



# Towards a European Quality Framework in Early Childhood Education and Care

*DG Education and Culture  
ECEC/ESL Stakeholder Meeting,  
31 March 2014*

# What will I talk about ?



- European policy context—holistic approach to children and to education
- Quality Framework – developments so far
- Next steps

# EU co-operation in education & training



- *Programmes and funding:*  
Erasmus +, Structural Funds,
- Research Programmes
- *Political co-operation:*  
Europe 2020 strategy,  
Education and Training  
2020 Strategy,  
European Semester
- *Open method of coordination*
- Common objectives
- EU reference tools supporting national reforms
- Monitoring of progress (indicators and benchmarks, biennial joint reports)
- Peer-learning, peer-review

# Communication and Council Conclusions on ECEC



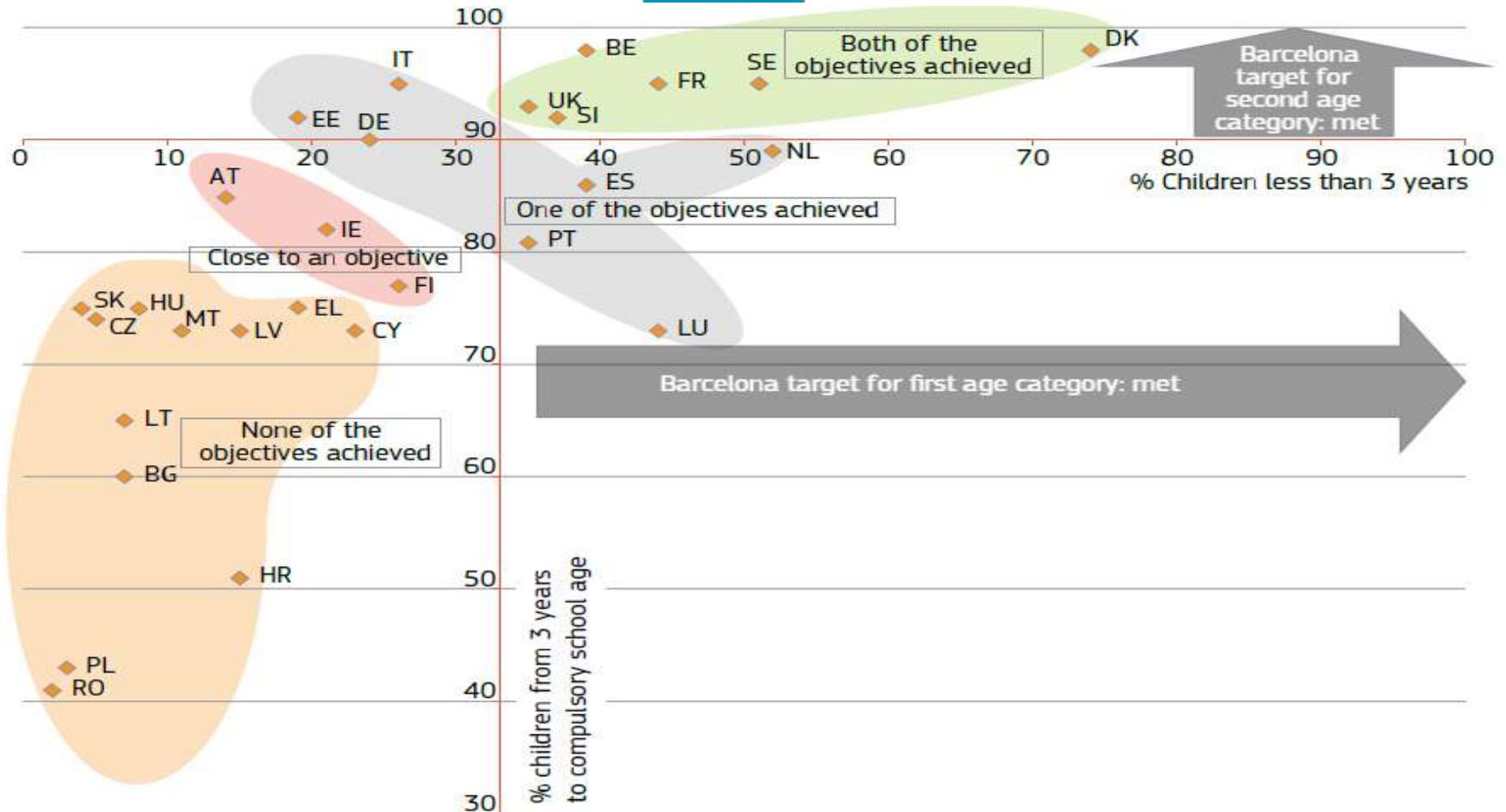
- Improving **accessibility** and **quality**
- **Holistic** approach to children – from birth to compulsory school age

