



European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Monitoring and evaluating quality in ECEC:
background note



Monitoring and evaluating quality of early childhood education and care in Europe

Background note

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1. Background

1.1. Policy background

1.1.1. The European Education Area and European work on ECEC

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has featured highly on the European agenda for several years, in particular since the adoption in 2019 of a Council recommendation on High Quality ECEC, which includes a European Quality Framework¹. It describes the five pillars which support the provision of quality education and care to young children, i.e.:

- Access
- Staff
- Curriculum
- Governance and funding
- Monitoring and evaluation

Through the European Education Area, Member States are working together to removing barriers to learning and improve access to quality education for all. Within this framework, work is being done to support the implementation of the European Quality Framework for ECEC, in particular through peer learning within a European Working Group on ECEC.

1.1.2. What are Working Groups?

Working groups (WGs) were initially established by the European Commission under the Education and Training 2010 work programme as a key vehicle for the Open Method of Coordination in education and training. Working groups are intended to function as a forum for mutual learning, bringing together representatives from national authorities in charge of ECEC, stakeholders and international organisations. The Working Groups are informal and voluntary, and their contributions and recommendations for policy development are therefore non-binding in nature.

1.1.1. Results of past ECEC Working Groups

A first ECEC WG met in 2012-2014 and drafted a Proposal for a European Quality Framework for ECEC, which became part of the 2019 Council recommendation for high-quality ECEC systems.

A second WG met in 2018-2020 and published two reports :

- [The Toolkit for inclusive ECEC](#)
- [Guidelines on How to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified ECEC staff.](#)

¹ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN)

1.1.2. The Mandate and Composition of the current Working Group

Working groups were recently re-established under the Commission's Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (EEA communication, 30 September 2020),² as well as the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and Beyond (Resolution, 18 February 2021).³ The current generation of WGs is scheduled to run until 2025, and is foreseen to produce concrete outputs in support of participating countries' national reforms.

The specific objectives of the **WG on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)** are to provide the Commission with advice and expertise, as well as to support Member States and other participating countries in implementing the 2019 Council Recommendation for High-Quality ECEC systems and the European Quality Framework for ECEC. **Under the present mandate, the main topical focus of the ECEC WG is the monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC**, with inclusion, staff, and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic featuring as auxiliary sub-topics. The ECEC WG is foreseen to produce a number of concrete outputs, including guidelines on monitoring and evaluating quality in ECEC and reports and collections of good practices.

The present ECEC WG is composed of representatives from EU Member States⁴ and additional participating countries,⁵ as well as European and international agencies and institutions including Eurydice, Eurofound, UNESCO and UNICEF. The WG also consists of representatives from the following stakeholder organisations: Alliance for Childhood, the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), Eurochild, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA).

1.1.3. Purpose of this note

This note brings together concepts, research findings and questions on the topic of monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC. These were discussed during the first meetings of the ECEC Working group in January and February 2022 to frame the discussions of the group in the following months.

1.2. Definitions: What is Monitoring & Evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes are important components of enhancing quality in ECEC systems: by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of ECEC provision, they can act as catalysts for change to support stakeholders and policymakers in undertaking initiatives that respond to the needs of children, parents and local communities. There is a consensus among researchers and policy-makers that by systematically linking data collection, research, ongoing evaluation and policy action, these processes can lead to the

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&from=EN>

³ Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48584/st06289-re01-en21.pdf>

⁴ AT, BEFR, BENL, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

⁵ AL, MK, RS, TR, IS, LI, NO.

continuous improvement of ECEC provision and to the enhancement of children's development.

1.2.1. Monitoring

In an ECEC context, **monitoring** refers to the **continuous and systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative data** which supports a **regular review of the quality of the ECEC system**. It is based on pre-agreed quality standards, benchmarks or indicators which are established and modified through use.⁶

MONITORING is generally understood within the context of ongoing analyses of information concerning development processes within the system (e.g. children's participation in education, staff-child ratio, staff qualifications, etc.). Adjustments and alignments can be made on this basis, and processes can be optimized (e.g. expansion of services offered, improvements to structural quality). Monitoring procedures are thus used as a method of aggregating governing knowledge for the various stakeholders in the ECEC system (policymakers, administration, service providers, parents as service users). In ECEC, 'monitoring' is thus often determined by political or administrative intent to examine new regulatory methods and forms of management with respect to their ability to ensure quality, or to introduce accountabilities (OECD 2015).

Source: DJI-ICEC (2017) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Approaches and experiences from selected countries*: www.dji.de/fileadmin/user_upload/bibs2017/Monitoring_Sammelband_E_final.pdf

1.2.2. Evaluation

Evaluation refers to the **systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the design, implementation or results** of an on-going or completed ECEC project, programme or policy.⁷

EVALUATION, internal as well as external or third-party evaluations, are generally mentioned when (direct) feedback is given to professional practitioners in the form of observations and/or evaluations of aspects, including pedagogical work at an ECEC setting in general and activities of pedagogical professionals in particular. This is effected by applying previously agreed principles or criteria to bring transparency to evaluations. Several instruments and procedures for evaluating the various aspects of quality are in use at national and international level.

Source: DJI-ICEC (2017) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Approaches and experiences from selected countries*: www.dji.de/fileadmin/user_upload/bibs2017/Monitoring_Sammelband_E_final.pdf

As will be described in more detail in section 3 below, both monitoring and evaluation can be conducted **internally** by the centres/service providers themselves through self-evaluation, or **externally** by inspectors and/or data collectors from local, regional or national authorities. Furthermore, M&E processes may involve a range of tools, such as reviews of documentation, inspections, classroom observations, measurements and/or assessments of children's health, education and/or wellbeing outcomes, and surveys and interviews with ECEC centre staff, children and parents.

Taken together, monitoring and evaluation practices should aspire to judge the effectiveness of ECEC services against previously agreed principles. Ideally, they should prioritise both

⁶ European Commission (2014) *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Brussels: Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission.

⁷ idem

education and care aspects of ECEC, and focus on children's holistic wellbeing and development rather than only on their learning outcomes.

2. Importance of monitoring and evaluating quality in ECEC

2.1. Policy recommendations

The two levels of data generation described – overall system monitoring and evaluation processes in the field of ECEC practice – are closely interconnected. Taken together, monitoring and evaluation create a way to recognise the achievement of quality in ECEC. In the **Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework put forward by the European ECEC Working group in 2014**, monitoring and evaluation form part of an ongoing dialogue and are part of the process of reflecting on developments and progress:⁸

- the implementation of monitoring and evaluation procedures should be **governed by ethical principles** – such as **transparency** and **usefulness** – and guided by a **child-centred approach** as well as by **shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity**
- **monitoring is integral to evaluation**: during an evaluation, information from previous evaluations and/or monitoring processes are used to inform progress
- monitoring and evaluation processes **should not be constructed as an imposition from an external agent** or **an optional accessory of any project or programme**, but rather being systematically embedded in meaningful reflection on practice as a **professional requirement for ECEC practitioners**.

Based on these principles, the European Quality Framework included in the **Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (2019)**⁹ contains two statements on evaluation and monitoring:

'Monitoring and Evaluation sustain quality. By pointing to strengths and weaknesses, its processes can be important components of enhancing quality in early childhood education systems. They can provide support to stakeholders and policymakers in undertaking initiatives that respond to the needs of children, parents and local communities.

Quality Statements:

7. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

Transparent information on service and staff or on curriculum implementation at the appropriate – national, regional and local – level can help to improve quality.

Regular information feedback can make the process of policy evaluation easier, also by allowing to analyse the use of public funds and of what is effective and in which context.

To identify staff learning needs and to make the right decisions on how best to improve service quality and professional development, it is beneficial that early childhood education leaders collect relevant data in a timely manner.

⁸ Idem, p. 53

⁹ Council of the European Union (2019) *Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN)

8. Monitoring and Evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

In order to protect the rights of the child, robust child protection/child safeguarding policies should be embedded within the early childhood education and care system to help protect children from all forms of violence. Effective child protection policies cover four broad areas: (1) policy, (2) people, (3) procedures, and (4) accountability. More information on these areas can be found in 'Child safeguarding standards and how to implement them' issued by Keeping Children Safe.

Monitoring and evaluation processes can foster active engagement and cooperation among all stakeholders. Everyone concerned with the development of quality can contribute to – and benefit from – monitoring and evaluation practices.

Available evidence indicates that a mix of monitoring methods (e.g. observation, documentation, narrative assessment of children's competences and learning) can provide useful information and give account of children's experiences and development including helping a smooth transition to primary school.

Monitoring tools and participatory evaluation procedures can be created to allow children to be heard and be explicit about their learning and socialising experiences within settings.'

Source: Council of the European Union (2019) *Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*:
[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN)

In accordance with national legislation, circumstances and available resources - and in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders - the **Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (2019)**¹⁰ invites Member States to:

5. Promote transparent and coherent monitoring and evaluation of early childhood education and care services at the appropriate levels with a view to policy development and implementation. Effective approaches could include:

- a) *using self-evaluation tools, questionnaires and observation guidelines as part of quality management at system and service level;*
- b) *using adequate and age-appropriate methods to foster children's participation and listen to their views, concerns and ideas and take the children's perspective into account in the assessment process;*
- c) *implementing existing tools to improve the inclusiveness of early childhood education and care provision such as the Inclusive Early Childhood Education Self-Reflection Tool developed by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.*

Source: Pg. 9, Council of the European Union (2019) *Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems*: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN)

Along with a growing interest to ensure equitable access to high-quality ECEC provision,¹¹ research and political debates concerning processes, methods and instruments which could be implemented for quality monitoring, evaluation and development have intensified in recent

¹⁰ Idem, p. 9

¹¹ Vandebroek, M., Lenaerts, K., Beblavý, M. (2018) *Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them*. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture:
<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/20810>

years both at international¹² and national level¹³. So far, most empirical research covered by international literature on M&E derived from Anglo-Saxon countries, which already have long-standing experience with various forms of monitoring of ECEC programmes.¹⁴ More recently, a new trend is emerging as **an increasing number of countries in Europe are in the process of developing systems for monitoring and evaluating quality in the ECEC sector.**¹⁵

In this regard, the NESET study ‘*The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks, or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States*’ (2017)¹⁶ reveals that the proposal for a European Quality Framework played a pivotal role in triggering the debate on Monitoring and Evaluation in some countries – i.e. Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany and Ireland – whereas in other countries – i.e. Finland, Slovenia and Spain – the debate on Monitoring and Evaluation was triggered by pre-existing national policy initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation processes generally address quality of ECEC systems and settings by focusing on:

- **Structural quality characteristics** (*adult:child ratio, group size, staff qualification and working conditions...*)
- **Process quality** (*adult-child interactions, educational environment...*)
- **Outputs** (*children’s learning and well-being*) and **outcomes** (*cognitive and socio-emotional development*)

These individual areas are often interconnected in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes, with *structural* and *process quality* being the *most common areas taken into account in M&E processes in place within EU Member States*.

