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First report on parents

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

Stakeholders study - Results from the interview and survey study among parents, practitioners and policy representatives in nine European countries

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is part of the project *Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care* (CARE), a collaborative project funded by the European Union to address issues related to quality, inclusiveness, and individual, social, and economic benefits of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe. The project started in January, 2014, and will continue until December, 2016.

The Stakeholders Study is part of work package 6 (WP6) *European Indicators of Quality and Wellbeing in ECEC*. The Study involves parents, ECEC-staff working with children and policy makers in this field, and aims to provide policy relevant and research-based knowledge to support the European Union's efforts towards excellence and equity in early childhood education and care in all member states.

Nine European countries participated in the study: England (EN), Finland (FI), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL) and Portugal (PT). In these countries about 2500 parents, 2172 staff working with children and 277 policy makers responded either to a personal interview (PI) or to an internet-based survey (IBS). The data collection for the current report was conducted between February 1st and May 26th , 2015. Since the date of delivery for this report was June 30th, only the parental data have been analysed and the main aim of this report is to provide a first comprehensive presentation of commonalities and differences in parents' values, beliefs and expectations regarding the quality and curriculum of ECEC-provisions and children's well-being across the participating countries. In addition, this report presents findings on parents' considerations when choosing particular ECEC services and parent's views on the appropriateness of using ECEC for young children.

In a mixed method design both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. A questionnaire was developed that could be used in personal interviews (PI) and in an internet-based survey (IBS). In addition to structured questions, the questionnaire contained also open-ended questions for an in-depth qualitative analysis of stakeholders' views on quality and well-being. The questionnaire has been developed in close cooperation with the partners in the nine countries with a particular focus on the cultural validity of the instrument. The questionnaire was carefully piloted in several rounds in all countries and the pre-final version was translated in all relevant languages and then formally checked by external bilingual professionals to detect remaining difficulties with the translations. The quantitative and qualitative analyses reported in this report were carefully conducted to ensure the cultural validity and cross-country comparability of the findings. Advanced statistical methods were applied for assessing the measurement equivalence across countries of the quantitative data. A grounded theory approach was used for the interpretation and contextualization of the qualitative data across the nine countries. The results until now are satisfactory and provide a valid basis for comparing countries and for evaluating what is common and what differs between the countries.

RESULTS

Research question 1 examined which educational and developmental goals should be fostered most in ECEC according to parents. To be able to make meaningful comparisons of the mean importance ratings, both within countries between age groups, and between countries within age groups, we constructed several confirmatory factor models and assessed their measurement equivalence across countries. Overall, satisfactory measurement equivalence was found. Finding full measurement equivalence is quite unique, pointing to largely shared thinking (using comparable cultural-conceptual frameworks) about early development and learning among parents across the nine countries. This finding may reflect a common tradition of thinking and theorizing on early education and care (see also Sylva et al., 2015, D2.1, regarding European ECEC curricula). Yet, clear differences remain in the mean importance attached to the different domains of development as areas for stimulation in ECEC, which reflect perhaps differences in systems and socioeconomic circumstances. In addition, several items did not fit into the constructed scales and warrant further investigation.

In general, all developmental goals – interpersonal skills, interest in diversity, pre-academic skills, learning related skills, physical-motor skills, emotion regulation, and personal learning attitudes – increase in importance with age. The increases in the importance of children's emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes were similar across countries. For all countries, we saw the strongest increase in importance of stimulating children's pre-academic skills, followed by stimulating children's learning-related skills.

The average (unstandardized) differences in developmental goals between countries were smaller for children between 3 and 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age. A possible explanation for this fact could be that this age-range is more fully covered by ECEC in all countries. For both age-ranges, the largest differences between countries are found for children's pre-academic 'hard' skills. Whereas parents in Greece, Norway, and Portugal score relatively high across both age ranges, parents in Germany and Finland score relatively low.

The patterns of the relative importance of developmental goals are rather similar across countries, especially for the more 'soft' skills, which are deemed highly important in all countries for both age ranges. Within countries there was more diversity in the importance of developmental goals for children younger than 3 years of age. The most prominent difference was that parents attach higher importance ratings to 'soft' interpersonal, emotional and personal skills than to 'hard' pre-academic skills as areas that should be fostered in ECEC. This difference was less strong for children between age 3 and 6, although it was still apparent in some countries (e.g., Finland and Germany).

The finding that there is more diversity in importance ratings for younger children than for older children suggests a lack of shared conceptual framework that addresses the specifics of development and learning in the very early years. This is in line with another finding from the CARE project that there are less curricula for the below threes.

Research question 2 focused on the importance that parents attach to different structural quality indicators: Aspects of the physical environment (e.g., safety, outdoor space), organizational aspects (e.g., group size, stability of group) and staff characteristics (e.g., educational level, stability team). Several items which are generally regarded as indicative of structural quality were selected. Since these items were all quite different from each other and not intended to constitute scales, simple means and standard deviations were compared across the nine countries.

Regarding the physical environment, parents rate all aspects (outdoor play space, supportive environment supporting independence, and varied equipment, toys and materials) at least as important, although the patterns of relative importance diverge somewhat across countries. Having a safe environment is rated as most important by parents in all countries.

Concerning the organizational aspects of ECEC-settings, parents attached most importance to children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases and least importance to having a stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time. However, there was relatively large variation regarding this last issue, indicating low agreement among parents. There are some clear differences between countries with respect to a low adult-child ratio, which is deemed more important by parents in Finland, Greece, and Poland, than in the Netherlands, Portugal and England, although the latter still consider it to be important. Finally, parents in the Southern European countries and Poland attach most importance to healthy food.

Finally, with respect to the selected staff characteristics, parents rate being part of a stable team and providing practical and educational support for parents when needed as more important than having enough relevant work experience and having a high educational level. For these latter two characteristics, there was more variation, and thus less agreement among parents.

Research question 3 focused on parent's opinions on the most important aspects of ECEC for children's well-being and well-becoming through two open-ended questions. Do parents' expressed views on well-being and well-becoming differ between countries? Starting with a grounded theory approach, a list of codes was developed for both open-ended questions. In addition, a first pilot was conducted for 10 parents in five countries: Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Greece, and Norway.

When we compare the quantitative findings from research question one and two and with the first, preliminary qualitative findings of the pilot, we see that the qualitative material highlights more differences between the five countries than the quantitative data. However, as we did not reach saturation for the qualitative analyses yet, we cannot draw any firm conclusions. Nevertheless, this preliminary finding supports our mixed-method approach of including both structured and open-ended questions. Through this approach we may gain a more differentiated and nuanced picture of the aspects that parents think are most important for children's current well-being and future well-becoming.

In general, we see that both in the quantitative and qualitative data, there is a stronger emphasis on children's 'soft' social, emotional and personal skills than on children's 'hard' pre-academic skills. In addition, the high importance of process quality when choosing an ECEC setting is reflected in the qualitative finding that parents mentioned more often process quality characteristics than structural quality characteristics or curriculum (content) quality aspects.

Research question 4 concerned the aspects of ECEC-settings parents consider to be most important when choosing for a particular ECEC provision. Based on theory and exploratory factor analyses, we tried to estimate a five-factor model referring to practical considerations, the availability of ECEC, process quality characteristics, structural quality characteristics, and inclusiveness and diversity policies. Although this theoretical model was confirmed in a fully constrained model for the total group, we ran into many problems when we constrained the model to be equal across countries. We were not surprised by this finding, since there are large differences between national ECEC systems, specifically with regard to practical considerations (e.g., has low costs) and the availability of ECEC (e.g., Is available the whole year, also during holidays). Therefore, we cannot assume that these items are interpreted and considered in exactly the same way across all nine countries (i.e. they are not measurement-invariant). Nevertheless, this finding does not mean that we can never compare parents from different countries on these constructs. Based on an analysis of structural differences in national ECEC systems we can decide which items or constructs would be appropriate to compare for these specific countries.

For three items on process quality and two items on structural group characteristics we could estimate a measurement invariant confirmatory factor model across all countries. In general, we see that parents do not seem to distinguish that much between children younger than 3 years of age and children between 3 and 6 years of age. For process quality characteristics we see that the scores are really high for all countries (average means above 4.60). For structural group characteristics we also see that all average scores are quite high. In general, it is interesting to see that parents think that structural group characteristics are as important for older as for the younger age group.

Finally, **research question 5** examined to what extent parents feel that using ECEC for young children as complementing care in the family and as supporting parents to combine parenthood and work is appropriate. In general, the overall low mean scores indicate that, across countries, parents tend to disagree with statements expressing the inappropriateness of ECEC, the more so for older children. It should be noted though, that we targeted parents with at least one child in ECEC. Parents in Finland, followed by Germany and Poland differentiate more clearly between the two age groups when evaluating the appropriateness of ECEC than parents in other countries, such as England, Netherlands and Italy. Regarding cross-country differences for younger children, Netherlands and Norway think that ECEC is least inappropriate, less so than Poland, Greece, and England. For older children, Norway, Finland and Germany think that ECEC is least inappropriate, less so than Poland, Greece, and England.

A final interesting observation is that the standard deviations are larger in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland for younger children, and that they are still quite large for Germany and the Netherlands for the older children.

These findings indicate that in these countries there is more variation in how parents think about the appropriateness of ECEC for children than in other countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results summarized above, we formulated some first, preliminary recommendations:

1. It appears to be possible to define quality and curriculum indicators at an overall European level, at least as far as based on the shared understanding that was found in this study. Nevertheless, the definition of bench marks or criteria should respect cultural differences that may relate to systems differences, socioeconomic circumstances, coverage issues, et cetera.

2. It is important to create a stronger shared understanding of early development of the younger children, for which developmental science can give us important inputs. Yet, preferences of parents, and local and national traditions may remain, especially regarding the benchmarks/criteria and the role division between ECEC-settings and the family.

3. Overall, parents attach higher value to soft cognitive, social, emotional and personal skills (i.e., a more broad/holistic development) whereas an emphasis on academics seems less valued, especially for younger children. The emphases of parents do align with recent insights from developmental science and with from studies examining the long-term effects and social and economic benefits from ECEC programs. This is an important message for both national and EU educational policy.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the project *Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (CARE)*, funded by the European Union within the 7th Framework program (Theme [SSH.2013.3.2-2] Early childhood education and care: promoting quality for individual, social and economic benefits).

Reliable information on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services in European countries is a crucial prerequisite to tackle the challenges European countries are currently facing in the field of ECEC. Several Workpackages in CARE will provide new, policy relevant knowledge regarding a variety of aspects of European ECEC-systems. Focusing on center-based provisions, and distinguishing between children younger than 3 years of age and children between 3 to 6 years of age, the CARE-project will contribute to a framework for defining and assessing quality of ECEC in a culture-sensitive way that takes into account concerns of parents, professionals and society – the most important stakeholders next to the children.

Recent policy documents (European Union, 2011; OECD, 2012; Taguma & Litjens, 2013; Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission, 2014) and recent theoretical and empirical studies (Ceglowski, 2004; Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; La Paro, Thomason, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, & Cassidy, 2012) emphasize the importance of including a wide range of stakeholders (parents, staff, policymakers, children) in the joint project of developing, monitoring and assuring high quality in ECEC institutions. More specifically, The European Commission (2011) emphasizes the importance of collaboration between policy sectors and stakeholder groups in ECEC:

> A systemic approach to the ECEC services means strong collaboration between the different policy sectors, such as education, employment, health, social policy. Such approaches allow governments to organise and manage policies more simply and efficiently, and to combine resources for children and their families. This requires a coherent vision that is shared by all stakeholders, including parents, a common policy framework with consistent goals across the system, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities at central and local levels. This approach also helps ECEC services to respond better to local needs. Policy exchange and cooperation at EU level can help countries learn from each other's good practice in this important and challenging task.
>
> (European Commission, 2011, p. 7)

In accordance with the Commission's recognition of the importance of involving stakeholders in ECEC practice and policy development, The Council of The European Union acknowledges that "… a systemic and more integrated approach to ECEC services at the local, regional and national level involving all the relevant stakeholders — including families — is required, together with close cross-sectorial collaboration between different policy sectors, such as education, culture, social affairs, employment, health and justice" and agrees that

"promoting quality assurance with the participation of all key stakeholders, including families" (European Union, 2011, p. 9).

FOCUS OF THIS REPORT

The Stakeholders Study in the CARE project involves parents/guardians, ECEC-staff working with children and policy makers in the area of ECEC as informants to provide policy relevant research-based knowledge on core aspects of quality and wellbeing to support the European Union's efforts towards excellence and equity in early childhood education and care[1] in all member states. Within the wider objectives of the study, this *first* report includes only the information obtained from parents and their responses on core items regarded as most relevant for their values, beliefs and expectations. We examine and evaluate cross-cultural differences and commonalities in the views of parents based on the assumption that a comparative perspective is of main interest for EU policy development. Due to the strict time frame of this first report and the fact that far more data have been collected than originally planned, a complete presentation of all results was not possible yet. We provide some information about the other two stakeholders groups involved in the study in the Method section of this report. Furthermore, the planned next steps of the data analysis, including the data obtained with the other stakeholder groups, are outlined in a separate section at the end of this report.

TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout this report, when referring to early childhood education and care, we are using the abbreviation ECEC. ECEC in this report comprises of all officially licensed, professional forms of care and education provided to children in the age range of 0 to the onset age of formal education in primary school at centers or schools. Referring to ECEC-institutions and services, we apply the terms "ECEC-provisions" or "ECEC-settings" regardless of the national terminology. To simplify the language in this report, we will use only the term "parents" although this group of stakeholders includes both parents and legal guardians. For the same reason, we refer to the group of ECEC-staff working with children as "ECEC-staff" or just "staff". This group includes all kinds of professionals working with children in the participating countries and they concern caregivers and nurses working in care-oriented systems, as well as educators and teachers working in education-oriented systems. Finally, applied short labels in Tables and Figures for the participating countries are in accordance with the Eurostat Glossary: England (EN); Finland (FI); Germany (DE); Greece (EL); Netherlands (NL); Norway (NO); Poland (PL); Portugal (PT); European Unions (EU).

[1] According to the Presidency conference on 'Excellence and equity in early childhood education and care', held in Budapest on 21-22 February 2011

STAKEHOLDER STUDY

The Stakeholders Study is a main task of Work Package 6 (WP6), entitled *European Indicators of Quality and Wellbeing in ECEC*, within the CARE-project. The objectives of the task are directly related to the overall aim of WP6 and the CARE-project as a whole, namely to develop a comprehensive, culture-sensitive European framework for evaluating and monitoring ECEC quality and child wellbeing, and to propose indicators of ECEC quality and child wellbeing that can be used for educational policy making at the European level. To this end, WP6 will integrate the results of several studies conducted within CARE. These include the following already completed studies: (1) A comparative analysis of European curricula (Sylva et al., 2015; deliverable D2.1), (2) a comparative review of approaches to ECEC staff professionalization in Europe (Jensen et al., 2015; D3.1), (3) an updated review of research into the impact of ECEC on child development (Melhuish et al., 2015; D4.1), (4) a secondary analysis of data from recent large-scale studies into the quality and effectiveness of ECEC in five European countries (Slot et al., 2015; D2.2), and (5) a literature review on the effectiveness of different types of funding and governance of ECEC (Akgündüz et al., 2015; D5.1). Other, still ongoing studies address (6) the cultural interpretations of quality and the cultural factors that shape the implemented curriculum in ECEC as observed in different countries, and provide (7) a meta-analytical review of effects on child outcomes including recent European studies, (8) an in-depth analysis of innovative approaches to continuous in-service professionalization, (9) an analysis of factors determining the accessibility and inclusiveness of ECEC, and (10) an economic analysis of the costs and benefits of ECEC. To provide a general framework of shared concepts and a basic model of ECEC services as embedded in wider local, regional and national contexts, in order to guide and integrate all separate studies within CARE, WP 6 developed a starting document with the main goals of the project and definitions of core concepts in ECEC that is also the basis of the current Stakeholders Study (Moser, Melhuish, Petrogiannis, & Leseman, 2014; D6.1).

The Stakeholders Study is one of the four studies within the CARE project in which new data are collected and analysed to support the main aims of the project. The study focuses on the core concepts *quality* and *well-being*, and is specifically designed to include the perspectives of important stakeholders in the overall objective of designing a European quality framework with indicators of quality and well-being. An important aim of the Stakeholders Study is to identify and evaluate what is shared and common among parents, staff and policy representatives across Europe regarding these core concepts, and to examine and evaluate possible differences in the views of these stakeholders. The study is conducted in nine European countries: England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Portugal. These countries were selected because of relevant variations in their welfare regimes, ECEC systems, economic prosperity, and cultural values and beliefs.

The study was originally designed as a personal interview study that would involve in each country 80 parents from both mainstream and disadvantaged communities, 16 ECEC-staff working with children in the age-ranges 0-3 years of age and 3 years of age to primary school entry, and 6 policy representatives (e.g., Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, and Welfare, but also municipal and regional authorities). At the start of the study, it was decided to extend the samples by adding an internet-based survey to the personal interview study. Whereas

the personal interview method enables deliberate sampling of stakeholders groups of interest, for example representatives of low-income minorities in the respective countries who may otherwise be less easily reached, the internet-based survey offers the opportunity to collect much more data in a relatively inexpensive way. An obvious drawback of the internet-based survey is that the recruitment of informants is essentially self-selective and prone to sampling biases and, consequently, a lack of representativeness. By combining the two approaches, using a largely identical questionnaire for both studies, sampling biases in the extended study can be controlled and addressed by deliberate weighting of the sample based on information obtained in the personal interview study (and also using other sources, such as national statistics), while the power of the entire study, needed for advanced statistical analysis of, for example, the measurement equivalence of the questionnaire across countries, is strongly increased by the bigger total sample. Below in the Analysis plan, we will detail how we dealt with these issues.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Starting point of the CARE-project is the awareness that quality and well-being in ECEC services are complex and heterogeneous concepts which may reveal profound cultural differences in interpretation, valuation and implementation both between countries and, within countries, between different socioeconomic and cultural communities (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012a; La Paro et al., 2012; Sheridan, 2007). Therefore, a major challenge is to explore and compare these concepts in a culture-sensitive perspective (Dodge et al., 2012a; Limlingan, 2011; Pluess & Birkbeck, 2010; Rosenthal, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford & Wong, 1999; Tobin, 2005; Woodhead, 1998). In this section we describe the theoretical and empirical basis of the questionnaire that was constructed, focusing on the two core concepts quality and well-being, and on the decisions regarding the design, sampling and analysis strategy.

DEFINING QUALITY

In the conceptualization of quality, we follow the traditional distinctions in the ECEC research and policy literature (e.g. Leseman & Slot, 2014; Litjens & Taguma, 2010), differentiating between structural, process, curriculum (content) and result (outcome) quality. Although distinguishable, it should be noted that there are overlaps and fluent transitions between the concepts of structural quality, process quality, and curriculum quality (Laevers, 2005; Pianta et al., 2005; Sylva et al., 2007). Moreover, the various dimensions of quality are not independent from each other and interact in complex ways to constitute practice in ECEC. Nonetheless, it makes sense to distinguish these dimensions of quality. Although the present study does not address child outcomes directly, the outcomes expected by stakeholders, that is, the educational or developmental goals they consider important for young children, are assumed to be part of their concepts of quality and wellbeing, and, therefore, should be included in the framework. Indeed, outcome indicators of quality should be matched to the educational and developmental goals deemed important by stakeholders (OECD, 2012). Below we briefly summarize how the central concepts were defined and how they provided the basis for the questionnaire construction for the Stakeholders Study.

Process quality, in this study, refers to general characteristics of the child's daily experiences that contribute to well-being and development, and that set the conditions for acquiring knowledge and skills (Philips & Lowenstein, 2011; Sylva et al., 2006). Based on a review of a several studies, including European studies, and currently widely used quality assessment instruments (Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Musatti, 1993; Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009; Slot, Leseman, Mulder & Verhagen, 2015; Thomason & La Paro, 2009), process quality is defined here as characterized by:

- Adult-child interaction that is responsive and affectionate and characterized by a high level of verbal stimulation, guidance and scaffolding, reflected in the quality of adult-child relationship
- Varied opportunities for peer interaction;
- Stable, emotionally positive and cooperative peer relationships;

- A general positive affective classroom climate with positive social relationships between children and between adults and children;
- Developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn and to explore materials, toys and tasks;
- Well-implemented and pedagogically structured activities;
- Involvement of the voices of children and families in decision making.

Structural quality, in this study, represents aspects of ECEC-provisions that are relatively stable from day to day, and that are seen as a distal determinants of child outcomes and frequently thought to determine child outcomes via process quality and by setting the conditions for children's experiences in ECEC (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Sylva et al., 2006). Structural quality in most studies includes aspects such as the design and furnishing of the indoor and outdoor space, available play and learning materials, group size, children-to-staff ratio, committed and stable staff, and staff professional competences, personnel's salaries and work status, health and safety measures, the competences of the ECEC center's head , and practices of group composition. Recent studies and reports (CoRe, 2011; European Comission Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2011; Leseman & Slot, 2014; Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2015; Zaslow, Anderson, Redd, Wessel, & Tarullo, 2010) also include other characteristics into the concept of structural quality. These concern in particular (a) the use of well-designed, developmentally appropriate education programs, or curricula in a narrow sense, that regulate the provision of developmental and educational activities, (b) the presence at the team and centre-level of systematic activities that serve continuous professional development of the staff, and (c) characteristics of the ECEC organization that promote team cohesion and a positive work climate.

Curriculum quality, in the current study, refers to the experiences children have with certain domains of social, cultural, psychological, physical, biological and moral knowledge, and to the knowledge, skills and values they can develop and appropriate through exploring the contents of the activities that are deliberately provided to serve valued developmental and educational goals. It should be noted that the use of the term *curriculum* varies in the literature. Consequently, there are different understandings of what is meant by curriculum quality. Often the term describes a statutory document with general principles and guidelines which are mandatory for ECEC-services in varying degrees. The document may refer to specific developmental and learning goals (and detail the activities that serve these goals) in a narrow sense, like in a learning plan or education program. Curriculum may also stand for a set of overarching principles and include a limited set of broad, content-oriented norms that should guide content and quality of ECEC practice (see also Sylva et al., 2015; D2.1). In this study, we apply a rather broad understanding of curriculum with a focus on the implementation of the curriculum in practice, where the concept denotes the:

- Basic values underlying ECEC (e.g. the understandings of children and childhood),
- Educational and developmental goals that are fostered,
- Learning contents of the activities that are provided,
- Pedagogical approaches and methods that are used (e.g. play, child-centeredness),
- Material resources and facilities that are available, and
- Forms of assessment and documentation of quality, well-being and development that are used.

DEFINING WELL-BEING

While the concept of quality is extensively discussed in ECEC practice, the concept of child well-being has not received the same attention even though it is a core concept in a number of national guidelines (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005; Niikko & Ugaste, 2012; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006; Sylva et al., 2015; D2.1). Traditional indicators of well-being, according to MacAuley, Morgan, and Rose (2010), are: being safe; healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a contribution; economic well-being. Following a multi-dimensional perspective on well-being, a range of indicators of child well-being has been proposed. Some include measures of the context in a single indicator, whereas others distinguish between well-being and the contexts that influence well-being (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009). A general trend is to move away from measures of the presence (or absence) of indicators of *negative* well-being to indicators that put a greater emphasis on *positive* well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2010). Another trend is a shift in the emphasis on children's future "well-becoming" to an emphasis on children's current "well-being" (Ben-Arieh et al., 2001; Qvortrup, 1999), in line with the view that childhood should be regarded as phase in life with its own merits. A final trend is the increasing emphasis in definitions of well-being on children's own voice and subjective well-being. For example, MacAuley, Morgan, and Rose (2010) have provided an overview of what children and youth themselves perceive as well-being. Children mentioned the following ten aspects as important to them (Collette MacAuley & Rose, 2010, p. 42f): Being healthy; feeling loved; having a home; enjoying activities and having fun; feeling happy; being cared for; being safe; having a family; having friends; being supported.

With regard to ECEC, current quality concepts and assessment systems address most of these dimensions of subjective well-being. Especially the aspects of material resources, communication, belongingness, relationships, agency and education can be directly related to core aspects of process and structural quality, emphasizing positive and secure relationships, sensitivity and responsiveness to the child, respect for the perspective of the child, and opportunities for development and learning. An issue related to this, concerns the balance between individually-oriented indicators of subjective well-being, as listed above, and the contextual resources that children need to face the challenges they are presented within their situation. Dodge et al. (2012b) argue for a definition of well-being that includes both aspects and that takes the balance, or match, between challenges and resources as the basis of defining children's well-being. Resources in ECEC context may refer to the quality of the staff, the emotional support provided, but also to the stimulation of personal skills and competencies that support children in adapting to current society's wide-ranging demands, which we will refer to as the 'soft' skills of the 21st century. Following the lead of Dodge et al. (2012b), the present study included both the individual-oriented and the context-oriented dimensions of well-being.

CULTURAL BELIEFS ON QUALITY AND WELL-BEING IN ECEC

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines a stakeholder as a person who is involved in or affected by a course of action. Bryson (2004) claims that the term stakeholder has reached a prominent place in public and none-profit management theory and suggests an inclusive definition, understanding stakeholders as all people who are affected by a change, which is in line with notions of democracy and social justice stakeholder management. For many years, stakeholder involvement has been widely acknowledged and advocated as an important contribution to policy development. Recent research (Bijlsma, Bots, Wolters, & Hoekstra, 2011) confirms that well prepared stakeholder involvement may significantly increase the quality of the knowledge base for policy development. According to Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (2002), trying to achieve high quality childcare requires that different stakeholder perspectives on this issue are acknowledged and recognised, including the perspectives of researchers and professionals, parents, children and staff. Including the viewpoints of these stakeholder groups, according to Ceglowski (2004), may also be relevant for policy development as "… we might better understand the child care landscape and influence the choices available to families, program types, and staff support and professional development opportunities" (p. 110).

The current Stakeholders Study involves parents, ECEC-staff working with children and, in addition to the groups mentioned by Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (2002), also policy representatives as the most important stakeholder groups. The voices of children (cf. Clark, Kjørholt, & Moss, 2005) are not directly addressed in the Stakeholders Study due to restrictions of the research method and available budget. However, we assume that children's parents will represent, at least partly, the concerns and interests of children in high quality ECEC. Moreover, in another study of the CARE-project, involving observations of the practices in ECEC centers in different European countries, children's subjective well-being is one of the core variables and the findings from this study will be integrated in the overall framework at the end of the project.

Several studies have examined the matches and mismatches between parental beliefs and expectations regarding the quality of ECEC-provisions and the ideas and practices of the staff. Studies among mainstream parents find basic convergence of parents' views and the developmental goals, pedagogical approaches, required professional competences and quality characteristics of ECEC provisions endorsed by staff and policy makers in their country (Ceglowski, 2004; Cryer et al., 2002; Duigan, 2005), but also point to differences in emphasis. In a study of infant and toddler classrooms in the USA, Tietze and Cryer (2004) found that quality expectations of parents correlated quite strongly with external quality assessments based on a standard quality assessment instrument (ITERS), reflecting the professional consensus regarding quality. ECEC centers scored higher on items that were most appreciated by the parents. However, other studies revealed contradictions between the views of parents and staff, which may partly depend on differences in cultural background. For example, Ceglowksi (2004) found parents in the USA, compared to professional caregivers and to a research-based quality framework, to especially emphasize happiness of the child, a liking and loving relationship of the caregiver with the child, and communicative competence of the caregiver and the ECEC-provision management to make parents feel

comfortable and welcome. Happiness and loving relationships also emerged as important themes among Irish parents in discussing a new ECEC quality framework for Ireland (Duignan, 2005). Also Swedish mothers mentioned happiness and pleasure as important objectives in ECEC, more than cognitive ability (Tulviste, Mizera, & De Geer, 2012). Finally, Ho (2008), studying a sample of Asian immigrant parents, identified several conflicts between the staff's professional values of learning through play and parental expectations of academic preparation for primary education.

There is abundant evidence that the values, norms and goals regarding childrearing, care and education are related to cultural background, holding for parents as well as ECEC staff (Bemak, 2005; Bhavnagri & Gonzalez-Mena, 1997; Cryer, Tietze, & Wessels, 2002; Fleer, 2006; Huijbregts, Leseman, & Tavecchio, 2008; Sheridan, Giota, Han, & Kwon, 2009; Van Schaik, Leseman, & Huijbregts, 2014). Aukrust, Edwards, Kumru, Knoche, and Misuk Kim (2003) found strong cultural differences between parental descriptions of their child's friendships and their beliefs about the needs of young children in general for close and continuing relationships in preschool and primary school when comparing parents in four cities in four different continents. Parents in Oslo (Norway) favoured the value of long-term continuity of the relationships with peers and teachers from preschool to primary school. Parents in Lincoln (USA) had a stronger academic than relational focus and wanted their children to deal successfully with different teachers in different settings. Parents in Ankara (Turkey) put less emphasis on their child's friendships at preschool, but valued especially good parent-teacher and parent-child relationships in primary school in view of the child's academic success. Parents in Seoul (South-Korea) were most strongly oriented to educational goals as a means to economic success in primary school, while they favoured their children having quality learning experiences and close peer relationships in preschool.

Also within communities belonging to the same culture, different values and concerns can emerge, which may depend on the child's gender and family situation (Sobkin & Marich, 2004). Within Western communities, the same valued developmental goals are sometimes rather differently defined (Keller et al., 2006; Harkness, Super, & Van Tijen, 2000; Suizzo, 2002). For example, USA and Dutch middleclass parents find development of independence in early childhood equally important, but in the US context this means stimulating competitiveness and becoming smart, whereas in the Dutch context independence means promoting self-regulation of emotions and self-reliance (Harkness et al., 2007). French middleclass parents are similar to US middleclass parents in valuing cognitive stimulation and independence, but also stress proper presentation of the child, emotion regulation and good manners (Suizzo, 2002). Tulviste et al. (2012) compared the socialization values of Swedish, Estonian and Russian-Estonian mothers. Swedish mothers emphasized independence, self-confidence, happiness and pleasure as important goals in early childhood, whereas Estonian and Russian-Estonian mothers indicated to value obedience, politeness, respect for authorities, responsibility and hard-work in order to be successful.

Studies in Europe with immigrant communities have revealed that, overall, immigrant parents value good close relationships to the family, and relatedness more than independence (Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009; Pels & de Haan, 2006). However, these studies also show that after migration to Western-oriented communities immigrant parents reorganize their parenting. Mutuality in the relationships between the generations and autonomy become more important as developmental goals. Whereas in the traditional model

obedience and interdependency guarantee loyalty of the child to the family, in the modern (urban) setting, egalitarian relationships and independency of the child are more adaptive. In the project Children Crossing Borders project (Tobin et al., 2010; Adair & Pastori, 2011) the views and expectations of immigrant parents regarding ECEC in France, Germany, Italy, England and the USA were examined. Immigrant parents in all countries tended to emphasize academic goals more than ECEC teachers did and also preferred a more authoritarian and teacher-centered pedagogy (Tobin & Kurban, 2010; Vandenbroeck, Boonaert, Van der Mespel, & De Brabandere, 2009). For example, Turkish parents in Germany found the play-based, multicultural curriculum of German preschools odd and ill-suited to their preferences and their perceptions of children's educational needs (Tobin & Kurban, 2010). Turkish immigrant parents in France agreed on the structured approach of teachers in French preschools. Likewise, in the USA, Yamamoto and Li (2012) studied Chinese-American and Euro-American parents' views on what constitutes high-quality in preschool. Chinese-American parents valued in particular the educational qualifications of the teacher and the focus on learning outcomes, but found play-time, self-directed learning, responsiveness to children's needs and peer relations as less important for quality. European American parents, however, emphasized individual attention and response to the needs of parents and children.

The extant literature, briefly reviewed above, reveals several possible topics on which parents from different cultures may express different views. Happiness, loving relationships, belongingness, pleasure, and emotional independence can be considered adequate indicators of child well-being in the view of parents from Western mainstream cultures, whereas close relations with the family may be an important aspect of child well-being for non-Western parents, which may lead to a reluctance of using ECEC. Within Western cultures differences may exist regarding the value of social relations, emotional and behavioural control, and proper demeanour in young children. Academic goals tend to be more emphasized by parents with a migration background and parents in non-Western (Asian, East-European, Mediterranean and Middle-East) countries, but soft skills such as communicative competence, enthusiasm, openness to the world, may show a reverse picture. Similar differences were found regarding pedagogy. Parents may further differ in what they consider important qualities and qualifications of staff working with children in ECEC and the pedagogies they use. For example, divergence between parents and staff was found regarding the role of play. Also, differences in views regarding the staff's communicative competence and the center's policy regarding parental involvement were found. All these topics, identified as possible sources of divergence in views while relevant for the concept of well-being, for defining quality, curriculum and pedagogy of ECEC, and for setting requirements regarding structural quality, staff qualifications and centers' policies, have been included in the questionnaire of the current study (see Appendix B2).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE CURRENT REPORT

This first report on the Stakeholders Study focuses on the parents and only includes the topics that are considered most relevant for policy. Within these limitations, the present report provides initial answers to the following sets of research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the educational and developmental goals that according to parents should be fostered most in ECEC? Is the importance of different educational and developmental goals rated differently for children under three years of age than for children in the age range between three and six years? Are there differences in parents' ratings between the participating countries?

RQ2: How important for quality and well-being are different structural quality indicators according to parents? Are there differences in parents ratings between the countries?

RQ3: What are important aspects and conditions of children's well-being and well-becoming in the words of parents? Do parents' expressed views on well-being and well-becoming differ between countries?

RQ4: Which aspects of ECEC-settings do parents consider most when choosing for a particular ECEC provision? Do parents' ratings differ according to children's ages? Are there differences in parents' ratings between the countries?

RQ5: To what extent do parents feel that using ECEC for young children as complementing care in the family and as supporting parents to combine parenthood and work is appropriate? Do parents' views in this regard differ between countries?

The answers to RQ1 will be based on items included in question 3 of the questionnaire, while for answering RQ2 items from question 2 will be used (see appendix B1 for the complete questionnaire). The answers to RQ3 builds on the items 1.2 and 1.3 of the questionnaire. RQ4 will be answered using items of the questions 2.3, while RQ5 will be answered based on the information obtained with questions 5 and 6. The answers to RQ1, RQ2, RQ4 and RQ5 will be based on the quantitative analyses of the structured parts of the questionnaire, the answers to RQ3 will be based on the qualitative analyses of the open-ended questions of the questionnaire.

METHOD

DESIGN

The stakeholders study applies a multimethod approach[2] using both an internet-based survey (IBS) and a personal interview (PI), with both structured and open-ended questions. The IBS and PI were largely identical. In both the IBS and PI quantitative and qualitative data are generated, with a greater emphasis on qualitative data in the PI, based on extra open-ended questions. See appendix B1 for the questionnaire used in both the IBS and PI and appendix B2 for the additional open questions. According to typology of mixed method designs suggested by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), the stakeholders study follows a fully mixed concurrent dominant status design. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the same period with most weight on the quantitative data (dominant). Since the quantitative and qualitative approaches are mixed in several stages of the investigation, both regarding the research objectives, the data generation and, partly, also the analysis, the design can be considered as (nearly) fully mixed (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) or fully integrated mixed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

A comparative cross-national study in nine countries as diverse as in the ones included in this study entails a number of challenges. To obtain comparable, reliable and valid information from countries characterised by different social structures, languages, ECEC-systems and related ECEC-terminologies, and presumably varying concepts on early childhood education and care, required a thoughtful research approach. We applied two strategies to achieve high measurement quality as a prerequisite for comparing countries. First, much effort was put in developing a reliable and cross-culturally valid questionnaire by actively involving professionals and researchers in each country in the construction of questions and response categories in a collaborative process led by the WP 6 team members. Draft versions of the questionnaire were thoroughly piloted in each of the participating countries in several rounds. Furthermore, the pre-final version of the questionnaire was translated in the languages of the participating countries and then formally checked by external bilingual professionals to detect remaining difficulties with the translations to check for possible confusions, involving ECEC-experts who were bilingual in English and the national languages and who were not involved in the development of the questionnaire. Second, we used advanced statistical modelling to test whether the questions in the questionnaire were understood in the same way in all countries and to examine the measurement invariance of the basic concepts of the current study.

Another challenge was to recruit representative samples of stakeholders as respondents within each country and to correct for possible sample biases. Originally, the method of the personal interviews to be conducted in deliberately constructed samples in each country, stratified in accordance with pre-set criteria to obtain representative variance in the measures, was planned as the only way of data collection. The decision to extend

[2] For pragmatic reasons we consider the concepts of multimethod (Elliott, 2004) and mixed-method (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) as synonyms although in the literature the distinctions between these concepts are discussed (Morse, 2003).

the PI study with the internet-based survey, with self-selection of respondents, called for procedures of correcting for sampling bias, such as sample-weighting using available population statistics. For the present report, sample weighting was applied on the basis of the educational level of the parents (for further details, see the section on weighting in the Analysis plan). We considered the educational level of the respondents as the best single indicator of socioeconomic background. Furthermore, the personal interview approach ensured that we would reach special groups of interest in terms of socioeconomic background and migration status. In this first report, we don't distinguish parents according to (non-)migration status.

