



TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

INVESTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN FROM MIGRANT AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Looking ahead: opportunities to improve and expand high-quality Early
Childhood services for all

Seventh meeting: Turin, February 3 - 5, 2016

Synthesis report

Where are we now?

The TFIEY project is coming to an end and it is time to take stock of what we have learned and witnessed and to draw relevant policy recommendations from it all. Along the way, some of the presumptions at the start have been supported by research and practice. To name just a few: high quality ECEC is beneficial for all children and even more so for children living in vulnerable situations, respecting parents and working with them as equal partners is necessary and supports the child's well being, high quality services require well trained and highly competent professionals...(see all documents of all previous meetings on <http://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/transatlantic-forum-on-inclusive-early-years>)

Besides several insights in what quality means in ECEC and in possible approaches for servicing the most vulnerable families, the issues of funding and building political and public support were also examined during this meeting. Throughout all TFIEY meetings, we saw increasing evidence and a growing consensus on how high quality (which includes accessibility for all) ECEC can benefit the most vulnerable children in particular in many different levels, how this can be instrumental in fighting inequity and in achieving equal opportunities, there is however less agreement on how these ECEC services could or should be financed.

In this meeting we summarized the main statements, as well as the conditions that need to be met.



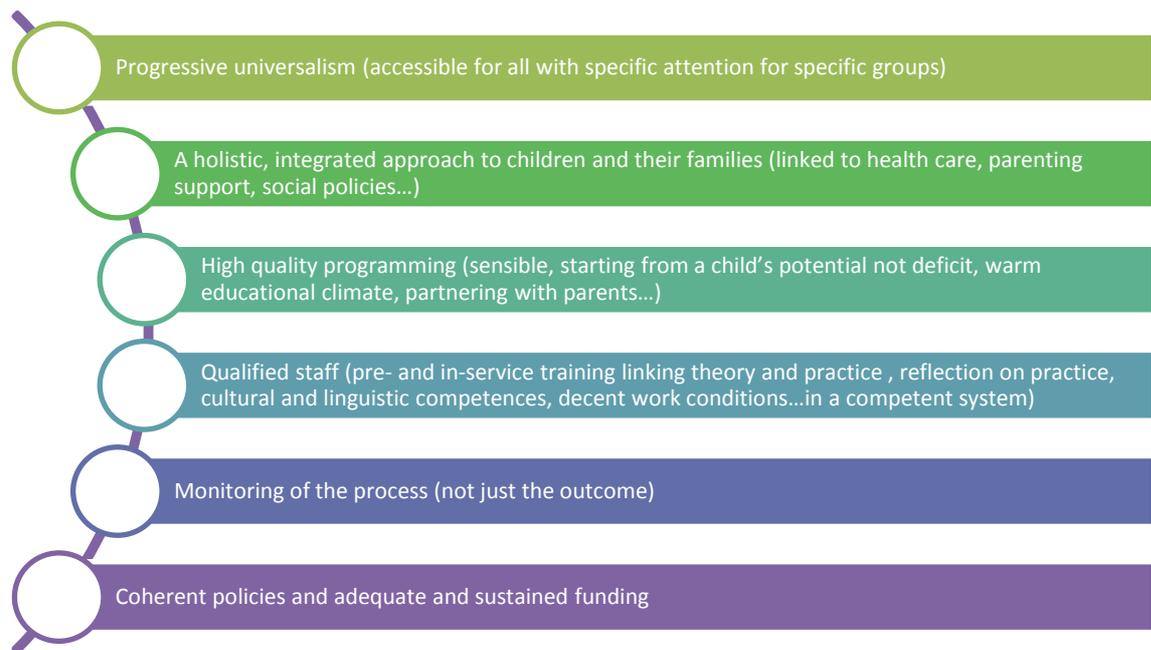
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ECEC matters



But this requires:



Main challenges?

The TFIEY focus has always been on high quality ECEC in the context of poverty and migration. Both in Europe and the US, we see that education and care for young children is hardly available for all. While children in vulnerable situations could benefit the most from these ECEC services, we have seen that they still encounter way too many barriers and that the early years sector is still more often excluding groups that including them.

