Pandemic childcare-policy responses in 28 European countries: A fuzzy-set ideal type analysis

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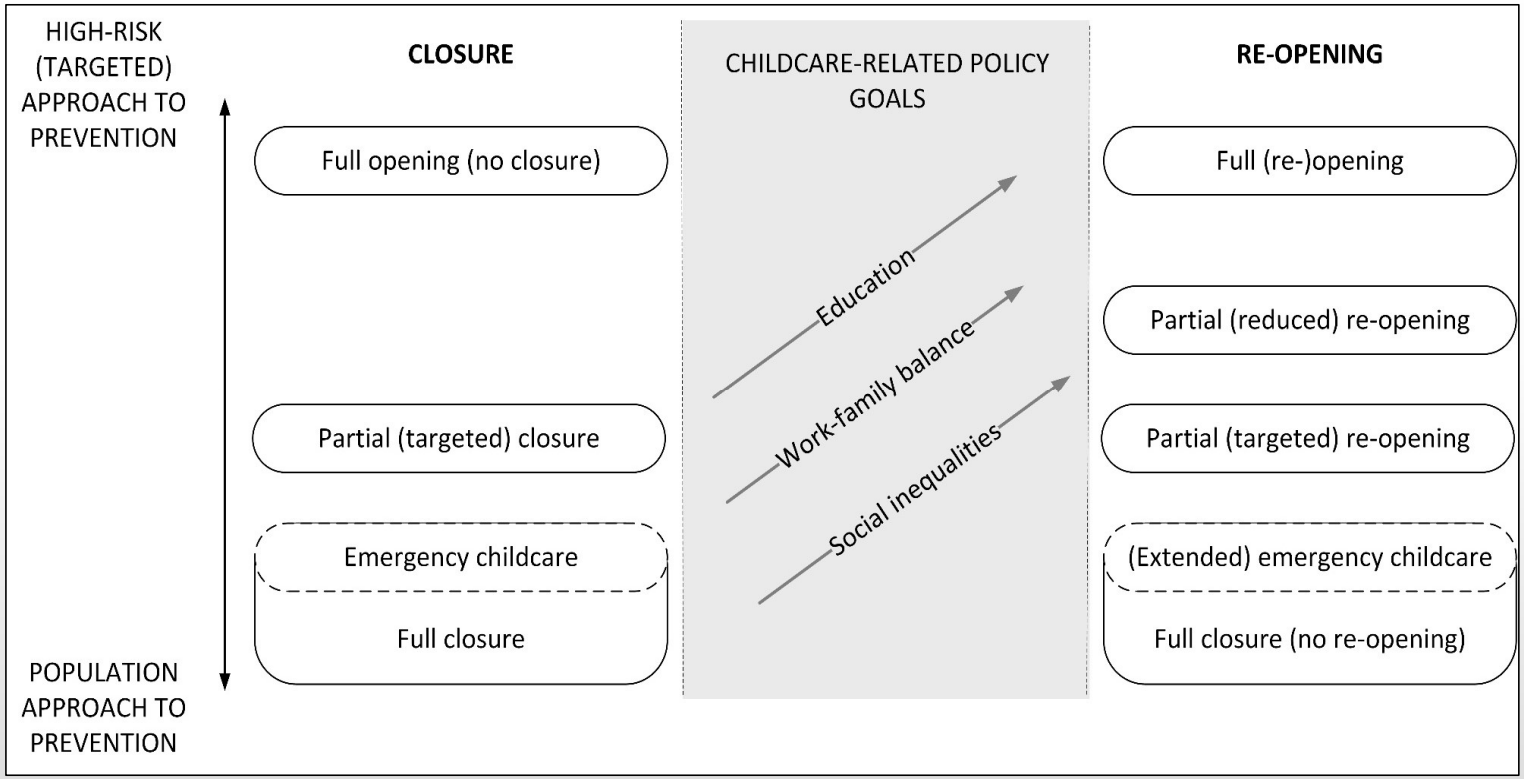
ECEC/school closures under COVID-19