Eurydice¹⁷ notes that *evaluation and monitoring systems in Europe are very diverse in the sense that the actors involved, their mission and the freedom they have to fulfil their tasks varies substantially between countries*.

2.2. Research findings

Although an in-depth review of how Monitoring & Evaluation procedures can achieve concrete quality improvement has yet to be conducted, **positive effects on ECEC quality have been ascribed to the process**, including the benefits of **data generation for evidence-informed policymaking** and positive impacts on **workforce professional development**.¹⁸ The currently available research points to benefits of monitoring such as **improved staff practices** and **better curriculum implementation**, but such findings also point out that **the**

¹² OECD (2018) *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264085145-en>

¹³ Lazzari A. (2017) *The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks, or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States*. NESET II report: <https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AHQ4.pdf>

¹⁴ OECD (2015) *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en>

¹⁵ Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (2017) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

¹⁶ Lazzari A. (2017) *The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks, or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States*. NESET II report: <https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AHQ4.pdf>

¹⁷ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019. [Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition](#). Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁸ OECD (2018) *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264085145-en>

implementation of monitoring and evaluation practice does not have a positive impact per se. Therefore, the challenge for policymakers is to optimise the design and implementation to ensure that the relevant data is collected and processed in a way that improves the quality of the whole ECEC system. In this regard, the review of international literature gives some indication of the **conditions that are needed for M&E practices to produce positive impacts.**

- In first instance, research indicates that **to monitor quality within an ECEC system or programme a shared vision of quality needs to be defined**, as any assessment of quality depends to a large extent on the way in which quality is defined.¹⁹ As ECEC quality is a value-laden and culturally sensitive construct, **pedagogical (quality) frameworks** are to be defined within an **ongoing process** which entails revision over time.
- Policymakers and administrators need to **be clear about the purpose(s) for which they are developing monitoring systems and select the practices most appropriate for those purpose(s).** Research show that monitoring practices should be adopted as a result of informed choices since there is a risk of negatively affecting the validity and reliability when a monitoring practice designed for one purpose is used for other purposes.²⁰ In addition, the fact that a single monitoring practice might not be reliable if adopted for multiple purposes (e.g. evaluating the quality of provision, the quality of curriculum implementation, or the quality of staff performance) should also be carefully considered.
- **Monitoring practices that are used at different levels - national, regional and municipal or centre level – needs to be consistently aligned.** If purposes and practices are not coherently aligned across different levels of governance, the procedures and methods used in relation to varied purposes can generate inconsistencies between controlling compliance mechanisms and quality evaluation processes implemented at different levels of the ECEC system (*vertical governance*), as well as gaps between sub-systems (*horizontal governance*). Thus, the challenge is to design a coherent approach within which vertical alignment of M&E processes is combined with the use of complementary methods/tools for data collection and interpretation;²¹ this aspect proves to be highly complicated in practice, especially in federal and decentralised systems.
- **Monitoring and evaluation practices need to have practical relevance for the different stakeholders involved.** Monitoring processes should generate usable knowledge, so that policy-makers, administrators, pedagogical leaders/coordinators and practitioners are able to link the results of evaluation to practical initiatives aimed to strengthen the quality of ECEC provision.²² In this sense, it seems critical to identify the benefit of the data collected in M&E processes for the different stakeholders involved and their areas of responsibility, by clarifying which data and information are useful for which stakeholders. If data obtained through M&E are not of direct use to the work of the various stakeholders involved in the process (policy-makers,

¹⁹Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (2017) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

²⁰OECD (2015) *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en>

²¹Children in Europe (2016) 'Principle 7—Evaluation: Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent'. In: Moss, P. (Ed.) *Young children and their services: developing a European approach. A Children in Europe Policy paper*. https://www.lefuret.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/EDE/Principe7.pdf?_t=1585665834

²²OECD (2015) *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en>

administrators, pedagogical leaders/coordinators and practitioners), they might perceive M&E practices as an additional bureaucratic and time-consuming burden. *This, in turn, could hinder the sustainability and effectiveness of monitoring systems.*²³

- Research highlights that M&E practices that are **linked to ongoing professional development** or **coaching initiatives** can have a positive impact on sustaining the quality of ECEC provision over long periods of time.²⁴ Several studies indicate that **staff self-evaluation** can be an effective tool for professional development as it enhances practitioners' reflectivity and collegial work.²⁵ Along the same line, research findings seem to indicate that **curriculum monitoring initiatives** are particularly beneficial when combined with staff training or coaching support.²⁶
- **All relevant stakeholders should be involved in monitoring processes as part of a democratic endeavour.** As quality evaluation results from an *ongoing process* – during which the educational practices implemented in early childhood settings are continuously reflected upon and revised by practitioners in order to better respond to the *needs and potentialities of children, families and local communities* – **parents** and other relevant **community stakeholders** are to be **engaged in decision-making processes.**²⁷
 - To provide a *comprehensive picture of children's needs and potentialities*, information from the ECEC setting should be complemented by information from **parents** (home environment) and from **other professionals working in local community services**. If nurtured within a **reciprocal dialogue**, such collaborations produce a positive effect on the relationship between parents and professionals – as well as on inter-professional collaboration and integrated working – by providing opportunities to *develop a shared understandings of the child and to establish common educational goals.*²⁸
 - The **involvement of families in the process of quality evaluation** can contribute to greater *parental engagement to ECEC, as it increases parents' awareness of the educational role of early childhood services and improves their sense of ownership*. At the same time, involving families in quality evaluation processes allows practitioners to gain a *better understanding of families' expectations*. Therefore, evaluation practices can become an **opportunity to foster collective discussion of educational themes starting**

²³Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (2017) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

²⁴Eurofound (2015) *Early childhood care: Working conditions, training and quality of services: A systematic review*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions.

Taguma, M. and Litjens, I. (2013) *Literature Review on Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care: Directorate for Education and Skills.

²⁵Sheridan, S., Williams, P. and Sandberg, A. (2013) Systematic quality-work in preschool, *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45 (1), 123–150.

Picchio, M., Di Giandomenico, I., & Musatti, T. (2014) The use of documentation in a participatory system of evaluation. *Early Years*, 34(2), 133-145.

²⁶Bleach, J. (2013) Using action research to support quality early years practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(3), 370–379.

Pirard, F., & Barbier, J. M. (2012) Accompaniment and quality in childcare services: the emergence of a culture of professionalization. *Early Years*, 32(2), 171-182.

Fonsén, E., & Vlasov, J. (2017). Leading pedagogical quality in the context of Finnish childcare. In *Nordic social pedagogical approach to early years* (pp. 253-265). Springer.

²⁷Children in Europe (2016) 'Principle 7—Evaluation: Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent'. In: Moss, P. (Ed.) *Young children and their services: developing a European approach. A Children in Europe Policy paper*. https://www.lefuret.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/EDE/Principe7.pdf?_t=1585665834

²⁸Vandekerckhove, A., Hulpia, H., Huttova, J., Peeters, J., Dumitru, D., Ivan, C., Rezmuvcs, S., Volen, E., and Makarevičienė, A. (2019) *The role and place of ECEC in integrated working, benefitting vulnerable groups such as Roma*, NESET report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NESET_AR1_20182-1.pdf

from concrete matters (ie. the experience of their children in the ECEC setting)²⁹. In this context, *families' diverse values and beliefs can be made explicit and taken into account in educational decision-making processes enacted within the settings*: this stimulates practitioners to improve their practices in a dialogical perspective that **recognise and values diversity**.³⁰

- The involvement of **researchers** could also be beneficial for the development of context-sensitive evaluation tools as well as for sustaining practitioners' teams in the process of collegial reflection and improvement of educational and care practices.³¹
- **Monitoring and evaluation procedures need to be designed within participatory and consultative processes** as different stakeholders might have divergent perceptions of what should be monitored and how.³² For example, when designing M&E systems, policymakers, researchers, pedagogical leaders/coordinators and ECEC practitioners may disagree on what aspects of quality should be monitored, how frequently, in what manner, and for which purpose. But even in currently operating M&E systems, the ongoing development of existing approaches through negotiation of procedures and objectives remains of fundamental relevance.³³
- The practice adopted for **monitoring children's development** should **holistically address multiple domains in a way which is respectful of children's learning strategies** – according to their age – and of their **diverse languages and backgrounds**. In designing approaches for monitoring children's development, the notion of 'child outcomes' – and how and by whom they are defined – should be openly discussed among stakeholders, including families. Cultural and linguistic biases must be explicitly considered as they might affect the process of defining quality and desired child outcomes driving evaluation.³⁴ In this sense research shows that *close cooperation between ECEC centres, families and community members with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds* can contribute to development of M&E processes and tools which are more *culturally relevant*.³⁵ Research also shows that defining outcomes only in terms of 'school readiness' or cognitive skills within a standardised product-oriented approach should be avoided³⁶. Rather, focusing on aspects such as children's *well-being, independence, sense of identity and belonging, quality of relationships with peers, and engagement in their learning* within a **process-oriented**

²⁹ Children in Europe (2016) 'Principle 7—Evaluation: Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent'. In: Moss, P. (Ed.) *Young children and their services: developing a European approach. A Children in Europe Policy paper*. <https://www.lefuret.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/EDE/Principe7.pdf? t=1585665834>

³⁰ Transatlantic Forum for Inclusive Early Years (2014) *Recommendations to support good and effective monitoring and evaluation of ECEC policy and provision for children from low-income and migrant families*: <https://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/transatlantic-forum-on-inclusive-early-years/tfey-4-amsterdam>

³¹ Pastori, G., & Pagani, V. (2017). Is validation always valid? Cross-cultural complexities of standard-based instruments migrating out of their context. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(5), 682-697.

³² van Nieuwenhuyzen, C. (2017) 'The road to monitoring Quality in Childcare settings for babies and toddlers in Flanders.' In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

Sheridan, S. (2017) 'Preschool Quality, Governance and systematic Quality work in a Swedish Preschool context.' In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

³³ Požar Matijašič, N. & Lunder Verlič, S. (2017) 'Quality Assessment and Assurance in Preschool Education in Slovenia'. In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

³⁴ Transatlantic Forum for Inclusive Early Years (2014) *Recommendations to support good and effective monitoring and evaluation of ECEC policy and provision for children from low-income and migrant families*: <https://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/transatlantic-forum-on-inclusive-early-years/tfey-4-amsterdam>

³⁵ Idem.

