

TRANSATLANTIC FORUM  
ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS



# Early Childhood Education and Services for all!

**Policy Recommendations  
Derived from the Forum**





## INTRODUCTION

### **The Importance of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for All – and Particularly for Vulnerable Populations**

The ability to access and benefit from high-quality ECEC has long-term positive effects for both individuals and for society. From an economic perspective, several studies demonstrate that the cost of inaction outweighs by far the cost of investment in high-quality early childhood education for all. International studies have put forward the minimum figure of one percent of GDP as a benchmark for the level of annual investment needed to obtain and deliver high-quality ECEC services for all.<sup>1</sup>

A recent study funded by the Bertelsmann Foundation shows that in Germany, education reforms could bring returns up to €2.81 trillion by 2090—more than its current GDP.<sup>2</sup> Evidence from the United States, meanwhile, shows that for every dollar invested in a child, returns vary between US\$2.50 and US\$16.<sup>3</sup> The same report indicates that in Ireland, returns would range between €4 and €7 for every €1 invested in ECEC.<sup>4</sup>

1. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Ireland). (2013). "Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy."
2. Woessmann, L. & Piopiunik, M. (2013). What Inadequate Education Costs Society, Bertelsmann Stiftung. [http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-6FE66C6A-8C78859C/bst\\_engl/hs.xml/93522.htm](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-6FE66C6A-8C78859C/bst_engl/hs.xml/93522.htm).
3. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Ireland), "Right from the Start."
4. Ibid.

For both individual children and their families, longitudinal studies demonstrate that participation in high-quality ECEC programmes has a long-lasting impact on educational outcomes and attainment, as well as on their overall social, emotional, and physical development; in short, their well-being. These benefits are even stronger for vulnerable or marginalized children,<sup>5</sup> and studies in the US show that high-quality early learning can be especially beneficial for children with a migrant background, particularly those who speak a minority language at home<sup>6</sup> and children living in poverty.

Not only for the future, but also for the here and now, high-quality ECEC supports the holistic development of young children and offers them a safe and stimulating environment as a first encounter with the world outside the family. It also offers them a social space in which they can engage with their peers. Parents can benefit as well: ECEC provision can be their partner in education and offer them support, as they are their child's first educators. ECEC can also serve as a meeting place for parents to engage with their peers and exchange and share their experiences and concerns.

Finally, it needs to be said that early childhood services alone are not sufficient to address issues of poverty: high-quality programming in early childhood is not sufficient, on its own, to address the challenges facing low-income and migrant families. High-quality services for children must be embedded in other structural supports and anti-poverty measures including employment, social security, housing, and, for instance, literacy and language skills and workforce training.

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5. Lazzari, A. & Vandenbroeck, M. (2013). Accessibility of ECEC for children from ethnic minority and low-income families. <http://www.calameo.com/read/001774295780e9c56e158?authid=lunFhaVetzQ6>. Melhuish, E. (2013). Early Childhood Education & Care & Long-term Effects. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-1\\_PP/Edward\\_Melhuish.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-1_PP/Edward_Melhuish.pdf). Sylva, K. (2016). The Effects of Early Education in England. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7\\_PP/Kathy-Sylva.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7_PP/Kathy-Sylva.pdf).
  6. Park, M. (2013). Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care Services in the United States for Children of Immigrants of Diverse Origin. <http://www.calameo.com/read/001774295243ac83c66da?authid=A6uZKUnfA4NZ>.

## Necessary Requirements for ECEC to Achieve a Positive Impact

In order to achieve these positive effects on both the individual and societal levels, there are important prerequisites for successful ECEC provision – particularly for children of low-income or migrant backgrounds. These were all discussed during the Forum meetings and are also incorporated in the European Quality Framework for ECEC (see page 6).<sup>7</sup>

Substantial variations in the policies of Member States in funding (public, private, and mixed), staff qualification requirements, attendance, types and organisation of ECEC services indicate that ideal conditions for access and other aspects of quality are not currently being met. In many European countries, a shortage of affordable and high-quality provision persists, particularly for younger children aged 0-3. There may also be gaps in provisions of paid maternity, paternity, or parental leave and barriers to entitlements for children to free or affordable ECEC.<sup>8</sup> All of these factors are likely to affect access for the most vulnerable families.