- A **core element of containment policies** against the pandemic → often before a significant number of COVID-cases in a country (e.g., Hale et al. 2021)
- Diversity in countries' responses – timing & policy design

Aim to explore the different types of pandemic 'childcare-policy responses' & their cross-country variations

- Education- and care-services up to age 12 approximately (parent's care & home-schooling more intensive)
- Difficult to perceive them as clear dichotomies (e.g., open vs closed) → stepwise reopening strategies marked by different ***pace*** and ***patterns***; a different approach for ECEC & primary schools
- Fuzzy-set ideal type analysis (FSITA) → ideal types & 'hybrid' cases

The pandemic childcare-policy responses...



Source: Blum & Dobrotić 2020

... towards ideal types?

Public health (population) approach

- Long periods of ***full closures*** (with emergency care for key workers)
- Universal in re-opening style (may start with fewer hours/shifts but tends to cover all children)

Education approach

- Short-to-medium closure periods or/and closure periods that allow attendance for children ***in 'critical' education stages / vulnerable children***
- Selective re-openings where priority is given to children in 'critical' education stages / vulnerable children

Work-care approach

Short closure periods or/and closure that allow attendance for ***children of parents with no care option***

Selective re-openings where priority is given to children of employed parents & youngest children (schools)

No closure (high-risk) approach

- No closures or closures of secondary schools while primary schools ***remain open*** (possible shifts/shorter hours or local closures if outbreaks)

Data and method

Data & geographical scope

- 28 European countries
- COVID-CPR dataset capturing rules on modes of pandemic ECEC/school closures and re-openings
- 'Two pandemic waves' (1 March – 31 June 2020 & 1 October 2020 – 31 March 2021)

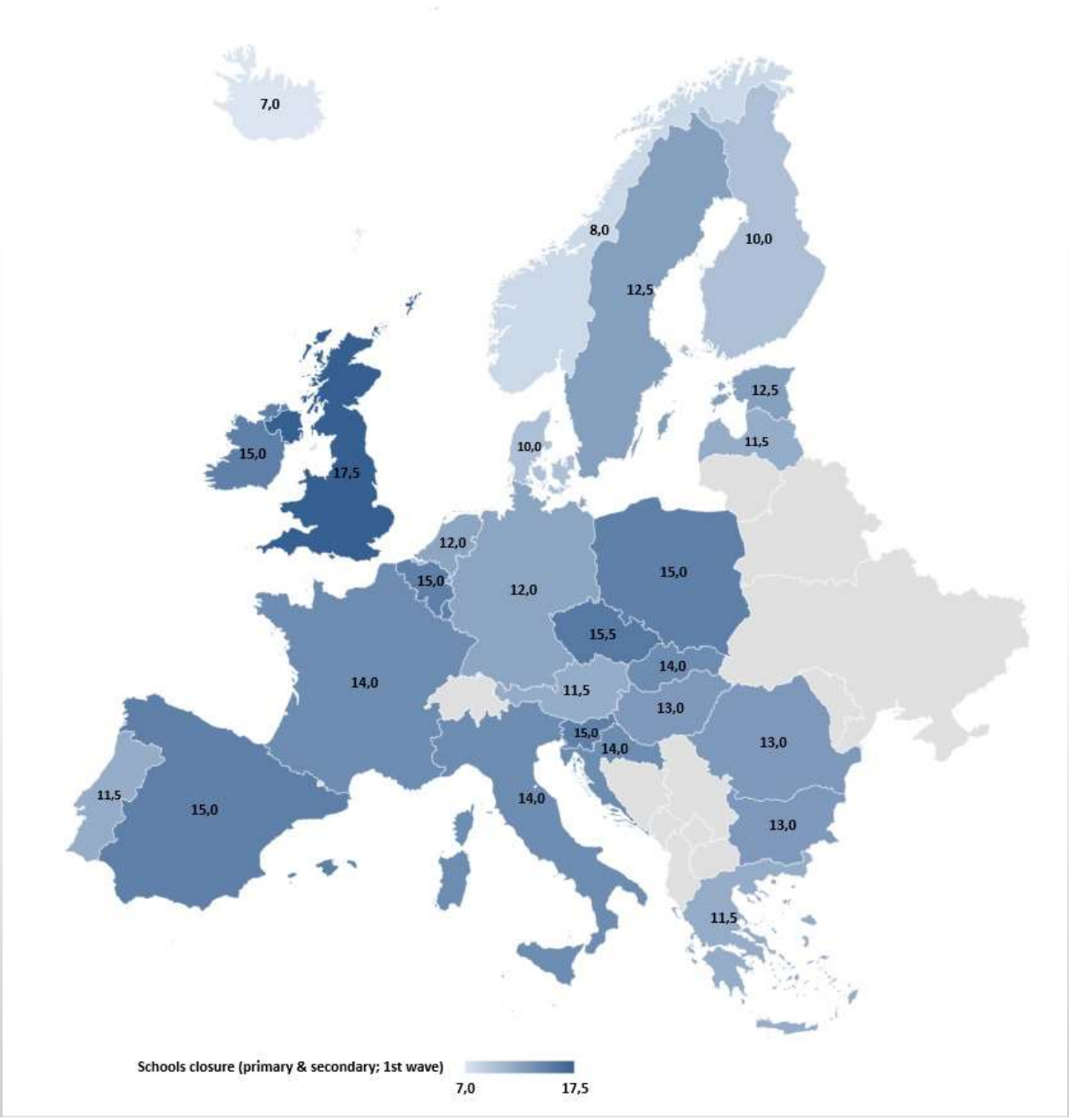
FSITA (Ragin, 2000; Schneider & Wagemann, 2007; Ciccia, 2017)

