years of a setting or curriculum target or cover ages 3 to 5. This includes settings or curricula which start earlier than age 3 (e.g. 2.5 years) or later than age 3 (e.g. 4 years).
- **Integrated for age 0 to primary school entry:** if a setting or curriculum target or cover ages below and above the cut-off point of 3 years to a similar extent (e.g. 0 to 12 years).

Application of “not applicable” and “missing” information

Information classified by countries or jurisdictions as “no, not regulated or not required”, “not applicable” (a), or “missing” (m) was checked against explanatory notes provided by countries and sometimes reclassified within these three categories to ensure comparability of information across countries.

For instance, where a particular type of staff (e.g. leaders or assistants) is not employed in a particular setting, the information is consistently classified as “not applicable” across indicators. Similarly, where no external monitoring process for curriculum implementation is in place, information on related items, such as the frequency of inspection or the methods used, is classified as “not applicable”.

In situations where countries left items in their response to the policy questionnaire either blank or ticked the response category “information is not available”, comments provided by countries were taken into account for the interpretation of the data.

Aggregation of information across different curricula and settings within countries and jurisdictions

Information was aggregated for each indicator where information was the same within the standardised age groups. No information for different curricula or settings was aggregated across different standardised age groups. However, given the number of curricula and settings in some countries, a standardised age group could still entail different settings or curricula with different information.

For the use of the data in comparative figures and tables, both on the website and the publication, information was sometimes aggregated across settings and curricula, within the same age groups. This generated one item per country and age group.

The following rules were applied:

- For indicators based on binary response options (e.g. “yes” or “no”), a category was applied for a specific standardised age group if it applied consistently to all settings or curricula within that age group (e.g. “yes” or “no”). Where information differed across settings or curricula within a certain age group, this was indicated by the category “differs across curricula” or “differs across settings”. For items with multiple response options (e.g. “required”, “common practice”, “no”), similar rules were applied as for items with binary response options.
- For indicators based on the calculation of a percentage of response categories that applied for a curriculum or setting (e.g. “breadth of policy measures in place to improve working conditions”), the simple value is shown where information is the same across settings or curricula within a specific standardised age group. Where information differs, a country average was calculated across curricula or settings within the same standardised age group.

Concerning the treatment of “missing” and “not applicable” information in these aggregations:

- For items based on binary or multiple response options, “missing” or “not applicable” information was not taken into account and the aggregation was based only on the curriculum or setting with available information. In case countries or jurisdictions indicated both “not applicable” and “missing” information for different curricula or settings within the same standardised age group, the information is shown as “not applicable”.
- For items based on the calculation of a percentage of response categories, “missing” or “not applicable” information was not taken into account, and the country value for that standardised age group represents the simple average of the remaining settings.
- As a consequence of these treatments, if information on the main setting or main curriculum framework within an age group is missing, the aggregations might reflect policies for settings or curriculum frameworks that cover a minority of children.

For some indicators (namely those providing information on levels of governance), the classification “shared responsibility” or “multiple authorities” was applied in the following cases:

- When more than one level of governance was specified for one curriculum or setting (e.g. Central and Regional), the information was classified as “shared responsibility”/“multiple authorities”.

- When information was the same for different curricula or settings within the same standardised age group, the aggregation was simply that category. That can be one particular level (e.g. Central), or “shared responsibility”/“multiple authorities”.
- When information was different across curricula or settings within the same standardised age group, this was indicated as “shared responsibility” (e.g. responsibilities are shared for developing the curriculum for different curricula within a standardised age group).

In brief, “shared responsibility”/“multiple authorities” within standardised age groups was used, both when different authorities are responsible for a task for the same curriculum or setting, and when different authorities are responsible for a task for different curricula or settings. Curricula or settings with “missing” or “not applicable” information were not taken into account.

Visualisation of indicators on the website and in the publication

Presentation of countries in figures:

- All countries with information available for curricula or settings within a specific age group are represented in the figures. Countries may therefore appear in different categories, representing the different curricula or settings.

Calculation of percentage of curricula or settings:

- When information is presented by standardised age group, the percentage was calculated considering the whole set or total number of observations in this age group in the denominator (including curricula and settings classified as “not applicable” or “missing”).

Treatment of sub-national data

Similar procedures (application of standardised age groups, aggregation of information across curricula or settings within the same age groups) were implemented for countries providing sub-national information. The nature and extent of the data does not allow to calculate national data from information provided at the sub-national level for most of the indicators..

Country background reports

Complementary country background reports (CBRs) were provided by six countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg and Switzerland. These background reports responded to a common set of issues and questions, following a standardised framework developed by the OECD Secretariat and reviewed by participating countries, to facilitate comparative analysis and to maximise knowledge sharing opportunities. All country background reports are available on the following website: <https://oe.cd/3N6>.