Overall, only 10 Member States reach the Barcelona target of 33 percent enrollment for 0-3 year olds, though attendance increases to about 90 percent in several Member States for children from ages 3 through the start of compulsory education. In terms of ensuring a minimum baseline of quality, in the majority of Member States, qualification requirements remain very low or non-existent for those caring for children from 0-3 years old, though for children between 3-6 years old most Member States require a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) to teach pre-school.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Milotay, N. (2016). From research to policy: the case of early childhood and care. In M. Vandenbroeck, M. Urban & J. Peeters. *Pathways to Professional Early Childhood Education* (pp.119-131). London, New York: Routledge.
  8. Moss, P. (2012). "Caring and Learning together: exploring the relationship between parental leave and early childhood education and care." In *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 47, Issue 4, December, p484. 15.
  9. For an overview of the different systems, we refer to the results of the CoRe study which presents the different rules and regulations present in different European countries. See <http://www.vbjk.be/en/node/3559>, where the reports can be downloaded.

## European Quality Framework for ECEC

### Accessibility

1. Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children
2. Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion, and embraces diversity

### The ECEC workforce

3. Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role
4. Supportive working conditions, including professional leadership, which create opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork, and cooperation with parents

### Curriculum

5. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values, and approaches which enables children to reach their full potential in a holistic way
6. A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues, and parents and to reflect on their own practice

### Monitoring and evaluation

7. Monitoring and evaluation that produces information at the relevant local, regional, and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice
8. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child

### Governance arrangements

9. Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations
10. Legislation, regulation, and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders

## Barriers to Accessing High-Quality ECEC

In both the US and Europe, children from low-income and/or immigrant families face barriers to accessing high-quality ECEC. According to a UNICEF study, they often access ECEC services at lower rates than their peers, and when they are enrolled, they tend to participate in lower-quality services.<sup>10</sup>

A number of structural barriers for children from low-income and migrant families may contribute to these disparities:

- › **Poverty and the cost of ECEC service provisions:** Limited public funds generate waiting lists or exclusion, as many low-income or immigrant parents cannot afford the full costs of ECEC.<sup>11</sup>
- › **Lack of networks and access to information about ECEC provisions:** Many disadvantaged and vulnerable families have smaller informal networks and less knowledge about the functioning and availability of ECEC services.<sup>12</sup>
- › **Shortage or inflexibility of provision:** In the case of insufficient places, priority may be given, for instance, to working parents. Low-income parents often work irregular hours and require flexible operating hours in order to utilize ECEC services, which is rarely the case in publicly funded systems.<sup>13</sup>

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10. UNICEF. (2008). The child care transition. A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries. Innocenti Report Card 8. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. [http://www.unicef.or.jp/library/pdf/labo\\_rc8.pdf](http://www.unicef.or.jp/library/pdf/labo_rc8.pdf) 18.

11. Park, Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care Services.

12. Vandenbroeck M., Lazzari, A. et al. (2013) Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children from ethnic minority and low-income families. <http://www.calameo.com/read/001774295780e9c56e158?authid=lunFhaVetzQ6>.

13. Ibid.

- ▶ **Household characteristics – parental educational attainment and employment:** Parents', and in particular mothers' levels of educational attainment, affect the educational outcomes of their children as well as their children's preschool participation.<sup>14</sup> Children of low-income or migrant background are more likely to have parents with lower educational qualifications. Though these children would benefit most from high-quality ECEC, they are less likely to be enrolled depending on the country and entitlements.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ **Services are not always responsive to diversity or relevant for all communities:** Children and their families who come with different cultural values, beliefs, languages, and backgrounds may feel alienated by monocultural and monolingual ECEC provision and approaches or feel that services do not meet their needs or expectations.

Ultimately, high-quality ECEC services must not only be accessible, affordable, and available, but also desirable and relevant to all families and responsive to changing demographics and evolving needs in order to be successful.

The recommendations that follow are intended to provide a comprehensive set of guiding principles for policymaking at the local, national, and federal levels, as well as for funders and other stakeholders, and are based on the knowledge generated from the TFIEY's convenings. While these recommendations are focused on issues in ECEC that may particularly impact children in a low-income or migrant context, they are considerations that can benefit all young children and families in ECEC systems across the EU and US regardless of their background. Investing in inclusive, high-quality ECEC is a win-win situation: for all children and their families and for society.

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14. Park, Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care Services.

