



The childcare gap in EU Member States



Employment,
Social Affairs
and Inclusion



In most – but not all – EU Member States, there is a period in which families with young children are unable to benefit from well-compensated childcare leave or a guaranteed (or otherwise state-supported) place in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). We refer to this period as the **childcare gap**. There is wide variation between EU Member States, from no childcare gap (in Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden, and by some estimates Estonia and Malta) to five to six years (in Lithuania, Ireland, Italy and Romania).

This policy memo offers an overview of what is known about the childcare gap, discusses policies to address the gap and reflects on how future research might build on this knowledge base. Member States might look to reduce the childcare gap by expanding childcare leave policies, ECEC provision, or a combination of the two, but this is a complex policy area with competing pressures and trade-offs.

Introduction

The concept of a ‘childcare gap’ has been used to describe the discrepancy between the demand for and provision of childcare,¹ as well as a period in which families with young children are unable to benefit from either childcare leave or a guaranteed (or otherwise state-supported) place for their child in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).^{2,3,4,5} The gap between childcare leave and ECEC (henceforth referred to as the childcare gap) matters because it shapes parents’ options, which – without state support – could be limited to private care (for those who can afford it) and/or informal care (if available). Parents for whom these options are unaffordable or inaccessible could be forced to drop out of the labour market. Women are more often affected than men, since they are more likely to drop out of the labour market or reduce their working hours when they become parents.⁶

This policy memo focuses on the childcare gap as a concept, as well as on how the concept has been operationalised in existing literature. Desk research identified three studies

that measure or quantify the childcare gap.^{7,8,9} All three reports focus on Europe and highlight wide variation between countries. There are some differences in how these studies define and measure the childcare gap, including how they define well-compensated childcare leave¹⁰ and whether they focus on a guaranteed ECEC place¹¹ or a publicly provided and/or financed place.¹²

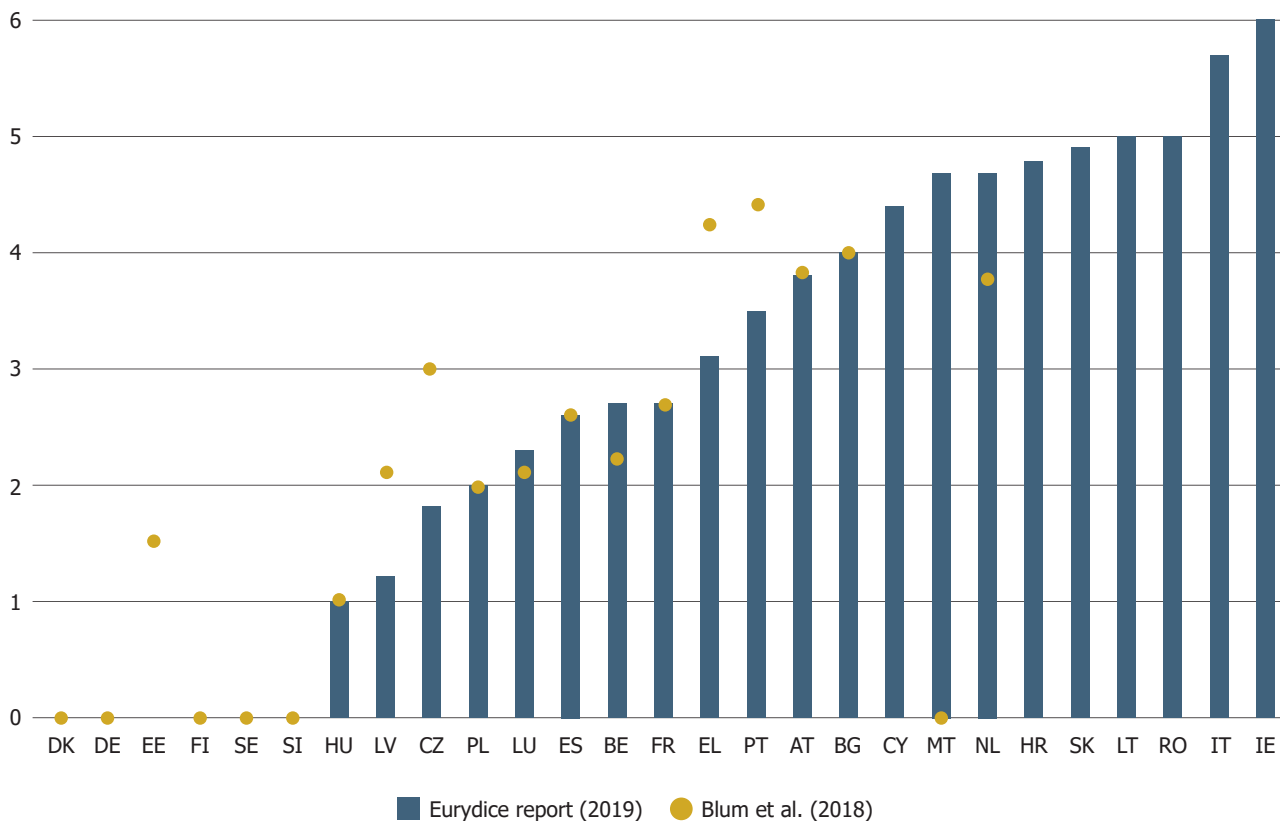
Drawing on these data,¹³ this memo offers an overview of what is known about the childcare gap, discusses policies to address the gap and reflects on how future research might further develop this knowledge base.