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT

PERSONAL INTERVIEW (PI)

Participants for the personal interviews were recruited according to a convenience sampling model. The basic strategy was to deliberately sample for relevant variation. Regarding parents, we proposed to focus on a mainstream (middle class) sample of ECEC users, split by age group (children between 0 and 3 years of age and children between 3 and 6 years of age), to ensure that parents and staff (working) with children in both age periods were included. In each country, one or two additional samples of low income or particular ethnic-cultural minority groups should be recruited. The choice depended on country-specific considerations of relevance for national policy issues, presence of particular groups, et cetera. For example, in The Netherlands, next to mainstream parents, groups of Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch parents were sampled, whereas in Poland, next to mainstream urban parents, specifically low income urban and low income rural parents were recruited. Parents were mainly approached via ECEC-provisions and, in addition, via the networks of already recruited parents ('snowball method') and via contacts of the research assistants who came from the same communities. See appendix B5 for the specific recruitment strategy of each country. The basic sampling design with the planned numbers of informants is presented in Table 1.

Regarding the staff, we targeted both staff working with children from mainstream families and staff working with children from low income or minority families, following the sampling design presented below. Whenever possible, also staff of minority background was recruited. Regarding the policy makers' stratification was not considered relevant. Instead, we focused on recruiting policy makers working at the national level.

Table 1. Sampling scheme for the personal interviews with stakeholders

System	Social/ethnic background	Parents	Staff working with children	Policy makers
0-3	Mainstream / middle class	10	4	
	Low income / minority 1	7	1	3
	Low income / minority 2	7	2	
3-6	Mainstream	10	4	
	Low income / minority 1	7	2	3
	Low income / minority 2	7	1	
Total		48	14	6

INTERNET-BASED SURVEY (IBS)

The recruitment of participants for the internet-based survey was less controlled and based on self-selection within all stakeholder groups. To increase the representativeness and relevant variation according to respondents' background, organisations of stakeholders (parent organisations, unions), large ECEC-service providers and the professional networks of the researchers were approached with the request to send their members, staff or colleagues the link with the login-information and the flyers explaining the purpose of the study. See appendix B5 for the specific recruitment strategy of each country. The sampling scheme presented in Table 2 below served as a rough guideline. Incoming responses were carefully monitored and, if deemed necessary, WP 6 team members were requested to contact additional organisations and networks in their countries to fill the sample. We also linked the login-address to the CARE website and contacted European organisations for disseminating the questionnaire to other groups outside the current CARE community. We expected a lower response to the IBS from parents of low income and minority groups. Therefore, we included larger samples of these groups in the PI. The numbers in the table below are indicative and reflect our ambitions.

Table 2. Sampling scheme for internet-based survey for stakeholders (numbers are indicative).

System	Social/ethnic background	Parents	Staff working with children	Policy makers
0-3	Mainstream / middle class	100	50	
	Low income / minority 1	30	15	25
	Low income / minority 2	30	15	
3-6	Mainstream	100	50	
	Low income / minority 1	30	15	25
	Low income / minority 2	30	15	
Total		320	160	50

PROCEDURES

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The English version of the questionnaire was used to prepare an online version of the questionnaire using the software program Limesurvey, which is supported by Utrecht University. See appendix B3 for sample interfaces of the online questionnaire. Two separate online questionnaires were: One for the IBS, and one for the PI, including the additional open questions. After creating the English prototypes, the translations from the eight other languages were copied into the program. This resulted in nine language-specific, though structurally identical versions of the online questionnaire. These national versions were checked and piloted in each country by the national partners and their networks.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for the IBS and PI study ran parallel in the nine participating countries and was conducted by the national partners in CARE. The responses from all nine participating countries were stored in two databases (one for IBS and one for PI) at an internal server of Utrecht University. On a weekly basis partners have been updated about the number of respondents that completed the IBS and the number of entered personal interviews.

A manual was provided for all partners containing regulations and guidelines for recruitment and data collection (see Appendix B4, Interviewer manual). In addition, we provided sample information letters for stakeholder organizations and information brochures (see Appendix B6 and B7, Letters of invitation, Information brochures respectively). On average, the personal interviews took 45 to 60 minutes to complete, and the IBS 25 to 30 minutes. Personal interviews could be conducted on a laptop or through using a paper-pencil questionnaire. These paper-and-pencil questionnaires had to be entered into the online questionnaire afterwards. Interviewers either typed or wrote down the answers of the respondents to the open questions.

Data for this first report were collected from February 1st until May 26th. The official deadline was April 30th, however, the recruitment of respondents for both IBS and PI turned out to be more time-consuming than expected. At present, the data collection is still ongoing and additional efforts will be made to enlarge the samples in countries with relatively low response and for stakeholders groups that are yet underrepresented.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

As described in the sampling and procedure sections, respondents could participate in the study in two ways: Through a personal interview or by individually filling out an internet-based questionnaire. These two ways of data-collection lead to the samples reported in Table X (parents), X (staff) and X (policymakers). These were the samples on May 26th 2015, the date that we downloaded the data for the current report. The first four rows of each table show how many respondents initially started (*N* start), and how many continued to respectively question 2.1.1, 4.1 and the demographic part of the questionnaire. We see that quite some people resigned the questionnaire after the start. However, most of them resigned very early in the questionnaire. Between the first quantitative question (2.1.1) and the demographics, the attrition was much lower. The large differences in sample sizes between countries can be mainly explained by unforeseen staffing problems and differences in recruitment strategies. It should be noted, however, that the data-collection is still ongoing, and that the final numbers of respondents will increase over the upcoming months. Specifically England is continuing the data-collection, since their research-assistant working on this part of the project was sick for a while during the first phase of data collection. As mentioned before, in this report we will only report results on the parent data. Future reports and empirical papers will report on the results for staff and policy makers as well.

We used several definitions to code the demographic data. First, to distinguish between native and immigrant respondents, we used the guidelines provided by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA):

- *native respondents*: respondents born in the country of assessment with at least one parent born in the country or foreign-born respondents with at least one parent born in the country of assessment;
- *first-generation respondents*: foreign-born respondents whose parents are also foreign-born;
- *second-generation respondents*: respondents born in the country of assessment with both parents foreign-born (OECD, 2012).

Second, to create an indicator of respondents' educational level, we used the following criteria:

- *Low:* No vocational and no college degree[3]
- *Medium:* Only vocational degree
- *High:* College degree or higher

These criteria correspond approximately with the ISCED level categorization in *low* (0-2), *medium* (3-4) and *high* (5-8) used by EUROSTAT. This distinction is also used for the applied weighting strategy, which will be described in the analysis plan.

[3] For two countries we had an additional age criterion: For England that respondents had left school before 18, and for Portugal before 16.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Table 3 presents the current sample of parents. We aimed to only include parents of which at least one child participated in ECEC[4]. This table shows that the number of parents that completed the questionnaire ranged from 34 for England to 1317 for Italy. The respondents were around 35 years of age and between 75.3% (NO) and 94.1% (EN) were female. Although most respondents were native-born citizens, we included reasonable numbers of first and second generation immigrants in most countries, with exception of Finland and Poland, which is in concordance with the demographic statistics of these countries. Regarding educational level, we see that higher educated parents, as expected, are overrepresented. To adjust for this selection bias, we decided to weight the data for this first report (see section Analysis Plan below). In addition, we see that most respondents were employed and were living with a partner. In general, fathers worked more than mothers, and mothers in England, the Netherlands, and Germany worked more often part-time. Finally, parents had on average two children, and one child in ECEC.

POLICYMAKERS

Table 4 presents the current sample of policymakers. We aimed to only include representatives of local, regional or national authorities with a policy responsibility for ECEC. This table shows that the number of staff that completed the questionnaire ranged from 15 for England to 88 for Italy. The respondents were around 50 years of age and the majority was female. As expected, most policymakers had a higher educational level. In addition, we see large variation in the amount of years working in ECEC policy making, which strengthens the representativeness of our sample. Finally there was quite some variation between countries on what level the policymakers operated (i.e., local, regional or national), which can be attributed to differences in national ECEC systems and in strategies of data collection.

ECEC-STAFF WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Table 5 presents the current sample of ECEC-staff. We aimed to only include ECEC-staff working with children on a daily basis (i.e., no kitchen staff, etc.). This table shows that the number of staff that completed the questionnaire ranged from 28 for England to 937 for Italy. The respondents were around 40 years of age and the vast majority was female. Although most respondents were native-born citizens, most country samples included first and second generation immigrant staff in addition. Regarding educational level, we see quite large differences, which can be attributed to differences in national guidelines regarding the minimum educational level of ECEC-staff. In addition, we see large variation in the amount of years working in ECEC, which strengthens the representativeness of our sample. Finally, there was quite some variation between countries in the age groups staff worked with, although the majority worked with children younger than 4 years[5].

[4] As we did not have control of the distribution of the internet-questionnaire, some parents without any children in ECEC filled out the questionnaire. However, since they still can have an opinion on ECEC, we still included them in our analysis.
[5] This seemingly random split is a result of the used question in the demographic part of the questionnaire, see appendix B1.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and frequencies of parents within each country

	EN	DL	GR	IT	FI	NL	NO	PL	PT
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
N (start)	47	436	193	2182	294	527	187	230	170
N (Q2.1.1)	37	302	145	1621	199	395	126	211	108
N (Q4.1)	34	244	135	1358	162	287	97	202	91
N (demogr.)	34	237	136	1317	154	277	89	200	93
Personal Interview %	59.6%	7.3%	26.9%	2.5%	17.3%	11.4%	19.8%	23.5%	28.4%
Age	34.22 (7.33)	35.42 (6.32)	37.75 (5.07)	37.38 (5.22)	35.58 (5.62)	36.16 (5.29)	35.76 (7.40)	35.97 (7.08)	35.2 (5.55)
Gender, woman %	94.1%	85.7%	86.0%	87.8%	92.2%	87.4%	75.3%	78.5%	84.9%
Native or immigrant %									
Native	67.6%	81.8%	89.6%	91.3%	98.1%	79.6%	80.0%	100.0%	85.6%
First Generation	20.6%	10.2%	10.4%	7.7%	1.9%	13.8%	20.0%	-	14.4%
Second Generation	11.8%	8.1%	-	1.0%	-	6.5%	-	-	-
Educational level %									
Low (1)	38.2%	8.0%	20.3%	15.7%	3.9%	3.6%	7.8%	6.1%	30.8%
Medium (2)	23.5%	36.6%	26.6%	35.5%	20.1%	14.7%	13.3%	21.7%	12.1%
High (3)	27.7%	55.5%	53.1%	48.7%	76.0%	81.7%	78.9%	72.2%	57.1%
Employed %	63.6%	75.6%	76.5%	80.2%	79.2%	86.3%	83.3%	84.8%	73.6%
Living with partner %	70.6%	90.7%	93.9%	96.1%	94.2%	94.6%	84.4%	90.8%	90.2%
Work hours - mother	26.15 (10.90)	28.10 (11.60)	33.67 (12.43)	31.92 (10.05)	37.02 (6.38)	27.34 (7.09)	35.99 (6.67)	35.47 (13.64)	37.25 (9.10)
Work hours - father	41.72 (10.89)	39.70 (9.83)	43.12 (13.91)	40.93 (9.72)	39.76 (7.57)	37.17 (6.03)	39.08 (5.80)	43.76 (11.37)	39.56 (7.78)
Children	2.03 (1.0)	1.76 (0.95)	1.77 (0.61)	1.78 (1.09)	2.05 (0.93)	1.95 (0.89)	1.99 (0.95)	1.86 (0.95)	1.84 (0.94)
Children in ECEC	1.00 (0.62)	1.13 (0.55)	1.23 (0.51)	1.21 (0.48)	1.43 (.63)	1.47 (0.65)	1.34 (0.60)	0.85 (0.64)	1.02 (0.63)

Table 4

Descriptive statistics and frequencies of policy makers within each country

	UK	DL	GR	IT	FI	NL	NO	PL	PT
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
N (start)	28	59	38	173	31	89	34	50	8
N (Q2.1.1)	16	32	23	107	26	60	20	39	6
N (Q4.1)	15	26	21	92	25	50	17	37	5
N (demogr.)	15	24	22	88	24	48	16	35	5
Personal Interview %	42.9%	13.6%	28.9%	8.7%	45.2%	5.6%	20.6%	12.0%	37.5%
Age	48.00 (10.16)	48.64 (8.16)	49.36 (9.27)	53.03 (7.83)	50.91 (7.91)	51.65 (10.34)	49.31 (9.57)	50.41 (10.44)	53.00 (11.94)
Gender, woman %	80.0%	83.3%	68.2%	79.5%	100.0%	81.3%	87.5%	94.3%	80.0%
Native or immigrant %									
Native	93.3%	96.0%	90.9%	100.0%	95.8%	96.0%	93.3%	100.0%	100.0%
First Generation	-	4.0%	9.1%	-	4.2%	2.0%	6.7%	-	-
Second Generation	6.7%	-	-	-	-	2.0%	-	-	-
Educational level %									
Low (1)	-	-	-	1.1%	-	-	-	2.9%	-
Medium (2)	-	12.0%	9.5%	9.0%	12.5%	6.0%	6.3%	-	-
High (3)	100.0%	88.0%	90.5%	89.9%	87.5%	94.0%	93.8%	97.1%	100.0%
Levels of institution %									
Local	20.0%	12.0%	54.5%	77.0%	39.1%	36.0%	43.8%	22.9%	-
Regional	-	48.0%	22.7%	4.6%	-	24.0%	-	45.7%	20.0%
National	60.0%	24.0%	22.7%	8.0%	47.8%	16.0%	56.3%	22.9%	80.0%
Combination	20.0%	16.0%	-	10.3%	13.0%	24.0%	-	8.6%	-
Work years with ECEC issues in policy making	6.38 (6.64)	9.2 (8.97)	9.68 (8.10)	14.73 (10.87)	16.18 (10.39)	12.41 (9.50)	13.33 (10.93)	20.91 (12.02)	8.00 (5.60)

Table 5

Descriptive statistics and frequencies of teachers within each country

	UK	DL	GR	IT	FI	NL	NO	PL	PT
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
N (start)	39	558	391	1693	149	442	158	409	127
N (Q2.1.1)	31	366	212	1140	105	286	104	349	67
N (Q4.1)	28	289	181	960	82	217	84	333	51
N (demogr.)	28	279	180	937	80	211	81	325	51
Personal Interview %	41.0%	2.9%	13.0%	1.6%	9.4%	5.0%	10.1%	4.2%	10.2%
Age	43.89 (9.75)	44.71 (10.12)	39.73 (8.28)	45.78 (10.24)	43.24 (11.09)	44.88 (11.71)	41.75 (9.78)	39.47 (10.79)	40.88 (9.23)
Gender, woman %	89.3%	95.0%	100.0%	98.7%	100.0%	97.6%	91.4%	99.4%	96.1%
Native or immigrant %									
Native	89.3%	88.8%	100.0%	99.3%	100.0%	92.8%	92.6%	100.0%	98.0%
First Generation	3.6%	5.9%	-	0.7%	-	2.4%	7.4%	-	2.0%
Second Generation	7.1%	5.2%	-	-	-	4.8%	-	-	-
Educational level %									
Low (1)	-	2.9%	2.4%	7.0%	2.5%	-	-	11.1%	-
Medium (2)	21.4%	67.9%	44.7%	59.0%	41.8%	43.0%	-	26.2%	-
High (3)	78.6%	29.2%	52.9%	34.0%	55.7%	57.0%	100.0%	62.7%	100.0%
Work years in ECCE	13.41 (8.56)	11.74 (10.82)	14.30 (7.72)	20.12 (11.33)	17.01 (11.46)	16.07 (9.05)	15.90 (9.48)	12.70 (10.97)	16.67 (10.06)
Currently working with children of age (years) %									
<4 years	74.1%	58.7%	53.7%	41.8%	23.9%	63.2%	35.2%	89.3%	46.8%
<2 years	*3.7%*	*32.0%*	*7.4%*	*23.9%*	*9.0%*	*3.6%*	*21.1%*	*40.1%*	*31.9%*
3-4 years	*25.9%*	*2.2%*	*42.0%*	*13.5%*	*6.0%*	*19.2%*	*5.6%*	*26.0%*	*10.6%*
3-4 and 5-6 years	-	8.6%	9.9%	45.7%	19.4%	11.9%	26.8%	3.8%	25.5%
>5 years	3.7%	3.0%	35.2%	10.3%	26.9%	9.3%	4.2%	5.6%	21.3%
Heterogeneous	22.2%	29.7%	1.2%	2.3%	29.9%	15.5%	33.8%	1.3%	6.4%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

WEIGHTING THE DATA

As described in the sampling procedure and sample description, response to the internet-based questionnaire was based on self-selection, which was expected to lead to uneven distributions of socioeconomic background of the informants in the country samples. Therefore, one of the main challenges was to create a fairly representative sample of parents. As we considered parents' educational level the best single indicator of socioeconomic status, moreover an important background characteristic found to correlate with beliefs on development and education, we decided to weight each country sample using population statistics available at Eurostat (educational level of adults between 25 and 44) to create an appropriate distribution according the parents' education levels. See the sample description for the criteria used to categorize parents' educational level. When there was no data on educational level available, we applied a weight of 1. In addition, based on advise by the methodology and statistics department of Utrecht University, weights were trimmed to a minimum of 0.33 and a maximum of 3, to prevent inflation of the standard errors. In the end, we only had to trim the weight for lower educated parents in the Netherlands from 4.84 to 3. The final weights are given in Table 6. The specific calculation of the weights per country is provided in appendix A.1.

Table 6

Final weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat for adults 25 to 44 years of age

	Low	Medium	High
Germany	1.62	1.61	0.51
England	0.43	1.61	1.20
Greece	1.05	1.72	0.62
Italy	1.95	1.34	0.45
Finland	2.52	2.25	0.59
Netherlands[1]	3.00	2.83	0.50
Norway	1.94	2.64	0.63
Poland	1.06	2.60	0.52
Portugal	1.35	2.45	0.51

[1]This weight had to be trimmed from 4.84 to 3.00

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

For the quantitative analyses we focused on the following sections of the questionnaire (appendix B1):

- RQ 1: Section 3.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 – Educational and developmental goals
- RQ 2: Section 2.1, 2.2, 2.5 – Structural quality characteristics
- RQ 4: Section 5 – Determinants of parents' choice of ECEC
- RQ 5: Section 6 – Appropriateness of ECEC for young children

For this first report we were not able to thoroughly evaluate the other sections, although we ran already some preliminary analyses on section 2.3 (diversity and inclusiveness in ECEC), 2.4 (parental involvement), 2.6 (educational principles in ECEC), and 2.7 (social and emotional climate in ECEC). These missing sections will be included in next versions of the report.

For the items of sub-section 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, and section 5 and 6 we tried to construct the most appropriate and useful measurement-invariant confirmatory factor models across countries. When reaching measurement invariance, we know that the constructed scales have the same structure and measure identical concepts over countries (van de Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). To define these measurement-invariant confirmatory factor models, we performed several steps in the statistical software package Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

First, for each section we combined theoretical knowledge and exploratory factor analysis in Mplus to find the most optimal grouping of items into one or more scales for the total group of parents (i.e., not distinguished between countries). When an item did not load well on any of the hypothesized factors, we deleted it from our analysis. After this exploration, we constructed a confirmatory factor model (Brown, 2015) in which we constrained the intercepts and factor loadings of the items for children younger than 3 years of age and children between 3 and 6 years of age to be equal to each other, see Figure 1. In this way we could compare the relative importance of the finally constructed scales between the two age groups. Within these confirmatory factor models, we freely estimated the correlations of the error terms between similar <3 and 3-6 item (not shown in the figure). In addition, we sometimes freely estimate the correlations of the error terms when there were item similarities (e.g., in wording or semantically).

To evaluate the appropriateness of the model, we used several criteria of model fit. The most well-known test for assessing global model fit is the chi-square test, however, this test is highly sensitive to sample size. That is, it will reject good fitting models if the sample is large (van de Schoot, Lugtig & Hox, 2012). Since we have a large sample size, we decided to use two other recommended fit indices: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (van de Schoot, et al., 2012). Several guidelines (Brown, 2015; van de Schoot, Lugtig & Hox, 2012) state that the model fit is considered adequate if the CFI values are >.90, and good if they are > .95 For the RMSEA ,values < .08 indicate adequate and values < .06 good model fit. When the model fit was inadequate, we used the modification indices in the Mplus output to identity the problematic parameters and/or items.

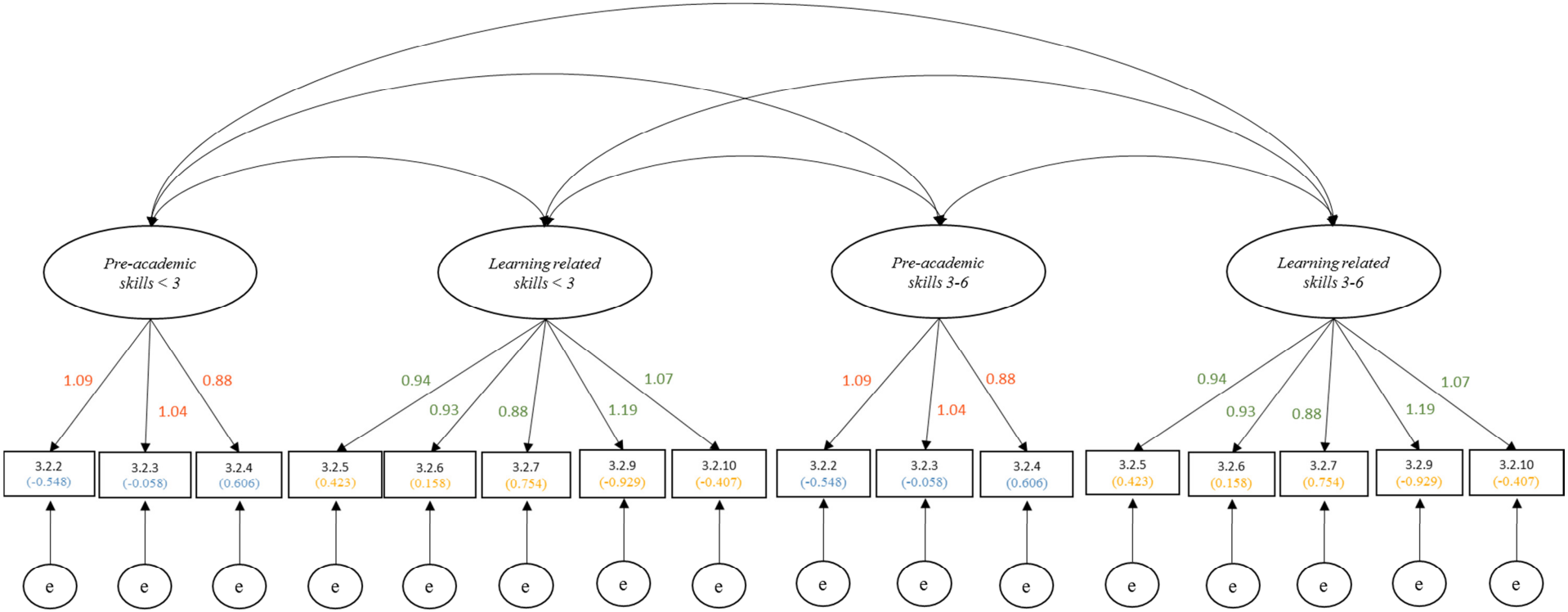

Figure 1. Sample of confirmatory factor model in which factor loadings and intercepts are constrained across age-groups – Section 3.2 of the questionnaire.

When an adequate to good fitting model was constructed for the total group, we conducted a multiple group analysis with the nine countries as the different groups. First, we constrained all factor loadings and intercepts to be equal across groups, to test for so-called scalar measurement invariance (Brown, 2015). Next, we used the modification indices to identify whether there were factor loadings or intercepts of specific items that caused problems in specific countries. When the factor loadings or intercepts of certain items were difficult to constrain across countries, we decided to delete that item from the analysis, since it appeared that the items is not interpreted in the same way (i.e., different factor loading) or that the meaning of the level of the item (i.e., different intercept) across countries. When the factor loading or intercept was only problematic in one country, we released it for that specific country. As long as there are at least two intercepts and factor loadings constrained, we can still compare the latent means across countries (Byrne et al., 1989; in van de Schoot et al., 2012). However, we cannot compare the country for which an item constraint is released on this specific item. When the model fit only slightly increased by releasing one or two factor loadings or intercepts for some countries, but the patterns in mean differences remained the same, we decided was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Since we had very large differences in sample sizes between countries, especially for Italy (N = +/- 1200) and England (N = 36), we tried to estimate the models with and without Italy and England. Italy has a very large influence on the estimation of the constrained factor loading and intercepts, and England could largely influence the model fit through possible outliers. However, often the model fit stayed almost exactly the same, which strengthens our confidence in the identified scales and average mean differences on those scales.

Finally, to enhance the interpretability of the findings we rescaled the latent means to the original 1 ‘unimportant’ to 5 ‘highly important’ scale using the effect coding method (Little et al., 2006; Brown, 2015). In this method, certain model constraints are placed, so that for a given construct the set of indicator intercepts sum to an average of zero and the set of factor loadings to an average 1.0. In this way, “the variance of the latent variables reflects the average of the indicators’ variances explained by the construct, and the mean of the latent variable is the optimally weighted average of the means for the indicators of that construct” (Brown, 2015, p. 234).

COMPARISON OF MEAN DIFFERENCES

After the construction of the most optimal measurement invariant model for a specific section, we made (at least) two types of comparisons of the latent means of a given construct: Comparisons across age groups within countries and comparisons within age groups between countries. We compared both the unstandardized effect sizes (Δ latent means) and standardized effect sizes (Cohen’s d) between two latent means. Cohen's d is defined as the difference between two means divided by pooled standard deviation of the two groups (Cohen, 2013).

Cohen's $d = M_1 - M_2 / \sigma_{pooled}$

where $\sigma_{pooled} = \sqrt{[(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2) / 2]}$

According to Cohen, a d of .2 is a small effect, .5 is a medium effect and .8 is a large effect. However, the terms “small”, “medium” and “large” are relative to specific content area and used research method in any

investigation (Cohen, 2013). In our study we should be aware that we interpret differences in values and beliefs, and not in, for example, children's behaviour. For England, we never calculated Cohen's d, since the standard deviations for this country were sometimes quite large due to the small sample size.

For the items of sub-section 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5, we selected several items which are generally regarded as indicative of structural quality, as defined on **p. 14** of this report. For these items we compared simple means and standard deviations across the nine countries. We did not estimate confirmatory factor models, as the items were all quite different from each other and not intended to constitute scales.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

In the first qualitative analyses, we focused on the following two questions, of which the first one was included in the IBS and the PI, while the second one only was part of the PI:

1) What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think are most important to foster children's well-being? (Item Q1.2, see appendix B1)
   …for children under the age of 3 years
   …for children 3-6 years

2) What three aspects of development in early life for children do you consider to be the most important to be successful in later life? (Item PIQ3, see appendix B2)
   …for children under the age of 3 years
   …for children 3-6 years

The analyses started with a sample of five parents and three staff members from each participating country[6]. When selecting these parents and staff members we took the education level and the ethnic status (native vs. non-native) of respondents into account, to ensure sufficient diversity in the answers. The goal of this first analysis was to create lists of codes for each of the two questions, which subsequently can be used to analyse the answers to the open questions in the original language for all informants in all countries. The list of codes for each question covers both age categories (under 3 years and 3-6 years).

The answers on the questions for this sample (string variables in the database) were translated with Google Translate. The national partners checked these translations regarding correctness and accuracy of the language, and provided more accurate translations when needed. For some countries the Google translations were quite accurate, but for other's many adjustments were needed. Therefore, we decided that a proper translation check is always needed when analyses are done on English translations of the answers. Based on these checked translation, one of the researchers from the WP-6 core team who has particular experience in qualitative interview coding created the first list of codes.

[6] From the Netherlands we have used eight parents and three teachers, because we wanted to check what kind of answers and how diverse the answers would be with this amount of participants

To create the lists of codes for both questions, we applied a grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2013). This approach was applied to evaluate, enrich and reconsider theoretical notions on parental (and staff's) values and beliefs regarding the issues mentioned in the above stated questions. We used the QSR International's NVivo 10 software and analysed the answers. The answers of each informant were, firstly, categorized through open coding, labelling answers and check if other answers can be assigned with the same code. Secondly, axial coding was applied, structuring the codes by determining if they are sufficient, should be modified or if new codes are needed; it has been controlled if categories can be assigned to the codes. Thirdly, through selective coding, we wanted to identify the most important messages from the informants concerning the research question and which categories repeated repeated and/or related (Boeije, 2010). The subsequently emerging lists were regularly discussed with other researchers from the WP-6 core team.

In addition, we started with a back and forward approach between the original data and existing theory on for example quality of ECEC to categorize the separate codes into broader categories. Finally, the lists of codes were discussed with the complete WP-6 core team, representing all countries participating in the Stakeholders Study, during the meeting in Tønsberg (Norway), June 14-16, 2015.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible create a list of codes based on the answers from all nine participating countries for the well-being question; in the first list of codes, the Netherlands, Norway and Italy were not included. However, after finalizing the lists of codes for both questions, we did a pilot with the Netherlands, Greece, Finland, Norway and Italy to check if the lists of codes were applicable to their national data. In this way, we could check the representatives of the generated code list the Netherlands, Norway and Italy through this pilot.

In each country a purposive sample of 10 parents was drawn. The national partners received the lists of codes, empty coding schemes to count the codes and the descriptions of some codes from the WP6-core team, which can be found in the appendixes A2, A3 and A4. The partners participating in the pilot counted the codes for their national data using the coding scheme. When they found answers that were not applicable to the list or if they were doubting about codes or descriptions, they sent their feedback to the WP6-core group. The feedback was applied to the lists of codes and the final list of codes and their counts were used to do the first analyses of the qualitative data. In the results section we will present the frequencies of main themes, and a first overview of common and culturally differing concepts that emerged from this first cross-cultural comparison.

R E S U L T S

HOW STRONGLY SHOULD ECEC-SETTINGS FOCUS ON VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS ACCORDING TO PARENTS?

The first research question of this study concerned parents' views on how strongly ECEC-settings should focus on various developmental goals. To answer this research question, the items included in section 3 of the questionnaire were analysed (see appendix B1). The leading question was:

"In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes for the child"

This question was followed by five sub-sections, containing several specific questions, concerning respectively: 3.1) social development, 3.2) development of thinking, language and math, 3.3) physical development, skills, and health, 3.4) emotional development, and 3.5) personal development. Parents were asked to give their opinion for two age groups, children younger than 3 years of age and children from 3 to 6 years of age. The answer categories of the items were 1 'unimportant'. 2 'of little importance', 3 'moderately important', 4 'important', and 5 'highly important'.

We will discuss the findings for all five sub-sections separately. For each of the sub-sections we tried to construct the most appropriate and useful measurement-invariant confirmatory factor model, using the steps described in the analysis plan. In the following sections we will shortly describe this process of model construction. Next, we will present the factor loadings and model fit indices for the final factor models. Finally, we will examine the differences in mean importance ratings on the constructed scales across all nine countries. We will describe and discuss the cross-cultural differences and commonalities that can be identified, and we will evaluate to what extent differences in beliefs between developmental goals and between countries are substantial (based on effect sizes) and meaningful (in relation to the original answering scale).

After the presentation of the final confirmatory factor models and the examination of differences and commonalities in latent factor means across countries, comparisons will be made on patterns of importance of developmental goals within countries (section 3.6). Do we see similar patterns of importance of developmental goals across countries? How do individual countries deviate from the 'European average' on those developmental goals? We end this chapter with an integrative summary of the results.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

When developing the section social development we aimed to include a wide range of items, covering both more general aspects of children's social development (e.g., can solve problems with other children, can share toys/ things with other children), more collectivistic aspects of children's social development (e.g., understands and respects rules, shows respectful behaviour towards adults), and items on children's interest in diversity (e.g., is interested in contact with children with different ability levels or cultural and language backgrounds).

Both the results from exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses (both for the total group and multi group), however, showed that a two-factor model yielded the most optimal solution. The first factor represents children's 'interpersonal skills' and the second factor children's 'interest in diversity'. The specific items and factor loadings of these two latent factors are presented in Table 7. This table shows that the factor loadings of items belonging to each construct are approximately equal. This means that all items are equally important for calculating the latent mean of this construct.

To achieve adequate model fit, we excluded item 5 (has a sense of autonomy/ independence), item 7 (knows the difference between right and wrong), and item 9 (takes responsibility for her/his own behaviour). These three items didn't fit well in neither factor. That is, both item 5 and 9 do not include a strong social element, and item 7 is more strongly focused on children's moral development. Future analyses will further examine these individual items.

The model fit of the fully constrained model (i.e., the factor loadings and intercepts are constrained between both the sets of items for the younger than 3-year-olds and the 3- to 6-year-olds and across the nine countries) was adequate (CFI = 0.914, RMSEA = 0.066). It was possible to somewhat increase the model fit by releasing one or two factor loadings or the intercepts for some countries, however, the patterns in latent means across countries remained the same. Therefore, it was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Table 7

Interpersonal skills and Interest in diversity - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model

		Interpersonal skills < 3 & 3-6	Interest in diversity < 3 & 3-6
Items		λ (*SE*)	λ (*SE*)
3.1.1	Is able to communicate and interact well with peers and adults	0.922 (.015)	-
3.1.2	Shows respectful behaviours towards adults	0.942 (.014)	-
3.1.3	Can solve conflicts with other children	1.106 (.012)	-
3.1.4	Can share toys/things with other children	0.947 (.013)	-
3.1.6	Understands and respect rules	0.959 (.012)	-
3.1.8	Respects other children's ideas and interests	1.124 (.013)	-
3.1.10	Cares about children with handicap	-	1.072 (.010)
3.1.11	Is interested in contact with children with different cultural and language backgrounds	-	0.928 (.010)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means of the scales across countries for both the < 3 and 3-6 items, rescaled to the original answer scale, are presented in Table 8 and Figure 2 and 3. As expected, parents in each country thought that both children's interpersonal skills and interest in diversity are more important for children from 3 to 6 years than for children younger than 3 years. Overall, the standard deviations are rather similar across countries. They are much smaller for interpersonal skills than for interest in diversity, suggesting more agreement among parents regarding the first and less regarding the latter.

Table 8

Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating interpersonal skills and interest in diversity in ECEC centres - Latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the age ranges <3 and 3-6 years

	Interpersonal skills		Interest in diversity	
	<3	3-6	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	3.53 (0.79)	4.51 (0.39)	2.95 (1.06)	3.87 (0.81)
EN	3.37 (0.55)	4.63 (0.29)	2.67 (1.25)	3.66 (1.07)
EL	4.10 (0.56)	4.75 (0.25)	3.98 (0.93)	4.59 (0.42)
IT	3.92 (0.71)	4.64 (0.38)	3.68 (0.89)	4.37 (0.59)
FI	3.43 (0.66)	4.45 (0.34)	2.57 (0.87)	3.44 (0.93)
NL	3.49 (0.83)	4.30 (0.52)	3.03 (1.08)	3.76 (0.83)
NO	4.06 (0.58)	4.67 (0.55)	3.93 (0.78)	4.52 (0.56)
PL	3.86 (0.64)	4.55 (0.37)	3.69 (0.77)	4.31 (0.51)
PT	3.91 (0.60)	4.52 (0.45)	3.75 (0.73)	4.38 (0.52)
Average[1]	3.74	4.56	3.36	4.10

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

Interpersonal skills

For children's interpersonal skills, countries mean scores are between 3.37 (EN) and 4.10 (EL) (i.e., between moderately important and important) when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 4.30 (NL) and 4.75 (EL) (i.e., between important and highly important) when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in opinion for younger children and older children is larger in some countries than in other countries; the difference is largest for Germany, Finland and England, and smallest for Norway, Poland, and Portugal (see Figure 3.1). When we calculate Cohen's *d* to determine the size of the difference between age groups we see, for example, that $d = 1.94$ for Finland and $d = 1.08$ for Portugal. This means that the mean difference in opinion for children younger than 3 years and children between 3 and 6 years varies between one and two pooled standard deviations. Note that the *d*-scores indicate strong effect sizes according to Cohen's rule-of-thumb.