³⁶ Taguma, M. and Litjens, I. (2013) *Literature Review on Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care: Directorate for Education and Skills.

approach are considered more appropriate for **monitoring children's experiences in ECEC settings**, as it allow practitioners to value children's capabilities and learning strategies for sustaining the development of their potentialities.³⁷

- Adopting **M&E practices that seriously take into account children's experiences and perspectives** has also proven to be beneficial for improving the quality of pedagogical practices enacted in ECEC settings.³⁸ Particularly important in this respect are monitoring tools and participatory evaluation procedures that allow opportunities to listen to children's voices as well as be explicit about their learning and socialising experiences within ECEC settings. Child-centred participatory action-research methodologies³⁹ as well as pedagogical documentation⁴⁰ and narrative practices⁴¹ can give a meaningful account of children's everyday life in ECEC settings. These can be considered as powerful tools for bringing children's perspectives to the core of ECEC quality improvement.

In addition, the findings of a literature review recently conducted as part of the OECD project 'Policy Review: Quality beyond Regulations in Early Childhood Education and Care'⁴² seems to suggest that **M&E systems which are designed and implemented solely with a focus on structural quality characteristics** - i.e. *assessing the compliance with regulations and standards* (staff:child ratio, group size, staff qualification) - **may be less effective at fostering and improving the quality of ECEC provision than M&E systems which are designed and implemented with a focus on both structural and process quality characteristics** - i.e. *assessing the quality of staff-child interactions within a developmentally-oriented perspective*. Therefore, if children's right to high quality ECEC is to be guaranteed, **equal importance should be attached** to monitoring practices aimed at assessing the **compliance with regulations and standards** and to evaluation practices aimed at **improving the pedagogical quality of provision** as well as the **quality of children's learning and socialising experiences** within ECEC settings.

As the **quality of children's learning and socialising experiences** within early childhood settings seems to depend on a **complex interaction between features which unfold at different levels of the ECEC system** – including the level of **policy**, the **centre level**, the **classroom level** and the **staff level**⁴³ – a **comprehensive and participatory M&E approach** seems to be needed for the quality of ECEC provision to be enhanced at system level. These

³⁷ Declercq, B., Laevers, F., & Moons, J. (2013) *A process-oriented monitoring system for Early Years*. Leuven: CEGO Publishers.
Formosinho, J. & Formosinho, J. (2016) 'The search for a holistic approach to evaluation'. In: Formosinho, J., & Pascal, C. (Eds.) *Assessment and evaluation for transformation in early childhood*. London: Routledge.

³⁸Schwartz, P. (2017) 'Monitoring Quality in Danish ECEC settings with special focus on including children's perspectives by adapting the Mosaic approach in a pedagogical context.' In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Haring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

Pihlainen, K., Reunamo, J., Sajaniemi, N., & Kärmä, E. (2020). Children's negative experiences as a part of quality evaluation in early childhood education and care. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-12. / Pihlainen, K., Reunamo, J., & Kärmä, E. (2019). Lapset varhaiskasvatuksen arvioijina–Lasten mukavina pitämät asiat päiväkodissa ja perhepäivähoidossa. [The children as evaluators of early childhood education in day care centres and family day care]. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 8(1), 121-142.

³⁹Clark, A. & Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to Young Children: the Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.

⁴⁰Picchio, M., Giovannini, D., Mayer, S., & Musatti, T. (2012). Documentation and analysis of children's experience: An ongoing collegial activity for early childhood professionals. *Early Years*, 32(2), 159-170.

Oliveira-Formosinho, J., and Sousa, J. (2019) 'Developing Pedagogic Documentation: Children and Educators Learning the Narrative Mode.' In: Formosinho J. & Peeters, J. (Eds) *Understanding Pedagogic Documentation in Early Childhood Education*, London: Routledge

⁴¹Požar Matijašič, N. & Lunder Verlič, S. (2017) 'Quality Assessment and Assurance in Preschool Education in Slovenia'. In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Haring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

⁴²OECD (2018) *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264085145-en>

⁴³Idem

findings are in line with previous research demonstrating that a '**competent system**' is a necessary precondition for a guarantee of high quality ECEC provision to all children.⁴⁴ Given this, successful strategies for quality assurance and development seem to require a cohesive and systematic approach leading to increased 'competence' among all the stakeholders involved in ECEC throughout the various levels of the ECEC system – including policymakers, pedagogical leaders, practitioners and local communities.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Peeters, J., Lazzari, A. & Van Laere, K. (2011) *CoRe: Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fc7e05f4-30b9-480a-82a7-8afd99b7a723>

⁴⁵Children in Europe (2016) 'Principle 7—Evaluation: Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent'. In: Moss, P. (Ed.) *Young children and their services: developing a European approach* A Children in Europe Policy paper.

3. How are monitoring and evaluation processes designed and implemented?

3.1. Purposes of Monitoring & Evaluation

Institutions in charge of organising, funding and delivering ECEC might approach M&E of systems and services with a wide range of different objectives. While these purposes may vary from country to country, most of them can be divided between those aimed at **quality control** and those aimed at **quality improvement**.

Purposes of ECEC M&E that are focused on **quality control** include the following:

- Ensuring that ECEC provision **complies with national standards, rules and regulations** in exchange for **accreditation**, which may also result in **entitlement** to receipt of **public subsidies**, especially in contexts where ECEC systems are characterised by 'mixed' (public, private, and independent) provision;
- Supporting **public accountability** and/or **transparency** by publishing results of evaluations, and thus making ECEC centres **answerable to parents and the wider communities they serve**;
- Implementing **sanctions** or **rewards** in cases where M&E are linked to funding mechanisms – **rewards** may include **additional funding or recognition**, whereas **sanctions** may include **interventions, financial resource limitations**, or in rare cases the **closure** of the centre.

Purposes of M&E of ECEC that place stronger emphasis on **quality improvement** may resemble the following:

- Ensuring **consistency of quality** in ECEC systems that are characterised by 'mixed' provision (e.g. public, private, and independent provision), with a view to **achieving equality of educational opportunities**;
- Getting an **overview of strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement at system level**, which can then guide the mobilisation of **targeted support and funding mechanisms**;
- Supporting **quality improvement** in ECEC provision at **centre level**, by **improving pedagogical practices** in ECEC settings (e.g. delivery of the curriculum, process quality) and **supporting staffs' continual professional development** (e.g. coaching and in-service training).

In addition to quality control and quality improvement, the process of monitoring and evaluating ECEC quality may be used to **foster democratic participation** of children and parents in decision-making processes around the management and functioning of ECEC centres as well as the wider ECEC systems of which they are a part.

M&E can also fulfil the purpose of creating and disseminating potentially impactful information on the quality of ECEC services for policymakers, researchers, advocates and more. For example, the monitoring and evaluation of ECEC quality may **inform policymakers** on the effectiveness of their ECEC policies at system level, and enable a thorough investigation into whether and how ECEC policies should be changed to better achieve their objectives. Furthermore, M&E can **benefit advocacy** by making the results of monitoring and evaluation available to stakeholders, researchers, parents and the media,

thus **enabling them to hold policymakers accountable** and increasing their agency and voice in mobilising public initiatives and sustaining advocacy processes.

At the system level, the existence of M&E processes does not automatically suggest that M&E processes will fulfil all or any of the purposes and objectives examined above. As described in the OECD publication [‘Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experiences’](#) (2020), the ways in which results of monitoring and evaluation are used can vary significantly across countries, with governance systems being divided between those that engage in the *symbolic*, *conceptual*, or *instrumental* use of evaluation results (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 – Categories of use for results of policy evaluation by policymakers

Symbolic Use	Where policy evaluation is used justify or legitimate existing policies or positions rather than to look for areas of improvement.
Conceptual Use	Where policy evaluation leads to an improved understanding or change in the conception of the policy being evaluated.
Instrumental Use	Where policy evaluation recommendations inform decision-making and lead to changes in the policies or interventions being evaluated

Source: ‘Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experiences’. *OECD Public Governance Reviews* (2020).

3.2. Levels of M&E Processes

Monitoring and Evaluation processes can be undertaken at different levels of governance within the the ECEC system. They can be organised at the central/national level, at the regional and/or local level, and at the level of the ECEC centres/settings/providers. In practice, this means that some countries may have a common approach to M&E of ECEC quality that applies to all ECEC centres, while in others M&E processes may be governed by regional or local authorities. Additionally, there may be M&E tools and processes in some countries that are governed by individual ECEC centres.

Countries may have a combination of national, regional/local, and/or centre-level processes and tools for measuring quality in ECEC. However, while these level of governance are mutually influential, they may not always be aligned and well-coordinated across levels. There is therefore a critical need for balance and alignment between centralised and decentralised M&E mechanisms, in order to ensure that ECEC quality is coherently monitored, evaluated, and approved across all levels of the system.

3.3. Data Collection instruments and methods

A range of different instruments and methods can be deployed to generate data in support of monitoring & evaluation processes. These could include:

- **National statistics and stakeholders’ surveys** (quantitative data);
- **External/Internal evaluations protocols**, for example pre-defined (eg. ECERS, CLASS) and/or purposefully developed sets of instruments (eg. MemoQ -Measuring

and Monitoring Quality in childcare settings for babies and toddlers⁴⁶ and SiCs -Self-evaluation Instrument for Care Settings)⁴⁷. In the European context, rating scales are generally used within self-evaluation initiatives to support collegial reflectivity within practitioners' teams rather than to assess ECEC services' performance. In this sense, rating scales are mostly used from the perspective of 'formative assessment' for sustaining practitioners' teams in the process of analysing and reviewing their practice in order to improve the quality of ECEC centres.

- **Narrative assessment**, which is recognised to be 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, artefacts, excerpts from children's comments and/or conversations), feedback from staff, and staff planning or examples of practice. Portfolios or storybooks of children's development are well-known examples of narrative assessment practices commonly used at ECEC centre level.⁴⁸
- **Participatory methods** for recording the perspective of children in different daily situations in the ECEC setting, for example guided interviews with children or the mosaic approach.⁴⁹ These methods for collecting data feeding into evaluation processes were developed with the intent to include the voices of young children 'as experts of their own lives' in the explorations of the quality of ECEC services⁵⁰. Although such methods are more rarely adopted, the systematic inclusion of children's perspectives has great potential for increasing professional learning within practitioners' teams and thus for sustaining quality improvement in ECEC settings in areas that are crucial to children's well-being and learning opportunities, including the potential for increased parental engagement.⁵¹
- **Pedagogical documentation**, which is the representation of practices by a variety of expressive means to make children's learning processes visible.⁵² As a method to collect data feeding into evaluation processes, pedagogical documentation draws attention to the specific role played by ECEC professionals, who are committed to documenting practices so that they may be subject to reflection and discussion by a wider audience.⁵³ In this sense, pedagogical documentation is seen not only as a powerful tool that enables involved stakeholders to base their interpretations and

⁴⁶ van Nieuwenhuyzen, C. (2017) 'The road to monitoring Quality in Childcare settings for babies and toddlers in Flanders' In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute. More updated references to MemoQ sets of instruments can be retrieved here: www.kindengezin.be/memoq/default.jsp

⁴⁷ Laevers, F. (2017) 'How are children doing in ECEC? Monitoring Quality within a process-oriented approach'. In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

⁴⁸ OECD (2015) *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en>

⁴⁹ Clark, A. & Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to Young Children: the Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau. Pascal, C., & Bertram, T. (2017) 'Participatory methods for assessment and evaluation.' In: Formosinho, J., & Pascal, C. (Eds.) *Assessment and Evaluation for Transformation in Early Childhood*. London: Routledge.

