

CHAPTER 4:

Public Policy

This chapter presents data on ECE policy at national, regional and local levels, including policy aims; governance and system management; legislative status and statutory entitlements for ECE; statutory entitlements to parental leave and pay; and key policy changes in ECE. These data inform readers about how ECE sits within national systems and what the priorities are for governments, and aim to capture within and between country variations in the way ECE is handled in public policy statements and actions.

Policy Aims

ECE policy and systems vary widely from country to country and have developed to serve different and multiple aims. For some the main aim may be ensuring school readiness and supporting children's general well-being, healthy socio-emotional development and their sense of citizenship. For others it may be to allow parents to access the labor market, or to support gender equality more widely, or to reinforce cultural values and community cohesiveness, or to ensure less advantaged children have a better start to their lives. These differing goals mean that the early childhood system may be focused on achieving different outcomes for children. Documenting policy aims in countries can help to explain the orientation of ECE services and give a wider perspective to the ECE system.

A recent working paper by the World Bank (2013) and other reviews of international evidence on social mobility (Corak et al., 2012; Pascal, & Bertram, 2012) showed that, around the world, inequalities in child development are stark. These inequalities are entrenched during a child's early years, so that, by the time children enter primary school, significant gaps exist in the development of socially disadvantaged children and are likely to increase over time. This evidence makes a strong case that ECE policy provides a key opportunity to address inequality and improve outcomes later in life. It also points to a growing body of literature that demonstrates that the returns to investments in children's early years are substantial, particularly when compared to equivalent investments made later in life. The benefits to such investments can accrue to individual children and to society more broadly, and can be leveraged to influence diverse policy objectives, including increasing female labor participation, reaching marginalized populations, and reducing the intergenerational transfer of poverty (Corak et al., 2012; Heckman, 2012).

A further impetus for ECE policy is the growing evidence, mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States, that high quality interventions can advance child development and education in the early years. Random assignment studies of programs such as Perry Preschool, Abecedarian, Infant Health and Development and Nurse-Family Partnerships, and the cohort study, Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE), have found that high quality ECE programs do have the capacity to significantly improve child health and educational outcomes for disadvantaged children, in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains (Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2005; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Sirjai-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004; Sylva et al., 2008). These results provide grounds for optimism that well-crafted early childhood policies can and should play a key role in narrowing the gaps in school readiness, and, in the longer term, countering the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Due to this evidence, ECE policy aims have begun to focus more specifically on developing services that enhance child development and outcomes, as well as supporting parent employment (EIU [The Economist Intelligence Unit], 2012; OECD, 2012b). A growing body of research recognizes that ECE can improve children's cognitive abilities and socio-emotional development, help create a foundation for lifelong learning, make children's learning outcomes more equitable, reduce poverty and improve social mobility (Corak et al., 2012; Heckman, 2012; Pascal, & Bertram, 2012). Consequently, ECE policy is increasingly embedded into anti-poverty or educational equity measures. Today, many governments see ECE as a public investment and high-quality ECE programs are used as an effective tool to help children build a strong foundation for life skills and, therefore, better life trajectories, especially for children from disadvantaged or immigrant backgrounds.

The evidence in these international reports also shows convincingly that there are both short- and long-term economic benefits to taxpayers and the community if high quality early education is available to all children, starting with those who are most disadvantaged. Indeed, universally available early education of a high standard has been shown to benefit everyone and be the most cost-effective economic investment (Heckman, 2012). An independent review (Aos, Lieb, Mayfield, Miller & Pennucci, 2004) placed the average economic benefits of early education programs for three- and four-year-olds from low-income groups at close to two and a half times the initial investment: these benefits take the form of improved educational attainment, reduced crime and fewer instances of child abuse and neglect. Within this overall figure, there is substantial variation, but reviews of early education programs have noted benefit-to-cost ratios as high as 17:1 (Heckman, 2012).

Given this wider evidential context, the ECES explored the range of policy aims found in legislation and official documentation within and between the eight ECES countries (see [Table 2](#)).

All eight participating countries are able to identify clear policy aims for ECE, but the range and priority of these aims differs between countries, and sometimes between age phases ([Table 2](#)). For example, all countries identify policy aims to support parental employment and training for either ECED or PPE, but in Chile, the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation these aims were less of a priority; for Italy these aims are a priority for ECED but not for PPE. All countries have policy aims to support working parents (with child care; [Table 2](#), columns 1–3), and also aims to support an early education policy agenda ([Table 2](#), columns 4–9). Most countries also identify aims that address wider social and civic issues ([Table 2](#), columns 10, 12 and 14), particularly for PPE, and aims that support early intervention for language needs or special needs, ([Table 2](#), columns 11 and 13). The data suggest that ECE policy is being used to meet a spectrum of social, economic, educational and political demands in all eight study countries, with a core focus on educational/developmental goals.

Closer examination of the data reveals that Chile, Denmark, Estonia and the United States see supporting parental employment as a highly ranked policy aim in ECED and PPE. Support for parental education and training is less strongly identified across the study countries, but still highly ranked in Denmark, Estonia and the United States. Supporting parental work/life balance is viewed as a high policy priority in Denmark and Estonia, and for ECED services in the Russian Federation. This evidence indicates

Table 2: Stated policy aims for children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (PPE)

Country	Level	Policy aims													
		Support parental employment	Support parental education and training	Support parental work/life balance	Encourage the development of socio-emotional skills	Develop positive attitudes and dispositions to learning	Introduce language and literacy skills	Introduce basic mathematical skills	Encourage healthy physical development	Prepare young children for school	Introduce young children to citizenship	Remediate special needs, e.g. language delay, physical disability	Support/safeguard vulnerable young children	Support young children where the language used at home is different to the national language	Reduce inequality and social disadvantage
Chile	ECED	○	○	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	-	●	-	●
	PPE	●	●	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	●	-	●
Czech Republic	ECED	○	-	○	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-
	PPE	○	-	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Denmark	ECED	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	PPE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Estonia	ECED	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
	PPE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Italy	ECED	●	-	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	-
	PPE	-	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	●
Poland	ECED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	PPE ^a	○	-	-	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	-	●
Russian Federation	ECED	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	●	-	-	●	○	○	●
	PPE	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
United States	ECED	●	●	-	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
	PPE	● ^b	●	-	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●

Key:

- Highly ranked policy aim.
- Policy aim.
- No policy aim.