When further examining the differences in opinions across countries for children younger than 3 year, we see the largest differences between Greece and Norway on the one hand and Finland, the Netherlands and England on the other hand. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). When we calculate Cohen's *d* between Greece (4.10) and Finland (3.43), we see that $d = 1.09$. This means that the mean difference in opinion for children younger than 3 years between those two countries is more than one pooled standard deviation.

For children between 3 and 6 years, we see that the differences between countries are somewhat smaller. Nevertheless, when we calculate Cohen's *d* between Greece and the Netherlands (which takes into account the *SD*'s in the countries), we see that $d = 1.10$, which is still considered to be a quite large difference. Note, however, that the variance for the older children is smaller than for the younger children, which can explain the

relatively large *d*-score despite smaller differences on the original scale. Moreover, it can be questioned whether the difference between 4.30 (NL) and 4.75 (EL) is relevant from an educational policy point of view.

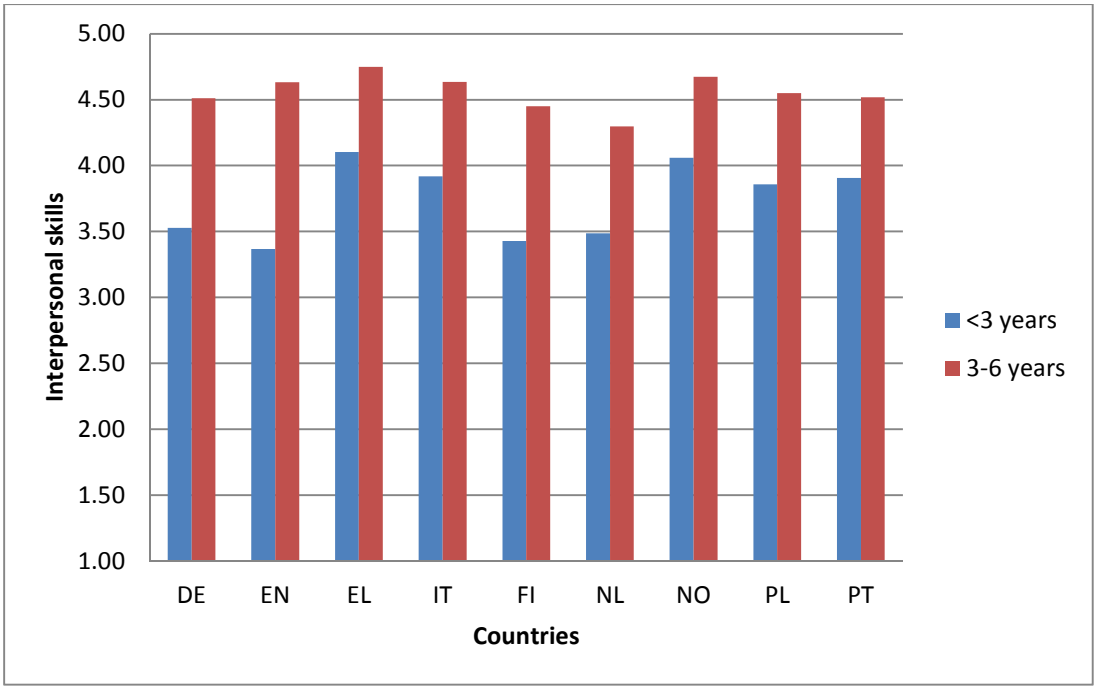

Figure 2. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating interpersonal skills development in ECEC - latent means by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges.

Interest in diversity

For children's interest in diversity, countries score on average between 2.57 (FI) and 3.98 (EL) (i.e., between 'of little importance' and 'important') when children are younger than 3 years of age and between 3.44 and 4.59 (i.e., between 'moderately important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in importance ratings between children younger than 3 years and children between 3 and 6 years is larger in some countries than in other countries. For example, the difference is largest for Germany, Finland and England, and smallest for Norway, Poland, and Portugal (see Figure 3.2). However, when we calculate Cohen's *d*, we see that $d = 0.98$ for Germany and $d = 0.87$ for Norway. So while the unstandardized differences seem larger, the standardized differences are approximately the same.

When further examining the differences across countries for children younger than 3 years of age, we see that the largest differences are between Greece and Norway on the one hand and Finland, Germany and England on the other hand. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). When we calculate Cohen's *d* for the difference between Greece and Finland, we find $d = 1.57$, a strong effect. For children between 3 and 6 years of age, we still see quite large mean differences in parents' importance ratings between countries. Greece and Norway are the highest, and Finland, the Netherlands and England the lowest. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). For example, Cohen's *d* for the difference in mean ratings between Greece and Finland is 1.59.

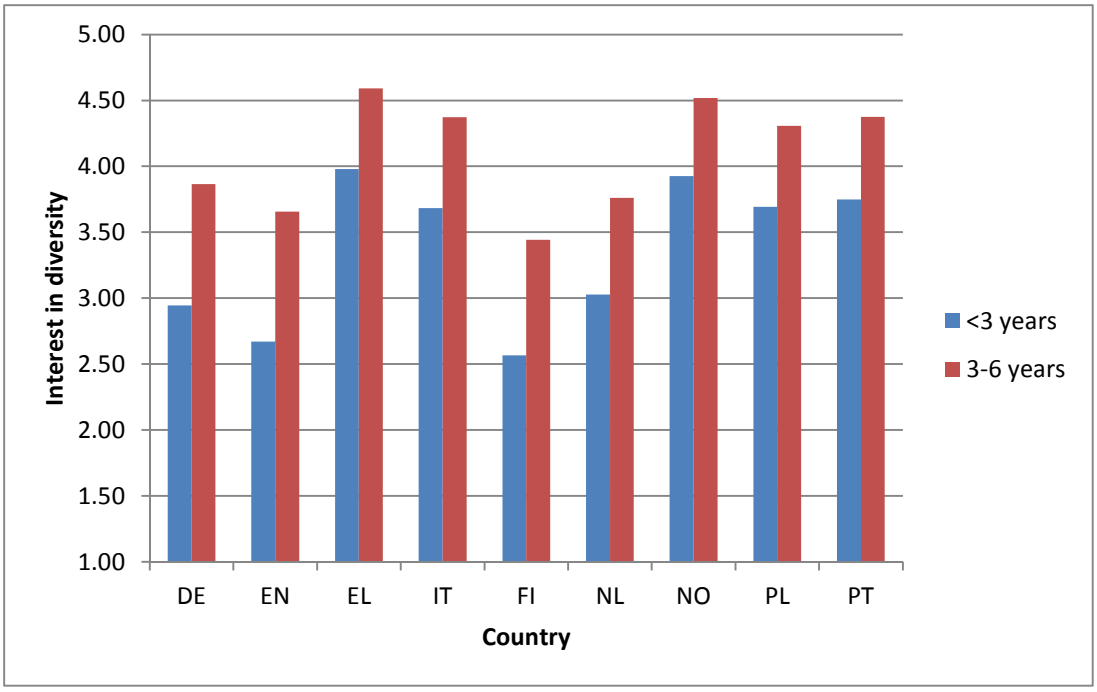

Figure 3. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating interest in diversity in ECEC - latent means by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges.

DEVELOPMENT OF THINKING, LANGUAGE AND MATH

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

In the section development of thinking, language and math we aimed to include specific pre-academic as well as general communication and learning-related skills. Both the results from exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses (based on both the total group and the multi-group models), showed that indeed a two-factor model yielded the most optimal solution. The first factor represents children's 'pre-academic skills' and the second factor children's 'learning related skills'. The specific items and factor loadings of these two latent factors are presented in Table 9. This table shows that the factor loadings of items belonging to each construct are approximately equal. This means that all items are equally important for calculating the latent mean of this construct.

To achieve adequate model fit, we excluded item 1 (Has good spoken language) and 8 (Has basic skills in a language other than the mother tongue), as both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses showed that they didn't load well on either factor. Future analyses will further examine these items separately. Finally, the modification indices of the statistical software Mplus indicated that we had to estimate the residual covariances between the error terms of item 5 and 7 for both age groups. This is probably due to the fact that item 5 and 7 are rather similarly worded (i.e., they are both about communication).

The model fit of the fully constrained model (i.e., the factor loadings and intercepts are constrained between both the sets of items for the younger than 3-year-olds and the 3- to 6-year-olds and across the nine countries) was

acceptable (CFI = 0.887, RMSEA = 0.083). It was possible to increase the model fit to adequate levels by releasing the constraints of one or two factor loadings and the indicator intercepts for some countries, however, the patterns in latent means across countries remained the same. Therefore, it was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Table 9

Pre-academic and Learning related skills - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model.

		Pre-academic skills <3 & 3-6	Learning related skills <3 & 3-6
Items		λ *(SE)*	λ *(SE)*
3.2.2	Has elementary knowledge of writing and reading (e.g., writes letters of her/his name)	1.085 (.007)	-
3.2.3	Has basic understanding of numbers (for example, can count to 10)	1.040 (.006)	-
3.2.4	Has basic understanding of shapes	0.875 (.007)	-
3.2.5	Can communicate own ideas and experiences	-	0.944 (.011)
3.2.6	Is interested in knowledge of the physical world	-	0.927 (.014)
3.2.7	Can ask questions to get information	-	0.875 (.011)
3.2.9	Is able to describe, explain and reason about the world	-	1.188 (.010)
3.2.10	Can make plans for play and work	-	1.066 (.012)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age ranges are presented in Table 10 and Figures 4 and 5. As expected, parents in each country thought that both children's pre-academic skills and learning related skills are more important for children from 3 to 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age.

Table 10

Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating the development of pre-academic skills and learning-related skills in ECEC - Latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age range

	Pre-academic skills		Learning related skills	
	<3	3-6	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	2.22 (0.75)	4.08 (0.70)	2.98 (0.75)	4.37 (0.45)
EN	2.13 (0.93)	4.22 (0.82)	3.08 (0.73)	4.55 (0.29)

EL	3.18 (0.73)	4.65 (0.42)	3.62 (0.68)	4.65 (0.43)
IT	2.67 (1.03)	4.18 (0.77)	3.42 (0.84)	4.43 (0.52)
FI	1.96 (0.70)	3.81 (0.80)	2.90 (0.83)	4.24 (0.58)
NL	2.54 (1.01)	4.16 (0.80)	2.82 (0.86)	4.10 (0.63)
NO	2.83 (1.04)	4.41 (0.56)	3.35 (0.86)	4.54 (0.35)
PL	2.60 (0.93)	4.41 (0.51)	3.31 (0.75)	4.43 (0.43)
PT	2.99 (0.95)	4.26 (0.72)	3.44 (0.63)	4.33 (0.42)
Average[1]	2.57	4.24	3.21	4.40

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

Pre-academic skills

For children's pre-academic skills, countries score on average between 1.96 (FI) and 3.18 (EL) (i.e., between of 'little importance' and 'somewhat important') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 3.81 (FI) and 4.65 (EL) (i.e., between 'important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in opinion for children younger than 3 years and children between 3 and 6 years is larger in some countries than in other countries; the difference is largest for Germany, Finland and England, and smallest for Norway, Italy, and Portugal (see Figure 3.3). When we calculate Cohen's *d*, we find $d = 2.56$ for Germany and $d = 1.51$ for Portugal, both indicating very strong differences.

When further examining the differences in opinions across countries for children younger than 3 years of age, we see that the largest differences are between Greece and Portugal on the one hand and Finland, Germany and England on the other hand. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). When we calculate Cohen's *d* for the difference in means between Greece (3.18) and Finland (1.96), we find $d = 1.71$. This means that the mean difference in rated importance of developing pre-academic skills for children younger than 3 years of age between those two countries is almost two pooled standard deviations, a very strong difference.

For children between 3 and 6 years of age, the unstandardized differences between countries are smaller. Nevertheless, when we calculate Cohen's *d* for the difference between Greece (4.65) and Finland (3.81), we find $d = 1.31$, which is still considered to be a quite large difference. This difference is also statistically significant ($p < .01$)

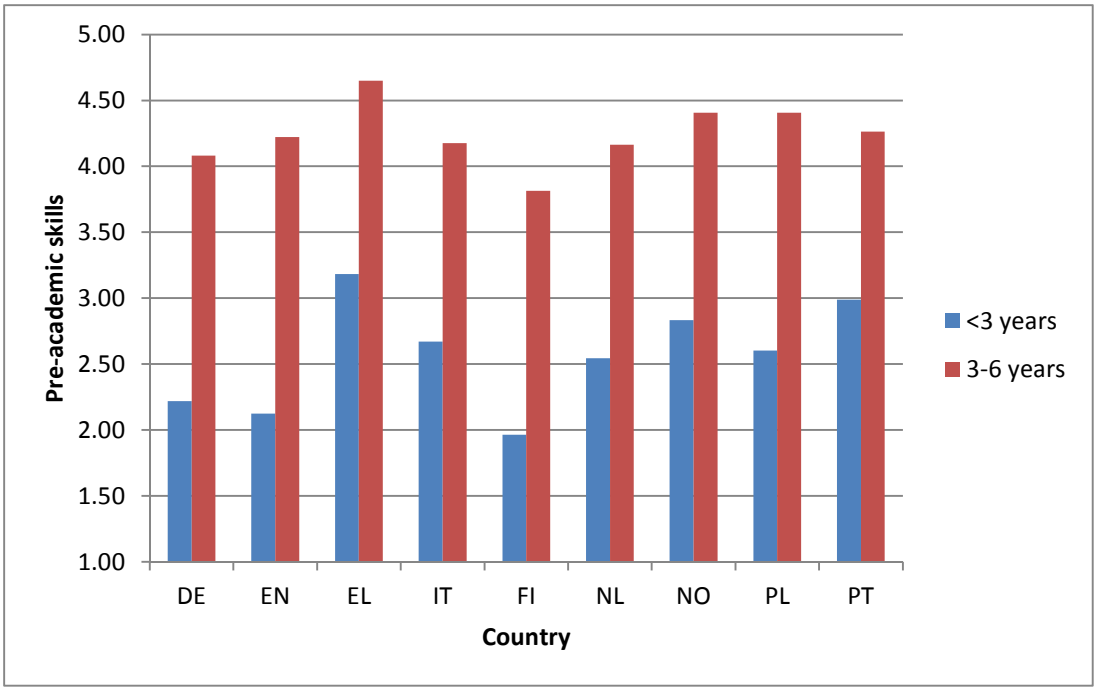

Figure 4. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating pre-academic skills in ECEC - latent means by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges.

Learning-related skills

For children's learning-related skills, countries score on average between 2.82 (NL) and 3.62 (EL) (i.e., between 'somewhat important' and 'important') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 4.10 and 4.65 (i.e., between 'moderately important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in the rated importance of fostering learning-related skills for children younger than 3 years and children between 3 and 6 years is in some countries larger than in other countries. For example, the difference is largest for Germany, Finland and the Netherlands, and smallest for Greece, Italy, and Portugal (see Figure 3.4). When we calculate Cohen's *d*, we find $d = 2.25$ for Germany and $d = 1.66$ for Portugal.

When further examining the differences across countries for children younger than 3 years of age, we see the largest differences in views between Greece, Italy, and Portugal, on the one hand, and Finland, the Netherlands and Germany, on the other hand. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). When we calculate for example Cohen's *d* between Greece and the Netherlands, we see that the $d = 1.03$.

For children between 3and 6 years of age, we see smaller (though statistically significant) differences in opinions between countries; Greece and Norway are the highest, and Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal the lowest. When calculating Cohen's *d*, we find $d = 1.02$ for the difference in mean importance ratings between Greece and the Netherlands. So while the unstandardized differences seem smaller, the standardized differences are approximately the same, which can be partly explained by the reduced variances within countries in the importance ratings for the older children compared to the younger children. However, it can be questioned whether the difference between 4.10 (NL) and 4.65 (EL) is still relevant.

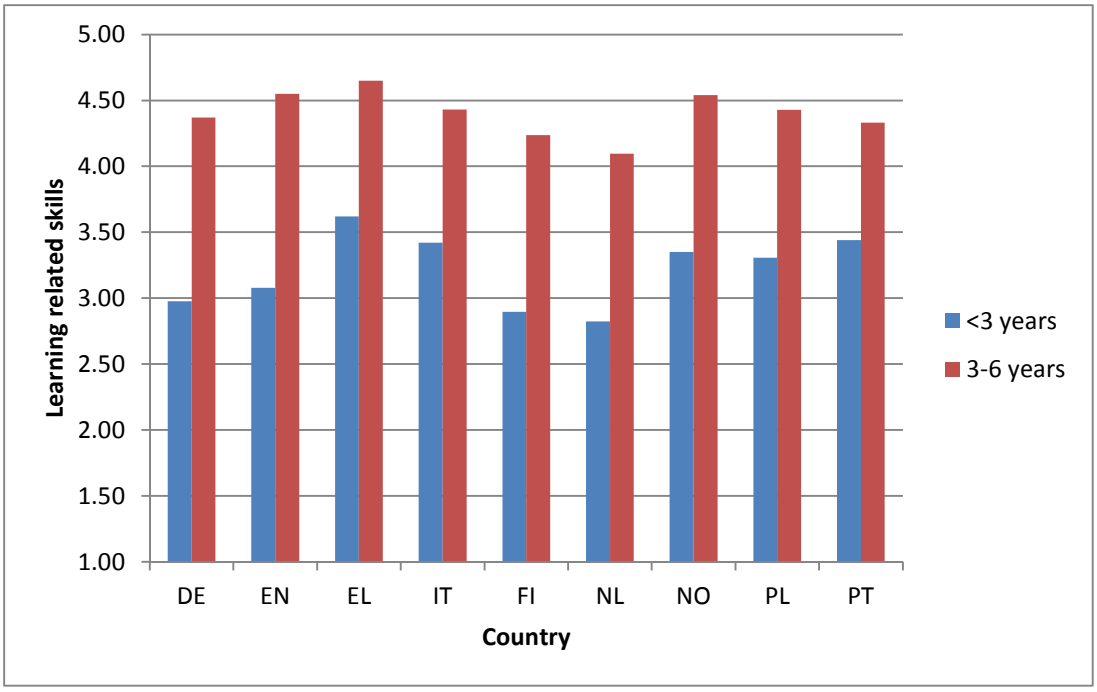

Figure 5. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating learning related skills in ECEC - latent means by country for the age ranges < 3 and 3-6 age range.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, SKILLS, AND HEALTH

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

In the section physical development, skills, and health we aimed to include a wide range of items, covering both physical activity, healthy eating, and motor, creative and practical skills. Based on the first exploratory and subsequent confirmatory factor analyses we excluded item 2 (has healthy eating habits), since this item did not fit well with the other items. Exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses for the total group suggested a two- or three-factor model, however, these models did not fit when estimating multiple group models for all countries. More specifically, the correlation between some of the latent factors was larger than 1 in some countries. This is confirmed by the fact that a one-factor model also had adequate model fit. In this one-factor model we excluded item 4 (Copes with practical tasks (for example, washing or dressing by him-/herself) and 7 (Has basic skills in daily work at home (participating in preparing food, setting the table, tidying up)), as it appeared to be difficult to impose measurement invariance constraints for the younger and older children's items. Future analyses will further examine these excluded items.

The final factor represents children's 'physical/motor skills'. The specific items and factor loadings of this latent factor are presented in Table 3.5. This table shows that the factor loadings are somewhat different, with item 6 (Has basic skills in arts (painting, drawing, music, dance)) contributing most strongly to the construct and item 3 (has good motor skills) contributing least to the construct. The model fit of this fully constrained model (i.e., the factor loadings and intercepts are constrained between both the < 3 and 3-6 items and across the nine countries) was acceptable (CFI = 0.874, RMSEA = 0.099). It was possible to increase the model fit to adequate levels by releasing the invariance constraints of one or two factor loadings and indicator intercepts for some countries,

however, the patterns in latent means across countries remained the same. Therefore, it was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Table 11

Physical/motor skills - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model

		Physical activity, motor and creative skills <3 & 3-6
Items		λ *(SE)*
3.3.1	Has physical endurance	0.970 (.018)
3.3.3	Has good motor skills	0.650 (.017)
3.3.5	Engages in physical play, sports or dance	1.175 (.016)
3.3.6	Has basic skills in arts (painting, drawing, music, dance)	1.194 (.014)
3.3.8	Has the capability to express him-/herself in various creative art forms, music, or dance	1.012 (.017)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age groups are presented in Table 12 and Figure 6. As expected, and in line with the other developmental domains, parents in each country thought that children's physical/motor skills are more important for children from 3-6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age.

Table 12

Physical/ motor skills - latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) across countries for < 3 and 3-6 years

	Physical/motor skills	
	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	3.41 (0.66)	4.11 (0.54)
EN	3.10 (0.78)	3.99 (0.59)
EL	3.85 (.69)	4.43 (0.42)
IT	3.32 (0.82)	4.03 (0.61)
FI	3.16 (0.80)	3.90 (0.59)
NL	3.41 (0.76)	4.04 (0.60)
NO	3.97 (0.62)	4.39 (0.44)
PL	3.78 (0.68)	4.33 (0.50)
PT	3.73 (0.55)	4.21 (0.48)
Average[1]	3.54	4.16

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

Table 12 shows that countries' average scores range between 3.10 (EN) and 3.97 (NO) (i.e., between 'somewhat important' and 'important') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 3.99 (EN) and 4.43 (EL) (i.e., between 'important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in rated importance of fostering physical and motor skills development between the two age groups is larger in some countries than in other countries; the difference is largest for Italy, Finland and Germany, and smallest for Norway, and Portugal. When we calculate Cohen's *d* for the difference in mean importance ratings for the two age groups for Finland and Norway we find $d = 1.05$ for Finland and $d = 0.78$ for Norway.

When further examining the differences in mean importance ratings across countries for children younger than 3 year of age, we see that the largest differences exist between Norway, Greece, and Poland, on the one hand, and Finland, England and Italy, on the other hand. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < .01$). Cohen's *d* for the difference between Norway (3.97) and Finland (3.16) is $d = 1.13$, a strong difference.

For children between 3-6 years of age, the differences between countries are somewhat smaller. Nevertheless, Cohen's *d* for the difference in mean importance ratings regarding physical and motor development between Greece (4.43) and Finland (3.90) is $d = 1.03$, which is still considered to be a quite large difference. This difference is also statistically significant ($p < .01$). However, it can again be questioned whether the difference between 3.90 (FI) and 4.43 (EL) is relevant from an educational policy point of view.

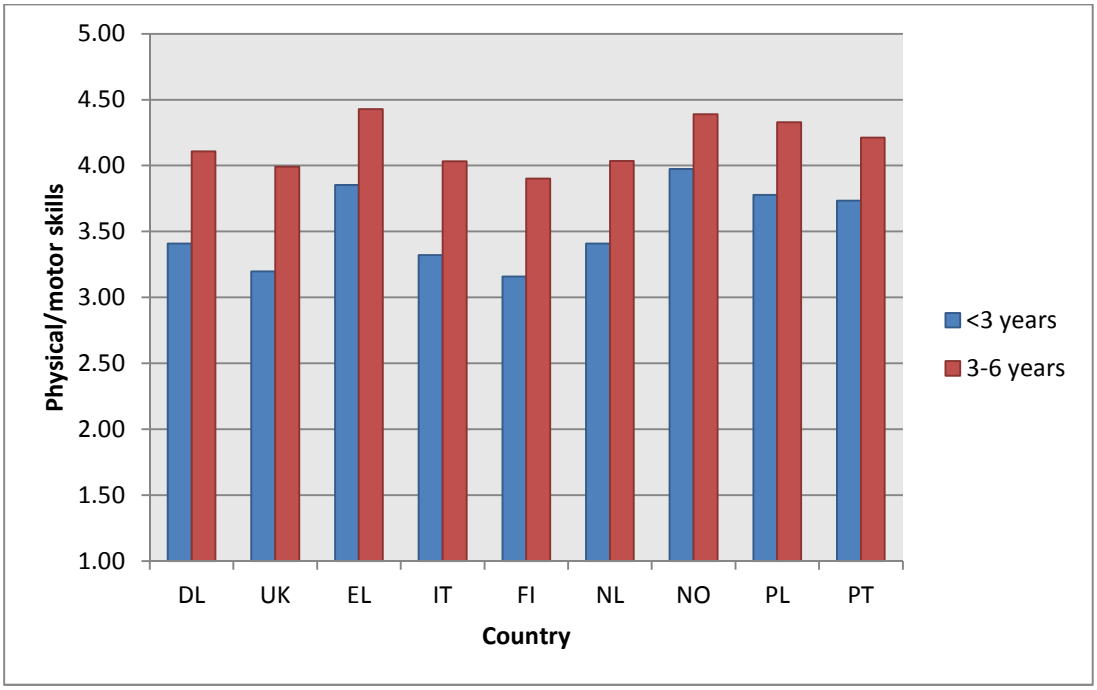

Figure 6. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating physical/motor skills - latent means by country for the age ranges <3 and 3-6 years of age.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

In the section emotional development we aimed to include items which covered children's ability to regulate, control and express their feelings and to be aware of thoughts and feelings of others. Based on the first exploratory and subsequent confirmatory factor analyses we excluded item 2 (experiences joy of life), since this item did not fit well with the other items. Both the results from exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses (based on both total group and multi-group models), showed that indeed a one-factor model yielded the most optimal solution. We named this construct 'emotional regulation', since all items contain an aspect of children's ability to control and regulate their emotions. The specific items and factor loadings belonging to this latent factor are presented in Table 13. This table shows that the factor loadings differ somewhat, with item 5 (Shows awareness of others' thoughts and feelings) contributing most to the variance in the construct and item 3 (Develops a strong will of her/his own) contributing least to the variance in the construct.

The model fit of the fully constrained model was acceptable (CFI = 0.884, RMSEA = 0.095). It was possible to increase the model fit to adequate levels by releasing the invariance constraints of one or two factor loadings or intercepts for some countries, however, the patterns in latent means across countries remained the same. Therefore, it was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Table 13

Emotional regulation - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model

		Emotional regulation <3 & 3-6
Items		λ *(SE)*
3.4.1	Can express feelings and needs adequately	0.952 (.016)
3.4.3	Develops a strong will of her/his own	0.751 (.017)
3.4.4	Develops control of her/his emotions	1.097 (.015)
3.4.5	Shows awareness of others' thoughts and feelings	1.200 (.016)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age groups are presented in Table 14 and Figure 7. As expected, and in line with the other developmental domains, parents in each country thought that fostering children's emotion regulation skills in ECEC is more important for children from 3 to 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age.

Table 14

Parents' ratings of the importance of emotional regulation - latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges

	Emotional regulation	
	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	3.87 (0.66)	4.59 (0.41)
EN	3.95 (0.55)	4.80 (0.20)
EL	4.12 (0.70)	4.70 (0.39)
IT	3.97 (0.69)	4.58 (0.47)
FI	3.83 (0.66)	4.55 (0.38)
NL	3.72 (0.73)	4.38 (0.46)
NO	4.24 (0.46)	4.73 (0.28)
PL	3.75 (0.79)	4.43 (0.49)
PT	3.72 (0.65)	4.41 (0.44)
Average[1]	3.91	4.57

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

In Table 14 we see that countries score on average between 3.72 (NL and PT) and 4.24 (NO) (i.e., around 'important') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 4.38 (NL) and 4.80 (EN) (i.e., between 'important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in importance ratings for younger and older children is quite similar in all countries (see Figure 3.6). Cohen's *d* for the largest (FI) and smallest difference (NO) is $d = 1.34$ for Finland and $d = 1.29$ for Norway. Note that, despite sizeable differences in the importance ratings between the two age groups, the mean importance ratings for developing emotion regulation are also for the youngest still quite high.

When further examining the differences in parents' views regarding the importance of developing emotion regulation in the youngest children across countries, we see the largest difference between Greece and Norway, on the one hand, and the Netherlands and Portugal, on the other hand. However, although still significant ($p < .01$), these differences are small compared to the other developmental domains. For example, Cohen's *d* for the difference between Norway (4.24) and the Netherlands (3.72) is $d = 0.85$, suggesting stronger agreement on this aspect of development among parents from the different countries

For children between 3-6 years of age, we see that the differences in importance attached to emotion regulation development between countries are even smaller. Nevertheless, when we calculate Cohen's *d* between Norway and the Netherlands (which takes into account the *SD*'s in the countries), we see that $d = 0.92$, partly due to decreased variances, which is still considered to be a quite large difference. However, it can be questioned whether the difference between 4.38 (NL) and 4.73 (NO) is relevant.

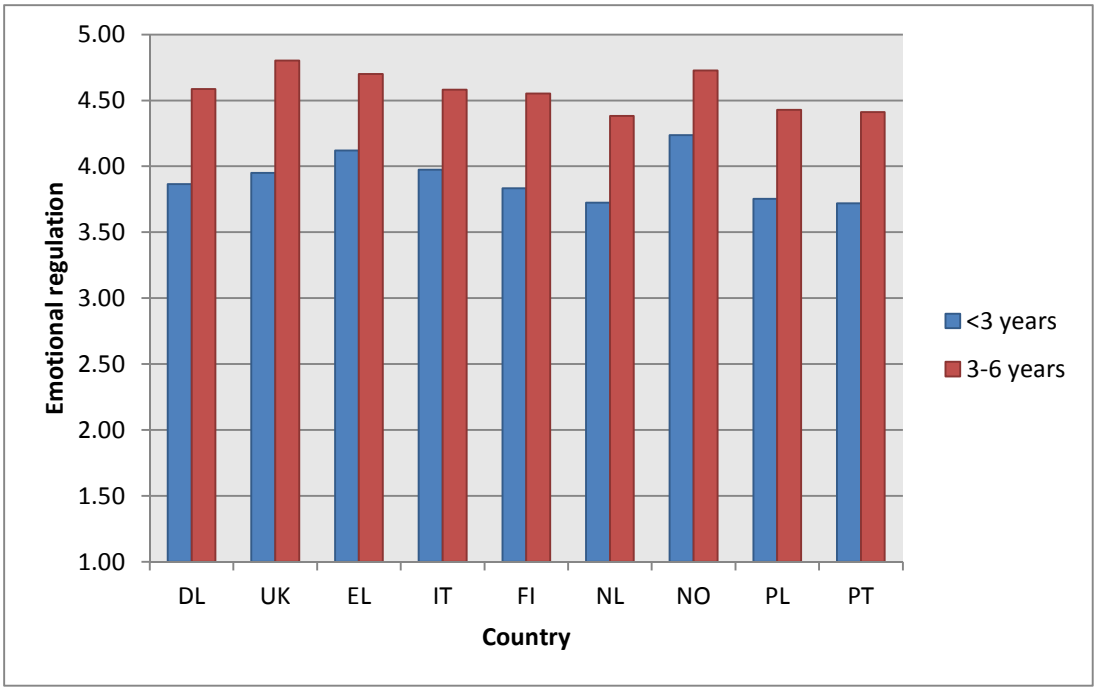

Figure 7. Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating emotional regulation in ECEC - latent means by country for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

In the section personal development we aimed to include items which addressed several aspects of children's personal attitudes toward and self-confidence in activities and experiences that can foster learning and development. Item 2 (Is able to solve problems by her-/himself) of this section, however, addresses a skill instead of attitude, and appeared to not fit well with the other items in the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Therefore, this item was excluded.

Both the results from exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses (based on total group and multi-group models), showed that a one-factor model yielded the most optimal solution. We named this construct 'personal learning attitudes'. The specific items and factor loadings belonging to this latent factor are presented in Table 15. This table shows that the factor loadings are somewhat different, with item 4 (Shows persistence, and focus in play and learning activities) contributing most to the variance in the construct and item 3 (Shows enthusiasm in play and learning activities) the least.

The model fit of the fully constrained model was acceptable (CFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.091). It was possible to increase the model fit to adequate levels by releasing the invariance constraints of one or two factor loadings and/or intercepts for some countries, however, the patterns in latent means across countries remained the same. Therefore, it was decided to use the fully constrained confirmatory factor model to compare the latent means across countries.

Table 15

Personal learning attitudes - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model

		Personal learning attitudes <3 & 3-6
Items		λ *(SE)*
3.5.1	Is open-minded, not afraid to try new things	1.002 (.018)
3.5.3	Shows enthusiasm in play and learning activities	0.857 (.019)
3.5.4	Shows persistence, and focus in play and learning activities	1.257 (.022)
3.5.5	Has confidence in her/his own abilities	0.884 (.019)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age groups are presented in Table 16 and Figure 8. As expected, and in line with the other developmental domains, parents in each country thought that fostering children's personal learning attitudes are more important for children from 3 to 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age.

Table 16

Parents' ratings of the importance of stimulating personal learning attitudes in ECEC centers - latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the age ranges <3 and 3-6 years

	Personal learning attitudes	
	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	4.05 (0.60)	4.53 (0.42)
EN	3.54 (0.73)	4.61 (0.43)
EL	4.17 (0.60)	4.71 (0.27)
IT	4.05 (0.60)	4.51 (0.45)
FI	3.67 (0.72)	4.36 (0.46)
NL	3.81 (0.74)	4.38 (0.44)
NO	4.21 (0.50)	4.61 (0.33)
PL	3.89 (0.56)	4.43 (0.44)
PT	4.10 (0.54)	4.50 (0.40)
Average[1]	3.94	4.51

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

In Table 16 we see that countries score on average between 3.54 (EN) and 4.21 (NO) (i.e., around 'important') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 4.36 (FI) and 4.71 (EL) (i.e., between 'important' and 'highly important') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. The difference in importance attached to developing personal learning attitudes between the two age groups is quite similar in all countries (see Figure

3.7). Cohen's *d*'s for the largest (FI) and smallest difference (NO) between the age groups is respectively d = 1.14 for Finland and d = 0.84 for Portugal.

When further examining the differences in ratings across countries for children younger than 3 year of age, we see the largest differences between Norway and Greece, on the one hand, and the Finland and England, on the other hand. Although still significant ($p < .01$), these differences are small compared to the other developmental domains. Cohen's d for the difference between Norway (4.21) and Finland (3.67) is d = 0.87.

For children between 3-6 years of age, we see that the differences between countries are even smaller. Nevertheless, Cohen's d for the difference between Greece and Finland is d = 0.93, which is still considered to be a quite large difference. However, it can be questioned whether the difference between 4.36 (FI) and 4.71 (EL) is still theoretically relevant. Note that the importance ratings regarding the development in ECEC of positive personal learning attitudes are quite high for both age groups, as was found for emotion regulation.

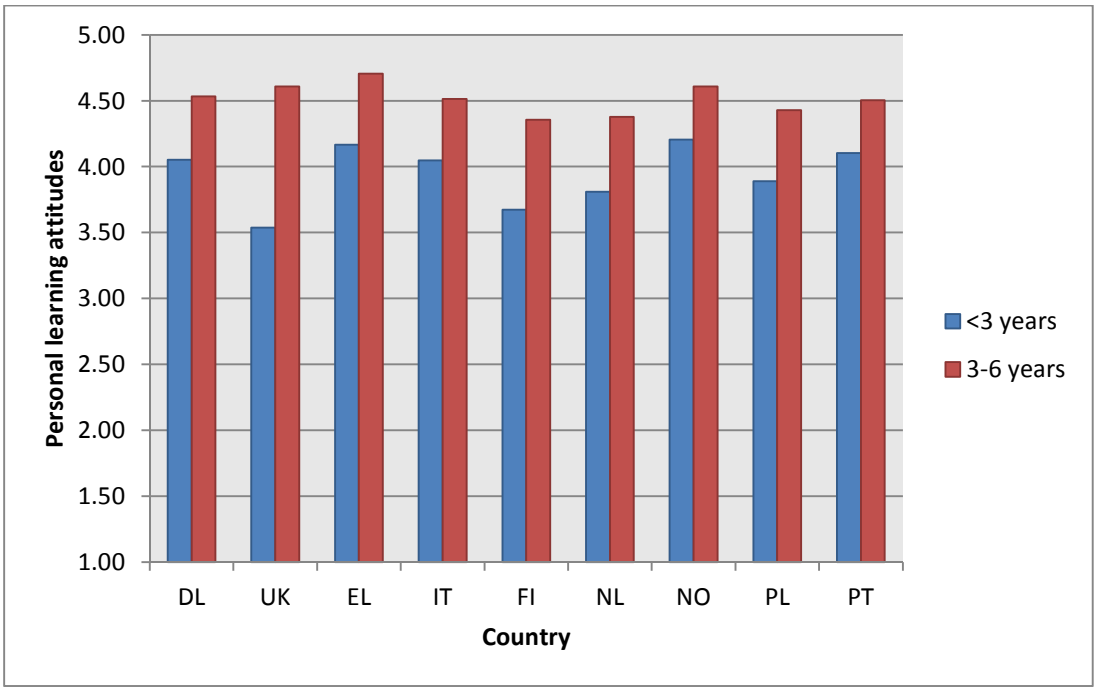

Figure 8. Personal learning attitudes - Latent means across countries for < 3 and 3-6 years.

