

Ministry of Education and Culture
Seminar on Social Inclusion and Diversity
Helsinki, September 24, 2025

The potential of ECEC in general and for newcomers in particular European policies and local possibilities



Prof. Em. Michel Vandebroek

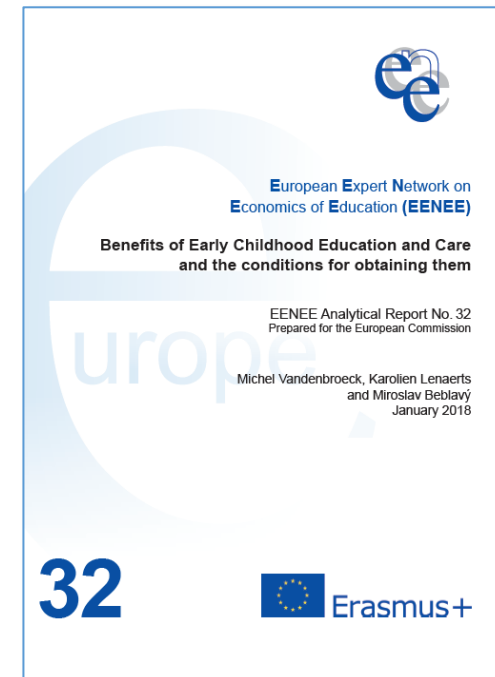
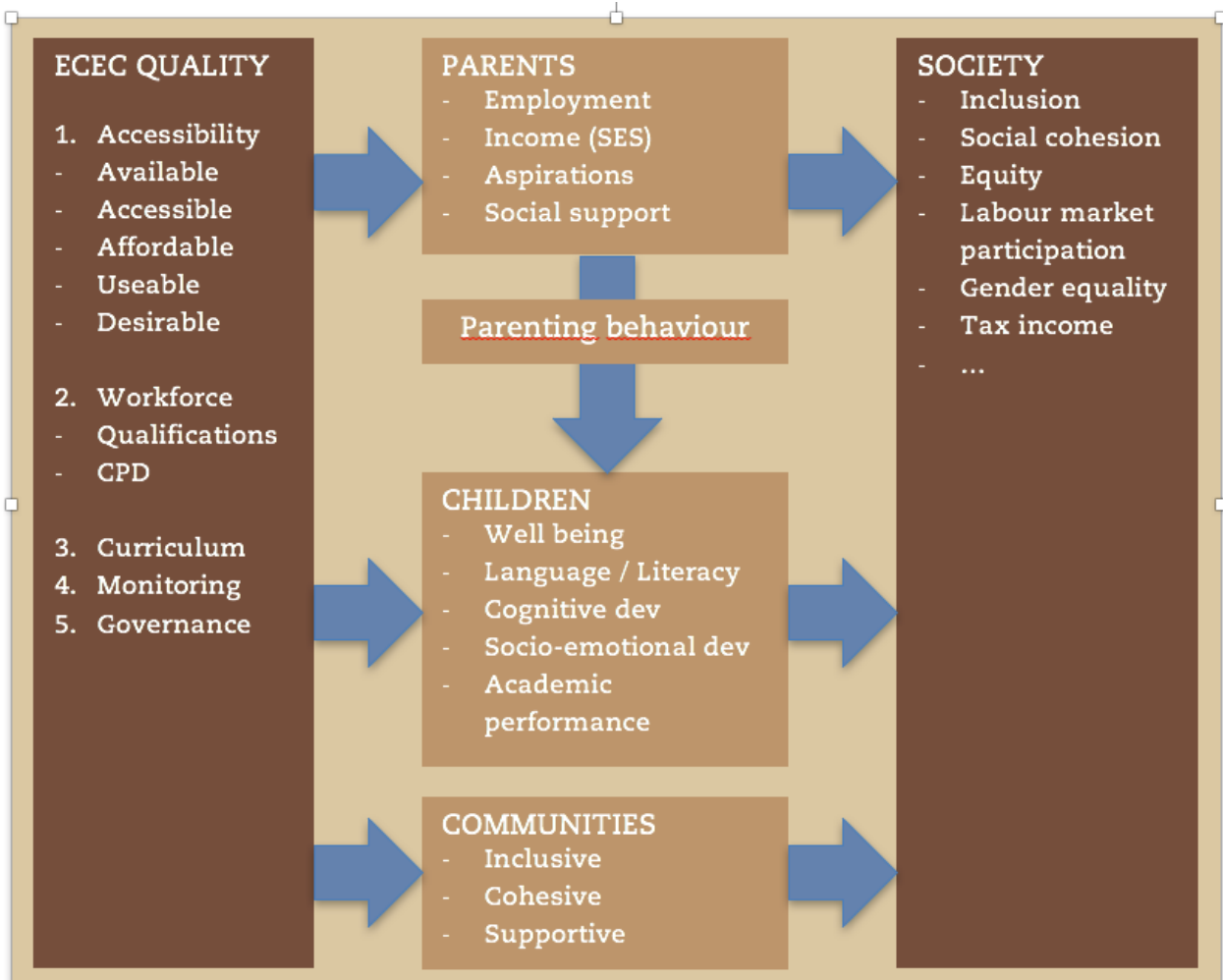
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ECEC has a unique potential

Impact on cognitive, social, emotional development and school results

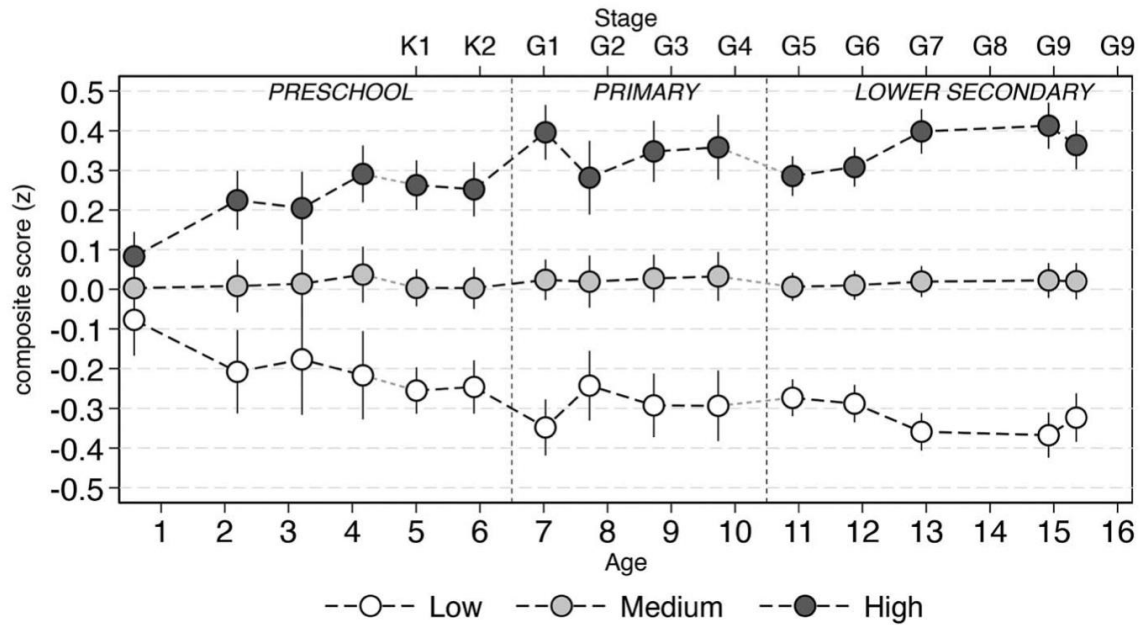
Impact on employment, parenting and on social cohesion



Vandebroeck, M., Lenaerts, K., & Beblavý, M. (2018). *Benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care and the conditions for obtaining them*. Brussels: European Expert Network on Economics of Education.

ECEC has a unique potential

Figure 1. Composite index for children of parents with low, medium, and high educational levels.

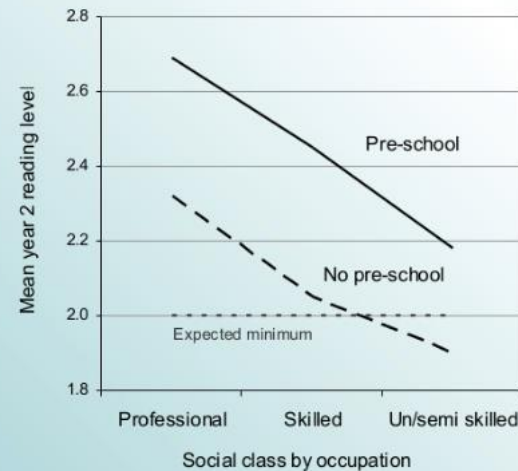


Notes: Predictions based on life stage specific regression models (see Equation 1). 95% confidence intervals for predictions shown. Stage: K = kindergarten, G = grade level in school. The long-dashed black lines connect data within the same NEPS cohort.