Country specific notes:

^a In Poland, there are only very broad policy goals that are briefly stated for ECED; these focus on keeping children safe while parents work and do not constitute an explicit policy goal. The aims also vary in each commune where responsibility to ECE is located.

^b In the United States, the policy aim “to support parental employment” at PPE level only applies for the parents of children from three years to not yet in kindergarten (five years).

that the provision of child care to facilitate parental employment and balance work/life demands continues to be a key policy aim for ECE systems through to the start of primary schooling.

ECE policy in the study countries is also highly concerned with supporting the development and education of the young child; this is also seen as a priority aim in all of the eight study countries, and is especially highly ranked in the PPE phase (three years to start of primary schooling). The high ranking of specific policy aims to support children’s socio-emotional development, the development of positive attitudes and

dispositions, introducing children to language and literacy and basic mathematics, and encouraging healthy physical development reveals that all eight of the study countries aim to provide young children with a balanced educational program (only for PPE in Italy and Poland). This ranking is evident throughout the ISCED Level 0 phase from babyhood to primary school in all countries except Italy, where for under-threes the main aim is to support parental employment.

The policy aim of preparing young children for citizenship is also highly ranked from birth to primary school age in Denmark, Estonia and the United States, and for children from three years old in the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and the Russian Federation. This evidence reveals that, in the study countries, ECE is viewed as forming a key part in preparing children for their participation in civic society, and this process begins from an early age. All countries (except the Czech Republic and Poland for ECED) also see ECE policy as a key early intervention strategy in identifying and remediating special needs.

The role of the ECE system in addressing wider social issues is also evident in the country policy rankings. All eight study countries identified supporting and safeguarding vulnerable children as an explicit policy aim, with Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, the Russian Federation and the United States making this a high ranking aim. The contribution of ECE in reducing inequality and social disadvantage was also clear in all study countries, where it was universally highly ranked as an ECE policy aim for PPE services. Supporting children whose home language differs from the national language was also highly ranked as a policy aim in Denmark, Estonia and the United States.

Summary Finding 1

All eight study countries have a wide range of policy aims for ECE, which include aims to support a child's development and learning agenda, aims to support parental employment and training, aims that address wider social and civic issues, and aims that support early intervention for language needs or special needs. This suggests that ECE policy is being used to meet a spectrum of social, economic, educational, and political demands in all eight study countries, although the emphasis differs among the study countries.

Governance and System Management

Research indicates that integrating ECE services under one national authority for system governance and management can provide better coordinated and goal-oriented services (Bennett, 2008; OECD, 2012b). However, evidence (Kaga, Bennett, & Moss, 2010) has also shown that, in practice, administrative and policy responsibility for ECE and care services are often split between two or even more government departments (usually welfare, health and education). Historically, many countries have started out with a “split” system of early childhood services, divided between “(child) care” services, often located in welfare or health departments or ministries, and “early education” services, often located in education departments or ministries. More recently, some countries have moved towards an integrated system where one lead department has responsibility for early education and care services, and, in many cases, this department or ministry is education (for further discussion of this development, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014; Kaga et al., 2010).

A further complexity is that responsibility for early education and care services may reside in organizational bodies at the state, regional and/or local level. Some research has shown that responsibility at a more local level can have positive results, such as the better integration of ECE services and a greater responsiveness to local needs, but it can also increase differences in access and quality between areas (Kaga et al., 2010).

Given this wider evidential context, the ECES explored the governmental level assigned responsibility for ECE (national, regional, or local level) in the participating countries, and determined which national, regional or local bodies, departments or ministries were responsible for ECE at each different level, and whether this differed between ECED (under-threes) and PPE (three years to primary school) (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of government responsible for setting ECE policy for children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary schooling (PPE)

Country	Level	Level at which responsibility for ECE resides	
		Responsibility for ECE policy lies mostly at national level	Responsibility for ECE policy lies at national and subnational level
Chile	ECED	●	
	PPE	●	
Czech Republic	ECED ^a		
	PPE	●	
Denmark	ECED		●
	PPE		●
Estonia	ECED		●
	PPE		●
Italy	ECED		●
	PPE		●
Poland	ECED	●	
	PPE		●
Russian Federation	ECED		●
	PPE		●
United States	ECED		●
	PPE		●

Key:

● Level at which responsibility for ECE resides.

Country specific notes:

^a The Czech Republic did not report the existence of a national or subnational body, ministry or department with responsibility for ECED. This was due to the change in the governance of services for the under-threes. For children under three years old, traditional crèches (special health child-care facilities) should have terminated their operation by the end of 2013. These were public facilities, established by cities. They often operated as part of municipal social or health facilities, some of them were affiliated to a nursery school, the others being self-contained. A new act on providing care of children within a group for children from six months of age until the commencement of compulsory school attendance (at six years old) was being prepared. New children groups will be established by employers for use of their employees, or by municipalities, regions and nonprofit organizations. This type of facility should legislatively secure operation of public facilities for children under three years of age. This new act came into effect from 2014 (Czech Act No. 247/2104). In addition, there are a number of “trade” or private child care facilities. These do not receive any state funding and are not bound by any specific legal regulations, hence little is known about their functioning or governance.

For provision serving children under three years (ECED), all countries except Chile offer governance at both national and subnational levels (Table 3). This means that responsibility for different aspects of ECE governance and system management is distributed between national and subnational bodies.

In Chile, ECED responsibility is located at a national level only, but with responsibilities distributed between a range of national bodies, each concerned with various strategic and operational aspects of the system, such as policy and legislation; quality; regulation, compliance and accountability; and funding and service delivery.

In Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United States, responsibility is distributed between national and subnational levels. In these countries there is a model of governance for services for under-threes (ECED) with distributed responsibilities for different aspects of policy strategy and operations, indicating an attempt to balance a strategic national policy agenda with more local autonomy, particularly for system delivery and management. For example, in Denmark and Estonia, responsibilities for ECE policy and legislation are located at a national level, while local communities establish and run child care centers and nurseries. In Italy, a similar distribution of responsibilities is reported, but with an additional regional level of governance (responsible also for normative arrangements) with regions, autonomous provinces and individual municipalities having responsibilities for the quality of services and funding mechanisms. In Poland, one national body is responsible for legislation compliance; development of services; information about availability; research and analyses; and local communes are responsible for implementation of the services, including accreditation, admission, and program approach. In the Russian Federation, responsibilities for state policy, educational standards and data collection are located at federal level; responsibilities for supervision, regional system development, financing and child registration are at regional level; and responsibilities for educational program development are at setting level. The United States adopts a similar pattern, with the greatest responsibility for ECE policy being located at state level, but with funding often coming from federal government, provided state programs comply with federal goals. Thus, whilst overall ECED policy is set at federal level, it is implemented by the individual states, counties and school districts. This distributed governance model means that there is variability on specific issues but similarities overall between States on major issues.