3.6 WITHIN COUNTRY PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS

To be able to compare the relative importance of the developmental goals within countries, we plotted the average latent means of parents' importance ratings, rescaled to the original answer scale, of all developmental goals for children younger than 3 years of age in Figure 9 and the same for children between 3 and 6 years of age in Figure 10. In general, these figures show that there are differences in the relative importance of the developmental goals for both age groups, with the largest differences for children younger than 3 years of age.

When we focus on the pattern of developmental goals for children younger than 3 years of age, we see that, in general, the pattern of relative importance attached to the range of developmental goals is rather similar across countries (Figure 9). According to parents in all countries, stimulating children's pre-academic skills is least important in this age range, followed by learning-related skills. In addition, parents in almost all countries think that interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes are the most important domains of development to be fostered in this age range. Regarding the importance of interest in diversity, there are large differences across countries. Parents in Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland and Portugal rate the importance of this goal at similar levels as interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes, whereas Germany, England, Finland and the Netherlands think that this goal is relatively less important. Correspondingly, parents in Greece, Norway, Poland and Portugal rate physical/ motor skills at similar levels as interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes, whereas stimulating these skills in ECEC is rated less important in England, Finland and Italy.

For children between 3 and 6 years of age, Figure 10 shows that the pattern of relative importance of developmental goals is also quite similar across countries, with again the highest importance attached to children's interpersonal skills, emotion regulation and personal learning attitudes, although learning-related skills are catching up. In general, parents think that almost all developmental goals are important to stimulate in ECEC (i.e., scores higher than 4) for the older age group. Only the scores on interest in diversity range between somewhat important (i.e., score of 3) and important (i.e., score of 4). In line with the pattern for the younger children, parents in Germany, England, Finland, and the Netherlands think that it is relatively less important to focus on the interest in diversity of children compared to the other countries. In addition, in some countries, the development of pre-academic skills is rated as less important than the development of more 'soft skills', like interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes. This difference is largest for Finland, followed by Germany, while the difference is smallest for Greece and Poland. Finally, similar to the pattern for children younger than 3 years of age, parents in Greece, Norway, Poland and Portugal rate physical/ motor skills at similar levels as interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, personal learning attitudes and learning related skills.

To conclude this section, Figure 11 presents the 'European average' on these seven developmental goals for both age groups. These European averages are also presented in the tables in the sections on the individual developmental goals. In this way, the latent mean of each country on a specific goal can be compared to this European average. Figure 11 shows that, on average, the importance parents attach to stimulating the development of pre-academic and learning-related skills in ECEC shows the largest increase with age. Finally, whereas children's interpersonal skills, emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes are most important across both age ranges according to parents, children's learning related skills are clearly catching up in attributed importance for children between 3 and 6 years of age.

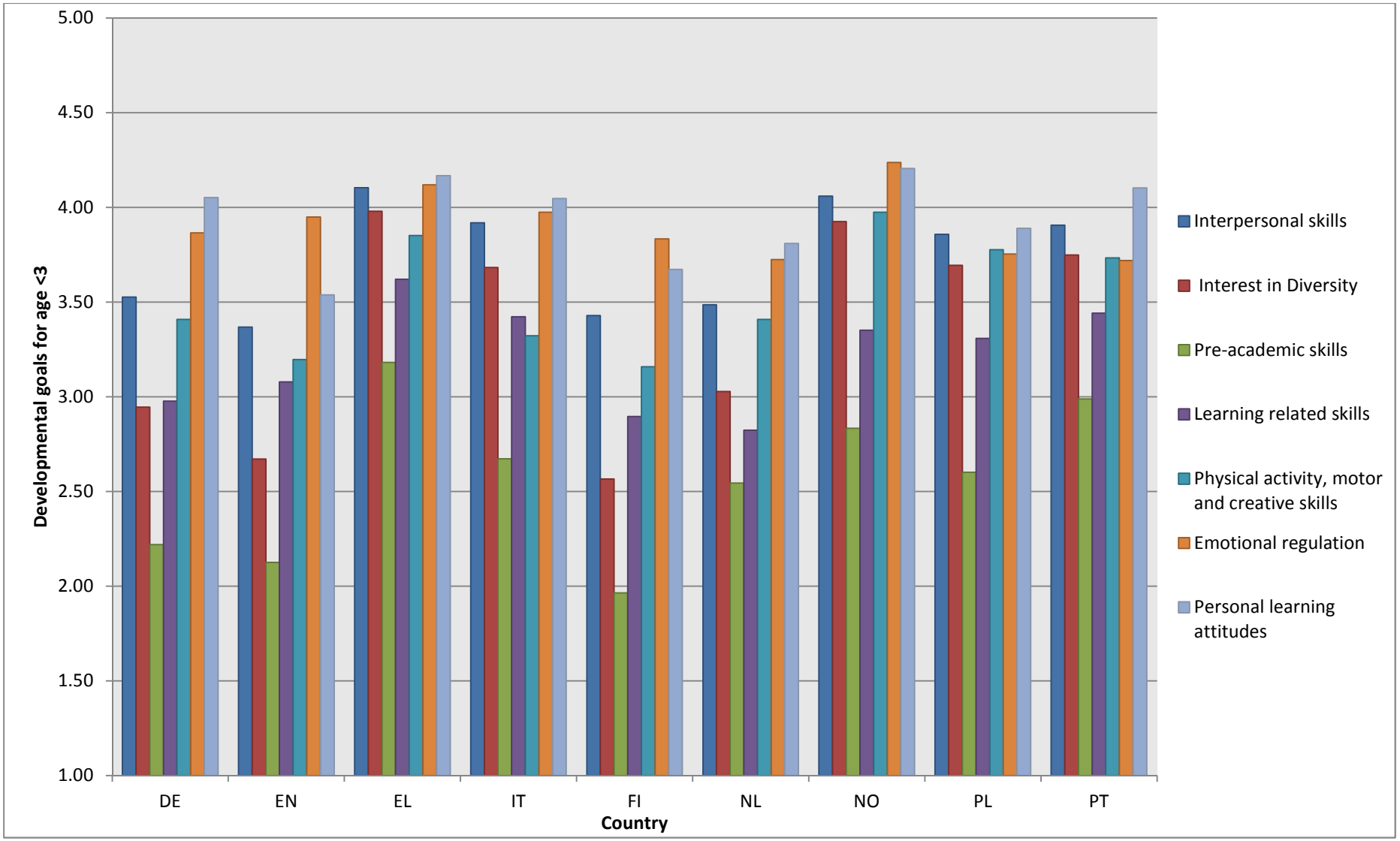

Figure 9. Pattern of developmental goals - latent means across countries for children younger than 3 years of age.

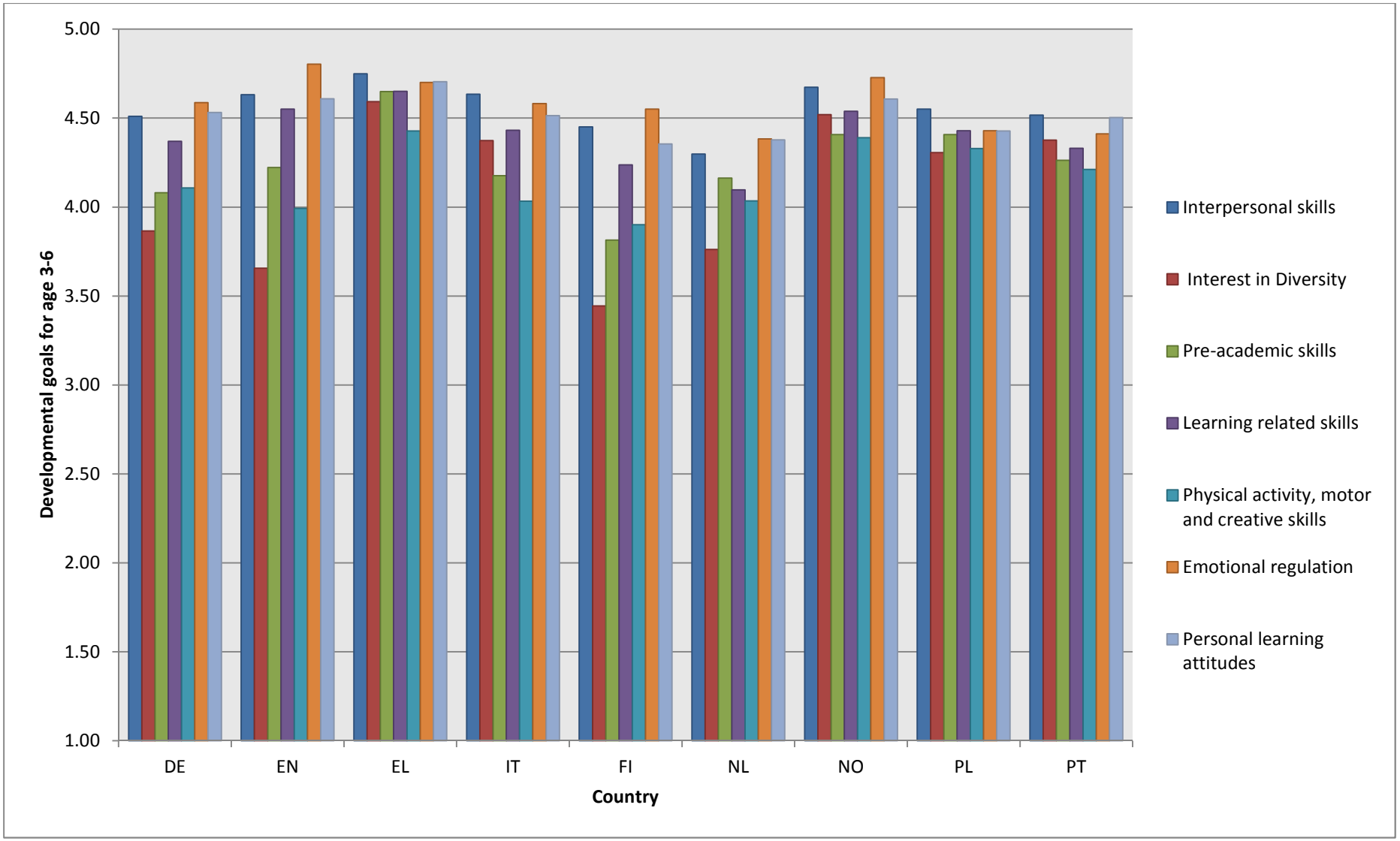

Figure 10. Pattern of developmental goals - latent means across countries for children between 3 and 6 years of age.

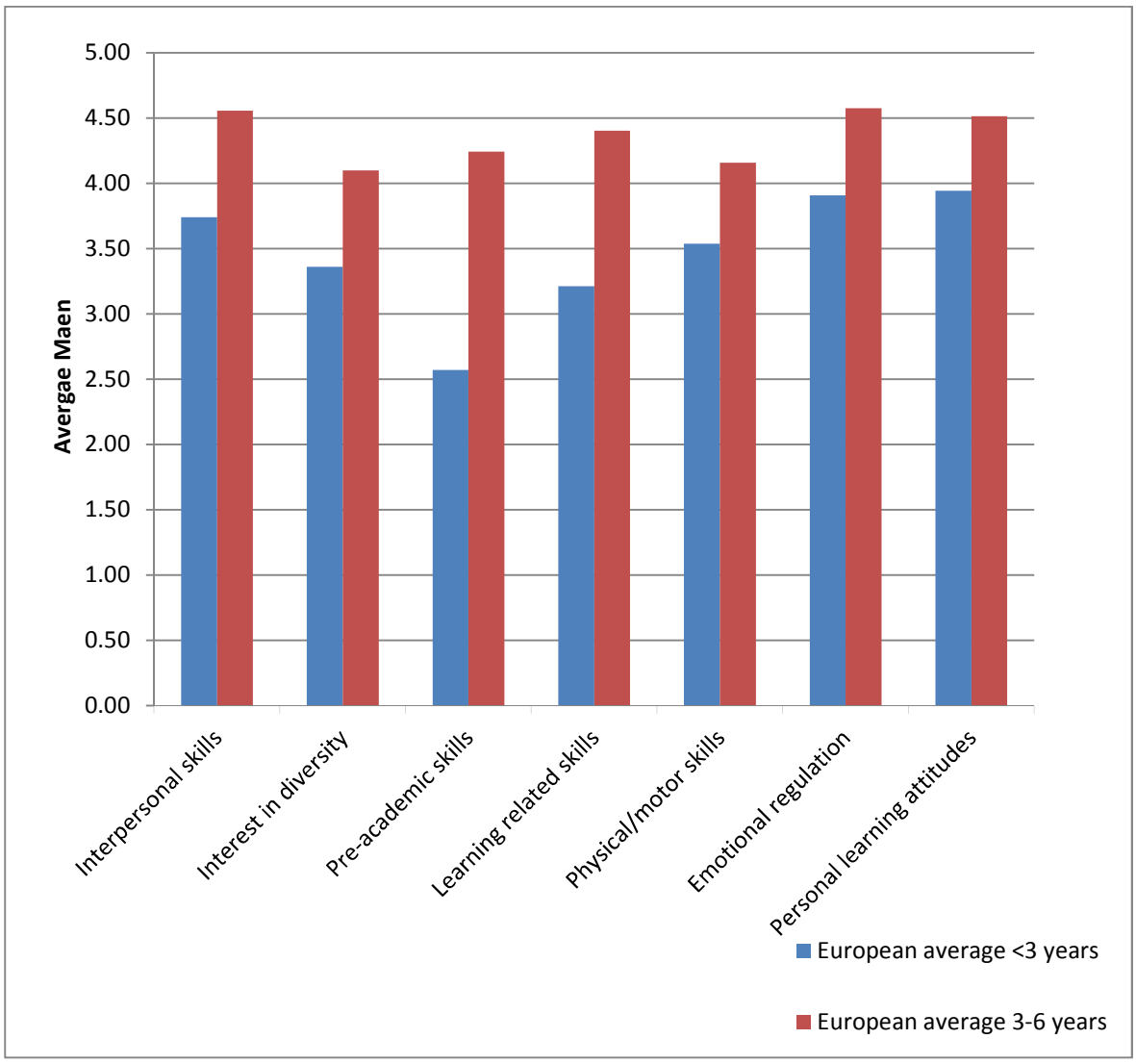

Figure 11. Pattern of developmental goals – Average latent means across 9 European countries for children <3 years of age and between 3 and 6 years of age.

GENERAL SUMMARY

The first research question of this study concerned parents' views on how strongly ECEC-settings should focus on various educational and developmental goals. To answer this question, parents responded to several questions concerning a wide array of goals, ranging from more 'soft' social, emotional and personal skills to more 'hard' pre-academic skills. All questions were answered for two age groups: children younger than 3 years of age and children from 3 to 6 years of age.

Overall, satisfactory measurement equivalence across age groups and countries was found. This means that we are able to make meaningful comparisons of the mean importance ratings, both within countries between age groups, and between countries within age groups. Finding measurement equivalence is quite a unique finding, pointing to largely shared thinking (cultural-conceptual frameworks) about early development and learning among parents across the nine countries and for both age groups. Yet, clear differences remain in the

mean importance attached to the different domains of development as areas for stimulation in ECEC. These differences between countries were often small when regarding the original, 1 to 5 scale, but quite the (standardized) Cohen's *d* were (very) large. However, we should be somewhat careful with interpreting this statistic, since we are examining differences in values and beliefs, not in, for example, children's behaviour. Finally, certain items did not fit in the constructed scales as expected and warrant future investigation.

When evaluating the average differences in developmental goals *within countries between age groups*, we see that all goals increase in importance with age. These increases were stronger for some than for other countries. Whereas the largest differences are often found for Germany, Finland, and England, smallest differences are often found for Norway, Poland, Portugal and Italy. For children's emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes, countries show similar increases in importance with age. For all countries, we saw the strongest increase in importance of stimulating children's pre-academic skills, followed by stimulating children's learning related skills.

When evaluating the average differences in developmental goals *between countries within age groups*, we see that the (unstandardized) differences are smaller for children between 3 and 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age. For both age-ranges, the largest differences between countries are found for children's pre-academic 'hard' skills; whereas Greece, Norway, and Portugal score relatively high across both age ranges, Germany and Finland score relatively low.

The *patterns of the relative importance of developmental goals* are rather similar between countries, especially for the more 'soft' skills, which are deemed (highly) important in all countries for both age-ranges. We see that within countries there was more diversity in the importance of developmental goals for children younger than 3 years of age. The most prominent difference was that parents adhere higher importance ratings to children's 'soft' interpersonal, emotional and personal skills versus 'hard' pre-academic skills. This difference was less strong for children between age 3 and 6, although it was still apparent in some countries (e.g., Finland and Germany).

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENT STRUCTURAL QUALITY INDICATORS AND EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES ACCORDING TO PARENTS?

The second research question of this study focused on the importance that parents attach to different structural quality indicators. To answer this research question, the items included in section 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5 of the questionnaire were analysed (see appendix B1). The leading question was:

"Different people will expect different things from ECEC. How important do you consider different characteristics of ECEC settings are for children's well-being, development and learning? (Applies to children 0-6 years of age)"

Section 2.1, 2.2 and 2.5 focused on three types of structural quality indicators of ECEC, respectively: Aspects of the physical environment (e.g., safety, outdoor space), organizational aspects (e.g., group size, stability of group) and staff characteristics (e.g., educational level, stability team). Parents were asked to give their general opinion on the importance of the listed aspects for children in the entire age range from 0 to 6 years of age. Although we acknowledge that it would have been more appropriate for some countries to separate some of the items for children younger than 3 years of age and between 3 and 6 years of age, due to a split system for younger and older children, this was not possible for some countries with a 0 to 6 system. In addition, as the questionnaire was already quite long, it would have been impossible to double the number of items for these sections. Similar to most other sections of the questionnaire, the answer categories of the items ranged from 1 'unimportant' to 5 'highly important'.

We will discuss the main findings section 2.1 (physical environment), 2.2 (organizational aspects), and 2.5 (staff characteristics) separately. We did not estimate confirmatory factor models, as the items were all quite different from each other and not intended to constitute scales. Instead, we selected several items which are generally regarded as indicative of structural quality, as defined on **p. 14** of this report. For these items we compared simple means and standard deviations across the nine countries. We have to be somewhat careful with the conclusions that we draw from the comparisons between countries on these items, since we could not test these items on measurement equivalence. For this reason we selected only items of which we were quite confident that they were relatively simple, unambiguous and easy to translate.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The selected items, including their simple means and standard deviations across countries, are presented in Table 17. and Figure 12. The table and figure show that parents from all countries think that a safe environment is a very important aspect of the physical ECEC environment. The patterns of the relative importance of the items diverge somewhat between countries. Whereas a large outdoor play space is the second most important aspect for Finnish parents, it is the least important for Dutch parents ($d = 0.62$), although Dutch parents still think that this characteristic is important ($M = 3.92$). For an environment that supports children's independence, Finland ($M = 4.16$) and the Netherlands ($M = 4.23$) have the lowest, and Germany ($M = 4.61$) and Italy ($M = 4.53$) the highest means. Cohen's d of the difference in attributed

importance between, for example, Germany and Finland is 0.64. For the provision of varied equipment, toys, and materials, Finland (*M* = 3.70) and England (*M* = 3.90) have the lowest, and Greece (*M* = 4.44) and Italy (*M* = 4.43) the highest average mean. Cohen's *d* for the difference in importance attributed to this aspect between Greece and Finland is 0.98.

Table 17

Physical environment - Latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) across nine countries

	Has a large outdoor play space	Supports children's independence (e.g. children can take toys or books by themselves)	Is safe	Provides varied equipment, toys and materials
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	4.21 (0.81)	4.61 (0.63)	4.60 (0.70)	4.29 (0.82)
EN	3.84 (0.98)	4.25 (0.83)	4.74 (0.50)	3.90 (0.98)
EL	4.15 (0.79)	4.34 0.72)	4.94 (0.29)	4.44 (0.61)
IT	4.42 (0.72)	4.53 (0.69)	4.86 (0.41)	4.43 (0.71)
FI	4.42 (0.71)	4.16 (0.77)	4.90 (0.33)	3.70 (0.88)
NL	3.92 (0.90)	4.23 (0.73)	4.72 (0.58)	4.30 (0.70)
NO	4.14 (0.78)	4.42 (0.82)	4.91 (0.30)	4.25 (0.79)
PL	4.06 (0.77)	4.38 (0.61)	4.92 (0.27)	4.41 (0.61)
PT	3.98 (0.85)	4.37 (0.92)	4.69 (0.59)	4.27 (0.83)
Average[1]	4.13	4.36	4.81	4.22

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

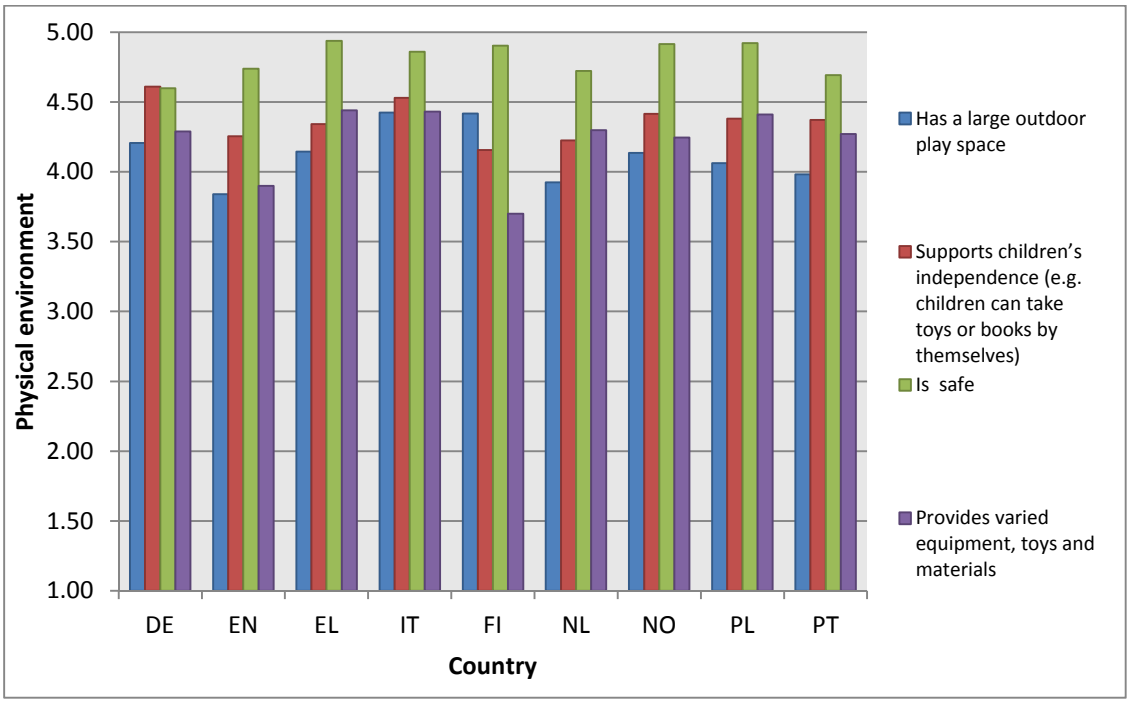

Figure 12. Physical environment - Latent means across nine countries

ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

The selected items, including their simple means and standard deviations across countries, are presented in Table 18. and Figure 13. This table and figure show that the patterns of the relative importance of the items diverges between countries. Only the item 'stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time' is consistently rated lowest by parents, with average means ranging from 3.39 (PT) to 4.15 (NO). However, the standard deviations of this item are highest, which means that the agreement among parents regarding this item is less compared to the other items. Cohen's *d* of the difference in adhered importance between Portugal and Norway is 0.73. Regarding the aspect few children per trained caregiver/teacher, Finland (*M* = 4.75), Greece (*M* = 4.59), and Poland (*M* = 4.56) have the highest and Netherlands (*M* = 4.03), Portugal (*M* = 4.08), and England (*M* = 4.08) the lowest means. Cohen's *d* of the difference in attributed importance between, for example, Finland and the Netherlands is 1.02. Parents in all countries score high on the importance of care for children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases; Germany (*M* = 4.22) and England (*M* = 4.23) have the lowest and Poland (*M* = 4.70) and Greece (*M* = 4.91) the highest means. Finally, we see that the Southern European countries (Italy, Greece and Portugal) and Poland have very high means on the item healthy food (above 4.70). England had clearly the lowest mean with 3.88, followed by the Netherlands (*M* = 4.36). Cohen's *d* for the difference in importance attributed to this aspect between, for example, Italy and the Netherlands is 0.71.

Table 18

Organizational aspects - Latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) across nine countries

	Few children per trained caregiver/teacher	A stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time	Care for children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases	Healthy food
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	4.51 (0.65)	4.05 (0.81)	4.22 (0.95)	4.58 (0.61)
EN	4.08 (0.80)	3.87 (1.01)	4.23 (0.83)	3.88 (1.00)
EL	4.59 (0.58)	4.05 (0.77)	4.91 (0.31)	4.77 (0.43)
IT	4.14 (0.84)	3.65 (1.04)	4.59 (0.66)	4.79 (0.47)
FI	4.75 (0.55)	4.15 (0.74)	4.34 (0.68)	4.61 (0.58)
NL	4.03 (0.83)	3.78 (1.00)	4.23 (0.88)	4.36 (0.71)
NO	4.32 (0.76)	4.14 (0.91)	4.56 (0.58)	4.46 (0.61)
PL	4.56 (0.62)	3.96 (0.91)	4.70 (0.52)	4.73 (0.51)
PT	4.08 (0.89)	3.39 (1.14)	4.55 (0.63)	4.71 (0.47)
Average[1]	4.34	3.89	4.48	4.54

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

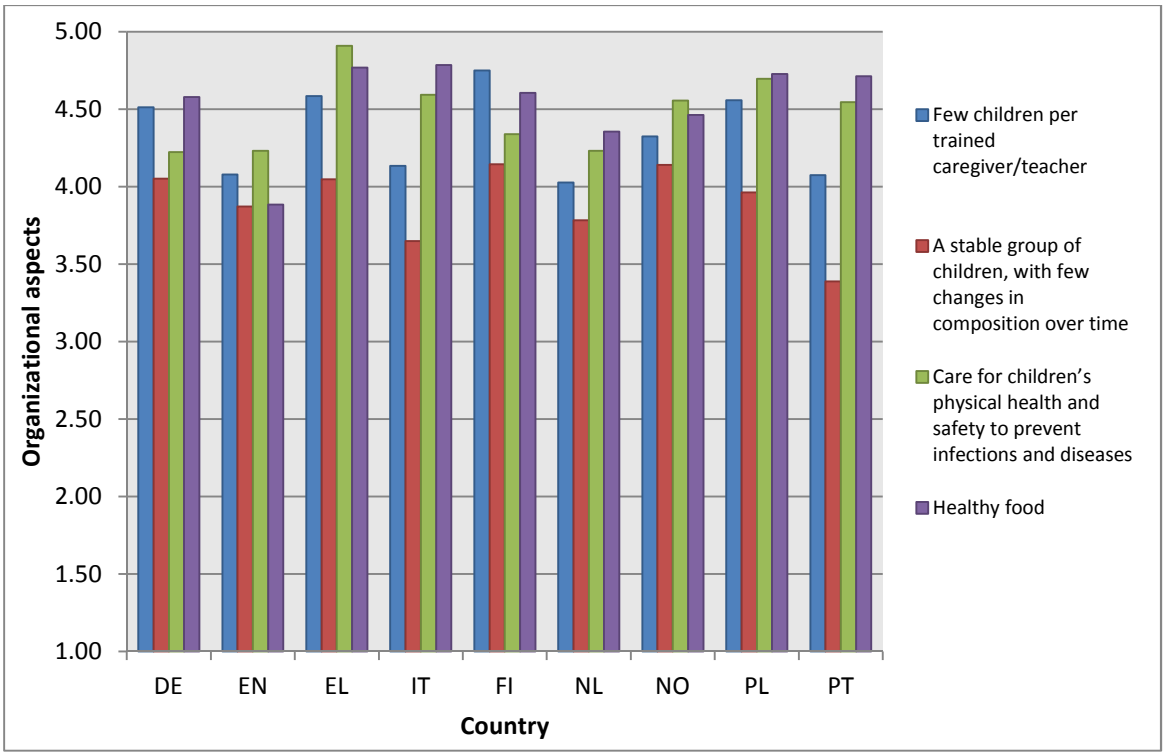

Figure 13. Organizational aspects - Latent means across nine countries

STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

The selected items, including their simple means and standard deviations across countries, are presented in Table 19, and Figure 14. This table and figure show that the patterns of the relative importance of the items diverge somewhat between countries. However, in general, parents from all countries (except England) rate being part of a stable team and providing practical and educational support for parents when needed as the two most important characteristics of the four mentioned characteristics of ECEC-staff. For being part of a stable team, Norway (M = 4.65) Finland (M = 4.45) have the highest, and England (M = 4.06) and Portugal (M = 4.12) the lowest mean. Cohen's d of the difference in attributed importance between, for example, Norway and Portugal is 0.80. For providing practical and educational support for parents when needed, Greece (M = 4.54) and Italy (M = 4.44) have the highest and Netherlands (M = 3.72) and England (M = 3.44) the lowest mean. Cohen's d of the difference in attributed importance between, for example, Greece and Netherlands is 1.00. For the items on having enough relevant work experience and having a high educational level, the standard deviations are quite high. This means that the agreement among parents regarding these items is less compared to the other two items. For having a high educational level, there were quite large differences between countries, with the Netherlands and Germany having the lowest, and Finland and Greece the highest average mean. These differences can probably be explained by large differences in national ECEC systems regarding this characteristic. Cohen's d between, for example, Netherlands and Greece is 0.95. Finally, for having enough relevant work experiences, there were also quite large differences between countries. Whereas Greece and Italy rated this aspect on average as important, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands rated this as somewhat important. Cohen's d between, for example, Germany and Greece is 0.77.

Table 19

Staff characteristics - Latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) across eight countries

	Have enough relevant work experience (at least five years)	Have a high education level (at least three years college/university education)	Are part of a stable team (with low turn-over)	Provide practical and educational support for parents/guardians if needed by them
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	3.12 (1.19)	2.95 (1.24)	4.42 (0.75)	4.12 (0.84)
EN	3.80 (0.82)	3.00 (1.10)	4.06 (1.03)	3.44 (1.12)
EL	3.97 (1.00)	3.81 (1.00)	4.39 (0.74)	4.54 (0.61)
IT	3.86 (1.00)	3.38 (1.07)	4.20 (0.83)	4.49 (0.66)
FI	3.13 (0.93)	3.66 (1.06)	4.45 (0.65)	4.02 (0.89)
NL	3.13 (1.16)	2.78 (1.16)	4.31 (0.80)	3.72 (0.99)
NO	3.26 (1.06)	3.41 (0.97)	4.65 (0.52)	4.29 (0.90)
PL	3.64 (1.10)	3.47 (1.02)	4.26 (0.84)	4.44 (0.65)
PT	3.32 (1.18)	3.43 (1.06)	4.12 (0.78)	4.37 (0.71)
Average[1]	3.47	3.32	4.32	4.16

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

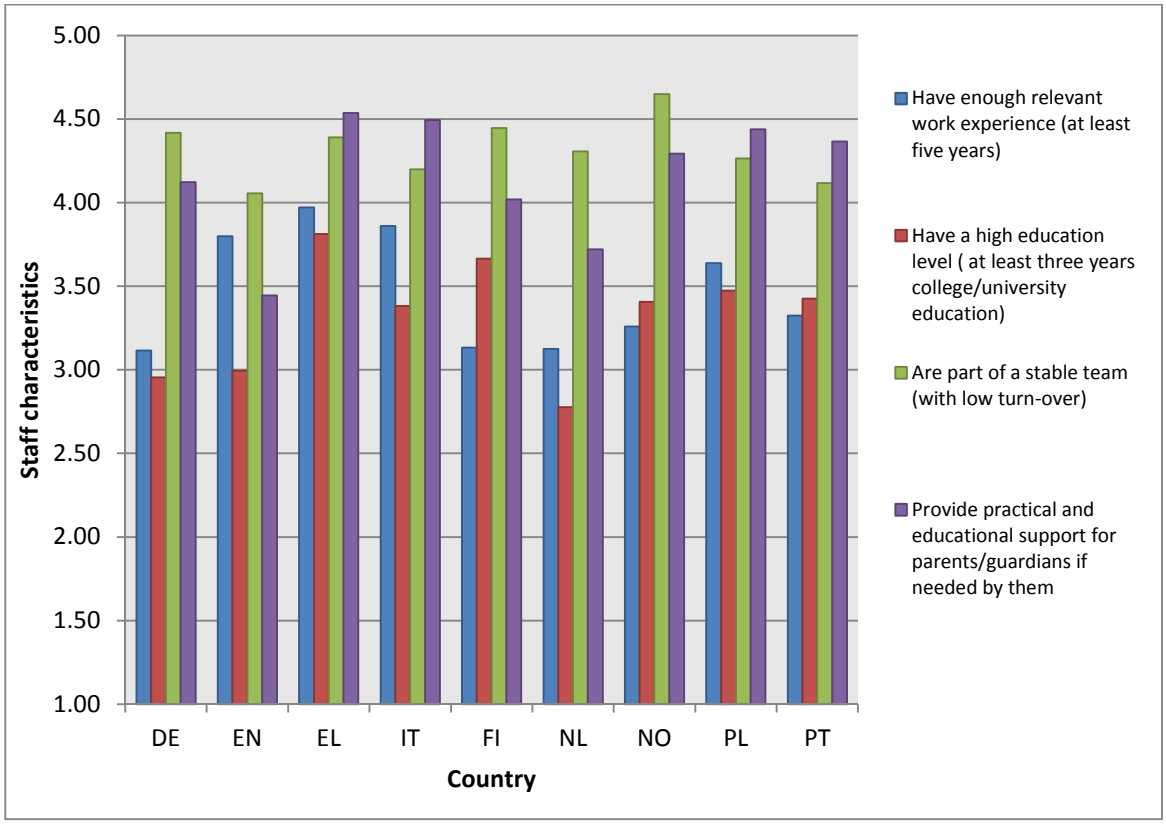

Figure 14. Staff characteristics - Latent means across nine countries

GENERAL SUMMARY

The second research question of this study focused on the importance that parents attach to different structural quality indicators: Aspects of the physical environment (e.g., safety, outdoor space), organizational aspects (e.g., group size, stability of group) and staff characteristics (e.g., educational level, stability team). We selected several items which are generally regarded as indicative of structural quality, and compared simple means and standard deviations across the nine countries.

Parents from all countries think that a safe environment is the important aspect of the physical ECEC environment. However, the patterns of the relative importance of the selected aspects of the physical environment diverge somewhat between countries. Nevertheless, parents rate all aspects (outdoor play space, supportive environment supporting independence, and varied equipment, toys and materials) on average (at least) as important.

Regarding the organizational aspects of ECEC-settings, parents adhered most importance children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases and least importance to having a stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time. However, the relatively large variation indicate low agreement among parents regarding this issue. There are some clear differences between countries with respect to a low adult-child ratio, which is deemed more important in Finland, Greece, and Poland, than in Netherlands, Portugal and England, although the latter still consider it to be important. Finally, the Southern European countries and Poland adhere most importance to healthy food

With respect to the selected staff characteristics, patterns of relative importance diverge somewhat between countries. In general, parents rate being part of a stable team and providing practical and educational support for parents when needed as more important than having enough relevant work experience and having a high educational level. For these latter two characteristics, there was more variation, and thus less agreement among parents.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT CONDITIONS OF CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND WELL-BECOMING IN THE WORDS OF PARENTS?

To answer the third research question 'What are important conditions of children's well-being and well-becoming in the perspectives of parents?' we focused on two open questions:

> *What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think are most important to foster children's well-being?* (Item Q1.2, see appendix B1)
>
> *What three aspects of development in early life for children do you consider to be the most important to be successful in later life?* (Item PIQ3, see appendix B2)

As described in the analysis plan, the first, still preliminary, results are based on a pilot of in total 50 parents in Netherlands, Greece, Finland, Norway, and Italy. Tables 20 and 21 show the percentages of how many times each sub-code was mentioned in each country. This percentage is calculated by dividing the count for each code by the total count per country. The total counts for the well-being question were 65 (NL), 91 (EL), 48 (FI), 30 (NO), and 37 (IT). For the early development question the total counts were 40 (NL), 35 (EL), 34 (FI), 29 (NO), and 37 (IT). The differences between the number of counts can be explained by two reasons: First, for some answers more than one sub code was applicable. Second, parents did not always gave three arguments in their answers, as requested, but they were included in the current analysis if they had at least one mention.