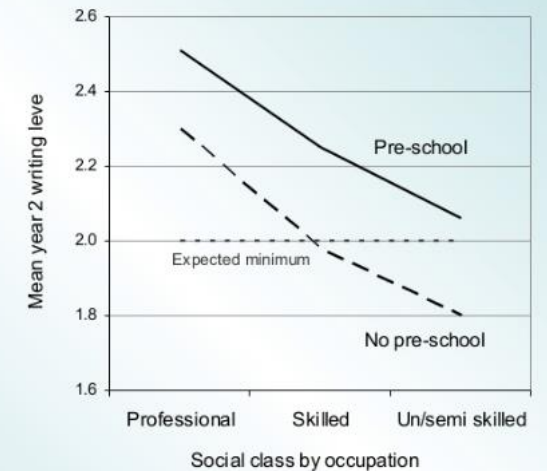
Skopek, J., & Passaretta, G. (2021). Socioeconomic inequality in children’s achievement from infancy to adolescence: The case of Germany. *Social Forces*, 100(1), 86-112.

The effect of social class and pre-school attendance on literacy at age 7

READING at key stage 1, social class and pre-school experience



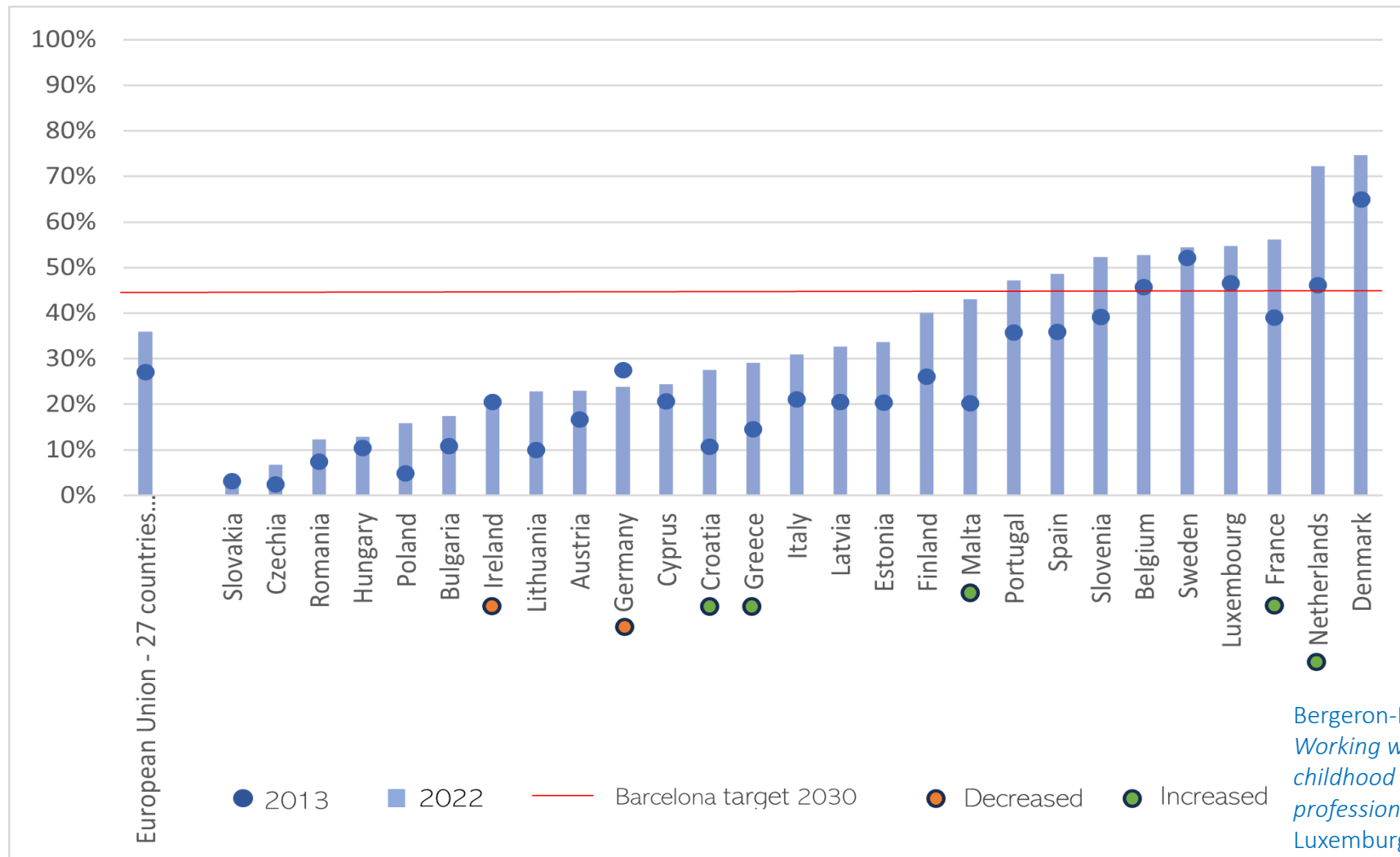
WRITING at key stage 1, social class and pre-school experience



From Sylva et al. (2004)

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of preschool education (EPPE) project: Final report*. Nottingham: DfES Publications - The Institute of Education.

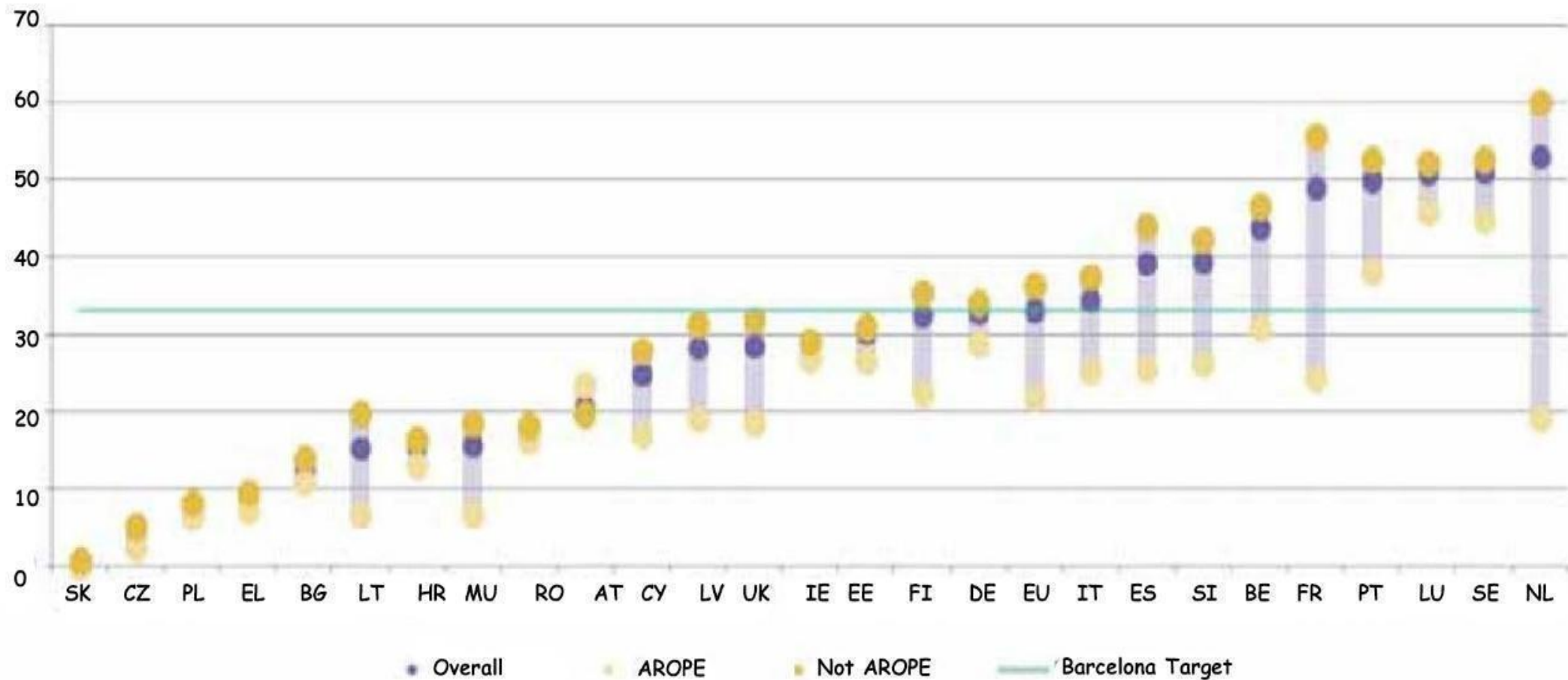
2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality: enrolment < 3 y



Bergeron-Morin, L., Peleman, B., & Hulpia, H. (2024 in press). *Working with multilingual children and families in early childhood education and care: Guidelines for continuous professional development of ECEC professionals. NESSET report.* Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union..

2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality

Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee



2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



Lack of places and **geographical disparities**

Split systems: 0-3 < 3-6

Historical legacies of gender policies

Unequal enrollment is often related to low overall enrollment

Structural policies (entitlement) > targeted policies

Waiting lists have unequal effects

Cf Henrik Daae Zachrisson
Inequality in access

Vandenbroeck, M. (2021). *Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU Child Guarantee Scheme including its financial foundation. In-depth assessment of policies/programmes/projects Free Early Childhood Education and Care*. Brussels: Social Europe / European Commission.