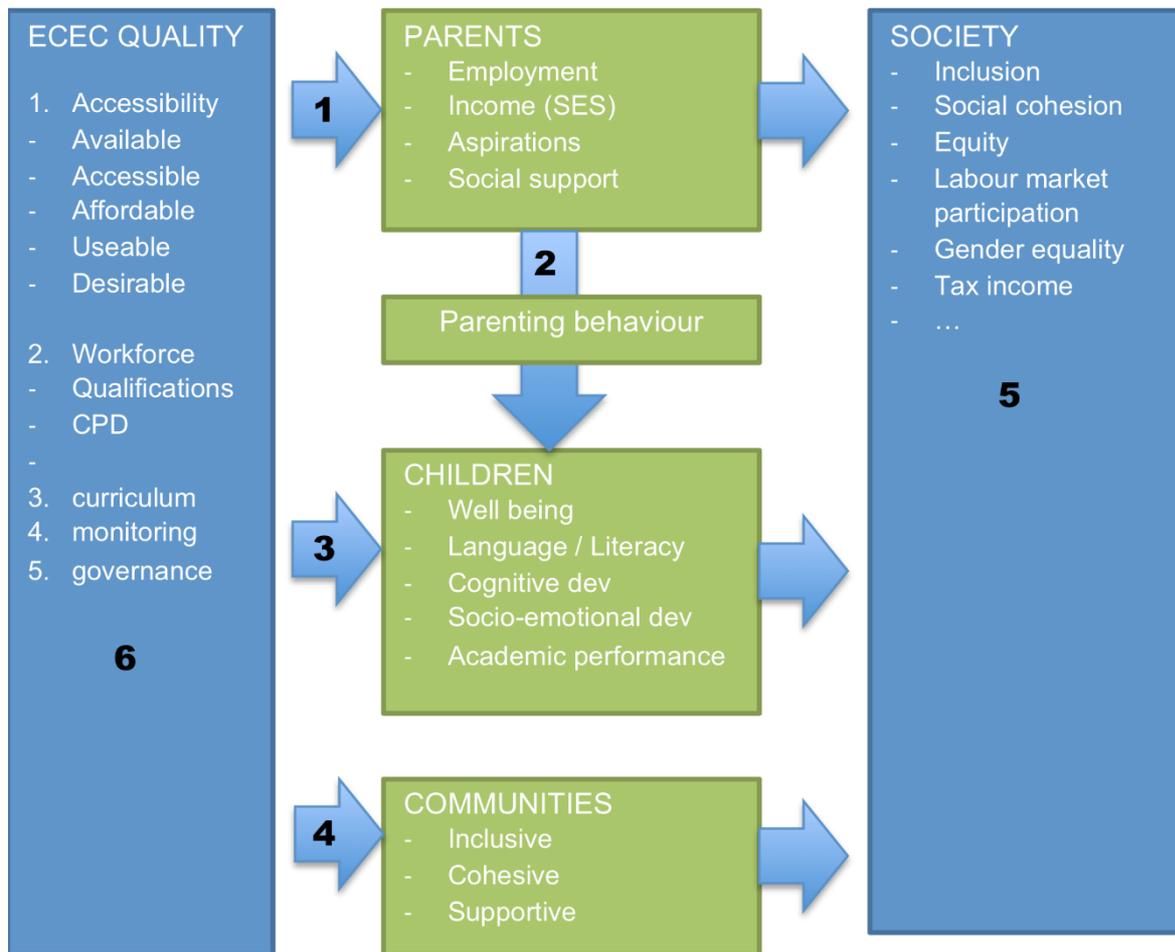




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Looking back at the previous meetings, [Michel Vandebroek](#) summarizes the most relevant issues to make a strong case on why we can't afford NOT to invest in high quality ECEC for all. This scheme contains most of the topics of the previous meetings:



When we say that ECEC matters, we need to add some nuance. From the start of TFIEY, it has been argued that the many benefits of ECEC will only manifest themselves if a certain level of quality is guaranteed, if supportive policies are developed, if the workforce is ready and able to do the job well etc. Throughout the meetings we have understood that it is quite a challenge to combine all these critical success factors.

