

Relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements: April 2020

Most discussions of policy frameworks to support employed parents with young children highlight two key policies: Parental leave and early childhood education and care (ECEC). The table below looks at the relationship between these two policy areas, and, in particular, at whether they are coordinated in the sense that an entitlement to leave leads immediately into, or coincides with, an entitlement to ECEC.

Great variations exist between countries in both leave policies and ECEC. The table shows two dimensions of variation for ECEC: attendance rates at formal services and entitlement to ECEC. **Attendance rates for children under three years of age** vary from less than 15 per cent (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Mexico, Poland, and Slovak Republic), to over 50 per cent (Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Israel, Korea, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, and Norway), with a median rate among the 40 countries yielding data of just under a third (32 per cent). **Attendance rates for children over three years of age** are uniformly much higher, but vary from under 70 per cent (Croatia, Greece, Switzerland, and the US) to 95 per cent and over (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain and the UK), with a median rate among the 42 countries for which there is information of 91 per cent. What these figures do not reveal is the opening hours of services and how far they are suited to the needs of working parents: indeed, in many cases they will not be.

Thirty countries have an **entitlement to an ECEC service**, but, in most cases, this is only from three years of age or later. In five countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, and Mexico), the entitlement includes a period of compulsory attendance at an ECEC service, usually for children aged four and a half years and over (in Croatia, all children must attend a pre-school programme for one year before entering primary school, but as this programme is brief, it has not been treated as a legal entitlement to ECEC). Only seven countries have a clear entitlement for before three years of age: at two and half years in Belgium, and at 12 months or younger or at the end of Parental leave in six countries: Denmark, Finland, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden, with full-time places available in all cases (except Finland, where this entitlement is not necessarily full-time). In another seven countries – Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Mexico, Romania, and Russia – there is a legal entitlement for the youngest age group, but it is reported that a shortage of places means that, to varying degrees, the entitlement is not fully operational until a later age. It is only in the six countries with an operational entitlement for the youngest age group that there

is no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement: Denmark, Finland, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. Elsewhere, there are substantial gaps, which if combined with countries that have no ECEC entitlement, emphasise the extensive lack of coordination between these two policy areas.

	Attendance rates at formal ECEC services (2017)		Child's age (months) at:			Gap between	
	0-2 years	3-5 years	end of leave(a)	end of well-paid leave(b) ¹	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Australia	40%	84%	24	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Austria	21%	89%	24	14	■ 5 years; PT; OB	36	46
Belgium	56%	98%	11.3	3.3	■ 2½ years	18.7	26.7
Brazil	23%	84%	4.2 to 6.5	4.2 to 6.5	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Bulgaria	9%	77%	36	12	■ 5 years; OB	24	48
Canada	No information		19-22	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Québec	No information		12.8	12.8	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Chile	22%	79%	5.6	5.6	×	No ECEC entitlement	
China	No information		2.8 ²	2.8	■ 3 years	33.2	33.2
Croatia	19%	68%	36	6	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Cyprus	32%	86%	6	3.7	■ 4.8 years; OB	50	52.3
Czech Republic	8%	88%	36	24	■ 5 years	24	36
Denmark	55%	98%	14.4	11.2	■ 6 months	No gap	No gap
Estonia	29%	91%	36	18.1	■ 18 mths[*3 yrs]	No gap	?No gap
Finland	31%	80%	36	11.1	■ end Par. leave	No gap	No gap

¹ Where bonus months given if leave shared, 'end of well-paid leave' includes these months. Both (a) and (b) give child's age if leave taken in one continuous period and full-time.

² China: 2.8 months is the national minimum entitlement; many provinces offer longer periods of leave, most frequently up to 4.7 months.

