Starting Strong IV
Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care Country Note

ITALY

Summary

Italy has a split Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system, with different authorities in charge of ECEC: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (*Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*) and the Department of Family Policies (*Dipartimento per le politiche della famiglia*) within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (*Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*) are responsible for ECEC for children up to the age of three years; the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca*) is responsible for children in ECEC between three and six years. Italy is currently considering reforming their system into an integrated ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) level 0 system. Pre-primary education for 3-6 year-olds is guided by National Guidelines for the 3-14 year-olds Curriculum (*Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo*), ECEC services for the youngest children in *nidi* (nurseries) and integrative settings are licensed by local municipalities; pre-primary schools are licensed by regional authorities supervised by central authorities.

The monitoring of nurseries and integrative services for children under the age of 3 years is undertaken by regional or local authorities. Pre-primary schools are monitored by the *Uffici Scolastici Regionali*, regional branches of the Ministry of Education. Service and staff quality are monitored in ECEC settings, although this is done only on a local case-by-case basis and mainly to monitor regulation compliance. The monitoring of service quality focuses on structural aspects in nurseries, while in pre-primary schools the scope is broader and includes aspects such as the materials used, work conditions and curriculum implementation. Staff quality inspections focus mainly on whether staff have the required qualifications. The tools most commonly used during inspections in preschools are observations, interviews, surveys completed by staff and management, results of locally-developed parental surveys, and internal documentation of the school.

Monitoring children's development is not standard and not carried out at the national level in Italy. If it is carried out it, is done at the local level in preschools and can cover language and literacy, socio-emotional skills, motor skills, numeracy, science, creative skills, health development and autonomy. Although Italy implements a range of monitoring practices in ECEC, several challenges remain. Firstly, Italy has no national monitoring system in place. The development of a central monitoring framework for monitoring and standardising certain monitoring tools can overcome this and Italy is making progress in this direction through a new self-evaluation report format which is currently in its consultation phase. Secondly, there is a need for more training on monitoring as this is currently not widely available. And thirdly, children's views are not yet monitored in Italy while in other countries this been found to provide useful information on how children experience ECEC.

The monitoring quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) country note for Italy is based on findings presented in the report of OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* that covers 24 OECD member and non-member economies.

For more information on Early Childhood Education and Care, visit www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood.

Key messages

- **Italy has not yet put a national monitoring system in place for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector**. Italy is aiming to establish an integrated ECEC system with national service standards (the so-called *La Buona Scuola* or The Good School Reform, Law 107/2015, par 181 E).

- **Service and staff quality is monitored in Italy.** Inspections are mainly carried out on a case-by-case basis in public and non-state preschools. They can make use of the results of parental surveys, analysis of internal documentation, observations, interviews, and surveys completed by staff and management Self-evaluations and parental surveys may be used to monitor service quality by autonomous schools. For these reasons, in 2015, a preschool self-evaluation report format was developed to improve the quality of provision nationally.

- **Monitoring service quality focuses primarily on regulatory aspects** in Italian nurseries, such as staff-child ratios, space requirements, and health and safety regulations. In addition, Italy inspects staff qualifications, play and learning materials in use, the planning and work of staff, working conditions, and curriculum implementation in pre-primary schools.

- **The focus of staff quality inspections is meeting staff qualifications, while staff self-evaluations focus on the communication between staff and parents and the implementation of the curriculum.** These staff evaluations often use self-reflection reports, checklists and/or self-reported questionnaires.

- **Child development and outcomes assessments of children between the ages of 3 and 6 in Italy is not regulated**. However, when child development is monitored, it generally focuses on a broad set of holistic skills including literacy and numeracy, science, creativity, socio-emotional skills, motor and health development, and autonomy.

- **In Italy, informal and unstructured observation is the most common way of assessing child development** and progress in preschool, however, no centralised national data exist on this type of monitoring. No national testing of children in pre-primary education is done in Italy.

- **There are several monitoring challenges in Italy.** There is no national monitoring system in place yet for ISCED 0, resulting in differences in monitoring across regions in Italy. Standardising monitoring tools or creating a central monitoring framework can create greater coherence in monitoring practices. In addition, there is limited training available on monitoring, indicating a need for more in-service or on-the-job training. Lastly, the monitoring of children's views can contribute to improving ECEC services, but children's experience of ECEC is not yet widely monitored in Italy.

Introduction

The data and information in this country note for Italy are based on findings from the OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* report that covers 24 OECD member and non-member economies and the underlying OECD Network on ECEC's Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development that was conducted in 2013 and validated in 2014/15.[1]

This country note primarily aims to provide opportunities for peer-learning by highlighting Italy's policies and practices for monitoring quality in ECEC settings and describing what other countries are doing in this area. It informs policy makers and the general public of the current international standing of Italy regarding key areas of monitoring quality in ECEC, of the types of challenges for Italy in monitoring quality, which have been identified by the OECD ECEC team in close consultation with the Italian colleagues. Between the time of data collection, verification and publication, some changes occurred in Italy and the Italian contributors provided the updated information which has been considered in this note. It also provides insights from other countries to understand various approaches and practices used for monitoring quality.

This note distinguishes between the monitoring practices of three key aspects of quality: 1) service quality; 2) staff quality and performance; and 3) child development and outcomes. Some jurisdictions monitor all three aspects and some monitor only one. Sometimes aspects are integrated into the monitoring tool of another aspect, for example, curriculum implementation can be monitored when evaluating quality at a more general service level, or when assessing staff performance; and monitoring general staff performance can be part of the service quality evaluation procedure. Therefore, aspects of ECEC quality that are monitored are not mutually exclusive (see also Litjens, 2013).

In line with previous reports from the Starting Strong series, the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) "includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content" (OECD, 2015: 19).

In Italy, there are three types of ECEC provision for which data exist: nurseries for 0-2 year-olds; integrative services for early childhood for 0-2 year-olds, such as centres for parents and babies or play centres; and pre-primary schools for children between 3 and 6 years.

Italy chose to be compared with France, Germany and Ireland in this country note. For France, data in this note refers to home-based family day care provisions for children up to 2 to 3 years, centre-based community crèches for children from birth until 2 to 3 years, and pre-primary schools (or *écoles maternelles* in French) for children from the age of 3 years (or 2 years in disadvantaged areas). In Germany, the information and data in this note regards child daycare centres for all children under the age of 6-years-old. In Ireland there are no specific distinctions between types of ECEC settings, and ECEC services refer to full day care services for all children under 6. All data and information for countries refer to their most commonly used practices and tools, unless indicated otherwise, as monitoring practices are often not implemented at the national level.

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1. For the purpose of comparability across all participating countries the information collection underlying this report focused on the mainstream provision and therefore – in line with the work on ECEC by the European Commission (Eurydice) – excludes the information on settings providing services to children with special needs only, settings integrated into hospitals (and all other ECEC services targeting children with disabilities attributable to organic pathologies), orphanages or similar institutions. Responding countries and jurisdictions were asked to use, where possible, the school year starting in 2012 as a reference year for reporting statistics and data. Further information about the questionnaire and compiling procedures can be found in the full report (see OECD, 2015).

This country note first provides a review of key findings from the research literature, focusing on studies that examine how monitoring practices contribute to quality improvement, specifically in the areas of service quality, staff quality, curriculum implementation and child development and outcomes. The remaining sections focus on Italy's monitoring policies and practices, in comparison with France, Germany and Ireland. The sections address how quality is defined, the purposes of monitoring quality, areas and scope of monitoring, responsibility for monitoring, and approaches and procedures. The final part of the country note looks at the challenges for Italy and policy approaches that other countries have taken when tackling these issues.

Monitoring matters: Overview of research findings

- There is a significant body of research that shows the benefits of quality ECEC for child development (OECD, 2006). This body of research emphasises that the benefits of high quality ECEC are important for all children's outcomes, with evidence especially strong for disadvantaged children.

- Definitions of "quality" may differ between countries as it is a value- and cultural-based concept, and any definition of quality is subject to change over time (Kamerman, 2001). Service quality is usually defined by a set of structural (e.g. staff-child ratios) and process indicators (e.g. the quality of staff-child interactions) that contribute to practices that are markers of settings and staff performance.

- Staff quality is often linked to pre-defined criteria or professional standards (Rosenkvist, 2010). Child development encompasses various domains such as socio-emotional skills, health, motor skills, early numeracy, literacy and language skills. Quality indicators for children's development may be linked to pre-defined outcomes for different ages, learning standards, developmental goals or curriculum objectives. These outcomes can also be used over time to define the effectiveness of a setting and its staff (Rosenkvist, 2010).

- Service quality (including curriculum implementation), staff quality and child outcomes can be monitored using various practices and tools. It is often difficult to elicit the causality between monitoring and actual quality improvements; for instance, improvements in service quality are more likely to be the result of numerous policy developments.

Effects of monitoring service quality

Overall, research supports the idea that monitoring and evaluation contributes to improvements in the quality of ECEC services (Litjens, 2013). Without monitoring, it is difficult to ensure that services are meeting their goals and aims (Cubey and Dalli, 1996). Studies show that monitoring quality can be associated with increased programme quality, for example, adopting higher standards can lead to improved ratings for settings (Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2010; RAND, 2008).

There are a number of tools that can be used to monitor service quality, such as checklists, parental surveys, and rating scales. In the United States, ratings scales are frequently used to monitor quality. Some research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of rating scales, for example, the validity of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) (a rating scale) has been studied for its role as a tool to improve childcare quality. The study found that among providers using QRIS, service quality improved over time (Zellman et al., 2008). However, others studies have suggested that extensive co-ordination across services, agencies and data systems is required to attain this goal (Tout et al., 2009).

The effects of monitoring curriculum implementation are complex and although some studies indicate that such practices can lead to better staff quality and staff-child interactions (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2012), there is a clear gap in research about how the monitoring of curriculum

implementation interacts with other monitoring practices of service and staff quality (OECD, 2012, Østrem et al., 2009).

Effects of monitoring staff quality

The literature indicates that the quality of staff and their pedagogical activities have a large impact on children's well-being and development. It also suggests that the effective monitoring of staff quality is central to their professional development and improvement of ECEC services (Fukkink, 2011; OECD, 2012). From this research, however, it is difficult to draw wider conclusions about the impacts of monitoring staff quality (Litjens, 2013).

