



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

Expectations of ECEC from a European perspective: Views of parents, staff and policymakers

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 613318

Today

- CARE project
- Stakeholders Study
 - Why this study?
 - What did we do?
 - First findings
 - Developmental-educational goals
 - Quality of ECEC
 - Parental involvement
 - Diversity and inclusiveness





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

Aim:

To develop an evidence-based and culture-sensitive European framework of developmental goals, quality assessment, curriculum approaches and policy measures for improving the quality and effectiveness of ECEC.

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Early childhood education and care: promoting quality for individual, social and economic benefits



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CARE partners - 11 countries: England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark.



Utrecht (NL)



Oxford (GB)



FU Berlin (D)



Aarhus (DK)



Leuven (B)



Jyväskylä (FI)



Milano (I)



Hellenic Open Univ. (GR)



Lisboa (P)

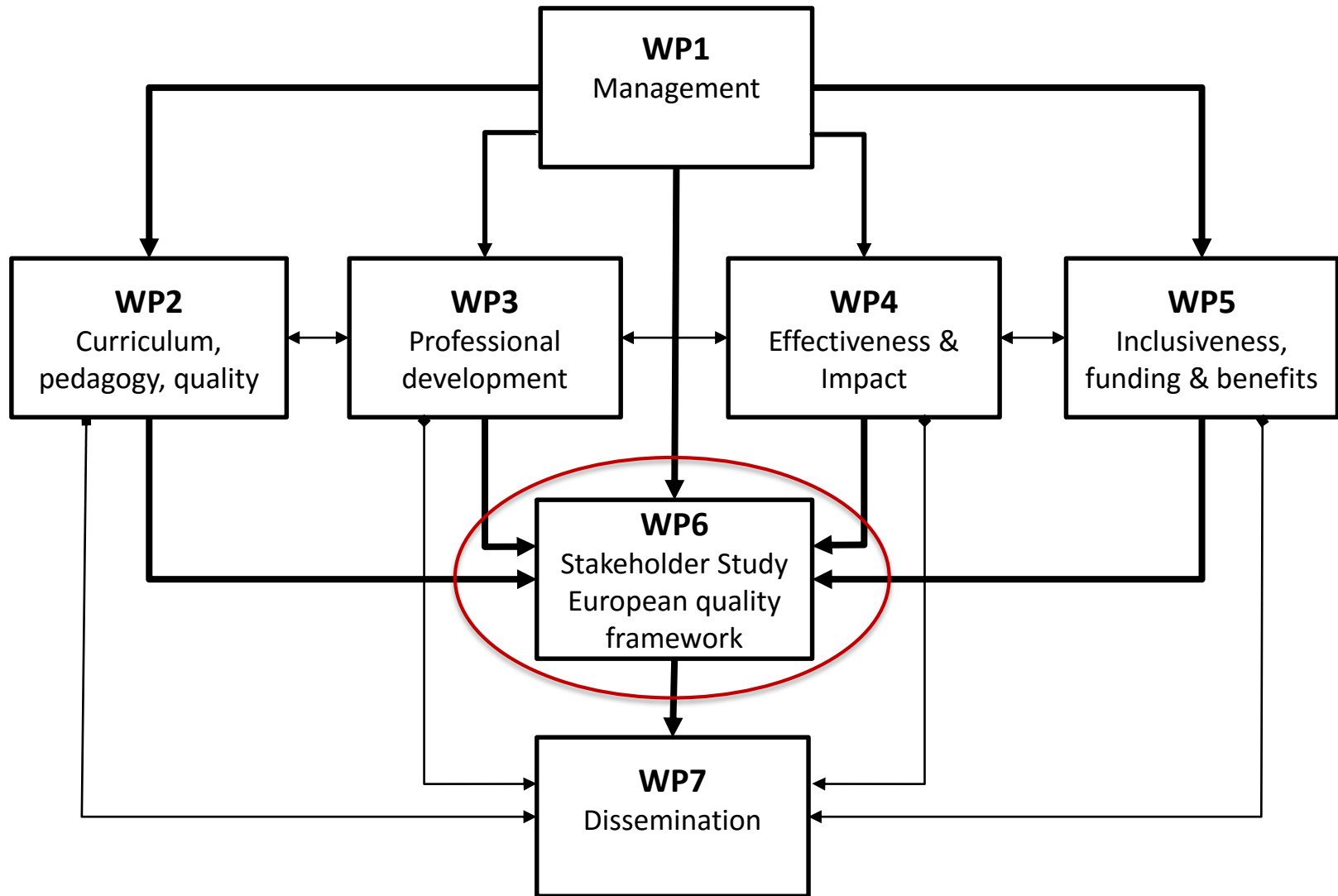


Warszawa (PL)



BUSKERUD (N)

CARE Organisation: 7 Work Packages



CARE Stakeholders Study – WP6

Survey in 9 European countries into the values, beliefs and concerns of parents, staff and policymakers regarding ECEC

Main topics

1. Developmental-educational goals (social, academic, physical, emotional, personal)
2. Quality of ECEC
 - a) Structural quality
 - b) Process quality
3. Inclusiveness and diversity
4. Ideology about motherhood
5. Choice processes when selecting ECEC

Aim: To identify cross-cultural commonalities and differences as input for the evidence-based and culture-sensitive European quality framework

Why this study?

Abundant evidence that beliefs, norms and goals regarding childrearing, care and education are related to cultural background

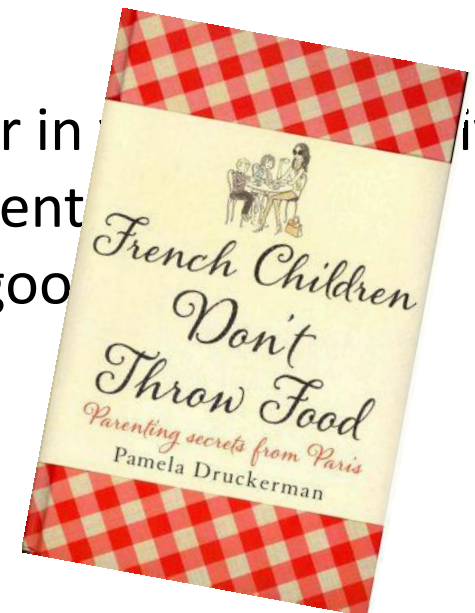
German: Psychological independence, emotional self-control, and feeling good

Turkish-German: Personal achievement, school readiness, good demeanor and relationships with the family

→ Misfit with German play-based curriculum
(Citlak et al., 2008)

Also differences within Western communities...

- **Dutch** and **U.S.** middleclass parents find the development of independence in early childhood equally important, but...
 - **U.S.:** stimulating competitiveness and becoming smart
 - **NL:** promoting emotion regulation and self-reliance
 (Harkness et al., 2007)
- **French** and **U.S.** middleclass parents are similar in stimulation and independence, but French parents emphasize proper presentation, emotion regulation and good manners (Suizzo, 2002)



Policy evaluations show importance views stakeholders (parents, staff, policymakers) for developing and monitoring high quality ECEC


Why European perspective?

- Development of evidence-based and culture-sensitive European quality framework → which ideas, beliefs and core concepts about early childhood are *similar*, and which are *different*?
- Contributes to the discussion on a European level (i.e., shared language), and possibly the formulation of communal policies.


Methods (what did we do?)

- Development questionnaire
 - Open & closed; < 3 and 3-6 years
 - Many feedback rounds and informal pilots
 - Formal translation check
- Personal Interviews
 - Deliberate convenience samples
 - Parents: mainstream, immigrants and (rural) low income
 - Staff: different types of institutions
 - Policymakers: local, regional, and national
- Internet- based survey
 - Distributed among large ECEC and parent organizations, schools, etc.

Number of participants



	Personal Interview			Internet-based questionnaire		
	Parents	Staff	Policymakers	Parents	Staff	Policymakers
England	38	15	9	62	54	15
Germany	45	16	3	218	278	23
Greece	45	46	10	93	139	12
Italy	49	26	14	1471	953	82
Finland	47	14	14	166	254	11
Netherlands	59	22	6	228	276	46
Norway	44	14	6	71	78	10
Poland	48	15	6	180	632	32
Portugal	47	14	3	47	38	2



TOTAL

Personal interview + Internet based questionnaire

Sample characteristics

	Parents	Staff	Policymakers
Age (yrs)	36.3	43.0	51.0
Female %	74 – 93 %	89 – 100 %	68 – 100%
Employed %	73 – 86 %	-	-
# children	1.8	-	-
Work years ECEC	-	15.8	13.8

Analyses

- Country representative samples → weighting educational level (Eurostat statistics, population 25-45 yrs)
- Examining structural characteristics of questionnaire
 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis
 - Measurement Invariance
- Comparison of mean importance ratings...
 - ...across countries
 - ...across stakeholders

Investigating *communalities* and *differences*



Results

1. Developmental-educational goals (social, academic, physical, emotional, personal)
2. Quality of ECEC
 - a) Structural quality
 - b) Process quality
3. Inclusiveness and diversity
4. Parental involvement



What children should get out of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes in children?