15. Ibid, 28. Vandenbroeck, Lazzarri et al., Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Improve Access to ECEC Services

**Access to ECEC policies that promote equitable access to ECEC services and ensure a fairer (re-)distribution of programs are essential in reducing barriers for low-income and migrant children. In addition to a more general implementation of every child's right to access, this can also lead to increased school readiness and decreased achievement gaps. This is particularly important for migrant and other disadvantaged young children, who have been found to draw even greater benefits from high-quality ECEC provision in comparison with their peers.<sup>16</sup>**

- ▶ Utilization rates of ECEC services differ heavily among countries, with Belgium being one of the highest worldwide (99% of all children aged 3-5 use maternity school)<sup>17</sup>. Differences in the utilization rates, both in the EU and US, often stem from the availability and costs of such services. Therefore, policies that reduce the costs of high-quality ECEC and increase the availability of such programs, particularly in underserved areas, are critical to expanding access. Linking ECEC fees to parent income, for instance, helps to address financial obstacles to participation, particularly for the lower middle class, who are often excluded from voucher programs for the poorest families.<sup>18</sup> Since low-income families often experience lower mobility than higher-income families, it is also vital that quality ECEC programs are located in neighborhoods where these populations live.<sup>19</sup>

16. Park, Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care Services, 5.

17. OECD (2014), OECD Family database, p.3, [http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3\\_2\\_Enrolment\\_in\\_childcare\\_and\\_preschools.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_2_Enrolment_in_childcare_and_preschools.pdf)

18. Vandenbroeck, Lazzari et al., Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), 6.

19. Vandenbroeck, Lazzari et al., Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), 4.

- ▶ ECEC interventions should be meaningful and accessible as early as possible, particularly for children with poverty or migration backgrounds, as research demonstrates that a child's first few years are particularly critical for healthy educational and socio-emotional development.<sup>20</sup>
- ▶ A combination of universal services and targeted approaches to foster political support and provide realistic funding options through, for example, a policy of progressive universalism, is considered to be an effective strategy to ensure access to ECEC services for all while avoiding service segregation, which is detrimental to low-income and minority populations. ECEC programs with a socio-economic mix have been shown to be particularly beneficial for disadvantaged children.<sup>21</sup> Under the Flemish education system, for example, a baseline level of funding is allotted for every child, with additional funding provided based on specific risk factors, including low household income, low maternal educational attainment, and a home language other than Dutch.
- ▶ By building a broad coalition of support among low-income as well as middle class populations, high-quality ECEC is more likely to be maintained as a social and political priority even through times of economic austerity and frequent administrative and political changes.

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20. Bonati, M. (2013). Matching Vulnerable Children Needs and Health Services. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2\\_PP/Maurizio-Bonati.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2_PP/Maurizio-Bonati.pdf). 27-8.

21. Melhuish, Early Childhood Education & Care, 15.



## Develop Competences, Knowledge and Attitudes of ECEC Professionals

The level and quality of preparation and training of early childhood professionals are key factors in determining the overall quality of services offered. Moreover, specific competences, knowledge, and attitudes are needed for teachers and other professionals to work successfully with families from low-income and migrant backgrounds, making ECEC services more inclusive, accessible, meaningful and valuable for vulnerable and diverse populations. A combination of effective initial training and continuous professional development across the early childhood field is necessary to ensure teacher competences are adequate to meet the increasingly complex needs of diverse classrooms.

- ▶ Working effectively with families with a migration or low-income background requires additional competences and knowledge for ECEC professionals, including strategies to welcome diversity, respect different family backgrounds, values, and beliefs, understand first and second language development processes, reach out to hard-to-reach communities, build trusting relationships based on mutual respect, and cooperate in full partnership with other organizations, services, and parents.<sup>22</sup> An emphasis on developing cultural competencies and best practices should be part of both pre-service and in-service training in ECEC programs.<sup>23</sup>
- ▶ Continuous professional development is as important as a high initial training (60 percent of practitioners should be trained at a bachelor level). Continuous professional development initiatives, which are succeeding in improving the quality of ECEC services and children's experiences, are characterised by the following key success factors:<sup>24</sup> they are based on a coherent pedagogical framework or learning curriculum that builds upon research and addresses the needs of disadvantaged and poor families. Practitioners must be actively involved in the process of improving

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22. Lazzari, A., Vandenbroeck, M., and Peeters, J. (2013). The early years workforce: A review of European research and good practices on working with children from poor and migrant families. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2\\_InputPaper/The-early-years-workforce\\_European-perspective.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2_InputPaper/The-early-years-workforce_European-perspective.pdf). 6.