Comparing the childcare gap across EU Member States

There is wide variation across Member States in the length of the childcare gap, as shown in Figure 1.

Several Member States experience no childcare gap: Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, and – according to some sources (depending on the legal and

FIGURE 1. ESTIMATES OF THE CHILDCARE GAP (IN YEARS) IN EU MEMBER STATES



Notes: discrepancies in the childcare gap estimated by the two sources could be due to methodological differences.¹⁴

practical aspects taken into account) – Estonia¹⁵ and Malta.¹⁶ Discrepancies in countries identified as having no childcare gap relate to varying approaches between studies, such as whether ECEC places are guaranteed¹⁷ or publicly provided and/or financed.¹⁸

- For instance, **Lithuania** offers 20 hours of free childcare for children from less than 1 year of age, but there is no legal framework guaranteeing an ECEC place until attendance becomes compulsory at the age of 6, hence it is counted as having a long childcare gap in some sources¹⁹ but no childcare gap at all in others.²⁰
- **Ireland** and **Italy** are also noted in the literature as countries where the de facto childcare gap is shorter than the estimated gap, because provision is widely available even if there is no legal guarantee.²¹

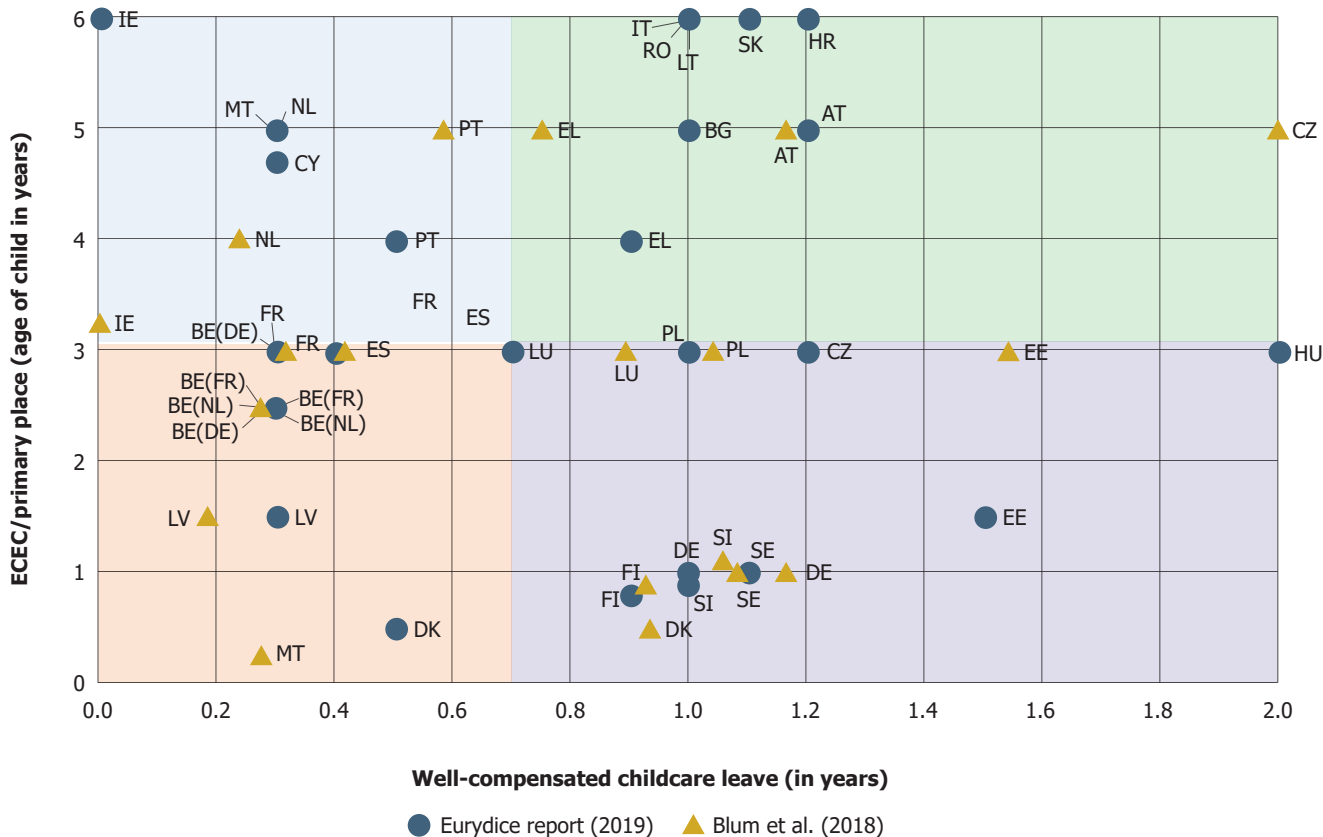
There are also discrepancies in countries that are identified as having no childcare gap in terms of how a guaranteed ECEC place is defined: either as a universal guarantee available to all families²² or subject to certain conditions.

- In the case of **Malta**, ECEC entitlement is restricted to parents in full-time employment or education; this is counted as a legal guarantee in some sources²³ but not in others.²⁴
- In the case of **Estonia**, discrepancies relate to whether the legal guarantee of an ECEC place is met in practice; some sources²⁵ adjust estimates on the grounds that shortages in provision mean that the obligation is often not met until a child is older.