For ECE provision serving children from three years to primary school age (PPE), there is greater variation in system governance across the study countries (Table 4), with three countries locating governance responsibilities at a national level (Chile, the Czech Republic, Italy) and five countries locating governance at both national and subnational levels (Denmark, Estonia, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United States).

For those countries offering a single, national level of governance, responsibilities may be located in one national body or distributed across a number of national bodies. For example, in Chile, the system of governance is the same as for its ECED services, with PPE responsibilities distributed between a range of national bodies, each concerned with various strategic and operational aspects of the system, namely policy and legislation, quality, regulation, compliance and accountability, and funding and service delivery. In the Czech Republic, there is just one national body responsible for PPE system governance and management; in Italy there are other bodies with consultation power.

In those countries offering a mix of national and subnational governance for provision serving children from three years to school age (PPE), there are evident attempts to balance a strategic national policy agenda with more local autonomy, particularly for system delivery and management. In Denmark, Estonia and the Russian Federation, the governance of the PPE system mirrors that of the ECED system, with the same distribution of responsibilities. In the United States, governance is consistent until the kindergarten stage, where policy aims are set at both federal and state level. For example, there are nationally prescribed learning goals for kindergarten through to grade 12, established by state-member organizations and incentivized by the federal government for adoption by individual states. The federal government, however, is prohibited from establishing learning standards or curricula. In Poland, as a result of administrative reform, national policy (including curriculum development, teacher salaries and regulation) is developed and implemented centrally, while the management of education and the administration of schools, nursery schools and other educational services, including pedagogic supervision, are decentralized to regional educational authorities and communes.

Summary Finding 2

There is a mix of national and regional or local level governance (national and subnational) for managing the ECE system. This applies, both to provision serving children aged under three years old (ECED) and over three years old (PPE) across the study countries. However, national level governance increases as provision moves towards the pre-primary year and transition to the schooling system. This suggests that for younger children there is more room for local or regional variation in the delivery of services.

The location of responsibility for ECE across government departments or ministries at national level in all countries is influenced by precedent, culture, and evolving structures and systems (Table 4).

Responsibility for ECE policy at national level in both ECED and PPE phases is predominantly spread between multiple ministries or departments, with the most common ministries being education and health in four of the eight participating countries (Chile, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United States) (Table 4). The mix of national ministries or bodies can also differ according to the age phase.

In Denmark, there is one ministry for ECED and PPE, the Ministry of Children, Gender, Integration and Social Affairs, which is a merger of a number of departments into one integrated body that works together with the city councils of the local communities. In the Czech Republic, there is one ministry at ECED level and another at PPE level. At ECED level, responsibility is with the Ministry of Work and Employment and, at PPE level, it is the Ministry of Education.

In countries that have multiple national bodies engaged in ECE system governance there are a wide range of different bodies, reflecting different ECE policy priorities. Two national bodies are involved in Estonia and the United States; three national bodies are involved in Poland; and five or more national bodies are involved in Chile and the Russian Federation (Table 4). In Italy, the responsibility for ECED is at the central level, located within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies/Welfare. However, this

Table 4: Bodies or ministries responsible for children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary schooling (PPE)

Country	Level	Responsible body or ministry								
		Education	Health	Work and Employment	Social Welfare	Families and Children	Equal Opportunities	Integrated body	Cross-cutting departmental structures with specific responsibility for children	Other
Chile	ECED	●	●	●	●				●	●
	PPE	●	●		●				●	●
Czech Republic	ECED			●						
	PPE	●								
Denmark	ECED							●		
	PPE							●		
Estonia	ECED	●			●					
	PPE	●			●					
Italy	ECED	● ^a	● ^b					●	●	●
	PPE	●	● ^b							●
Poland	ECED	●					●			
	PPE	●								
Russian Federation	ECED	●	●	●					●	●
	PPE	●	●	●					●	●
United States	ECED	●	●							●
	PPE	●	●							●

Key:

● Responsible body.

Country specific notes:

^a Services for children aged 24–36 months, the so-called "Spring Sections" and anticipated enrollments, are under the responsibility of the Italian Ministry of Education.

^b the Italian Ministry of Health is responsible for establishing health regulations, rather than a health service.

level is not the only one in charge of policies for ECED: the Department of Family within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is also responsible for funding and monitoring ECED policies. In addition, 21 regions and autonomous provinces also hold normative responsibility, with a particular attention to the regulation of both the quality of services and funding mechanisms. Municipalities are a very important part of the funding and management system for ECED and, in some instances, they also regulate their own services with specific normative documents at the local level. In addition, the services for children aged 24–36 months, the so-called "Spring Sections" and anticipated enrollments, are under the responsibility of the Italian Ministry of Education.

In Estonia, responsibility for ECED and PPE policy is shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare. In the United States, there are two main

national bodies that have responsibility for ECE: US Department of Education and the US Department of Health and Human Services. They coordinate on many aspects of ECED. However, the responsibility for early childhood education and care is shared with the states, where each state also has its own education department and own health and human services department that shape ECE policy from birth through to kindergarten. The US Department of Defense provides early education and care to military families. Additionally, the Bureau of Indian Education oversees early education and care for American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives living on reservations. In Poland, ECED responsibility is shared between the Ministry of Health and an integrated body, and for PPE responsibility is the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

For Italy, an integrated system for ECED, with multi-level governance, could best define both the normative and funding responsibility, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy/Welfare, Education, Health, and other integrated and cross-cutting departments. For PPE this complexity decreases, with Education, Health and an integrated national body sharing responsibility. The case of Italy illustrates the complexity of collaboration required where multiple national bodies share responsibilities. In Italy, one of the integrated bodies with responsibility for ECED policy is the Department for Family Policies within the Presidency of the Council of Ministries, and this is responsible for the elaboration of the National Plan for family policies and their coordination at national, regional and local level, plus a range of other strategic responsibilities. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and other departments also operate in conjunction with the Unified Conference between the state and regions/local authorities. They liaise with the Ministry of Education for the services dedicated to the 24–36 months age range, now mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. This illustrates that ECED governance is currently very fragmented in Italy, though this situation is expected to change. In July 2015, a general education system reform act was passed ([no. 107/2015](#)). This law foresees new legislation for the reunification of the split system in order to establish an integrated or unitary ISCED Level 0 system catering for children from birth to six years. A clearer governance system is in place for PPE, although there are many bodies responsible for this segment too. The Ministry of Education, University and Research is the central authority for educational policies in Italy. Its responsibilities start from the *Sezioni Primavera* (“Spring” sections, with a bridging function between ECED and PPE within PPE institutions), hosting children aged two to three years and encompassing more generally the *Scuole dell’Infanzia* (pre-primary schools), for children aged three to six years. The Ministry issues national curriculum guidelines and has responsibility to fund state-owned schools, while supervising the *scuole paritarie* (schools with equal status, which can be either private or publicly funded).