2 CONDITIONS: **Access** and Quality



Costs including indirect costs (transport)

Priorities

Waiting lists, priorities for working mothers (split systems)

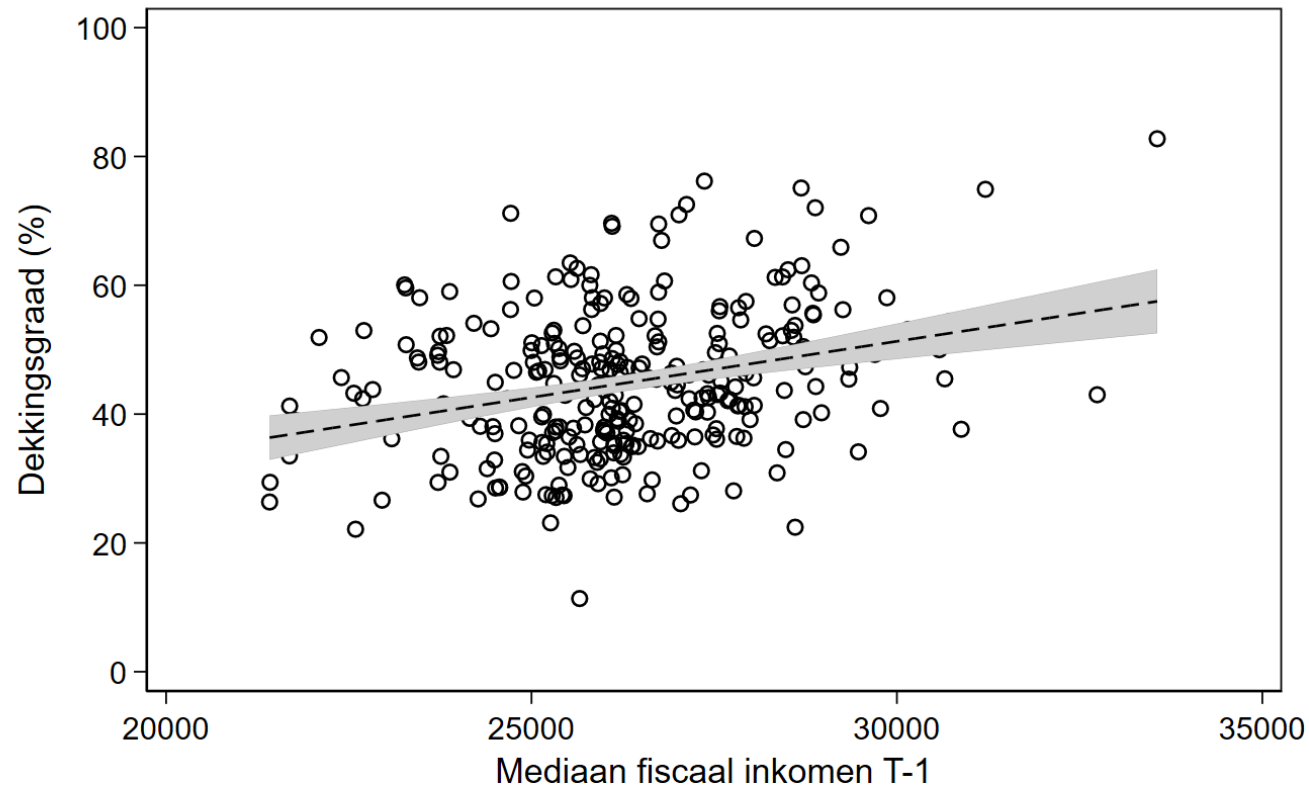
Expertise

Poverty, diversity, Roma

Flexibility

Vandenbroeck, M. (2021). *Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU Child Guarantee Scheme including its financial foundation. In-depth assessment of policies/programmes/projects Free Early Childhood Education and Care*. Brussels: Social Europe / European Commission.

2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality

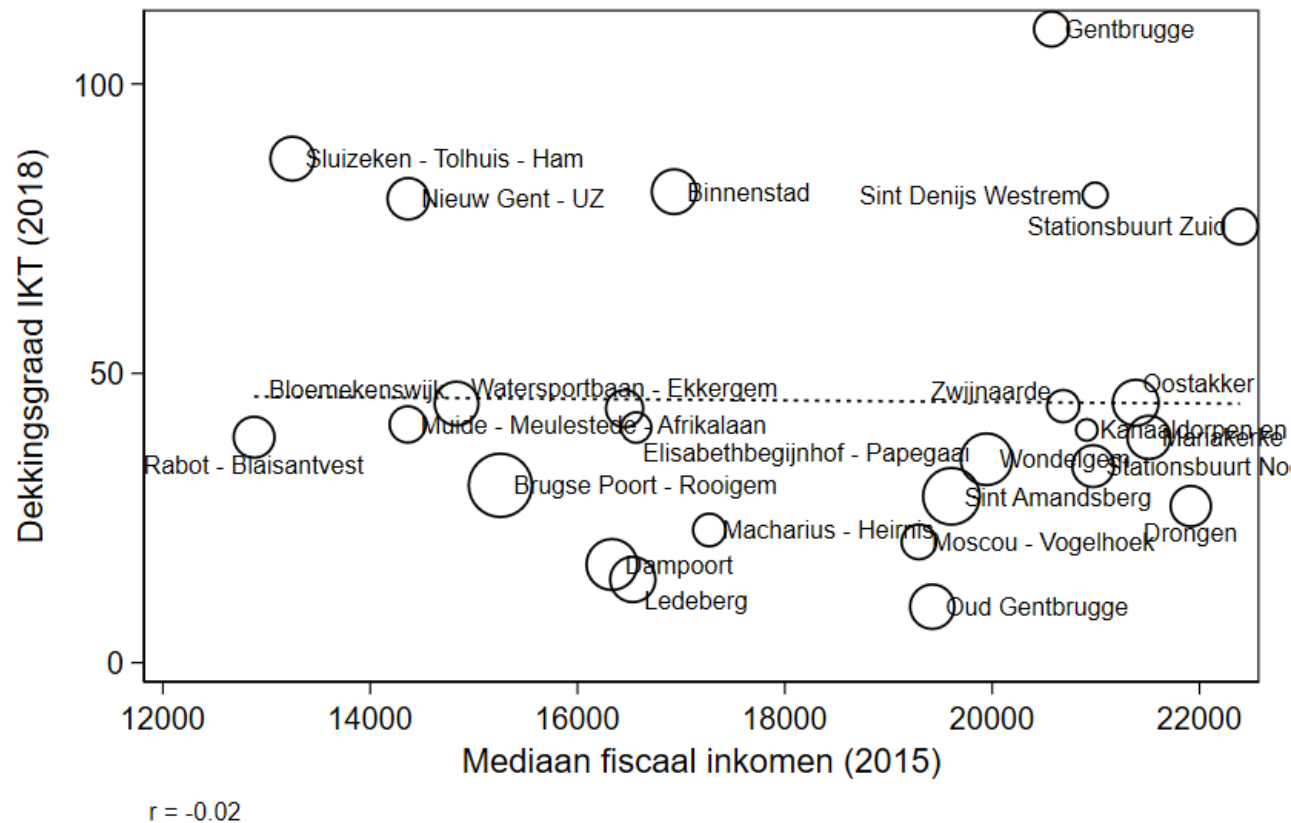


N = 289, $r = .29$

Coverage of childcare places according to income in all Flemish municipalities:
Richer areas have more funded childcare

Van Lancker, W., & Vandebroeck, M. (2019). *De verdeling van de kinderopvang in Vlaanderen en in de centrumsteden: spanning tussen de economische en sociale functie van kinderopvang*. Leuven - Gent: KU Leuven - UGent.

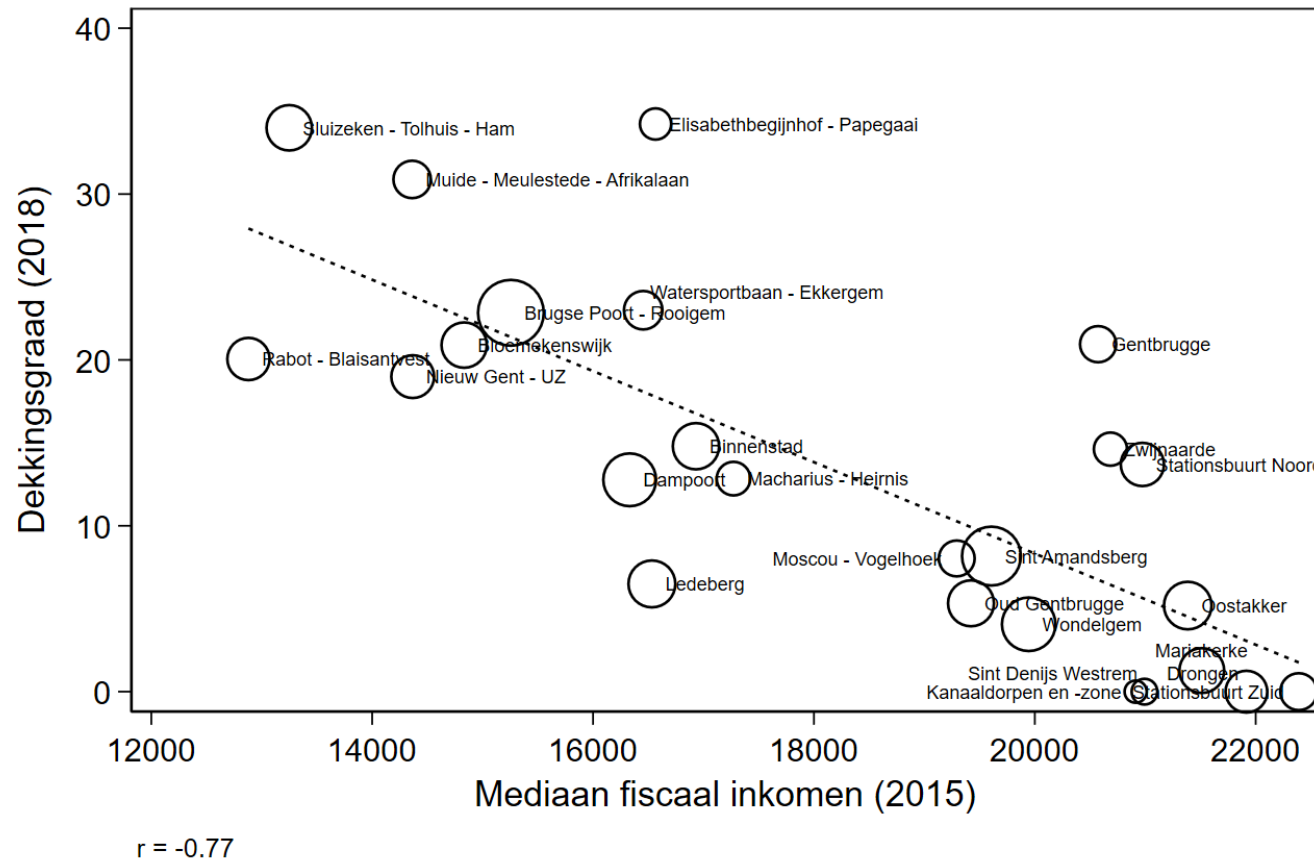
2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