A recurring conclusion in this context was the appeal to progressive universalism as targeted



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provisions for specific groups have serious disadvantages: they seem to be less effective, they rarely gain enough public support, they can be stigmatising... Designing and implementing policies aimed at mainstream provisions, while also focusing on specific needs of certain groups, accessible for all and creating a social mix, have proven to give better results. Not only for the children themselves, but also for their parents, which is a unique opportunity to stimulate more social cohesion. Because of the children's young age, quality in ECEC also means getting engaged with parents, taking responsibility in the education and care of children in partnership and dialogue with parents. This two-way approach is part of the power of ECEC: it not only has a long term impact on children's holistic development (cognitive, social, emotional, physical...), but it affects the life of parents as well, both directly (employment, training, gender equality...) and indirectly (informal parenting and social support, meeting other parents, improving the home learning situation...). This way, ECEC doesn't only open doors to the outer world for young children, but also for their parents.

And finally, beyond the benefits for children and their families, high quality ECEC also affects the wider community with its potential to work in a more integrated way with other supportive services, to work on warm transitions to school (and thus avoiding new gaps), to offer parents opportunities to connect and to add to social cohesion and support. ECEC plays an important role in co-educating all children beyond difference in race, income, education level... both in bonding with equals and bridging to 'the other'. Never before did young children spend so much time outside the home so we shouldn't underestimate the potential of ECEC to develop and strengthen all these links and work towards more inclusion, equity, democracy and social cohesion.

[Ajay Chaudry](#) pointed out that the gaps in early learning are quite large, starting at a very early age and accumulating quite rapidly throughout childhood. ECEC in the US has high rates of exclusion and this affects mostly the children living in poverty. While programmes like Head Start, Perry Preschools, Abecedarian... have been running for some decades now, the achievement gap is still showing clearly and poverty is one of the main factors here, next to racial and ethnical background. Chaudry concludes from facts and figures that still too many children are left behind and that inequality in children's cognitive skills e.g. is larger in the US than in other countries. This is problematic as we know that durable gaps from the start are hard to address over the years. Many of the gaps in primary school are already showing at school entry. Differences in scholastic achievement by racial, ethnic or immigrant background are persisting, while gaps by income level have even been growing. As a lot of ECEC services are to be 'purchased' by parents, we see that only children from higher income families start attending at a very young age (1-1,5y). Even middle income families, let alone low income, start using these services at a later age (4-5y). By that time, the pronounced and growing inequities in what young children experience are already clear; not only in terms of access, but also in terms of the quality of services and provisions (see also [John Bennett](#), 'poor services for poor people'). And as quality could be far better overall, there is strong evidence that children from lower income families





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experience lower quality education and care on several levels (emotional support, instructional quality and overall quality).

Some US examples have shown how public investment can be successful in giving children living in poverty a fair chance of a good start, but the investment level is far from meeting the actual needs. Overall investment is needed to guarantee universal access, starting at age 3, providing continuous ECEC at an early age to the most vulnerable until school entry.

What have we learnt from research?

One of the most impressive studies in this field, is the EPPSE study – Effective Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (see [Kathy Sylva](#) and also [Edward Melhuish](#), [EPPSE](#)) This is a longitudinal study on the effects of preschool, involving 141 preschools and over 3000 children. It is worth noting that this study was done in mainstream preschools. More than 3,000 children were assessed at the start of pre-school around the age of 3 and their development was monitored until they entered school around the age of 5. They were assessed again at key points when they were 11 y old and are currently being followed through their final year of compulsory schooling and on to their post 16 educational, training and employment choices.

As Edward Melhuish already illustrated, the effects of quality early years education last throughout the school years and shapes the future development of children. These effects are even stronger for children whose parents have low level qualifications. The positive effects were on several domains: not only academic success but also on social behaviour and self-regulating skills. Quality also refers to the quality of relations, interactions and dialogue: “enthusiastic thinkers make killer pedagogues!”.