⁵⁰ Langsted, O. (1994) 'Looking at quality from the child's perspective.' In Moss, P. and Pence, A. (Eds.) *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New approaches to defining quality*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

⁵¹ Schwartz, P. (2017) 'Monitoring Quality in Danish ECEC settings with special focus on including children's perspectives by adapting the Mosaic approach in a pedagogical context.' In: Klinkhammer, N., Schäfer, B., Harring, D., Gwinner, A. (Eds.) *Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Approaches and experiences from selected countries*. Munich: German Youth Institute.

⁵² Rinaldi, C. (2005). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. London: Routledge.

⁵³ Children in Europe (2016) 'Principle 7—Evaluation: Evaluation: participatory, democratic and transparent'. In: Moss, P. (Ed.) *Young children and their services: developing a European approach A Children in Europe Policy paper*. <https://www.lefuret.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/EDE/Principe7.pdf? t=1585665834>

judgements on real, concrete practices, but also as a way to make the evaluation process transparent for everybody. Using pedagogical documentation to collect data feeding into evaluation processes can contribute to improving the quality of ECEC services by enhancing practitioners' reflectivity at team level, while at the same time fostering parents' participation. As it facilitates a co-constructive approach to the production of knowledge by giving voice and visibility to children's learning experiences, pedagogical documentation is also considered a valuable resource for sustaining transformative practices in ongoing dialogue with children.⁵⁴

3.4. Processes and procedures of monitoring & evaluating quality of ECEC centres

Different processes and procedures are adopted to monitor and evaluate the quality of ECEC centres. These include:

- **ECEC System Monitoring**, which focuses on pre-defined (national) structural quality benchmarks (e.g. number and age of children in ECEC, group structure, number and qualification of ECEC professionals), including *regular inspections*, based upon binding standards or targets, and defined by Law and Regulations
- **External evaluation**, which is a quality control process that seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on the quality of the provision and suggest ways to improve practice. In contrast to internal evaluation, it is carried out by individuals or teams who report to a local, regional or top-level education authority and who are not directly involved in the activities of the setting being evaluated.
- **Internal evaluation**, which is a quality-control process that seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on overall quality, and suggest ways to improve practice or provision. In contrast to external evaluation, it is performed primarily by staff members of the setting by using self-evaluation tools.

3.5. Connection to Quality Improvement Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation practices can be translated into improvements in ECEC quality by connecting them to the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the use of data for undertaking follow-up actions, such as:

- **Targeting additional support** (funding, extra-staff, pedagogical guidance) toward areas that are most in need of improvement;
- Conducting **appreciative and developmentally-oriented inspections** as opposed to controlling inspections;
- Systematically ensuring opportunities for **continuing professional development which address weaknesses** among ECEC centre staff, as well as pedagogical guidance to support reflection and improvement of practices at the level of each setting.

While quality monitoring and evaluation processes can be undertaken using a combination of top-down 'controlling' approaches and bottom-up 'supporting' approaches, the evidence

⁵⁴Formosinho, J., & Pascal, C. (Eds.) (2017) *Assessment and evaluation for transformation in early childhood*. London: Routledge.

analysed in the NESET report '[Governing quality Early Childhood Education and Care in a global crisis: first lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic](#)' (2021)⁵⁵ indicates that the supportive element of monitoring proved to be especially useful in sustaining ECEC teams' ability to review and improve their practice during the pandemic crisis and beyond. In those contexts where a systemic support infrastructure was in place to combine quality M&E procedures with pedagogical guidance (i.e. the Berlin Länder in Germany and the region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy), ECEC centres were more successful in re-adapting their practice in light of constantly-changing scenarios without losing sight of their pedagogical goals. In other contexts, where M&E procedures were mostly carried out in the form of controlling inspections (e.g. the Flemish community in Belgium), short external audits were temporarily suspended and replaced by 'supporting visits.' According to the inspectors consulted for the study, the primary aim of such visits was to stimulate reflection and awareness among preschool teams concerning the impact of the crisis on children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. From the lessons learned in the case studies examined, the following recommendation was developed within the report:

Policy guideline 4.1: *Investing in a monitoring infrastructure that systematically supports ECEC centres and teams in the process of pedagogical planning, evaluation and the review of educational practices is paramount, and preferable to the use of external processes of control during times of crisis.*

⁵⁵ Van Laere, K., Sharmahd, N., Lazzari, A., Serapioni, M., Brajčević, S., Engdahl, I., Heimgaertner, H., Lambert, L., Hulpia, H. (2021). 'Governing quality Early Childhood Education and Care in a global crisis: first lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic', *NESET report*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

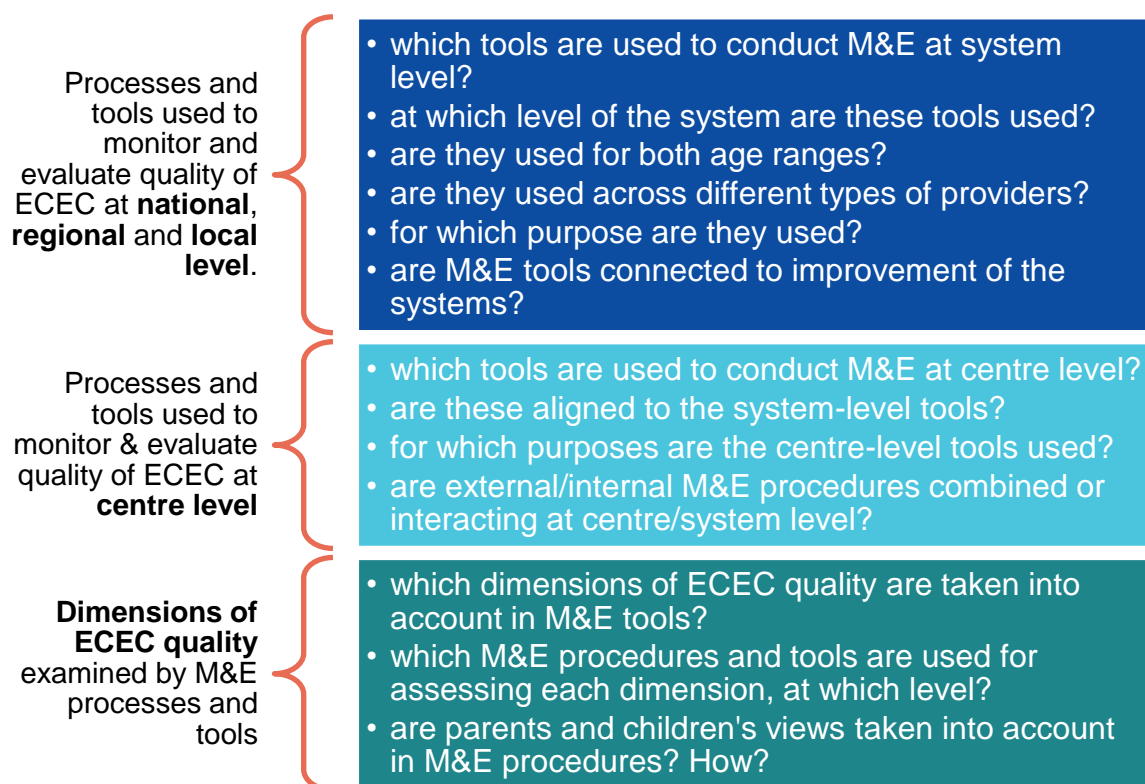
4. How to improve monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC

4.1. A preliminary overview of questions

To support the discussions of the ECEC WG on monitoring and evaluation of quality in ECEC, a first step was to identify the wide range of questions and issues to be explored. This helped to identify the main questions to be discussed by the ECEC Working Group to support national decision-makers in establishing efficient M&E processes.

For each topic, preliminary information on existing M&E policies and practices was gathered by drawing on the Eurydice report '*Key data on ECEC in Europe*' (2019 edition), with the understanding that some of it may need to be updated in the course of the WG's work.

Overview of questions



4.1.1. Processes and tools used to monitor and evaluate quality of ECEC provision at national, regional and local level

Which tools are used in EU Member States (MS) to conduct M&E at system level?

The extent to which EU MS have regulations and mandatory processes in place for monitoring and evaluating their ECEC provision at the system level varies widely from country to country. The most common system level tools are **inspections** and **external evaluations**, conducted by external professionals from centralised quality-assurance institutions or bodies. However, there is significant variation across EU MS regarding the

extent to which these system level procedures are regulated, mandatory, and implemented in conjunction with National Curricular Frameworks, as well as the types of specific tools that are used.

The extent to which system-level monitoring and evaluation processes are **mandatory and regulated in terms of methodology and frequency** varies significantly from country to country. While in some countries external evaluations are conducted at fixed periods, ranging from more than once in a year to once every few years, in others external inspections are rare and only conducted in response to complaints.

System-level monitoring and evaluation processes in EU Member States are often aided by established **National Curricular Frameworks for ECEC**, which outline pedagogical principles, learning areas and developmental objectives of relevance for young children and therefore function to establish a **shared definition of pedagogical quality** among ECEC settings.

In almost all EU MS where national curricula are in place, they are intended not to be replicated word-for-word but instead to provide a pedagogical guideline and foundation from which ECEC centres can build their own tailored and centre-specific learning programmes. However, there is some variation in the extent to which adhering to the national curricular frameworks is mandatory for ECEC centres across each MS. While some countries explicitly state that national curricula exist only to provide pedagogical advice to centres and parents, others require ECEC centres to design their learning programmes around the national curriculum and include assessments of curriculum implementation as part of their monitoring and evaluation activities. In some cases, the learning programmes of ECEC centres are also required to receive approval from regional authorities prior to their implementation.

Among the majority of EU Member States that do regulate system-level monitoring and evaluation processes of their ECEC provision, a wide range of **monitoring tools** are deployed by system-level monitoring and evaluation bodies including **announced and unannounced inspections, reviews of documentation, questionnaires, self-evaluations, consultations with parents and children**, and **interviews**. Several countries use mixed-methods approaches, for example by conducting assessments with teams of trained experts using a combination of teacher observations, reviews of documents, and interviews with children, parents, and staff. Some centres are assessed for their health and safety, group size, number and qualification level of the staff, using a combination of survey questionnaires, observations, checklists, and interviews.

Some EU MS opt to use **prescribed and standardised tools** in their system-level assessments of ECEC provision, thus enabling the collection of comparable data across ECEC settings.

At which level of the system are these tools used?

Tools and procedures for monitoring or evaluating ECEC are often **organised across multiple levels**, including both **centralised national-level processes** and **de-centralised regional or municipal processes**. In several countries, ECEC M&E processes are devolved to the regional and local authorities, who are entirely responsible for designing M&E processes and have full autonomy over the tools that are used and the ways in which results are processed and followed-up.

