

Relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements: April 2021

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 41 countries yielding data of just over a third (37 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 43 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 two countries have an **entitlement to an ECEC service**. In nine countries (Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg and Mexico), the entitlement includes a period of *compulsory* attendance at an ECEC service, usually for children aged four years and over. In 16 countries the entitlement is only from three years of age or later. A further eight 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 seven countries: Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden, with full-time places available in all cases except Luxembourg (whose part-time entitlement is part of a multilingual education programme). 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; in the case an eighth country, Portugal, a recent reduction of the entitlement from four to three years cannot yet be fully met. It is only in 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, emphasises the extensive lack of coordination between these two policy areas.

	Attendance rates at formal ECEC services (2017)		Child's age (months) at:			Gap between (months)	
	0-2 years	3-5 years	end of leave(a)	end of well-paid leave(b) ⁶⁶	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Argentina	NI	76%(2016)	8 to 8.3	2 to 2.3	■ 4 years: OB	40	46
Australia	40%	84%	24	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Austria	21%	89%	24	14	■ 5 years: PT & OB	36	46
Belgium	56%	98%	12	4	■ 2½ years	18	26
Brazil	23%	84%	4.2 to 6.5	4.2 to 6.5	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Bulgaria	9%	77%	36	12	■ 4 years: OB	24	48
Canada	No information		19-22	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Québec	No information		12.8	11.2	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Chile	22%	79%	5.6	5.6	×	No ECEC entitlement	
China	No information		2.8 ⁶⁷	2.8	■ 3 years	33.2	33.2
Croatia	19%	68%	36	6	■ 5 years: PT & OB	24	54
Cyprus	32%	86%	6	3.7	■ 4.8 years: OB	50	52.3
Czech Republic	8%	88%	36	24	■ 3 years: OB from 5	No gap	12
Denmark	55%	98%	18.1	10.7	■ 6 months	No gap	No gap

⁶⁶ 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.

⁶⁷ 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) ⁶⁶	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Estonia	29%	91%	36	19	■ ■ 18 months	No gap	?No gap
Finland	31%	80%	36	11.5	■ ■ end Parent.leave	No gap	No gap
France	56%	100%	36	3.7	■ 3 years	No gap	2.2
Germany	37%	95%	36	14	■ ■ 1 year ⁶⁸	?No gap	?No gap
Greece	23%	65%	14 to 72	6 to 12	■ 4 years PT	34 to no gap	36 to 42
Hungary	16%	92%	36	24	■ ■ birth: OB from 3	?No gap	?No gap
Iceland	60%	97%	20	12	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Ireland	32%	98%	23.6	×	■ 3¼ years PT	18.6	×
Israel	56%	99%	12	3.5	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Italy	30%	94%	16	5	×	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 ⁶⁹	63%	88%	14.8	14.8	■ 1 year PT: OB from 4	21.2	25.2
Malta	55%(2014)	94%	12 to 75.3	3.3	■ ■ 3 months ⁷⁰	No gap	No gap

⁶⁸ 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.

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ 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) ⁶⁶	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%	16.2	4.2	■ 4 years PT	31.8	43.8
New Zealand	50%	95%	12	6.0	■ 3 years PT	24	30
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	■ 3 years	12	42
Romania	17%	82%	24	24	■ birth	?No gap	?No gap
Russian Federation	19%	83%	36	2.3	■ 2 months ⁷¹	?No gap	? No gap
Serbia	No information		36	11.2	×	No ECEC entitlement	
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%(2015)	4	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Spain	36%	97%	36	5.5	■ 3 years	No gap	30.5
Sweden	47%	94%	18	13	■ 12 months	No gap	No gap
Switzerland	38%(2014)	50%	3.7	3.7	×	No ECEC entitlement	
U. Kingdom	38%	100%	13.9	1.4	■ 3 years	22.1	34.6
USA	28%(2011)	66%	×	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Uruguay	No information		2.8	2.8	■ 4 years	45.2	45.2
OECD average	35%	87%					

⁷¹ 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. N.B., in these cases, data on gaps appears in italics preceded by '?' (*?no gap*) and refers to the entitlement on paper, and not the actual availability of services.