From this research, it is clear that high quality ECEC actually protects children from the risks of social and familial disadvantage. It also points towards elements of this required quality and adds that the public sector, with better leadership and qualified staff is more able to deliver high quality than the private or charitable sector. The study also led to major policy changes as the results were so undeniable, making free preschools accessible for all children in the UK as of 3y and starting at 2y for children from disadvantaged groups.

Along the same lines, research by [Daniela del Boca](#) points at the beneficial impact for children – cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes - as well as for their mothers in terms of participation in the labour market. While children’s outcomes – school, behaviour, health - are surely also depending on both parent’s input, formal ECEC serves as a solid addition to the home environment, where children also learn from and with their peers. Early interventions seem to have higher rates of return than later interventions and these last for a longer period of time. Pisa-data show that the link between preschool attendance and test scores at the age of 15 is higher in countries that have a higher spending per pupil in preschool, higher enrolment rates and higher levels of training and of wages of the ECEC staff.

Looking into supply and access of ECEC over different countries, we see considerable differences



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in enrolment, especially for babies and toddlers (0-2y), with e.g. attendance up to 74,5% in Denmark and barely 20% in Greece. Enrolment rates increase with age (3-5y) up to over 90% (e.g. in Denmark, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, France) and over 55% in the US, and almost 50% in Greece.

ECEC in the US and UK, childcare for the youngest children (under 3y) is very heterogeneous, most often privately funded and informal. This is quite problematic as studies show that in both countries and especially for vulnerable children, formal childcare shows better and more lasting results. Simulation in the UK, introducing formal childcare for children under 3 shows a reduction of children with low test scores, a reduction in the dispersion of cognitive outcomes among children from low-income families, as well as a reduction of inequalities among children. On the European continent childcare is most often formal, publicly funded and more homogenous. Here as well, we clearly see that positive impact increases along the lines of higher availability and higher quality. Again, in countries like Norway and Denmark, with high levels of available, universal and high quality provision, strong and positive effects were registered, such as educational success, college attendance, adult earnings. And again, this was even more significant from children in vulnerable situations (low level of education of the mother, low-income family).

Some regions in Italy show a divergent picture in a way: while municipal child care is of rather high quality, availability is low, especially in the Southern regions. Higher availability results in higher language test scores. A new study on the internationally renowned Reggio Emilia approach offers some preliminary results of interesting correlations of preschool attendance and later school success for children from immigrant and low-income families.

In Germany also, research showed that attending childcare increases e.g. language skills and that these effects are higher in childcare centres with experienced and trained staff, adding to the quality of the provision.

When we see the research results pointing at a correlation between attendance of high quality ECEC and positive outcomes on many levels and long term, policymakers should have no choice but to invest thoroughly in affordable and universal high quality ECEC. Alongside investing in ECEC, and valuing parents - both mothers and fathers! - as first educators, policies on parental leave and smoother combination of work and private life should also be reconsidered, especially to benefit the development of very young children.

What does practice tell us?

In earlier meetings, especially in the Washington meeting focused on multilingualism, we have seen how children who do not speak the dominant language or have a different cultural/ethnic background have more thresholds to overcome to enter mainstream ECEC provision. As this plays a major role in their underachievement, we need to find ways to get our ECEC systems better equipped to welcome these children and give them as good a start as any other child.





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One of the viable strategies to respond to needs of minority language groups is to better prepare and support the workforce for their work with so-called Dual Language Learners (DLL). [Marlene Zepeda](#) reports on the lack of a uniform standard in ECEC teacher's preparation, ranging from high school diploma's to bachelor degrees throughout the states in the US and the different programmes. Quality of staff however is one of the salient factors in ECEC quality, especially in the context of underserved populations. Data on the education levels of staff working with the 0-3y old children show that these levels are far lower than for teachers working with older children. Added to this, many children of low-income and migrant families don't attend the formal ECEC centres but are in informal care (family, child minders...often unlisted, some also unpaid). This means that the children most in need of decent ECEC are being served by a low qualified workforce. And while these child-minder's are in fact more likely to match the cultural and language characteristics of the families they work for, little is known about the pedagogical quality they are able to offer.