Monitoring staff quality usually involves observations or self-evaluations in combination with the use of rating scales, checklists or portfolios, and can be part of monitoring service quality (Isoré, 2009). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in centre-based preschool classrooms. It was found that the CLASS observation tool can help teachers and schools improve the quality of their interactions with students as it identifies what interactions are rated higher and provides an opportunity to identify what practices they can improve (CASTL, 2011).

Studies show that self-evaluation can be an effective tool to support professional development and increase the quality of the service (Picchio et al., 2012). Self-reflection processes enable staff to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (Isoré, 2009; Cubey and Dalli, 1996), and lead to a greater awareness of ongoing activities and pedagogical processes (Sheridan, 2001).

In Belgium, a process-orientated self-evaluation instrument for staff in care settings contributed to staff professional development and teamwork. However, findings from research in the United Kingdom were more ambiguous, concluding that there needed to be more emphasis on how providers implement self-assessment procedures and initiate changes in their practice (Munton, Mooney and Rowland, 1997).

Effects of monitoring child development outcomes

Research indicates that monitoring child development and outcomes can play an important role in improving teacher practices and service provision. Researchers emphasise the need for age-appropriate monitoring tools and for the assessment of development to be ongoing rather than at a particular point in time. This is because the development of young children evolves at a rapid pace and ongoing monitoring can more accurately capture how a child is developing (Meisels and Atkins-Burnett, 2000; NICHD, 2002).

The results from monitoring child development can foster staff interactions with children and facilitate the adaptation of curricula and standards to meet children's needs (Litjens, 2013). There is some evidence of positive relationships between the use of non-formal monitoring practices such as observation, documentation through portfolios or narrative assessments, and improved child outcomes (Bagnato, 2005; Grisham-Brown, 2008; Meisels et al., 2003; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004).

Capturing children's skills and abilities at a single moment in time is a challenging proposition (Zaslow, Calkins and Halle, 2000). Brain sensitivity is higher and development more rapid in the period from birth to age eight than at later periods. To assess individual children's abilities in different domains, it is recommended that child outcomes are based on multiple sources of information, rather than single tests or monitoring practices, especially if assessment results are used for high-stakes decisions and tracking at an early age (NAEYC, 2010; Waterman et al., 2012).

Representing children's views in monitoring

The importance of considering the view of the child in monitoring the quality of ECEC provision has been established, but more research and reflection on the validity of instruments and results and their effective implementation is needed (Meisels, 2007; NAEYC, 2010; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004). Research on children's self-perception suggests that their perceptions can provide information on their development in areas such as academic competence, achievement motivation, social competence, peer acceptance, and depression and aggression, which are also important areas for staff evaluations and monitoring of their performance (Measelle et al., 1998).

Summary

The literature indicates that it is critical to monitor quality at both system and service level. Recent research studies provide some indication that monitoring the quality of settings, staff and children's outcomes can lead to higher quality service provision. However, the literature also reveals some gaps and complexities in making causal links between monitoring practices and quality improvements. Further research into the effectiveness of monitoring tools across the three monitoring areas will provide a greater evidence base to help countries enhance quality in these areas.

Monitoring quality: Where Italy stands in international comparison

How quality is defined in Italy

Quality encompasses all the features of children's environments and experiences that are assumed to benefit their well-being and development (Litjens, 2013). These features include the use of a curriculum, staff characteristics, teacher or care giver behaviours and practices, and staff-child interactions, often referred to as process quality. Quality also includes structural features of ECEC settings, such as space, group size and safety standards (OECD, 2006; 2012). The literature points out that the definitions of quality differ between countries as it is a value- and cultural-based concept, meaning that definitions of quality tend to change over time (Kamerman, 2001). Most jurisdictions that participated in the Starting Strong IV study set out their definition of ECEC quality in their curricula or legislation. Alternatively they may set out quality expectations through minimum requirements or educational or developmental objectives for staff to achieve. This is the case in Italy, France and Germany. Ireland has a national quality framework in place to define quality in ECEC.

In Italy, quality in care for 0-3 year-olds is locally defined, and legal minimum quality requirements are in place in various regions. These refer to quality in terms of: accommodation capacity (minimum and maximum number of children per setting); space availability for children (number of square meters available per child); teacher-child ratio (number of children per teacher); and teacher level of education (number of years in education, type of degree needed to access the profession). In early education (3-6 years), quality is defined primarily by the Charter of Services (*Carta dei Servizi*), by a document stating a school's official rules at school level (*Regolamento d'Istituto*) and by the 2012 National curriculum guidelines (*Indicazioni Nazionali*). The *Indicazioni* set out the expectations of pre-primary school, children's broad learning goals, specific objectives regarding the competencies children should acquire, and a profile of children at the end of preschool in the transition to primary education. The *Indicazioni* include reference to preschool self-evaluations to improve quality of provision. Minimum legal quality requirements are in place in Italy, such as maximum group size, staff qualification at tertiary level and health and safety regulations. New work on national regulatory quality standards for the entire 0-6 age range is foreseen through Law 107/2015, meaning that the current situation might change.

In France, quality is implicitly defined through minimum standards, curriculum and, a competency framework for staff. The minimum regulatory standards set out the aspects France regards as important for quality. In ECEC settings for children below pre-primary school age and childminders, the

Orientations du code de la santé publique et les projets d'établissements (guidelines of public health and facilities) define the minimum requirements for these providers. The general guidelines for crèches (*Orientations générales pour les crèches* set out a general framework for childcare in France and includes quality standards regarding hygiene, safety, staff qualifications, size of the setting, size of each group, and the conditions in which physical, intellectual and emotional development of children can be optimally fostered. In ECEC centres for children below pre-primary school age and family day-care, the *Orientations du code de la santé publique et les projets d'établissements* (guidelines of public health and facilities) define the minimum requirements. Quality in pre-primary schools is defined by the curriculum, which sets out its objectives for pre-primary education. This was revised in 2015 to have a greater emphasis on holistic development. The competency framework for kindergarten teachers defines their tasks and the objectives to aim for. Both the curriculum and competency framework complement each other and define quality in pre-primary schooling in France.

In Germany, a definition of quality ECEC has been developed through law, a curriculum framework as well as state-level curricula, and through an initiative that sets out quality criteria. Expectations of ECEC (as part of the general child and youth welfare system) is provided in Social Code Book VIII (*Sozialgesetzbuch*), where the federal law stipulates that all young people have the legal right to be supported in their development and encouraged to become independent and socially competent personalities. It also states that ECEC providers are obliged to equally support the education, care and upbringing of children, and take into account children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Children's individual interests and needs, and their ethnic background, also have to be considered. In addition to the Social Code Book, all 16 *Länder* (regions) have developed their own ECEC curriculum. The overarching document for these curricula is the Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in ECEC Centres (*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*), which is an agreement on the most important basic principles that guide curriculum development. This framework emphasises the importance of a holistic approach whereby education, care and upbringing are considered inseparable elements of pedagogical practice. The framework indicates that a curriculum has to take into account the interests of children and should be relevant to their lives. The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*), together with 10 *Länder*, launched the National Quality Initiative in ECEC (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*) in 1999. Its aim was to define quality using a set of quality criteria (21 quality areas) and to develop instruments for internal and external evaluation within five sub-programmes.

In Ireland, quality is defined through regulations, a national quality framework, and a national curriculum framework. The Child Care (Preschool Services) (No 2) Regulations of 2006 govern early years services. They are deemed to be minimum requirements and have a strong focus on structural quality and health, safety, and the well-being of children aged 0-6 years. The regulations cover the health, welfare and development of the child, and management and staffing, among others. Ireland further defines quality through its National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, called *Síolta*, which was established in 2006. The framework consists of 16 quality standards and 75 components of quality. The standards cover topics such as the rights of the child, play, and the curriculum, amongst others. Ireland also has a curriculum framework for 0-6 years: Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. This provides a comprehensive range of guidance on what constitutes quality in curriculum and pedagogical practice in ECEC (OECD, 2015).

Why countries monitor the quality of services, staff and child development

Countries reported various reasons for monitoring ECEC service and staff quality. Common reasons included: accountability with and without sanction or reward; informing policy making; informing the general public; improving the level of service quality; improving staff performance; identifying learning needs for staff; and enhancing child development and identifying children's learning needs. In all countries, improving service quality is the main purpose for monitoring both service and staff quality, followed by informing policy making. Monitoring service and staff quality is not usually conducted in

order to identify learning needs for children or for accountability purposes without any sanctions or rewards. It is common to monitor service quality to inform the general public, including the users of ECEC settings, while this is fairly uncommon in monitoring staff performance (see Figure 1 and 2).

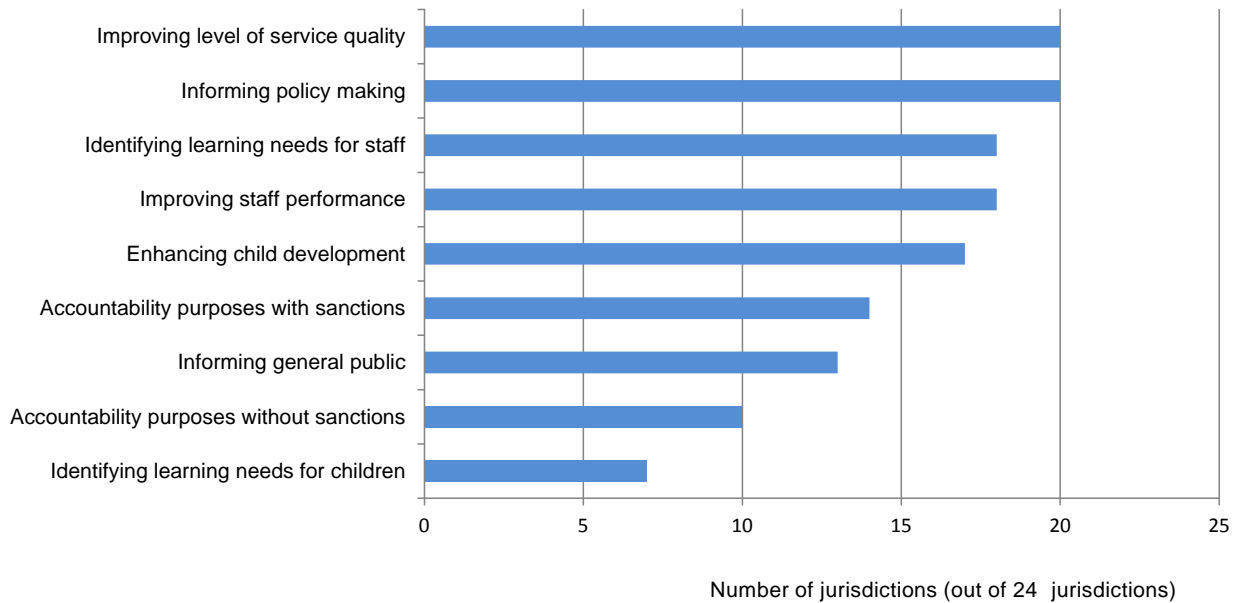**Figure 1: Purposes of monitoring service quality**