There are four categories into which EU Member States fall in terms of the childcare gap

Plotting the length of childcare leave against the age at which an ECEC (or school) place is guaranteed (Figure 2), four broad groups of countries can be identified. The first two groups of Member States offer a relatively long period of well-compensated childcare leave. Well-compensated leave ranges from none in Ireland and Slovakia²⁶ to 2 years in Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic;²⁷ the EU average is just over 6 months.²⁸

FIGURE 2: WELL-COMPENSATED LEAVE AND THE AGE AT WHICH AN ECEC OR SCHOOL PLACE IS GUARANTEED



Notes: discrepancies in the childcare gap estimated by the two sources could be due to methodological differences (see European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice (2019)); some countries are mentioned twice because they appear in both sources; red lines reflect the mean from the Eurydice report (used to compute the average because the data covers all Member States).

Group 1 (located in the lower right-hand quadrant of Figure 2, shaded in purple) offers a relatively long period of leave and guarantee an ECEC place early on. In some Member States (Sweden, and by some estimates Slovenia,²⁹ Finland,³⁰ Germany³¹ and Denmark³²) there is an overlap between well-compensated childcare leave and a guaranteed place in ECEC, maximising flexibility and choice for parents in navigating the transition between home-based care and ECEC.

Group 3 of Member States (lower left-hand quadrant of Figure 2, shaded in orange) offers relatively short childcare leave but guarantee a place in ECEC early on in a child's life. Most Member States without a childcare gap offer a relatively long period of childcare leave, but the example of Denmark (6 months of childcare leave, guaranteed place in ECEC from 6 months³⁵) shows that this is not a prerequisite.