Coverage of childcare places according to income in Gent neighborhoods:
Municipal policies can make a difference

Van Lancker, W., & Vandebroek, M. (2019). *De verdeling van de kinderopvang in Vlaanderen en in de centrumsteden: spanning tussen de economische en sociale functie van kinderopvang*. Leuven - Gent: KU Leuven - UGent.

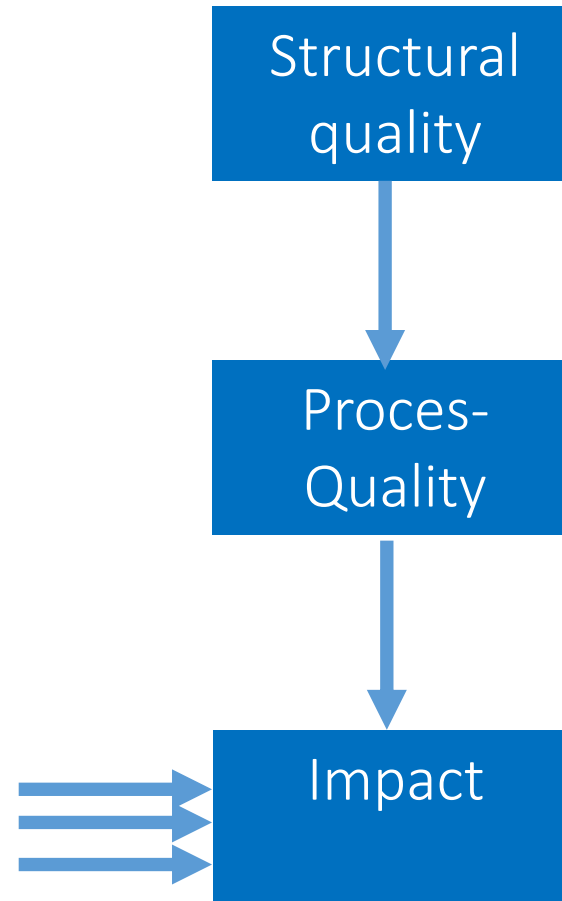
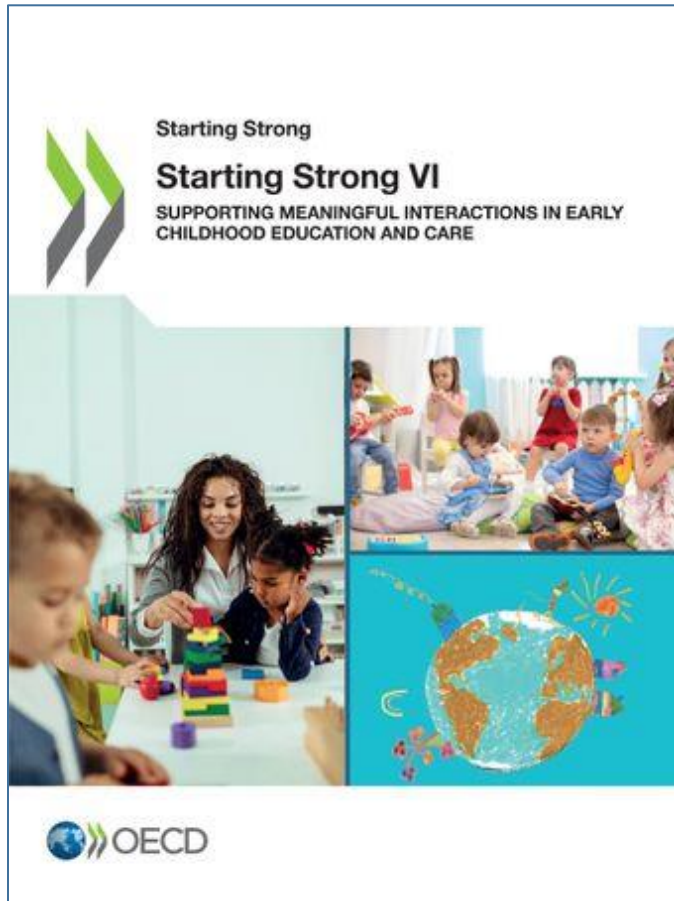
2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



Coverage of **municipal** childcare places according to income in Gent neighborhoods
Municipal policies make a difference

Van Lancker, W., & Vandebroek, M. (2019). *De verdeling van de kinderopvang in Vlaanderen en in de centrumsteden: spanning tussen de economische en sociale functie van kinderopvang*. Leuven - Gent: KU Leuven - UGent.

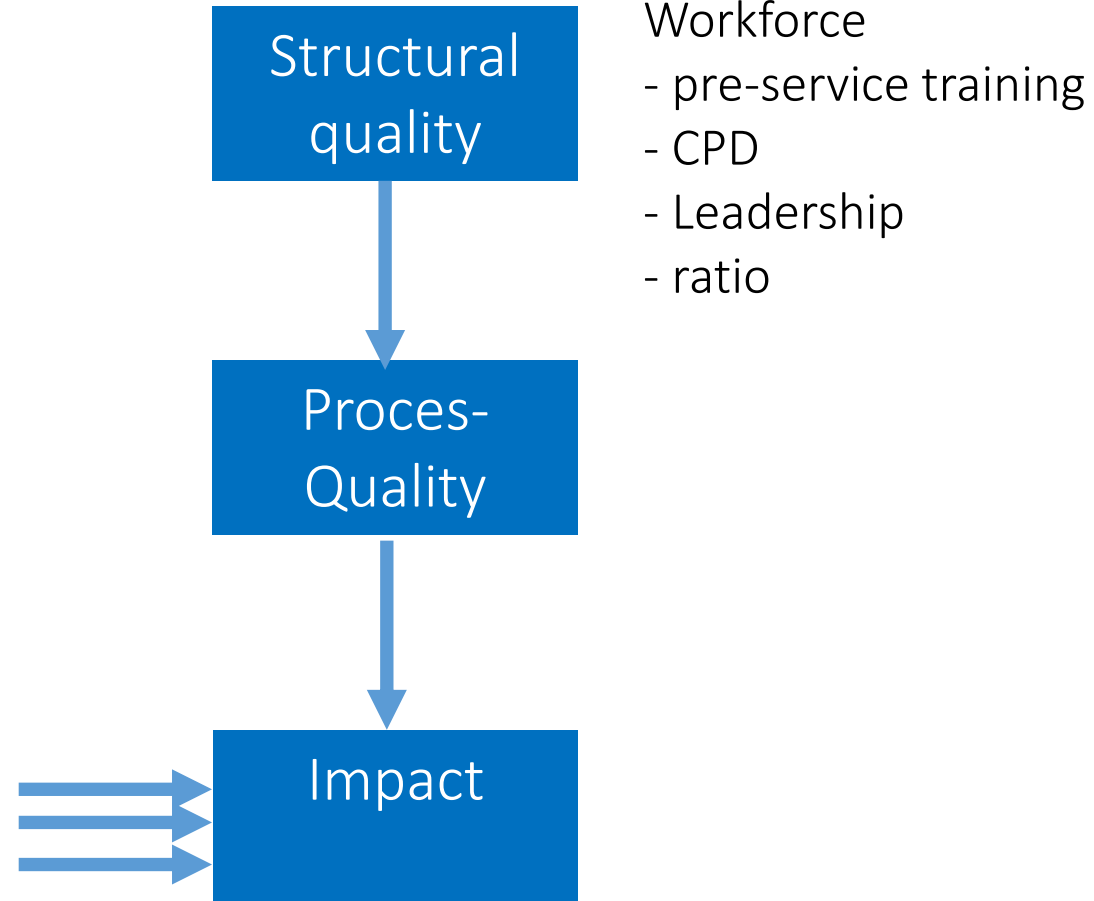
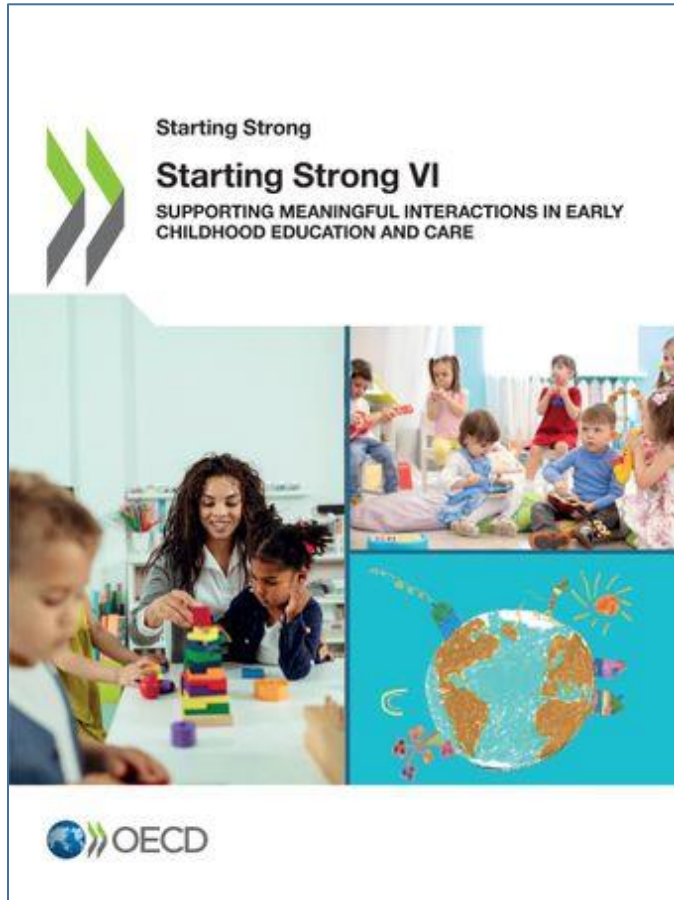
2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