Over and over it is stated that high quality ECEC is good for all children, but for children who are not – in the US case - native English speakers this may not be sufficient either, as long as we do not get better prepared staff or do not reconsider our measuring instruments as well. As e.g. language acquisition has its own peculiarities, general language tests will never show a fair result. As for the ECEC staff, a large majority has no other language knowledge than English. Some groups also have larger percentages of Spanish speakers (e.g. 23% of family-based childcare workers, 15% of ECEC workers) but the majority of the workforce is monolingual.

Workforce preparation and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is highly needed to increase their competences to work in a context of diversity. Cross cutting themes in teacher training are e.g.: understand the links between early brain development and language development, understand how children become bilingual, understand that language acquisition takes time, support oral language development on both languages used, assess children's progress in their native languages as well as in English and learn to identify and implement appropriate pedagogical practices. Besides the language issue, there is a need to expand culture-sensitive competences as well, e.g. in understanding the impact of a child's cultural background (parent-child interaction, parent's expectations and priorities..) or respecting the fact that the child's primary language is the medium through which he/she learns about the values and beliefs of their culture. As we have seen in some inspiring practices during the 6th meeting of the TFIEY (see e.g. [Little and Kirwan](#)) a well-equipped workforce also needs firm and committed leadership, working from a clear vision on how to prioritise ECEC for a diversity of young children and their families.

With the case of Berlin [Christa Preissing and Henrietta Heimgaertner](#) illustrate how the concept of quality needs a systemic, participatory and multi-layered approach. Defining or describing quality is not a monopoly of policymakers or academics alone. It is an ongoing process of





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dialogue between experts, researchers, policymakers, ECEC staff, parents and children, a process of constant reflection on a changing world and living context (e.g. now with the refugees in Europe) and of learning from each other. Thinking about and shaping quality requires combining different sources of knowledge, backgrounds and experiences.

The Berlin ECEC curriculum – Bridging diversity (see also [Christa Preissing](#)) was drafted in 2003 by a group of practitioners, academics and policymakers and discussed by many more within the ECEC sector before being accepted by the Ministry of Education of Berlin in 2004. Starting from a children’s rights perspective it is built on a holistic understanding of education in the broad sense of the word (education, upbringing, socialisation...), aimed at empowering the potential of every child and their families, while respecting diversity. It starts from a vision of shared responsibility for human/children’s rights and for the natural and cultural environment of all involved. It supports participatory work and empowerment of staff, of children and their parents, of communities.

Children learn from exploring the world around them in all its diversity, exploring social cultures, communicating through languages, literacy, media, art, maths and so on. The program offers opportunities for ECEC teams to (self-)reflect, to raise awareness on children’s rights and feelings of belonging to foster children’s well-being, to view children as agents and to continuously be aware of interactions between children and adults and of possible discrimination and how to act upon that.

As of January 2006, this ‘Bildungsprogramm’ was implemented and made compulsory for all publicly funded ECEC centres in Berlin (over 2000 centres). It is monitored accordingly, with regular internal and external evaluations and provides for in-service training modules.

The internal evaluation is a detailed instrument on orientation-, task- and cooperation quality, which are all monitored in different ways: individual self-reflection with built in quality criteria, peer observations, team discussions and internal contracts on steps to take to improve. In addition, an external evaluation was designed as well, built around 3 central elements: valuing achievements of a centre, constructive-critical assessment of necessary changes towards the goals of the curriculum and tailor-made recommendations for further quality development (taking into account the concrete situation of each centre). External evaluations like this serve as a support for ECEC centres rather than a merely controlling instrument. Both types of evaluations are well received by the workforce, both the management and the practitioners.

