

# Mind the gap!

Exploring the relationship between entitlements for parental leave and early childhood education and care

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# Supporting working parents – high on policy agendas

Range of measures, e.g.

1992 Council Recommendation on Childcare: childcare  
+ leave + workplace + participation by men

Conditions for measures to be effective

availability (e.g. entitlement) + design (fitness for  
purpose) + alignment (integration with other  
measures )

Focus today on alignment between early childhood education  
and care (ECEC) and leave

# Cover 28 countries from 2011 review

- 20 member states of the EU + 1 accession state (Croatia)
- 3 non-EU European countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland)
- 4 non-European and predominantly English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA)
- But not Russia, S.Africa

# Entitlements: 1.Leave

Length of entitlement to **any** leave  
(Maternity + Paternity+Parental)

- 0 ►► 60 months, median = 19 months

Length of entitlement to **well-paid** leave  
(66% of earnings)

- 0 ►► 24 months: median = 5 months

# Entitlements: 2.ECEC

20/28 countries have some entitlement

- 18/21 member and accession states
- 2/7 other countries (New Zealand, Norway)

There are important issues of availability and design that qualify this picture

# Entitlements: 2.ECEC

1. No entitlement but enough places for **universal access**: e.g. Iceland, Italy
2. Entitlement but **not enough places** for universal access: e.g. Estonia, Hungary
3. Entitlement with **compulsory attendance**: e.g. Greece, Hungary, L'bourg, Poland, Flanders
4. Age when entitlement begins: mostly begins @3 years...**below 3 years** for Denmark, Finland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden @ 1 year or less + Belgium @ 2½

# Entitlements: 2.ECEC

5. Hours of attendance: **mostly part-time hours** (20 hours/week or less)...full day for Denmark, Finland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden + Estonia and Hungary
6. Cost to parents: **usually free** if entitlement begins at 3 years+....**highly subsidised** in countries where entitlement begins before 3 years
- 7.Children with special needs: **???**

# How do leave and ECEC align?

- 1 country has **no leave/ECEC entitlements**
- 7 countries have **no ECEC entitlements**
- 8 countries + GR private sector have **a gap** between end of leave and start of ECEC entitlements = 18 ►► 41 months
- 11 countries + GR public sector **have NO gap**

**BUT ...**



# How do leave and ECEC align?

...only 5 countries **have no gap between the end of well-paid leave entitlement and the start of an ECEC entitlement:**

Denmark; Finland; Norway; Sweden; Slovenia  
**and**

all 5 also have an entitlement to full-day ECEC

# Why so few with no gap?

- Welfare regime...social democratic welfare regimes (including Slovenia?) have alignment
- Split systems with divided responsibility... leave // 'childcare' // 'early education', e.g. Belgium
  - leave policy : federal Department for Employment and Social Affairs
  - ECEC policies: three language communities; in each one, divided between welfare (childcare for children under 3 years) and education departments (nursery education for children from 2½ years upwards).

# Why?

5 aligned countries have **social democratic welfare regimes + integrated ECEC** (NO, SI, SW within education; DK, Fi within welfare)...

In other countries, entitlement to ECEC is for **'early education'** = part-time provision for children aged 3+ years; 'childcare' in welfare does not have universal principle, education does

**Integrated ECEC systems more likely to have entitlements for under and over 3s and align with leave**

# What next?

- Whose next? Is Germany about to align with 2013 target for ECEC for under 3s? Any other countries?
- Do other measures to support working parents need aligning?
- Time for the EU to revisit, review and revise the 1992 Recommendation? Measures  
+availability +design +alignment

*Caring and Learning Together:  
a cross-national study of ECEC within education*