Some countries also organise their monitoring and evaluation of ECEC provision through a **combination of synchronised national, regional, and local processes**. For example, some countries may use a combination of less-frequent external inspections by national-level authorities, and more frequent checks by local or regional authorities. In some other countries, local education authorities are responsible for overseeing kindergartens and preschools unless they identify cases in which ECEC providers do not comply with the legal requirements, in response to which municipal authorities and education authorities will generally get involved.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ How can the different levels of responsibility (national / regional / territorial / of the single settings) for data collection and quantitative and qualitative monitoring be connected?
- ▶ How can tools and processes to improve coordination between different educational administrations and stakeholders be designed?
- ▶ How clear are the different roles and responsibilities, and should this be regulated?

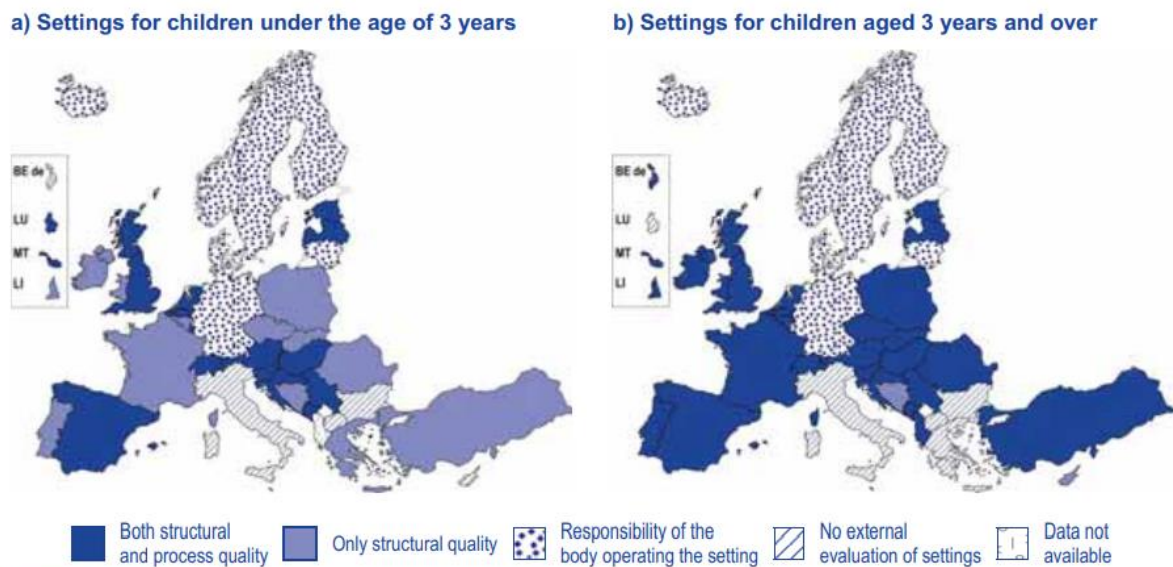
Are they used in both segments of the sector (e.g. under-3 and over-3)?

In many EU MS, **mandatory system-level M&E processes** are **limited to ECEC service providers targeting the ‘pre-school’ (i.e. aged 3 and over) segment of the ECEC sector**, potentially due to the increased emphasis on ‘school readiness’ and smooth transitions into primary school as the children enter kindergartens/preschools. Some countries opt to conduct more frequent and comprehensive inspections of infant-toddler centres, however these tend to be driven mostly by concerns for younger children’s health and safety, rather than by concerns for their well-being and development.

ECEC services for under-3s are generally **regulated by National Curricular Frameworks** to a **lesser extent than ECEC services for preschool-aged children**. Several countries that have official curricular requirements in place for ECEC centres servicing pre-school children do not have centralised curricular frameworks to set minimum standards and define pedagogical quality for children under the age of 3.

Figure 2 highlights the differences of regulations governing M&E processes for settings welcoming children under or over 3, as they were at the time of reporting in 2019.

Figure 2 – Main focus of external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/2019⁵⁶



Source: Eurydice.

Eurydice also highlights that *differences in the scope of external evaluation in ECEC settings are, in turn, often related to the type of body responsible for the external evaluation of settings (see Figure 3)*. When an educational inspectorate or another ministerial department responsible for educational evaluation at higher levels of education (such as primary education) carries out the external evaluation of ECEC settings, attention is usually paid to *how well the setting supports the learning process (process quality)*. However, when the external evaluation of settings is assured by public bodies dealing with family, social affairs or youth, which are not responsible for evaluating schools at higher levels of education, it is *more often concerned with compliance with norms and standards (structural quality)*.

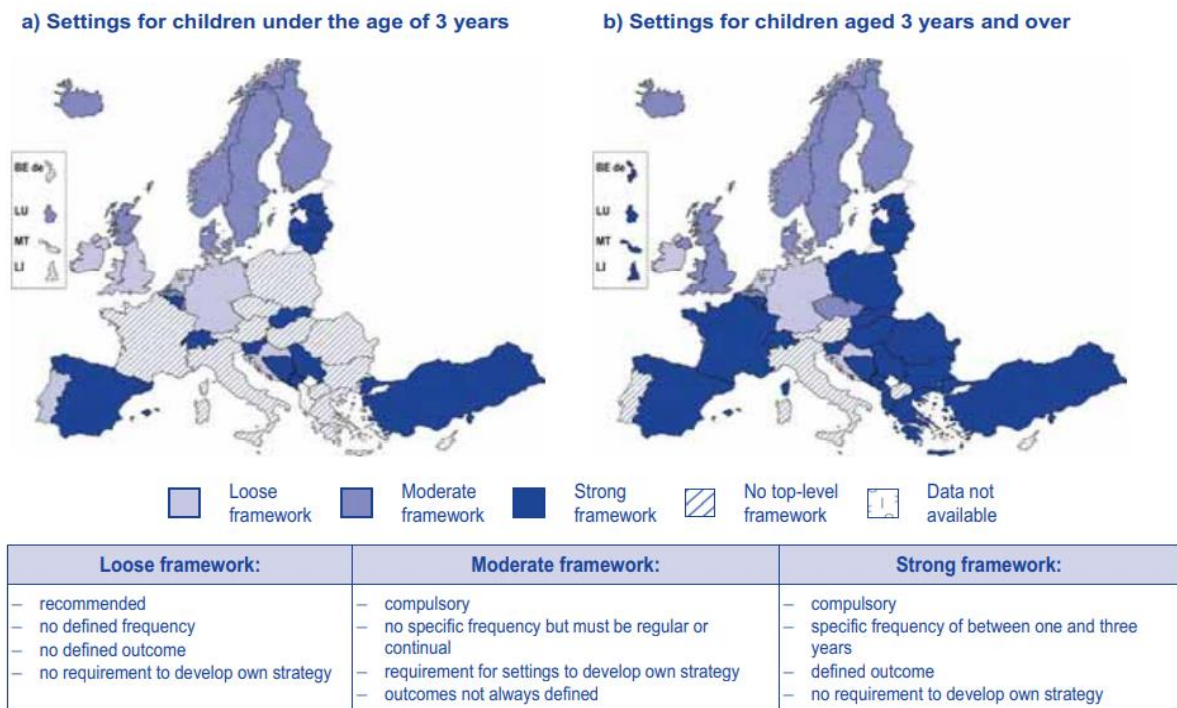
⁵⁶ Please note: the information in this figure was accurate at the time of publication in 2018/2019.

Figure 3 – External evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings for children under the age of 3: types of evaluation body and main focus, 2018/2019⁵⁷



National guidance to ECEC centres for their internal evaluation may also vary according to the age range of children they welcome, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Top-level framework for the internal evaluation of ECEC settings, 2018/2019⁵⁸



⁵⁷ Please note: the information in this figure was accurate at the time of publication in 2018/2019.

⁵⁸ Please note: the information in this figure was accurate at the time of publication in 2018/2019.

Are they used across different types of providers (e.g. public, private subsidised, and private unsubsidised provision?)

There is also variation in the degree to which Member States' monitoring and evaluation mechanisms **cover all ECEC settings country-wide**. In some countries it is mandatory for ECEC service providers to undergo accreditation, monitoring and inspection regardless of their status as a public, private, or independent institution. In others, however, quality control mechanisms only apply to ECEC centres that receive public funding. To increase the share of quality-controlled provision, some countries make the receipt of state subsidies conditional on the agreement to undergo specific quality checks and adhere to certain minimum requirements, including for private nurseries.

For which purposes are they used (inspection/external evaluation, accreditation leading to a public funding mechanism, quality improvement, public accountability)?

Inspection and **quality assurance** are some of the most common purposes of the M&E tools used to assess ECEC centres, mainly due to the vulnerability of the target end-users and the extensive health and safety considerations involved when providing services to them.

However, several countries also used the monitoring and evaluation activities to publicise the results of the inspections and/or external evaluations of ECEC centres in the interest of **transparency** and **public accountability**. In some countries, evaluation reports of individual ECEC centre inspections are always made public, whereas in others the individual results are only publicised if shortcomings are identified. In contrast, some countries only publish outcomes of ECEC inspections in an aggregated and synthesised format to prevent any conclusions from being drawn about individual ECEC centres.

Furthermore, in several EU MS a major role of system-level M&E mechanisms is to provide **accreditation** to ECEC centres, both initially and on an ongoing basis. In some countries, ECEC centres must be officially licensed and approved within a fixed number of years following their establishment. Furthermore, several countries require that ECEC centres undergo regular external evaluations at fixed intervals in order to renew or maintain their accreditation.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ What range of stakeholders are relevant to monitoring and evaluation, and how can monitoring and evaluation systems and outputs be enhanced to ensure relevant information and learning is available for those different stakeholders (e.g. not just policy-makers at both national and local levels, and ECEC service providers, but also parents, tax-payers, researchers, social partners, etc.)?

Are M&E tools connected to improvement of systems?

In many EU MS, the link between M&E and improvement of systems is unclear. However, there are several cases in which **external assessments** are **closely linked to obligatory follow-ups** to **monitor and improve quality**. In some countries, ECEC centres can only renew their accreditation if they meet specific quality-improvement objectives laid out in the results of their previous evaluations. Furthermore, some countries require the authorities responsible for monitoring ECEC centres to analyse the evaluations and draw bespoke recommendations for each centre on how to improve the quality of their services. These may

or may not be followed by subsequent inspections to review the extent to which ECEC centres have complied with agreed targets for quality improvement.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ How can service-level monitoring/evaluation results/indicators be used effectively to inform national policy?
- ▶ How can monitoring and evaluation of services be linked with delivery of quality supports for services (e.g. through mechanisms by which negative findings on quality of a service trigger intensive quality supports for the service)?
- ▶ How can service-level monitoring/evaluation results/indicators be linked with funding of services (e.g. mechanisms by which measures of service quality affect levels of funding for services, either to incentivise higher quality provision, or to support quality improvement for lower quality services (using either measures of quality inputs or quality outcomes))?