23. National Education Association. (2008). Promoting Educators' Cultural Competence To Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students. [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB13\\_CulturalCompetence08.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB13_CulturalCompetence08.pdf).

24. Peeters, J., Lazzari, A., Cameron, C., Budginaite, I., Hauari H., Peleman, B., and Siarova, H. (2015). *Early Childhood Care: working conditions, training and quality-A systematic review*. Dublin: Eurofound.

educational practice and continuous professional development must be focused on practice-based learning, with teams supported by a mentor or coach who facilitates practitioners' reflection during paid non-contact time.<sup>25</sup>

- ▶ Hiring a diverse staff, such as those with a migration background or experience living in poverty, can facilitate access and service provision for families with similar backgrounds; ideally, a staff that reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the young child population is desirable. However, given workforce constraints and the rise of super-diverse classrooms, all staff, multilingual or otherwise, must be trained to work sensitively and responsively in diverse ECEC provision.



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25. Peeters, J., De Kimpe, C., and Brandt, S. (2016). The competent early childhood education and care system in the city of Ghent: A long-term investment in continuous professional development. In M. Vandebroek, M. Urban & J. Peeters. *Pathways to Professional Early Childhood Education* (pp.57-71). London, New York: Routledge.

## Well-designed ECEC Curricula

**A holistic view of learning and education—including not only cognitive and academic development but also healthy socio-emotional development and identity formation—is necessary in approaching the issues of both curricula and workforce development, particularly for vulnerable communities. In many countries, both curricula and teacher preparation maintain a heavy focus on academic success and related outcomes for children, which minimizes the opportunity to offer a safe setting to negotiate what and how young children in a context of diversity could and should be learning and what actually supports their holistic development.**

- ▶ A holistic understanding of child development, including not only learning and academic outcomes, but also overall well-being, positive identity formation, and inclusion, are critical for all young children’s healthy development as well as in achieving desired societal outcomes of cohesion and inclusiveness.
- ▶ Well-designed curricula can help to reduce exclusion and improve mutual understanding among different communities. Effective curricula respect the different backgrounds of all children, including those from low-income and migrant families, preferably in a socially-mixed setting.<sup>26</sup>
- ▶ ECEC curricula should be responsive to children’s diverse needs and capabilities, respecting children’s backgrounds and experiences. An integrated, general curriculum, rather than separate curricula for children from certain backgrounds, is vital to ensuring equitable outcomes. Finally, as far as possible, curricula should be defined through a participatory approach and in dialogue with parents and communities in a reciprocal relationship of respect and mutual trust.

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26. Bonati, M. (2013). Matching Vulnerable Children Needs and Health Services: Strategies and Contents. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2\\_PP/Maurizio-Bonati.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-2_PP/Maurizio-Bonati.pdf), 9.

## Expand Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness in ECEC Programs

**Policies that encourage the development of native language competencies and the preservation of cultural heritage are needed to ensure program quality, equality of opportunity, and broader social integration. Most traditional monolingual language policies neglect growing research on the importance of children’s first language to their emerging cognitive and literacy development. Moreover, preservation and celebration of diverse cultures help develop social and emotional capacities and facilitate inclusive and tolerant ECEC environments.**

- ▶ Prevailing—and often inaccurate—beliefs among practitioners about second language acquisition and myths about the superiority of monolingual practices demonstrate a need to accelerate training both in research findings and effective practices.<sup>27</sup>
- ▶ Creative uses of students’ own native cultural and linguistic capabilities are central to many innovative program initiatives that tap into and utilize student strengths. This strategy can serve multiple goals, such as developing plurilingual competencies in Ireland’s primary school model<sup>28</sup> or building tolerance and mutual understanding as in Northern Ireland’s Pilot Programme.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Van Avermaet, P. (2015). Inequality, inequity and language in the early years. There are no simple recipes! [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6\\_PP/Piet-Van-Avermaet.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6_PP/Piet-Van-Avermaet.pdf).