The lists of codes for both questions consists of different levels of coding. The highest level in the well-being question is *ECEC quality*, which was based on theoretical considerations. The quality level is followed by the main codes and sub-codes. For the early development question, the list of codes consists only of the main codes and sub-codes

Table 20

Frequencies of Main Themes for the Well-being Question

Main codes and sub codes	**Counts NL (%)**	**Counts EL (%)**	**Counts FI (%)**	**Counts NO (%)**	**Counts IT (%)**
Structural quality	32.3	34.1	39.7	40	37.8
Staff quality: organization	12.3	3.3	35.5	36.7	5.4
Pedagogical competence	7.7	2.2	10.4	-	2.7
Managing staff quality	-	1.1	-	6.7	-
Stable staff	-	-	6.3	10	-
Staff-child ratio	-	-	6.3	-	-
Group composition	3.1	-	4.2	6.7	-
Structure, routine, rhythm	1.5	-	8.3	3.3	-
Reflective staff	-	-	-	3.3	-
Communication between professionals	-	-	-	6.7	2.7

Environment	20	30.8	4.2	3.3	32.4
Safety	3.1	5.5	-	-	-
Indoor spaces	4.6	9.9	-	-	5.4
Outdoor spaces	4.6	5.5	-	-	8.1
Materials	6.2	5.5	-	-	5.4
Health	1.5	4.4	4.2	3.3	13.5
Process quality	38.5	50.5	37.6	49.9	37.8
Staff quality: communication and relationship	20	13.2	29.2	33.3	18.9
Competent engagement in staff-parent relationship	6.2	-	12.5	3.3	5.4
Secure child-staff relationship	12.3	13.2	10.4	23.3	13.5
Moral attitude	1.5	-	6.3	6.7	-
Supporting of the child's development	17	31.9	6.3	13.3	18.9
Focus on child's overall development	-	-	2.1	-	2.7
Physical/motor development	6.2	1.1	-	-	-
Cognitive development	-	1.1	-	-	2.7
Social development	3.1	5.5	2.1	13.3	5.4
Emotional development	-	4.4	-	-	2.7
Language development	3.1	5.5	-	-	-
Personal/explorative skills	1.5	2.2	-	-	5.4
Personal skills-independence/autonomy	3.1	2.2	-	-	-
Personal skills-special needs	-	-	2.1	-	-
Personal skills-learning attitude	-	3.3	-	-	-
Personal skills-promote self-confidence	-	4.4	-	-	-
Obedience/discipline	-	2.2	-	-	-
Atmosphere	1.5	5.5	2.1	3.3	-
Learning/stimulating atmosphere	-	1.1	-	-	-
Positive atmosphere	1.5	4.4	2.1	3.3	-
Curriculum quality	29.2	15.4	23	10	24.3
Curriculum quality	29.2	15.4	23	10	24.3
Individual needs	6.2	-	12.5	3.3	5.4
Moral, values	-	-	2.1	-	-
Smooth transition	3.1	1.1	2.1	-	2.7
Organization of activities	12.3	8.8	6.3	6.7	-
Creative play activities	1.5	1.1	-	-	5.4
Physical activities	1.5	-	-	-	-
Explorative activities	3.1	-	-	-	2.7
Ability to play	1.5	2.2	-	-	2.7
Group activities	-	2.2	-	-	5.4

Note. Because of rounding, the total of all codes is not always exactly 100%.

Table 21

Frequencies of Main Themes for the Early Development Question

Main codes and sub codes	**Counts NL (%)**	**Counts EL (%)**	**Counts FI (%)**	**Counts NO (%)**	**Counts IT (%)**
Development	2.5	2.9	-	-	-
Child's development as a key focus	2.5	2.9	-	-	-
Cognitive development, cognitive skills	15	11.5	14.7	3.4	8.1
Language development, language skills	12.5	2.9	11.8	3.4	2.7
Learning a second language	-	-	-	-	2.7
Math	-	-	2.9	-	-
Concentration, attention	-	2.9	-	-	-
Intellectual development	2.5	5.7	-	-	2.7
Social-emotional development, social skills	45	34.3	52.9	51.7	35.1
Social	20	8.6	23.5	27.6	27
Emotional	7.5	5.7	11.8	6.9	5.4
Belongingness	2.5	2.9	2.9	-	-
Moral, values	10	17.1	11.8	6.9	-
Attachment/emotional security	5	-	2.9	10.3	2.7
Personal skills, attitudes and characteristics	30	48.7	20.6	37.8	51.3
Learning attitude	-	8.6	5.9	6.9	2.7
Persistence	7.5	5.7	-	3.4	2.7
Independence/autonomy	7.5	8.6	-	6.9	10.8
Personality development	2.5	-	-	-	-
Self-view	7.5	14.3	14.7	13.8	16.2
Explorative skills	5	2.9	-	3.4	13.5
Responsibility	-	8.6	-	3.4	5.4
Physical development, motor skills	2.5	-	2.9	3.4	2.7
Motor skills	2.5	-	2.9	3.4	2.7

Safe environment	2.5	-	8.8	-	-
Safe environment	2.5	-	2.9	-	-
Psychologically safe environment	-	-	5.9	-	-
Environment quality	2.5	2.9	-	3.4	2.7
ECEC quality: child oriented	2.5	2.9	-	3.4	2.7

Note. Because of rounding issues, the total of all codes is not exactly 100% when you sum all percentages.

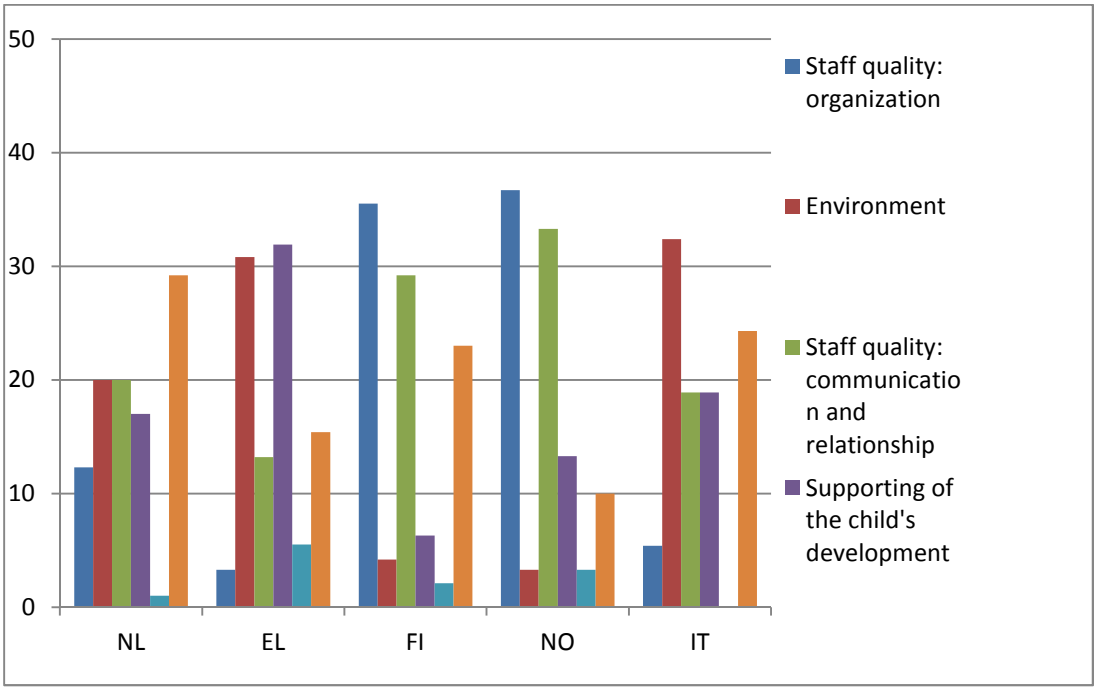

Figure 15. Frequencies of main codes for the well-being question compared to the total counts of all countries.

WELL-BEING

Although all main codes of the list of codes were mentioned for the well-being question in the pilot, not all sub-codes were mentioned in the current preliminary sample. Figure 15 shows the distribution of the main codes for each country.

QUALITY

The quality level is the highest level for this question, which is further divided in structural, process, and curriculum quality. An overview per country is shown in the Figures 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d, and 16e. The parents in all countries mentioned curriculum quality as the least important condition for children's well-being. Parents in all countries, except Finland and Italy, mentioned process quality as the most important quality

aspect for children's well-being. Especially Greece and Norway had a clear preference for process quality. In Italy structural and process quality were both mentioned as equally important. For the Finnish parents in the preliminary sample the preference for structural quality was slightly higher than the preference for process quality.

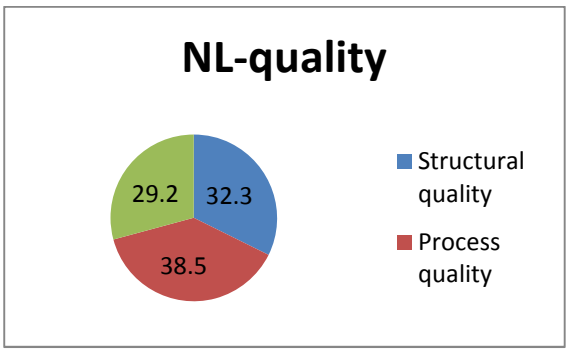

Figure 16a. Frequencies of the quality for children's well-being in the Netherlands.

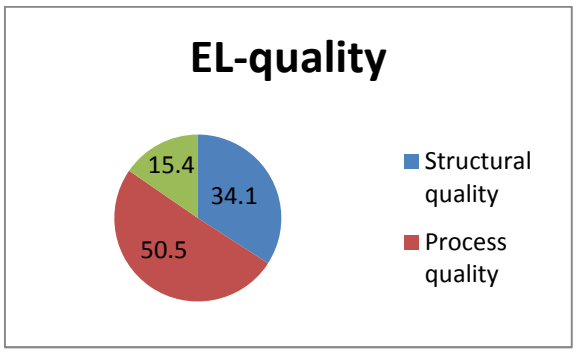

Figure 16b. Frequencies of the quality for children's well-being in Greece.

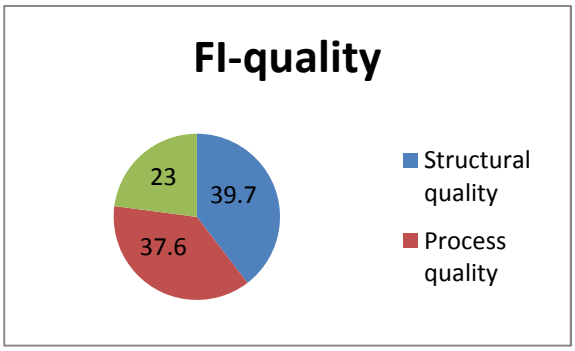

Figure 16c. Frequencies of the quality for children's well-being in Finland

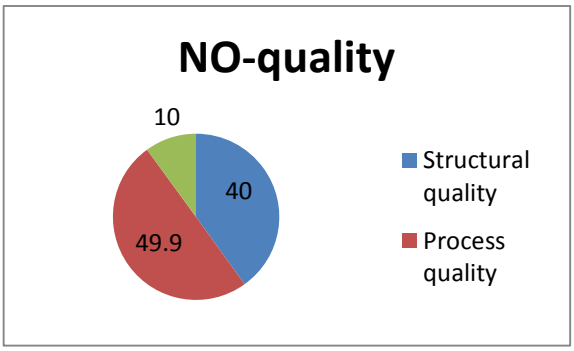

Figure 16d. Frequencies of the quality for children's well-being in Norway.

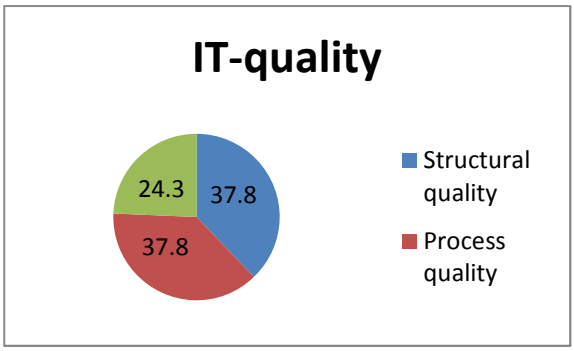

Figure 16e. Frequencies of the quality for children's well-being in Italy.

STRUCTURAL QUALITY

Figures 17 and 18 show the distributions of the total counts within the category structural quality. For the parents from the Netherlands, Greece and Italy in the current sample characteristics of the ECEC environment were seen as more important for children's well-being than organizational aspects of staff quality. For Finland and Norway it was the other way around. Within the coding category *organizational aspects: staff quality*, the pedagogical competence of the staff was mentioned most as important characteristic for children's well-being by parents from the Netherlands, Greece and Finland. In Norway the stability of the staff was seen as most important. Next to the pedagogical competence of the staff, the structure, routine and rhythm of the ECEC setting was also mentioned as an important condition for the children's well-being by parents in Finland.

Regarding characteristics of the ECEC environment, the provision of appropriate materials were seen as most important by the parents from the Netherlands. Also the indoor spaces and the outdoor spaces were seen as important in the Netherlands, but less so than materials. In Greece the indoor spaces were most often mentioned as important. Whereas, in Italy health was the most important characteristic for the ECEC environment.

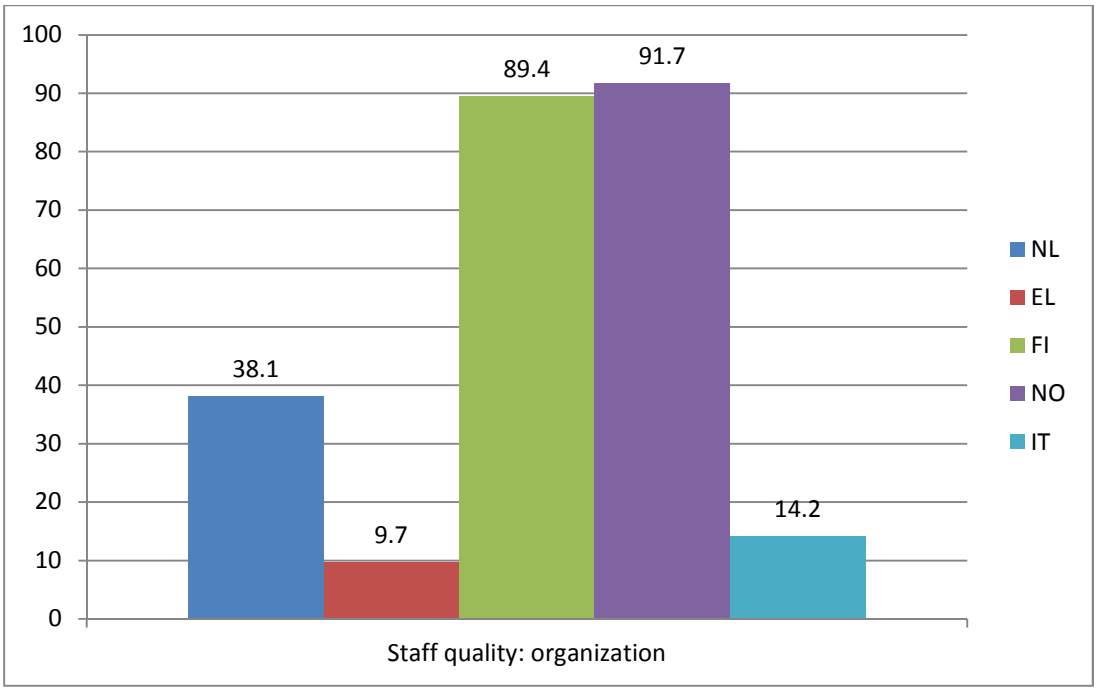

Figure 17. Frequencies of the staff quality on the organizational level compared to the total counts within structural quality.

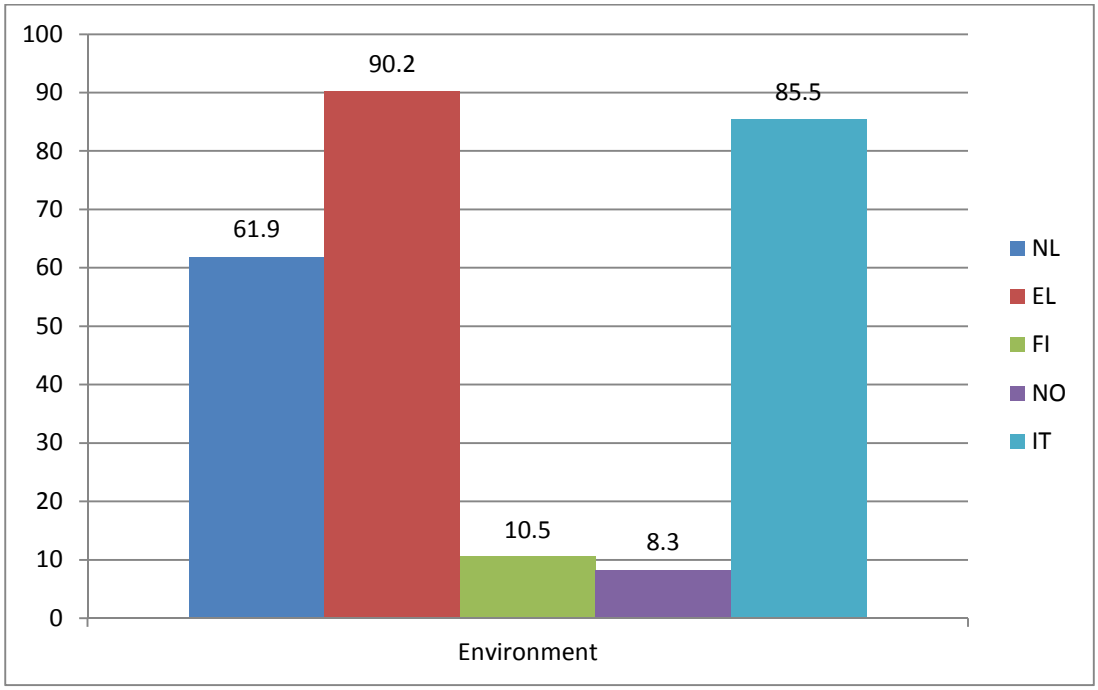

Figure 18. Frequencies of the ECEC environment compared to the total counts within structural quality.

PROCESS QUALITY

The distributions of the total counts for parents views on what constitutes process quality are shown in Figures 19, 20, and 21. As shown in these figures and in Table 20, all countries, except Greece and Italy, mentioned the aspect communication and relationship of the category staff quality rather frequently as contributing to children's well-being. For the Greek parents, the support for children's development was regarded most important. In Italy, both the communication and relationship aspect of staff quality, and the support of children's development were mentioned as most important.

Within the sub-code *staff quality: communication and relationship*, the secure child-staff relationship was seen as most important for children's well-being by parents in all countries, except Finland. However, note that Finnish parents mentioned the secure child-staff relationship only mentioned slightly less frequently than competent engagement in the staff-parent relationship.

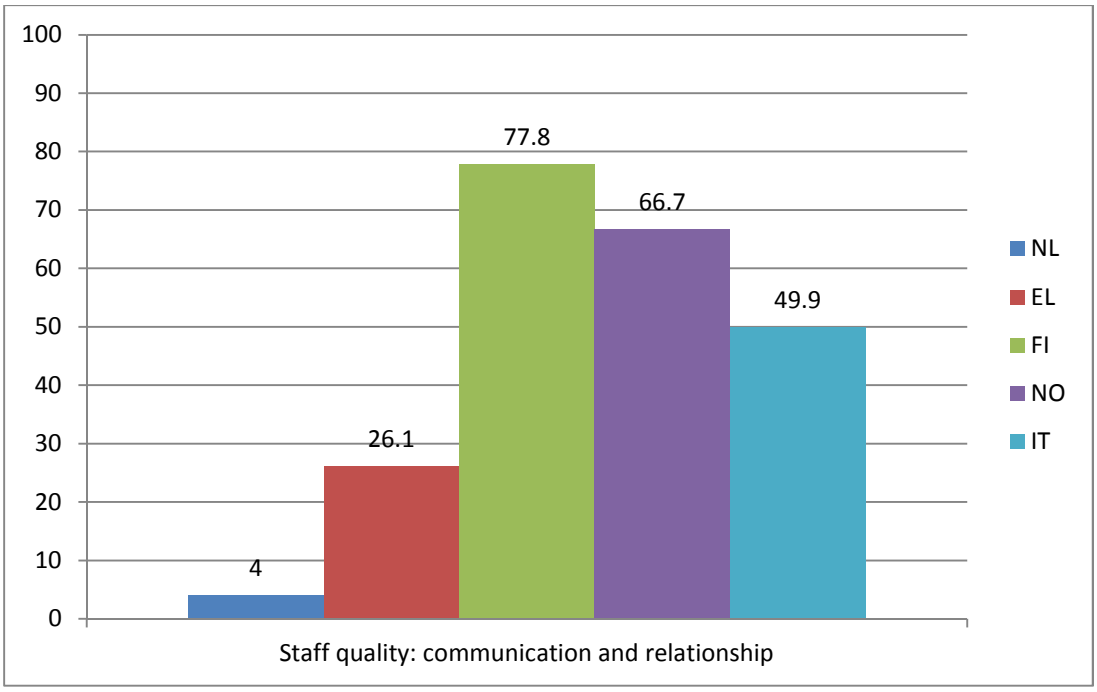

Figure 19. Frequencies of the staff quality on communication and relationship compared to the total counts within process quality.

Regarding the main category *supporting children's development*, social development was most often mentioned by the parents from Greece and Norway in this sample. In addition, for Greece supporting the language development was as important as supporting the social development. In comparison, emotional development and personal skills that promote self-confidence were rated slightly less important by the Greek parents. In the Netherlands the physical/motor development was most important of supporting the child's well-being according to the parents in the sample.

Atmosphere was mentioned at least once by parents in each country, except Italy. All mentioned positive atmosphere as the most important for the child's well-being.

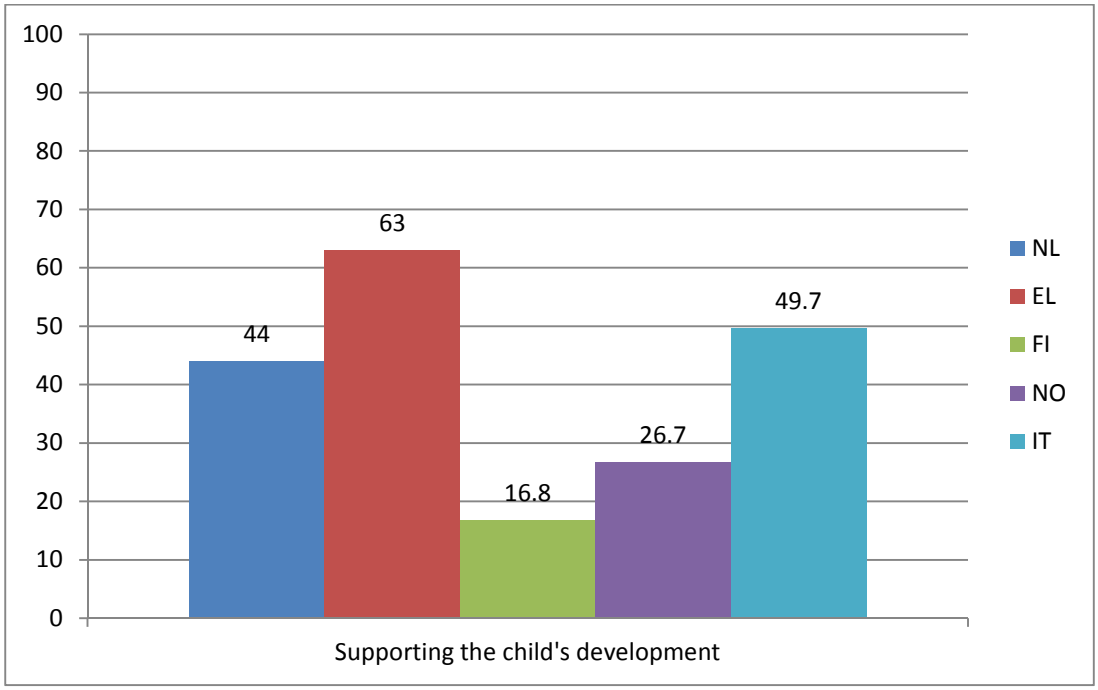

Figure 20. Frequencies of the supporting the child's development compared to the total counts within process quality.

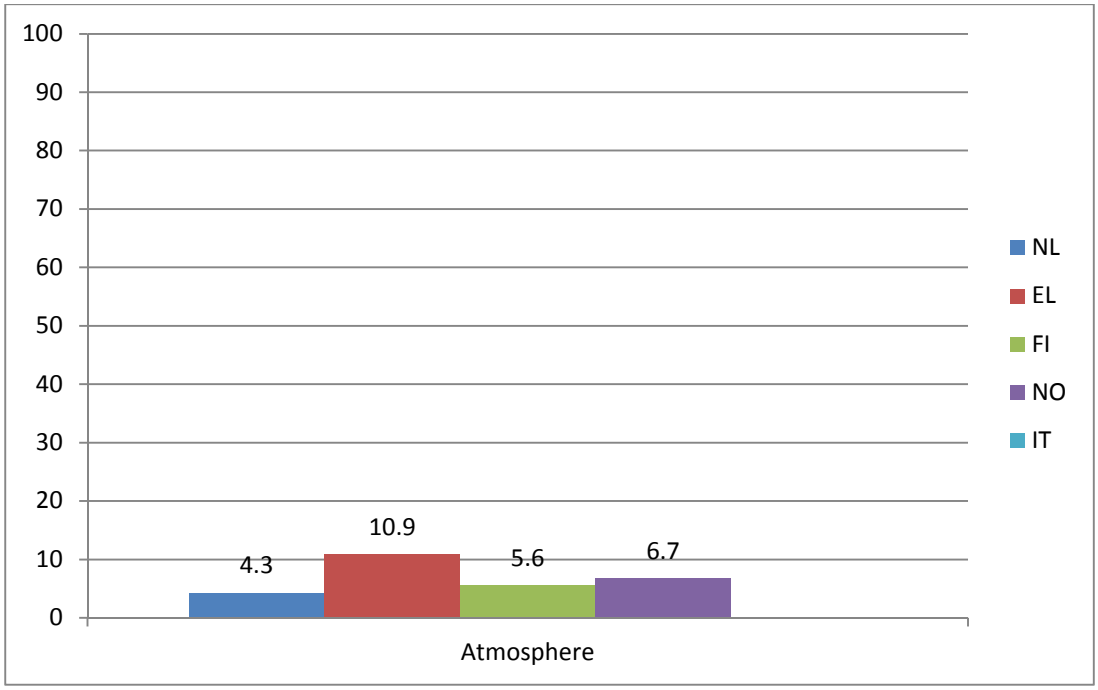

Figure 21. Frequencies of the atmosphere compared to the total counts within process quality.

CURRICULUM QUALITY

The distributions of the total counts within curriculum quality are shown in Table 20. Since the percentages were so low for each sub-code, a detailed graph is not informative. For the parents from the Netherlands,

Greece and Norway the organization of activities was most important as aspect of the curriculum quality for supporting children's well-being. For the parents in Finland, adjusting activities to children's individual needs was most often mentioned. The Italian parents did not express a clear preference for a particular aspect.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

For this question, all main codes were mentioned by at least one country, except the main code education with the sub-code educational success. Therefore, this main and sub-code were deleted from the final list of codes for this preliminary report. The distribution of the main codes for each country are shown in Figure 22 and Table 21. Like for the list of codes for the well-being question, not all sub-codes mentioned in the pilot returned in the current analysis. In addition, Greek parents in the current sample mentioned a few other aspects of early development that they considered as important to be successful in later life, which will be discussed below.

In general the parents in all countries, except Greece and Italy, mentioned children's *social-emotional development, social skills* as most the important aspects to be successful in later life. Personal skills, attitudes and characteristics were the second most important. In comparison, parents in Greece and Italy thought that personal skills, attitudes and characteristics were more important than children's social-emotional development and social skills. Finally, parents in Finland did not mention the main codes *development, physical development, motor skills and environment quality*, parents in Norway, Italy and Greece didn't mention *development and safe environment*, and parents in Greece did not mention *safe environment*.

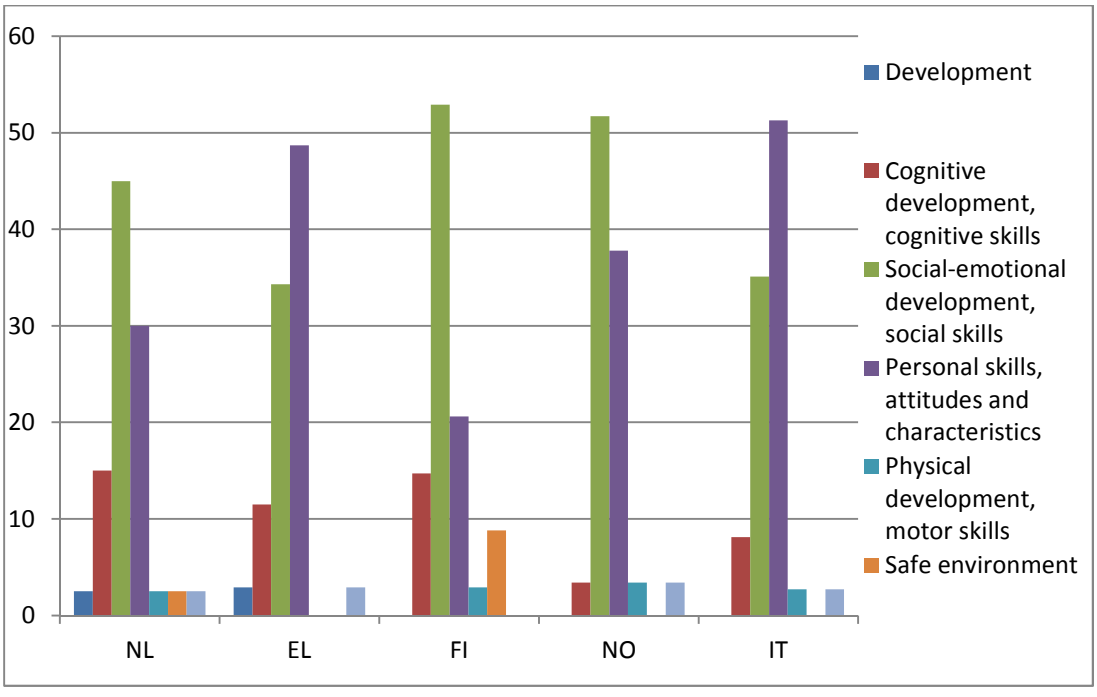

Figure 22. Frequencies of main codes for the early development question compared to the total counts of all countries.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT, COGNITIVE SKILLS

For the main code *cognitive development and cognitive skills*, the aspects *language development and language skills* were mentioned most often as important for being successful later in life by the parents of the Netherlands and Finland. In Greece, the parents mentioned intellectual development as most important.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL SKILLS

Parents form all countries, except Greece, mentioned being social as the most important aspect in the category *social-emotional development, social skills*. Moral values was by the Greek parents seen as the most important aspect for being successful later in life.

PERSONAL SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Children's (positive) self-view was most important for the parents in all countries within the category *personal skills, attitudes and characteristics*. In the Netherlands, parents mentioned persistence and independence/autonomy of the child as frequently as children's self-image. The parents from Italy mentioned explorative and independence/autonomy as slightly less important than a positive self-view for being successful later in life.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The lists of codes in Appendix A2 and A3 are the lists that were used for the pilot with some minor adaptations according to the direct feedback on the pilot by some countries. Overall, the lists were applicable to all countries of the pilot. However, we are aware that with the analyses of other data there may be a few adaptations to the lists of codes possible, because saturation was not yet reached. During the Milan meeting in December 2015 we will plan a meeting to train all the partners on how to analyse the qualitative data, which will also improve the inter-coder reliability between researchers.

LIST OF CODES FOR WELL-BEING

For the category *staff-quality: organization*, the sub-code group size was renamed into group composition, because this was mentioned a few times. In the curriculum part, the ability to play was mentioned more often. Therefore, the sub-code (more) outdoor play time was renamed as the ability to play. Another adaptation to the curriculum quality part was renaming the sub-code *upbringing-moral, values* into *moral, values*. The reason for this is that these sub-codes were not seen as the same by representatives of different countries. Finally, the sub-code *activities outside the ECEC setting* was added to the curriculum quality as it can be expected that this sub-code will probably reoccur more often.

LIST OF CODES FOR THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT QUESTION

As mentioned earlier, the main code *education* with the sub-code *educational success* was deleted from the list as this code occurred only once when the list was created. For the main category *development*, the sub-code *emphasis on children's development* was renamed into the *children's development as a key focus*. Intellectual development was added as a new sub-code for the cognitive development, cognitive skills, because this sub-code was mentioned several times. Also learning a second language was added as a new sub-code of *cognitive development, cognitive skills*, because it can be expected that this sub-code will reoccur more frequently when more questionnaires will be coded. The main code *personal skills* was renamed into *personal skills, attitudes and characteristics* in order to cover the sub-codes in this category better. For the main code *safe environment* the sub-code safe environment was added to include answers that were quite vague and ambigous, like 'safety' or 'safe environment', and therefore could not be allocated to one of the other sub-codes. Vague answers in this category occurred quite often. By adding this sub-code, we would not lose this information.

Finally, codes that were still too unclear were given a description. These additional descriptions are shown in Appendix A4.

WHICH ASPECTS OF QUALITY DO PARENTS CONSIDER MOST WHEN CHOOSING FOR A PARTICULAR ECEC PROVISION?

The fourth research question of this study focused on determinants of parents' choice when selecting ECEC settings and views of parent about the appropriateness of ECEC for young children. To answer this research question, the items included in section 5 and 6 of the questionnaire were analysed (see appendix B1). For both section 5 and 6 we tried to construct the most appropriate and useful measurement invariant confirmatory factor model, using the steps described in the analysis plan.In the following sections we will shortly describe the process of model construction and present the factor loadings and model fit indices for the final factor models. Finally, we will examine mean differences among these new constructs across all nine countries.

DETERMINANTS OF PARENT'S CHOICE WHEN SELECTING ECEC

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

To identify which characteristics parents find most import when selecting an ECEC setting, we asked the following question:

"How important are the following aspects for your choice of a particular ECEC-setting?"

The 13 items of this section (see appendix B1) covered a wide range of possible aspects that parents may consider and compare when choosing to use a particular ECEC setting. We included items referring to practical considerations (item 1 and 2), the availability of ECEC (item 3, 4, and 5), process quality characteristics (item 6, 7 and 8), structural quality characteristics (item 11, 12, and 13), and inclusiveness and diversity policies of ECEC (9, and 10). Parents were asked to give their opinion on the importance of these aspects in their decision making for children younger than 3 years of age and for children from 3 to 6 years of age. The answer categories of the items again ranged from 1 'unimportant' to 5 'highly important'.

Although the theoretical model was confirmed in a fully constrained model for the total group (i.e., factor loadings and intercepts of the < 3 and 3-6 items constrained to be equal), we ran into problems when we constrained these factor loadings and intercepts also to be equal across countries. This was especially the case for the items on practical considerations, the availability of ECEC and inclusiveness. We were not surprised by this finding, particularly not for the practical considerations (e.g., item 2 – has low costs) and availability of ECEC (e.g., item 4 – Is available the whole year, also during holidays), since there are large differences between national ECEC systems exactly with regard to these aspects. Therefore, we cannot assume that the items are interpreted and considered in exactly the same way across all nine countries (i.e. they are not measurement-invariant).

It should be stressed that this finding does not mean that we can never compare parents from different countries on these constructs. However, we first need to compare the structural differences of national ECEC systems of the countries we want to compare. Based on this analysis we can decide which items or constructs

would be appropriate to compare for these specific countries, and/or for which specific items it is justified to release invariance constraints on intercepts or factor loadings.

For the three items on process quality (item 6, 7 and 8) and two of the items on structural quality (item 11 and 13) we could estimate a measurement invariant confirmatory factor model for the two age groups separately (i.e., for children <3 and between 3-6) for all countries, except England (probably due to a combination of non-normality in the data and the small sample size), which, therefore, had to be excluded from the remaining analyses. When we constrained the factor loadings and intercepts for both age groups, we encountered many latent correlations larger than 1, most times between the same construct for children younger than 3 and between 3 and 6 years of age. This is an indication that the responses of parents for both age groups are highly correlated. In addition, we had to exclude item 12 (Has caregivers/ teachers that have a high educational level (at least three years college/university education)), probably because there are large differences in national ECEC systems regarding this characteristic. In a next report on this study, this and the aspects mentioned before will be addressed separately per country. In this report we focus specifically on aspects that can be compared between countries.