- Identify theoretically relevant *dimensions* of the ideal types → to construct a *property space*, i.e. logically possible combinations of selected dimensions BUT not all are theoretically relevant!
- Define each dimension as a set in which cases can have a degree of membership → translate it into empirical indicators → calibration
- [Calculate each case's membership score --- to be done...]

Property space of ideal-typical configurations of pandemic childcare policy responses [*early thoughts*]

Ideal types	**Dimensions**			
	ECEC closures (C)	Primary school closures (S)	Work-care function prioritisation (W)	Educational function prioritisation (E)
Public health (population) approach	C	S	w	e
Education approach	C	s or S	w	E
Work-care approach	c or C	S	W	e
No closure (high-risk) approach	c	s	W	E

Note: Uppercase letters indicate membership in a set; lowercase letters indicate the absence or negation of the set


7,0
8,0
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12,5
12,5
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17,5
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12,0
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15,5
14,0
14,0
11,5
13,0
15,0
14,0
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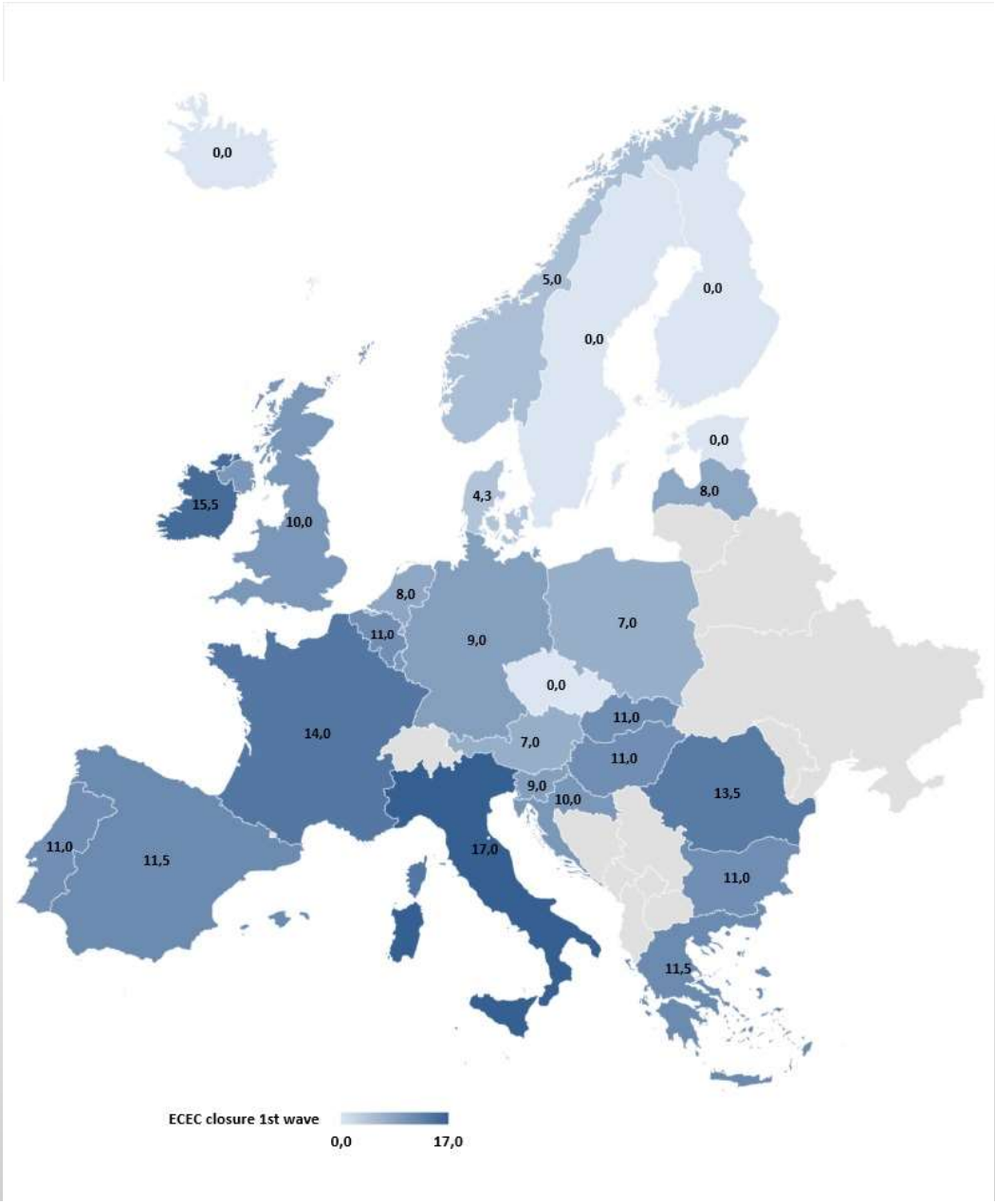
13,0
11,5
Schools closure (primary & secondary; 1st wave)
7,0
17,5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11,5
ECEC closure 1st wave
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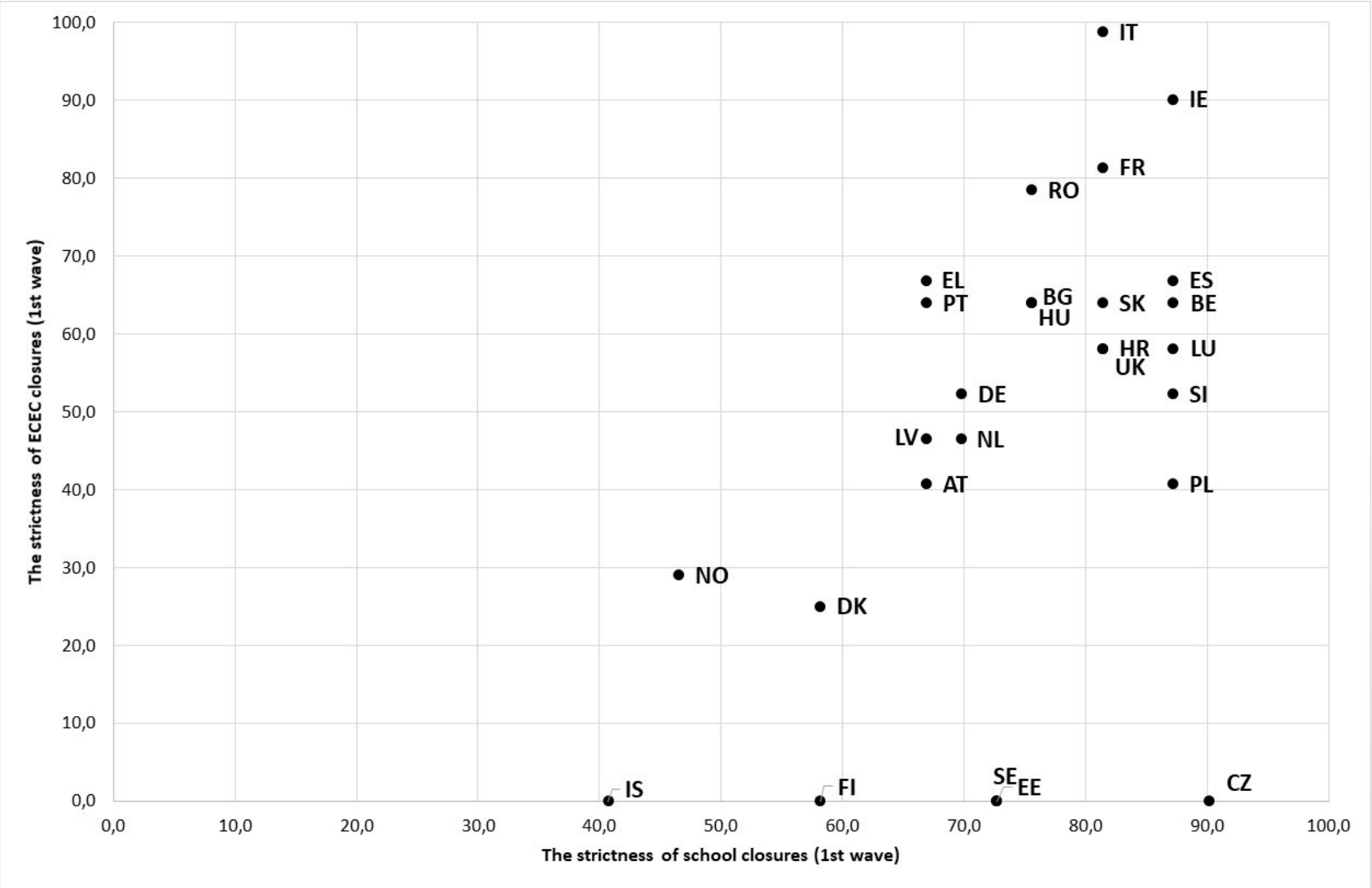
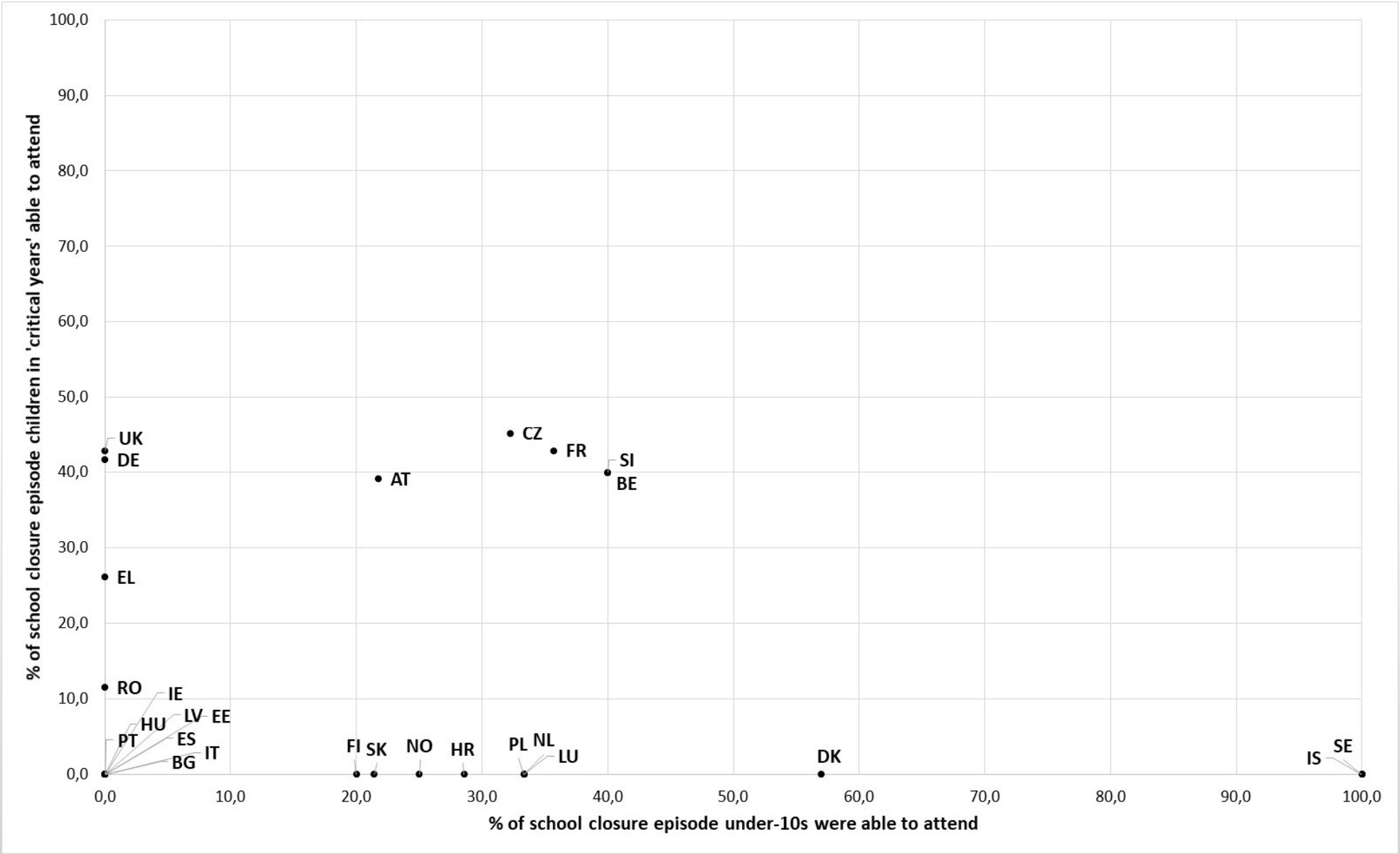
17,0



