

Relationship between Leave and ECEC entitlements: April 2018

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** vary from less than ten per cent (Czech Republic, Slovakia), to over 50 per cent in Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands and Norway, with a median rate among the 35 countries for which there is information of just under a third (32 per cent). **Attendance rates for children over three years** are uniformly much higher, but vary from under 60 per cent (Croatia, Greece, Switzerland) to over 90 per cent (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK), with a median rate among the 37 countries for which there is information of 88 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; in many cases they will not be.

27 countries have an *entitlement to an ECEC service*, but in most cases – 19 countries – this is only from three years of age or later. Entitlement for under three-year-olds is often limited to a part-time place. In five countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Mexico), the entitlement includes a period of compulsory attendance at an ECEC service, usually for children aged five years and over. Only seven countries have a clear entitlement before three years: 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 four countries – Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Russia – there is a legal entitlement for the earlier age group, but it is reported that shortage of places to varying degrees means the entitlement is not fully operational until around three years. It is only in the countries with operational entitlement for the younger age group that policies are designed to ensure no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement. Elsewhere, the gap is from 12 to 53 months, 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		Child's age (months) at:			Gap between (months)	
	0-2 yrs.(2014)	3-5 yrs.(2014)	end of leave (a)	end of well-paid leave(b)	start of ECEC entitlement(c)	(c)-(a)	(c)-(b)
Australia	32%	67%	24	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Austria	19%	83%	24	14	● 5 years PT; OB	36	46
Belgium	55%	98%	11.3	3.3	●● 2½ years	18.7	26.7
Brazil	NI	NI	4.2 to 6.5	4.2 to 6.5	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Bulgaria	11%	82%	36	12	● 5 years; OB	24	48
Canada	NI	NI	12	None	×	No ECEC entitlement	

Québec	NI	NI	12.8	12.8	×		
China	NI	NI	2.8 ¹	2.8	● 3 years	33.2	33.2
Croatia	17%	57%	36	6	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Czech Republic	6%	81%	36	24	● 5 years	24	36
Denmark	65%	96%	14.4	11.2	●● 6 months	No gap	No gap
Estonia	23%	90%	36.5	18.5	● 18 months[*3 years]	No gap	18
Finland	28%	74%	38.1	11.1	●● end Par. leave	No gap	No gap
France	52%	100%	36	3.8	● 3 years	No gap	32.2
Germany	32%	97%	36	14	● 1 year [* ²]	No gap	No gap
Greece	14%	47%	14 to 132	6 to 12	● 5 years PT	46 to no gap	48 to 54
Hungary	15%	90%	36	24	● birth[*3 years]; OB from 3 years	No gap	12
Iceland	60%	96%	17	9	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Ireland	35%	79%	18.1	×	● 3¼ years PT	21	×
Israel	NI	98%	12	3.3	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Italy	24%	95%	14.8	3.8	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Japan	31%	91%	14	14	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Korea	36%	92%	27	9	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Latvia	24%	91%	18	2.2	●● 18 months	No gap	15.8
Lithuania	29%	83%	36	12	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Luxembourg ³	55%	88%	14.7	10.7	● 3 years PT	21.3	25.3
Malta	55%	99%	12 to 76	3.3	●● 3 months ⁴	No gap	No gap
Mexico	NI	81%	2.3	2.3	● 3 years; OB	33.7	33.7
Netherlands	56%	92%	14.8	2.8	● 4 years PT	33.2	45.2
New Zealand	42%	92%	12	4.2	● 3 years PT	24	31.8
Norway	55%	97%	37.5	13.5	●● 12 months	No gap	No gap

¹ China: 2.8 months is the national minimum entitlement; many provinces offer longer periods of leave, most frequently up to 4.7 months.

² 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.

³ Luxembourg: based on full-time employed parents taking option of full-time leave. Non-formal education is available and is partially state subsidised from the end of the leave period until the beginning of ECEC entitlement.

⁴ Malta: entitlement for children with parents in full-time employment or education.

Poland	11%	74%	48	12.5	● 3 years	No gap	23.5
Portugal	48%	88%	37	7	● 5 years	23	53
Romania	12%	84%	24	24	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Russian Fed.	18%	82%	36	2.3	● 2 months [* ⁵]	No gap	No gap
Slovak Rep.	6%	73%	36	×	×	No ECEC entitlement ⁶	
Slovenia	40%	87%	12.7	12.7	●● end Par. leave	No gap	No gap
South Africa	NI	NI	4	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Spain	38%	97%	36	5	● 3 years	No gap	31
Sweden	47%	94%	34.5	13	●● 12 months	No gap	No gap
Switzerland	38%	48%	3.3	3.3	×	No ECEC entitlement	
U. Kingdom	34%	94%	13.9	1.4	● 3 years PT	22.1	34.6
USA	28%	67%	×	×	×	No ECEC entitlement	
Uruguay	NI	NI	3	3	×	No ECEC entitlement	
OECD average	34%	84%					

Source: *Attendance rates at formal ECEC services*: OECD Family Database, Table PF3.2, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>. Except for the Russian Federation which is: TransMonee Database 2016, Table 5.1, available at: <http://www.transmonee.org>

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 or older; ●●: entitlement from below 3 years of age. PT: entitlement is for 20 hours a week or less. OB: attendance obligatory.

*: There is an obligation to provide a place, but this obligation can – in varying degrees – not be met due to shortages of provision. This shortage usually applies to children under three years, and the bracketed figure indicates when the entitlement can usually be met in practice. The gap in the next column refers to the later age, i.e. when the entitlement in practice is implemented.

⁵ There is no information available to confirm whether the entitlement to an ECEC place from two months of age can be met.

⁶ There is no ECEC entitlement in Slovakia but children one year prior to compulsory education do not pay any fees. Children aged 4 and 5 have priority when applications are assessed.