Based on the content of the items, we decided to call the remaining latent constructs 'process quality characteristics' and 'structural group characteristics'. The items and factor loadings belonging to these latent factors for children younger than 3 years and for children between 3 and 6 years are presented in Table 22. This table shows that the factor loadings are somewhat different, with item 6 (Fosters children's well-being and happiness) contributing less strongly to the variance in the construct process quality characteristics.

The modification indices showed that constraining the intercept of item 8 (fosters children's thinking and language development) for Italy to be equal to other countries introduced quite some measurement error into the model. Therefore, we decided to release this constraint in both the model for children younger than 3 years of age and for children between 3 and 6 years of age. Although we released this constraint, we can still compare the latent mean for Italy with the latent means for the other countries. However, we cannot compare Italy to the other countries on this specific item. The model fit of this almost fully constrained model across the nine countries for children younger than 3 years of age was adequate to good (CFI = 0.943, RMSEA = 0.061). For children between 3 and 6 years of age, the model fitted even better (CFI = 0.964, RMSEA = 0.052).

Table 22

Aspects parents consider for choosing a particular ECEC provision - unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of the final model

		Process quality characteristics		Structural group characteristics	
		λ *(SE)*	λ *(SE)*	λ *(SE)*	λ *(SE)*
Items		<3	3-6	<3	3-6
5.6	Fosters children's well-being and happiness	0.762 (.043)	0.855 (.032)	-	-
5.7	Fosters children's social and emotional development	1.116 (.034)	1.098 (.028)	-	-
5.8	Fosters children's thinking and language development	1.122 (.036)	1.047 (.028)	-	-
5.11	Provides small group size	-	-	1.036 (.075)	1.059 (.082)
5.13	Has stable groups and low turn-over rate of staff	-	-	0.964 (.075)	0.941 (.082)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age ranges are presented in Table 23 and Figures 23 and 24. We did not constrain the intercepts and factor loadings to be equal for both age groups, so the latent means for the two age groups cannot be directly compared. However, in general, we see that parents do not seem to distinguish that much between children younger than 3 and children between 3 and 6 years of age. Only parents in Finland and, to a lesser extent, Germany think that structural group characteristics (i.e., small group size and stability of staff) are somewhat less important for older children than for younger children, although they still consider small group size to be important for them as well (means of 4.28 and 4.32).

For process quality characteristics we see that the scores are really high for all countries; for children younger than 3 years of age the lowest score was 4.63 (FI) and for children between 3 and 6 years of age 4.66 (NL). For structural group characteristics we also see that all scores are quite high. Parents ratings of the importance of structural group characteristics range between 4.02 (PT) and 4.50 (EL) (i.e., between 'important' and 'highly important') when children are younger than 3 years of age (d = 1.8109), and between 4.02 (PT) and 4.55 (EL) when children are between 3 and 6 years of age (d = 1.3442), highly similar thus. In general, it is interesting to see that parents think that structural group characteristics are as important for children between 3 and 6 years of age as for children younger than 3 years of age.

Table 23

Parents' ratings of the importance of process and structural quality for choosing a particular ECEC provision - latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) by country (except UK) for the <3 and 3-6 years age groups.

	Process quality characteristics		Structural group characteristics	
	<3	3-6	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	4.76 (0.40)	4.80 (0.41)	4.47 (0.35)	4.32 (0.40)
EN	-	-	-	-
EL	4.84 (0.27)	4.90 (0.18)	4.50 (0.27)	4.55 (0.30)
IT	4.74 (0.37)	4.77 (0.41)	4.32 (0.48)	4.28 (0.51)
FI	4.63 (0.50)	4.70 (0.49)	4.48 (0.55)	4.28 (0.48)
NL	4.65 (0.40)	4.66 (0.47)	4.27 (0.41)	4.18 (0.54)
NO	4.86 (0.25)	4.86 (0.29)	4.48 (0.34)	4.50 (0.41)
PL	4.70 (0.39)	4.71 (0.39)	4.39 (0.38)	4.32 (0.42)
PT	4.74 (0.37)	4.79 (0.35)	4.02 (0.26)	4.02 (0.47)
EU	4.74	4.77	4.37	4.30

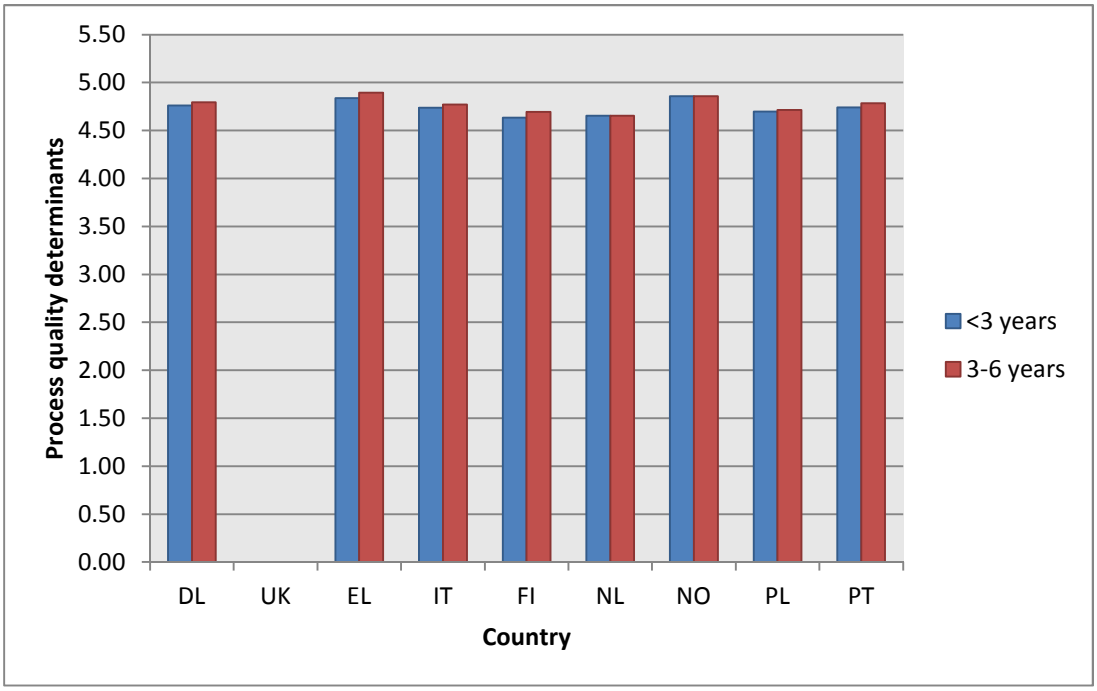

Figure 23. Parents' ratings of the importance of process quality characteristics for choosing a particular ECEC provision - latent means by country (except UK) for the <3 and the 3-6 age groups.

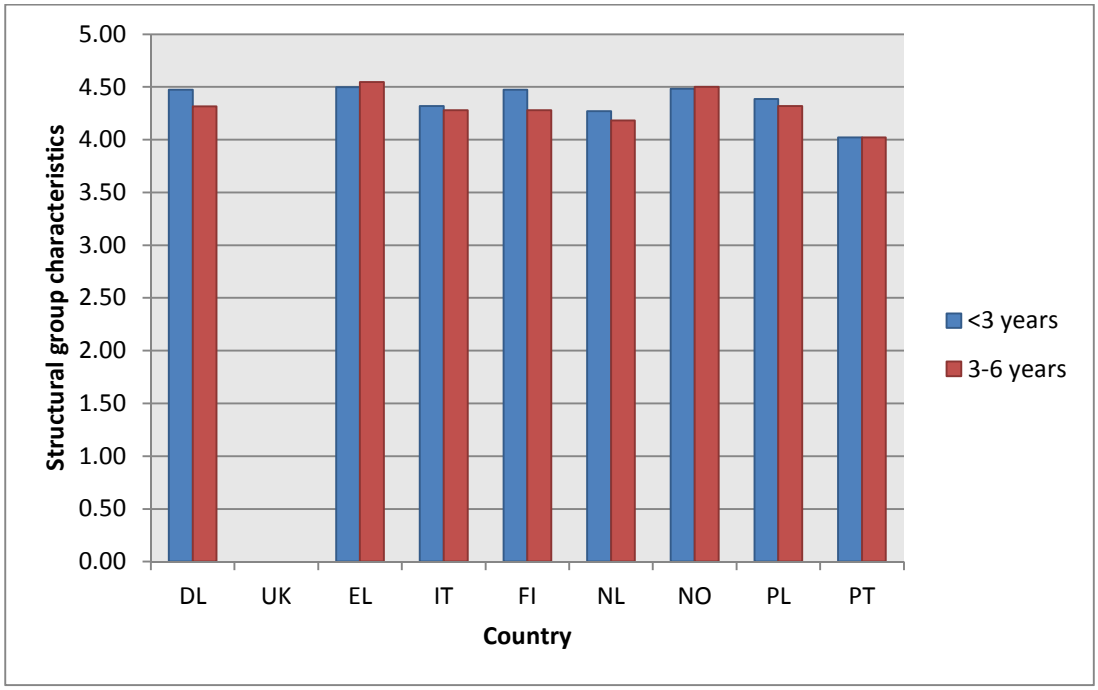

Figure 24. Parents' ratings of the importance of structural group characteristics for choosing a particular ECEC provision - latent means by country (except UK) for the <3 and the 3-6 age groups.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO PARENTS FEEL THAT USING ECEC FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IS APPROPRIATE?

PARENTS VIEWS ON APPROPRIATENESS ECEC FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

MODEL CONSTRUCTION

To address parental views on the appropriateness of ECEC for children younger than 3 and children between 3 and 6 years of age, we presented parents with several statements (see section 6, appendix B). Parents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement, differentiating again between the two age groups. The answer categories of the items ranged from 1 'totally disagree' to 5 'completely agree'. With respect to this question, it is important to keep in mind that the sample consisted of parents who had at least one child in ECEC.

Three items (item 1, 3, and 5) expressed in different wordings that it is better for children to be cared for at home than to participate in ECEC. In contrast, item 2 expressed the view that 'working out of home makes a mother feel better, which has a positive influence on children', and items 4 stated that 'qualified caregivers or teachers are better for my child than relatives or acquaintances who are not educated in this field'. Although these items were related to item 1, 3, and 5, both item 2 and 4 had a considerably lower factor loading in a one-factor model for the total group in which the factor loadings and intercepts of the items for the younger and the older children were constrained to be equal. In addition, both items caused several problems when estimating multi-group models in which the factor loadings and intercepts of these items were also

constrained to be equal across countries. That is, the constraints on the factor loadings and intercepts of these items had to be released in several countries to reach adequate model fit.

Based on these findings, we decided to estimate a one-factor model for item 1, 3 and 5 only in which the factor loadings and intercepts for both age groups were constrained to be equal. The items and factor loadings belonging to this latent construct are presented in Table 24. The table shows that the factor loadings of the items are approximately equal, meaning that all items are equally important for calculating the latent mean of this construct. Note that higher scores mean that parents think that ECEC is *less* appropriate. Finally, the analysis showed that the latent correlation between appropriateness of ECEC for children younger than 3 and for children between 3 and 6 was larger than 1 for Portugal. As a result, we had to exclude Portugal from the final analysis. The latent correlation larger than 1 is probably an indication of Portuguese parents thinking very similar about this issue for younger and older children.

Besides excluding Portugal from the analysis, the model fit indices also showed that we had to release the equality constraints on the intercept of item 3 (Being in the the own family is better for a child than being in an ECEC setting) for both age groups for Italy and Greece. This means that the average level of this item for Greece and Italy cannot be compared to the other countries in both age groups. However, we can still compare the latent means of Italy and Greece with the other countries' latent means. Finally, the modification indices showed that we had to estimate the covariances between the errors of item 3 and 5 for both age groups to reach adequate model fit. This could be due to the fact that item 3 and 5 are semantically more similar to each other (i.e., they are both about the child staying at home) than to item 1. The model fit of this final, almost fully constrained model across eight countries was acceptable (CFI = 0.947, RMSEA = 0.097).

Table 24

Unstandardized factor loadings (λ) and standard errors (SE) of final model on parental views on the appropriateness of ECEC

		Appropriateness ECEC < 3 & 3-6
Items		λ (*SE*)
6.1	It's more difficult for a child to develop a secure relationship with a mother who goes out working than with a mother staying at home	0.980 (.029)
6.3	Being in the own family is better for a child than being in an ECEC setting	0.962 (.032)
6.5	In families with sufficient income, one of the parents should stay at home with their children	1.059 (.024)

MAIN FINDINGS

The latent means across countries for both age groups are presented in Table 25 and Figure 25. Countries score on average between 2.25 (NO) and 3.20 (PL) (i.e., between 'disagree' and 'agree') when children are younger than 3 years of age, and between 1.94 (NO) and 2.80 (PL) (i.e., between 'disagree' and 'don't agree/disagree') when children are between 3 and 6 years of age. Note that the latent construct represents parents' degree of agreement with the inappropriateness of ECEC for children in different age ranges (see items table 25). The overall low mean scores indicate that, across countries, parents tend to disagree with statements expressing the inappropriateness of ECEC, the more so for older children. The difference in parents' opinion on the appropriateness of ECEC for younger children compared to older children is largest in Finland, followed by Germany and Poland (see Figure 25). Thus, parents in these countries differentiate more clearly between the two age groups when evaluating the appropriateness of ECEC than parents in other countries. The age-related differences in agreement were relatively small in England, Netherlands and Italy. Cohen's *d* for Finland was, for example, 0.78, and for Netherlands 0.16.

When further examining the differences in opinions across countries for children younger than 3 years of age, we see the largest differences between Netherlands and Norway, on the one hand, and Poland, Greece, and England, on the other hand. Cohen's *d* for the difference in agreement with the inappropriateness of ECEC between Norway (2.25) and Poland (3.20) is $d = 1.29$, a strong difference.

For children between 3 and 6 years of age, we see the largest difference between Norway, Finland and Germany, on the one hand, and Poland, Greece, and England, on the other hand. Cohen's *d* of the difference in mean scores between Norway (1.94) and Poland (2.80) is $d = 1.52$, again a strong difference. However, the average means show that also the Polish parents tend to disagree with the statement that ECEC is inappropriate.

A final interesting observation is that the standard deviations are larger in some countries than in other countries. Specifically in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland the standard deviation is quite large for parents' views regarding the younger children, and it is still quite large for Germany and the Netherlands regarding the older children. These findings indicate that in these countries there is more variation in how parents think about the appropriateness of ECEC for children than in other countries.

Table 25

Parents' agreement with views expressing the inappropriateness of ECEC - latent means (M) and standard deviations (SD) by country (except PT) for <3 and 3-6 year old children.

	Appropriateness of ECEC	
	<3	3-6
Countries	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
DE	2.38 (1.16)	2.01 (0.97)
EN	2.70 (0.75)	2.57 (0.62)
EL	2.84 (0.54)	2.64 (0.61)
IT	2.52 (0.68)	2.37 (0.64)
FI	2.69 (0.98)	2.06 (0.60)
NL	2.31 (0.92)	2.17 (0.83)
NO	2.25 (0.74)	1.94 (0.42)
PL	3.20 (0.73)	2.80 (0.68)
PT	-	-
Average[1]	2.61	2.32

[1]This is the average latent mean of all nine countries

Note. High scores mean that parents think that ECEC is less appropriate.

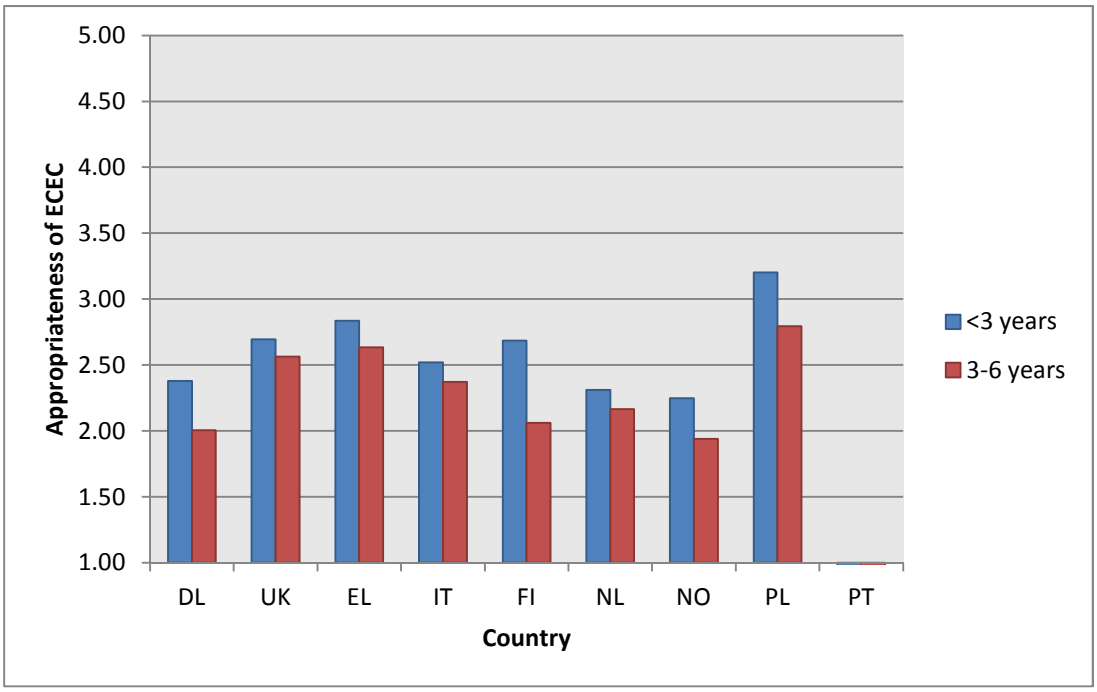

Figure 25. Parental agreement with statements indicating the inappropriateness of ECEC - Latent means by country (except PT) for the <3 and 3-6 years age ranges. Higher scores mean that parents think that ECEC is less appropriate.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Stakeholders Study in the CARE project involves parents/guardians, ECEC-staff working with children and policy makers in the area of ECEC as informants to provide policy relevant research-based knowledge to support the European Union's efforts towards excellence and equity in early childhood education and care in all member states. Nine countries were included in this study: Germany, England, Greece, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Portugal. This *first* report includes the information obtained from parents and their responses on core items regarded as relevant for their values, beliefs and expectations. We examined and evaluated cross-cultural differences and commonalities in parents views, as this comparative perspective is of main interest for EU policy development.

As mentioned in the introduction, five research questions will be answered in this report. **Research question 1** examined which educational and developmental goals should be fostered most in ECEC according to parents. To be able to make meaningful comparisons of the mean importance ratings, both within countries between age groups, and between countries within age groups, we constructed several confirmatory factor models and assessed their measurement equivalence across countries. Overall, satisfactory measurement equivalence was found. Finding measurement equivalence is quite a unique finding, pointing to largely shared thinking (cultural-conceptual frameworks) about early development and learning among parents across the nine countries. This finding may reflect a common tradition of thinking and theorizing on early education and care (see also Sylva et al., 2015, D2.1, regarding European ECEC curricula). Yet, clear differences remain in the mean importance attached to the different domains of development as areas for stimulation in ECEC, which reflect perhaps differences in systems and socioeconomic circumstances. In addition, several items did not fit into the constructed scales and warrant further investigation.

In general, we see that all developmental goals – interpersonal skills, interest in diversity, pre-academic skills, learning related skills, physical/ motor skills, emotional regulation, and personal learning attitudes – increase in importance with age, with in general stronger increases for Germany, Finland, and England than for Norway, Poland, Portugal and Italy. The increases in the importance of children's emotional regulation and personal learning attitudes were similar across countries. For all countries, we saw the strongest increase in importance of stimulating children's pre-academic skills, followed by stimulating children's learning related skills.

The average (unstandardized) differences in developmental goals between countries we see smaller for children between 3 and 6 years of age than for children younger than 3 years of age. A possible explanation for this fact could be that this age-range is more fully covered by ECEC in all countries. For both age-ranges, the largest differences between countries are found for children's pre-academic 'hard' skills; whereas

Greece, Norway, and Portugal score relatively high across both age ranges, Germany and Finland score relatively low.

The patterns of the relative importance of developmental goals are rather similar between countries, especially for the more 'soft' skills, which are deemed (highly) important in all countries for both age-ranges. We see that within countries there was more diversity in the importance of developmental goals for children younger than 3 years of age. The most prominent difference was that parents adhere higher importance ratings to children's 'soft' interpersonal, emotional and personal skills versus 'hard' pre-academic skills. This difference was less strong for children between age 3 and 6, although it was still apparent in some countries (e.g., Finland and Germany).

The finding that there is more diversity in importance ratings for younger children than for older children, both between developmental domains and between countries, reflects perhaps the fact that there is less unity in systems, including large differences in coverage, across countries (Leseman & Slot, 2014). As a result, parents perhaps have a lack of shared concepts that address the specifics of development and learning in the early years. This is in line with another finding from the CARE project that there are less curricula for the below threes (Sylva et al., 2015). Yet, many countries face an increasing need for education and care, also for the youngest children. Moreover, developmental science clearly shows the formative influence of the early years in all areas of development (Leseman & Slot, 2014).

Research question 2 focused on the importance that parents attach to different structural quality indicators: Aspects of the physical environment (e.g., safety, outdoor space), organizational aspects (e.g., group size, stability of group) and staff characteristics (e.g., educational level, stability team). Several items which are generally regarded as indicative of structural quality were selected. Since these items were all quite different from each other and not intended to constitute scales, simple means and standard deviations were compared across the nine countries.
Regarding the physical environment, parents rate all aspects (outdoor play space, supportive environment supporting independence, and varied equipment, toys and materials) at least as important, although the patterns of relative importance diverge somewhat across countries . Having a safe environment is rated as most important by parents in all countries.

Concerning the organizational aspects of ECEC-settings, parents adhered most importance to children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases and least importance to having a stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time. However, there was relatively large variation regarding this last issue, indicating low agreement among parents. There are some clear differences between countries with respect to a low adult-child ratio, which is deemed more important in Finland, Greece, and Poland, than in Netherlands, Portugal and England, although the latter still consider it to be important. Finally, the Southern European countries and Poland adhere most importance to healthy food.

Finally, with respect to the selected staff characteristics, parents rate being part of a stable team and providing practical and educational support for parents when needed as more important than having enough relevant work experience and having a high educational level. For these latter two characteristics, there was more variation, and thus less agreement among parents.

Research question 3 focused on parent's opinions on the most important aspects of ECEC for children's well-being and well-becoming through two open-ended questions. Do parents' expressed views on well-being and well-becoming differ between countries? Starting with a grounded theory approach, a list of codes was developed for both open-ended questions. In addition, a first pilot was conducted for 10 parents in five countries: Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Greece, and Norway.

When we compare the quantitative findings from research question one and two and with the first, preliminary qualitative findings of the pilot, we see that the qualitative material highlights more differences between the five countries than the quantitative data. However, as we did not reach saturation for the qualitative analyses yet, we cannot draw any firm conclusions. Nevertheless, this preliminary finding supports our mixed-method approach of including both structured and open-ended questions. Through this approach we may gain a more differentiated and nuanced picture of the aspects that parents think are most important for children's current well-being and future well-becoming.

In general, we see that both in the quantitative and qualitative data, there is a stronger emphasis on children's 'soft' social, emotional and personal skills than on children's 'hard' pre-academic skills. In addition, the high importance of process quality when choosing an ECEC setting is reflected in the qualitative finding that parents mentioned more often process quality characteristics than structural quality characteristics or curriculum (content) quality aspects.

Research question 4 concerned the aspects of ECEC-settings parents consider to be most important when choosing for a particular ECEC provision. Based on theory and exploratory factor analyses, we tried to estimate a five-factor model referring to practical considerations, the availability of ECEC, process quality characteristics, structural quality characteristics, and inclusiveness and diversity policies. Although this theoretical model was confirmed in a fully constrained model for the total group, we ran into many problems when we constrained the model to be equal across countries. We were not surprised by this finding, since there are large differences between national ECEC systems, specifically with regard to practical considerations (e.g., has low costs) and the availability of ECEC (e.g., Is available the whole year, also during holidays). Therefore, we cannot assume that these items are interpreted and considered in exactly the same way across all nine countries (i.e. they are not measurement-invariant). Nevertheless, this finding does not mean that we can never compare parents from different countries on these constructs. Based on an analysis of structural differences in national ECEC systems we can decide which items or constructs would be appropriate to compare for these specific countries.

For three items on process quality and two items on structural group characteristics we could estimate a measurement invariant confirmatory factor model across all countries. In general, we see that parents do not seem to distinguish that much between children younger than 3 years of age and children between 3 and 6 years of age. For process quality characteristics we see that the scores are really high for all countries (average means above 4.60). For structural group characteristics we also see that all average scores are quite high. In general, it is interesting to see that parents think that structural group characteristics are as important for older as for the younger age group.

Finally, **research question 5** examined to what extent parents feel that using ECEC for young children as complementing care in the family and as supporting parents to combine parenthood and work is appropriate. In general, the overall low mean scores indicate that, across countries, parents tend to disagree with statements expressing the inappropriateness of ECEC, the more so for older children. It should be noted though, that we targeted parents with at least one child in ECEC. Parents in Finland, followed by Germany and Poland differentiate more clearly between the two age groups when evaluating the appropriateness of ECEC than parents in other countries, such as England, Netherlands and Italy. Regarding cross-country differences for younger children, Netherlands and Norway think that ECEC is least inappropriate, less so than Poland, Greece, and England. For older children, Norway, Finland and Germany think that ECEC is least inappropriate, less so than Poland, Greece, and England.

A final interesting observation is that the standard deviations are larger in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland for younger children, and that they are still quite large for Germany and the Netherlands for the older children. These findings indicate that in these countries there is more variation in how parents think about the appropriateness of ECEC for children than in other countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results summarized above, we formulated some first, preliminary recommendations:

1. It appears to be possible to define quality and curriculum indicators at an overall European level, at least as far as based on the shared understanding that was found in this study. Nevertheless, the definition of bench marks or criteria should respect cultural differences that may relate to systems differences, socioeconomic circumstances, coverage issues, et cetera.
2. It is important to create a stronger shared understanding of early development of the younger children, for which developmental science can give us important inputs. Yet, preferences of parents, and local and national traditions may remain, especially regarding the benchmarks/criteria and the role division between ECEC-settings and the family.
3. Overall, parents attach higher value to soft cognitive, social, emotional and personal skills (i.e., a more broad/holistic development) whereas an emphasis on academics seems less valued, especially for younger children. The emphases of parents do align with recent insights from developmental science and with from studies examining the long-term effects and social and economic benefits from ECEC programs. This is an important message for both national and EU educational policy.

FUTURE ANALYSES

As outlined in the introduction and in the limitations, there are many more questions that can and will be answered with the data from the Stakeholder Study. Below we provide a list with some plans for future analyses. However, it should be noted that this list is far from exhaustive. We will stimulate all CARE partners to use this data for both within-country and between country-analyses. In this way, we aim fully acknowledge the richness of the data gathered in the Stakeholder Study.

1) Between country and between age comparisons for the teacher and policymaker data
2) Further between country analyses for the parent data, taking into account:
    a. Parental/family socioeconomic status
    b. Urbanicity (rural vs. urban)
3) Within country analyses:
    a. Between stakeholders (parents, professionals, policymakers)
    b. 'Mainstream' vs. 'minority' groups
    c. Lower vs higher socioeconomic status
4) Urbanicity (rural vs. urban)
5) Large scale analysis of qualitative data after a common training in applying the developed list of codes (Milano, December 2015)
6) An in-depth comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data.
7) Latent Profile Analysis for several sections of the questionnaire. For example, can we distinguish between parents with certain developmental goal or aspects of choice profiles? Do we find similar patterns in different countries?
8) Comparison of "homogenous" immigrant groups across countries for several sections of the questoinnaire (e.g. Turkish-German and Turkish-Dutch parents).

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APPENDIX A - TABLES

A1 - SPECIFIC CALCULATION OF WEIGHTS PER COUNTRY

To estimate the weights for the current sample, the following calculation swere conducted for each country:

-Weight= Eurostat fraction x total of Actual N/Actual N

-Weighted N= Weight x Actual N

Table A1.1

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - England

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	13	8	13	34
Eurostat fraction	0.163	0.379	0.458	1.000
Weight	0.43	1.61	1.20	
Weighted N	5.542	12.886	15.572	34

Table A1.2

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Germany

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	19	87	132	238
Eurostat fraction	0.129	0.587	0.285	1.001
Weight	1.62	1.61	0.51	
Weighted N	30.702	139.706	67.83	238.238

Table A1.3

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Greece

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	26	34	68	128
Eurostat fraction	0.213	0.458	0.329	1.000
Weight	1.05	1.72	0.62	
Weighted N	27.264	58.624	42.112	128

Table A1.4

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Italy

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	203	457	626	1286
Eurostat fraction	0.308	0.475	0.218	1.001
Weight	1.95	1.34	0.45	
Weighted N	396.088	610.85	280.348	1287.286

Table A1.5

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Finland

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	6	31	117	154
Eurostat fraction	0.098	0.452	0.451	1.001
Weight	2.52	2.25	0.59	
Weighted N	15.092	69.608	69.454	154.154

Table A1.6

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Netherlands

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	10	41	227	278
Eurostat fraction	0.174	0.418	0.409	1.001
Weight	4.84	2.83	0.50	
Weighted N	48.372	116.204	113.702	278.278
Trimmed weight	3	2.83	0.50	
	30	116.204	113.702	259.906

Table A1.7

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Norway

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	7	12	71	90
Eurostat fraction	0.151	0.352	0.497	1.000
Weight	1.94	2.64	0.63	
Weighted N	13.59	31.68	44.73	90

Table A1.8

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Poland

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	12	43	143	198
Eurostat fraction	0.064	0.564	0.373	1.001
Weight	1.06	2.60	0.52	
Weighted N	12.672	111.672	73.854	198.198

Table A1.9

Calculation of weights based on population statistics available at Eurostat (age 25-44 years) - Portugal

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Actual N	28	11	52	91
Eurostat fraction	0.415	0.296	0.289	1.000
Weight	1.35	2.45	0.51	
Weighted N	37.765	26.936	26.299	91

A2 – LIST OF CODES OF WELL-BEING QUESTION

1.2: What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think will foster children's well-being?
…for children under the age of 3 years:
…for children 3-6 years:

Structural quality[1]

Codes	Sub codes	Examples of answers
Staff quality: organization[2]	pedagogical competence	psycho, pedagogical knowledge on needs monitoring and supporting development- observe (growth and development) monitoring and supporting development- reports and outcomes sufficient individual approach
	knowledge on cognitive development	knowledge about brain/cognitive development
	knowledge on social-emotional development	knowledge about attachment
	Managing staff quality[3]	highly trained staff/qualified staff proper selection of staff controls staff work more autonomy teachers, less bureaucratic and centralism
	stable staff	stable staff
	staff-child ratio	connection between adult and child more easier and positive
	group composition	mixed groups: boys and girls group size

		small groups
	structure, routine, rhythm	age appropriate rhythm and routines rest periods enough time for kids
	reflective staff[4]	develop and reform activities
	communication between professionals	regular documented educational discussions (with other staff members)
Environment	safety[5]	safe facility/location
	Indoor spaces	Physcial space with good conditions comfortable facilities good facility Interesting location of the facility Convenient location space to withdraw to
	Outdoor spaces	well-equipped preschool garden/facility certified preschool garden Availability of outdoor space for play and discovery Physcial space with good conditions comfortable facilities good facility Interesting location of the facility Convenient location space to withdraw to

	materials	creative toys age-appropriate (play) materials, toys challenging material diversity of play materials
	health	sensitivity to clean and hygienic environment healthy/clean environment, indoor air clean healthy food/nutrition physical health care hygiene

Process quality[6]

Codes	Sub codes	Examples of answers
Staff quality: communication and relationship[7]	competent engagement in staff-parent relationship[8]	regular contact between parents and staff able to relate (knowledge) to both children and families trust between parents and staff familiar relationship regular contact/consultations between parents and staff cooperation with parents-regarding child's development cooperation with parents-parental involvement in activities and visits cooperation with parents-good involvement of the parents guardian in the child's involvement regular contact between parents and staff able to relate (knowledge) to both children and families
	secure child-staff relationship[9]	child is feelling safe (with staff)

	trust between child and staff
	key person (to strenghten attachment)
	building relationships
	warm encountered
	individually encountered/sufficient individual approach, attention
	good (affectionate) relationship
	kind/nice staff (who love children)
	caring staff- appropriate/proper care
	caring staff-continituity of care
	caring staff-good care by staff
	caring staff-availability of adults lap and warmth
	emotional responsive staff-respond and support accordingly
	emotional responsive staff-understand feelings child
	emotional responsive staff-staff open for child, hearing and listening to the child
	emotional responsive staff-empathy of caregivers
	emotional responsive staff-patient staff
	able to relate (knowledge) to both children and families
	build trust toward others than parents
	personal commitment
	staff has shared attention not only individually
moral attitude	respect for the children
	respect for family conditions
	acceptance of children
	encourage differences among children
	respect individuality
	educator acknowledges the child
	moral, values

Supporting of the child's development	Focuse on child's overall development	Focuse on child's overall development
	Physical/motor development	fine motor skills gross motor skills
	cognitive development	develop memory develop thinking intellectual, cognitive activity
	social development	social cooperation with peers and adults opportunity to play with others learn boundaries of trust learn to play with others communication learnt to cooperate (enhances) peer relationships learn to play with others socialize with other children new peers and peers more generally support versatility of peer relations support child in finding a place in group
	emotional development	recognizing emotions coping with emotions express feelings through play, drawing and puppet theatre promote self-regulation promote behavior control

	language development	develop speech communication
	personal/explorative skills	broadening horizons creativity imagination gain knowledge about themselves and others through play, drawing and puppet theatre
	personal skills-independence/autonomy	autonomy stimulate individual independent thinking taking initiatives child develops coping strategies
	personal skills-special needs	support talented children support children with difficulties
	personal skills-learning attitude	stimulate individual independent thinking child develops coping strategies
	personal skills-promote self-confidence	encourage and praise children promote self-confidence promote self-esteem
	obedience/discipline	promote discipline
Atmosphere	Learning/stimulating atmosphere	stimulating but relaxed environment good learning environment

	Positive atmosphere	peaceful environment open, friendly atmoshpere loving, affectionate environment pleasant environment

Curriculum quality[10]

Codes	Sub codes	Examples of answers
Curriculum quality	Individual needs	Age appropriate participation level appropriate participation free accessto explore and discover at own pace diverse activities that suit ensuring the development of the children's abilities basic needs are satisfied following individual rhythm ensure that basic needs are fulfilled age appropriate requirements freedom that allows development of different personalities support child's interest
	moral, values	teaching norms of behavior fairness (equity)
	Smooth transition	prepare for life in society prepare for school-diverse playful activities good familiarization prepare for life in society smooth transition from home to school

	teach should find ways to deal with a smooth transition from home to school
	proper adaptation to the new conditions
Organization of activities	sufficient amount of activities per day
	parental involvement in activities and visits
	daily activities according to the curriculum
	variety of fun and learning activities for cognitive and emotional stimulation
	diverse learning experiences
	interesting forms of activities
Activities outside the ECEC setting	connection with the local context/territory
practice basic skills	learning to go to the restroom
	eating
	dressing/undressing
	eating well with each other
Creative play activities	Play, drawing and puppet theatre to express feelings
	Play, drawing and puppet theatre to gain knowledge about themselves and others
	stimuli rich environment to promote children's creative activities
	availability of outdoor space for play to promote children's creative activities
physical activities	sufficient physical activity per day
	opportunities for movement and sports
	activities that promote dexterity
explorative activities	experimental learning
ability to play	ability to play

		(more) outdoor play time
	group activities	ability to work in a group discussion groups for children learn to play with others

A3 – LIST OF CODES OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT QUESTION

PIQ3: What three aspects of development in early life for children do you consider to be the most important to be successful in later life?