Concluding, as quality is the challenge, policies need to support this in different ways, as they do in the Berlin program: by intensive communication between all parties concerned, by an improved professional-child ratio, by financial support (10€ per child per year extra for evaluation) and by recognition of the quality increase in politics and the media.

On the US side, the Head Start programme has been working over several decades, making links between knowledge, policies and practice. [Robert Stechuk](#)’s presentation illustrated how Head Start evolved during its 50 year existence. Head Start has always focused on low-income families and opportunities for their children and worked on the design of a federally regulated program,



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including technical assistance and monitoring, starting from a vision of inclusion and respect for (racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and developmental) diversity. Throughout the years, system revisions were introduced and capacity building efforts were made in order to continue growth in terms of quality.

Looking back on how program implementation around responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity can effectively be monitored and how the needs of diverse learners are being met, this is clearly still a challenge, even in this program that has historically set out with the explicit purpose of serving disadvantaged and minority groups. Initially, there was an effort to try and include issues of linguistic diversity at the broadest level of program standards, which would be the ideal scenario. However, this effort was rejected, so specific indicators are now included within each generic standard to directly address the needs of Dual Language Learners. In addition, many resources are made available in the form of technical assistance to individual programs by the national office, including a program preparedness checklist that helps programs to investigate themselves how well they may be serving Dual Language Learners and children of immigrants, and handouts that are designed to inform staff and families about the importance of home language and the basics of first and second language acquisition.

Ultimately, while there has been an upward trend in Head Start's commitment toward taking a truly inclusive and holistic approach to address the needs of immigrant and DLL children in the past few decades, the size of the program and the difficulty of controlling all aspects of implementation make this difficult to achieve across all classrooms, and much remains to be done in ensuring that all providers are using research-driven best practices to promote the success of all children.

Funding Models and Innovations

If anything, the TFIEY collected many sorts of extensive and convincing evidence, proving that high quality ECEC is of major importance to every child's holistic development and that this is definitely the case for children in vulnerable situations such as migration and poverty. And while ECEC issues are moving up on political agenda's worldwide (see the European Quality framework for ECEC - [EQF](#) and the Strategic Developmental Goals of the UN - [SDG4](#)), universally accessible ECEC is far from reality in many countries. And the current refugee situation in many of our countries will add even more urgency to this challenge.

Looking at the benefits of ECEC on so many levels (child development, support to families, (female) employment, social cohesion, inclusion, poverty...) the question now is how to develop adequate policy strategies and funding schemes. Different views and options are possible here, depending on the underlying paradigms, such as children's rights, ECEC as a basic provision or as a marketised service. Different funding systems can be considered and will be influenced by the political context.





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Researching the Dutch system, [Janneke Plantenga](#) looks into innovative funding in the shape of a market-system for ECEC. To reach all the goals of ECEC the question is how to finance all this as efficiently as possible. In Europe different systems exist: public funding, supply subsidies, tax deductions, demand subsidies (such as vouchers for parents for service purchase) etc. In most cases we see a mixed system, in which the state and private partners (for-profit and not-for-profit) all have a role in the provision, the funding and the regulation of ECEC. In many Northern European countries and countries like France and Belgium, ECEC is considered to be a basic provision that should be funded by public resources. The UK and the Netherlands have chosen a different path and introduced the market approach in ECEC. All systems have pro and contra arguments depending on what you aim for: controllable spending, goal oriented, demand driven, flexibility, pedagogical quality, etc.

In the case of ECEC, the basic idea is that the market will create a more efficient incentive structure as the market driven approach will increase competition and will force suppliers to increase internal efficiency resulting in lower prices. In addition, the introduction of market forces may lead to a better balance between supply and demand. Consumers are expected to select the provider that offers the best price/quality ratio and the sector may adapt quicker to changing circumstances. The introduction of market forces should therefore increase both internal and external efficiency. Reality however raises other issues.