Number of times cited by jurisdictions
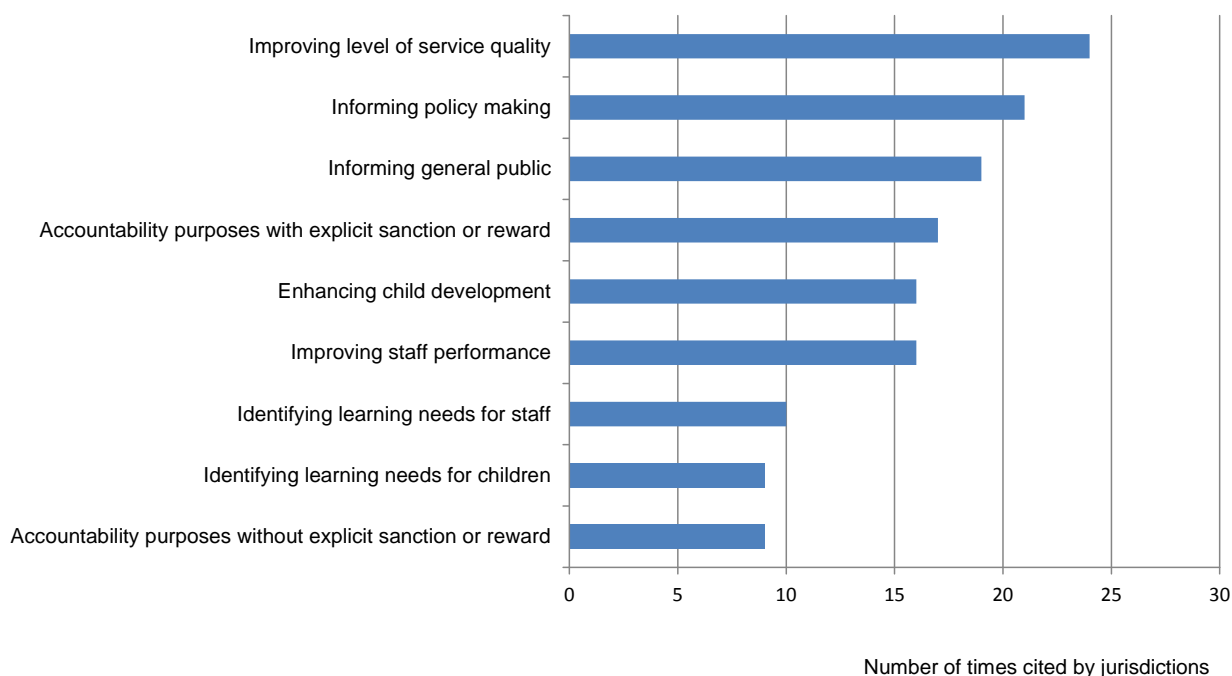
Note: Purposes of monitoring service quality are ranked in descending order of the number of times they are cited by jurisdictions.

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC),* Table 3.1, OECD Publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243059.

In all four countries discussed in this country note, service quality is monitored to enhance the level of quality in ECEC provisions. Italy, Ireland and France also monitor service quality to inform policy makers. In Italy, the main purpose of current monitoring activities in preschools is to ensure that ECEC regulations are met and properly implemented by the non-state providers. Occasional monitoring activities (mostly of a quantitative nature) are also carried out in state-run services in order to receive feedback on the impact of legislative changes. In Ireland and France, service quality is monitored for accountability purposes, although no sanctions or rewards are attached to the results in France, while there can be sanctions in Ireland. France, Germany and Ireland also monitor service quality to inform the public of the level of quality. Germany monitors service quality to enhance staff performance, while Ireland monitors service quality to enhance children's development.

Staff quality in Italy is also monitored with the purpose of improving the quality of ECEC and informing policy makers. Ireland monitors staff quality for the same reasons that it monitors service quality, including enhancing the level of service quality. Germany monitors staff quality to enhance the quality of service and staff performance. France monitors staff quality to enhance the quality of service and staff performance, for accountability purposes (without sanctions or rewards), to inform policy making, to identify the learning needs of staff, and to stimulate child development.
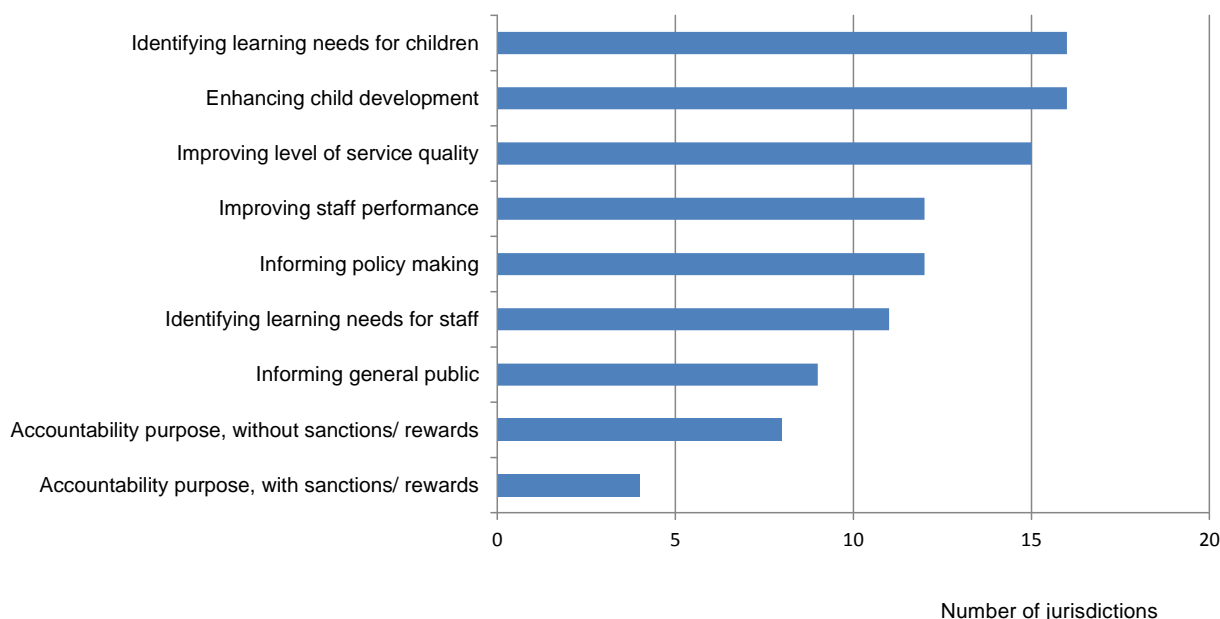
Figure 2. Purposes of monitoring staff quality

Number of jurisdictions (out of 24 jurisdictions)

Note: Purposes of monitoring staff quality are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdictions that cited these purposes.

Source: OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Table 4.1, OECD Publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243203.

While the research literature suggests that child development outcomes are not usually used as a way of monitoring quality, many countries do monitor child development for various purposes. In line with the potential benefits suggested by research, the most commonly named reason for monitoring child development and outcomes is to enhance child development (16 jurisdictions out of 24), to identify the learning needs for children (16) and to improve the level of service quality (15).

In Italy, monitoring children's development in pre-primary education is not a nationally regulated practice, thus its purposes are largely unknown. In addition, monitoring child outcomes is not used to infer staff quality or the quality of teacher-child interactions. France and Germany monitor child development to enhance service quality and improve staff performance. Germany also monitors child development to identify the learning needs of staff and to stimulate child development. In comparison, France monitors child development to enhance the overall level of quality in ECEC, to inform the public about children's development, and to inform policy makers about ECEC outcomes (see Figure 3 for a complete overview). While in Ireland, child development is monitored regularly by staff, it is not done at national level and no data on purposes for monitoring child development is available.

Figure 3. Purposes of monitoring children's development

Note: Purposes of monitoring child development are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdictions that cited these purposes.

Source: OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Table 5.1, OECD Publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243334.

Monitoring practices

Countries use various approaches and practices for monitoring service quality, staff quality and child development. The practices used for monitoring service and staff quality can be either external or internal. The external monitoring of quality is done by an external agency, evaluator or office that is not part of the ECEC setting being monitored.

In Italy, regional and municipal authorities and agencies are in charge of monitoring nurseries and integrative services. The monitoring of pre-primary schools is the responsibility of regional education offices (*Uffici Scolastici*), which are branches of the Ministry of Education. In Germany, local authorities are responsible for conducting inspections due to the federal system whereby responsibility for monitoring is also at the regional and municipal level. In Ireland, monitoring of day care services is the responsibility of the Child and Family Agency. The National Early Years Inspectorate, which falls under the responsibility of this agency, conducts inspections. Monitoring in France is done at the national level where the ministry responsible for the respective setting is also responsible for monitoring.

External inspections and internal self-evaluation are the most common practices used to monitor service and staff quality. Italy, France, Germany and Ireland all conduct external inspections to monitor both service and staff quality (see Table 1). In Ireland, inspections are the only practice commonly used to monitor service and staff quality. Internal self-assessments for monitoring service and/or staff quality are common in many countries, including Italy (for the entire ECEC system), France (for child care settings) and Germany (in child day care). Germany also uses parental surveys to ask parents' opinion on the quality of services provided. Parents' satisfaction regarding staff is surveyed in Italy (on a local basis) and France.

Table 1. Monitoring practices for service and staff quality

	Type of setting	External practices			Internal practices		
		Inspections	**Surveys**	**Peer reviews**	**Peer reviews**	**Tests for staff**	**Self-assessment/ evaluation**
Italy	Integrative services for early childhood	X	X				X
	Nurseries	X	X (Service)				X
	Pre-primary schools	X	X				X
France	Community crèches and family day care	X	X				X
	Pre-primary school	X	X (Staff)				
Germany	Family day care	X (Service)					
	Child day care centres	X	X (Service)				X
Ireland	ECEC settings	X					

Note: In Italy, how to monitor staff quality is decided at the regional/municipal level. Data in the table refers to the most common practices in Italy. Surveys are not implemented at the national level, but are used on a case-by-case basis locally or by individual centres or preschools.