4.1.2. Processes and tools used to monitor and evaluate quality of ECEC provision at centre level

Which tools are used in EU MS to conduct M&E at centre level?

Centre-level tools are present in the Monitoring and Evaluation procedures of several EU MS and generally include self-evaluation and internal evaluation measures to assess indicators of process quality and structural quality. These include the **pedagogical environment**, the extent of **participation with parents**, the level of **teamwork** among staff, the **leadership quality** of the management, and the way in which the **finances** of the ECEC centre are managed. The specific data collection methods that are used in centre-level assessments and self-evaluations generally include **checklists**, **interviews with staff and parents**, **observations of children**, and **reviews of documentation**.

In several EU MS, these process and structural quality indicators are assessed through **centre-level self-evaluations by ECEC staff members**. In some countries, kindergartens are expected to develop their own evaluation systems provided they adhere to some basic requirements specified in the national curriculum. The responsibility for evaluating the pedagogical approaches of the centre may fall under the responsibility of the ECEC centre head, and there may be substantial autonomy in the systems they develop for quality management.

In contrast, some countries require that centre-level process and structural quality indicators are measured using **standardised tools**. In some cases, tools have been developed for use not only by inspectors, but also as self-evaluation instruments to support ECEC providers in reflecting on the quality of their pedagogical practices, thus resulting in more comparable data.

Child-specific output measures are also covered in several MS. These evaluations are conducted through a range of data collection methods including **child observations**, **checklists** and **assessments**, and they are generally not for the purpose of ECEC quality monitoring, but rather used to identify each individual child's specific needs, thus facilitating tailoring of their learning and developmental goals through collaboration with parents. In few countries, these assessments are referred to as 'maturity tests' or 'School Readiness

Certificates', and they are used to help guide decisions on whether to enrol the child in primary education.

Are these aligned to the system-level tools (local/regional/national?)

The degree of alignment between centre-level and system-level tools varies widely across EU MS, with some centre-level M&E procedures being driven by the ECEC centre's own initiatives and others being implemented as one supplementary dimension of a wider M&E process, integrating both internal and external assessments.

In several MS, centre-level tools are an integral part of **a broader M&E process that is implemented by external inspectors**. For instance, the results of self-evaluations of centre staff may be collated by national-level agencies or institutions, who may in some countries be directly involved in follow-up actions including the provision of additional funding, support or intervention.

ECEC providers in several countries are also expected to **conduct self-evaluations at their own initiative** and **make their reports available for inclusion in evaluation reports alongside external measures**. In some countries, self-evaluation procedures can be developed by the ECEC centres themselves or included in external evaluations conducted by school inspectorates. These arrangements enable a holistic approach in which the findings of centre-level self-evaluations and external evaluations can be reviewed and analysed in totality.

Additionally, some EU MS allow ECEC settings to **select and design their own bespoke centre-level self-evaluation tools**, as long as they adhere to the basic requirements laid out in the national curriculum. Such approaches result in evaluations that are heterogeneous, but highly-tailored and responsive to the needs and particularities of each ECEC centre.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ How can bridges be built across the methods and content of instruments in split systems in order to have continuity, in view of a smooth transition?

For which purposes are the centre-level tools used (external/internal evaluation, quality improvement, public accountability)?

Despite the extent to which centre-level tools are sometimes integrated alongside system-level tools in ECEC M&E procedures, centre-level M&E tools generally appear to serve a different purpose than system-level tools. While system-level M&E tools tend to place more emphasis on quality control, inspection, and accreditation, **centre-level tools** generally focus more on **quality control, process quality improvement, and supporting positive child outcomes**.

Self-evaluations conducted by ECEC setting staff, for instance, are often deployed for the purpose of **internal quality checks and ongoing quality improvement**. In some countries, ECEC centres are required to formally review their pedagogical plans in order to re-confirm whether the everyday activities and environment still adhere to the goals of the learning plans. In others, self-evaluations are conducted not only to appraise centres' performance over the previous assessment period, but also to draw up new development plans to guide their progress over the subsequent assessment period.

Furthermore, centre-level monitoring and evaluation of **children’s language and development** is generally conducted in order to react efficiently to children’s needs and mobilise services in support of their development, thus reinforcing the **process quality** of the ECEC centres. In several countries, children in ECEC centres undergo screenings to assess their **development** and ensure early diagnosis of potential physical or psychosocial problems. **Language screening** is also a common practice in some MS, which enables the early identification of language delays and allows sufficient time to provide children in need with targeted language support.

In some EU MS, **child assessments are obligatory** and may involve **standardised testing**. In some cases, assessments of kindergarten children are a legislative requirement, and children’s health data and emotional, social, intellectual, language and physical development are evaluated regularly.

Other MS opt **not to mandate or standardise procedures for assessing children**, and instead allow ECEC centres **autonomy** and **discretion** in deciding how to assess children’s progress and achievements. In some countries, for example, child monitoring is decidedly non-comparative and does not emphasise fixed standards of achievement, instead functioning to identify emerging problems in children at an early stage and facilitate early intervention. Notably, some countries legally mandate ECEC centres to keep documentary evidence of children’s activities and progress, however the entries are confidential and strictly for the use of staff and parents.

Some tools are also aimed at assessing **school readiness** towards the end of a child’s time in ECEC. In some cases, children are given a ‘school readiness’ certification which can be passed on to the child’s first primary school teacher.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

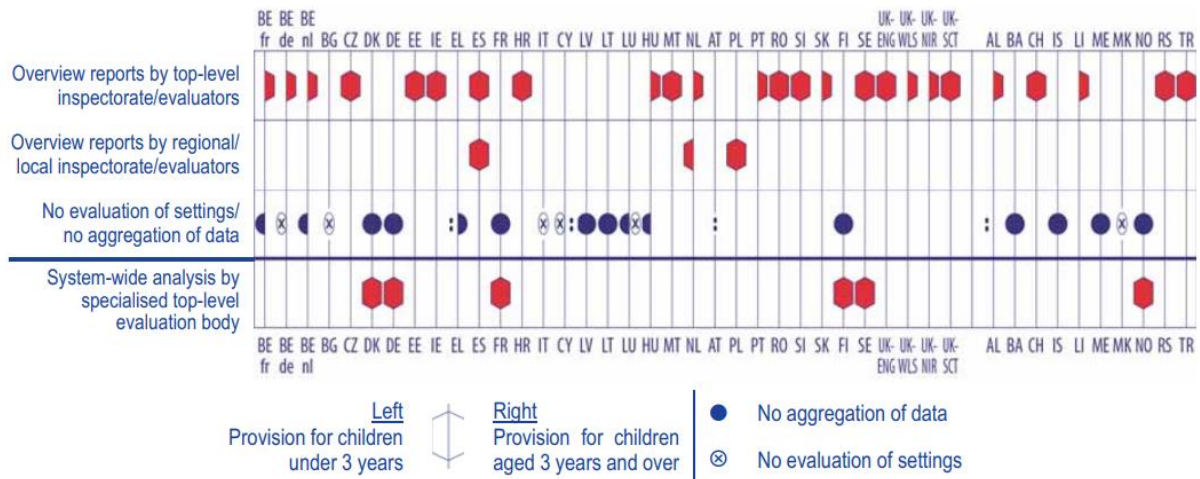
- ▶ How do external evaluators check that individual settings support children’s learning and how is the learning process improved following that process?
- ▶ How is internal evaluation integrated in to the functioning and daily practices of ECEC settings as a continuous and autonomous process, and how does it contribute to the improvement of the quality of educational practice?

Are external/internal M&E procedures combined or interacting at centre/system level? Or do individual centres opt to undergo M&E according to their own tools?

In a majority of EU MS, internal and external M&E procedures are **closely linked**, **allowing a holistic view of each ECEC centre’s structural quality, process quality, and child-related indicators**. As indicated in the 2019 Eurydice report of key data on ECEC in Europe (Figure 5), mechanisms to ensure that evaluation evidence from the centre-level is aggregated at the system level are fairly common throughout EU MS.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Pg 133

Figure 5 – Monitoring of the ECEC system: use of aggregated findings from the evaluation of centre-based settings and other system-wide analysis, 2018/19⁶⁰



Source: Eurydice.

In some countries, internal self-evaluations are mandatory for ECEC centres, with reports being submitted to national and/or local authorities. In other EU MS, however, internal and external M&E procedures are not linked through structural and/or mandatory mechanisms. Centre-level self-evaluations are, in some contexts, not nationally regulated and vary significantly from municipality to municipality, while also being optional for ECEC centres to participate in. Some countries provide indicative guidelines for conducting internal and external evaluations, however ECEC centres have autonomy in selecting their self-assessment approaches and deciding their frequency.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ How can self-evaluation be linked with external evaluation/inspection of services?
- ▶ How can service-level monitoring results be linked to system-level monitoring of quality?
- ▶ How can the settings be involved in the evaluation/self-evaluation?

4.1.3. Dimensions of ECEC quality examined by M&E Processes and tools

Which dimensions of ECEC quality are taken into account in M&E tools?

Across EU MS, monitoring and evaluation tools and processes assess a range of dimensions of ECEC quality including **physical** and **environmental elements**, **operational aspects**, **structural quality**, **process quality**, and **child-related elements**.

Physical and environmental elements refer to the **safety** and **cleanliness** of the ECEC centre's **indoor** and **outdoor environments**, whereas **operational aspects** refer to the **financial** and **administrative management** of the ECEC centre. These aspects are typically examined through inspections of ECEC centres by external evaluators for the purpose of quality checks and accreditation.

⁶⁰ Please note: the information in this figure was accurate at the time of publication in 2018/2019.

Structural quality indicators refer to aspects relating to the **work environment** of the ECEC centre, such as the **staff-to-child ratios**, the level of **teamwork** among staff, their **qualifications**, and the **group sizes** across classrooms. Other centre-level workplace indicators such as **leadership quality**, **working hours**, and **opportunities for continuous professional development** are also sometimes examined.

Process quality indicators refer to those that encapsulate children's day-to-day experiences in ECEC settings, and in particular the physical, emotional, social and instructional aspects of their activities and interactions with peers and teachers. The **pedagogical approach** and degree of **parent participation** in ECEC centres are two process quality indicators that are typically covered in M&E tools across EU MS. For example, ECEC centres in some countries assess parent involvement as one of the indicators of ECEC quality, and pedagogical teams are encouraged to reflect on the level of cooperation between staff and parents.