Group 2 of Member States (upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 2, shaded in green) offers a relatively long period of leave but guarantee a place in ECEC relatively late. Most Member States guarantee an ECEC place before the start of primary education, but the age at which this is guaranteed includes 4 years in Greece to 6 years in Croatia and Lithuania,³³ the EU average is around 3 years³⁴.

Group 4 of Member States (upper left-hand quadrant of Figure 2, shaded in blue) offers a relatively short period of leave and guarantee a place in ECEC (or primary education) relatively late.

A more in-depth analysis of specific Member States offers greater insight into variation across the EU in policies contributing to the childcare gap, and the complex interplay between different policies. Four Member States – Latvia,

Sweden, the Netherlands and Croatia – are selected to represent a diversity of approaches spanning the four quadrants in Figure 2. Information is drawn primarily from

the Eurydice report (2019), supplemented with other sources where available.

Examples of how well-compensated childcare leave and ECEC interact in each category



Representative of Group 3 in the lower left-hand quadrant of Figure 2 (shaded in orange), **Latvia** offers a relatively short period of well-compensated childcare leave (16 weeks, comprised solely of maternity leave) but guarantees a place in ECEC early on in a child's life (at 18 months of age). Municipalities in Latvia should ensure that all children from 18 months of age have access to a free place in the ECEC facility closest to their home.³⁶ If such a place is not available, the municipality must cover some of the costs of childcare from a private service provider.³⁷ Despite this offer, ECEC participation, particularly for children aged under 3, is lower than the EU average (28.4% compared to 34.2%³⁸) and is variable across regions (e.g. difficulties with transportation lower attendance in rural areas).³⁹ The legal entitlement to ECEC in Latvia does not stipulate a minimum number of hours, but the average number of childcare hours per week (38.9 hours per week for children aged under 3; 41.2 hours per week for children aged 3 and over) is one of the highest in the EU, and is commensurate with full-time employment.⁴⁰



Offering a relatively long period of well-compensated childcare leave (over a year) and guaranteeing a place in ECEC early on in a child's life (at 1 year of age), **Sweden** is representative of Group 1 in the lower right-hand quadrant of Figure 2 (shaded in purple). Comprised of maternity (13 weeks), paternity (13 weeks) and parental leave (30 weeks), well-compensated childcare leave is paid at almost 80% of previous salary.⁴¹ 90 days of parental leave are reserved for the mother and father respectively (the mother's quota and father's quota) and cannot be transferred to the other parent.⁴² There is an overlap of around a month between well-compensated leave and a guaranteed ECEC place.⁴³ Although an ECEC place is guaranteed from a young age (the municipality must provide a place if requested within 4 months), this is on a part-time basis (15 hours per week).⁴⁴ Despite this, the average number of weekly hours attended is higher than the EU average (31.8 hours per week for children aged under 3, and 35.2 for those aged 3 and over; the EU average is 27.4 and 29.5 hours respectively).⁴⁵ Prior to 3 years of age, ECEC is heavily subsidised with fees capped at 3% of family income.⁴⁶ Families with lower incomes or more children in ECEC pay reduced or no charges. ECEC is free of charge from 3 years of age and for younger children with special educational needs. Overall, 7% of the costs of a preschool place are financed through parent fees; the remaining 93% is paid by the municipality.⁴⁷ Over half (52.7%) of children aged under 3 attend formal childcare – considerably higher than the EU average (34.2%).⁴⁸