Sources: OECD (2013), Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, Network on ECEC, OECD, Paris; OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), OECD Publishing, Paris, Table 3.2 http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243065 and Table 4.2 http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243213.

Children's development is most commonly monitored when children are aged 3 or 4, or older. This is the case in Italy, France and Germany. Direct assessments, observational tools or narrative assessments can be used for monitoring children's development or outcomes. Direct assessments assess children's development through, for example, testing at a certain point in time, while narrative assessments and observational tools may be used to monitor children's development on an ongoing basis.

Italy commonly uses narrative assessments, such as story-telling and portfolios, in combination with observational tools, such as checklists, or rating scales for 4- and 5-year-olds. Direct assessments (in the form of tests or screenings) may also be conducted at the local or setting level.[2] However, in the absence of a national monitoring system, the extent of child assessment and child development monitoring practices remains unknown. France uses narrative and observational assessments, and in Germany, all three practices (direct assessments, observational tools, narrative assessments) may be used (OECD, 2015).

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2. In Italy, the few tests developed and used locally to monitor child developmental outcomes at the end of ECEC mainly consider cognitive domains, and are coupled with checklists or rating scales for socio-emotional development. Recently, INVALSI (*Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione*, National Institute for the Evaluation of the System of Education and Training developed a rating scale for approaches to learning (Stringher, 2016). Screenings for disabilities or learning difficulties are not used nationally in Italy, but are used in some preschools to assess children's readiness for primary education, although the purpose of the tools is different from that which was originally intended.

Areas and scope of monitoring

There are a number of different aspects that can be monitored in relation to service[3] and staff quality.[4] When monitoring child development, other aspects more directly related to outcomes, skills, and aptitudes a child can develop are monitored. These include language and literacy skills; numeracy skills; socio-emotional skills; motor skills; autonomy; creative skills; practical skills; health development; well-being; science skills; and information and communications technology (ICT) skills.

Service quality

All jurisdictions indicated that regulatory aspects of service quality are monitored during inspections. Safety regulations are most frequently monitored (in 23 out of 24 jurisdictions), followed by health and hygiene regulations (22) and staff qualifications (22). Staff-child ratios (21) and space requirements (19) are also commonly monitored. Human and financial resource management are not frequently monitored as part of service quality, although they are monitored in French childcare settings and in Irish ECEC settings.

Table 2. Aspects of service quality monitored through inspections

Jurisdiction	Type of setting	Staff-child ratios	Indoor/outdoor space	Health and/or hygiene regulations	Safety regulations	Learning and play material in use	Minimum staff qualifications	Planning of work/staff	Working conditions	Curriculum implementation	Human resource management	Financial resource management
Italy	Nurseries	X	X	X	X							
	Pre-primary schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
France	Community crèches and family day care	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
	Pre-primary school	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		
Germany	Child day care centres and family day care	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Ireland	ECEC settings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Source: OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Table 3.3, OECD Publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243071.

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3. For service quality, these aspects are: staff-child ratios, indoor/outdoor space, health and/or hygiene and safety regulations, learning and play materials, minimum staff qualifications, planning of work and staff, the working conditions for staff, implementation of the curriculum, human resource management and financial resource management.

4. For staff quality, these aspects are: staff qualifications, process quality, use of materials, time management, knowledge of subjects, overall quality of teaching/caring, teamwork and communication skills, communication between staff and parents, management and leadership, working conditions, professional development opportunities and child outcomes.

All four countries inspect compliance with regulations, such as whether the setting meets the staff-child ratios, space requirements, health and hygiene regulations and safety standards. This varies across settings in Italy: nursery inspections generally focus on regulatory aspects; while inspections in pre-primary schools have a broader focus and also include the monitoring of learning materials, minimum staff qualifications, the planning and work of staff, staff working conditions, and how the curriculum is implemented. Inspections of German childcare and family day care settings have a similar focus as inspections in Italian pre-primary schools. France's crèche and family day care inspections have a stronger focus on regulatory aspects than inspections of pre-primary schools. In both types of French setting, staff-child ratios, space requirements, health and hygiene and safety regulations are monitored. In childcare settings, minimum staff qualifications, working conditions and human and financial resource management are also monitored. In French pre-primary schools, the implementation of the curriculum and staff planning is monitored as well as regulatory aspects. In Irish ECEC settings, all aspects listed in Table 2 are monitored, except for working conditions.

Self-assessments of service quality usually monitor slightly different aspects than inspections, and there is often stronger attention given to communication among staff members and with parents, and collaborations. In Italy, self-evaluations are not yet used nationwide although preschools can opt to conduct self-evaluations. No national data is yet available, but it is common to monitor the overall quality of settings, as well as communication between staff and parents. Curriculum implementation may also be monitored in pre-primary settings. A newly-developed tool, the Preschool Self-Evaluation Report Format (PSERF) is in the consultation phase for possible use. Self-evaluations in German day care centres tend to focus on similar aspects as those in Italy, in addition to looking at the quality of the rooms, staff collaborations, collaborations between management and staff, use of materials and availability of materials, working conditions, and leadership. In French community crèches, self-evaluations have a similar focus as in Germany, although regulation compliance is also monitored and curriculum implementation is not (OECD, 2015).

Parental surveys, which are used in French care settings and Italian nursery settings and pre-primary schools, focus on the overall quality of the setting, day schedules and opening hours. In Italy they are used and defined autonomously by settings. France also surveys parents about the quality of the play or classroom, while Italy also asks parents about the quality of instruction, children's experiences, satisfaction about the information sharing done by staff and management, and possibilities for parental involvement[5] (OECD, 2015).

Staff quality

Inspections of ECEC settings in Italy and Ireland mainly focus on whether staff have the required qualifications. In Italy, according to INVALSI's analysis of current normative documents, for the 0-3 age group, 17 out of 21 Italian regions and autonomous provinces monitor overall regulation compliance, including staff qualifications requirements. Only two regions monitor staff performance or leadership and management according to their regulations. Other countries have a broader focus. France commonly monitors process quality, materials in use, overall quality of teaching, teamwork and communication among staff, time management and planning, staff knowledge of subjects, and the professional development of staff. Curriculum implementation and child development outcomes are also monitored in pre-primary schools. Staff qualifications and working conditions are only inspected in childcare settings. Similar aspects are monitored in German day care settings as in French child care settings, except professional development opportunities of staff and knowledge of subjects are not monitored in Germany, while curriculum implementation and management and leadership of staff are monitored.

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5. In Italy, no information is available on a national basis since settings conduct parental surveys at their own discretion. The information provided refers to the most common situations reported by country representatives.

Self-evaluations of staff in Italy focus on communication between staff and parents, as well as curriculum implementation in pre-primary education settings. Germany's self-evaluation procedures focus on similar aspects as inspections, except that staff qualifications and overall quality provided are not monitored through self-evaluations. Self-evaluations in France's childcare settings have a similar focus to Germany's, however they do not monitor curriculum implementation as there is no curriculum for under 3-year-olds in France. Self-evaluations in France also focus on the overall quality of caring and educating. Parental surveys in Italian pre-primary schools and French childcare settings typically focus on similar aspects: process quality, planning and time management, curriculum implementation, overall quality, and communication of staff with parents. Teamwork and communication among staff is also surveyed in France, but not in Italy (OECD, 2015).

Child development and outcomes

Among participating countries, the most common aspects of child development monitored are language and literacy, socio-emotional skills and motor skills. Language and literacy skills are more commonly monitored through direct assessments than socio-emotional and motor skills. Observations and narrative assessments are more common than direct assessments in assessing children's development.

Italy does not systematically monitor child outcomes at the national level, yet there are some experiences of local initiatives in preschools (in Reggio Emilia and the Rome municipality, for example), where portfolios and documentation of child development and child learning journeys are most commonly used. Screening instruments to detect disabilities or learning difficulties are also not used at the national level, but can be part of some preschools' practices to assess children's readiness for primary education, even though the purpose of the tool may differ from the originally intended purpose. In Italian and French pre-primary schools and German family day care, common aspects of child development are monitored: language and literacy skills, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, motor development and autonomy. In Italy and France, science is also monitored, along with health development in Italy and creative skills in both Italy and Germany. Germany also monitors practical skills and the well-being of the child, as well as basic learning skills and attitudes. As no national child monitoring practices occur in Ireland, it is not known what areas are most commonly monitored in Ireland.

Figure 4. Areas of early child development monitored, by monitoring method
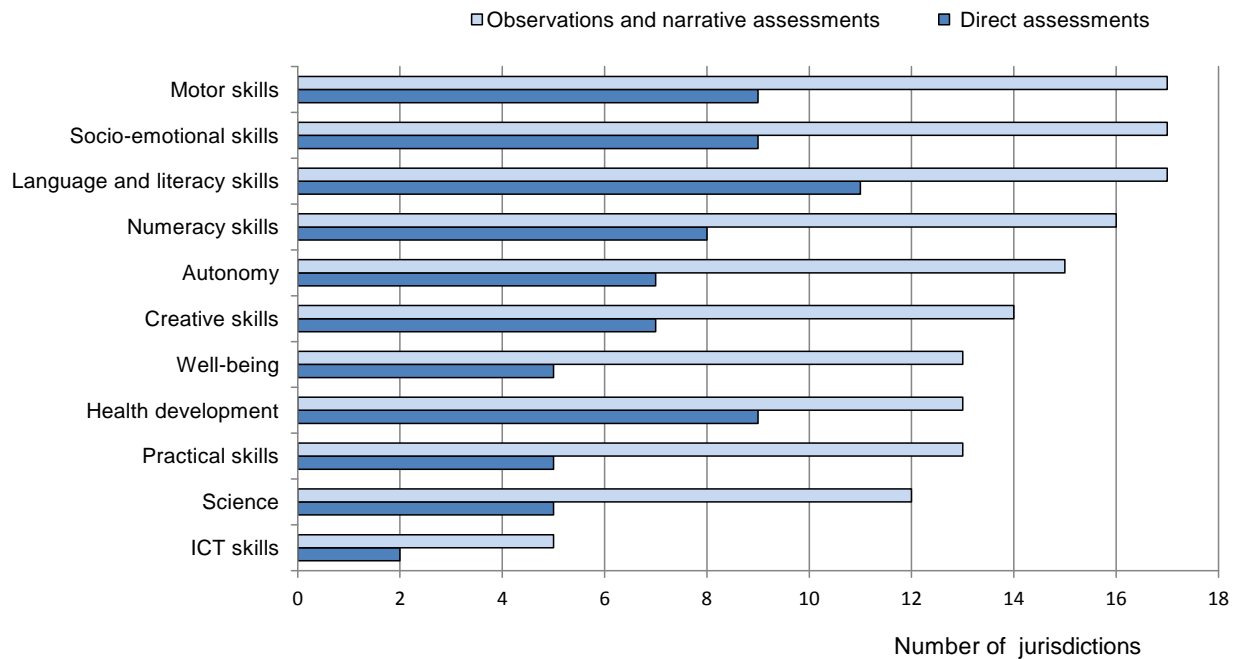
Notes: Developmental areas are ranked in descending order of the number of jurisdiction that cited observation and narrative assessments to monitor development areas.
Information on use of direct assessments and observations and narrative assessments to monitor developmental areas based on 21 jurisdictions.