Codes	Sub codes	Examples of answers
Development	child's development as a key focus	More emphasis on child's development
Cognitive development, cognitive skills	Language development, language skills	Good language skills comprehensive language development communication skills share feelings and thoughts represent own opinion express themselves
	Learning a second language	Learning a foreign language

	math	good number skills
	concentration, attention	concentration, attention
	intellectual development	intellectual development
social-emotional development, social skills[11]	social	good social skills collaboration good communication skills taking others' perspectives and needs into account comprehensive play skills express themselves adapt behavior to meet perspectives of others empathy share feelings and thoughts relationships-build relationships with peers and adults relationships-ability to maintain relationship relationships- contact with adults relationships with(in) family social competence mindful loving interaction basis principle of sociability learning to be with others stimulation interaction child-child interaction-contact with parents child-child interaction- cooperation in group child-child interaction-play with other children

	child-child interaction-child is interested in contact with children of different origin and language
emotional	emotion regulation (controlling own feelings)/self-regulation skills
	empathy
	taking others' feelings into account
	identifying own feelings
	recognizing emotions
	share feelings and thoughts
	happiness
	tolerance
	ability to express emotions
	emotional stable
belongingness	feel important by people around
	feel loved by people around
	sense of belonging
	love, strong bonds with family
	love, strong bonds with caregivers
	loving approach
	feeling to be heard and understood
	(feeling) integrated in group
	love
	good bonding
	close adult-child relationship
moral, values	small emphasis on teaching tolerance
	knows between right and wrong
	respect (for adults)

		(good) behavior manners, rules
		non-discrimination-appreciation of the child
		non-discrimination- acceptance of the child
		non-discrimination- not distinguish between children
	Attachment/emotional security	sense of security
		sense of security which is good for self-esteem
		teacher provides safety
Personal skills, attitudes and characteristics	learning attitude	conceptualizing
		critical thinking
		sense, experience of mastering
		positive motives for learning
		stimulation and desire to learn and be curious
		concentration, attention
		appropriately transferred knowledge using in further years
		ability to face and overcome critical situations
	persistence	determination
		deal with failure
		courage
		trying to make ideas and desires to be fulfilled
		patience
		motivation
		perseverance
		can stand up for themselves
		coping with everyday life situations
		having long-term and reasonable goals
		making clear goals

independence/autonomy	independence
	preparation for independence
	independence from external pressure, group dynamics
	learn to do things by oneself
	(supported) autonomy (by staff)
	individuality
integrity	integrity
good humored	good humored
personality development	healthy personality
	strong personality
self-view[12]	self-confidence
	(support) self-esteem
	self-esteem - awareness of one's strenghts and weaknesses in relation to each other
	self-efficacy
	positive self-image
explorative skills	creativity
	creativity-learn to do things with hands
	to set bases to continue the child's exploration, discovering and learning life
	playing skills
	curiosity
	stimulation and desire to learn and be curious

	responsibility	responsible learning that things have consequences, positive and negative
Physical development, motor skills	Motor skills	Motor skills
	health	physical health mental health healthy life style good nutrition
	physical exercise	larger variety of physical activities promoting physical activity sports
Safe environment	safe environment[13]	safe environment
	psychologically safe environment	mental safe environment
	physical safe environment	physical safe environment
Environment quality	ECEC quality: child oriented[14]	teacher that propose many activities: preschool that is focusing on self-development teacher that propose many activities: diverse learning experiences teacher that propose many activities: diverse play teacher that propose many activities: methodical practices and patience teacher that propose many activities: various experiences

	teacher can observe the children in different ways
ECEC quality: parent oriented[15]	educators help parents: help understand children's resources and skill educators help parents: encourage talents and expression staff-parent interaction: collaboration between home and Kindergarten
having space challenge	having space challenge
family quality[16]	good family family support care: meeting basic needs care: contact with mother, crèche (daycare) is not good care: family care
health	healthy life style good nutrition
structural quality	Routine stability tranquility continuity

1.2: What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think will foster children's well-being?
…for children under the age of 3 years:
…for children 3-6 years:

[1]Structural quality
Structural quality represents aspects of ECEC-provisions that are relatively stable from day to day; they are seen as a distal determinant of child outcomes and frequently thought to determine child outcomes via process quality providing a frame for children's experiences in ECEC (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Sylva et al., 2006). Structural quality regularly includes aspects such as the design and furnishing of the indoor and outdoor space, available play and learning materials, group size, children-to-staff ratio, committed and stable staff, and staff professional competences, personnel's salaries and work status, health and safety measures, the principal's competences, internal regulations and practices of group composition.

[2]Staff quality: organization
Quality (and competence) of the staff and setting.

[3]Managing staff quality
The management of the setting is controlling the quality of the staff. For example by recruiting only qualified staff/selecting staff, controlling the staffs work, et cetera.

[4]Reflective staff
Staff have the capacity to reflect on (and subsequently adapt) their care and educational practices and activities.

Environment

[5]Safety
The protection from injury or loss by circumstance, accident, or negligence. This can
be a physical safe environment. For example, that the location or the facility is safe.

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[6]Process quality
Process quality refers to characteristics of the child's daily experiences (Philips & Lowenstein, 2011; Sylva et al., 2006). A variety of characteristics of process quality emerges in literature

(Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Musatti, 1993; Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009; Thomason & La Paro, 2009):

1. adult-child interaction that is responsive and affectionate and characterized by a high level of verbal stimulation, guidance and scaffolding, reflected in the quality of adult-child relationship
2. varied peer interaction opportunities
3. cooperative peer relationships
4. a general positive affective classroom climate with positive social relationships between children and between adults and children
5. well-implemented pedagogically structured activities
6. involvement of the voices of children and families

[7]**Staff quality: communication and relationship**

Quality of the relationships and communication between staff and children and staff and parents.

[8]**Competent engagement in staff-parent relationship**

There is an involved, engaged relationship between staff and parents. For example by having regular contact, having a trustful relationship and cooperation.

[9]**Secure child-staff relationship**

The staff provides warm, protective and secure relationships. For example, there is a trustful and attached relationship between the child and staff. The staff cares about the children and is emotional responsive.

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[10]**Curriculum quality**

Curriculum quality emphasize that children's experiences have certain contents and, through their contents, can serve particular valued developmental and educational goals. The most important function of the curriculum is to coordinate the child's experiences in order to provide consistent support to children's development across differing contexts and over time, while striking a balance between the short and long term interests of children, the values of families, the requirements for school, as well as the interests of the wider society (Oberhuemer, 2005).

1.3: What three aspects of development in early life for children do you consider to be the most important to be successful in later life?

[11]Social-emotional development, social skills

Social-emotional development includes the child's experience, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others (Cohen, Onunaku, Clothier, & Poppe, 2005). It encompasses both intra- and interpersonal processes.

Personal skills, attitudes and characteristics

[12]Self-view

How the child sees itself and knowing its own weakness and strengths. For example: self-confidence, (support) self-esteem, awareness of one's strengths and weakness in relation to each other, self-efficacy, positive self-image, et cetera.

Safe environment

[13]Safe environment

When it is not clear whether they mean mental or physical safe environment. For example, just safe environment.

Environment quality

[14]ECEC quality: child oriented

Activities that are focused on the development of the child. In general are the responses to this question not focused on the environment as we ask for early characteristics of children's early development. However, some parents responded by mentioning a characteristic of the environment.

[15]ECEC quality: parent oriented

Support from staff to the parents and the collaboration between them. In general are the responses to this question not focused on the environment as we ask for early characteristics of children's early development. However, some parents responded by mentioning a characteristic of the environment.

[16]Family quality

In general the responses to this question are not focused on the environment as we ask for early characteristics of children's early development. However, some parents responded by mentioning a characteristic of the family. Therefore, we put them in the family quality sub code with examples like, good family, family support, care: meeting basic needs, contact with mother, crèche (daycare) is not good, family care, et cetera.

APPENDIX B - DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS AND CONTRIBUTORS

B1 - QUESTIONNAIRE STAKEHOLDER STUDY

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

STAKEHOLDER STUDY – QUESTIONNAIRE

The CARE project is funded by the European Union to develop knowledge about early childhood education and care in European countries, in order to provide information to improve services.

The study includes all kinds of out-of-home early education and care for children from 0-6 years. With out-of-home early education and care we mean both center-based and professional, non-familial, home-based settings. In *(COUNTRY'S NAME)* this means...[7]

We look at the values, beliefs, and experiences of people who have an interest in early education and care from different perspectives: as parents/guardians, as staff or professionals and as policy makers.

Our aim is to understand peoples' views in an open-minded and sensitive manner. We want to look beyond official documents to understand the views of those involved with early education and care.

We thank you for your cooperation and your views will be taken into account by the project and may make a difference to improve services all over Europe.

The results of the study will be presented at scientific meetings and published in scientific journals. Individuals **will not** be identifiable in any stage of the project. Your individual answers will be treated as strictly confidential.

Parents/guardians are asked to answer as parents/guardians of their children.

Staff, professionals and policy makers are asked to answer as experts and experienced professionals, but not as the voice of their government, owners or responsible authorities.

It will take you approximately 20-25 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. You are not obliged to fill out all the questions.

I agree to participate in the research study described above[8] *(please tick)* ◯
I agree to participate in the research study described on the former page[9] *(please tick)* ◯

[7] Fill in the name of you country and list the names of the settings in your country that fulfil this definition.
[8] Paper and pencil version
[9] Electronic version (Limesurvey)

Question 0.a: **Country where you live** *(please tick)*

◯ United Kingdom

◯ Germany

◯ Greece

◯ Italy

◯ Finland

◯ The Netherlands

◯ Norway

◯ Poland

◯ Portugal

Question 0.b: **You are answering the questionnaire as a** *(please tick)*

◯ Parent/Guardian

◯ Policymaker (representatives of local, regional or national authorities with responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care)

◯ ECEC teacher/Caregiver (professionals who are working with children on a daily basis)

Question 1.1: **If you were choosing an ECEC setting for *your child/children* today, what would be the most important quality characteristics of the setting in making a choice?**

Please write down up to five quality characteristics that are most important for you.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Question 1.2: **Based on your experiences with ECEC settings and *your child's/children's* well-being:**

Q1.2.1: **What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think are most important to foster children's well-being? Please write down up to three aspects …**

…for children under the age of 3 years:

1.
2.
3.

…for children 3-6 years:

If it is the same answer as above, tick here: ◯

1.
2.
3.

Question 2: **Different people will expect different things from ECEC. How important do you consider different characteristics of ECEC settings are for children's well-being, development and learning?** *(Applies to children 0-6 years of age)*

Q2.1: Physical environment **The physical environment ...**	**Unimportant**	**Of little importance**	**Moderately important**	**Important**	**Highly Important**
2.1.1 Has a large outdoor play space	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.1.2 Is a pleasant building	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.1.3 Supports children's independence (e.g. children can take toys or books by themselves)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.1.4 Is safe	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.1.5 Is stimulating and challenging	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.1.6 Provides varied equipment, toys and materials	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.2: Organizational aspects **The setting ensures …**	**Unimportant**	**Of little importance**	**Moderately important**	**Important**	**Highly Important**
2.2.1 An appropriate small group size	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.2 Few children per trained caregiver/teacher	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.3 A stable group of children, with few changes in composition over time	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.4 Good connection to primary school in terms of staff communication and pedagogy	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.5 Clear developmental and educational goals	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.6 Care for children's physical health and safety to prevent infections and diseases	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.2.7 Healthy food	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.3: Diversity The setting facilitates that …	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
2.3.1 Staff members are from several ethnic-cultural communities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.2 Staff members have different ages, from young to old	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.3 Staff includes men as well as women	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.4 Children are from several ethnic-cultural communities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.5 Children are from low as well as higher income families	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.6 The group consists of children of mixed ages	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.3.7 The group includes children with handicaps or impairments	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.4: Parent/guardian involvement Parents/Guardians …	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
2.4.1 Can get in touch with staff easily	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.4.2 Can take part in a parent-staff committee that meets regularly	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.4.3 Can influence important decisions that relate to children's day-to-day experiences in the ECEC setting	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.4.4 Are involved in the planning of the care and educational activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.4.5 Are involved in evaluating the care and educational activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.4.6 Are informed about the development and well-being of their child on a regular basis	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.5: Staff characteristics Caregivers/teachers …	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
2.5.1 Have enough relevant work experience (at least five years)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.2 Care affectionately for the children	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.3 Have a high education level (at least three years college/university education)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.4 Evaluate their own work continuously	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.5 Are part of a stable team (with low turn-over)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.6 Form cohesive teams with their colleagues (they collaborate well and support each other)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.7 Have similar ideas about childrearing as parents/guardians	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.8 Document what children are, say and do (through for example saving children's work, making exhibitions and photos)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.9 Communicate and cooperate well with parents/guardians	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.5.10 Provide practical and educational support for parents/guardians if needed by them	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.6: Educational principles In the ECEC setting there is an emphasis on…	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
2.6.1 The individual child and her/his talents	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.2 Freedom of choice of activities for children	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.3 The child acting independently	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.4 Lots of small group activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.5 Children playing together	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.6 Children's free play	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.7 Children's learning	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.8 Recognizing children's point of view	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6. 9 Preparing children older than 3 years for school	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.10 Stimulating children's creativity	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.11 Teaching children good manners	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.6.12 Children learning a second language	①	②	③	④	⑤

Q2.7: Social and emotional climate How important do you consider the following characteristics of the group or classroom?	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
2.7.1 Caregiver(s)/teacher(s) respond sensitively and adequately to the individual needs of each individual child	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.7.2 Caregiver(s)/teacher(s) respond sensitively and adequately to processes in the group as a whole	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.7.3 Children establish warm and stable relations with each other (experience belongingness to the group)	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.7.4 Children are seen as individuals	①	②	③	④	⑤

whose voices should be heard

Question 3: **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.*

Children younger than 3 years					Q3.1: Social development The child …	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.1 Is able to communicate and interact well with peers and adults	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.2 Shows respectful behaviors towards adults	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.3 Can solve conflicts with other children	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.4 Can share toys/things with other children	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.5 Has a sense of autonomy/independence	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.6 Understands and respect rules	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.7 Knows the difference between right and wrong	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.8 Respects other children's ideas and interests	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.9 Takes responsibility for her/his own behaviour	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.10 Cares about children with handicap	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.1.11 Is interested in contact with children with different cultural and language backgrounds	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 3: **In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes for the child?** *Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.*

Children younger than 3 years					Q3.2: Development of thinking, language and math The child …	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.1 Has good spoken language	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.2 Has elementary knowledge of writing and reading (e.g., writes letters of her/his name)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.3 Has basic understanding of numbers (for example, can count to 10)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.4 Has basic understanding of shapes	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.5 Can communicate own ideas and experiences	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.6 Is interested in knowledge of the physical world	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.7 Can ask questions to get information	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.8 Has basic skills in a language other than the mother tongue	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.2.9 Is able to describe, explain and reason about the world	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3. 2.10 Can make plans for play and work	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 3: **In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes for the child?** *Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.*

Children younger than 3 years					Q3.3: Physical development, skills, health The child …	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.1 Has physical endurance	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.2 Has healthy eating habits	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.3 Has good motor skills	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.4 Copes with practical tasks (for example, washing or dressing by him-/herself)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.5 Engages in physical play, sports or dance	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.6 Has basic skills in arts (painting, drawing, music, dance)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.7 Has basic skills in daily work in the home (participating in preparing food, setting the table, tidying up …)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.3.8 Has the capability to express him-/herself in various creative art forms, music, or dance	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 3: **In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes for the child?** *Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.*

Children younger than 3 years					Q3.4: Emotional development The child …	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.4.1 Can express feelings and needs adequately	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.4.2 Experiences joy of life	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.4.3 Develops a strong will of her/his own	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.4.4 Develops control of her/his emotions	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.4.5 Shows awareness of others' thoughts and feelings	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 3: **In your opinion, how important is it that ECEC-settings focus on developing the following outcomes for the child?** *Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.*

Children younger than 3 years					Q3.5: Personal development The child …	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.5.1 Is open-minded, not afraid to try new things	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.5.2 Is able to solve problems by her-/himself	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.5.3 Shows enthusiasm in play and learning activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.5.4 Shows persistence, and focus in play and learning activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	3.5.5 Has confidence in her/his own abilities	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 4: **How important do you consider the following staff skills regarding challenges in Early Childhood Education and Care?**

Staff skills to …	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important	Don't know
4.1 Support the development of children from disadvantaged families	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
4..2 Support the development of children with special educational needs	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
4..3 Stimulate and support the 'whole child', (all domains of development and learning)	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
4.4 Implement the UN Convention on Children's Rights	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
4.5 Stimulate children's interest in cultural differences and commonalities	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
4.6 Apply new ICT technologies in the ECEC-context (for example, computers, Ipad, …)	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩

PARENT'S SPECIFIC PART (Q5; Q6) – TO BE ANSWERED OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS ONLY

Question 5: **How important are the following aspects for your choice of a particular ECEC-setting?** *Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.*

Children younger than 3 years					The ECEC setting…	Children 3 to 6 years				
Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.1 Is easy to get to	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.2 Has low costs	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.3 Is available at times of the day when I need it	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.4 Is available the whole year, also during holidays	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.5 Is flexible in terms of schedules/hours from week to week	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.6 Fosters children's well-being and happiness	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.7 Fosters children's social and emotional development	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.8 Fosters children's thinking and language development	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.9 Includes children with special needs or disability	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.10 Includes children with different social or cultural backgrounds	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.11 Provides small group size	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.12 Has caregivers/teachers that have a high educational level (at least three years college/university education)	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.13 Has stable groups and low turn-over rate of staff	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	5.14 Offers activities in a second language on a regular basis	①	②	③	④	⑤

Question 6: **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**
Please give your opinion for both groups, children younger than 3 years and children 3 to 6 years.

Children younger than 3 years						Children 3 to 6 years				
Totally disagree	Disagree	Don't agree/ disagree	Agree	Completely agree	Statement	Totally disagree	Disagree	Don't agree/ disagree	Agree	Completely agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	6.1 It's more difficult for a child to develop a secure relationship with a mother who goes out working than with a mother staying at home	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	6.2 Working out of home makes a mother feel better, which has a positive influence on children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	6.3 Being in the the own family is better for a child than being in an ECEC setting	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	6.4 Qualified caregivers or teachers are better for my child than relatives or acquaintances who are not educated in this field.	①	②	③	④	⑤
①	②	③	④	⑤	6.5 In families with sufficient income, one of the parents should stay at home with their children	①	②	③	④	⑤

TEACHERS/CAREGIVER AND POLICYMAKER SPECIFIC (Q7)

TO BE ANSWERED OF TEACHERS/CAREGIVERS AND POLICYMAKERS ONLY

Question 7: **How important do you consider the following aspects of ECEC settings?**

Q7.1: Implementing a program or curriculum	**Unimportant**	**Of little importance**	**Moderately important**	**Important**	**Highly important**	**Don't know**
7.1.1 Staff follow national/regional/local guidelines for ECEC services and settings	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.1.2 Staff have a shared understanding of developmentally appropriate practice	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.1.3 Staff follow guidelines decided in their own ECEC setting	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.1.4 Staff take responsibility for adapting the program to the needs of children	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.1.5 Staff have sufficient professional autonomy to decide on program issues themselves	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩

Q7.2: Improving group/classroom quality **Staff skills to enhance quality in the group/classroom by …**	**Unimportant**	**Of little importance**	**Moderately important**	**Important**	**Highly important**	**Don't know**
7.2.1 Observing or assessing individual children's progress in for example language, motor skills and maths	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.2 Documenting children's activities that promote well-being, development and learning	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.3 Regularly applying quality management programmes	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.4 Systematically evaluating the pedagogical environment using research-based assessments	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.5 Designing and planning educational and care activities together with colleagues at the institution	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.6 Regular cycles of planning, evaluating and adapting practice	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.7 Learning-on-the-job, by observing colleagues, giving feedback, and sharing good practices	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩
7.2.8 Team-based evaluation of individual children who need extra care and support	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑩

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Age in years	**Gender** *(Tick)* ☐ **Female** ☐ **Male**	
What's your nationality?	**Which language is used most often in your family?**	**How many languages do you speak so you can have a simple conversation?** *(Enter number of languages)*
What's the name of the country where you were born?	**What's your mother's country of birth?**	**What's your father's country of birth?**

Have you attended an ECEC-setting in your childhood? *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**

At what age did you leave school? *(Enter age in years)*	**Do you have a vocational qualification?** *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** **If yes, which one** *(Enter name)* **If yes, how many years did you study for this qualification?** *(Enter years)*	**Do you have a college or university education?** *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** **If yes, which one** *(Enter name)* **If yes, how many years did you study at a college or university?** *(Enter years)* **If yes, what is your highest achieved qualification?** *(Tick)* ☐ **None** ☐ **Bachelor** ☐ **Master** ☐ **PhD** ☐ **Other:**

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION – PARENTS/GUARDIANS ONLY

Are you currently employed or self-employed? *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**

If «No» - not employed or self-employed:

If you are not employed or self-employed: Are you… *(Tick, several choices are possible)*

☐ Home working (domestic work)
☐ Unemployed/seeking employment
☐ Retired
☐ Undergoing education
☐ Other

If «Yes» - employed or self-employed:

What is your current profession?

How many hours per week are you currently working?

Are you… *(Tick)*
☐ Employed (working outside home)
☐ Employed (working home based)
☐ Self-employed (working outside home)
☐ Self-employed (working home based)
☐ Other

Your relationship status

Are you currently living with a partner? *(Tick)*	**If you are not living with a partner, are/have you** *(Tick)*	**If you are living with a partner are you** *(Tick)*
☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**	☐ **Divorced/separated** ☐ **Widow(er)** ☐ **Always lived single**	☐ **Married** ☐ **Other**

If currently living with a partner:

Is your partner currently employed or self-employed? *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**

If «No» - the partner is not employed or self-employed:

If your partner is not employed or self-employed: Is she/he… *(Tick, several choices are possible)*

☐ Home working (domestic work)
☐ Unemployed/seeking employment
☐ Retired

☐ Undergoing education ☐ Other

If «Yes» - the partner is employed:

How many hours per week is your partner currently working? ☐
Is your partner… *(Tick)* ☐ Employed (working outside home) ☐ Employed (working home based) ☐ Self-employed (working outside home) ☐ Self-employed (working home based) ☐ Other

Did your partner attend an ECEC-setting in her/his childhood? *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **I don't know**

At what age did your partner leave school? *(Enter age in years)* ☐ ☐ **I don't know**	**Does your partner have a vocational qualification?** *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** **If yes, which one** *(Enter name)* **If yes, how many years did your partner study for this vocational qualification?** *(Enter years)* ☐ ☐ **I don't know**	**Does your partner have a college or university education?** *(Tick)* ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** **If yes, which one** *(Enter name)* **If yes, how many years did your partner study at a college or university?** *(Enter years)* ☐ ☐ **I don't know** **If yes, what is your partner's highest achieved qualification?** *(Tick)* ☐ **None** ☐ **Bachelor** ☐ **Master** ☐ **PhD** ☐ **Other:**

About children

How many children do you have as a parent or guardian? *(Enter number)* ☐

How many of your children from 0-6 years are currently enrolled in ECEC-settings? *(Enter number)* ☐

How old are the children who are currently enrolled in ECEC-settings?
(Enter age in years for each child)

Child 1: ☐ *Child 2:* ☐ *Child 3:* ☐ *Child 4:* ☐

Approximately how many days a week are your children in ECEC-settings? *(Enter the number of days per week for each child)*	**Approximately how many hours a week are your children in ECEC-settings?** *(Enter the number of hours per week for each child)*
Child 1: ☐	*Child 1:* ☐
Child 2: ☐	*Child 2:* ☐
Child 3: ☐	*Child 3:* ☐
Child 4: ☐	*Child 4:* ☐

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - TEACHERS/CAREGIVERS ONLY

What type of setting are you currently working for? *(Use national terminology)*

What are you currently working as? *(Use national terminology)*	**How long have you worked in ECEC-settings?** *(Enter years)*	**How long have you worked in your current institution?** *(Enter years)*

How many hours per week are you currently working in this institution?	**You are currently working mainly with children:** *(Tick, several choices are possible)*	**Your formal education and/or training focused mainly on the following age groups:** *(Tick, several choices are possible)*
	1. Younger than 1 year 2. 1-2 years 3. 3-4 years 4. 5-6 years 5. Older than 6 years 6. None of the above mentioned	7. Younger than 1 year 8. 1-2 years 9. 3-4 years 10. 5-6 years 11. Older than 6 years • None of the above mentioned

What is the size of the group of children you usually work with on an average day?

(Enter number of children in the group)

How many of these children have minority backgrounds? *(Tick)*	**How many of these children do you consider to come from poor families?** *(Tick)*	**How many of these children do you consider to have special needs?** *(Tick)*
12. None 13. 1-3 children 14. 4-6 children 15. 7-9 children 16. 10 or more children	17. None 18. 1-3 children 19. 4-6 children 20. 7-9 children 21. 10 or more children	22. None 23. 1-3 children 24. 4-6 children 25. 7-9 children 26. 10 or more children

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - POLICYMAKERS ONLY

What type of institution are you currently working for? *(Use national terminology)*

On which level is this institution operating? *(Several ticks are possible)*

- ☐ local
- ☐ regional
- ☐ national

What are the main responsibilities of your position regarding ECEC-policy ? *(Use national terminology)*

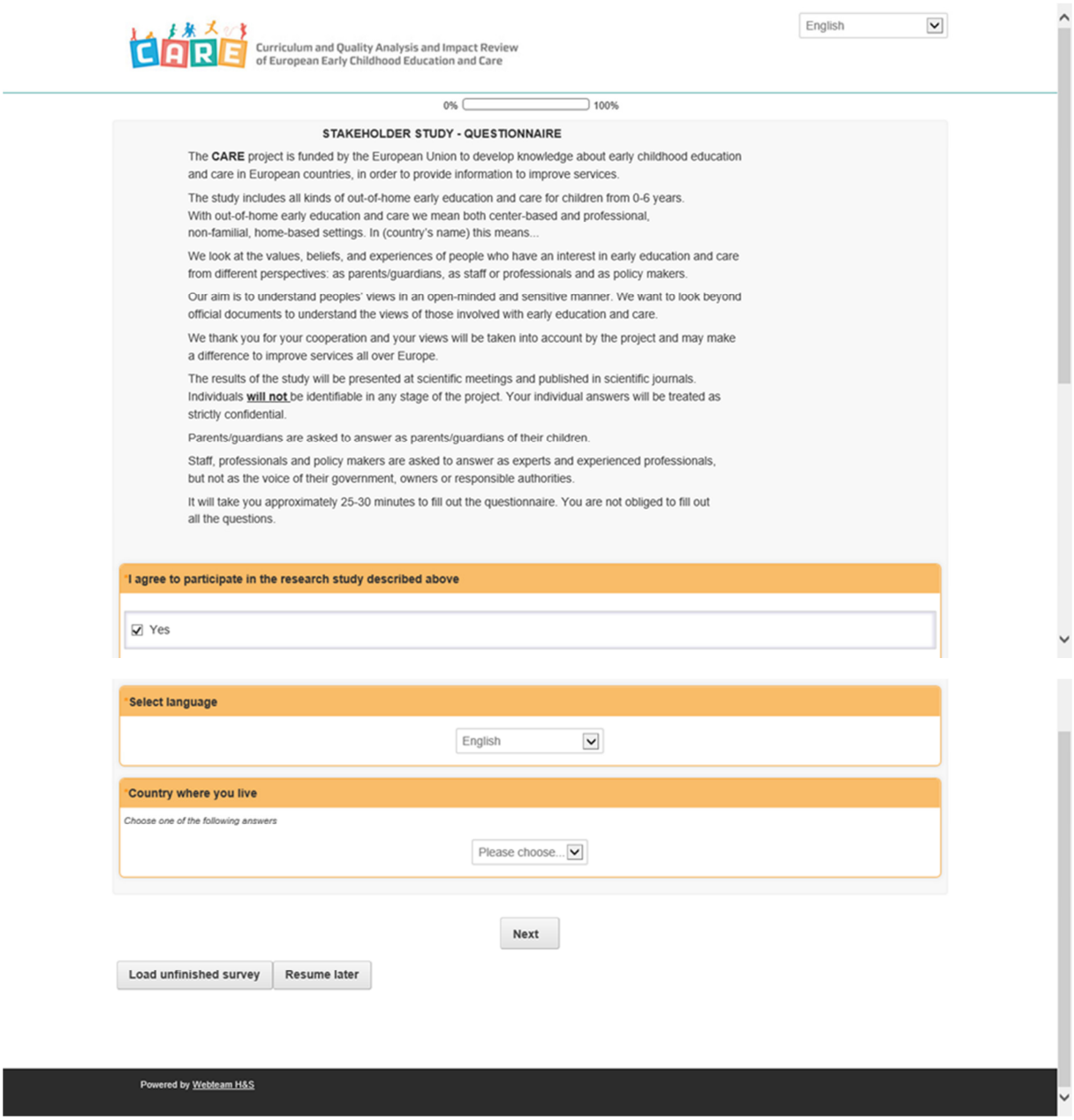
What is your current position as a policy maker? *(Use national terminology)*	**How long have you been working with ECEC issues in policy making?** *(Enter years)*	**How long have you worked in your current institution?** *(Enter years)*

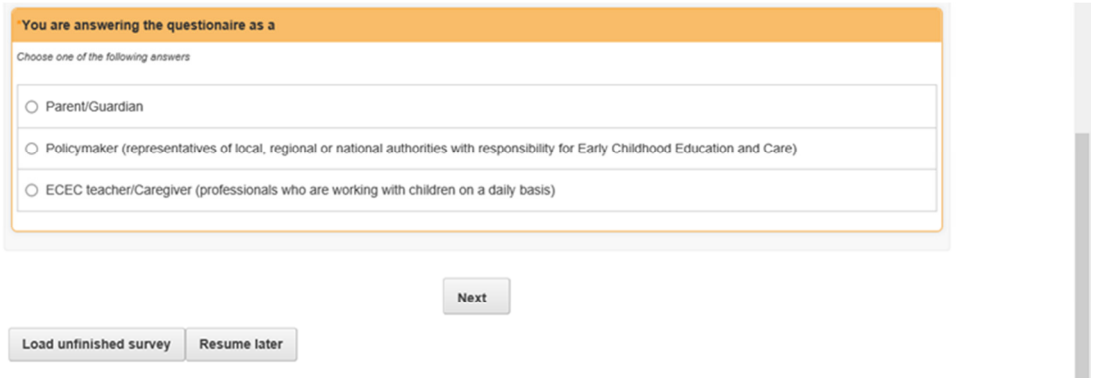
PIQ1: What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think will not foster children's well-being?
…for children under the age of 3 years:
…for children 3-6 years:

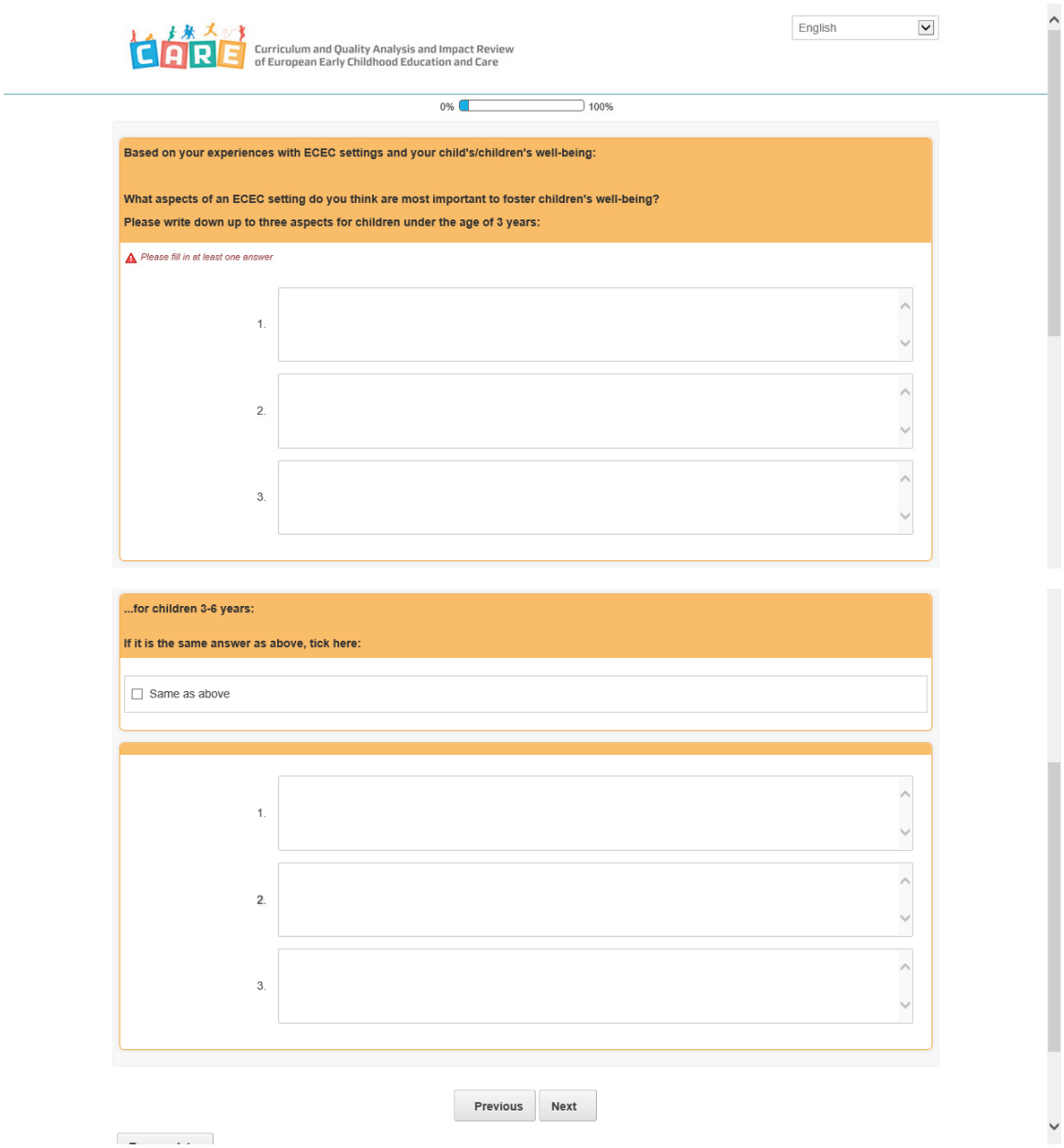
PIQ2: If it were possible, what change would you suggest in an ECEC setting to support children's well-being?
…for children under the age of 3 years:
…for children 3-6 years:

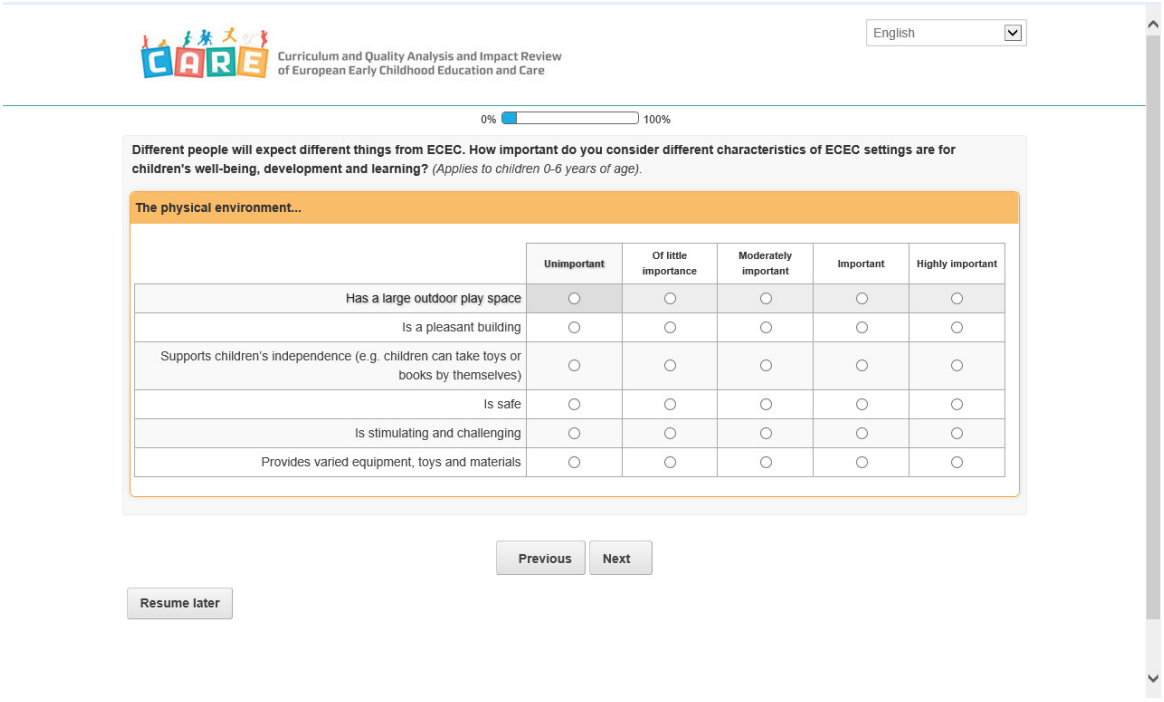
PIQ3: What three aspects of development in early life for *your child/children*[1] do you consider to be the most important to be successful in later life?
…for children under the age of 3 years:
…for children 3-6 years:

B3 - EXAMPLES INTERFACE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE






Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care
English
0%
100%
Based on your experiences with ECEC settings and your child's/children's well-being:
What aspects of an ECEC setting do you think are most important to foster children's well-being?
Please write down up to three aspects for children under the age of 3 years:
Please fill in at least one answer
1.
2.
3.
...for children 3-6 years:
If it is the same answer as above, tick here:
Same as above
1.
2.
3.
Previous
Next



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English

0% 100%

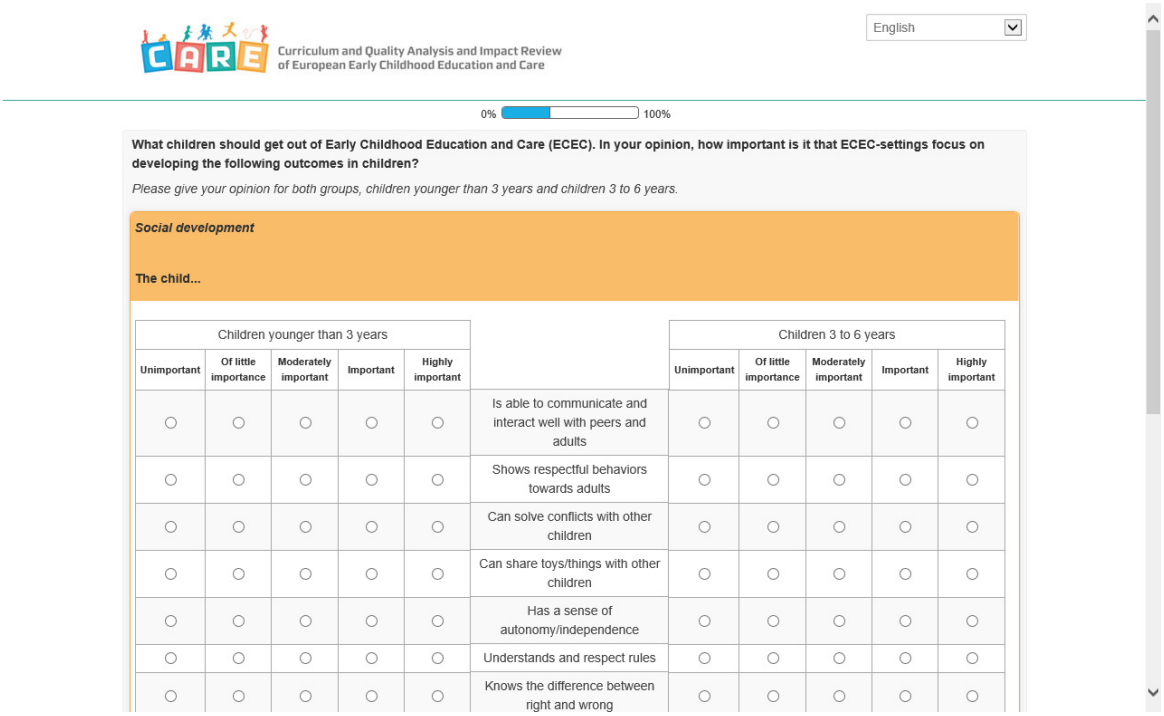
Different people will expect different things from ECEC. How important do you consider different characteristics of ECEC settings are for children's well-being, development and learning? *(Applies to children 0-6 years of age).*

The physical environment...