Representative of Group 4 in the upper left-hand quadrant of Figure 2 (shaded in blue), **the Netherlands** offers a relatively short period of well-compensated leave (17 weeks, consisting of 16 weeks of maternity leave and 1 week of paternity leave) and guarantees a place in ECEC relatively late in a child's life (at 5 years of age, when attendance becomes compulsory). In 2020, the duration of well-compensated paternity leave was extended to 5 weeks.⁴⁹ Whilst there is no legal framework guaranteeing an ECEC place prior to 5 years of age, there is financial support available for parents. Employees are reimbursed by their employer for a third of childcare costs for children under 12 (or a sixth of the cost if both parents are in employment), and the government pays an income-dependent subsidy.⁵⁰ Families are offered a free place in ECEC from the child's fourth birthday.⁵¹ Participation in ECEC for children aged 3 and under is high in the Netherlands compared to the EU average (61.6%, compared to 34.2%⁵²). However, the Netherlands stands out in having the lowest average hours of ECEC attendance of all Member States (16.7 hours for children aged under 3, compared to the EU average of 27.4; 21.6 hours for children aged three and over, compared to the EU average of 29.5) – the legal guarantee from 5 years of age does not stipulate a minimum number of hours.⁵³



Croatia is representative of Group 2 in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 2 (shaded in green) since it offers a relatively long period of well-compensated childcare leave (61 weeks, comprised of 26 weeks of maternity leave and 35 weeks of parental leave), and guarantees a place in ECEC relatively late in a child's life (at 6 years of age, at which point attendance is compulsory for a year prior to primary education).

Maternity leave is compensated at 100% of previous earnings, and mothers must take a minimum of 70 days of leave after the birth.⁵⁴ Although there is no statutory paternity leave, fathers can take parental leave compensated at 100% of previous earnings.⁵⁵ Participation in formal childcare – particularly for younger children aged under 3 – is low (15.9% for children under the age of 3, compared to the EU average of 34.2%⁵⁶). However, children who do attend formal childcare tend to do so on a full-time (or almost full-time) basis – the average number of weekly hours is 39.4 for children under 3 and 35.3 hours for children aged 3 and over.⁵⁷ There is no free childcare provision in Croatia, but fees are low⁵⁸ and the cost of childcare is rarely cited as a reason for not making use of formal childcare services.⁵⁹ However, the funding system is decentralised and childcare fees vary across regions. Some municipalities offer financial support to families whose children do not attend ECEC, which disincentivises participation.⁶⁰ Low participation in ECEC has also been linked to a lack of childcare places – priority is given to families where both parents are working, which disadvantages families with one or more unemployed adults.⁶¹

An overview of policies to address the childcare gap

This section presents an overview of research into policy decisions relating to childcare leave and ECEC, both of which can reduce the childcare gap. The literature shows that reducing the childcare gap is a complex issue: policy decisions must be reached by balancing likely benefits against potential disadvantages for children, parents, society and the economy.

Extending or improving childcare leave

This section presents an overview of the evidence on the advantages and disadvantages of extending various forms of childcare leave (studies generally focus on one type of leave rather than aggregate leave).

Under the EU Maternity Leave Directive (92/85/EEC), women have the right to a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave (including both pre- and post-natal leave), of which at least 2 weeks are compulsory. Evidence shows that longer spells of maternity leave are associated with improvements in

maternal health⁶² and longer duration of breastfeeding.⁶³ Maternity leave promotes labour market attachment (since women have an alternative to a complete withdrawal from the labour market when they have a child), but longer durations of leave are associated with reduced earnings and slower career progression,^{64,65,66} which contribute to the gender pay gap⁶⁷ and the 'motherhood penalty'.^{68,69}

Childcare leave for fathers (paternity leave or shared parental leave) strengthens the father-child relationship⁷⁰ and promotes greater paternal involvement in childrearing,⁷¹ leading to more gender equal co-parenting.⁷² Increasing the uptake of paternity and parental leave by fathers to promote a more gender-equal sharing of caring responsibilities is a key objective of the new EU Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers (2019/1158/EU).⁷³ The Directive needs to be transposed into national legislation by 2022, and a number of Member States have enhanced or expanded paternity and/or parental leave in recent years.^{74,75}

The overall weight of evidence supports offering paid leave for a period of several months and encouraging the use of leave by both parents. Recent efforts to expand childcare leave in EU Member States have more often focused on paternity leave than maternity leave,⁷⁶ perhaps reflecting concerns about the impact of long spells of (maternity) leave on earnings and career progression, as well as the potential for fathers' involvement in care to promote gender equality.