In the Russian Federation, there are also more than five national bodies sharing responsibility for both ECED and PPE provision, including Education, Health, Work and Employment and other integrated and cross-cutting departments. These bodies have to collaborate on the achievement of Presidential Decree goals. In Chile, six national bodies share responsibility for ECED and PPE policy, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Work and Employment (just ECED), Social Welfare and other cross-cutting departments. Each of these bodies is responsible for different aspects of ECE provision, from providing the permits to open an ECE service, to regulating the administration and the access of families to ECE provision.

Summary Finding 3

There is a complex system of governance and system management for ECE in most of the study countries, with distributed responsibilities between different levels in the system, between a range of national bodies or ministries and between different phases during ISCED Level 0. This complexity is especially evident in the development and delivery of policy for children under three years (ECED), and it challenges policymakers in all study countries to ensure effective communication, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and effective partnership working to ensure the governance and management system supports the development of a coherent early childhood education and care system from birth to primary school entry. Conversely, this complexity and distributed system governance model may have strength in encouraging regional and local participation and autonomy within a national framework, and ensuring ECE services have the flexibility to meet diverse local needs. It also implies a need for collaboration between the different bodies.

Legislative Status and Statutory Entitlements for Children and Parents

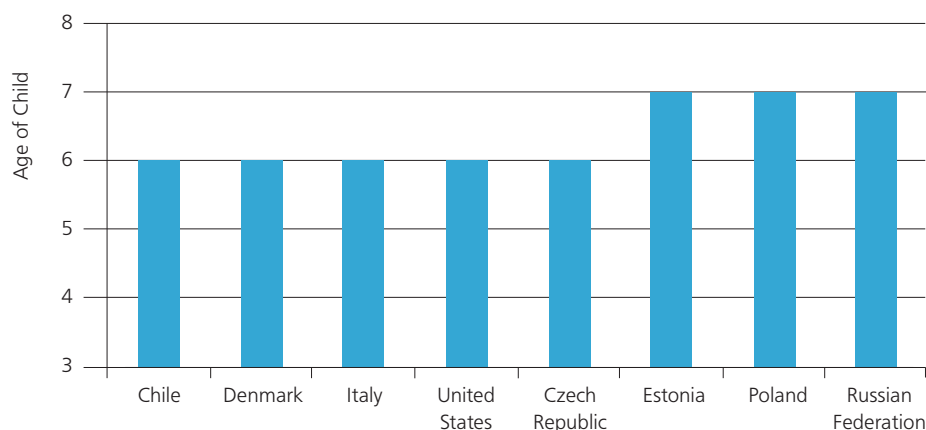
Many countries offer universal free ECE services to certain age groups, usually one or two years before the start of compulsory schooling, and some countries have extended this entitlement to cover younger children as well. However, the level, duration and age eligibility for entitlement to ECE around the world varies markedly between countries, with some children and families in some countries having generous entitlements from an early age, and others having little or no legislative entitlement at all (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014; OECD, 2012b).

Given this wider context, the ECES explored the legislative status of ECE and the statutory entitlements of children and parents in the eight study countries, including the age of start to ISCED Level 1, entitlements of children to ECE and entitlements of parents to parental leave and pay.

The age of start to ISCED Level 1 denotes the transfer of children from ECE (ISCED Level 0) to primary schooling; there is little variance between the study countries on this transition point (Figure 4). This is an important point to note as the maturational and instructional differences between the different levels of education may have implications for interpreting developmental and learning outcomes.

There are two key transition ages for start of ISCED Level 1 in the study countries (Figures 2 and 4). In five countries, the age of transfer to primary schooling is six years of age (Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy and the United States) and, in the other three countries, the age of transfer is seven years of age (Estonia, Poland and the Russian Federation). It should be noted that the child transfers to primary schooling usually in the year that they become either six or seven, and so may be slightly younger or older than this transfer age denotes. In addition, in some countries the age of transfer to ISCED Level 1 is flexible according to the assessed school readiness of the child, (for example, in the Russian Federation transfer can occur between the ages of six-and-a-half and eight years of age), or because they have earlier or delayed entry to primary schooling, (for example, in Italy). It should also be noted that in the period between the data collection and report production, regulation surrounding the age of entry to

Figure 4: Age of start of ISCED Level 1



ISCED 1 in Poland underwent two changes. At time of the data collection (in early 2015), Poland was in a transitional period of lowering the age of entry to ISCED Level 1 from seven to six years. During the report production, more precisely in December 2015, the newly-elected government canceled the previous reform and restored the starting age for compulsory education to seven years. In the United States, it is recognized that the year before entry to ISCED level 1 (five to six years) is termed kindergarten; this is usually part of the K-12 educational system (indicating kindergarten for four- to six-year-olds through to US 12th grade for 17- to 19-year-olds), and so considered the first year of formal education and fully integrated into the school system.

The statutory entitlement to ECE at different phases within ISCED Level 0 varies significantly among the eight study countries (Table 5).

Four of the eight study countries have no statutory entitlements to ECED services for children under the age of three years, namely the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and the United States (Table 5). Four countries do have statutory entitlement to ECED services for children under three years offering universal entitlement of up to 25 hours a week (Chile, Denmark [25+ hours], Estonia and the Russian Federation), with two offering targeted entitlement to certain populations of up to 25 hours a week (Chile and the Russian Federation). In Chile, from 2014, all children from two years of age are entitled to free access to ECE for 22 hours a week and vulnerable children are entitled to free access for 40 hours a week; those with working mothers have increased entitlement to 55 hours a week from birth. In Denmark, Estonia and the Russian Federation, the entitlement for all children is for much more than 25 hours a week, with some settings in Estonia and the Russian Federation being open 10–12 hours a day, and also at weekends. Although the United States does not have national universal statutory entitlements to ECED programs, it does have national targeted programs: for example, the [Early Head Start Program](#), which targets low-income families who meet specific requirements and targeted programs for children with disabilities.