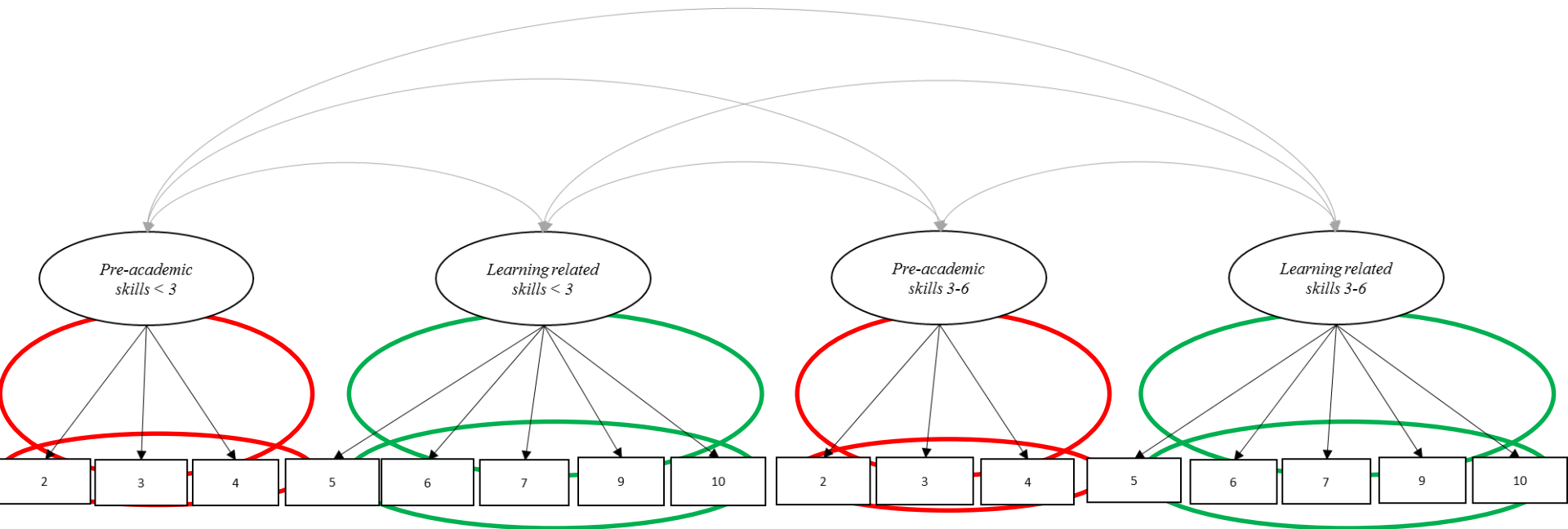
Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.

Social development

The child...

Children younger than 3 years						Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is able to communicate and interact well with peers and adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Shows respectful behaviors towards adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Can solve conflicts with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Can share toys/things with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has a sense of autonomy/independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Understands and respect rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Knows the difference between right and wrong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Respects other children's ideas and interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Takes responsibility for her/his own behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Multigroup CFA models



It's possible to model parents' & teachers' answers regarding developmental-educational goals with (nearly) full measurement equivalence across age-ranges and countries.

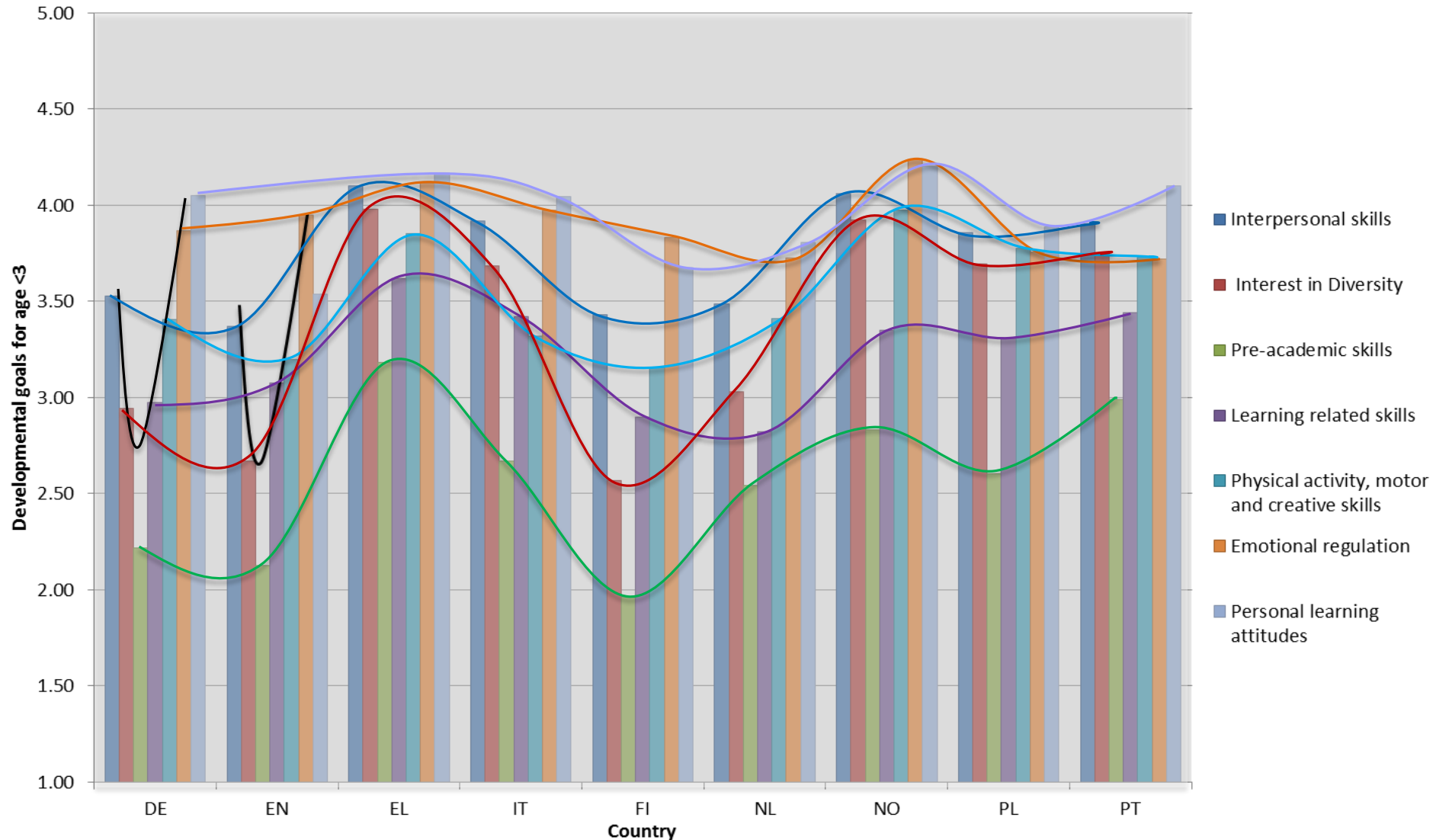
We apparently have a shared language for expressing our views

Developmental-educational goals

- Interpersonal skills:
 - Is able to interact, show respect, solve conflicts, share, understand rules.
- Positive attitude towards diversity:
 - Cares for handicapped children, interested in other cultures.
- (Pre-)academic skills:
 - Has basic knowledge of reading, writing, numbers, shapes.
- Learning-related skills:
 - Can express ideas, ask questions, reason about world, make plans.
- Physical, motor and creative skills:
 - Has physical endurance, motor skills, engages in physical play & dance.
- Emotional regulation:
 - Can express feelings, control emotions, is aware of others' feelings.
- Personal learning attitudes:
 - Is open-minded to new things, persistent, enthusiastic, self-confident.