28. Little, D. and Kirwan, D. (2015). One Irish primary school’s response to the challenge of diversity. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6\\_PP/David-Little--Dirdre-Kirwan.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6_PP/David-Little--Dirdre-Kirwan.pdf)

29. Fitzpatrick, S. (2015) From Conflict to Peace-building the Power of an Early Childhood Initiative in Northern Ireland. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6\\_PP/Siobh%C3%A1n-Fitzpatrick.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6_PP/Siobh%C3%A1n-Fitzpatrick.pdf).

Shohamy, E. (2015). Programs as opportunities for reconciliation. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6\\_PP/Elana-Shohamy.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6_PP/Elana-Shohamy.pdf).

- At the state and local policy levels, native linguistic competencies can be included in expansion and quality improvement efforts to gain a more holistic understanding of young children's development, as exemplified in Illinois' inclusion of home language instruction in their transitional models and quality and certification systems.<sup>30</sup>
- Promoting native language development and multicultural learning environments for all children promotes inclusion and equality, avoids stereotyping bias, and the negative social and developmental consequences of separation and segregation of subgroups of children from their peers.



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30. Hernandez, R. (2015). Early Childhood Services for English Language Learners Approaches from Illinois. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6\\_PP/Reyna-Hernandez.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-6_PP/Reyna-Hernandez.pdf).

## Foster Family Involvement

**Early childhood programs, particularly in the context of increasingly diverse populations, must intentionally involve parents and communities in order to support young children’s holistic development. As parents are the first educators, they need to be acknowledged as such and be included as partners in program design and in their children’s learning and development. They must be welcomed and invited to engage in this partnership in a meaningful and respectful manner.**

- › ECEC professionals require specific training and competencies to understand how to engage effectively with parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds and learn to recognize that parents and families enter into programs with varying experiences and expectations of what their relationship with staff and with their children’s development should be.
- › Barriers to meaningful parent engagement for low-income and migrant families can include a lack of language proficiency as well as limited functional literacy and levels of educational attainment as well as the feeling of (not) being welcomed, not knowing what ECEC actually is, or having diverse views on education that can make systems navigation and communication with ECEC staff particularly challenging.<sup>31</sup> At a minimum, translation and interpretation provisions are necessary to reach parents who lack host-country language skills, and care should be taken to ensure that program information is made accessible to all.
- › A strengths-based approach that builds off of parents’ skills, such as bilingualism, is important to the inclusion of families in ECEC services.
- › In addition to traditional parent engagement efforts, provisions that empower parents to successfully navigate ECEC systems and advocate for their children can be particularly important for communities that may otherwise lack a political voice. Initiatives that seek to provide training for parents to become leaders in their

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31. Park, M. and McHugh, M. (2014). Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs, Addressing Barriers of Literacy, Culture, and Systems Knowledge. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/ParentEngagement-FINAL.pdf>.

community and serve as advocates on a range of issues, such as the Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Illinois<sup>32</sup> and BOInK<sup>33</sup> in the Netherlands, can aid in advancing ECEC for underserved communities in the local policy agenda.

- ▶ Given the strong link between parental educational attainment, household poverty levels, and children’s future outcomes, two-generation strategies that seek to serve parents alongside their children are an impactful approach that can be particularly effective in promoting young children’s successful development and breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty, and can be a unique opportunity to draw parents into services—particularly for migrant families who would benefit from opportunities to access social services and integrate into their communities.<sup>34</sup>



32. For more information, visit: [www.lsna.net](http://www.lsna.net).

33. Jellesma, G. (2014). Parent Engagement in ECEC Provision and Policy. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3\\_PP/Gjalt-Jellesma.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3_PP/Gjalt-Jellesma.pdf).

34. Kağıtçıbaşı, C. (2014). The Turkish Early Enrichment Project. Long-Term Effects, Policy and Applications: Academic Performance. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3\\_PP/Cigdem-Ka%C4%9F%C4%B1t%C3%A7%C4%B1ba%C5%9F%C4%B1.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3_PP/Cigdem-Ka%C4%9F%C4%B1t%C3%A7%C4%B1ba%C5%9F%C4%B1.pdf). De Mey, W. (2014). Two generation programs: a literature review. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3\\_InputPaper/Two-generations-programs.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-3_InputPaper/Two-generations-programs.pdf).