Italy and the United States have no statutory entitlement to PPE services for children from three years to primary school age (Table 5). However, it should be noted that while there is no statutory entitlement in Italy, there is universal free PPE access of up to 40 hours a week. This is the result of regulations set out in 2009, which established that PPE should be open to all children, including those with disabilities: these regulations are not mandatory, and a child can access a place if it is available and the family chooses

Table 5: Statutory entitlements to services for children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (PPE)

Country	Level	Statutory entitlements at national or subnational level					
		Universal entitlement: 25 hrs or more per week	Universal entitlement: > 2 hrs and < 25 hrs per week	Universal entitlement: < 2 hrs per week	Target entitlement: 25 hrs or more per week	Target entitlement: > 2 hrs and < 25 hrs per week	Target entitlement: < 2 hrs per week
Chile	ECED		●		●	●	
	PPE		●		●		
Czech Republic	ECED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE	●	●				
Denmark	ECED	●					
	PPE	●					
Estonia	ECED		●				
	PPE		●				
Italy	ECED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	ECED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE		●				
Russian Federation	ECED	●	●		●	●	
	PPE	●	●		●	●	
United States ^a	ECED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Key:

- Existence of statutory entitlements at national or subnational level.
- n/a Statutory entitlement does not exist at national or subnational level.

Country specific notes:

^a In the United States there is not a statutory entitlement to ECED and PPE, but rather targeted eligibility to Head Start programs, disability programs and prekindergarten programs for children who meet certain criteria (see text). However, funding levels do not support the participation of all children eligible to be served in Head Start and prekindergarten. While most children attend kindergarten, it is not mandated in every state.

to do so. The other six study countries all offer statutory universal entitlements to PPE for children from three years to primary school age and, in addition, two countries offer targeted entitlement to certain populations of up to 25 hours a week (Chile and the Russian Federation). In Chile, there is free access to PPE for all children to for 22 hours a week, and for vulnerable children 40 hours a week, extending to 55 hours if the mother works. In Denmark, Estonia and the Russian Federation, there is universal PPE entitlement for up to 10–12 hours per day. In the United States, as with the ECED level, there are no national universal statutory entitlements to PPE programs, but the United States noted two targeted programs: firstly, the Early Head Start Program, which targets low-income families who meet specific requirements and secondly, targeted services for children with disabilities. Additionally, within the United States, at five to six years of age (the year prior to ISCED Level 1) 45 out of 50 states, plus DC, require school

districts to offer at least a half day of PPE (kindergarten), with 11 of those 25 states (including DC) requiring school districts offer a full-day program.

Summary Finding 4

Four of the eight study countries have statutory entitlements for children to have access to some level of ECED service, ranging from sessional, to half-day, to full-time programs, with relatively generous levels of entitlement in Denmark, Estonia and the Russian Federation. Six of the eight study countries offer children statutory or universal, non-mandatory entitlement to full-time PPE services in the year before entry to primary schooling, again with relatively generous levels of entitlement in Denmark, Estonia and the Russian Federation. This would seem to be in line with the trend internationally towards a more universal and statutory ECE system, particularly at PPE level (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014; OECD, 2012b).

Remunerated parental leave is a key part of family and labor policy in many countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014; OECD 2012b). All study countries have some level of entitlement to parental leave during the child's first six or seven years (ISCED Level 0), but it is not universally available in Italy or the United States (Table 6). This is mostly available when children are under the age of three years, and those countries with statutory entitlement all continue some degree of parental leave and pay into the PPE phase. All countries offer some level of maternity and paternity leave; sometimes this is universal and sometimes it is targeted, sometimes it is paid and sometimes it is unpaid.

Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Poland and the Russian Federation have universal paid maternity leave, ranging from 10 weeks to 26 weeks after birth, although in most countries this entitlement can be extended with reduced payment. The most generous total parental leave entitlements are found in the Czech Republic (82 weeks or more if parents take up their four-year parental leave entitlement), the Russian Federation (78 weeks) and Estonia (62 weeks); of the countries with universal paid maternity leave, Chile offers the shortest entitlement (12 weeks). Poland and the Russian Federation also offer unpaid maternity leave that can extend the paid entitlement for up to four years. The level of compensation paid to parents on leave also varies between the participating countries, with some offering full salary compensation and others offering only partial compensation. The country case studies set out below reveal the complexity of parental leave entitlements in the study countries.

In Chile, according to the Labor Code (*Código del Trabajo*; see ISN: CHL-2011-L-89227 and ISN: CHL-2002-L-63555), maternity leave for working mothers includes a period of six weeks before the delivery day and 12 weeks after the birth of the child. In 2011, another 12 weeks of parental leave was included. Therefore, in sum, working mothers have 24 weeks of post-partum leave. There is an option for the mother to start working part time after the first 12 weeks after the birth of her child; in this case parental leave is extended for 18 weeks, and mothers receive 50% of the salary subsidy of maternal leave. Working fathers have the right to paid leave from work of five days from the day of the birth of the child, and fathers can decide how to use those five days. There is no maternity or paternity leave for parents of children at PPE level. After maternity leave, working mothers have the right to one-hour statutory work breaks for breast feeding.

Table 6: Statutory entitlements to parental leave and pay for parents of children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (PPE)

Country	Level	Statutory entitlements to parental leave at national or subnational level	Universal entitlements				Targeted entitlements			
			Maternity leave (paid)	Maternity leave (unpaid)	Paternity leave (paid)	Paternity leave (unpaid)	Maternity leave (paid)	Maternity leave (unpaid)	Paternity leave (paid)	Paternity leave (unpaid)
Chile	ECED	◆	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	○
	PPE	◇	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Czech Republic ^a	ECED	◆	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
	PPE	◆	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Denmark ^b	ECED	◆	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
	PPE	◆	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○
Estonia	ECED	◆	●	○◆	●	○	○	●	○	●
	PPE	◆	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
Italy ^c	ECED	◇	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE	◇	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	ECED	◆	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
	PPE	◆	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
Russian Federation	ECED	◆❖	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
	PPE	◆	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
United States ^d	ECED	◇	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PPE	◇	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Key:

- ◆ Existence of statutory entitlements to parental leave at national level.
- ❖ Existence of statutory entitlements to parental leave at subnational level.
- ◇ No statutory entitlements to universal parental leave at either national or subnational level.
- Universal/targeted entitlement.
- Specific entitlement does not exist.
- n/a Data not applicable due to indication of no statutory entitlements.