# Accessibility: Barcelona target



## Formal child care by age category (2011)

Children cared for as a percentage of all children in the same age category

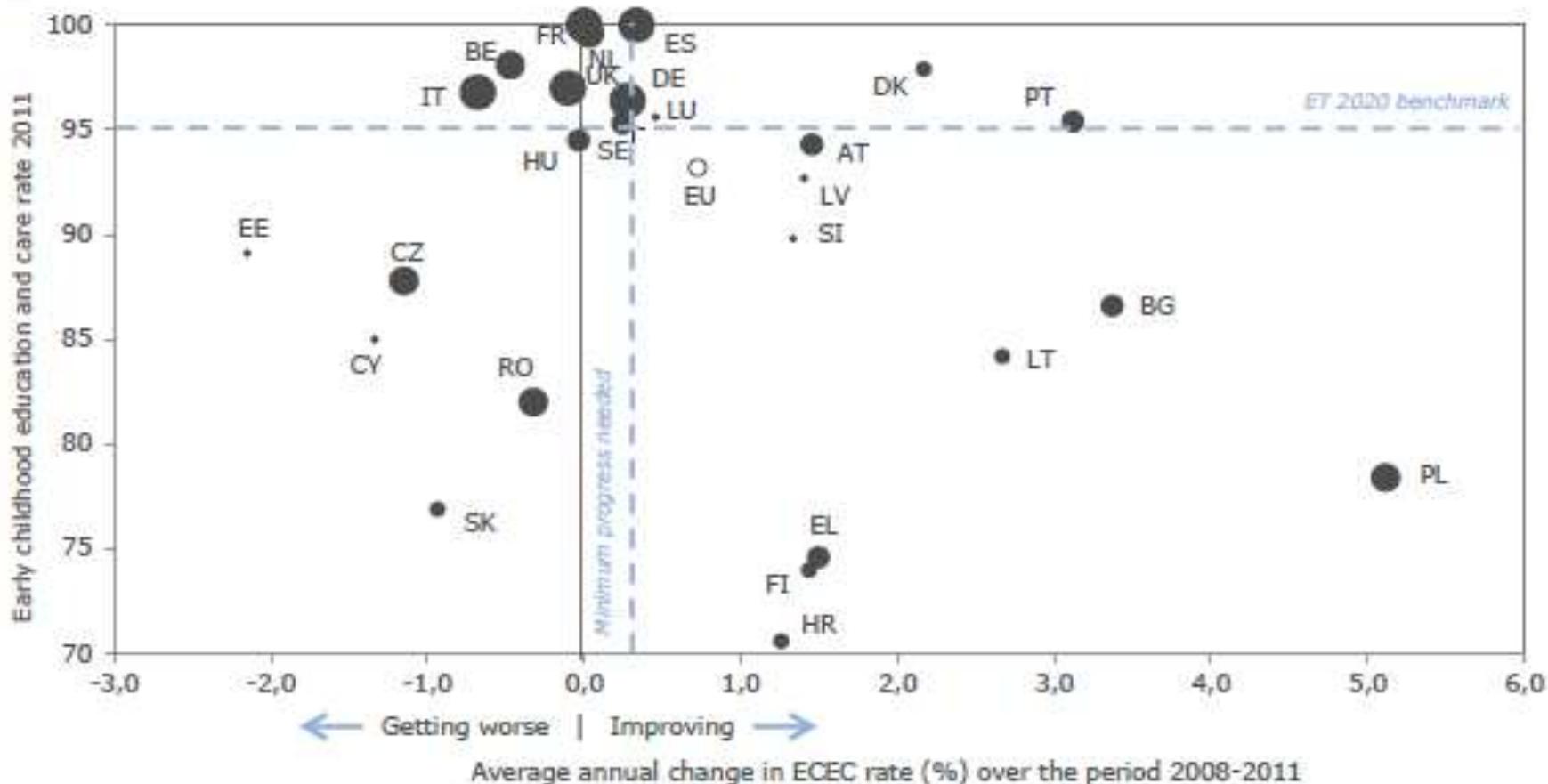


Sources: Eurostat — EU-SILC 2010

Notes: 'Close to an objective' refers to countries that had around 25 % of coverage for children under 3 (Finland) or around 80 % coverage of children aged 3 to the mandatory school age (Austria, Ireland).