## Strengthen Integration of Services

**Multidimensional approaches are needed in ECEC to address child poverty as it poses a multi-faceted, persistent, intergenerational, and both material and immaterial problem, and integration of services in early childhood can be critical in providing comprehensive and aligned support to young children and their families. However, policy segregation at all levels within many early childhood programs currently results in scattered and siloed services that fail to address the holistic needs of young children and their families.<sup>35</sup> Fragmented services present a challenge and create additional barriers for children from migrant and low-income families who may have more difficulty in navigating available provisions and accessing resources and, hence, require additional support.**

- ▶ Several different approaches to achieving the integration and alignment of services may be pursued depending on the context. A public debate engaging the commitment and support of all key stakeholders is needed. Additionally, the process must take account of context, community, local connectivity, and local decision-making in identifying an appropriate strategy.
- ▶ In some cases, as in Ireland, the national government can undertake a planned and centralized approach to alignment across services, encouraging collaboration and cooperation.<sup>36</sup>
- ▶ A bottom-up approach, as modeled in Switzerland at the city level (Primano program) and national level (Primokiz program)<sup>37</sup> that helps services organize themselves working with consultants, can also influence both horizontal and vertical alignment.

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35. Vandenbroeck, M. (2015). Integration, continuity and alignment. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5\\_PP/Michel-Vandenbroeck.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5_PP/Michel-Vandenbroeck.pdf).

36. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Ireland). Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020. [http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp\\_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf](http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf).

37. Program Primokiz and Jacobs Foundation (2015). [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5\\_PP/Philine-Zimmerli.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5_PP/Philine-Zimmerli.pdf).

- › In other instances, exemplary services and programs emerge inspired by a place-based need and/or innovative leaders, and generate development of new policies and strategies through their success with their local community. Pen Green<sup>38</sup> in the United Kingdom is one example of such a program that has promoted collaboration and alignment.
- › Early childhood services alone are not sufficient to address issues of poverty: high-quality programming in early childhood is not sufficient, on its own, to address the challenges facing low-income and migrant families.
- › The transition from home<sup>39</sup> to school is seen as a transition for the whole family, not just the child. Effective transition approaches, therefore, need to take families and the community into account. With the increasing heterogeneity of today's families, parental involvement and partnership with ECE and schools is crucial to adjust (pre-) school services to ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and other forms of diversity.

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38. Whalley, M. (2015). Integrated Family Services and Early Childhood Services. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5\\_PP/Margy-Whalley.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5_PP/Margy-Whalley.pdf).

39. Neuman, M. (2000). Hand in Hand: Improving the Links Between ECEC and Schools in OECD Countries. <http://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/08/04/hand-hand-improving-links-between-ecec-and-schools-oecd-cou>.

## Use Monitoring and Evaluation for quality assurance

Centralized systems to regulate and monitor ECEC programs are needed to ensure that all children receive high-quality ECEC.<sup>40</sup> Designing and implementing appropriate monitoring and evaluation as well as quality assurance depends on the type of provision in question, the desired policy vision and goals, and the means made available to achieve them.<sup>41</sup> In order to design and implement evaluations that can meaningfully inform ECEC policy as it relates to children from diverse backgrounds, the target populations must be fully identified and understood from the outset. Cultural and linguistic biases must be implicitly considered in the definition of quality and of desired child outcomes driving the evaluation. Moreover, the context in which the evaluation is being carried out must be clearly understood in order to avoid a generalization of positive outcomes from one situation to another which may be irrelevant.

- ▶ In evaluating the effectiveness of programs for children from migrant and low-income backgrounds, evaluators must consider the baseline or benchmark to which these children are being compared. Are they being compared, for instance, to a “gold standard” based on white middle class children, to similar families not benefiting from the provision in question, or is an effort being made to consider the holistic development of each individual child?
- ▶ Arriving at a shared understanding of the definition of quality, such as the comprehensive concept of quality in the European Quality Framework<sup>42</sup>, is a critical first step in designing a successful evaluation. From this it follows that being explicit about the vision, values, and purposes as well as of the uses that will be made of the results will have an effect on the outcomes for all involved.

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40. Vandenbroeck, Lazarri et al., Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

41. Vandenbroeck, M. (2015). Integration, continuity and alignment. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5\\_PP/Michel-Vandenbroeck.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-5_PP/Michel-Vandenbroeck.pdf).

42. Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, European Commission (2014). Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf).