Sources: OECD (2013), Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, OECD Network on ECEC, Table A5.1, OECD, Paris; OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Chart 5.3, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243423.

Monitoring system design, responsibilities and evaluator training

Design

Various stakeholders are involved in the design and monitoring of ECEC services. These generally involve the ministry in charge of ECEC (national or regional), an independent national agency, and/or local authorities.

In Italy and Germany, local authorities are responsible for developing a monitoring system for their municipality, as there is no national monitoring system in place in these countries. Italy is currently developing a plan to establish an integrated ECEC system for 0-6 year-olds that covers all ECEC settings (Law 107/2015, art. 1, par. 181 E), and to promote the quality of educational provision within these settings. According to this law, quality aspects to be legislated in the future are likely to include: continuity within ECEC and between ECEC and school services; definition of essential levels of ECEC services; generalisation of preschool (full access to preschool) for all children and increased provision for children up to the age of 3; tertiary level qualifications for all ECEC staff; definitions of structural, organisational and quality standards; territorial pedagogical co-ordination; and reference to *Indicazioni Nazionali* as curricular guidelines. In addition, for the 3-6 years age range, a new national tool for preschool self-evaluation developed by INVALSI is in the consultation phase. In Germany, child and youth welfare statistics (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistiken*) generate data that allow policy makers to evaluate quantitative growth, staff and employment conditions, and other structural features of the ECEC sector, such as opening hours, age and ethnic background of children. In addition, as part of Germany's National Quality Initiative (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*), several instruments for the internal and external evaluation of quality in ECEC have been developed by

different groups of ECEC researchers on the initiative of, and with funding from, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. These instruments have served as a blueprint for provider-specific adaptations.

In France, monitoring systems for childcare settings (community crèches and family day care) and pre-primary schools have been set up and developed by different authorities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health developed the monitoring system for childcare settings at the national level. At the local level, the mother and child protection services (*Protection Maternelle et Infantile* or PMI) and the Family Allowances Fund (*Caisse des allocations familiales*) are involved in developing the local monitoring system. The Ministry of Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*) developed the system for pre-primary schools.

In Ireland, the current monitoring system is designed by the body responsible for ensuring compliance with the legislation: the Child and Family Agency. The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education forms the basis of the monitoring system. It was developed in 2006 by the then Centre for Early Childhood Development in Education, which was an agency under the Department of Education and Skills. This document frames the quality standards and regulations and components on which the inspections are based and to which each ECEC setting has to adhere.

Responsibility

Among the 24 participating countries and jurisdictions, half have integrated systems of governance for ECEC, and half have split systems of governance. In integrated systems, the responsibilities for childcare and early learning are within one ministry or authority, and ECEC services generally provide integrated care and education. In split systems, the responsibilities for childcare (usually for children 0 to 3 years) and early education (generally for children aged 3 or 4 and above) are split between different ministries or authorities. There also tend to be different providers for childcare and early education.

Italy, France and Ireland have a split system for ECEC. In Italy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Department of Family Policies within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers are responsible for nurseries and integrative services for children up to the age of 3. The Ministry of Education, University and Research is responsible for children in pre-primary education between 3 and 6 years.[6] Germany is the only country out of the four compared in this country note that has an integrated ECEC system, with one ministry responsible for ECEC at the national level. However, most responsibilities for ECEC in Germany are decentralised to the state level and local authorities. In France, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*) is responsible for all children below pre-primary school age, and the Ministry of National Education is responsible for pre-primary education. In Ireland, ECEC services for children from birth to 6 years are the responsibility of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, while compulsory pre-primary education and schooling (from age 4) is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills. In 2014, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency was established and took over responsibilities that were previously held by the Health Service Executive.

In Italy, responsibilities for monitoring, financing, curriculum development and standard setting are shared with regional and local authorities for the care segment (0-3 years). For the 3-6 years segment they are more centralised, with the exception of monitoring quality, which is carried out by Regional Education Offices (*Uffici scolastici regionali*), branches of the Ministry of Education. Responsibility for monitoring is held at the national level in France. For pre-schools, the curriculum is defined at national level and responsibilities for standard setting and financing ECEC are shared between the national government and local authorities. For crèches, there is no curriculum at the local or national level,

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6. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for a "bridging offer", named *Sezioni Primavera* (Spring Sections). These cater to the needs of children aged 24-36 months, and the classrooms are generally organised within a preschool, but can also be included in nurseries.

financing is a shared responsibility of both levels while standard setting is under the responsibility of the national level. Ireland's system is the most centralised, with responsibilities for financing ECEC, minimum standard setting, curriculum development, and monitoring all held at the national level. Responsibility for monitoring quality is split between different agencies, with the Child and Family Agency (under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) being the regulatory body responsible for setting standards; and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (under the Department of Education and Skills) responsible for curriculum development. The National Early Years Inspectorate, under the aegis of the Child and Family Agency, is responsible for carrying out inspections of ECEC settings. The Department of Education and the Skills Inspectorate is responsible for conducting inspections in early education settings in primary schools.

Funding for monitoring ECEC services in OECD countries comes from a mix of public and private sources. Public funding can be from national, regional or local/municipal governments. In some countries, the funding sources for monitoring quality differ depending on the type of setting (OECD, 2015).

Qualification and training of evaluators

Research suggests that evaluators need to receive training to apply monitoring practices and tools to ensure these are properly understood and that practices result in consistent and objective judgments (Waterman et al., 2012).

In the vast majority of jurisdictions, at least pre-service education or training, on-the-job training or other types of training are offered to evaluators. Two-thirds of jurisdictions (16) reported that external assessors/evaluators receive on-the-job or in-service training. Training for assessors focuses on various skills or aspects of ECEC. Italy is the only country out of the four compared in this country note that does not provide specific monitoring training for external or internal evaluators of ECEC provision (see Table 3). In France, external evaluators (such as inspectors) and internal evaluators (such as staff conducting self-assessments or peer reviews) receive on-the-job or in-service training on monitoring and evaluation. This is also the case for inspectors in Ireland. In Germany, internal evaluators are usually not trained, while external evaluators are trained through pre-service education and training (OECD, 2015).

Table 3. Training of external and internal evaluators

		No, not specifically	Yes, through pre-service education/ training	Yes, through on-the-job or in-service training
Italy	External assessors	X		
	Internal assessors	X		
France	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors			X
Germany	External assessors		X	
	Internal assessors	X		
Ireland	External assessors			X
	Internal assessors	a		

Sources: OECD (2013), OECD Network on ECEC's Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development, OECD, Paris; OECD (2015) *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, Tables A2.4 http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243001 and Table A2.6 http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243026.

Implementation of monitoring practices

Monitoring tools (instruments)

Service quality

The main practices used to monitor service quality are external evaluations/inspections, parental surveys, and internal self-evaluations. There are various tools that can be used to carry out these practices.

In Italy, inspections of ECEC settings are not centrally regulated, meaning that a wide range of tools can be used, including: observations, interviews, surveys taken by management/staff, analysis of internal documentation, and parental survey results. Similar tools are used in France, however checklists are also used in childcare, while parental surveys are less common. Similar tools may also be used in Germany for inspections of child day care services, in addition to parental surveys, surveys taken by inspections, rating scales and results of self-evaluations. In Ireland, the National Early Years Inspectorate, the agency designated by the Child and Family Agency to carry out inspections of service and staff quality, uses four tools: checklists, observations, interviews, and analysis of a setting's internal documentation (OECD, 2015).

Internal evaluation is often used in combination with external evaluation/inspections to monitor service quality, as can be seen in French and German childcare settings. There are various internal evaluation tools used to monitor service quality across ECEC settings. The most common self-evaluation tools are self-reported questionnaires/surveys (12), self-reflection reports/journals (12), checklists (11), and portfolios (8). Video feedback is used in three jurisdictions: the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Sweden. All of these tools, except for portfolios of teachers and video feedback, are used in self-assessments of Italian pre-primary education settings; children's portfolios are also sometimes used. Self-reflection journals and checklists appear to be more commonly used in nursery settings in Italy. In France, self-reflection journals and self-reported questionnaire are the most commonly used tools for self-evaluation. These are also used in Germany, where they may be complemented by portfolios and checklists.

Staff quality

In many countries staff quality is monitored in the same way as service quality and includes a mix of external and internal practices. However, there can also be differences in the focus, aspects monitored and instruments used.

External monitoring and evaluation practices of staff quality include inspections, parental surveys, and peer reviews. Similar to the monitoring of service quality, inspections (external evaluations) of staff quality are undertaken in all 24 jurisdictions, including Italy where results of surveys completed by parents and internal setting documentation are used to inspect staff in all ECEC settings. Observations, interviews and results of surveys completed by staff and management may also be used in preschool inspections. In France and Ireland, similar tools used during inspections of service quality can be used when inspecting staff quality. In Germany, observations, rating scales, checklists, interviews, results of self-evaluations and analysis of internal documentation may be used.

Internal monitoring procedures are also conducted to monitor staff quality. In Italy, Germany and France, self-assessments are commonly used to monitor staff performance, although only in childcare settings in France and Germany. In France, self-reported questionnaires and self-reflection journals are most commonly used. This is also the case in Italian preschools, where checklists may also be used. In nurseries, self-evaluations of staff quality use similar tools as in self-evaluations of service quality. In Italy, self-reflection journals and checklists are commonly used in nurseries, although not on a national basis as self-assessments are locally developed. Different tools can be used that are sometimes

recommended by ECEC partners, such as universities. In Germany, each setting can decide on the tools and instruments it uses for staff self-evaluations.