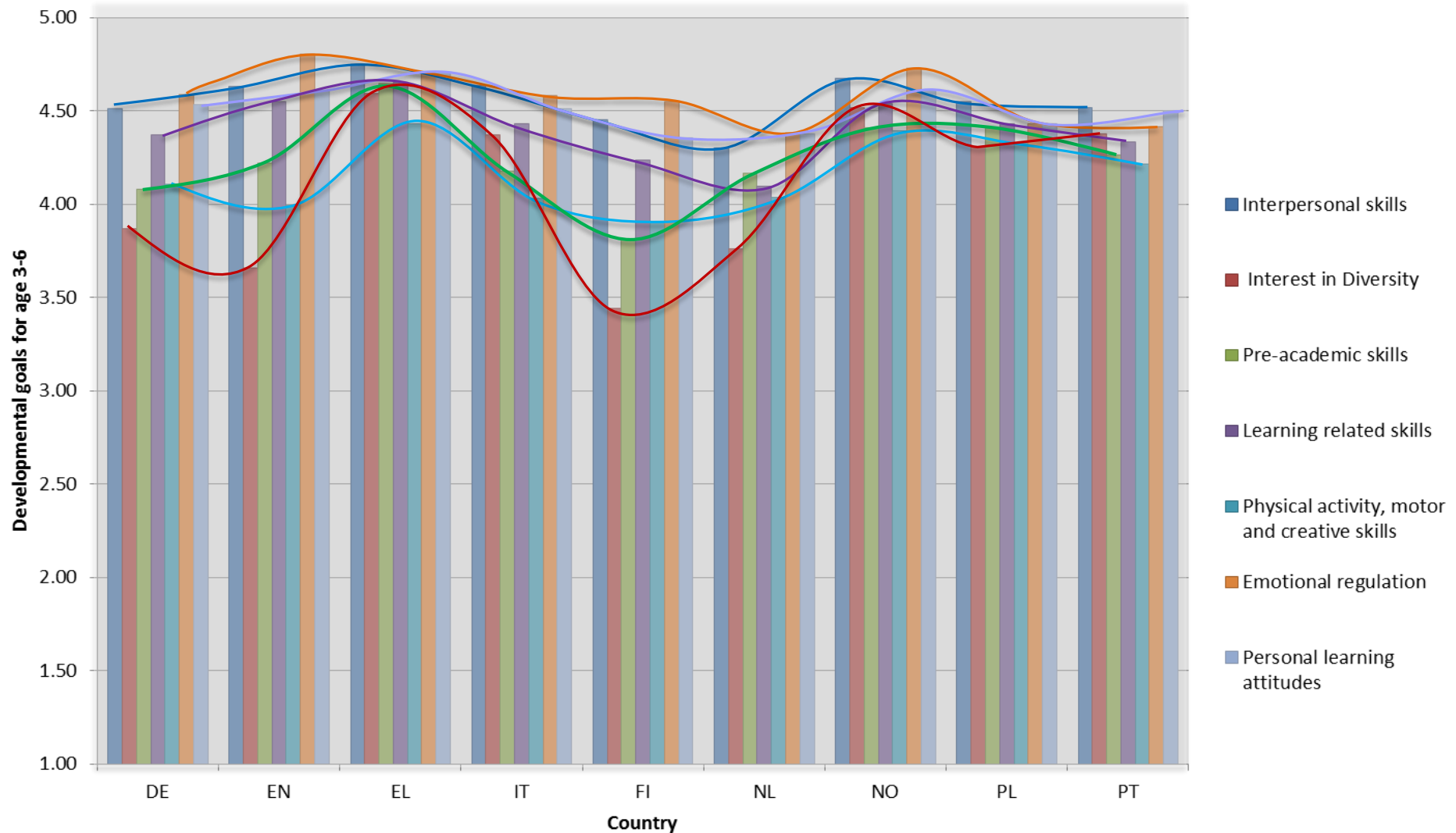
Parents – < 3 years

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance, 3= moderately important 4= important, 5= highly important

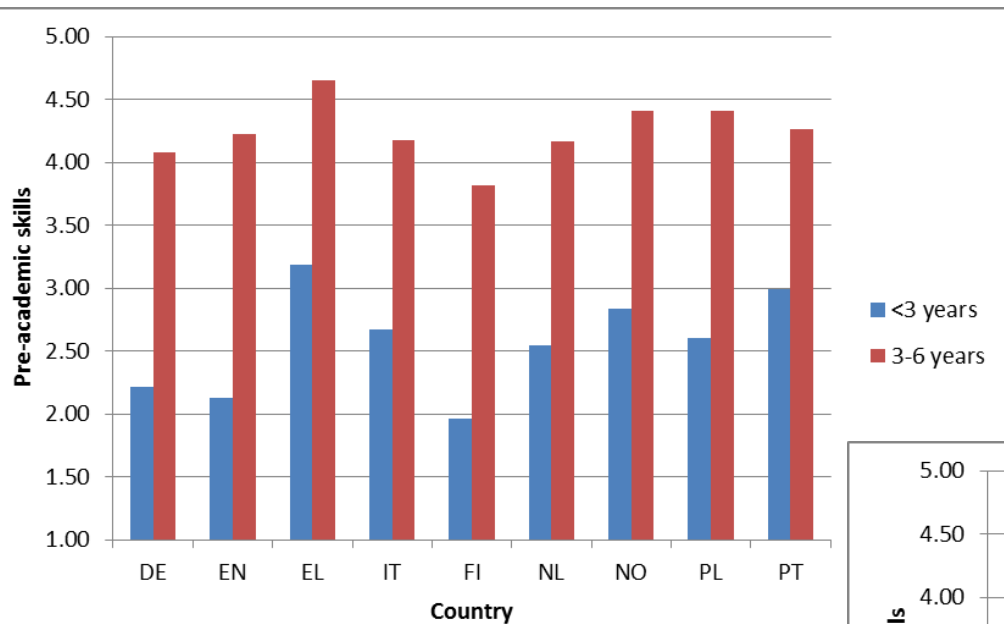


Parents – 3-6 years

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance, 3= moderately important 4= important, 5= highly important

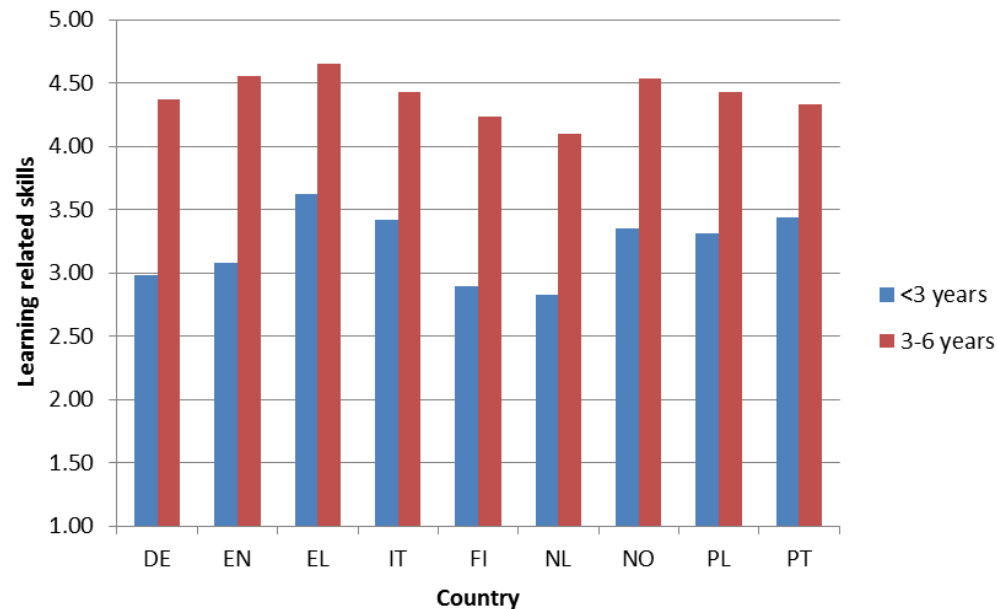


Parents - Pre-academic skills & Learning related skills

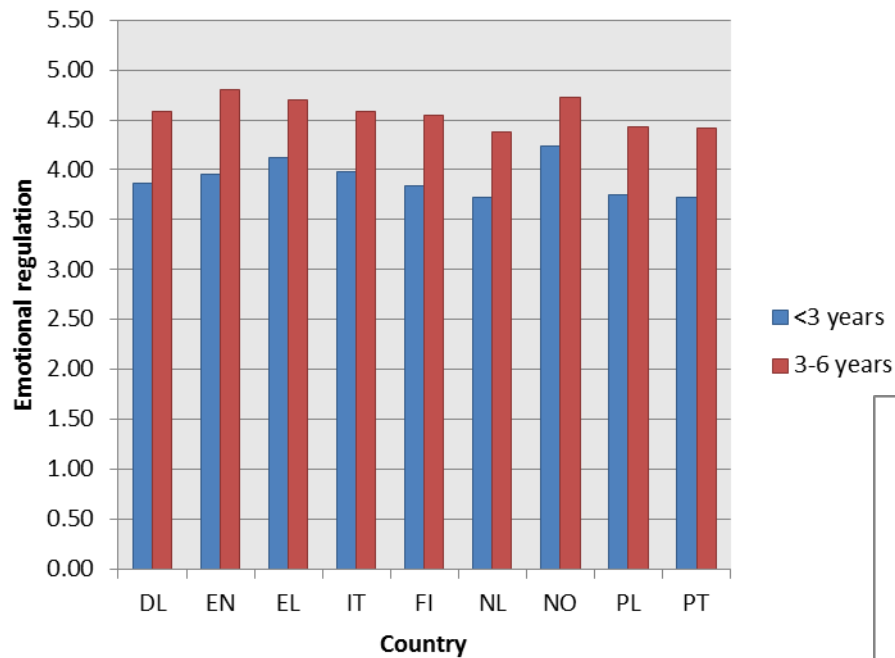


1= unimportant, 2= of little importance, 3= moderately important 4= important, 5= highly important

There is a sharp increase in the importance that parents attach to more “hard” pre-academic/ learning skills

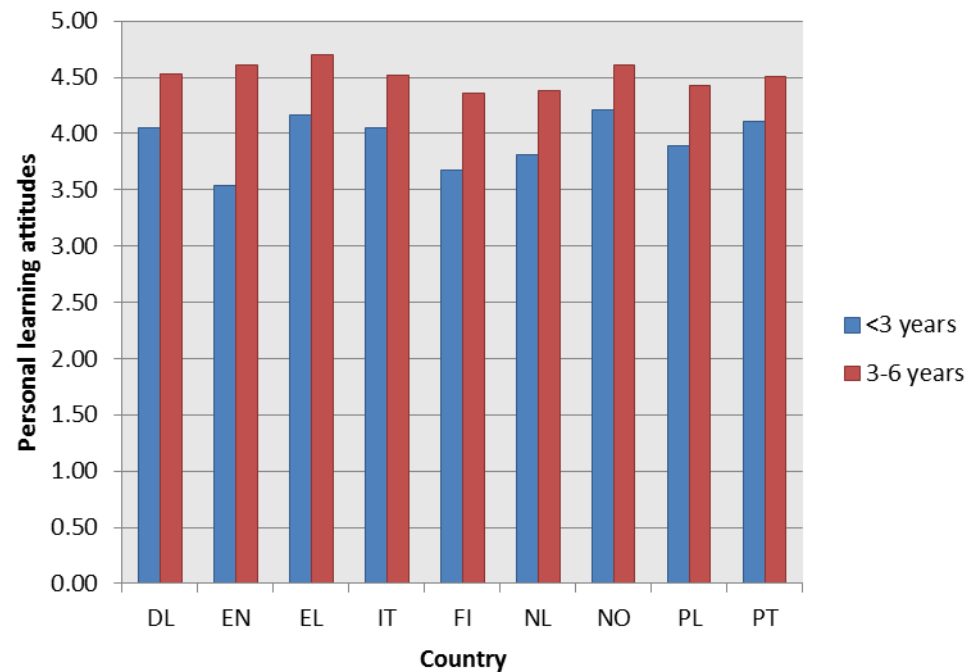


Parents – Emotional regulation & Personal learning attitudes



1= unimportant, 2= of little importance,
3= moderately important 4= important,
5= highly important