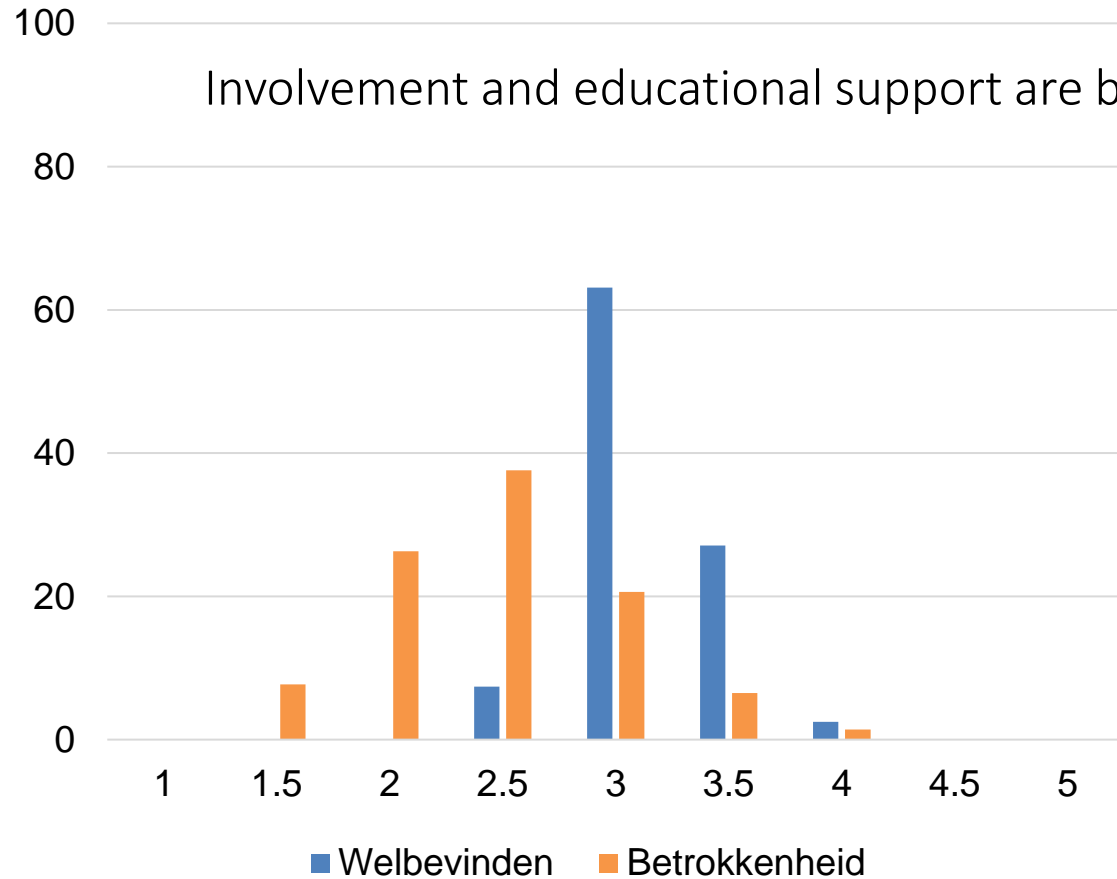
“Meaningful interactions”
Emotional support
Educational support

Cf Soile Granholm
(Vantaa project)
Tine Norholm Larsen
(Medvind)

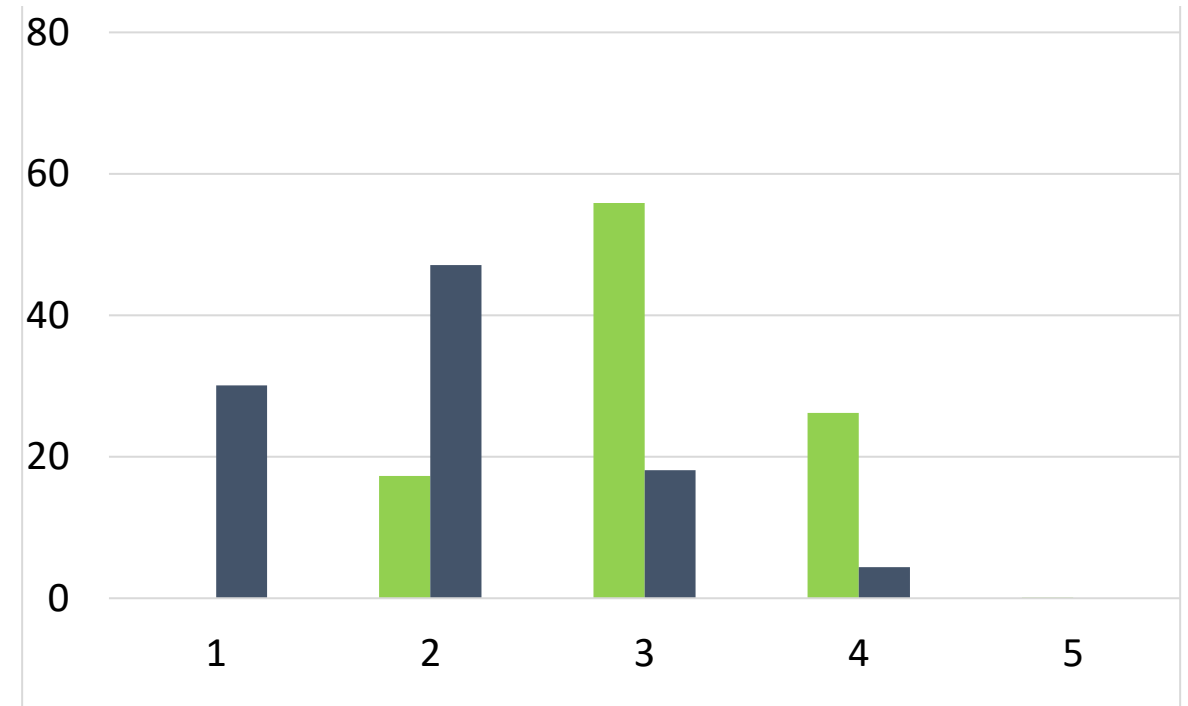
2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