The **Child-related outcomes** that are covered in M&E systems across EU MS generally include children's **physical and socio-emotional development**, **learning outcomes**, and **language capabilities**. Yet while these indicators generally have an established place in the M&E processes of ECEC centres in several countries, such dimensions are rarely treated as an indicator of ECEC Quality: instead, they are typically used as indicators of children's developmental needs. More specifically, observations of children's outcomes are used (as described in the sections above) as means for screening and identifying emergent problems at an early stage, thus ensuring that early support and intervention is possible. Standardised language testing at various ages, for example, is compulsory in several countries, however the purpose of the results is less to publicise and compare the scores of children across different ECEC settings, and more to enforce formal follow-up mechanisms such as additional language support.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ How can an integrated and balanced approach be ensured for the monitoring/evaluation of both the care and education aspects of ECEC?
- ▶ How can confusion be avoided between monitoring the quality of the system and the children's assessment with testing system?
- ▶ What are the critical success factors (and caveats) of the implementation of normed/standardized (high impact) tests at a young age (-6 years)? What added value does a program-oriented approach to parts of the curriculum add to otherwise development-oriented/experience-oriented/integrated guidance of young children (-6 years)? What are the critical success factors for the introduction of a program-oriented part?
- ▶ How can monitoring and evaluation of the National curriculum be implemented?

Which M&E procedures and tools are used for assessing each dimensions, at which level?

Many dimensions of ECEC quality are assessed at **both** the **system level** and the **centre level**. While Inspections of **operational** aspects (e.g. financial and administrative management) and **environmental** aspects (such as the hygiene, safety, and overall condition of indoor and outdoor spaces) in an ECEC centre are mostly conducted by external evaluators in order to provide vital quality checks, in some MS ECEC centres are also required to reflect on these elements in their self-evaluations. In some countries, ECEC

centres are asked to reflect on their material and financial resources and encouraged to comment on the availability of the material resources that they need.

Similarly, **structural quality indicators** relating to the working environment and conditions of ECEC centres can also be evaluated at the centre-level via self-evaluations, as well as the system-level via mandatory and centrally-organised inspections and certification programmes. For example, ECEC self-evaluation reports in several countries include information about the staff and their continuing professional development, as well as their relations with the community and the level of teamwork and workplace satisfaction among staff.

Process quality indicators can also be covered both by system- and centre-level monitoring and evaluation tools. For example, self-evaluations of ECEC centres in some countries include items on the learning environment of the children, the extent of parental involvement, the extent to which staff members respond to their individual needs, the administered educational activities and projects, and the cooperation between parents and staff. In other countries, process quality indicators are assessed at both levels, with external inspections using rating scales to assess relationships between staff and parents, and self-evaluations requiring ECEC centres to reflect upon the quality of teaching and learning within each centre.

In contrast to other ECEC quality dimensions, **child-related outcomes** are largely monitored and evaluated at the centre-level, most likely due to the time-intensive process required to assess children's development and the advantageous position that ECEC staff inhabit to do so.

The proposal for a European Quality Framework from 2014 has been completed in 2018 with a set of proposed indicators and guiding questions⁶¹, which can serve as a basis for national/local decision makers to set up their own indicators – see Annex 1.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ What quality indicators should be used, both at service level and at system level?
- ▶ In developing tools for measuring service quality, how can internationally comparable measures be balanced with country-specific measures?
- ▶ How important is the observation of children as a way of evaluating?
- ▶ What are the best approaches for identifying which types of data are missing (e.g. child/staff ratio; data related to inclusion issues, etc.)?
- ▶ How can on-going monitoring and evaluation be supported in place of sporadic actions?
- ▶ What are the best ways to support low-qualified staff to use monitoring instruments and to implement the results, particularly while working in a situation where there is a lack of no contact time and a high staff/child ratio?
- ▶ Self-evaluation instrument can be based on a 'plan-do-check-act' circle, but staff in childcare settings often use the self-assessment tool as a checklist (once completed,

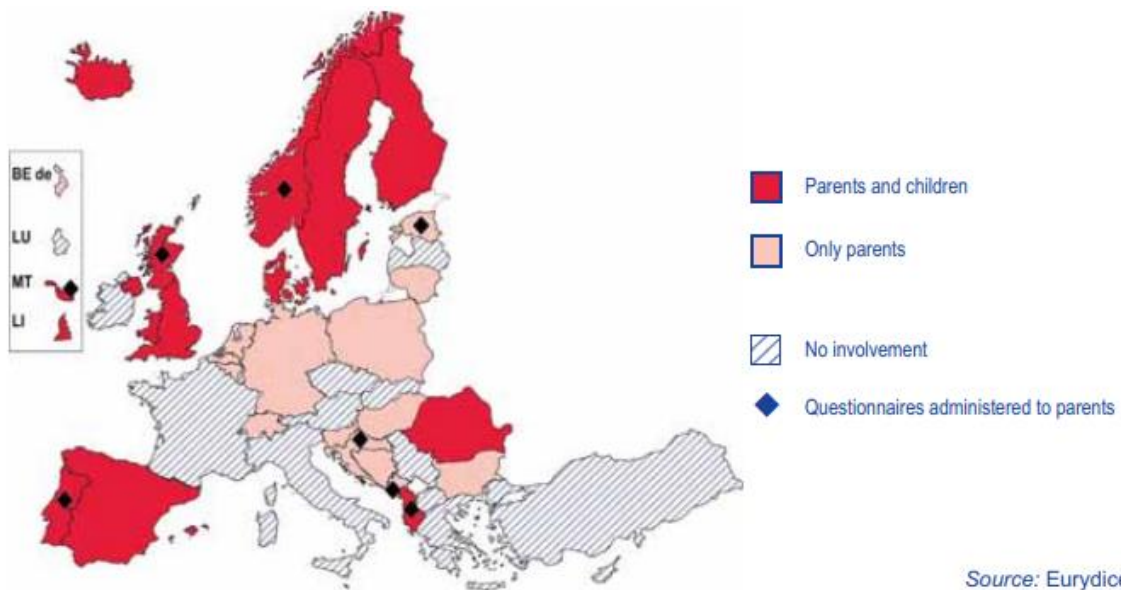
⁶¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2018) *Monitoring the quality of early childhood education and care: complementing the 2014 ECEC quality framework proposal with indicators. Recommendations from ECEC experts*. Luxembourg : EU Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/99057>

they feel that they are done). How can the use of self-evaluation to support team reflections, beyond being used as a checklist, be ensured?

Are parents' and children's views taken into account in M&E procedures? How?

The extent to which the **views of parents and children** are taken systematically into account in the M&E procedures of EU member states differs across countries and age range, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 – Involvement of parents and children in the evaluation of ECEC centre-based settings, 2018/2019⁶²



Source: Eurydice.

Involvement of parents and children in the evaluation of ECEC centre-based settings, according to age range

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	
< 3 years	Children						●					●											
	Parents			●			●	●	●			●		●					●				●
≥ 3 years	Children						●					●									●		
	Parents	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●		●					●		●	●	●
		AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK (1)	UK-SCT												
< 3 years	Children							●	●		●	(-)											
	Parents					●		●	●	●	●	(-)											
≥ 3 years	Children			●	●			●	●	●	●												
	Parents		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●				

Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Parents are consulted more frequently than children and guidelines specifying how to engage parents in ECEC evaluations are available in several MS.⁶³ Parents are often consulted in **self-evaluations conducted by ECEC centres**, and in some cases parental surveys are taken not only in self-evaluation procedures but also as part of their follow-up of children's learning and development, during which parents are closely consulted in the

⁶² Please note: the information in this figure was accurate at the time of publication in 2018/2019.

⁶³ Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, p. 129

construction of learning objectives and surveyed to examine their opinions on the work of the ECEC centre.

In addition to self-evaluations, there are some EU MS in which parents are able to take up **long-term roles in the monitoring and evaluation of ECEC centres**. Some countries allow parents to have seats on the pedagogical councils of ECEC centres and provide continuous follow-up on the process and structural quality of their centres.

In some countries, **interviews with parents and children** are included in external evaluations. As emphasised in the Eurydice 2019 report on Key Data in ECEC, children are seldom involved in evaluations of ECEC centres or systems, and few EU Member States have demonstrated a systematic consideration of children's views in their ECEC M&E procedures.⁶⁴

Notably, there are a small number of EU MS in which the consideration of children's views during M&E processes is explicitly required, either via legislation or via national curricular frameworks.

Other related questions which could be explored include:

- ▶ Which instruments and processes can be used to make children participate in evaluating quality in ECEC?

4.2. The Working group's focus

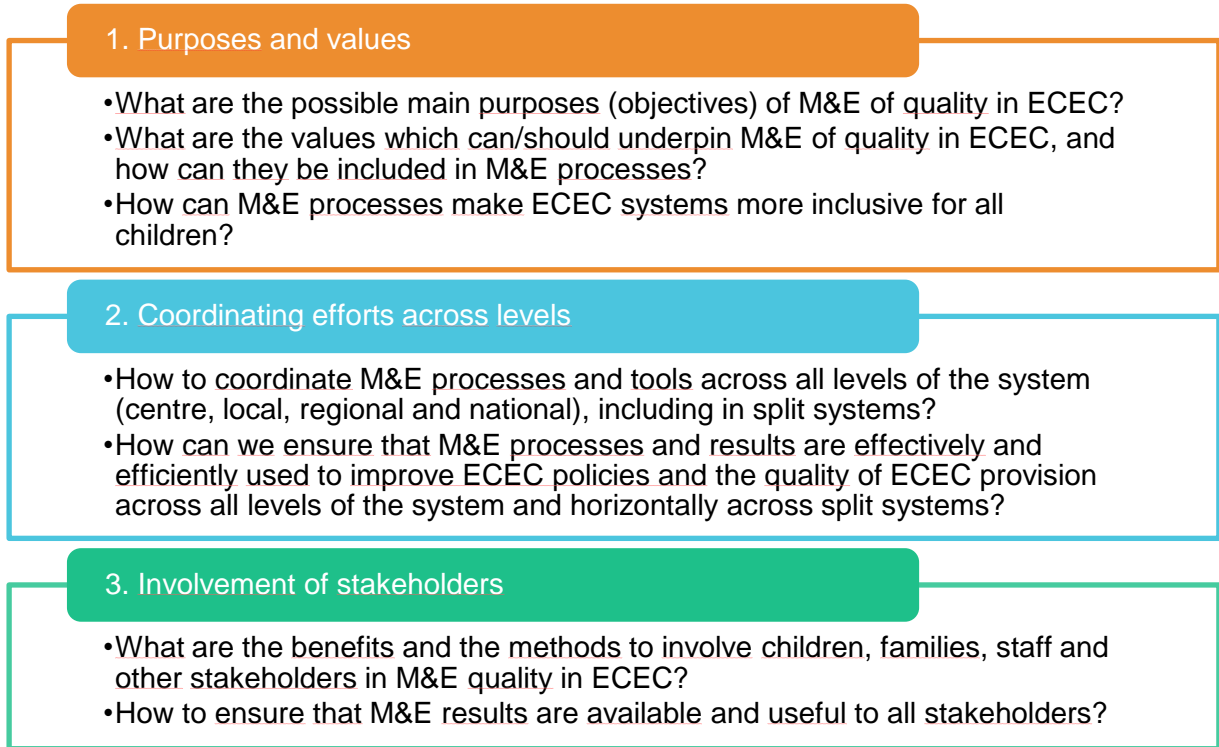
In order to structure the ECEC WG's work programme for the coming years, one of the initial tasks of the WG was to develop a set of guiding Key Questions on monitoring and evaluating quality in ECEC. The first ECEC WG meeting on 17 January 2022 featured an exploration of a wide range of possible questions that could be asked about the ways in which ECEC M&E processes are organised across participating countries, including those in the **Overview of Questions** presented under section 4.1 above. The WG then identified three main topics to be discussed:

1. **Purposes and values** – examining the values that should underpin the design of M&E processes, as well as the purposes that M&E of ECEC quality should aim to fulfil;
2. **Coordinating efforts across levels** – considering how best to ensure that M&E processes are streamlined across the local, regional, and national level;
3. **Involvement of stakeholders** – exploring the benefits of involving children, parents, and other stakeholders in M&E processes, as well as the most effective ways to do so.