Figure 3.6. Early childhood education and care: current performance and recent change



Source: JRC-CRELL and DG EAC calculations based on Eurostat (UOE) data. Notes: Countries are shown according to their 5-6 cohort size, with five categories. MT has been excluded from this scatterplot as its 2011 ECEC rate is – due to a break in series – unrelated to its 2008-2010 percentage change. IE is excluded because of methodological revisions in 2010 and 2011. EL is included only with its 2010-2011 percentage change.

# What is in legislation and policy documents on quality in the Member States?



Always an explicit reference in legislation or policy. However some:

- operate local or regional systems
- use accreditation or inspection systems
- provide frameworks within which others act
- require local authorities to be responsible.

# Quality criteria



- organisational – such as group size, space, staff/children ratios etc
- professional – such as curriculum, staff qualifications, social cohesion etc
- quality assurance – such as self-assessment or inspection

# Outcomes and outputs in legislation and policy



- there is a greater focus on inputs and processes than outputs
- the short term impacts (outputs) are more explicit than the longer term impact of ECEC (outcomes);
- measures or indicators to record progress or impact are rare.

# Thematic Working Group on ECEC



- 25MSs and NO and TR
- Different backgrounds of representatives, including ETUCE, Eurydice, (OECD)
- So far: 7 meetings, 4 PLAs, forthcoming 1 meeting,
- Peer learning and peer review
  - Existing international research (including the Commission's own studies - CORE, Inclusion study, ECEC/ESL study, Key data on ECEC, etc.)
  - Mappings and analyses of countries