In Ireland, self-assessments are not currently universally implemented, although changes are underway. The Síolta Quality Assurance Programme provides a standardised procedure for ECEC services to conduct self-assessments. A Síolta Mentor helps services work through the programme, which consists of a series of steps. Initially a baseline assessment is performed. This is a specially designed self-assessment tool that asks staff in ECEC settings to critically reflect on their practice against each of the 75 Components of Quality that are part of the Síolta framework. Based on the outcome of their self-assessment, staff will develop a concrete plan of quality improvement and work around each component and standard of the framework. Staff build a portfolio to document the quality of practice in the ECEC setting, which they later submit for external validation. An expert evaluator then assesses the portfolio of evidence, and its quality contributes to the overall rating the setting is awarded.

Child development

Across participating jurisdictions, monitoring child development and outcomes is mostly done through internal practices, often with a complementary role taken by external agencies. This is in line with the fact that in many countries, the monitoring of child development and outcomes takes place more frequently than in other areas, often on a continuous basis or several times per year. The three main tools used to monitor child development are: 1) direct assessments (tests of children and screening); 2) narrative assessments (storytelling and portfolios); and 3) observational tools (rating scales and checklists). As Table 4 shows, there is some variation in the combination of tools used, albeit not necessarily in a systematic way and nation-wide in all settings

The majority of jurisdictions use observational tools (primarily checklists), however these often vary by type of ECEC setting. Narrative assessments are also common, while direct assessments through testing and screening are used less often. Italy and France report using both narrative assessments and observational tools when monitoring children in pre-primary school, with portfolios and checklists most commonly used in both countries, as well as storytelling, rating scales, testing and screening in Italy. Rating scales are used for 4-5 year-olds in Italy, rather than the entire 3-6 age range. Germany is the only country of the four in this country note where direct assessments are conducted, for example on 4 and 5 year-olds for screening purposes and to detect any developmental delays (OECD, 2015). In Ireland, no instruments or tools are prescribed and there is no data available on what tools are most often used.

Table 4. Child development monitoring tools in place, by country

Country	Direct assessments		Narrative assessments		Observational tools	
	Tests for children	Screening	Storytelling	Portfolios	Rating scales	Checklists
Italy	X	X	X	X	X	X
France				X		X
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ireland	a					

Source: OECD (2015), *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*, Table 5.2, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933243347.

Frequency

Service quality is generally monitored a set number of times by the responsible monitoring body. Frequency of monitoring often varies across different types of ECEC. The frequency of monitoring is not regulated in Italy and Germany, and therefore varies by municipality or region. In Ireland, service and staff quality are monitored every one and two years; in France, it is every two to three years.

Use of results and consequences

Monitoring service quality results have to be made public in most jurisdictions (16 out of 24), however sometimes not for all types of ECEC. In Italy and France, monitoring staff and service quality results are not usually shared with the general public. In Germany, the setting has discretion over whether results are shared. Ireland is among the majority of jurisdictions where monitoring service quality results have to be made available to the public. Results from inspections of staff quality are also made available to the public in Ireland.

Countries take various actions or impose consequences when the results from monitoring service quality do not meet the minimum standards set by the service or body responsible. Actions can include funding cuts, follow-up inspections, obligatory staff training, or closure of services. Services can also directly benefit from monitoring results, for example, services can have a competitive advantage compared to other services, or remuneration can be increased in line with monitoring outcomes. In France, settings are required to address their shortcomings by, for instance, participating in training, and a follow-up inspection or evaluation is planned. In extreme cases, a setting may be closed (for crèches or family day care only). This is also the case in Italy, although revoking licenses and closing settings is not a common consequence. In Ireland, the National Early Years Inspectorate is required to use the court system to close an ECEC setting. Revised regulations, which still need to be introduced, will allow for greater sanctions to be applied if a setting is in breach of the regulations. This is regarded by the Irish authorities as an improvement on the old system.

Challenges and policy options

All countries face challenges in monitoring, some of which are shared by different countries. The practices that countries have implemented suggest ways of overcoming the challenges of monitoring quality. Italy's challenges include:

1. Monitoring is not yet centralised or unitary: there are different systems for the 0-3 and the 3-6 age groups, and there is no central monitoring framework in place, which results in territorial differences in monitoring practices.

2. The monitoring of children's development could be strengthened by monitoring their views to achieve a more complete picture of quality.

3. There is limited training on the topic of monitoring and evaluation.

It can be challenging to ensure that monitoring leads to follow-up actions that impact quality. For this to be achieved, sufficient data is needed to better understand ECEC and what the impacts are or can be. Policy approaches that other countries have taken when tackling these issues are presented to provide some examples for Italy in how the challenges can possibly be addressed.

Challenge: Differences in monitoring practices across regions in absence of a national monitoring system

In many countries, monitoring systems for ECEC are not always coherent as they are often established at the regional level, especially the areas monitored and instruments used. This has resulted in discrepancies in monitoring in different regions. To ensure a certain uniformity between the different monitoring systems, several countries have developed a central monitoring system or standardised tools to improve the coherency of monitoring methods across regions. Italy is undergoing a similar process: in 2015, a group of experts at INVALSI developed a Preschool Self-Evaluation Report Format (PSERF, *RAV Infanzia* in Italian) that aims to improve preschool quality. In January 2016, PSERF was circulated to all Italian preschools and regional and local authorities in order to receive feedback. Currently, a plan

for the validation and piloting of PSERF is being developed. The tool goes in the same direction as Belgium's CIPO described below and includes the same structural components.

Developing a central monitoring framework

- In **Ireland**, *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework, has been designed to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in ECEC settings. It was published in 2006, following a three-year developmental process, which involved consultation with more than 50 diverse organisations representing childcare workers, teachers, parents, policy makers, researchers and other interested parties. *Síolta* is comprised of three distinct but interrelated elements: principles, standards and components of quality. The 12 principles provide the overall vision of the framework, while the 16 standards and 75 components allow for the practical application of this vision across all aspects of ECEC practice. In settings where the *Síolta* Quality Assurance Programme has been implemented, staff begin with a baseline assessment of how good their practice is and then plan for improvement. As a follow-up measure they must show how they have improved the quality of their practice through a portfolio of evidence.

- Until 2013, the **Flemish Community of Belgium** had no uniform method of monitoring the childcare sector. This was acknowledged as a weakness, and as a result, the Measuring and Monitoring Quality project (MeMoQ) was launched in November 2013. Projected to take effect after three years, part of its task is to formulate a pedagogical framework that takes into account the economical, pedagogical and social objectives of childcare. The goal is a vision document, rather than a manual, that explains what is meant by "pedagogical quality" and offers some pedagogical principles and a description of how to provide integrated development opportunities to each child. A "scientific instrument" will also be developed to measure the quality of childcare in Flanders and provide an indication of overall national quality. These measures will help develop a monitoring instrument to be used by the Care Inspection Agency in all settings. Monitoring, for both public and private settings, will be made more coherent, and a self-evaluation instrument will be developed to help ECEC settings identify their weaknesses and strengths themselves.

- In **Germany**, although services are required to comply with basic standards for accreditation, ECEC providers have traditionally had considerable freedom to deliver services and define quality goals according to their own values. This is characteristic of German ECEC and considered the basis for parents' right of choice, which is legally guaranteed. ECEC policy development in Germany involves co-operative governance and consensus building rather than top-down measures, and its approach to quality assurance is based on support and co-operation rather than control. As a result, monitoring occurs at the state rather than the national level; each state can have its own monitoring framework. Most large welfare organisations have established their own quality assessment systems. Local Youth Welfare Offices employ specialist counsellors (*Fachberater*) and state supervisors (*Heimaufsicht*) who monitor settings only after complaints have been filed. Any initiatives to introduce a single coherent state-wide monitoring system have to strike a balance between uniform standard setting and respect for the diverse profiles and strategies of providers. For instance, when the new monitoring system in Berlin was implemented, quality assessment systems operated by providers were aligned with the requirements of the Berlin Education Program (*Berliner Bildungsprogramm*), the curriculum of Berlin, and accredited, rather than replaced. The monitoring system still allows for provider-specific priorities and variations. Providers are obliged to implement a quality development system, but can choose freely which tools and processes they apply.

- **Norway** acknowledged that the lack of a comprehensive monitoring system meant that it did not have adequate information on the quality of all its kindergartens. As a result, in 2013 the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) was asked to

develop a national quality assessment system for kindergartens. One of the main objectives was to increase accessibility to reliable information on the subject as the basis of a more informed discussion at all levels. Another goal included developing an online publication of statistical indicators for kindergartens.

- **Finland** does not monitor the performance of schools, and school inspections were abolished in 1991. However, a great deal of emphasis is placed on monitoring learning outcomes of children throughout their education, including ECEC. Before 2014, evaluations of education were conducted by three organisations: the Finnish Education Evaluation Council (*Korkeakoulutuksen arviointineuvosto*), the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (*Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto*) and the National Board of Education (*Opetushallitus*).. To consolidate and centralise the evaluation process, the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*) launched the Education Evaluation Plan (*Koulutuksen arviointisuunnitelma*), which led to the creation of an Education Evaluation Centre in 2014. The centralisation of the evaluation process aims to provide clearer evaluations of higher impact as they are now conducted and produced by a single organisation. This should also lead to more coherent national evaluations, which will help the Finnish government in making international comparisons.

Standardising monitoring tools

- In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, a standardised tool, known as the CIPO model, is used to perform inspections in kindergartens. It has been used since 1991 and was approved as part of the Resolution of the Decree on the Quality of Education (*Kwaliteitsdecreet*) in 2010. CIPO stands for its four components: context, input, processes and output. Each component is broken down into a number of indicators based on the parameters that are found, through research or experience, to influence the quality of education. The model allows the inspectorate to focus on outputs supported by the process indicators without resulting in a process evaluation. This makes it possible to respect the school's autonomy and its pedagogical project and activities, while judging its output in a standardised manner within the specificity of each school.