Looking at ECEC in a market-context, it is the parents, and not the children, who are the consumers and consumers are assumed to be very well informed, free to choose their preferred and available service as well as free to change provision as they see fit. This raises access as well as quality issues. Low-income families may not have all that much choice, if any, putting equal access at risk and by doing so decreasing overall quality (as access should be viewed as part of quality). In the Netherlands e.g. only working parents are eligible for vouchers for child care and it is mostly higher income dual-earner families that are using formal childcare services. Quality may also be at risk as reality mostly shows that the race is for 'a' place, rather than 'the best' place, given the shortage in supply of ECEC services. Also, parents may not be that well equipped to define and recognise pedagogical quality, so ECEC providers will not be competing on this domain. In general, information on process quality in the Netherlands shows that the quality level has been rather low between 2001 and 2008, with some increase as of 2012.

At this point, Plantenga concludes that there is not enough evidence (yet?) to state that the market mechanism would result in higher or lower quality levels than public provision.

A model of social entrepreneurship is illustrated by [June O'Sullivan](#), CEO of the London Early Years Foundation. In this, a business strategy has been deployed to provide in high quality childcare (38 community nurseries in London) in poor areas. The LEYF business model has 4 main goals: delivering financially viable childcare in poor areas, enduring high quality through the LEYF pedagogy, investing in local employment and in-service training of staff and building a multigenerational community and social capital. The focus is on many different aspects of the child's development, such as literacy, basic life skills (e.g. perseverance self-regulation,





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sociability, self-esteem...), attention for the home learning environment and creating mutual learning cultures. Inspection (Ofsted UK) has shown that the LEYF centres score from good to excellent. Within LEYF as well, a monitoring system has been developed to measure the benefits for the children.

The ambitions are high within a very challenging context. High quality as the main focus has the advantage that services are created that attract high income families which support the financing of lower fees for children from low income families (Robin Hood principle). Half of the staff is recruited locally, from low income families, with immigrant background and including men. About 80% of the children attending are not native English speakers and not all parents have a supporting family network. The LEYF centre can offer them social support and opportunities to meet with other parents to escape from their isolation. In this way, LEYF does not only offer childcare, but also creates possibilities for social mobility, for fighting child poverty, for parental support, employment etc.

[Bill Crim](#) introduces the first system of Social Impact Bonds in the context of early childhood provision in the US, in which venture capital is used to set up new services in ECEC. Appealing to the sense of urgency (not investing in ECEC is losing generations of children!) investors were encouraged and excited to fund social programmes where the state is unwilling or unable to do so. This way, private investors are taking all the risks at first and contribute to expand preschool to low-income families. Based on research, the case was made how low-income children would benefit from preschool and how much this would save on public spending in the end if they would have access to preschool. In this model, investors 'loan' money for programme expansion (up to 7 million \$) and when the targets are achieved, they are repaid with interest by the state, as costs have been avoided. This is a win-win situation for all parties involved with the added value that multiple stakeholders from the community are brought together to work in collaboration toward a shared effort. Whenever the targets are not met, the loss is for the investors, not for the state. The hope is that - as has been in the case of Utah - policymakers will themselves demonstrate more of a readiness to invest public funds in the effort once success has been proven.

Up until now, some 1800 children, 3 and 4 y olds, have received high quality preschool through this model and school readiness has in fact increased.

Introducing the importance of ECEC on the business table is also the message of Ready Nation. [Sara Watson](#) is advocating for ECEC and trying to convince the business community to invest in young children by using a language attractive to business leaders. Coming to terms with the fact that neither charity organisations nor NGO advocacy alone will lead to the required results, Ready Nation's message is that it is time that business leaders strengthen the call towards policymakers. Possible actions by business leaders are e.g. contributing money or volunteers to organisations, setting up family friendly policies for employees, educate customers... Several





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multinationals, as well as the World Bank, Federal Reserve and OECD have been supporting this approach.