2 CONDITIONS: Access and Quality



Wellbeing and involvement



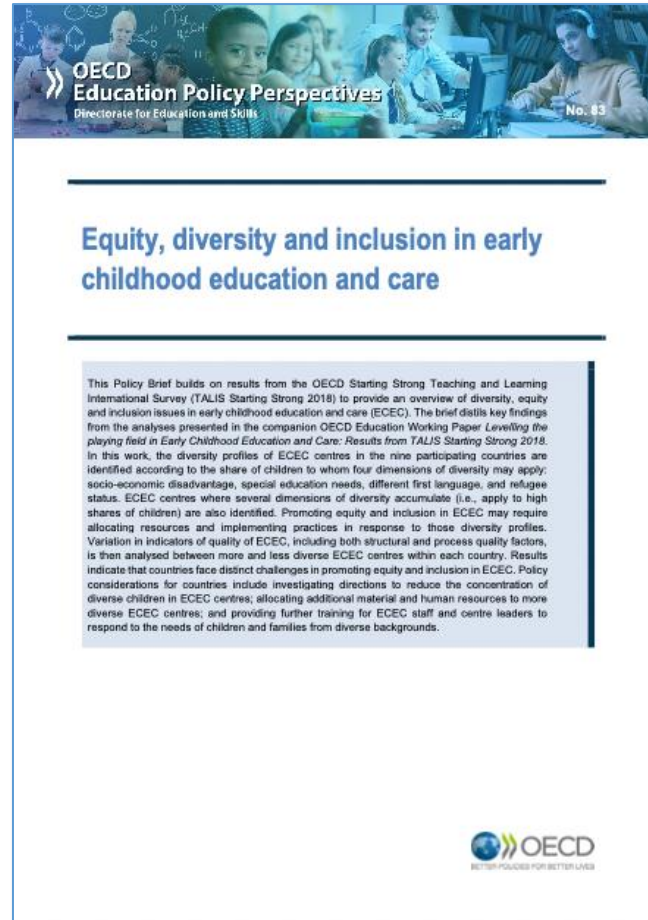
Emotional and Educational Support

The relations between structural and process Quality

- Group size
- Adult-child ratio
- Level of qualification
- Pedagogical support
- Home languages (cf OECDreport)
- Level of funding
- Which activities
- Physical environment

Not so much:

- years of experience
- group composition



Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *Levelling the playing field in ECEC: Results from TALIS Starting Strong 2018. OECD Education Working Papers N° 305*. Paris: OECD.

The relations between structural and process Quality

Three crucial points on the workforce (see the European Quality Framework)

1. Pre-service training
2. Continuous professional development
3. Working conditions

4 rules of thumb: evidence based (1)

- Based on a coherent framework
- A comprehensive (longitudinal) approach
- Practitioners as actors of change
- In relation to lived experience and day to day practice

CPD matters more than years of experience (2)

Recruitment AND retainment

1. Peleman, B., Lazzari, A., Budginaite, I., Siarova, H., Hauari, H., Peeters, J., & Cameron, C. (2018). Continuous professional development and ECEC quality: Findings from a European systematic literature review. *European Journal of Education, 53*(1), 9-22.

2. Vandenbroeck, M., Slot, P., & Hulpia, H. (2021). Quality in home-based childcare providers: Variations in process quality. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 29*(2).

The relations between structural and process Quality

Three crucial points on the workforce (see the European Quality Framework)

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Cf Anne Kultti: importance of CPD for language in play

Halldóra Sigtryggisdóttir on CPD

Kristin Morken: practitioners as actors of change and cooperation with parents

years of experience and day to day

years of experience (2)

White, I., Siarova, H., Hauari, H., Peeters, J., & Professional development and ECEC quality: A systematic literature review. *European Journal of*

Recruitment AND retainmen

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2022). *Early childhood education and care workforce development. A foundation for process quality*. Paris: OECD.

Vandenbroeck, M., Slot, P., & Hulpia, H. (2021). Quality in home-based childcare providers: Variations in process quality. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29(2).

An increasing challenge: diversity

ECEC as a micro society:

Identity construction

Examples of Emre and Rajae

And so many others

Cf Fríða B. Jónsdóttir and many others:

language as identity

Language as belonging

Language as dialogue

- Among peers
- With parents
- With grandparents



An increasing challenge: diversity

ECEC as a micro society:

Identity construction

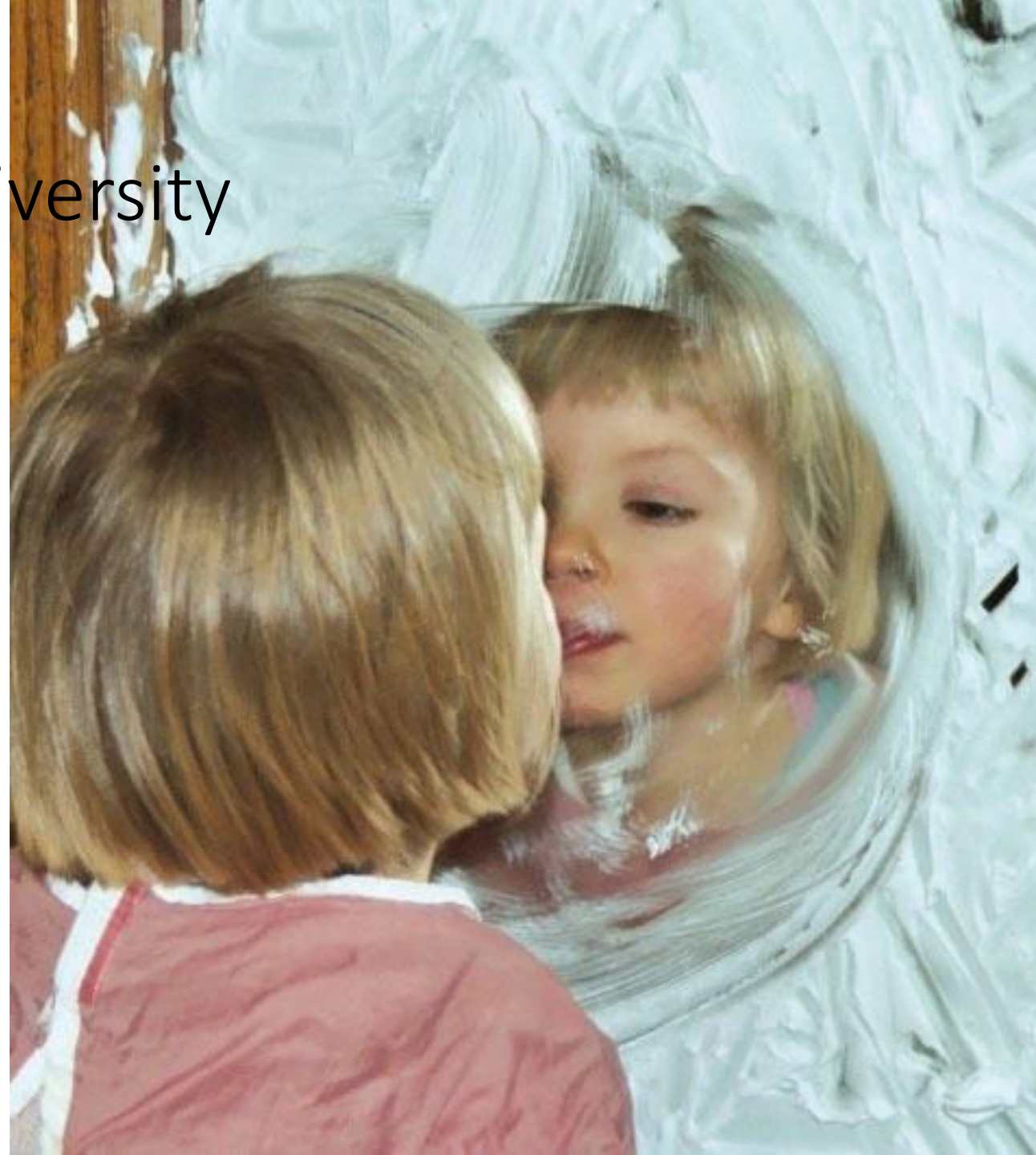
Multiple identities

- detraditionalisation

- disembedding and re-embedding

Hyphenated identities

Including plurilinguagism



An increasing challenge: diversity

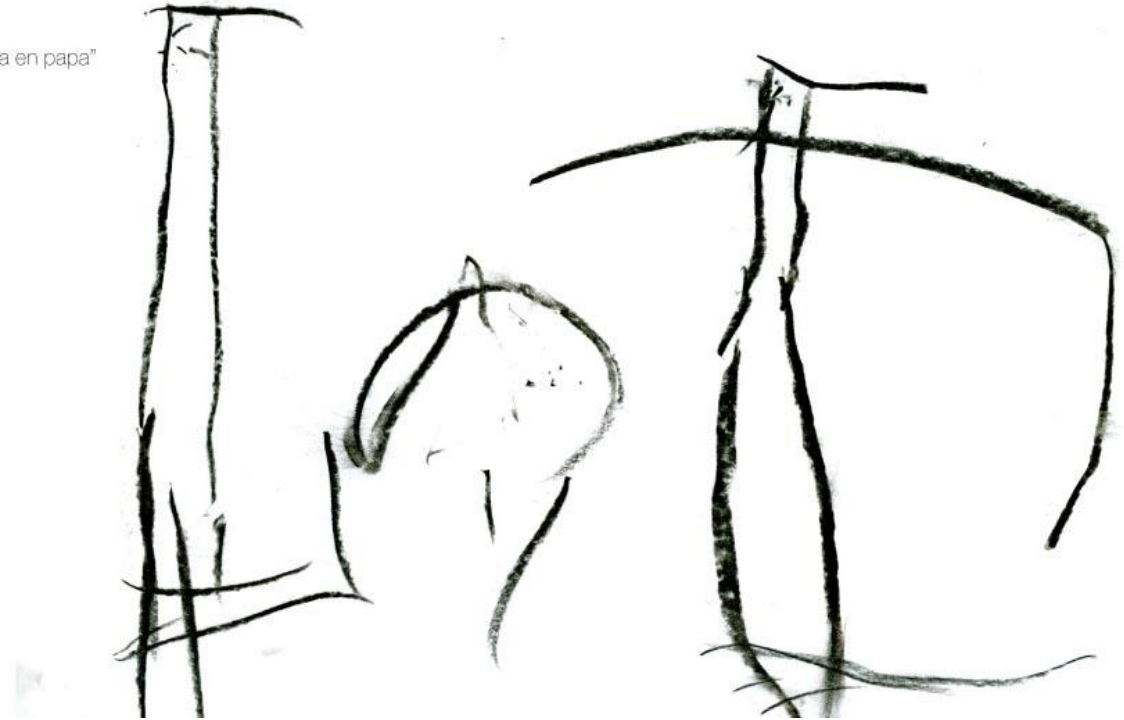
ECEC as a micro society:

Children develop prejudice at an early age

(Wankumbur, research of Conolly, ...)