- In **Germany**, providers can freely choose the quality assessment tools or schemes they apply. However, they often base the quality monitoring system on monitoring tools that are aligned with provider-specific value profiles and priorities. One of these standards is the DIN ISO 9000, as formulated by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO), an independent, non-governmental membership organisation and the world's largest developer of voluntary international standards. The ISO 9000 family of standards addresses various aspects of quality management and provides guidance and tools for organisations that seek to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customers' requirements, and that quality is consistently improved. The *Deutsche Institut für Normierung* (DIN) is the German institution responsible for ISO standards. The Kindergarten Evaluation Scale (*Kindergarten-Einschätz-Skala* or *KES*), a German adaptation of the Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) developed by the German pedagogical professor Wolfgang Tietze, is also used. KES was revised in 2001, becoming the KES-R, and is currently under further revision. At present, it contains 43 different rating indicators linked to physical, social, emotional and cognitive areas. It aims to capture all the factors that immediately influence the experience of children in ECEC settings. Germany also uses the Crèche-Scale (*Krippen-Skala* or *KRIPS-R*) to support pedagogical quality in ECEC settings, which is based on the American Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). KRIPS includes 41 indicators that provide a comprehensive overview of pedagogical process in day nurseries. In addition, many other tools are used, such as a quality instrument developed to measure quality in the context of the "situational approach", which is popular in Germany.

- In **England (United Kingdom)**, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspectors adhere to a standardised inspection procedure set out in a document published by Ofsted that outlines the expected inspection process in detail. Inspectors have a standardised set of indicators, which they use to evaluate settings and their performance.

Challenge: Monitoring children's views

Monitoring child development in ECEC settings is crucial for both ECEC staff and parents, in gathering information and knowledge on children's skills and development. But research highlights that it is difficult to capture the full extent of children's abilities and skills in a single snapshot. Many OECD countries therefore monitor child development at different points in time or even continuously, using mainly observational and narrative assessment techniques as discussed above. Monitoring children not only provides information on children's development: it can also contribute to a better understanding on how children experience ECEC, resulting in quality improvements.

Children's voices can be considered competent and they can provide useful information about their experience in ECEC and their views about wider societal issues (Clark, 2005; McNaughton, 2003; Sorin, 2003). Quantitative studies of children's self-perception suggest that their perceptions can provide information on their development in areas such as academic competence, achievement motivation, social competence, peer acceptance, and depression and aggression, which are convergent with the ratings of carers and teachers (Measelle et al., 1998). Box 1 provides a case study from Finland, one of the few countries that currently monitors children's views.

Box 1. Monitoring children's views in Finland

Finland provides an interesting example of how monitoring children's views can be used to inform policy making. In 2013/2014, a large survey of parents was conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture to inform the preparation of a new law on the ECEC sector. The process also included interviews with children to ensure that their voices were being heard; the first time this had ever been done in the preparation of a new law. Finland reports that the emphasis put on hearing children's opinions stems from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To inform the revision of the legal framework, 48 children across the country were interviewed in their ECEC setting, either by their own teachers or other staff. The interviews sought to reveal information about how children experience their days and practices in ECEC and what meaning they attribute to its different aspects. To express their opinions, children used photographs they had taken and drawings they had made to discuss with staff what they appreciated in ECEC and what they did not like and wanted to change.

Finland reported that children emphasised the importance of being able to participate in activities with their friends. They particularly liked being allowed to play and move. They also enjoyed games involving physical activities. On the question of the ECEC environment, they considered their bed and the sleeping room unpleasant, i.e. the rooms where activities and free movement are restricted. Long sedentary periods were also seen as unpleasant. Children reported that they expect personalised care from adults and that they mediate when differences in group situations emerge. While overall children enjoy being in ECEC, they asked for more time for play, movement and physical activities, as well as to be able to make use of modern technology. Activities regarded as important by staff and adults, such as long morning meetings in a circle, were not regarded by children as at all meaningful and important.

For the ministry, this represents valuable feedback from the users of the ECEC services under their responsibility that can contribute to their evaluation. The findings also encourage Finland to involve children more often in the development of practices.

Sources: Draft case study provided by the Finnish Government and edited by the OECD Secretariat; OECD Network on ECEC, "Online Survey on Monitoring Quality in Early Learning and Development", November 2013.

Involvement of children in monitoring practices can provide valuable insights into how children experience certain pedagogical practices, which can contribute to improved child development experiences. Other countries have also implemented measures to collect information on children's experiences.

Include children in evaluations and monitoring practices

- In the **Czech Republic**, children's views in public settings are taken into account as part of the school external evaluation, when children's well-being is assessed. Based on these reports, a comment about the atmosphere in the school is included in the public school inspection report. Internally, schools may also monitor children's well-being and happiness when conducting their self-assessments.

- In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, children's views are monitored in both family day care settings and day care centres. Though not compulsory, tools have been developed to enable family day care providers and day care centres assess how children experience the settings. The Self-Assessment Instrument for Care Settings (SiCs) starts by scanning well-being and involvement and helps to identify factors in the environment that may affect them. MyProfile, originally developed as ZiKo-Vo for family day care providers, helps practitioners in all kinds of settings for young children monitor children's development. Both instruments help the settings monitor each child and tailor their approach to the child's individual needs. Additionally, for preschool children (3-5 year-olds) a more extensive monitoring system is available: POMS, the Process-Oriented Monitoring System.

Challenge: Limited training on monitoring

There appears to be a lack of training for staff on the topic of monitoring in Italy, and there is no systematic training available for staff with external and internal monitoring responsibilities. Several countries that have faced a similar challenge now provide pre-service or on-the-job/in-service training to staff to prepare them for their evaluation tasks.

Providing pre-service training for external assessors

- In **Scotland**, inspectors in the education sector go through an extensive nine-month training period before they are given responsibility for an inspection. In the care sector, the care inspectorate also has a pre-service training programme. This ensures that all assessors/inspectors are trained to the same level.

- In **Australia**, a formal training programme has been developed to ensure consistency of assessment across jurisdictions. Assessors must pass a specific test to a high level of accuracy in order to become an assessor.

- In **Chile**, external evaluators evaluate the ECEC settings that fall under the responsibility of the institutions for which they work: the National Board of Kindergartens (JUNJI) the Superintendence of Education (Superintendencia de Educacion) or the Quality Agency (Agencia de la Calidad). Evaluators of all institutions receive pre-service training.

- In the **Czech Republic,** under the School Act a candidate who has completed higher education and has had at least five years of pedagogical or pedagogical-psychological experience can become an inspector. Inspectors are given pre-service training where they are taught to deal with complaints and suggestions, and are introduced to international surveys and key data on the Czech Republic in the field of education. They are also trained in the complex data collection system of the Czech School Inspectorate.

- In **England** (United Kingdom), Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspectors must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework. This includes the way in which young children learn and develop and the importance of secure emotional attachments to children's well-being. All inspectors undergo thorough training in inspecting the quality of provision. The training events are led by senior inspectors and senior policy development officers.

Providing on-the-job or in-service training

- In **Luxembourg**, all teachers receive on-the-job training on how to draft school development plans and how to regularly evaluate whether objectives have been attained.

- **Mexico** has several different ECEC institutions, all of which provide a form of in-service training for evaluators. In IMSS settings (*Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*, settings from the Mexican Social Security Institute), internal evaluators are called "zone co-ordinators" and receive constant training through training courses, a national event held once a year, video conferences and at IMSS training centres.

- In **Chile**, ECEC institutions train their assessors in implementation skills so that they can correctly use the monitoring instruments to evaluate ECEC services. In addition, the *Agencia de la Calidad* (Quality Agency) also trains evaluators on theories and technical knowledge in monitoring quality, implementation skills and how to interpret the monitoring results.

- **New Zealand** implemented *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Assessment for Learning) whereby teachers are expected to develop effective assessment practices that meet the aspirations of the *Te Whāriki* early childhood curriculum policy. The national government offers training on this assessment practice to ECEC staff. The curriculum programme is also evaluated in terms of its capacity to provide activities and relationships that stimulate early development. Children and parents can help in deciding what should be included in the process of assessing the programme and the curriculum.

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GLOSSARY

Autonomy: The ability of a child to undertake activities, tasks etc. without the help of others (mastery of skills), to make his/her own decisions, and to express his/her own opinions or ideas, feel secure and have confidence in his/her own ability.

Appraisal: The review of a preschool teacher's or educator's work by the centre management, an external inspector or by his or her colleagues. This appraisal can be conducted in a range of ways, from a more formal, objective approach (e.g. as part of a formal performance management system involving set procedures and criteria) to the more informal, more subjective approach (e.g. through informal discussions with the teacher).

Assessment: Judgement on individual progress and achievement of goals. It covers classroom/playroom-based assessments as well as large-scale, external assessments and examinations and refers to the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. Assessment can focus on the individual learner and staff (adapted from OECD, 2013). Assessment can be direct or indirect and its use formative or summative.

- **Direct assessment:** Assessments that look at concrete outputs of learning, i.e. the measurable and demonstrated knowledge and skills of children/staff.

- **Indirect assessment:** Assessments that examine indicators of learning and gather information through feedback, e.g. in surveys or interviews (adapted from Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2007).

- **Formative assessment:** Assessments that frequently or continuously (not at one point in time only) and interactively assess child development and progress with the purpose of understanding and identifying learning needs and adjust instruction and teaching methods accordingly (adapted from OECD, 2005, and Litjens, 2013).

- **Summative assessment:** Assessments that measure learning results at the end of a certain time period to obtain summary statements. These can be used e.g. for holding staff and settings accountable for providing quality ECEC or as a method to identify whether children have learning disadvantages (adapted from OECD, 2005, and Litjens, 2013).

Assessor (or evaluator): A person or organisation/company that conducts assessment or evaluation on the effectiveness or the level of quality of someone or something, e.g. level of service quality, staff performance, effective curriculum implementation, child development/outcomes.

Checklist: A list of items, tasks or steps to be taken in a specific order to be checked or consulted. In ECEC, this can be used to assess or evaluate the developmental status of children, staff performance and the quality of ECEC services by observing compliance with regulations. This may also include a series of tasks, skills and abilities to assess children's development or knowledge, such as "Child can count to five" or "Child is able to play independently" (OECD, 2012).

Creative skills (e.g. art, music, dance, imagination)**:** Children's capacities and competencies to generate ideas and feelings, use imagination and convey thoughts and experiences in many forms of expressions, including artistic skills (e.g. painting, drawing, handicrafts, etc.), musical skills (e.g. singing,

playing an instrument, recognising songs, etc.). It also refers to the capacity to observe and reflect; explore on their own, and search for their own answers and solutions.