- ▶ In addition, in designing monitoring and evaluation approaches, “child outcomes” and how and by whom they are defined must be clearly understood. This includes deciding on the key areas of focus and how to measure them. For instance, defining outcomes only in terms of “school readiness” with too narrow an academic definition should be avoided.<sup>43</sup> The impacts of ECEC provision on aspects such as the quality of relationships, children’s engagement in their learning process, and the image and well-being of the child are all factors that influence the ways in which monitoring and evaluation approaches should be developed and undertaken.
- ▶ As much as possible, evaluations should be undertaken through a participatory approach, including family and staff at all levels, in order to avoid making assumptions about the needs and desires of different stakeholders. Relevant decision-makers must also be included in dialogue throughout the process to ensure that the information obtained from monitoring and evaluation is relevant to existing policy opportunities and are put to use.
- ▶ It is important to bear in mind that the situations of families living in poverty change and families move in and out of a target group that may not remain stable for long periods, which raises issues about looking at longer-term effects in an evolving system.

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43. Bennett, J. (2012). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Findings from a European literature review and two case studies. Study commissioned by the Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-childhood\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-childhood_en). See also Melhuish, Early Childhood Education & Care.

## Potential Roles for Philanthropy and the Business Community

**In addition to the central role and responsibility of federal and local governments, other actors such as the philanthropic community, researchers, as well as the private sector and business community, have an important role to play in advancing the accessibility and quality of early childhood services for all, and particularly for low-income and migrant families.**

- ▶ Philanthropic and not-for-profit organizations can play an important role in the pursuit of a better understanding of “what works” in ECEC, particularly for low-income and migrant populations, by raising awareness and building knowledge in the context of circumstances that are challenging for policymakers.<sup>44</sup>
- ▶ The business community can play an influential role in advocating for increased funding for ECEC provision—ReadyNation,<sup>45</sup> for example, is an initiative that has been successful in mobilizing the private sector to support ECEC expansion through messaging on the importance of ECEC for the business community.
- ▶ The private sector, in some instances, can also offer alternative funding mechanisms in ECEC through a system of Social Impact Bonds, in which venture capital is brought in to provide resources to expand early learning opportunities in instances where the state is unwilling or unable to do so. Through such a model, as demonstrated in the case of Utah,<sup>46</sup> investors take the initial risk of loaning money for program provision, and are later repaid with interest by the state once program targets are achieved and return on investment has been collected. Once success has been proven, the hope is that policymakers themselves will demonstrate more of a readiness to invest public funds in the effort.

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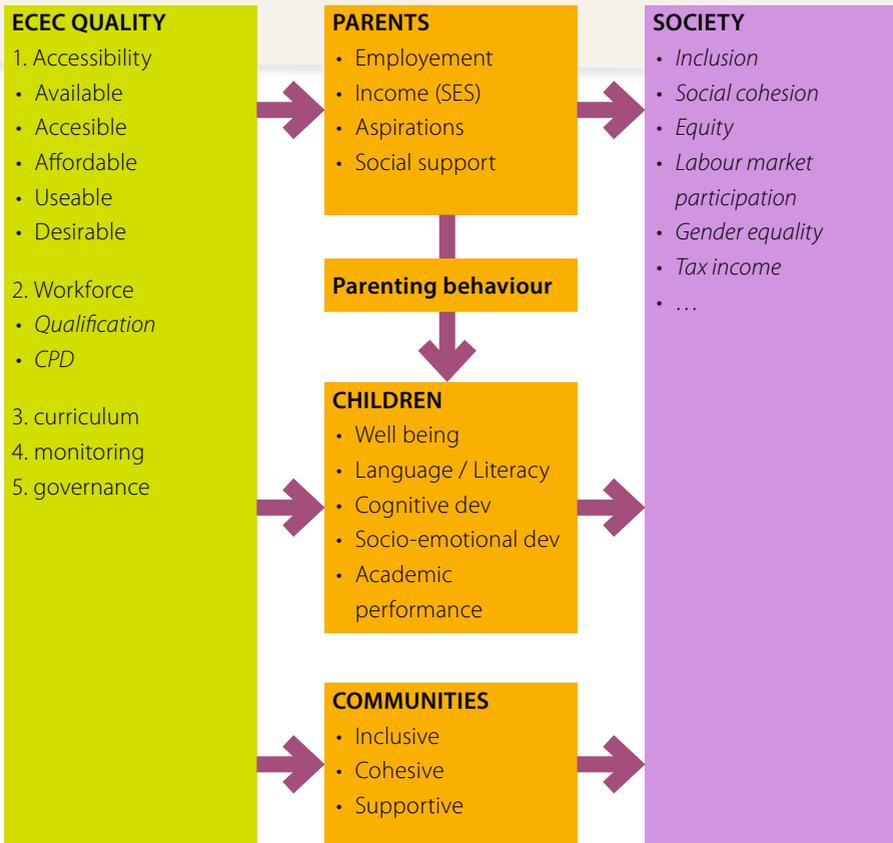
44. See the Foundation for Child Development’s Young Scholar Program for an example of long-term field-building in research focused on young children of immigrants.