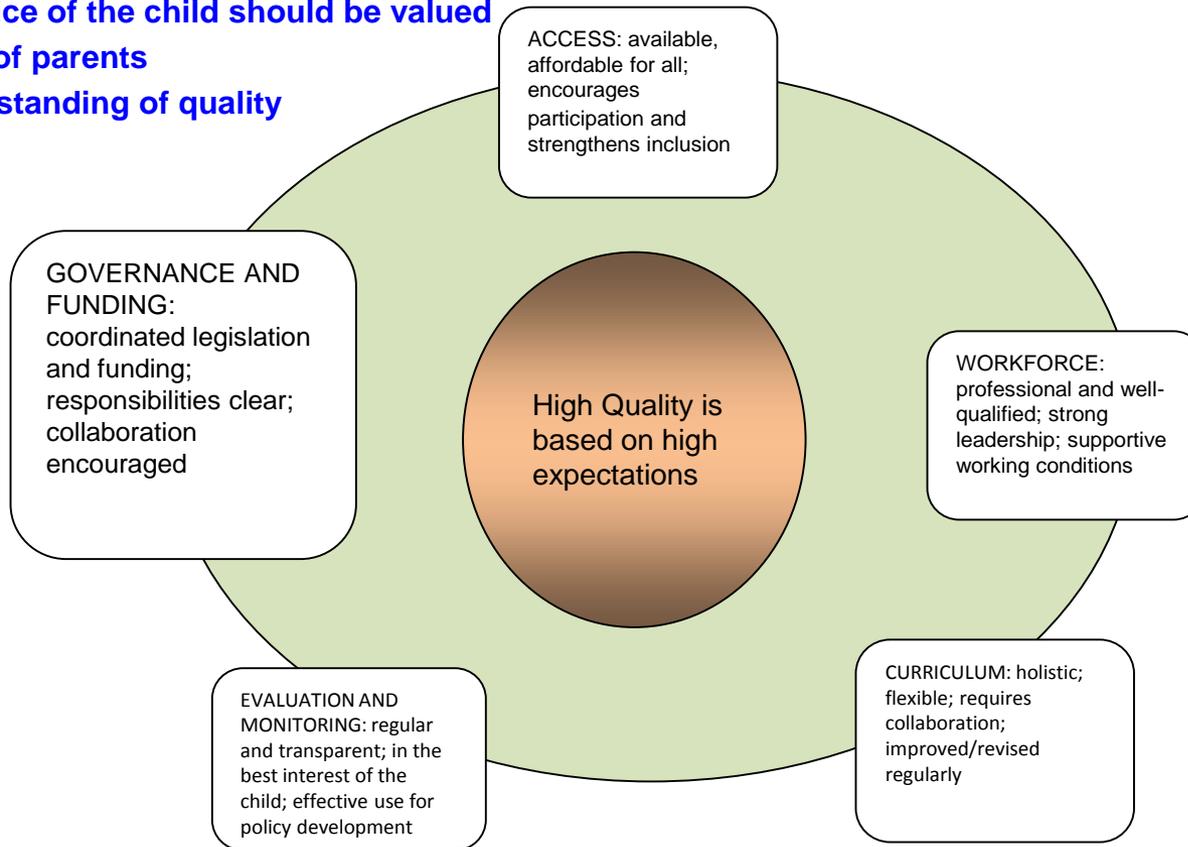


# Aims of the Quality Framework

- set out a new coherent vision and generate a culture of accessible high-quality ECEC that is part of education for all children at European level
- through
  - describing policies that work in establishing high-quality, accessible ECEC systems
  - providing guidance on implementation



**Image and voice of the child should be valued**  
**Participation of parents**  
**Shared understanding of quality**



# Access



- 1. services to be available and affordable to all families and their children**
- 2. services that encourage participation, strengthen social inclusion and embrace diversity.**

- potential benefits of high quality universal provision
- disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups
- available from the end of parental leave
- respond to parental circumstances and encourage all families (flexibility, content; collaborative approach)
- staff should be trained to help diverse parents and families
- close cooperation between the staff in ECEC centres, health and social services, local authorities and the school sector
- parenting programmes

# Workforce



- 3. well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role with children**
- 4. supportive working conditions including professional leadership that lead to opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.**

- recognising ECEC workforce as professionals
- common training for all staff working in an ECEC context for a shared agenda
- structural conditions
- time
- less staff turnover

# Curriculum



- 5. a curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way.**
- 6. a curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.**
- 7. curriculum improvements which are based on self-monitoring, external review and up-to-date research evidence.**

## Content

- common goals, values and approaches
- education and care - cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language development
- encouraging children's development towards their full potential
- children's experiences and their active participation are valued
- learning through play

## Delivery

- curriculum should be an open framework
- collaboration with children, parents and among staff
- self-reflection

## Monitoring

- changes in response to internal and external reviews which are based on the views of children, parents and staff - and these views are often different
- systematic data collection
- facilitates transition

# Evaluation and monitoring



- 8. monitoring and evaluating systems which produce information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level.**
- 9. monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.**
- 10. data from monitoring and evaluation supports continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.**

- monitoring - generation of appropriate information at the relevant local, regional or national level
- support coherent planning, review, evaluation and the development of ECEC at all levels in the system
- should happen in the best interest of the child
- results feed into the policy process

# Governance and funding



**11. Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.**

**12. Legislation and/or regulation and/or funding that ensure that there is progression towards universal entitlement to publicly subsidised/funded ECEC provision.**

- structural or legislative arrangements need to support access to ECEC
- progressive move towards universal availability of ECEC provision - providing additional funds for disadvantaged groups
- monitoring uptake for efficient funding
- raise attractiveness of ECEC provision



## Glossary

Frequently used terms from the Quality Framework

It includes working definitions from the Group.

It reflects on a consensus on the concepts behind the terms so that it will be easily translatable into other EU languages.

It should give policy input to currently running surveys and research projects as it reflects the policy makers' perspective.



## Next steps

Quality Framework –Spring 2014

research evidence

good practice examples

glossary

country fiches

Greek presidency conference on ECEC (June 2014) with the participation of main stakeholders, international organisations, national policy makers and decision makers

dissemination

indicators and benchmarks

Follow-up? Implementation



**Thank you for your attention.**