During its second meeting on 17 February 2022, the WG agreed on the Key Questions which will lead its future work, as presented in Figure 7 below:

⁶⁴ Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, p. 129

Figure 7 – Key Questions of the ECEC WG Work Programme, 2021-2023



5. Next steps

Work on the Key Questions of the ECEC WG will take place over three phases spanning February 2022 to September 2023 (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8 – ECEC WG Work Programme timeline, Topics 1-3



More information on the Working group's progress will be available on the European Commission's website: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/levels/early-childhood-education-care>.

6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1 – Indicators completing the proposal for a European Quality Framework

<i>Quality statement</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Guiding questions</i>
ACCESS		
Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children	Indicator 1 - Percentage of children who have publicly funded subsidised access to ECEC.	<p>To support this it is worth considering whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the legislation pays special attention to disadvantaged children – the legislation addresses all known barriers to children’s participation in ECEC – there are reductions or free provision for children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised families – every family which is entitled to publicly funded subsidised ECEC can find a place for their child/children – the size of the public subsidy is significant.
	Indicator 2 - For parents who earn the average national income, percentage of their disposable income which is required to pay for ECEC services for one child who attends an ECEC setting for at least 30 hours per week.	<p>To support this it is worth considering the extent to which the arrangements differ between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – children under three years of age and children aged over three; – single parent families and other families; – families living in an urban and rural environment

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity	I3 - A system-level policy to encourage disadvantaged families to use ECEC services.	<p>As it is likely to lead to the answer 'yes', users of this report may wish to consider the following guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is there an agreed definition of disadvantaged families? - does the policy apply to all groups of children from disadvantaged families? - is the policy to encourage the use of ECEC services well-known? - has the policy led to an increase in the number of disadvantaged families using ECEC services? - does the policy include outreach services or other activities to encourage participation? - is there training for staff in ECEC providers to enable them to promote their services to disadvantaged families?
	I4 - Percentage of children who attend ECEC regularly.	<p>To support this it is worth considering the extent to which attendance differs between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children who are under and over three years of age - children from single parent and other families - children from families living in an urban and rural environment - boys and girls - children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised families, and other families.
WORKFORCE		
Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role	I5 - Percentage of staff working directly with children who have completed professional education relevant to their role in an ECEC setting.	<p>To support this, it is worth considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff who work with children under and over the age of three; - ECEC assistants and staff with more pedagogic responsibilities; - the breadth of the definition of staff working directly with children; - the balance between initial and continuing education/training; - whether professional development is as important as qualifications.
	I6 - Percentage of staff who receive formal support for at least their first six months at work.	<p>As this is difficult to measure, the following guiding questions may help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is there support for all new staff? - are there different arrangements for different groups of staff? - is support linked to a probationary period of employment?

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
	<p>I7 - Percentage of ECEC leaders who have completed leadership training or have a recognised, relevant leadership qualification.</p>	<p>To support this , where there is a system based on qualifications, it is worth considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what is the European Qualification Framework level of the ECEC leadership qualification(s)? - how long would it normally take to complete a ECEC leadership qualification? - is there one, or many, qualifications which could be taken by ECEC leaders? - how are ECEC leaders supported (both professionally and financially) to complete a qualification? <p>To support this , where there is a system based on training, it is worth considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how is an ECEC leader supported during the training? - what is the normal amount of time/week which is allocated to leadership training? - is training mainly 'on-the-job' or 'off-the-job'? - does the training include assessment of the leaders' skills and competences?
	<p>I8 - Percentage of ECEC staff working directly with children who have received at least three months' relevant work experience as part of their initial training programme.</p>	<p>To support this it is worth considering if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the work experience is relevant to the individual's future ECEC role - the trainee receives support during their work experience; - the work experience is assessed; - staff in the ECEC setting receive guidance and training on how to support trainees during their work experience.
<p>Supportive working conditions, including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and</p>	<p>I9 - Average salary of ECEC staff employed in the public sector (with similar qualifications to primary school teachers) as a percentage of the average salary of a primary school teacher.</p>	<p>To support this it is worth considering whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - primary school teachers and ECEC staff have similar terms and conditions of employment, security of employment and progression opportunities; - the initial qualifications of ECEC staff (covered by this pointer) and primary school teachers are similar; the entry requirements for their initial training programmes are similar; and whether they have similar responsibilities when they are employed

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
cooperation with parents	I10a - Average ratio of children to all staff working directly with children.	To support this it is worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the definition of 'working directly with children'; – the arrangements for children under and over three years of age; – whether there are rules on the size of each group of children; – whether different ratios are used to support children from disadvantaged or marginalised families, or children with special needs.
	Indicator 10b - Average ratio of children to professionally trained staff working directly with children.	To support this it is worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – whether this data is best collected through a sampling approach; – how staff use non-contact time to support their work with children; – which members of staff are included; – whether there are different arrangements for staff who work with children under and over the age of three.
CURRICULUM		
A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way	I12 – There is an official, approved or mandatory curriculum framework for ECEC.	To support this it is worth considering if there are different arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – children under and over the age of three; – settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors.
	I13 - Percentage of settings whose work with children is based on an ECEC curriculum framework.	To support this it is worth considering if the data shows different arrangements are in place for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – children under and over the age of three; – settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors.
A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice	I14 – Curriculum or other guiding documents requires staff to use feedback from children, parents and colleagues to systematically improve their practice.	To support this it is worth considering if there are different arrangements for the curriculum which is offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to children under and over the age of three; – in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
	I15 – Percentage of primary schools which are required to use a curriculum which builds on children’s experiences of learning in ECEC.	To support this it is worth considering if there are different expectations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – schools in the private and public sectors; – pre-primary and primary schools; – children who have not used ECEC services

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice	I16 - Information on the quality of the ECEC system is used as the basis for improvement.	To support this it is worth considering if there are different arrangements for ECEC provision which is offered to children under and over the age of three. It is also worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to what extent is the collection of data based on self-evaluation (or self-assessment); – whether the data collected at the provider/setting level can easily be collated at the system level to support improvements; – whether there is system-level guidance to ECEC provider/settings on what data should be collected to support improvements in quality at the system level; – whether the quality assurance system is based on using data to improve the quality of provision? – how quickly data is used to strengthen the quality of ECEC provision.
	I17 – Information on the quality of the ECEC system is publicly available.	To support this it is worth considering the type of information that is publicly available. Is information available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – on the quality of ECEC provision at the system level? – on the outcomes achieved by the ECEC system? – on an annual basis? – in a form that can be easily understood by members of the public? – in an easily-accessible on-line format? – with no charges to access the information?

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child	I18 - Percentage of ECEC settings with monitoring systems which include a focus on the best interests of the child.	To support this it is worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the frequency of the monitoring which is required; – whether monitoring is based on an internal or external process; – who is required to be involved in the monitoring; – how the views of children are taken into account in the monitoring process.
	I19 - Percentage of ECEC settings which use administrative and pedagogic data to improve the quality of their provision.	To support this it is worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – whether improvements in quality are undertaken on an annual basis; – whether the outcomes of the improvements are monitored and evaluated; – who is required to ensure that the improvements are effective; – how the improvements benefit children.

GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Clear and shared understanding of role and responsibilities, stakeholders know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations	I20 - A formal set of arrangements enables parents and partner organisations to work with ECEC settings.	To support this it is worth considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – whether the formal set of arrangements are published and easily accessible for parents, staff, partner organisations and other stakeholders; – how often the arrangements are updated; – whether the arrangements cover ECEC providers who work with children aged from birth to three, and from three to pre-primary or primary school age; – whether a narrow or broad definition of stakeholders is used – the frequency of the collaboration; – whether collaboration covers the design, delivery and monitoring of ECEC; – whether data on collaboration is collected from each ECEC setting; – how data on collaboration is collated to provide a system-level response.
Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a	I21 – Age at which there is publicly funded subsidised ECEC provision for all children (at least 15 hours per week).	To support this it is worth considering if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there is access in each part of the country e.g. in rural and urban areas; – parents have a choice about which ECEC service to use.

Quality statement	Indicator	Guiding questions
universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders	I22 – Percentage of gross domestic product spent on ECEC.	<p>To support this it is worth considering whether the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – percentage of total public funds increases each year or over a longer period; – availability of public funds is affected by changes in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the number of children in the ECEC age range; - the staff/children ratios (Pointer 10) - the training/qualifications expected from ECEC staff (Pointers 5,6 and 7)

6.2. Annex 2 – Existing Frameworks of EU Quality Indicators

	<p>Monitoring the quality of early childhood education and care</p> <p>Complementing the 2014 ECEC quality framework proposal with indicators : recommendations from ECEC experts</p> <p>https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1</p>
	<p>CARE project (H2020)</p> <p>European Framework of Quality and Wellbeing Indicators (2017)</p> <p>https://ecec-care.org</p>
	<p>European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2017) Inclusive Early Childhood Education: New Insights and Tools – Contributions from a European Study. (M. Kyriazopoulou, P. Bartolo, E. Björck-Åkesson, C. Giné and F. Bellour, eds.). Odense, Denmark.</p> <p>https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/IECE_Synthesis_Report_2017.pdf</p> <p>Inclusive Early Childhood Education Environment Self-Reflection Tool:</p> <p>https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/inclusive-early-childhood-education-environment-self-reflection-tool</p>
	<p>Guio, A-C., Frazer, H. and Marlier, E. (eds) (2021). “Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU Child Guarantee scheme including its financial foundation”, Second phase of the Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee (FSCG2): Final Report, Brussels: European Commission – Part E on ECEC (p. 64)</p> <p>https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fb5ea446-ad4e-11eb-9767-01aa75ed71a1</p>



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www.inclusivegrowth.eu/files/Output/D9.6_Framework-for-data-on-publi-services_EIND.pdf