The strictness of ECEC closures = % of overall closure time per pandemic wave (first pandemic wave: 1 March to 31 June 2020)


% of school closure episode children in 'critical years' able to attend
% of school closure episode under-10s were able to attend
100,0
90,0
80,0
70,0
60,0
50,0
40,0
30,0
20,0
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60,0
70,0
80,0
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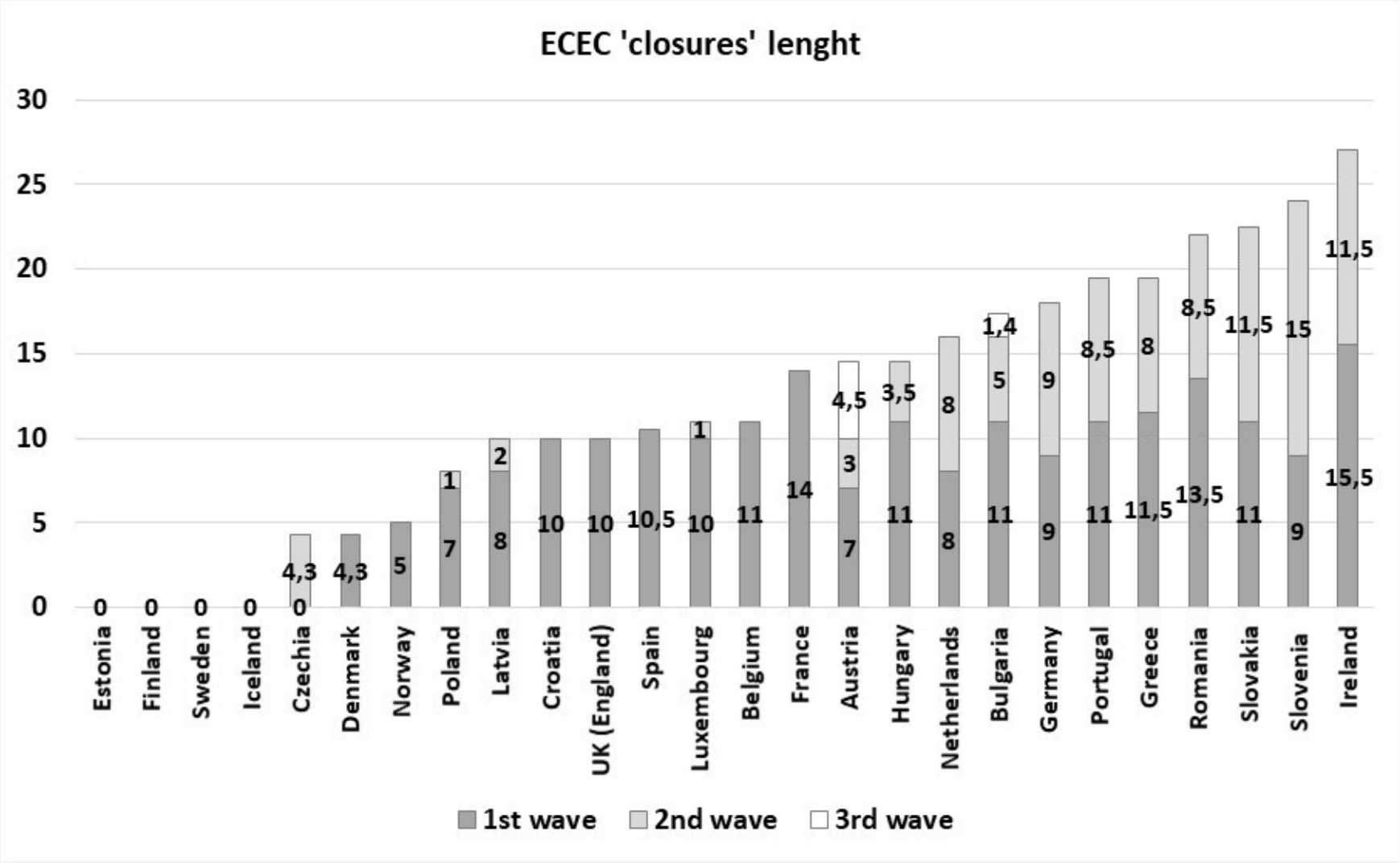
But a need to consider and incorporate following waves as well?



How to proceed…

- Finalize indicators and calibration
- Extend the view fully to second and third waves (1 year period March 2020 to March 2021)
- Next step / next paper: explanatory factors (QCA)

Thank you!