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	0-2 years	3-5 years	end of leave(a)	end of well-paid leave(b) ¹	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
France	56%	100%	36	3.7	■ 3 years	No gap	32.2
Germany	37%	95%	36	14	■ ■ 1 year ³	?No gap	?No gap
Greece	23%	65%	14 to 72	6 to 12	■ 5 years PT ⁴	46 to no gap	48 to 54
Hungary	16%	92%	36	24	■ ■ birth [*OB from 3 years]	?No gap	?No gap
Iceland	60%	97%	17	9	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Ireland	32%	98%	20.5	×	■ 3¼ years PT	18.6	×
Israel	56%	99%	12	3.5	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Italy	30%	94%	15.7	4.7	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Japan	30%	91%	14	14	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Korea	56%	95%	27	9	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Latvia	31%	93%	37.9	1.9	■ ■ 18 mths	?No gap	?16.1
Lithuania	25%	85%	36	12	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Luxembourg ⁵	63%	88%	14.8	10.8	■ 3 years PT	21.2	25.2
Malta	55%(2014)	94%	12 to 76	3.3	■ ■ 3 months ⁶	No gap	No gap

³ Germany: there is an entitlement to ECEC from 12 months of age, but the entitlement does not specify hours per day or per week; many services in Western Germany still offer only part-time hours, though full-time opening has remained the norm in Eastern Germany.

⁴ A new law, voted for in 2018, makes four years of age the start of compulsory ECEC attendance. The law is being implemented gradually and will need to be fully implemented by 2021.

⁵ Luxembourg: based on full-time employed parents taking the option of 4 months full-time leave. The maximum flat-rate payment is high and has, exceptionally, been counted as well-paid leave.

⁶ Malta: entitlement for children with parents in full-time employment or education.

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	0-2 years	3-5 years	end of leave(a)	end of well-paid leave(b) ¹	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Mexico	4%	84%	2.3	2.3	■ birth; OB	33.7	33.7
Netherlands	59%	95%	14.8	2.8	■ 4 years PT	33.2	45.2
New Zealand	50%	95%	12	5.1	■ 3 years PT	24	30.9
Norway	56%	97%	37	13	■ 13 months	No gap	No gap
Poland	10%	82%	48	12	■ 3 years	No gap	24
Portugal	37%	91%	36	6	■ 4 years	12	42
Romania	17%	82%	24	24	■ birth	?No gap	?No gap
Russian Federation	19%	83%	36	2.3	■ 2 mths ⁷	?No gap	? No gap
Slovakia	1%	75%	36	13	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Slovenia	41%	90%	12.2	12.2	■ end Par. leave	No gap	No gap
South Africa	NI	17% (2014)	4	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Spain	36%	97%	36	5.6	■ 3 years	No gap	30
Sweden	47%	94%	18	13	■ 12 months	No gap	No gap
Switzerland	38% (2014)	50%	3.3	3.3	×	No ECEC entitlement	
U. Kingdom	38%	100%	13.9	1.4	■ 3 years PT	22.1	34.6
USA	NI	66%	×	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Uruguay	No information		3	3	■ 4 years	No ECEC entitlement	
OECD average	35%	87%					

⁷ There is no information available to confirm whether the entitlement to an ECEC place from two months of age can be met.

Source: *Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services, 0- to 2-year-olds*; and *Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services and primary education, 3- to 5-year-olds*: OECD Family Database, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.

Key:

Well-paid leave: earnings-related payment at 66 per cent of earnings or above, an indicator used by the European Commission in monitoring member states' progress in meeting Employment Guidelines (European Commission (2010), *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2010 compendium*, Table 18.M3. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=4093&langId=en>)

✘: no well-paid leave or no entitlement to ECEC; ■: entitlement, but only from three years of age or older; ■■: entitlement from below 3 years of age. PT: entitlement is for 20 hours per week or less. OB: attendance is obligatory. ■ or ■■ indicates the existence of an entitlement that cannot be met due to shortage of places; the bracketed figure indicates when the entitlement can usually be met in practice. N.B., in these cases, data on gaps appears in italics preceded by '?' and refers to the entitlement on paper, and not the actual availability of services.