	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Highly important
Has a large outdoor play space	○	○	○	○	○
Is a pleasant building	○	○	○	○	○
Supports children's independence (e.g. children can take toys or books by themselves)	○	○	○	○	○
Is safe	○	○	○	○	○
Is stimulating and challenging	○	○	○	○	○
Provides varied equipment, toys and materials	○	○	○	○	○

Previous Next

Resume later



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

English

0% 100%

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
○	○	○	○	○	Is able to communicate and interact well with peers and adults	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Shows respectful behaviors towards adults	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Can solve conflicts with other children	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Can share toys/things with other children	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Has a sense of autonomy/independence	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Understands and respect rules	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	Knows the difference between right and wrong	○	○	○	○	○

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

Manual Stakeholder Study WP 6

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Contents

General info

- **What is CARE?**

The CARE project is funded by the European Union to develop knowledge about early childhood education and care in European countries, in order to provide information to improve services. The study includes all kinds of out-of-home early education and care for children from 0-6 years. With out-of-home early education and care we mean both centre-based and professional, non-familial, home-based settings.

- **Stakeholder Study**

One of the subprojects within CARE is to conduct a study on current values beliefs and concerns regarding ECEC in Europe among parents, caregivers/teachers and policymakers.
This study will be conducted in England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal. The study consists of two parts:

- A personal interview with deliberately composed samples, reflecting the 0-3 and 3-6 division and, in case of parents and caregivers/teachers, representing major social or ethnic-cultural communities (which may differ between countries).
- An internet-based questionnaire that can be sent out via stakeholder organisations. Within this part we have less/no control with respect to sample composition.

- **Why this manual?**

This manual is an instrument for:

- The persons who will organize and coordinate the study, and
- For the interviewers who will conduct the personal interviews.

In the following, we first present some details about the personal interview (section 2) and thereafter on the internet questionnaire (section 3).

Personal interview

The next paragraphs we will provide more information on the sample composition and recruitment approach for the personal interview, and some guidelines for conducting the interview (i.e., procedures and instructions).

- **Sample composition**

The basic strategy of the outlined sample composition (Table 1) is to deliberately sample for relevant variation.

Regarding the parents, we focus on a mainstream (middle class) sample of ECEC users, split by children's age (0-3, 3-6 years). The deliberate sampling proposed here is meant to ensure that we have a sufficient number of parents and teachers (working) with children in both age periods. However, it should be noted that all informants are asked to answer the questions for *both* the 0-3 and 3-6 age period.

In each country, one or two additional samples of low income and/or particular ethnic-cultural minority groups will be recruited. The choice depends on country-specific considerations of relevance for policy issues, presence of particular groups, et cetera.

Examples:
The Netherlands we will sample next to mainstream parents, groups of Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch parents, but in Poland the focus can be on low income urban and low income rural parents. In other participating countries, the Turkish-immigrant community (Germany, Norway) or the Moroccan immigrant community (Belgium) might be relevant as well, which would be nice because allowing to compare similar ethnic groups across countries in part of the entire sample.

We want to include caregivers/teachers, *working with* children from low income or minority children according to the scheme below. If possible, include also teachers (say, one-third) who themselves are of minority background. Regarding the policy makers, stratification to background is not relevant. However, it is important to include both policymakers with a responsibility for the 0-3 and 3-6 period (i.e., when this is relevant in your country). We encourage to focus in the personal interview on policymakers at the *national level* (e.g., representatives of relevant ministries).

Table 1. Sampling scheme for personal interviews with stakeholders (numbers are exact; less is not a real option given the DoW)

System	Social/ethnic background	Parents	Caregivers/ teachers	Policy makers*
0-3	Mainstream / middle class	10	4	3
	Low income / minority 1	7	1	
	Low income / minority 2	7	2	
3-6	Mainstream	10	4	
	Low income / minority 1	7	2	3
	Low income / minority 2	7	1	
Total		48	14	6

*Distinction of children's age only when it is relevant.

- **Recruitment approach**

Use your personal networks or the networks of organisations you work with to identify and recruit informants. For example, you may use the stakeholder list for each country documented in the WP7 folder (Deliverable 7.1) at the Google Drive. We are not striving for statistical representativeness of the sample, but for sampling relevant variation in social- and cultural background. As mentioned above, for the policy makers we propose to limit the sample to the national level.

A standard email/letter is provided with a brief explanation of the CARE project which partners can use to approach relevant organisations and networks. In addition, a sample brochure for parents and teachers about the CARE project and specifically the stakeholder study is provided, which can be given to parents and teachers. You will find these documents in the WP6-folder in Google Drive (see section 4 in this document).

- **Procedure personal interview**

2.3.1 General

The most ideal (i.e., efficient) situation is when the personal interview can be conducted on a laptop in a place where it is possible to connect to the internet. The questionnaire for the personal interview will be online available through a link (one for each country) which will be send in a separate e-mail by the WP6-team.

Important: This link is different from the below described internet-based questionnaire. These two links are not exchangeable! At the start of the personal interview the interviewer has to respond on two questions: (1) The name of the interviewer and (2) whether the answers were entered in real time or after the interview (see explanation below). Moreover, the questionnaire ends with the additional open questions, which are not included in the internet-based questionnaire.

When there is no possibility to connect to the internet during the interview, a paper-and-pencil version of the questionnaire can be used. Directly afterwards, the interviewer enters the data in the questionnaire online him/herself using the link. To save time, we encourage interviewers to type the answers to the open questions on a laptop in an offline word file during the interview (instead of writing them by hand), so they can be easily copy-pasted to the online questionnaire. The exact time and date of the interview will be saved in the database.

2.3.2 Interview procedure

Below we provide some general guidelines for conducting the personal interviews.

Preparations before the start of the interview

3 Make sure that the interview can be conducted in a quiet location with minimal disturbance (e.g., no television, radio, et cetera).
4 Make sure that your own phone is switched off. When you do this in front of respondents, this may indirectly motivate them to do the same.
5 Check whether the laptop and internet connection works and make sure that you have access to the right questionnaire.

- **Introductory part**

1 When online, the interviewer starts registration his/her name and that the interview is conducted in real-time.
2 Together with the respondent, read through the text that introduces the study (read out loud or let the respondent read for him/herself). Make sure that the respondent understands the purpose of the study. Give the respondent the opportunity to ask questions, and check actively whether anything is unclear.
3 Make clear that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in respondents ideas and opinions, and how these may differ between persons, both within and between countries. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes.
4 Ask formally for consent (and tick this box in the questionnaire).
5 The interviewer/or respondent ticks the language, country and stakeholder group.

- **First open question part**

6 Inform the respondent about the first part: You explain that there will first be two open questions (Q1.1 & Q1.2) and that you will type the answers (either in the online questionnaire or in an offline word-file).
7 Read the open questions out loud and type the answers of the respondent.

8 If the answer given is not relevant or good enough to answer the question, ask a follow-up question. You could use:
a) *general questions*, such as: Can you tell me something more about that? Can you explain that to me? How do you mean? Can you elaborate on that?
b) *specific questions*, such as: What do you mean exactly? Like what?
When respondents find it difficult to answer a question, you can help them by giving examples and thinking along with them.

9 If respondents do not understand the question, repeat the question slowly. When they still don't understand the question, you can give an additional explanation. However, it is important to stay as close as possible to the content of the question to be able to compare questions across countries.

What to do if the respondent asks how to understand the concept of well-being?

Earlier we decided to not give a definition of child well-being in the open questions, because we are interested in what respondents consider themselves to be well-being. However, we think that it is plausible that respondents will ask the interviewer how to understand the concept of well-being. We therefore came up with the following explanation.

"Well-being for example means that a child is feeling well, is enjoying live, is feeling accepted and belonging to a group, experience competence and is able to cope with daily live"

It is important that the whole sentence is mentioned, so we do not prime respondents to, for example, an individualistic interpretation of children's well-being. When you use this sentence, note this in the text box. This will be useful information for the analysis part.

- **Structured part**
- The interviewer explains that the second, structured part of the interview will start. The respondent can read the questions by him/herself, but the interviewer can also read the items out loud. Decide for each respondent (based on the respondents' capacities and preferences) which strategy will provide the most valid and reliable answers.
- When reading the items out loud: Ask the questions precisely as they are formulated in the questionnaire.
- When the respondents read the items for him/herself: Make clear that you are available to answer questions when anything is unclear. It could be useful to have a book or something else to do with you.
- In both cases: Make sure that respondents understand the available answer categories.
- Important: Make sure that you have read the items a couple of times, and that you understand what is meant with each item. If not, ask the coordinator of the study in your country for clarification
- It is important to explain difficult terms when necessary, however, to be able to compare the answer on the questions over countries it is important to stay as close as possible to the content of the questions.

- **Second open question part**

10 Inform the respondent about the final part: You explain that there will be three additional open questions and that you will again type the answers (either in the online questionnaire or in an offline word-file).

1. See guidelines from first open question part.

- **Demographic part**

3 Explain that we need this information to be able to make comparisons both within and across countries. This information will never be identifiable to individual persons.

4 When the respondents read the items for him/herself: Make clear that you are available to answer questions when anything is unclear.

General interview skills

- Have an open and interested attitude towards the respondents. Don't give respondents the feeling that they are judged on their answers. For example:
  - Do not give you own opinion or connect any value judgment on the replies of the respondents.
  - Do not use comments showing disapproval, such as 'Oh yeah?'.
- Do not make comments in which you distance yourself from the study (e.g., do not say: "The developers of the questionnaire would also like to know ... " or " How did they come up with this ... huh? ". Use "we" when you are talking about the study (i.e., make yourself an "owner" of the study).
- Listen actively.
- Regularly look at the respondents when asking questions (but don't stare).
- Have a friendly expression.
- Nod during the interview as a sign that you have understood the answer.
- Avoid distracting habits, such as chewing gum, tapping or fumbling a key, continuously look at your phone, etc.
- Keep the interview at an adequate pace; don't rush, but also don't linger.
- Make you sure that you ask for clarification when respondents give incomplete answers. Don't make assumptions.
- In general: Make sure that it will be a nice interview that respondents enjoy.

What to do if…?

- Boomerang question - The respondent gives the question back: "What do you exactly want to know"? This can sometimes be a sign of anxiety (and therefore delay of response). The best strategy is to repeat (and explain) the question.
- Silence falls - It is normal that there is an occasional silence and that people think for some time (10 seconds is very normal). If it takes a little longer, you can say something like "you can think quietly". If it is still hard, you can repeat and / or explain the question or repeat the final part of the respondent's answer so far.
- Respondents state that the question is not (completely) applicable to their country. Acknowledge that this is possible/right, and explain that the questionnaire is administered in nine countries with different ECEC systems. Although perhaps not applicable, respondents still may have an opinion about the question at hand.
- Too much detail – don't interrupt the respondent rudely, but use short breathers to interrupt kindly at an appropriate time ("I interrupt you just because you already have told a lot about this issue and I would like to discuss some other topics. If necessary, we can come back to this topic later). Another strategy is to give a summary of the respondent's answer. Give the respondents not the feeling that you are uninterested.

- The respondents are uncertain or shy – Help them to start talking by first talking small talk. During the interview, give positive feedback (e.g., "you have told a lot about what your think are/is…."). When necessary, repeat the fact that there are no right or wrong answers. You just want to know more about their ideas and opinions.
- If there are confounding factors such as radio, TV, phone – Try to improvise. Let people pick up the phone, wait quietly and then continue the interview again.
- Be sensitive to signals of the respondents (yawning, looking at the clock) and try to figure out what he reason might be. If necessary, have a pause or adjust your pace so the interview goes faster without the respondents feeling rushed.

Rounding up the interview

When you arrive at the final question, say something like: "I have come to the end of the interview, did you miss or do you want to add something?". These comments can be filled out in the final text box. When you have filled out this box, ask the respondent what they thought about the interview. Where there any questions which were unclear, unimportant or perhaps very important? It can also be nice to ask how they felt about your way of interviewing. Finally, thank respondents for their partaking in this study.

1) Internet-based questionnaire

- ***Sample composition***

The basic strategy is to use the stakeholders' organisations and networks to access potential informants. There will inevitably be less control of the final sample composition and sample size, but by carefully collaborating with organisations, we may be able to optimize the sample roughly in line with the scheme below. We expect lower response from the low income/minority groups. Therefore, we definitely need sufficient personal interviews with stakeholders from these groups. The numbers in the Table below are indicative and reflect our ambitions.

Table 2. Sampling scheme for internet-based questionnaire for stakeholders (numbers are indicative of the desired numbers)

System	Social/ethnic background	Parents	Professionals working with	Policy makers*
0-3	Mainstream / middle class	100	50	
	Low income / minority 1	30	15	15
	Low income / minority 2	30	15	
3-6	Mainstream	100	50	
	Low income / minority 1	30	15	15
	Low income / minority 2	30	15	
Total		320	160	30

*Distinction of age of the children only when it is relevant.

- ***Recruitment approach***

Parents: Contact parents' organisations or big service providers (well spread over your country), request them to send the invitation for the e-questionnaire via e-mail lists to their members or parents, respectively, with a strong recommendation to fill out the questionnaire. Try to select organisations in such a way that you can increase the likelihood of sampling relevant variation in

age-period and social and ethnic-cultural background. Use reminders and general outreach strategies to make CARE familiar to potential informants.
Caregivers/teachers: We propose to contact organisations of caregivers/teachers or big service providers (well spread), with the same request, now concerning professionals (caregivers, teachers – staff working with children on a daily basis). Try to select organisations in such a way that you can increase the likelihood of sampling relevant variation.
Policy makers: we propose to also include local (municipal) and, if relevant, regional level policy makers (e.g., strongly involved with policy implementation). Contact the local, regional and national government organisations that you have contact with, use your personal network of policy makers.

A standard email/letter is provided with a brief explanation of the CARE project in which a link to the internet-based questionnaire can be included (partners have to do this themselves). Partners select the organisations and networks and forward the email. In addition, a sample brochure for parents and caregivers/teachers about the CARE project and specifically the stakeholder study is provided. A translated version of this brochure can be attached to the e-mail to stakeholders. You will find these documents in the WP6-folder in Google Drive (see section 4).

- ***Access to internet-based questionnaire***

The internet-based questionnaire will be online available through a link (one for each country) which will be send in a separate e-mail by the WP6-team.

Important note: This link is different from the above described questionnaire for the personal interview. These two links are not exchangeable!

2) Data-processing

The data of both the personal interview and the internet-based questionnaire are entered automatically in data-files which are stored (and backed-up) on servers of Utrecht University. Data-cleaning and scaling will be done by WP6 core team, as well as the further comparative analyses.

The answers to the open questions are entered as text data in this data file as well. We will draw a random sample of the open answers (e.g., 25% of the personal interview and 10% of the internet-based questionnaire) that partners are requested to read carefully in order to make a brief report on the main themes that come up, broken down by subsample.

The WP6 core team will organize skype meetings to discuss the themes and to decide which themes to elaborate upon further. Based on the further selection of themes, partners will be asked to translate parts of the qualitative data – that is, the answers to the open-ended questions - for the main report.

3) List with additional documents for data collection

- Sample letter stakeholder organizations - Personal interview
- Sample letter stakeholder organizations - Internet-based questionnaire
- Brochure for parents/teachers - Personal interview
- Brochure for parents/teachers - Internet-based questionnaire

You find this information at the Google drive:

CARE > WP6 > Deliverable 6.2 > Documents for data collection

See e-mail of 21-01-2015 for login details.

B5 – RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR PI AND IBS USED BY CARE PARTNERS

The following table provides an overview of the recruitment strategies that partners used for both the personal interview and the internet based questionnaire (formulated by themselves):

PERSONAL INTERVIEW	INTERNET BASED SURVEY
ENGLAND	
● We used contacts with parents who were involved in another research project concerned with childcare for young children ● We used contacts in organisations concerned with ECEC and also the Department of Education.	We requested distribution through newsletters of ● Fathers' organisation ● Mumsnet – an organisation for parents ● NAECE – National Association for Early Childhood Education. ● NPDNA – National Private Day Nurseries Association. ● National Childminders' Association ● Early Learning Alliance ● 4children – a charity running many children's centres and nurseries ● Action for children – a charity running many children's centres
FINLAND	
<u>Distribution of invitation letter to:</u> ● Parents attending the Parents Panel in the city of Jyväskylä were invited to take part to the interview, volunteers were signing up for interview. (Parents panel is intended for parents with children attending day care in the city of Jyväskylä. Parents are voluntarily taking part on this panel.) ● 2 day care centres with which the CARE team members have established research collaboration was contacted to recruit educators and parents (this setting is located to the area of city where there are plenty of immigrant families/ city rental appartments → low income expected). ● Personal interview requests were sent via e-mail to central policy makers in the field of Finnish ECEC. ● Personal interview requests were sent to selected ECEC staff members in the metropolitan area. <u>Distribution of invitation letter through:</u>	<u>Distribution of invitation letter/ e-mail including the questionnaire link to:</u> National Board of Education/Preschool section Kindergarten Teachers' Union Finnish Parents' Union The Finnish-Swedish Parents' Union The Finnish-Swedish day care centres The Office of the Ombudsman (Lapsiasiainvaltuutettu) in Finland ECEC services of the city of Jyväskylä, Turku, Joensuu, Saarijärvi, Lahti, Tampere, Rovaniemi Contact person delivered the invitation to the ECEC services and staff members at the Metropolitan area in the cities of Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo E-mail list and web page link of the Niilo Mäki Institute (Institute and clinic for children with learning disabilities) International Services of the Faculty of Education at the University of Jyväskylä → the invitation letter was passed onwards to the exchange students/ international staff at the University A head of the private day-care centre within the metropolitan area. University staff in Jyväskylä, Tampere, Turku and

• A head of the ECEC services at the municipality of Saarijärvi was asked to distribute the interview invitation amongst the staff and parents • Personal contacts of CARE project workers and research associates to leaders of institutions and kindergarten teachers and parents • Personal contacts of CARE project workers and research associates to parents • International Services of the Faculty of Education at the University of Jyväskylä → the invitation letter was passed onwards to the exchange students/ international staff at the University as well as to the representative of the social services (immigrant contacts) at the city of Jyväskylä • The research assistant of the CARE project, potentially connected to young parents/ student parents	Rovaniemi in the fields of ECEC and teacher education <u>"Direct marketing" and invitation letter to:</u> Kindergarten teachers who are continuing their studies for Master level in JYU Snowballing (through colleagues at the university college) ForLearning network members in the JYU Snowballing through the personal and academic networks of CARE collaborators Posting the link to CARE collaborator's personal Facebook pages and asking people to share it further in their own ages. After the personal interviews with policymakers/educators/parents an additional invitation letter for internet based questionnaire was handed and asked whether the person interviewed knew suitable persons to fill in the questionnaire.
ITALY	
As premise to the recruitment strategies in both personal and internet based-questionnaire, we think that the success of the recruitment in Italy comes from a long lasting (over 30 years) tradition of networking among ECEC services, cities and Institutions and of some research centres especially in some University (Milano, Pavia, Bologna, Firenze…) and in CNR (National Research Centre) in Roma. This has engaged many researchers and professionals in action-research projects and in in-service professional development over the years, promoting a connected network. • Public occasion where the Italian Team has mentioned the Stakeholder Study • Contacts with teachers and pedagogical coordinators provided by several collaborators (senior professionals) who have been working in the last ten years in professional development courses or research-action/research-training projects in ECEC services. • Contacts provided by colleagues (professors/researchers of other university or Research Centres) with centres coordinators, local administrators, teachers…	• Contact with the Ministry of Education (link on the website) • Contacts with local admnistrators and responsibles of ECEC services at different level, provided by all the Italian Team of Professor/researchers (a 10 to 30 ys experience). • Contacts from several collaborators (senior professionals) who have been working in the last ten years in professional development activities or research-action/research-training projects in ECEC services. • School Inpectors (State Preschool) • Networkings of practioners and experts (Gruppo Nidi e Infanzia) • Social-private Cooperatives, Professional Associations (FISM, etc) • Scientific associations (SIPED- Italian Society of Pedagogy) • The local network of Reggio Children (in Reggio
GERMANY	
The default access to respondents of the PI was mostly established through contacting childcare centers and home-based daycare persons in	For the internet-based questionnaire study the same recruiting strategies like for the personal interview study were used. Strategies applied additionally or

different regions Berlin and in Bamberg covering the different target groups aimed at in the sample plan. The center managers and caregivers were contacted via the invitation letters provided by the WP6 core team (translated into German) and subsequent phone calls and asked to take part in the study themselves but also to ask and convince parents of the three sub-groups to participate in the study. Also, posters and flyers were placed in the university as well as in childcare centers and community family centers. Another strategy made use of was spreading an invitation to take part in the interview study together with an inviting text and important information about the study through Internet. Different local (Berlin, Bamberg) social networks were used focusing on groups within the network formed by the target groups of the study (mothers / family networks, some filtered by the age of the children). As establishing contact to families with Turkish migration background and low SES families without migration background proved very difficult. A Turkish student (Turkish language as mother tongue) visited bilingual Turkish-German childcare centers and approached caregivers and parents there. As another measure to reach families with a Turkish migration background, Turkish students were asked to ask their own personal contacts to Turkish families of the target group to take part in the study. In order to recruit the German low SES sample, Interviewers visited a community family center in the Berlin district Marzahn and approached parents taking part in certain groups (playgroups, early music education) after the groups took place and when parents stayed in a café at the family center. The sample of policy makers was recruited by sending invitation letters and information material per e-mail to persons that our department had already been in contact with before (for instance through other research projects).	differently to the ones for the personal interview study were: In order to increase participation in the IBS study, the possibility to take part in a lottery with two iPads mini as prices was integrated into the IBS. As there were no restrictions to local areas for the IBS, local and national online networks were addressed. As mentioned above, the Turkish version of the questionnaire could not be included into the Lime Survey and thereby made accessible online. To enable Turkish people to answer the questionnaire without language barriers, bilingual German-Turkish mother groups and courses taking place once per week were visited by a Turkish student. The parents were given and asked to fill in the Turkish paper version of the questionnaire at one course date. At the next course date (usually one week later) the filled in questionnaires were collected. To increase response rate, parents who had filled in a questionnaire received a book for their child. In order to reach the targeted number of caregivers (childcare centers and home-based daycare persons) online networks and platforms for caregivers were used for establishing contact and disseminating the study. One of the online portals for caregivers (www.erzieherin.de) issues its own newsletter. The Stakeholder IBS study was presented in one of the newsletter issues together with a request for participation.
GREECE	
Distribution of invitation letter to: ● 7 municipalities in broader Athens area (for day care centres) [for interview with vice-mayors or directors for social welfare/policy section]. ● The Greek Association of Private ECECs (day care centres) [for interview with members of the governing council] ● 4 Directorates of Primary Education (for kindergartens) [for	Distribution of invitation letter to: The 52 Directorates of Primary Education (kindergartens are part of it) in the country (for the Directors or the deputy officers for kindergartens) The municipalities of the country (for the directors of day care centres' section) National Parents' Confederation Teachers Union (kindergarten teachers are under the same union with the primary education

interview with the Directors] ● National Association of Early Childhood Educators for day care centres (PASYVN) [for interview with members of the governing council] Distribution of invitation letter through: ● Personal contacts with the vice-mayors of three municipalities for ensuring access to day care centres for interview with the staff and, in turn, with a number of parents ● Personal contacts of CARE project members to parents and staff	teachers) Direct invitation letter to: Currently registered students at the Hellenic Open University (through the university's internet platform), both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Two versions: (a) for ECEC educators/professionals studying in postgraduate level; (b) for parents with a child in an ECEC setting (day care centre or kindergarten) National Association of Early Childhood Educators for day care centres (PASYVN): (a) announcement through association's site and permanent link in the first page; (b) oral announcement in the national conference (1200 participants). Distribution of invitation letter through: the 52 Directorates of Primary Education (preschool is part of it) the invitation letter was distributed to public kindergartens (for kindergarten teachers) Snowballing (through colleagues at 4 university departments of preschool education) Printed information leaflets distributed to parents by the staff of 18 day care centres and 10 kindergartens Note: NO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (either for day care centres or kindergartens) were involved in the study. ONLY ACTIVE/EMPLOYED EDUCATORS.
NETHERLANDS	
We had three Master students who helped us with collecting the data from Dutch parents and teachers. They recruited parents through the following strategies: ● Parents within their own network, and friends/acquaintances of these parents. ● Teachers within their own network and colleagues of these teachers. ● Parents and teachers within network of CARE project workers/ colleague researchers. ● Two teachers that participated in the case study. We had two Research-Assistants who helped with collecting data from Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch families. They recruited parents through the following strategies: ● Parents within their own network,	Distribution of invitation letter to: Several large daycare and preschool organisations Several boards of school foundations/organisations Attendants of our yearly seminar on ECEC (policymakers, representatives of large childcare organisations, etc.). Parental organisation (parents of children in day care centers) Colleagues with their own network of daycares, preschools, and schools (e.g., Northern part of the Netherlands) Colleagues at the University of Applied Sciences. Colleagues with young children (and their friends).

and friends/acquaintances of these parents. ● Teachers within their own network and colleagues of these teachers. In addition, we conducted some interviews with parents at the organizations that participated in the WP2 case studies. Policymakers on the national-level were recruited through the personal network of Paul Leseman.	
NORWAY	
<u>Distribution of invitation letter to:</u> ● A municipality near the university college. ● A private, none profit foundation that owns 60 kindergartens ● Ministry of Education and Research ● Directorate of Education <u>Distribution of invitation letter through:</u> ● Personal contacts of CARE project workers and research associates to leaders of institutions and kindergarten teachers and parents ● Personal contacts of CARE project workers and research associates to parents	<u>Distribution of invitation letter to:</u> Ministry of Education and Research Directorate of Education Teachers Union Parental organisation (parents of children in Kindergarten) <u>"Direct marketing" and invitation letter to:</u> Former master students at the university college Partner kindergartens for the University college (where students complete their practice within their kindergarten teacher education) Snowballing (through colleagues at the university college) Personal and academic networks of CARE collaborators
POLAND	
<u>Policy makers:</u> first phone than e-mail (invitation letters) contact with the: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Comenious Fundation (Branch of the Bernard van Leer Foundation), National Parliment (Parlamentary committee of Education; Parlamentary committee of Labour and Social Policy) CARE researchers conducted all interviews <u>Parents/Professionals (steps of organizing data collection)</u> 1. we had several presentations concerning the project and its importance to students from our Faculty (Faculty od Education; Departament of ECEC) 2. we invited volunteers to participate in the CARE as interviewers 3. we arranged a meeting for students interviewers - went through the	<u>Policy makers (regional and local level):</u> ● Phone call and then e-mail to the 16 regional Educational Supervision Institutions *Kuratoria* (settings for 3-6 years old children) ● Phone call and than e-mail to the directors of creche public networks (17 in the country) ● Personal contact with some of the policy makers <u>Parents/Professionals:</u> ● Snowballing (through colleagues at the university college) ● Personal and academic networks of CARE collaborators (researchers, students, former students) ● Requests (personal, e-mail, phone) to

questionnaire; discussed the procedure of the interview (students got guidelince on paper); interviewers declared who they would like to interview (parents/professionals); interviewers received paper versions of the questionnaire 4. interviewers conducted the interviews (data collection lasted 6 weeks; students collected interviews in their home places what allowed to collect data from different parts of the country; also rural areas) 5. when the data was collected we organized a meeting and gave an instruction to students how to implement the data into the Limesurvey Additionaly CARE researchers conducted several interviews.	collaborating settings to inform parents/professionals and invite them to participate in the project • Contact with the heads of the institutions, networks with the request to inform/transmit the invitation letters to their employees • Personal contact with professionals who conduct practical training to our students
PORTUGAL	
<u>Distribution of invitation letter or e-mail (with same content) to:</u> • Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (General Directorate of Education; Division for Preschool Education and Basic Education) • The Institute of Social Security • The Social Action section of a major private, none profit organization that owns a considerable number of child care and education centers in the area of Lisbon <u>Personal contacts of the CARE project team and collaborators with:</u> • Representatives of the General Directorate of Education; Division for Preschool Education and Basic Education • Members of the Transatlantic Forum Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY) • Child care centers, teachers, and parents.	<u>Distribution of invitation letter or e-mail (with same content) to:</u> • Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (General Directorate of Education; Division for Preschool Education and Basic Education) • The Institute of Social Security • The National Confederation of Parent Associations as well as Regional Federations of Parent Associations. • Members of the Transatlantic Forum Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY) • The board of the Portuguese Association of ECEC Professionais. <u>"Direct marketing" and invitation letter to:</u> Child care centers that collaborated with the team in previous projects. Former master students Snowballing (through colleagues at several universities) Personal and academic networks of CARE team members and collaborators Social online networks from CARE research members, including Facebook pages of other CARE team research projects that involved parents and ECEC teachers.

SAMPLE LETTER FOR FIRST CONTACT WITH STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Dear …

We are pleased to inform you about **CARE**, an EU-funded project dedicated to the *Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care*. The research consortium conducting this project is composed of Universities in 11 countries, covering all regions of Europe, including the ______________________ [name of university] in our country. Started January 1st 2014, CARE aims 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 early childhood education and care (read more about our goals here). [This is just an example how you could introduce CARE. You are free to adjust this text to whatever you think is appropriate]

One project within CARE is to conduct an interview study on the values, beliefs, and expectations of people who have an interest in early education and care from different perspectives: as parents/guardians, staff, and policy makers. The overall aim is to understand peoples' views in an open-minded and sensitive manner. We want to look beyond official documents to understand the views of those involved with early education and care.

Our question to you is whether we may approach parents/ teachers/policymakers of your organization [Adjust to specific stakeholder] to participate in this interview study. The interviews, consisting of a structured questionnaire with some open-ended questions, take around 50 minutes. Data-collection will take place between February and April 2015. Individuals will not be identifiable in any stage of the project.

The views of the parents/ teachers/policymakers [Adjust to specific stakeholder] will be taken into account by the project and may make a difference to improve services all over Europe. The results of the study will be presented at scientific meetings and published in scientific journals.

We hope that it will be possible to approach parents/ teachers/policymakers… [Adjust to specific stakeholder] through your organization. If you have any questions about the study, don't hesitate to contact us at [your e-mail]. We will be pleased to answer any questions.

Our kindest regards,
The ____________ [nationality] CARE team/ The CARE country coordinator,

- -

Name
Position

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

SAMPLE LETTER FOR FIRST CONTACT WITH STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT INTERNETBASED QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear …

We are pleased to inform you about **CARE**, an EU-funded project dedicated to the *Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care*. The research consortium conducting this project is composed of Universities in 11 countries, covering all regions of Europe, including the ______________________ [name of university] in our country. Started January 1st 2014, CARE aims 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 early childhood education and care (read more about our goals here). [This is just an example how you could introduce CARE. You are free to adjust this text to whatever you think is appropriate]

One project within CARE is to conduct a study on the values, beliefs, and expectations of people who have an interest in early education and care from different perspectives: as parents/guardians, staff, and policy makers. The overall aim is to understand peoples' views in an open-minded and sensitive manner. We want to look beyond official documents to understand the views of those involved with early education and care.

To reach as many people as possible, we have designed an *internet-questionnaire*. Our question to you is whether you would be willing to send out the link to this questionnaire to the parents/ teachers/policymakers of your organization [Adjust to specific stakeholder]. The more responses we get, the greater the impact of the study will be!

The views of the parents/ teachers/policymakers… [Adjust to specific stakeholder] will be taken into account by the project and may make a difference to improve services all over Europe. The results of the study will be presented at scientific meetings and published in scientific journals. Individuals will not be identifiable at any stage of the project. It will take respondents approximately 20-25 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

We hope that it will be possible to send out the link to the questionnaire through your organization. The questionnaire will be available from February 1st 2015 onwards. If you have any questions about the study, don't hesitate to contact us at [your e-mail]. We will be pleased to answer any questions.

Our kindest regards,
The ____________ [nationality] CARE team/ The CARE country coordinator,

- -

Name
Position

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

B7 - INFORMATION BROCHURES

Why CARE?

The CARE project is funded by the European Union to develop knowledge about early childhood education and care (ECEC) in European countries, in order to provide information to improve services. The project includes all kinds of out-of-home early education and care for children from 0-6 years. With out-of-home early education and care we mean both centre-based and professional, non-familial, home-based settings.

What does this study entail?

One of the subprojects within CARE is to conduct a study among parents, caregivers/teachers and policymakers. This study is conducted in England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal.

We will look at the values, beliefs, and experiences of people who have an interest in early education and care from different perspectives: as parents/guardians, as staff or professionals and as policy makers. Our aim is to understand the views of those involved within early education and care in an open-minded and sensitive way.

Your views are taken into account by the project and may make a difference to improve ECEC-services all over Europe!

Are you interested in participating in this study? You can find the questionnaire at:

LINK

It will take you approximately **20-25 minutes** to fill out the questionnaire.

Privacy

The results of the study will be presented at scientific meetings and published in scientific journals. Individuals are **not** identifiable in any stage of the project. Your individual answers are treated as strictly confidential.

Contact: Name, University, E-mail of the national responsible CARE person

This Project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme

Why CARE?

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Your views are taken into account by the project and may make a difference to improve ECEC-services all over Europe!

It will take approximately **45-60 minutes** to complete the interview.

Where the interview will take place will be agreed upon with the interviewer.

Insert name, phone number and email address of the interviewer.

Privacy

The results of the study will be presented at scientific meetings and published in scientific journals. Individuals are **not** identifiable in any stage of the project. Your individual answers are treated as strictly confidential.

Contact: Name, University, E-mail of the national responsible CARE person

B8 - CONTACT LIST – CONTRIBUTORS TO THE STAKEHOLDER STUDY

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