



Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review
of European Early Childhood Education and Care

WP 4: Impact of ECEC in short-, medium- and long-term

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Background

- **Fundamental change of ECEC across Europe:**
Increased use of services and higher expectations with regard to the quality and range of services
- Main expectation of ECEC stakeholders is directed to the **potential of ECEC to foster children's development**
- The **potentials of different systems to monitor, assure and raise ECEC quality** have not been studied systematically so far
- Policy recommendations should be based on sound research base

Objectives of WP 4

To assess the impact of ECEC in Europe, including variations in quality on children's outcomes

- I. To review and quantify the effects of ECEC upon children's short-, medium- and long-term developmental outcomes
- II. To identify possible moderators and to investigate differential effects, including compensatory effects of ECEC for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
- III. To examine EU countries' systems of ECEC provision and quality monitoring

Reports of WP 4

- I. Literature review of research on the impact upon child development of ECEC

- II. Report of the meta-analysis of ECEC studies

- III. Overview of ECEC and quality monitoring systems

Main findings: Literature review

General population

- Attending ECEC before the age of three leads to gains in cognitive skills, language development and academic achievement, with some effects lasting into later childhood and adolescence. Evidence on socioemotional outcomes is less clear, but points to potential negative effects of long hours in poor quality provision or unstable care settings.
- Centre-based ECEC for children aged three and older is beneficial for the educational and social development
- The (process) quality of the provision is critical with regard to the direction, size and persistence of effects.

Main findings: Literature review

Disadvantaged children

- Early ECEC interventions of high quality (preferably with associated home visits) from 0-3 years, can produce benefits for cognitive, language and social development.
- High quality provision is also beneficial for the development of children aged 3 years and older.
- The research evidence on whether children from disadvantaged backgrounds take greater benefit from high quality than their less disadvantaged peers is mixed.

Main findings: Meta-Analysis

General findings

- The meta-analysis includes 226 separate findings from 22 large-scale longitudinal studies for over 43,000 children in Europe
- Children benefit from higher global process quality ($ES = .11$, Cohen's $d = .22$), more pre-academic promotion ($ES = .10$, Cohen's $d = .20$), and from a greater amount of ECEC ($ES = .12$, Cohen's $d = .24$)
- The evidence differed, for example, in the location and its ECEC system, in the design and the characteristics of the sample, or in the assessment measures of outcomes and ECEC aspects.

Main findings: Meta-Analysis

Moderator analysis

- High global process quality was more beneficial for literacy outcomes, pre-academic promotion particularly benefitted math outcomes
- Observational measures produced stronger effects than staff questionnaires
- Staff qualification yielded a significant effect, environmental aspects of structural quality did not

Main findings: Overview of ECEC systems

System findings

- Complex picture of ECEC services with high variation between different types of providers. Variation has advantages and disadvantages
- Demand seems higher than supply in many countries for the younger age group, yet costs are a major issue to parents. Targeted free entitlements for disadvantaged families are increasingly offered in many countries.
- Variation is reported in terms of participation rates and in terms of quality children with varying socio-economic, lingual and ethnic backgrounds receive

Curriculum findings

- Trend towards a more integrated system, with a common standard curriculum for all types of provision, but not yet realised in many countries
- Implementing a balanced curriculum means bringing together the diverse perspectives and methods of a more academic and more holistic approaches. This complex task creates tensions

Main findings: Overview of ECEC systems

ECEC Workforce

- Trend for ECEC becoming more academic in Europe
- In a few countries younger children are attended by lower qualified care staff only
- Qualification requirements for childminders in home-based care are often much lower than in centre-based care
- In most countries continuing professional development is compulsory to some degree

Main findings: Overview of ECEC Systems

Monitoring

- Not all ECEC systems include mandated evaluation processes.
- A lack of a homogenous quality framework for ECEC services.
- Structural aspects of quality highlights differences in monitoring between the 11 CARE countries. Only some systems are regulated and assessed by external bodies.
- Self-evaluations are implemented in all CARE countries.
- Cutbacks are a '*...basic concern that hinders efforts to promote ECEC quality*'.

Conclusion

- Prolonged high-quality ECEC yields substantial developmental benefits and ensures the wellbeing of children.
- Enhancing the quality of pedagogical processes and assuring access to ECEC for all children can be effective and sustainable measures to increase benefits for children of varying backgrounds.
- The goal of providing good quality universal provision that ensures social mix need is still far from being reached.
- Discrepancies between formal and implemented curricula need to be overcome
- Quality monitoring systems should be evaluated and reflected in all countries.