Extending or improving ECEC provision

For children aged 3 and over, attending high-quality formal childcare is associated with gains in cognitive, language and social development.⁷⁷ The gains are greatest for children from disadvantaged backgrounds,⁷⁸ meaning that ECEC can enhance life chances and reduce socio-economic inequality as assumed by the Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (2019/C 189/02).⁷⁹ Quality matters when it comes to ECEC – low-quality childcare services can have a negative impact on children's development.⁸⁰ Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be cared for in low-quality settings,⁸¹ reinforcing the need to make ECEC quality a policy priority.

Evidence on the effect of ECEC on outcomes for children younger than 3 years of age is more mixed.⁸² Some studies identify negative social and emotional outcomes for younger children, such as weaker parent-child attachment⁸³ and behavioural issues,^{84,85} although other studies find positive⁸⁶ or null⁸⁷ results. Positive effects on cognitive and language development are observed for younger children as well as older children.^{88,89} There are also wider societal and economic outcomes associated with ECEC. Investment in ECEC promotes female employment⁹⁰ and gender equality,

as outlined in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025.⁹¹ Higher employment and more gender-equal labour markets drive stronger, more inclusive economic growth.⁹²

There could be scope for Member States to reduce the childcare gap by extending their guaranteed ECEC provision to younger children. Evidence on the relationship between ECEC and child development outcomes is somewhat more mixed for children under 3 years of age, but overall the weight of evidence supports the extension of high-quality provision to children in this age group. However, there could be trade-offs between different factors, such as investing in improving the quality of ECEC provision for older children relative to extending provision to younger children.

Challenges and opportunities in policy

Policies to address the childcare gap – whether by extending childcare leave or ECEC – require substantial financial investment that could be difficult for some Member States. Particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound economic impact, Member States might find it difficult to mobilise the resources needed to reduce or eliminate the childcare gap. Moreover, there could be trade-offs between investment in different areas, such as improving ECEC quality versus widening access. From a social investment perspective,⁹³ investing in support for children and families – particularly ECEC⁹⁴ – could pay off in the long run by improving child outcomes and increasing employment rates. In light of the economic devastation wreaked by COVID-19, the impact of which is expected to be profound and long-lasting,⁹⁵ it is more important than ever to invest in policy areas that protect the vulnerable, reduce inequality and generate long-term returns to support future investment.



Reflecting on the childcare gap: strengths, limitations and areas for further research

This section reflects on the strengths, limitations and added value of the childcare gap as a concept, as well as the way in which the concept has been operationalised in existing studies.

Rather than viewing the different policies that support children and families in isolation, **the concept of the childcare gap foregrounds the interaction between different elements of state support**, and highlights the potential for families to ‘slip through the net’ if there are gaps in provision. Studies that operationalise the concept of the childcare gap and provide comparative data enable comparisons to be drawn, helping Member States to learn from the experiences of other countries. Presenting comparative data on the constituent components of the childcare gap (childcare leave and ECEC) facilitates a discussion about policies to reduce the gap, which was the focus of the previous section.

In order to operationalise the concept, **studies must develop specific measures to estimate the childcare gap**. No single measure is perfect, and measures of the childcare gap are no exception. Comparing results across different sources shows that estimates are to some extent sensitive to measurement decisions, such as whether to focus on a legal guarantee of ECEC, and if so, how to define it. In some cases (Malta and Lithuania), the estimated length of the childcare gap varies widely across sources due to methodological and measurement differences. Discrepancies such as these demonstrate that there is more to understand about the childcare gap than can be revealed by a single measure. The complexity of early years policy is highlighted by the in-depth focus on four Member States, which shows that a legal guarantee of ECEC is not always closely related to levels of participation; issues of access – availability of places, cost and hours – are key.