Country specific notes:

- ^a There is paid leave for the mother for six months. After this, there is paid leave a mother or father can take for two, three or four years. There is one amount for all and it is up to parents what length they choose (longer leave means a lower amount/month).
- ^b According to the [Danish Social Security Act](#), maternity leave of one year can be shared with the father; parents of children with special needs and adoptive parents are entitled to paid leave to support the child.
- ^c In Italy, there is no statutory universal entitlement, as only employees are entitled to parental leave, and it is not available for self-employed parents.
- ^d In the United States, there is no statutory universal entitlement to parental leave and pay but the FMLA provides certain employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected parental leave per year (see [Figure 3](#)).

Furthermore, during the pregnancy period and up to one year after the maternity leave has expired (this excludes the 12 months of parental leave), working mothers benefit from a law that forbids the company to replace or fire them (the “*fuero maternal*”). If the father decides to use the 12 weeks of parental leave, the “*fuero*” benefit will apply to the father for a period that doubles the duration of the parental leave, counting from 10 days previous to the beginning of the parental leave. These benefits apply only to mothers (or fathers) that are dependent workers, namely those that have an indefinite contract with a company. People who work independently or who have signed temporary contracts do not qualify for this benefit.

In Estonia, parental leave includes maternity and paternity leave. People have the right to receive parental benefit from the day following the final day of maternity leave. If a mother has no right to maternity leave, the right to the parental benefit starts from the moment her child is born and is paid until the child reaches the age of 18 months. Parental benefit is calculated on the basis of the income which was subject to social tax earned in the calendar year prior to the day on which the right to the benefit arose. If the state pays social tax on behalf of a person, this is not considered to be income from work. Income earned abroad is not subject to social tax in Estonia, and is thus excluded from consideration. If the parent did not work during the year prior to the time at which the right to the benefit arose, the parental benefit is paid at the designated benefit base rate, which, in 2013, was 290 euros.

In Italy, four types of parental leave exist for both ECED and PPE: (1) mandatory maternal, (2) alternative paternal, (3) optional parental, and (4) optional parental for child illness. In the first case, maternal leave in Italy is mandatory for a period of two months prior and three months after birth, and further provision is granted for special cases, such as premature birth, abortion or adoptions. Some flexibility exists within this period under specific circumstances. Only employed mothers are entitled to this leave and public employees have a specific treatment according to national labor contracts for public services. Meanwhile, paternal leave is an alternative for fathers if the following conditions occur: death or severe illness of the mother; mother neglecting child; father's sole custody of the child; or waiver of maternity in special circumstances. The period of paternity leave coincides with that generally granted to mothers. Optional parental leave applies to mothers or fathers for either the first or subsequent year of life of the child (up to the eighth year), and it expires if the parent is no longer an employee. The right can be exercised for a total maximum period of ten months over the first eight years of the child's life. The eleven months leave is an option granted under specific circumstances. During maternal or parental leave, parents of children under three years of age have the right to 30% of their daily wage/salary. A maximum continuous period of six months usually applies to both mothers and fathers. After the third birthday of the child, the right can still be exercised by parents if they have not used the entire ten-month period, but specific restrictions apply to the calculation of their salary. Autonomous workers, professionals and project workers may also be entitled to parental leave, under specific conditions. At the end of the continuous period of maternity leave, Italian law no. 92/2012 (Riforma del mercato del lavoro) introduces the right to a voucher for babysitting or ECED services. This subsidy applies for the subsequent eleven months of the child's life. In addition, the mother and/or father might also exercise the right to breastfeeding breaks, consisting of a maximum of two daily hours off from work in the case of a daily work schedule of up to six hours. This right entitles mothers/fathers to receive the entire hourly wage the child's first year. Other entitlements exist for childhood illnesses: parents (either the mother or the

father) are entitled to leave work for the period corresponding to the duration of the illness of any child below three years old. Parents are also entitled to take a maximum of five days per year for illnesses occurring to a child below eight years old.

In Poland, according to the Polish Labor Code (kodeks pracy; ISN: POL-1974-L-45181), each woman has a right to at least 20 weeks of leave (up to 37 weeks in case of multiple births). The six last weeks of this leave can be transferred to the father (this period may be extended if a newborn has serious health problems). The 20-week period can also be extended by another six weeks if requested. Immediately after those 26 weeks, the mother or father can take additional parental leave of up to 26 weeks with a right to 80% of their salary. Every father also has exclusive right to two weeks of paid leave, which can be used up until the child reaches 12 months. In summary, Poland allows 52 weeks leave (a full year) in total, where only 14 weeks are exclusively for mothers, two for fathers, and remainder may be taken by either parent. Furthermore, each Pole can take optional, unpaid maternity/paternity leave of up to 36 months for each child; this leave must be taken before child reaches five years of age. Within those 36 months, each parent has an exclusive (this right cannot be transferred to another parent) right to one month of leave. If the child is disabled or has serious health issues, then another 36 months of leave are possible, and can be used before the child reaches 18 years of age.

In the Russian Federation, maternity leave with full salary (due to pregnancy and childbirth) is available for 10 weeks before and 10 weeks after childbirth, in case of one child, and for 17–21 weeks in the case of twins or multiple births. Paternity leave (due to childbirth) is available unpaid for five days. Parental leave (for child care) is also available to either of the parents (but only one at a time) or any other adult relative up until the child's third birthday; for a child from birth to eighteen months, this is paid leave; for a child from eighteen months to three years of age, this is unpaid leave. Working women with children under the age of one-and-a-half years have entitlement to breaks for rest and meal breaks to feed the child(ren) of at least 30 minutes duration every three hours. Additional unpaid leave is also available for targeted groups of parents (those with two or more children under the age of fourteen years, or a disabled child under the age of eighteen years old, or a single parent with a child under fourteen years of age). One of the parents (or guardians) is given four additional paid days off per month to care for children with disabilities, which can be used by one person or divided among individuals at their discretion. The same groups also have additional discretionary annual leave without pay of up to 14 calendar days on a collective agreement basis.