- emotional reasons
- cognitive reasons
- social reasons

Lotte, 3 jaar
"ik tussen mama en papa"



An increasing challenge: diversity

ECEC as a micro society:

Making diversity visible

- languages
- festivities
- music
- food
- family wall
- ...

Cf Soile Granholm (Vantaa project)
on play materials
But family cultures are not cultures or
origins



Laurenzo, 4 jaar

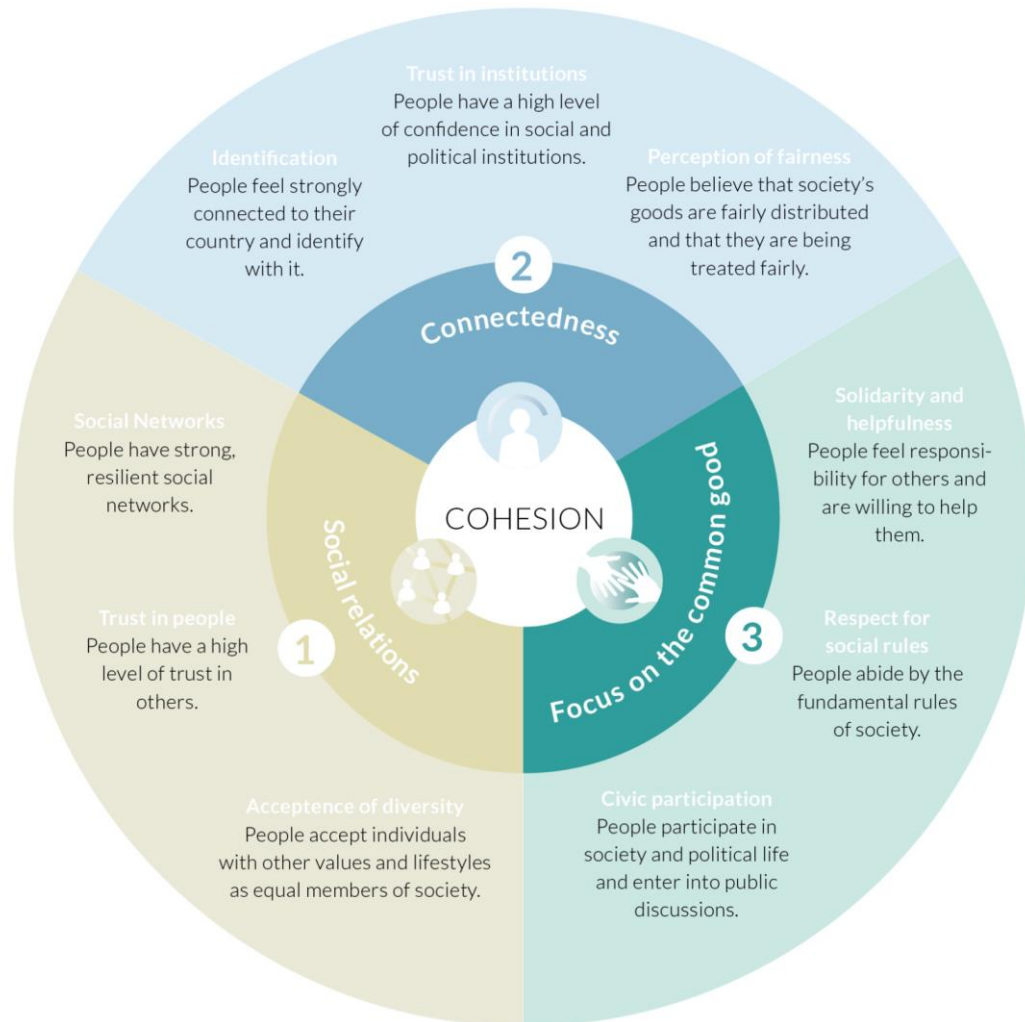
“Mijn huidskleur vinden was niet zo moeilijk, maar de kleur van mijn ogen, dat is moeilijker: mijn ogen blinken.”



Ahmed heeft hele grote blauwe zakken geschilderd. Blauw is zijn lievelingskleur. “Mijn zakken zitten vol met heel veel geld.”



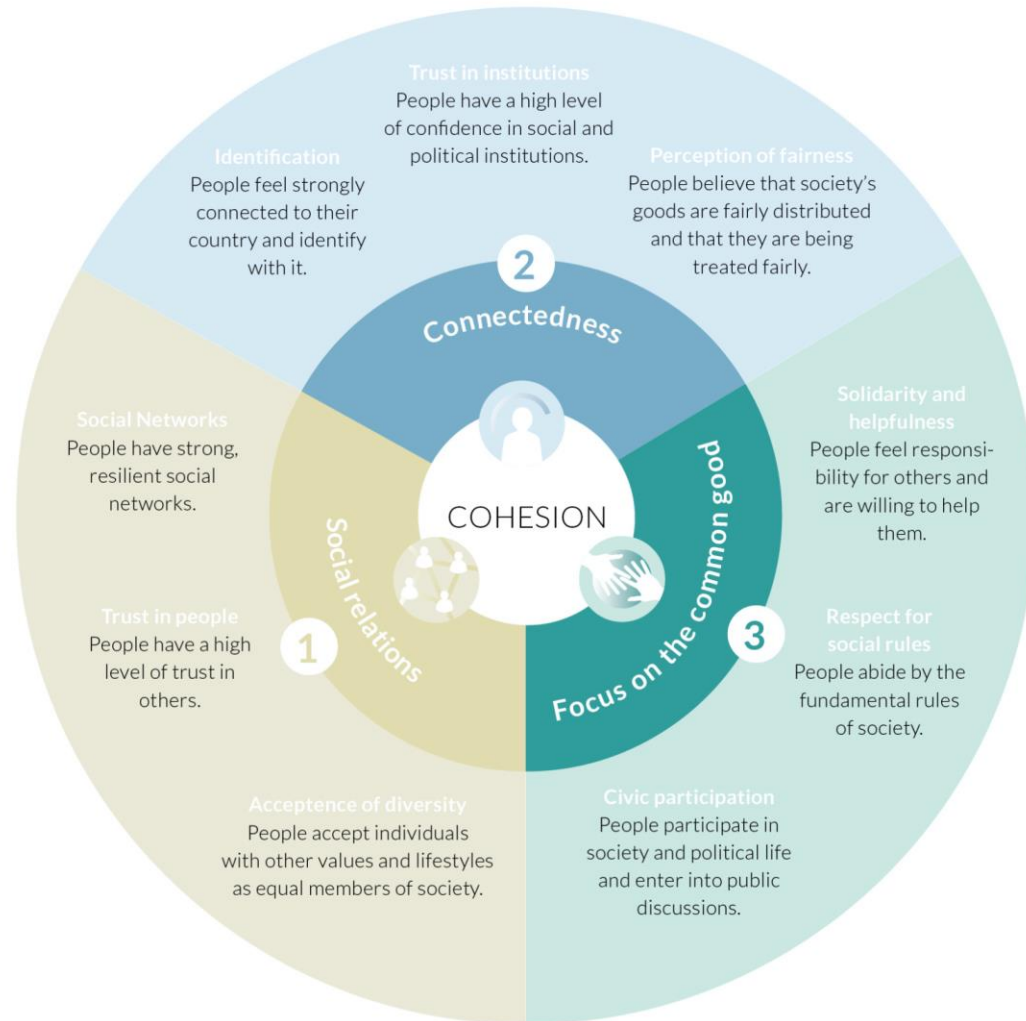
ECEC and social cohesion



The quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members. A cohesive society is characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good.