One limitation of current measures is that they do not fully account for the **difficulties that parents might face in accessing ECEC**. Even when the legal framework guarantees a place, parents might still struggle to access ECEC provision. In addition to a shortage of places, access might be constrained by the cost and available hours of childcare provision. Some studies focus on a guaranteed, subsidised place in ECEC;⁹⁶ however, parents with multiple children – particularly those from low-income households – might struggle to afford a subsidised place. Moreover, the childcare gap as operationalised in existing literature does not reflect the number of hours of childcare offered to parents (some sources⁹⁷ note when guaranteed provision is part-time rather than full-time). In most Member States, the number of guaranteed childcare hours falls below standard

full-time working hours.⁹⁸ This will disadvantage parents with multiple children and those from low-income households, for whom it is more difficult to pay for additional hours of childcare.

Rather than focusing on *the* childcare gap (singular), it might be appropriate to calculate a range of childcare gaps. To better understand difficulties faced by some parents, the focus could shift to the length of time between adequately compensated childcare leave and a guaranteed, *free* place in ECEC. Only a small number of Member States offer guaranteed childcare hours, free of charge, for children aged 3 or younger.⁹⁹ Another approach would be to focus on the gap between adequately compensated childcare leave and a free or subsidised *full-time* place in ECEC. This measure would shed light on barriers to full-time employment, an issue that has implications for gender equality, since women are more likely than men to reduce their working hours in response to parenthood.¹⁰⁰ Only two Member States – Romania and Malta – offer parents 30 or more hours of free childcare per week, but neither country guarantees an ECEC place to all families,¹⁰¹ hence by some estimates a comparatively long childcare gap exists. This demonstrates the importance of taking into consideration a wider range of factors in estimating childcare gaps.

Conclusion

This policy memo summarises and reflects on evidence regarding the childcare gap, defined as the period in which families are unable to benefit from well-compensated childcare leave or a guaranteed (or otherwise state supported) place in ECEC. There is wide variation across the EU in the childcare gap: some Member States provide continuous support for families by offering a guaranteed place in ECEC at the same time as (or even before) the end of well-compensated childcare leave, whereas in other countries there is a relatively long period of time in which families might find themselves without state support. Member States could look to reduce the childcare gap by extending childcare leave or ECEC provision. However, this is a complex policy area with competing pressures and trade-offs; there is no clear or uniform ‘solution’. There is value in presenting comparative data on the childcare gap, as some studies do, to illustrate different approaches taken across Member States and highlight possible policy solutions. To advance the literature and build on the existing evidence, future research might explore the gap between childcare leave and free and/or full-time ECEC provision. Rather than *the* childcare gap, in reality there are *multiple* childcare gaps, all deserving of research and policy attention.