In order to reach policymakers, the business community and ‘public opinion’ (being mostly middle class), we need sustained and need-driven campaigning and advocacy, as stated by [Delia Pompa](#). Moreover, the populations who are the target beneficiaries of these services—namely, low-income and immigrant families—must be included and empowered as agents of this advocacy. In the case of the US, immigrant groups, and in particular the Hispanic community, have become increasingly politically engaged and have played a critical role in campaigning for increased access to high-quality early childhood services. This strategy of including target populations as agents for change rather than passive recipients of services designed by others goes to the heart of issues of inclusion and empowerment that have been recurring themes throughout the Forum meetings. Facts and figures may be quite convincing in this context. Some examples: 44% of foreign born citizens between 25 and 44y old (the parents of today), 31% of children under 9 are Dual Language Learners, most of the being from racial and ethnic minorities of immigrant background, 25% of children up to 8 have at least one immigrant parent, only 54% of 3 and 4 y olds in the US are enrolled in some kind of preschool (most not even full time). Strong advocacy also needs to aim at a defined target audience, carefully determination of the message, use credible messengers and use the right vehicles.

Campaigning for more and more accessible ECEC has resulted in some success in terms of significant childcare legislation, increased preschool spending on state level and higher budgets for preschool on the federal level.

Still, a lot more needs to be done in order to get the same level of quality throughout the US, to deliver more services for the youngest children and to make existing programmes more accessible.

Besides working towards policymakers, the more vulnerable groups themselves need to be involved and empowered as well in order to really get to know what their needs and priorities are and what the main obstacles are from their perspective. (see also the Lisbon meeting).

Policy debate and takeaways

In the policy debate 3 models are illustrated.

Italy is currently in a transition phase, moving from a split system to a more integrated 0-6 ECEC policy. Even though it is quite a complex exercise, there is strong public and political support for several reasons: filling the gaps in the ECEC system, increase of female employment, less school dropout and equal opportunities for all children throughout the country. Facilitating factors for the cultural transition for 0-3 y olds from a welfare context to education are among others: ensuring systemic quality levels, qualified staff, equitable funding across the different regions, central leadership combined with strong local players (dialogue between state, communities and





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private partners)...ECEC is changing into an education issue rather than a women's issue and education is considered to be a major resource in need of serious investment.

In the US, the federal government has no authority on the ECEC issue, as most decision-making power is devolved to state and local levels, but has been designing funding schemes for the early learning challenge ('Race to the top'). Supporting the ECEC is critical here (decent wages, ongoing professional development) as this is a salient factor for rendering the required quality. It is important to get all the existing programs on the same line: no matter where a child spends the day, they should all get the same high quality learning opportunities.

In Ireland, more coordinated policy work has been facilitated by major strategic planning, reviewing all scattered policy initiatives under the coordination by one single Department for Children. (see also [Elizabeth Canavan](#) in the TFIEY Dublin meeting). Early years policies are still mainly focused on care and the education focus is only for the 3+ but steps forward have been taken and even in times of austerity the Children's Department saw its budget increased. Some of the successful actions have been: the extension of one free preschool year (starting at 3y), childcare subsidies for vulnerable families (25.000 children benefitting), move towards a focus on quality (instead of only on cost and mere availability), strengthening the workforce and enriching the curriculum. ECEC is now being considered to be an investment rather than a cost.

Rounding up

Throughout the TFIEY meetings, the case has been made of how high quality ECEC matters for all young children, and especially for children with a disadvantaged background, such as poverty and migration. Most relevant topics have been covered from different angles: research, practice and policy. Some elements were stressed over and over again: the overwhelming evidence on the impact of high quality ECEC on the holistic development of young children, the need for progressive universalism in ECEC, the importance of engaging in a dialogue with parents and the wider community, the need for monitoring processes to guarantee quality maintenance and continuous improvement, and the need for strong leadership both within the ECEC services and on the policy level. While the consensus was clear on all these elements, some different opinions remain on how such an ECEC system should and can be financed. In any case, the plea for ECEC as a universally accessible basic provision calls upon governmental responsibility, regulations and funding, either with or without private support.

It is clear that all the issues covered are highly interrelated and responsibilities are shared between governments, providers and parents. For the detailed recommendations on the separate TFIEY issues, we refer to the meeting summaries and the policy recommendations (<http://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/transatlantic-forum-on-inclusive-early-years>).