Delhey et al., 2018, p. 430; Dragolov et al.,

ECEC and social cohesion



An avenue for future research
- beyond individual impact on children
- beyond individual impact on parents

Children as brokers of relations

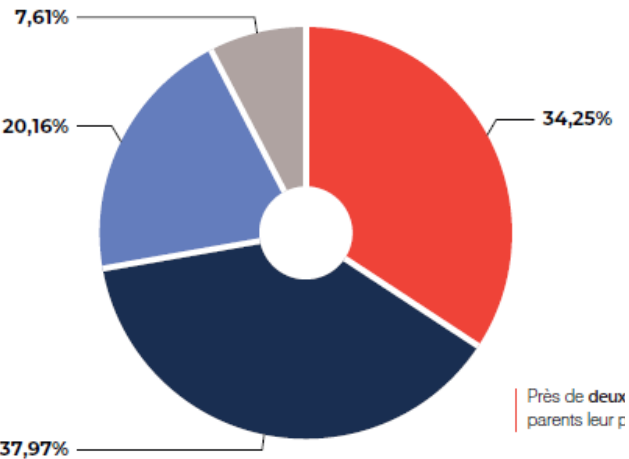
But: jeopardized by privatisation

Cf Lotta Andersson
Damberg (potential of
open preschools)

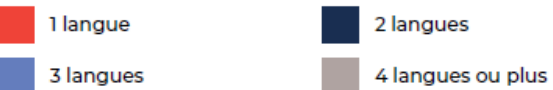
Cf Soile Granholm
(Vantaa project on
social segregation)

Languages, languages and languages

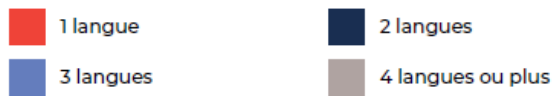
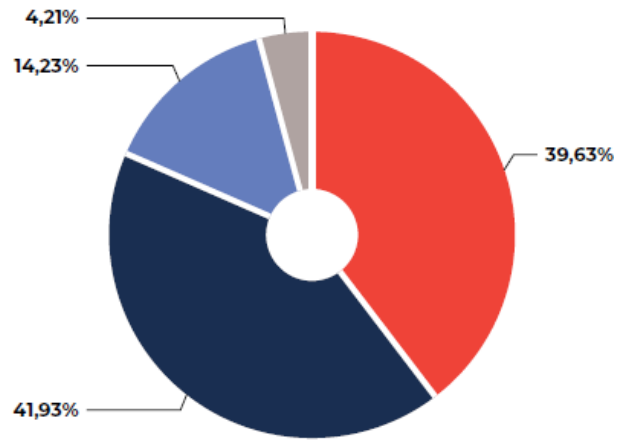
Nombre de langues parlées aux enfants
(n = 10 090 enfants)



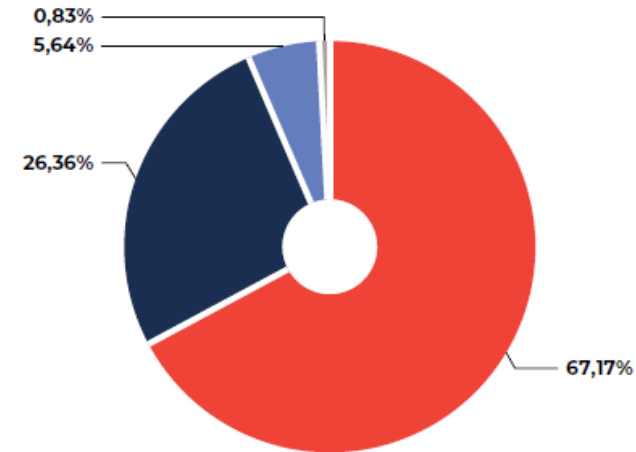
Près de deux parents leur p



Nombre de langues dans lesquelles les enfants parlent avec leurs parents
(n = 8 512 enfants)



Nombre de langues dans lesquelles les enfants parlent avec leurs frères et sœurs
(n = 6 260 enfants)



Nombre de langues dans lesquelles les enfants regardent la télévision
(n = 8 279 enfants)

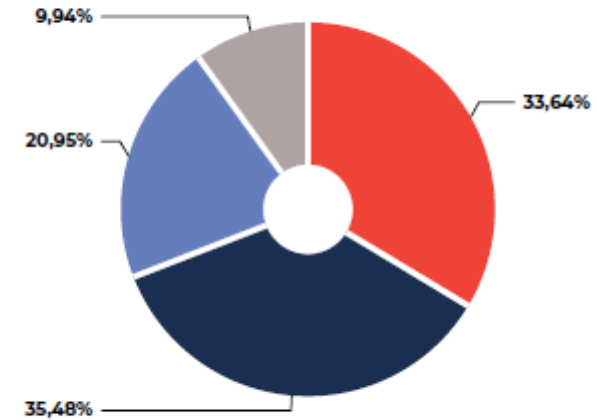


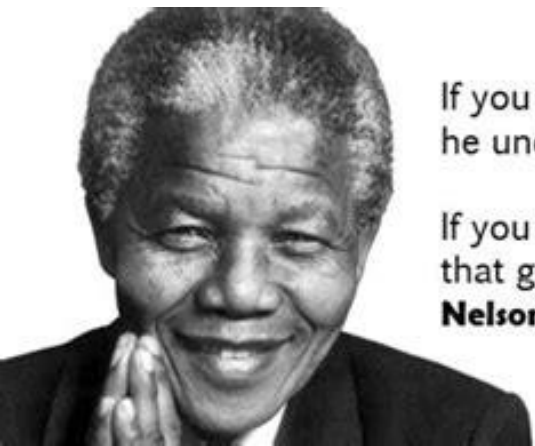
Figure 14



Service National de la Jeunesse (2023). La diversité linguistique des jeunes enfants et les pratiques langagières au sein des familles au Luxembourg. Luxembourg: SNJ

Languages, languages and languages

- Language is related to identity (is it ok to be who I am)
- Language is related to belonging
- Language is related to social cohesion (including intergenerational)
- Language is related to school careers
- But also to our vision on what is a just society, what is fairness



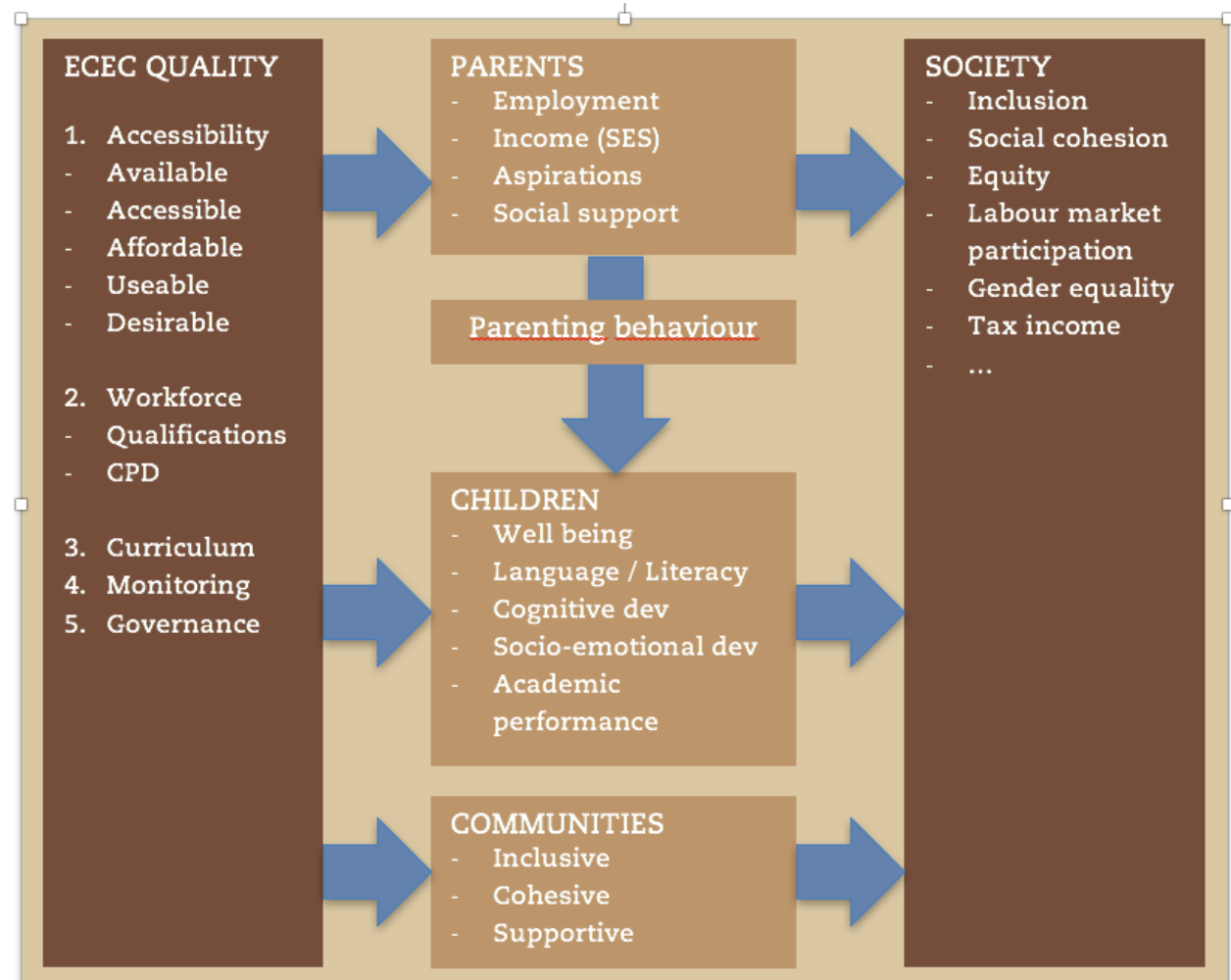
If you talk to a man in a language
he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language,
that goes to his heart.

Nelson Mandela



Conclusions



ECEC has a unique potential
On the condition of access and quality

It can also impact on local communities and
thus on societies as a whole

Warning 1: privatisation and the shift from
funding offer to funding demand

Warning 2: increasing nationalisms that
challenge multiple identities

Conclusions and some reflections on the day