Curriculum implementation: The actual use in practice (practical application) of the curriculum by ECEC staff, managers and children. This refers to the way in which the concepts of the curriculum are put into effect, and how they are used in practices and activities by staff and children, how they are interpreted, how they are used in development and learning, and how they influence teaching, caring and interactions between staff, and between staff with children.

ECEC setting: A place where ECEC is delivered. Also referred to as ECEC centre or provision. With regard to ECEC settings, two types of provision can be distinguished: **centre-based/school-based** and **home-based** (as defined by Eurydice, 2013).

Evaluation: Judgements on the effectiveness of ECEC settings or ECEC systems, policies and programmes (adapted from OECD, 2013).

Evaluator: See definition of **assessor**.

External monitoring practices: See definition of monitoring practice.

Government: The entirety of the executive at all levels of governance, at national, state, regional and local level.

Health development: The physical health status of a child, encompassing physical well-being only (adapted from WHO definition, 2006). Mental, emotional and social development are in this definition excluded – these are included in the definition of **socio-emotional skills**.

Information and communications technology (ICT): The teaching and learning of technological and digital skills. Creating and developing the capacity to use digital and technological environments for development, communication and knowledge creation. Digital environments refer to computers (including laptops, tablets, iPads, netbooks, smart boards etc.) and computer games, the Internet, television and radio, among others.

Inspection: The process of assessing (inspecting, investigating) the quality and/or performance of institutions, staff, services and programmes by those (inspectors) who are not directly involved in the ECEC settings being monitored, and who are usually specially appointed to fulfil these responsibilities.

Instrument (or **tool**)**:** A means used for monitoring or material that is used to conduct the monitoring process. Examples of instruments or tools for monitoring include checklists, rating scales and surveys.

Integrated system: The responsibilities of ECEC services are under one (leading) authority (at the national and/or regional level), e.g. the education Ministry, Ministry of social welfare or another authority.

Internal monitoring practices: See definition of monitoring practice.

Language and literacy skills: Children's productive and receptive language skills on all levels: syntax (ability to form sentences), morphology (ability to form words), semantics (understanding the meaning of words/sentences), phonology (awareness of speech sounds), pragmatics (how language is used in different contexts), vocabulary. It also refers to children's (precursor) literacy skills, that is to say, all the skills related to reading and writing, such as recognising and writing letters and words, understanding pictures, etc.

Local level or local authorities: The local level is a decentralised level of ECEC governance. It is located at city/town level in the vast majority of countries. In some countries, the municipalities take the main responsibility for ECEC.

Minimum quality standards: The minimum benchmark for structural aspects of ECEC settings to ensure a minimum level of quality. These are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated relatively easily (e.g. staff-child ratio, space, group size and qualifications of ECEC staff).

Motor skills: The ability to perform complex muscle and nerve acts that produce movements, the ability to co-ordinate the body. It refers to both fine and gross motor skills and awareness of their own body. Fine motor skills include small movements such as drawing and writing, crawling or putting shoes on. Gross motor skills are large movements like walking and kicking, running and cycling.

Monitoring: The process of systematically tracking aspects of ECEC services, staff, child development and curriculum implementation, with a view toward data collection, accountability and/or enhancing effectiveness and/or quality.

Monitoring practice: The main activity/ies involved in monitoring, such as inspections or self-assessments. There are two different types of monitoring practices:

- **External monitoring practices**: Any monitoring practices conducted by evaluators/assessors/ actors who are not part of the ECEC service that is being monitored. These can include inspections, surveys completed by people who are not employed by the ECEC setting that is being monitored, or peer reviews conducted by external staff (peer review of a person working in one ECEC setting by a person not working in that ECEC setting).

- **Internal monitoring practices**: Any monitoring practices conducted by evaluators/assessors/ actors who are part of the ECEC service that is being monitored. These can include self-evaluations of staff working in ECEC settings (teachers, managers, care givers, etc.) or peer reviews conducted by internal staff (among colleagues in the same setting).

Narrative assessments: Descriptions of the development of a child through narratives/stories. Narrative assessment is a more inclusive approach to assessing child development, as it involves not only professionals but also the children's work, and can also include inputs or feedback from parents. It is a combination or package of what a child has done and learned, such as examples of drawings and exercises, feedback from staff, and staff planning or example practices. Portfolios or storybooks of children's development are well-known examples of narrative assessment practices (see also **portfolio** and **storytelling**).

National level/national authorities (also referred to as **central level or central authorities**): The authorities responsible for ECEC within a single country that is at the highest level of governance. Depending on the governance structure of the country, such as a federal structure of education governance, those authorities may or may not exert the key power of decision over ECEC policies and implementation. Examples for such authorities include the United Kingdom and Belgium.

Numeracy: The ability to reason and to apply simple numerical concepts and understand numbers. Basic numeracy skills consist of knowing and recognising space, shapes, location and direction, the basic properties of sets, quantity, order and number concepts, time and change, being able to count, to comprehending fundamental mathematics like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Observation: Observation is a method to collect information on a subject from an outsider's perspective. It can be used for a specific purpose (e.g. inspection, peer review) or can be open-ended (e.g. to document a child's progress for parents).

Peer review: an assessment process of a colleague's work and practices. This can be done internally (by an internal colleague or a manager) or externally (by a colleague or a manager not working in the same setting).

Portfolio: A collection of pieces of work that can tell a story of child/staff progress, or achievement in given areas.

Practical skills: Skills that involve active involvement of a child and refer to only those skills that children need in daily life such as lacing shoes, brushing teeth, etc.

Process quality: What children actually experience in their programme – what happens within a setting, such as interactions between educators and children. It also consists of the relationships with parents, available materials and professional skills of staff.

Rating scale: A set of categories designed to elicit information about a quantitative or a qualitative attribute. A common example is the 1-10 rating scale, in which a person (evaluator or assessor) selects the number that is considered to reflect the perceived quality or performance of the subject being monitored.

Regional level/regional authorities: A decentralised level of governance. It is located at state or province level in the vast majority of countries, and can be referred to as e.g. communities, *Länder*, cantons, states, etc. Regional authorities in federal countries are often responsible for ECEC in their particular region. Examples for regional level authorities are England, Scotland and the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium.

Regulations/recommendations: Different kinds of official documents containing guidelines, obligations and/or recommendations for ECEC institutions. **Regulations** are laws, rules or other orders prescribed by public authority to regulate conduct. **Recommendations** are official documents proposing the use of specific tools, methods and/or strategies for teaching and learning. Their application is not mandatory (as defined in Eurydice, 2013).

Review: The process of examining, considering and judging a situation or process carefully in order to see, for example, if changes are necessary, analyse strengths and weaknesses, and look for improvement.

Science skills: All scientific subjects such as geography and natural science, as for example interest in and understanding of different cycles in nature, but also in the development of scientific knowledge, question scientific phenomena and the ability to draw conclusions about scientific subjects. Science also refers to the development of awareness of how science and technology shape and affect our material, intellectual and cultural environments and the ability to understand that we all are a part of nature's cycles.

Screening: A tool designed to identify problems or delays during normal childhood development. Usually involves a short test to tell if a child is learning basic skills when he or she should, or if there are delays. It can include some questions the professional asks a child or parent (depending on a child's age) or can involve talk and play with the child during an examination to see how he or she plays, learns, speaks, behaves and moves. Screening is often used to identify delays or problems, including learning disabilities, speech or language problems, autism, intellectual disability, emotional/behavioural conditions, hearing or vision impairment or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Self-evaluation (or self-assessment): The process in which an ECEC setting evaluates its own performance regarding the accomplishment of certain goals or standards, or a process in which staff members assess their own skills and capabilities as a way to monitor progress, attain goals and foster improvement.

Sensitivity: The quality of understanding how a child feels and the staff member's responsiveness to children's needs and emotions. The ability of a person (in this case a staff member) to respond and interact in a way appropriate to the age of the child and with care, warmth and attentiveness (adapted from Macmillan, 2014).

Service quality: The level of quality at setting/provision level. It is the level of quality provided by an ECEC setting, and refers to all the features that are regarded by a country/region/local authority to be of importance for quality, children's environments and experiences that are presumed to be beneficial to their well-being. This most often includes the use of a curriculum, staff characteristics, teacher or caregiver behaviours and practices, and the staff-child interactions that form the core of children's ECEC experiences, referred to in the literature as process quality. In addition, quality in most countries involves structural features of the setting, such as space, group size and other standards or regulations, e.g. safety standards (NCES, 1997; OECD, 2006; OECD, 2012).

Socio-emotional skills: The emotional and social development of a child. It includes children's ability to express and regulate emotions, children's relations with others (including peers), play with others (including peers), self-concept, development of personality identity, self-efficacy and the personality of a child, which shapes his/her thinking, feeling and behaviour. It also refers to co-operation and solving problems together. Examples of socio-emotional development include the forming and sustaining of positive relationships, experiencing, managing and expressing emotions, and exploring and engaging with the environment.

Split system: ECEC services are governed by different ministries or authorities at national/regional level. In many countries with a split system, policies for "care" and "early education" have developed separately and fall under the responsibility of different authorities. Child care and early education is provided as two different services and for different age groups. For instance, "child care" for younger children refers most commonly to children of under age 3 and "early education" most commonly to children of 3 years or older.

Staff-child ratio: The number of children per full-time member of staff. This can be a maximum (regulated) number, which indicates the maximum number of children that one full-time member of staff is allowed to be responsible for, or an average, that is, the average number of children a full-time staff member can be responsible for. Ratios can be either for main staff only (such as teacher or caregiver), but can also include auxiliary staff, such as assistants.

Standardised test: A test designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures and interpretations are consistent and administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner (OECD, 2012; Zucker, 2004). This means that the same test is given in the same way to all test takers. Standardised assessments are usually administered to large groups of children, and mainly for the purpose of measuring academic achievement and/or comparing members of a cohort (Rosenkvist, 2010) (see also **test***)*.

Structural quality: Quality aspects that consist of "inputs to process-characteristics that create the framework for the processes that children experience". These characteristics are not only part of the ECEC location in which children participate, but part of the environment that surrounds the ECEC setting, e.g. the community. They are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated, although they may include variables that cannot be regulated.

Test: A formal assessment, often administered on paper or on the computer, intended to measure children's knowledge, skills and/or aptitudes. Tests can be either standardised or not (see also **standardised test**).

Tool: See definition of **instrument**.

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