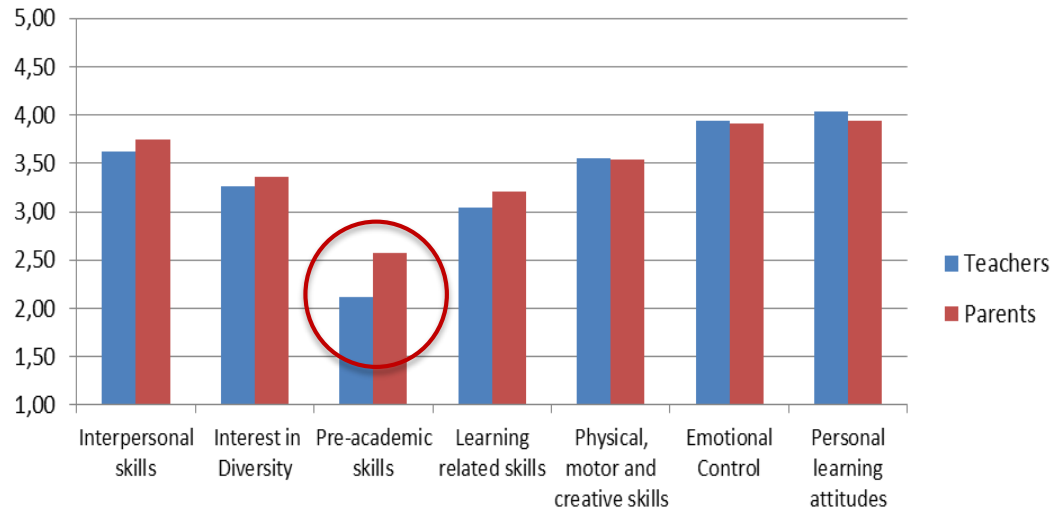
There is a small increase in the importance that parents attach to more “soft” personal/ emotional skills



First conclusions

- Parents across countries have a shared language for expressing their views on important developmental-educational goals
- Parents attach more importance to the goals when children are older; largest difference for pre-academic and learning skills.
→ Lack of shared conceptual framework for younger children?
- *Within country* patterns are comparable. Parents attach more importance to “soft” skills (interpersonal skills, emotion regulation, and personal learning attitudes) than to “hard” pre-academic skills
- Largest *between country* differences for the “hard” pre-academic skills (EL & PT relatively high and DE, EN & FI relatively low) and interest in diversity (GR, IT, PT, PL & NO relatively high and EN, FI & NL relatively low)

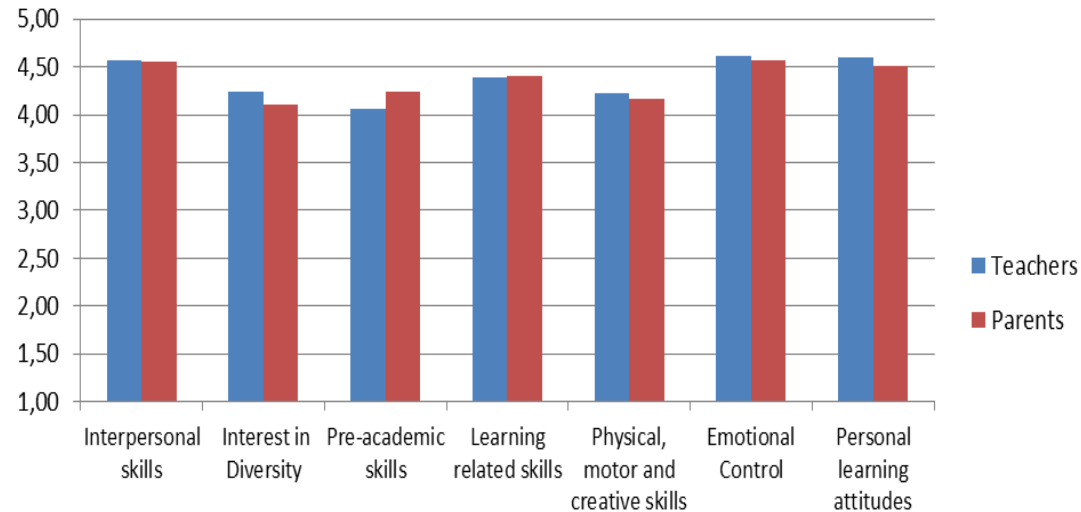
Comparison views parents and staff



Developmental goals < 3 years - European Average

Interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes are rated as most important by both stakeholders

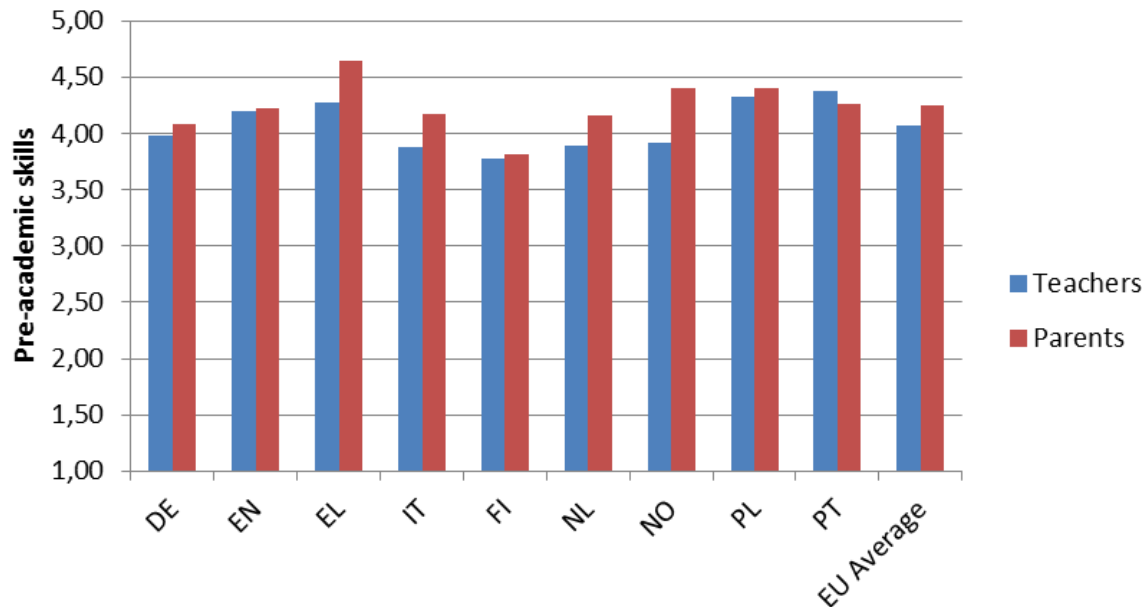
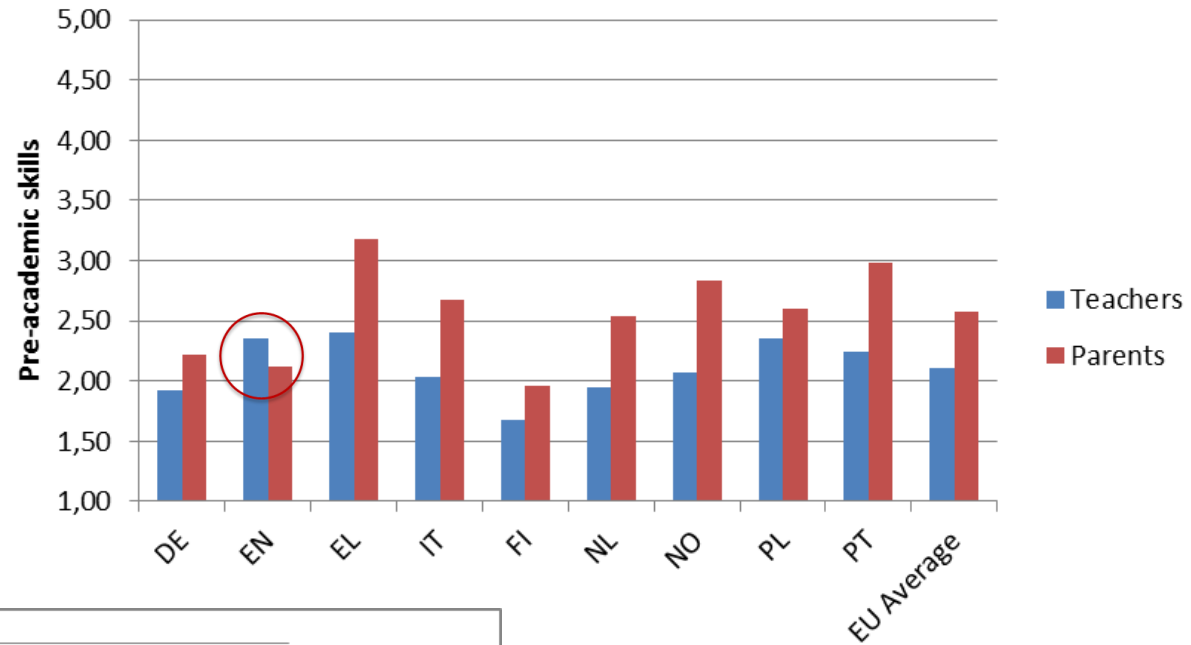
* Agreement among parents and staff, also within countries
→ Supports “cultural factor”