Endnotes

- 1 Ellingsæter, A.L. and Gulbrandsen, L. 2007. 'Closing the Childcare Gap: The Interaction of Childcare Provision and Mothers' Agency in Norway'. *Journal of Social Policy* 36(4): 649–669. DOI: 10.1017/S0047279407001225.
- 2 Saraceno, C. 2011. 'Childcare needs and childcare policies: A multidimensional issue'. *Current Sociology* 59 (1): 78–96. DOI: 10.1177/0011392110385971.
- 3 Farstad, G. 2014. 'Difference and equality: Icelandic parents' division of parental leave within the context of a childcare gap'. *Community, Work & Family*. Published online. DOI: 10.1080/13668803.2014.965661.
- 4 Eydal, G.B. and Rostgaard, T. 2011. 'Gender Equality Revisited – Changes in Nordic Childcare Policies in the 2000s'. *Social Policy & Administration* 45: 161–179. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9515.2010.00762.x.
- 5 Blum, S., Koslowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P. 2018. '14th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research'. International Network on Leave Policies and Research. Retrieved 3 May 2020: https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/annual_reviews/Leave_Review_2018.pdf
- 6 Grunow, D. and Evertsson, M. (Eds). 2016. *Couples' transitions to parenthood: Analysing gender and work in Europe*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- 7 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.
- 8 Saraceno, C. 2011, 2011. 'Childcare needs and childcare policies: A multidimensional issue.' *Current Sociology*, 59 (1): 78–96. DOI: 10.1177/0011392110385971 op. cit.
- 9 Blum, S., Koslowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P et al. 2018. , op. cit. '14th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research'. International Network on Leave Policies and Research. Retrieved 3 May 2020: https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/annual_reviews/Leave_Review_2018.pdf
- 10 Saraceno (2011) focuses on 'effective leave' (duration of leave weighted according to compensation level), whereas Blum et al. (2018) and the Eurydice Report from the European Commission (2019) focus on leave compensated at a certain level of previous earnings (66% and 65% respectively).
- 11 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 12 Saraceno 2011, op. cit.
- 13 The memo draws primarily on two sources: the Eurydice Report (2019) and Blum et al. (2018), because they offer more recent estimates than Saraceno (2011).
- 14 Methodological differences between the two sources: (a) well-compensated leave is defined as 65% of previous earnings in the Eurydice report (2019) and 66% in Blum et al. (2018); (b) leave estimates by Blum et al. (2018) include leave that may be taken concurrently (e.g. maternity and paternity leave), whereas this is not the case in the Eurydice report (2019); (c) both sources focus on a guaranteed place in ECEC, but the Eurydice report (2019) also stipulates that the place should be both subsidised and universal; (d) Blum et al. (2018) adjust the legal entitlement to ECEC in countries where this obligation is not met in practice, while the Eurydice report (2019) notes that this is the case in some countries but does not factor it into calculations; (e) Blum et al. (2018) do not calculate the childcare gap for countries where there is no ECEC entitlement, whereas in the Eurydice report (2019) this is measured according to the start of primary education; (f) Blum et al. (2018) do not provide regional estimates for BE and the UK.
- 15 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 16 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
- 17 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 18 Saraceno 2011, op. cit.
- 19 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 20 Saraceno 2011, op. cit.
- 21 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 22 In the case of Malta, ECEC entitlement is restricted to parents in full-time employment or education. Sources that focus on a *universal* legal guarantee (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.) do not count this.
- 23 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 24 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
- 25 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
- 26 Estimates of well-compensated childcare leave for Slovakia range from none (Blum et al. 2018) to just over a year (in the Eurydice report, 2019). Elsewhere, Blum et al. estimate 6–6.5 months of well-paid maternity leave in Slovakia, although with a ceiling on earnings-related payment, which might be why this is not factored into estimates of the childcare gap. The Eurydice report (2019 – see Annex A) estimates 6.5 months of well-compensated maternity leave and 6.5 months of well-compensated paternity leave in Slovakia.
- 27 As well as Hungary, Blum et al. (2018) class Romania and the Czech Republic as offering 2 years of well-paid childcare leave (estimated as 1 and 1.2 years respectively in the Eurydice report, 2019). In the case of Romania, this appears to be due to a rule (treated differently in the two sources) stipulating that the amount of paid leave is reduced if the non-claiming parent does not take one month of leave in the first year. In the case of the Czech Republic, this could

- relate to reductions in the compensation level if parental leave is claimed over a period longer than 12 months, and how this is treated in calculations.
- 28 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 29 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 30 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 31 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
 - 32 Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
 - 33 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 34 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 35 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 36 Pilipa, N. 2018. 'Latvia country note', in Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
 - 37 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 38 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 39 OECD. 2016. 'Early childhood education and care in Latvia', in *Education in Latvia*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264250628-5-en>
 - 40 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 41 Duvander, A. and Haas, L. 2018. 'Sweden country note', in Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
 - 42 Duvander and Haas 2018, op. cit.
 - 43 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 44 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 45 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 46 Naumann, I., McLean, C., Kosłowski, A., Tisdall, K. and Lloyd, E. 2013. 'Early Childhood Education and Care Provision: International Review of Policy, Delivery and Funding'. Scottish Government Social Research. Retrieved 13 April 2020: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>
 - 47 Naumann et al. 2013, op. cit.
 - 48 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 49 Rijksoverheid. n.d. 'Geboorteverlof voor partners'. Retrieved 19 October 2020: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/geboorteverlof-en-partnerverlof/geboorteverlof-voor-partners>
 - 50 Naumann et al. 2013, op. cit.
 - 51 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 52 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 53 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
 - 54 Dobrotic, I. 2018. 'Croatia country note', in Blum et al. 2018, op. cit.
 - 55 Dobrotic 2018, op. cit.
 - 56 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, op. cit.
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