In the United States, although not a universal statutory entitlement, the FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave. Eligible employees are entitled to 12 work weeks of leave in a 12-month period for: the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth; the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement; to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition; a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job; any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or twenty-six work-weeks of leave during a

single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the service member's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave) (US Department of Labor, 1993).

Summary Finding 5

In all the study countries there is an acceptance in national policy that parents, particularly mothers, need to be supported in balancing their work and family commitments, and there is an entitlement to some level of parental leave, usually maternity leave, in the majority of study countries. However, the complexity of eligibility requirements, the limitations on accessing some entitlements, the variable level of salary compensation and the complex timing of the leave entitlements within the study countries create a challenge for parents and employers to navigate and, for policymakers to address if parental leave is to form a coherent and equitable part of an integrated ECE system. This complexity has also been highlighted in other cross-national studies (OECD, 2011, 2013).

Policy Changes

Evidence in a number of recent studies (EIU, 2012; OECD 2012b; Pascal, & Bertram, 2012) has shown the dynamic nature of ECE policy and provision worldwide over recent years. The policy aim is generally to ensure greater access to early education, especially to socioeconomically disadvantaged children, and to improve the quality of provision for all. A recent international review of ECE policy in 16 countries, drawn worldwide (Pascal, & Bertram, 2012), has indicated converging policy initiatives in the following areas:

- More state investment in ECE to secure more equitable access
- More generous staff:child ratios (higher number of staff to the number of children)
- A better trained and qualified ECE workforce
- A regulated and data-evidenced ECE system
- An agreed curriculum, setting out learning goals and pedagogic strategies, for all ECE services

Given this wider context, the ECES explored the key policy changes that have occurred during the last five years (2009–2014), as well as those under consideration or planned within the next five years, within the study countries (Table 7). The intention was to capture the direction of travel for policy, and ascertain the change dynamics for ECE policy in the study countries.

All the study countries, except the Czech Republic, have undergone key policy changes in their services for under-threes (ECED) over the last five years or have significant changes planned for the near future (Table 7). Italy plans the greatest change in ECED provision. In July 2015, Italy passed an education system law (no. 107/2015, par. 181 e) that anticipated future needs to unify the split system for children from birth to six years under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Overall, the most dynamic areas of ECED policy change in the study countries are changes in expenditure (seven countries) child:staff ratios (five countries), staff qualifications (five countries), and

Table 7: Key policy changes for services for children aged 0–3 years (ECED) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (PPE)

Country	Level	Policy changes in ECE expenditure	Policy changes in statutory entitlements to ECE	Policy changes in ECE child: staff ratios	Policy changes in ECE staff qualifications	Policy changes in national ECE curriculum	Policy changes in ECE regulation and quality inspection monitoring	Policy changes in child assessment	Other
Chile	ECED	●	●	●	+	+	+	+	+
	PPE	●	●	●	+	+	●	○	+
Czech Republic	ECED	○	+	○	○	○	○	○	n/a
	PPE	+	+	○	○	+	○	○	n/a
Denmark	ECED	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	●
	PPE	●	○	○	●	○	○	●	●
Estonia	ECED	+	○	+	●	●	+	●	+
	PPE	+	○	+	●	●	+	n/a	+
Italy	ECED	●	+	+	+	+	+	○	+
	PPE	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	+
Poland	ECED	●	○	●	●	○	●	n/a	○
	PPE	●	●	○	○	●	○	n/a	○
Russian Federation	ECED	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
	PPE	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
United States	ECED	●+	○	○	○	n/a	○	○	n/a
	PPE	●+	+	+	+	n/a	+	+	n/a

Key:

- No changes in the past five years, and none currently;
 - Changes in last five years that have taken place;
 - +
- Planned changes in next five years
n/a Not applicable or no data supplied

Country specific notes:

^a The United States clarified that changes in expenditure have taken place over the last five years (2009–2014) and further changes are planned or being considered for the next five years (2014–2019).

^b The United States does not have a national ECE curriculum, therefore the NRC could not address this question. It does, however, have policies in support of what a curriculum should contain.

regulation and quality assurance (five countries). The most commonly planned changes in ECED policy include adult:child staff ratios (three countries), and regulation and quality assurance (three countries).

All eight study countries have also undergone key policy changes in their services for children from three years to primary schooling (PPE) or have significant changes planned for the near future (Table 7). The United States plans the most substantial change in PPE policy. The Czech Republic plans fewest policy changes in PPE. The most dynamic areas of PPE policy change in the study countries are changes in expenditure (eight countries), national PPE curriculum (six countries), staff qualifications (five countries), and regulation and quality assurance (five countries). The most common

change in PPE policy planned for the near future is an increase in PPE expenditure (three countries).

The most dynamic area of policy change in all the study countries, (except Czech Republic for ECED), was an achieved or planned increase in national ECED and PPE expenditure. In Denmark, for example, [a more money initiative](#) has been introduced to increase funding for center-based care and education for children from birth to primary school age. In Italy, new agreements at state and regional level have allocated increased resources to ECE over recent years. In addition a [Cohesion Action Plan](#) for 2013–2015 has facilitated the allocation of more resources for ECE in southern Italy. A further measure at PPE level is the 2009 decree, which rationalized schools into comprehensive institutes from PPE to lower secondary. This also modified expenditure on PPE, as many PPE settings were unified into bigger schools, thus cutting the costs of school leadership and other staff.

Chile and Italy reported recent changes in statutory entitlements to ECED services and Italy is planning further change in this area of policy. Chile, the Czech Republic and Poland also reported recent changes in statutory entitlements to PPE services and the United States is planning change in this area of policy. In Chile, for example, a national program entitled [“Chile Grows With You”](#) in 2009 changed the national entitlement for ECED for its most vulnerable families, allowing them free access to ECED services for children from the age of two years. In Italy, a comprehensive three-year plan for the development of ECED was introduced in 2007 by the state and the regions and autonomous provinces. The two main objectives of this plan were to increase the availability of places in ECED (“Nidi”) and increase the quality of provision. In an additional agreement in 2008, further measures were introduced ensuring participation in ECED of families with multiple (four or more) children. Presidential Decree n. 81/2009 affected PPE in Italy concerning normative arrangements on the rationalization of schools into comprehensive institutions encompassing PPE through lower secondary. This decree also modified expenditure in PPE, since many schools have been unified into bigger schools, thus cutting the overall costs of school leadership and other staff, and affected the number of children per classroom in PPE (minimum 18, maximum 28), so the child:staff ratio has been altered. In the Czech Republic, the last year of PPE is now obligatory.