Developmental goals 3-6 years - European average

< 3 years

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance,
3= moderately important 4= important,
5= highly important



Compared to staff, parents think that pre-academic skills are somewhat more important

3-6 years

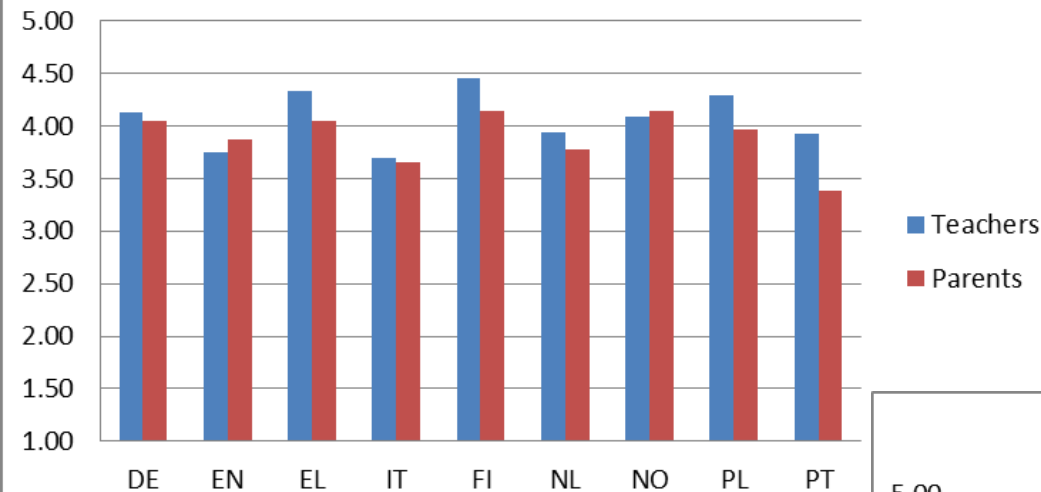
Results

1. Developmental-educational goals (social, academic, physical, emotional, personal)
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Organizational aspects

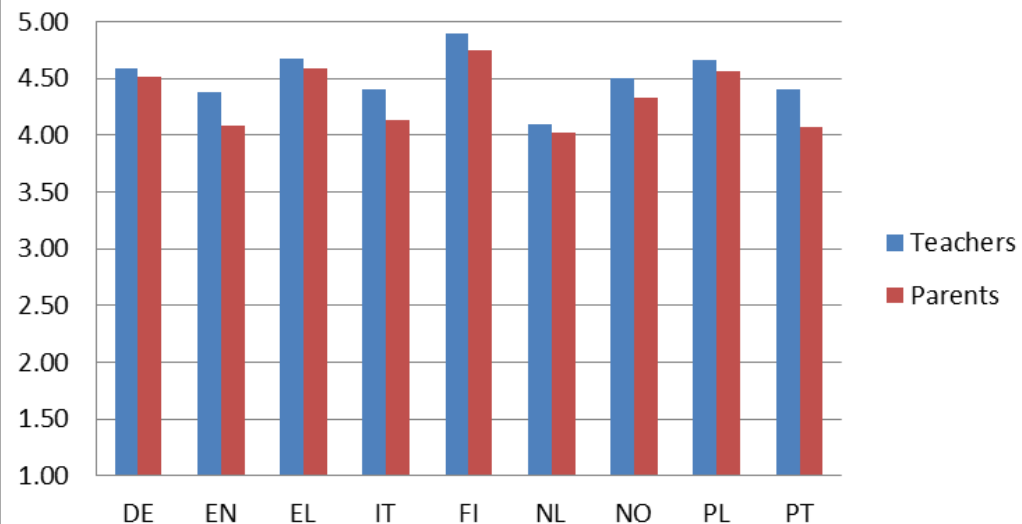
A stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time



Stable group is considered somewhat less important than low C-C ratio.

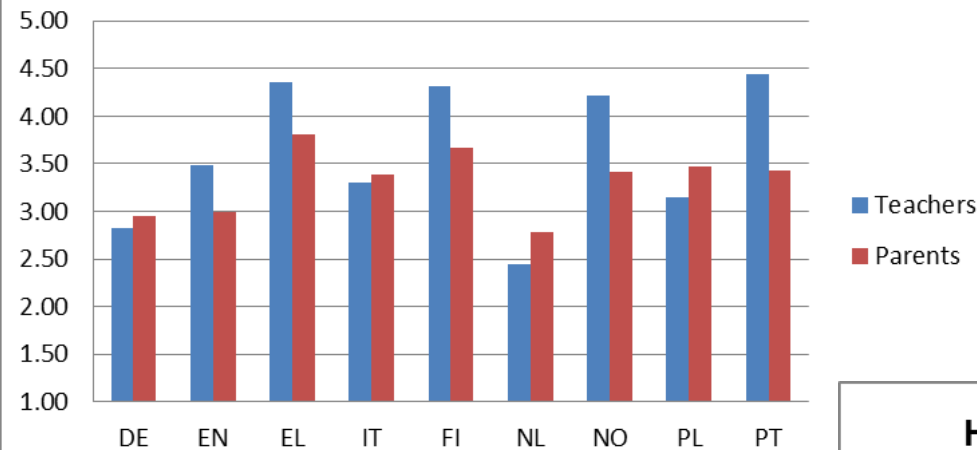
IT, EN & NL somewhat lower on both items, FI highest (but very small differences!)

Few children per trained caregiver



Staff characteristics

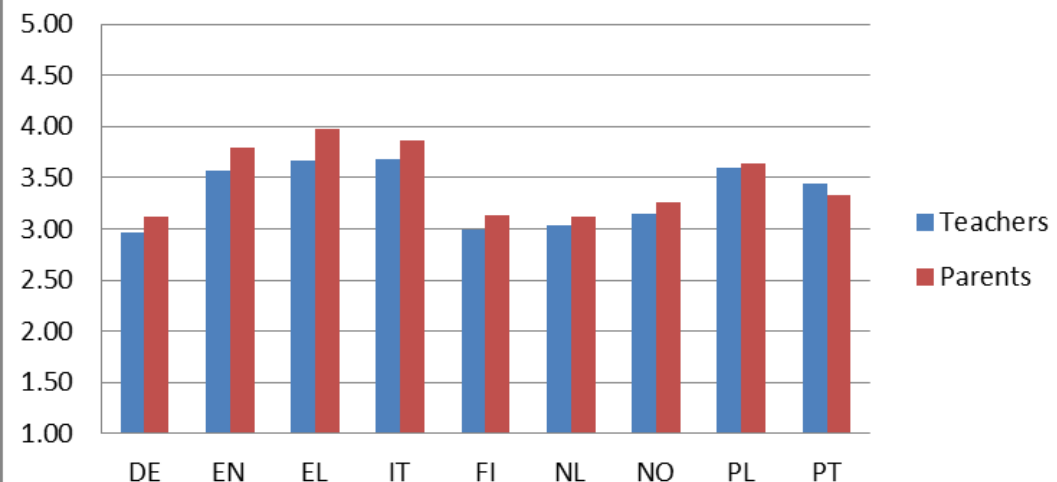
Have a high education level (at least three years college/university education)



Staff in EL, FI, NO & PT think that a high educational level is (highly) important. Lowest scores for staff and parents in DE & NL

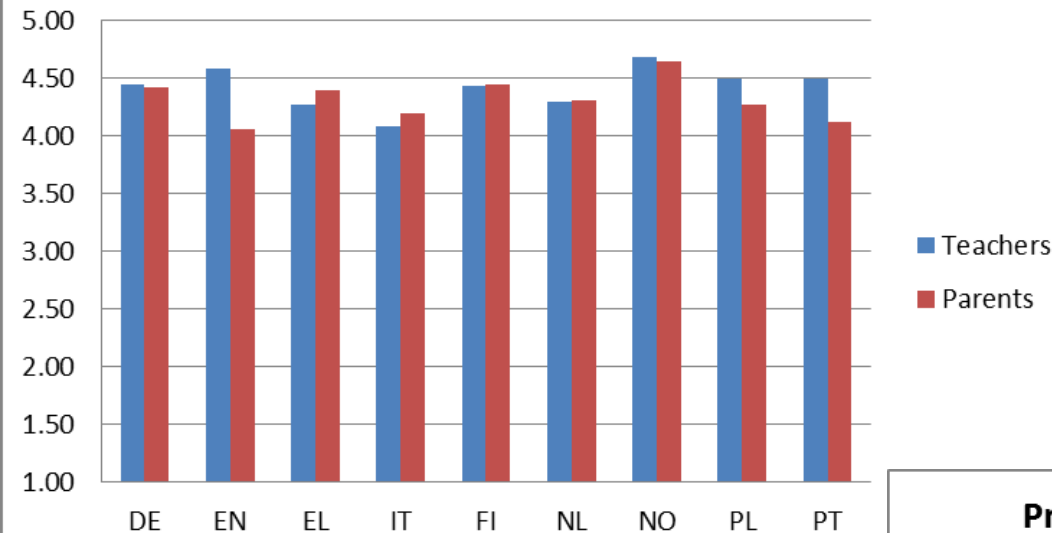
Work experience is most important in EN, EL, IT & PL