45. Watson, S. (2016). Business Champions for Early Childhood: Supporting the Global Workforce of Today—and Tomorrow. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7\\_PP/Sara-Watson.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7_PP/Sara-Watson.pdf).

46. Crim, B. (2016). Utah’s High Quality Preschool Initiative, Using Pay for Success/Social Impact Bonds to Expand Preschool to Low-Income Families. [http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7\\_PP/Bill-Crim.pdf](http://www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-7_PP/Bill-Crim.pdf).

# CONCLUSION

The agenda for the improvement and expansion of high quality ECEC policies and programmes is both urgent and extensive, requiring many primary issues to be covered simultaneously, which demands the shared responsibility of several stakeholders as illustrated in this scheme<sup>47</sup>:



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Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Ghent University

47. As drafted by Michel Vandenbroeck (2016), VBJK Centre for Innovation in the Early Years – Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Ghent University.

Ensuring equitable access and high-quality ECEC provisions is a public responsibility that can contribute to reaching several key EU2020 targets, including increasing employment, improving education outcomes, reducing early school leaving, and reducing poverty and exclusion. Moreover, addressing issues of access and quality in ECEC also lays the foundations for citizenship and a successful, inclusive society. It is vital for all children to learn, from a very young age, to be comfortable with the growing diversity of our communities--particularly in light of the challenging climate and in many cases growing divisiveness currently evident in many communities. Local, national, and federal EU authorities, in partnership with other stakeholders, including parents, all have the opportunity to embrace the importance of the early years as a unique and vitally important period requiring adequate and comprehensive support in order to achieve these objectives. A failure to respond to the current challenges and barriers in early childhood facing so many disadvantaged and marginalized communities will have long-term consequences and costs which far outweigh the cost of thoughtful investments.



## About the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years

The Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY) is an international project convened by the King Baudouin Foundation together with 13 European and American partner foundations.<sup>48</sup> Conducted over the course of a four-year period, this initiative sought to explore policies and programs supporting the early childhood development of children from migrant and low-income families in Europe and the United States. Through seven twice-annual meetings, the Forum brought together a wide range of expert stakeholders including policy-makers, practitioners, philanthropists, and researchers to share and discuss the most recent and compelling research, strategies, policies, and innovations surrounding these issues with the aim of leveraging and scaling up existing knowledge and evidence-based research to make ECEC for children from migrant and low-income families a priority on the political agenda in Europe, the US, and beyond. Each meeting focused on a specific theme relevant to the challenges facing these populations in ECEC, and was organized in collaboration with two operating partners for the initiative, the Belgian VBJK Centre for Innovation in the Early Years in Belgium, and the Migration Policy Institute in the US.

The themes, dates, and locations of each of the TFIEY meetings were as follows, and additional information including background papers, presentations, and output documents can be accessed via the project website.

#	Theme	Date	Location
1	Disparities in Access	January 2013	Ghent, Belgium
2	Curriculum Innovation and Workforce Preparation	July 2013	New York, USA
3	Parent Engagement	January 2014	Lisbon, Portugal
4	Evaluation for Diverse Populations	June 2014	Amsterdam, The Netherlands
5	Integrated Systems	January 2015	Dublin, Ireland
6	Multilingualism, Identity, and Diversity	July 2015	Washington DC, USA
7	Next Steps	February 2016	Turin, Italy

48. Jacobs Foundation (CH), Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (PT), Lego Foundation (DK), Bernard Van Leer Foundation (NL), Universal Education Foundation (NL), Compagnia di San Paolo (IT), Foundation for Child Development (US), California Community Foundation (US), The Atlantic Philanthropies (UK/IE), One America (US), Thrive by Five (US), Fondazione Cariplo (IT), Bertelsmann Stiftung (DE)

# COLOPHON

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