Chile, Poland and the Russian Federation have recently changed nationally prescribed staff:child ratios for under-threes settings, and Estonia and Italy are planning changes here. Chile, Italy and the Russian Federation have also recently changed nationally prescribed staff:child ratios for PPE settings, and Estonia and the United States are planning changes here. For example, in Chile in 2011, the Ministry of Education passed [decree 115](#), changing staff:child ratios and staff qualification requirements for the first level of ECE (birth to one year) to one professional educator (graduate) to 42 infants and one educator assistant for every seven infants; for the second level (one to two years), one professional educator to 32 children and one educator assistant for every 25 children; for the third level (two to three years), one professional educator and one educator assistant to up to 32 children; for the first transition level (three to four years), one professional educator and one educator assistant for 35 children; and for the second transition level (four to five years), one professional educator and one educator assistant for every 25 children. In Denmark, changes to staff:child ratios are planned, as part of the more money initiative.

Denmark, Estonia and Poland have recently changed national requirements for ECED staff qualifications, and Chile and Italy are planning changes here. Denmark, Estonia and Italy have also recently changed national requirements for PPE staff qualifications, and Chile and the United States are planning changes. For example, Chile has plans to introduce law that aims to establish a new design and incentives for teacher careers, including new requirements for staff qualifications. In Estonia, there are changes underway to develop teachers' professional preparation to be more open, flexible and practice oriented. A new qualifications framework has been introduced with teacher standards based on a set of identified competencies. These standards will be the basis for teachers' initial and in-service training, as well as career planning. In Italy, a reform of teacher training in 2010 ensured that PPE teachers have to hold a five-year tertiary degree (ISCED Level 5); previously a four-year degree was required.

Denmark, Estonia and Poland reported that there have been developments in their requirements for a national curriculum for the under-threes, and Chile and Italy also have changes planned. (In Denmark, both ECED and PPE have the same regulations for national curriculum requirements.) Estonia, Italy, Poland and the Russian Federation also reported recent developments in their requirements for a national curriculum for children from three to primary school age (PPE), and Chile and the Czech Republic have plans for curriculum changes. The United States could not report here because curriculum matters are decided at state level. It does, however, have policies in support of what a curriculum should contain. In Italy, for example, changes to the national curriculum for under-threes are planned to enhance provision, and ensure services promote child well-being and development, sustain the parental role, and reconcile time for work and care. New curriculum guidelines were issued in 2012 for ECED and PPE, which included new requirements to include teacher observation for child assessment, and a learning program that balances children's play, exploration and expectations for language development, numeracy, logic, time and space, early science and general knowledge of the world. Learning outcomes are also more explicitly defined and there is clear reference to transition to primary school. At present, actions in support of the 2012 curricular guidelines should be launched in PPE in the next six years, divided into three two-year periods.

Poland and the Russian Federation have undergone key changes in the national system for ECED regulation and quality assurance, and Chile, Estonia and Italy are planning changes here. Chile, Italy and the Russian Federation have also made key changes in the national system for regulation and quality assurance for PPE settings, and Chile, Estonia and the United States are planning changes here. For example, in Chile, a new body (*Intendance or Directorate of ECE*) is to be created within the Superintendence of Education, with the purpose of monitoring ECED and PPE establishments that have official recognition with the Ministry of Education, to ensure compliance with national regulations. In addition, a new law is to be introduced that will propose a national plan for quality assurance of ECE and a system of accreditation under the Quality of Education Agency. In the Russian Federation, there are new norms and a new mechanism for quality assessment of ECED services. In the United States, there are federal regulations for different funding streams, such as the [Child Care and Development Block Grants](#) (CCDBG), [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) and Title I, which is part of the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#) (ESEA). As amended, the ESEA provides financial assistance to local educational agencies

and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Additionally, within the United States the federal government has supported states in developing their quality rating information systems (QRIS), a systemic approach within the states to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early and school age care and education programs. In Italy, a national information system on early childhood education and care services is being implemented through the pilot project named SINSE (*Sistema Informativo Nazionale Sui Servizi Socio-Educativi Per La Prima Infanzia*: National information system on socio-educational services for early childhood) under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The project, coordinated by the Emilia Romagna region, ended in December 2014, and provided a national infrastructure for the census data collection of all early childhood centers (public and private) operating in Italy.

Estonia and the Russian Federation have recently made significant changes to their national ECED child assessment systems, and Chile plans changes. Denmark and the Russian Federation have recently made changes to their national child assessment systems for children over three years (PPE), and Italy and the United States are planning changes. The United States federal government has supported the development of comprehensive assessment systems within the states.

Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Italy and the Russian Federation also reported significant achieved or planned changes in other ECE policy areas. One further key area for change is system governance, where Italy, Russia and Poland reported changes underway. For example, in Italy, a major change was planned for 2015 around the governance of the ECE system, which was formerly a multi-level system under three national bodies (Ministries of Welfare and Labor, Department for Families within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and the Ministry of Education). The plan involved a reorganization of entire ECE provision from birth till the age of six years, aimed at integrating the ISCED Level 0 phase and placing it in the portfolio of the Ministry of Education. Fully implemented, this will create a unitary system in Italy, serving children from birth to six years. The aim is to increase access for children to ECED, and introduce regulatory requirements concerning funding, quality, monitoring/evaluation of centers, teacher qualifications, and structural quality indicators (ratios, space) and pedagogy. In Poland, a new law was introduced in 2011 that transferred ECED from the medical domain to the domain of social welfare and family (at ministry level). This incorporated new finance streams and new staff:child ratios.

For PPE, the United States indicated a number of areas with planned changes in the next five years (2014-2019) for ECE, specifically for prekindergarten programs. In terms of children aged three through to not-yet-in-kindergarten who are not in a prekindergarten program and are in some other ECE setting, there are no planned changes in the identified areas.

Summary Finding 6

All study countries have recently undergone, or have imminent plans to implement substantial changes in their ECE policy, at both ECED and PPE levels. In particular, increases in public expenditure and enhanced statutory entitlements to ECE services are the most common recent or planned changes. The evidence illustrates the dynamic nature of ECE policy and reflects the growing visibility and importance attached to the development of the ECE systems within all the study countries.

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