Have enough relevant work experience (at least five years)



Staff characteristics

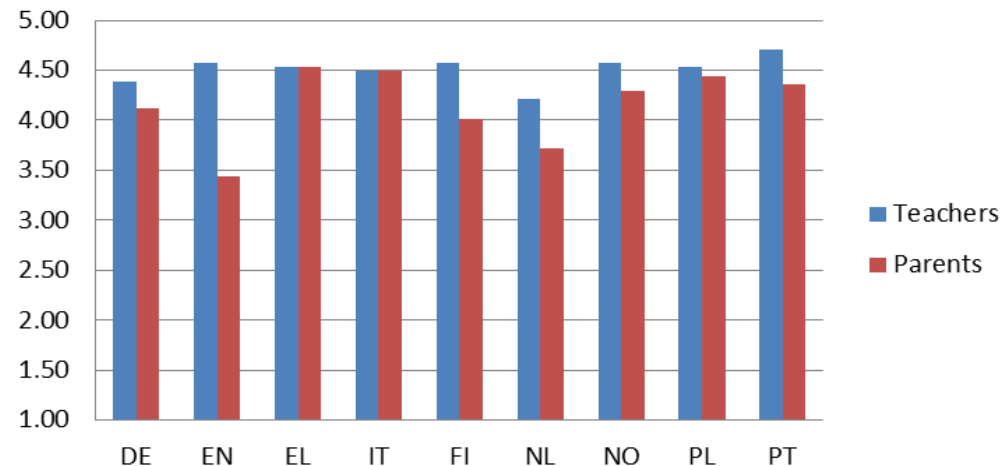
Are part of a stable team (with low turn-over)



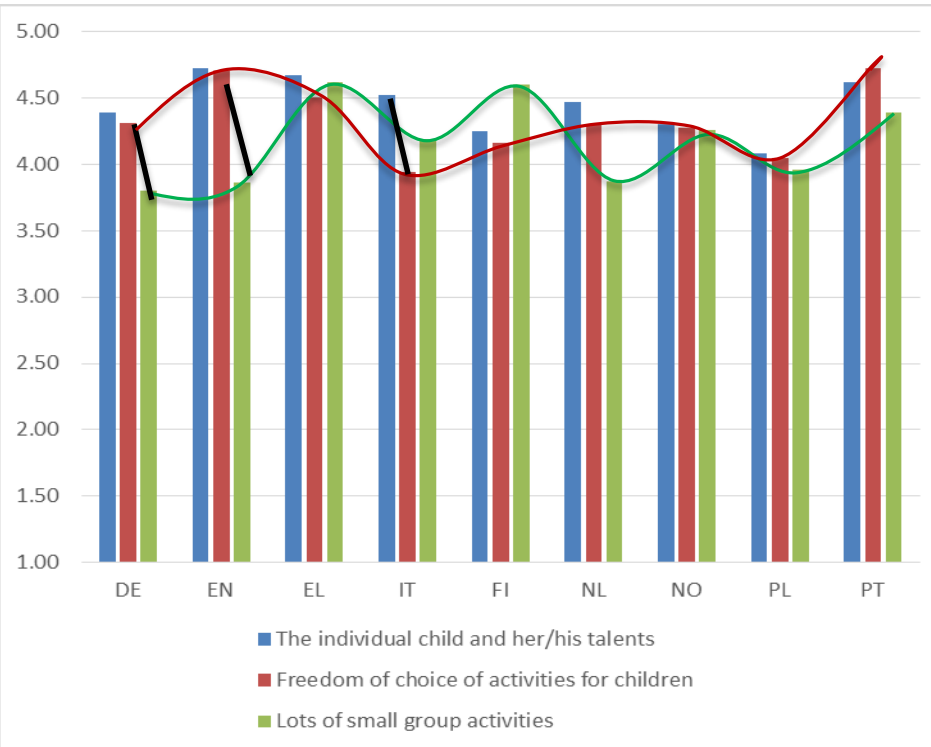
Both parents and staff in all countries think that a stable team and the provision of support are (highly) important

Support is considered somewhat less important by parents in EN & NL (part-time attendance?)

Provide practical and educational support for parents/guardians if needed by them



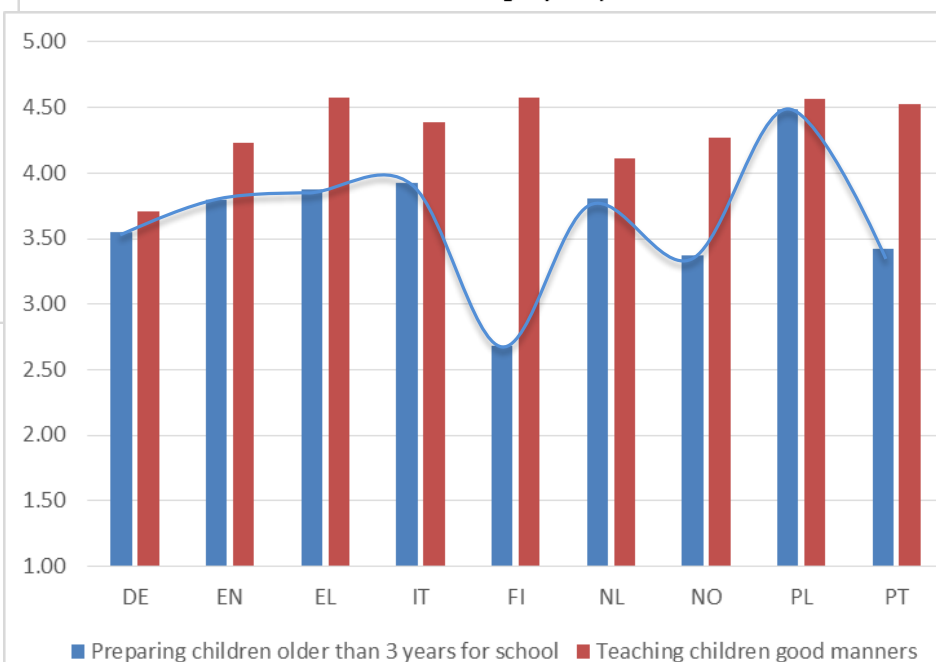
Staff - Educational principles



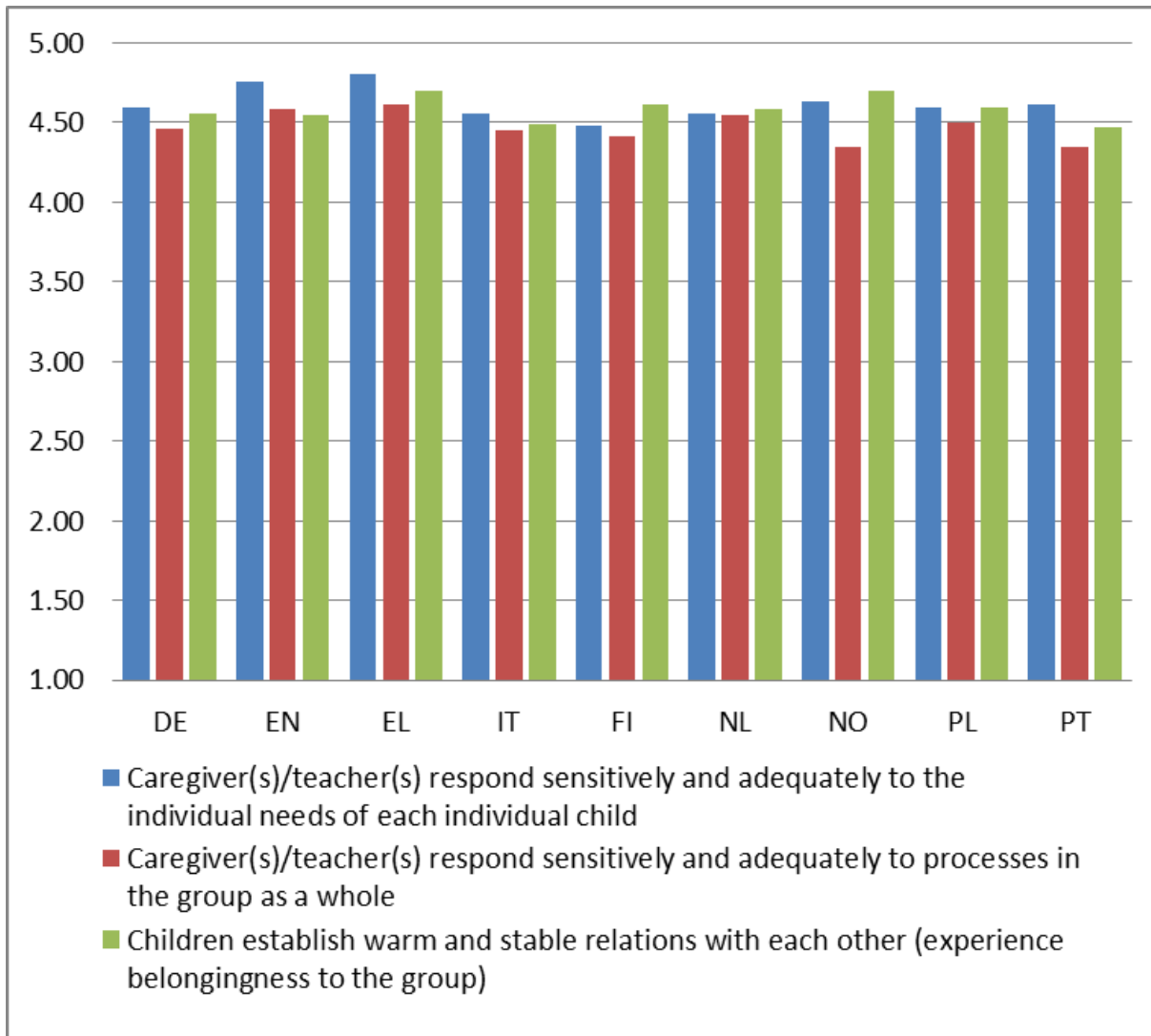
All are considered (highly) important, though some differences in emphasis

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance, 3= moderately important 4= important, 5= highly important

Teaching children good manners is (highly) important in most countries (DE lowest). More variation in preparing children for school (FI lowest).



