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.

  - 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