Parents – Social and emotional climate

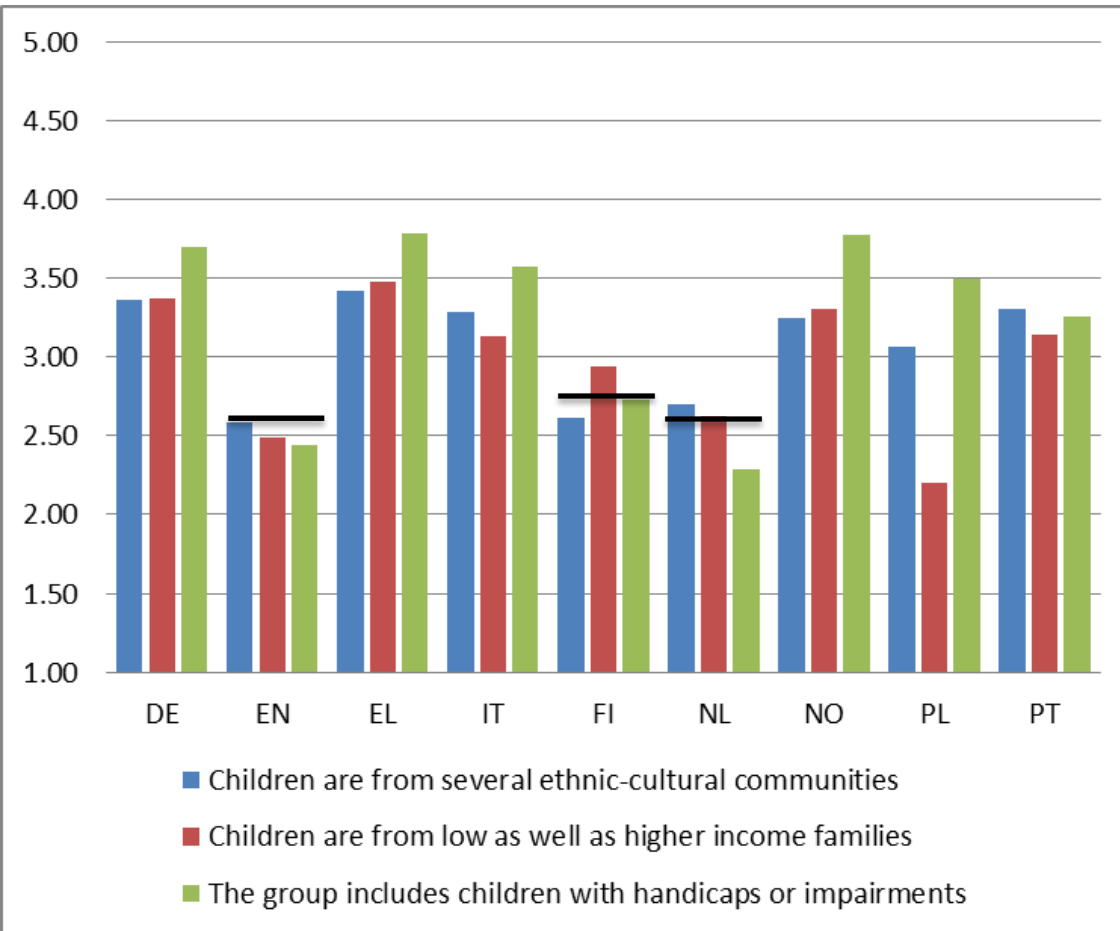


Results

1. Developmental-educational goals (social, academic, physical, emotional, personal)
2. Quality of ECEC
 - a) Structural quality
 - b) Process quality
3. Diversity and Inclusiveness
4. Parental involvement



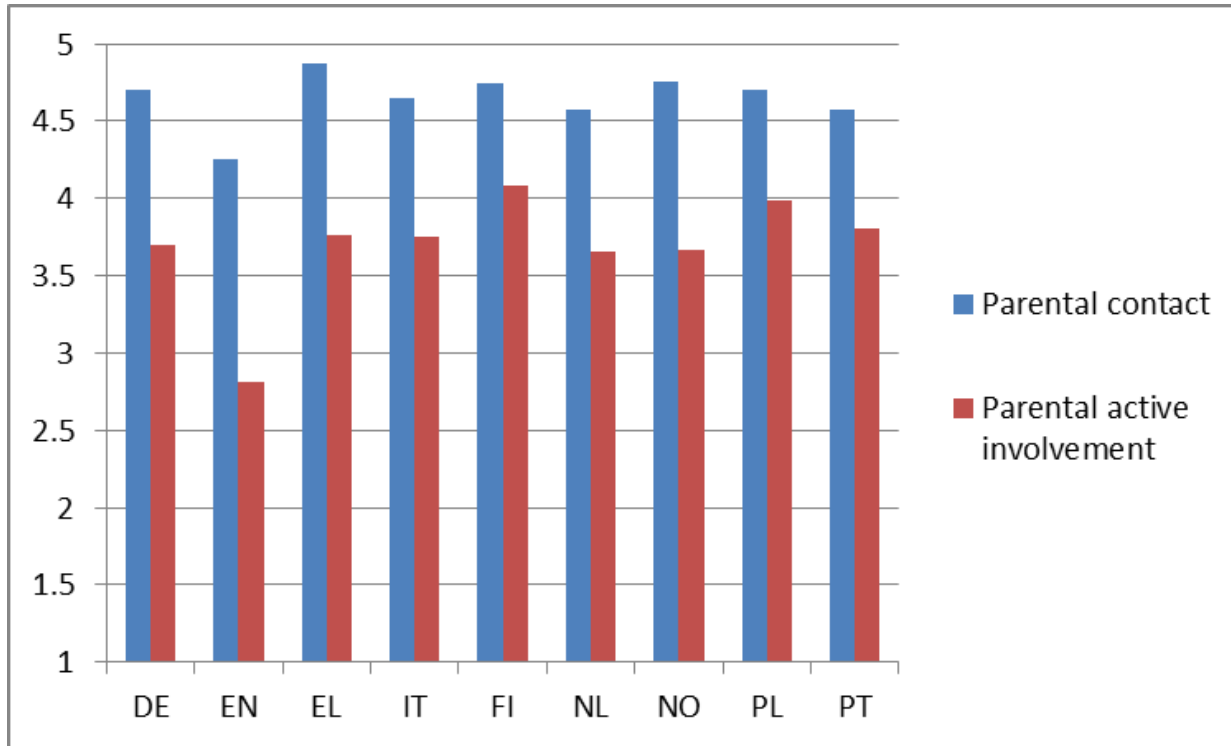
Parents –Diversity & inclusiveness



In general, EN, FI & NL score relatively low on diversity and inclusiveness

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance,
3= moderately important 4= important,
5= highly important

Parents – Parental involvement

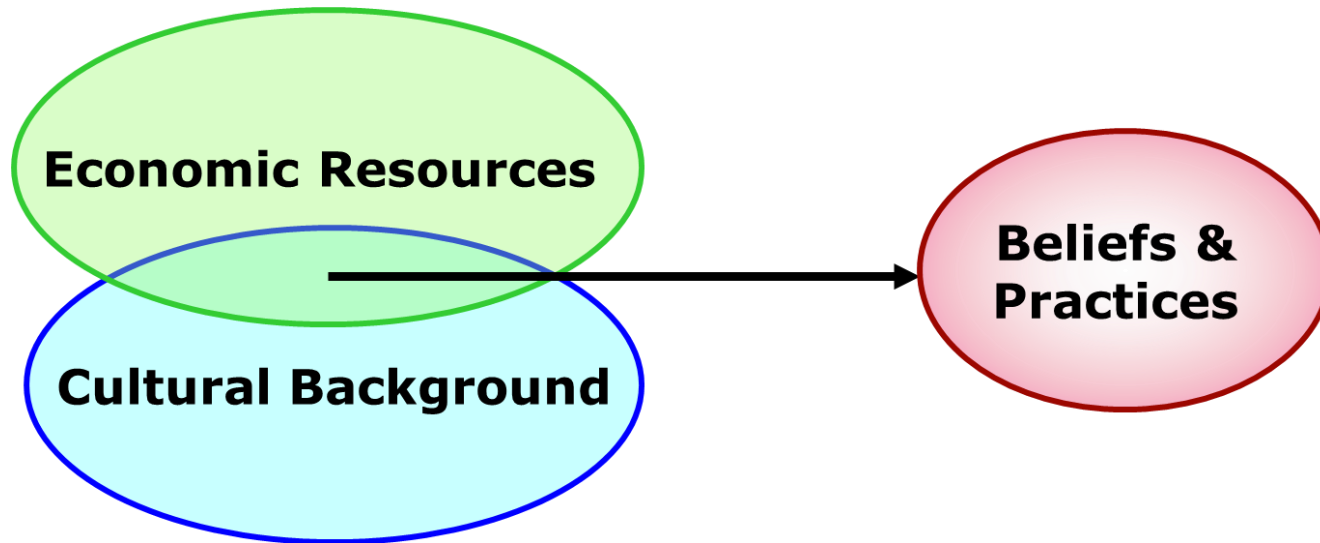


* Parental contact is considered highly important in all countries.

* Parental active involvement is rated as (moderately) important (EN lowest).

1= unimportant, 2= of little importance,
3= moderately important 4= important,
5= highly important

What's next...



Are the differences *between countries* smaller than the differences *within countries*?

- Can we explain some of the *within* country variation? (SES, minority)
- Are these associations comparable *between* the different countries?

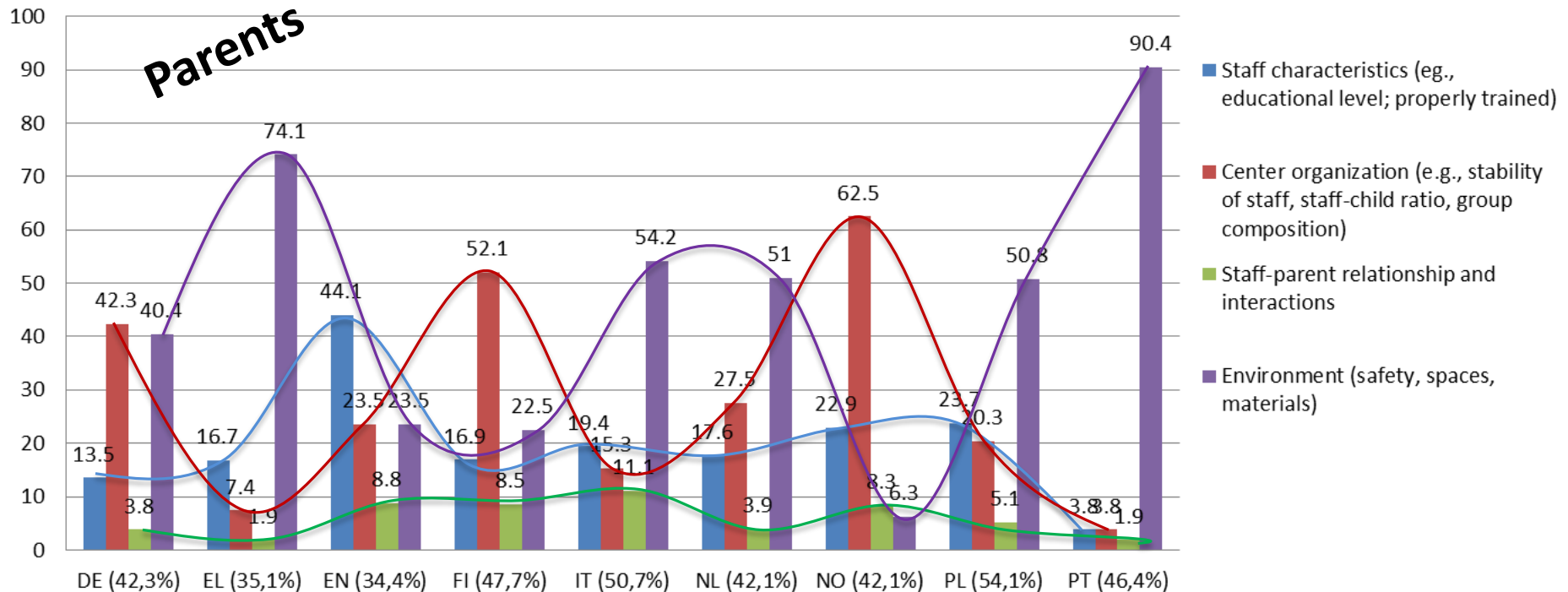


What's next...

Qualitative analysis: “What aspects of an ECEC-setting do you think are most important to foster children’s well-being?” <3 years & 3-6 years.

Structural quality 0-3 years

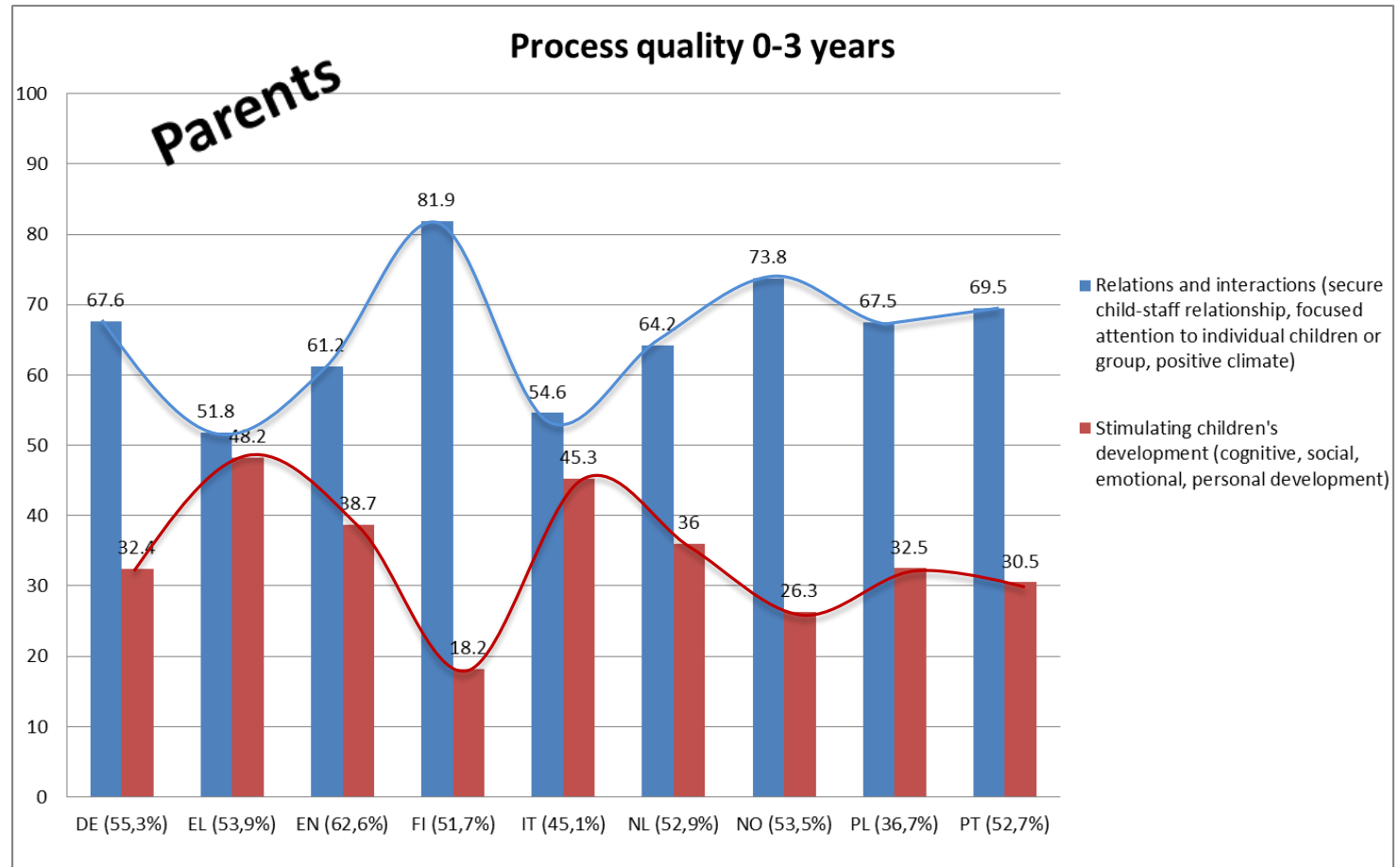
Parents





What's next...

Open question: What aspects of an ECEC-setting do you think are most important to foster children's well-being? <3 years & 3-6 years



To conclude...(1-2)

- Parents across countries have a common language for addressing important developmental-educational goals (especially for the 3-6)
- Although many commonalities across countries, we do see some differences in priorities (similar for parents and staff in the same country)
- Parents and staff emphasize “soft skills” as the most important skills for both the <3 year and 3-6 year old children
- There is some variation regarding the “hard” pre-academic skills, both between countries and stakeholders (parents and staff)
- The importance of diversity and inclusiveness is contested in some countries. (Both parents and staff in EN, FI, NL (and DE) state that this is less important)

To conclude... (2-2)

- Low C-C ratio more important than stable *group*, BUT stable *team* is highly important (both staff and parents in all countries)
- Variation between countries in importance staff educational level
- Staff exhibit some differences in emphasis regarding 'freedom of choice of activities' and 'small group activities', BUT all are seen as important
- There are some differences in whether staff thinks 'preparing for school' is important
- Parents both stress a positive child-teacher and child-group relationship
- Parental contact is considered highly important by parents in all countries, parental active involvement somewhat less.

To take home...

Based on the many commonalities, it seems possible to consider a comprehensive European perspective on ECEC quality. However, there should be room for differences in emphasis across countries when developing policies

“Every man/child is in certain respects

... like all other men

... like some other men

... and like no other man”

Kluckhohn & Murray (1955)

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