

CONTENTS

Table of Figures	5
Codes and Abbreviations	7
Executive Summary	9
Introduction	23
Chapter A – Governance	29
More than 30 million children in the EU are in the ECEC age range	29
Centre-based ECEC provision is provided either in unitary settings or in separate settings with a transition at age 3	30
Regulated home-based provision is widespread in only a few European countries	33
In most countries, the ministry of education is responsible for centre-based ECEC provision for children aged 3 and over	34
Top-level authorities seldom recommend measures to ease the transition between childcare- and education-type settings	37
Parent representatives usually have a say on the rules governing daily life in ECEC settings	39
Private self-financing ECEC settings exist in three quarters of European countries	41
Chapter B – Access	43
Section I – Structures	43
Ensuring universal access: a place is guaranteed from an early age in only a few countries	44
Most countries guarantee 20-29 hours of ECEC	48
Most countries have a childcare gap	51
ECEC is offered free of charge mainly for older children	54
ECEC fees for children under 3 years are lowest in Baltic and Balkan countries	57
Targeted measures to facilitate ECEC access focus on children living in poverty	59
Demand for ECEC places is higher than supply	62
Section II – Participation	65
34 % of children under age 3 attend centre-based ECEC	65
95 per cent of children aged 4 and over attend ECEC: the EU benchmark has been achieved	66
Children spend 30 hours or more per week in ECEC	68
Chapter C – Staff	71
Section I – Qualifications and Continuing Education	71
Qualification requirements for core practitioners are usually lower for working with younger children than older ones	72
In the majority of education systems assistants may be employed without an initial qualification in ECEC	74
Heads of ECEC settings are usually qualified at Bachelor's level or higher	75
In one third of European countries, heads of settings for older children must have specific training and previous professional experience	77
Childminders in regulated home-base provision must have some form of training in most countries	79
An induction phase is compulsory for all ECEC staff in only seven education systems	81
Only five education systems have made CPD mandatory for all staff	83
Section II – Child/Staff Ratios	87
The maximum number of children per staff member more than doubles between the ages of 2 and 4	87
Childminders in regulated home-based provision usually look after a maximum of four or five children under age 3	90

Chapter D – Educational Guidelines	93
Section I – General Framework	93
A third of education systems do not provide educational guidelines for under-3s	94
ECEC settings must draw up their own pedagogical plan in a majority of countries	97
Similar core areas exist across Europe for the learning and development of children in ECEC	98
Balanced pedagogical approaches in ECEC	100
Observation is the key method for assessing children in ECEC	102
Section II – Transitions	105
Age is the main criteria for admission to primary school	105
Parents have a decision-making role in deferring admission to primary education in half of the education systems	106
The same educational framework covers both ECEC and higher levels of education in nine countries	108
In the majority of education systems, some children undertake the last year of ECEC on the same site as the primary school	109
A variety of measures is used to ensure a smooth transition between ECEC and primary education	111
Section III – Support Measures	113
The most common form of language support in ECEC is speech therapy	113
A minority of countries provide teaching in home languages in ECEC	115
Only a quarter of European countries offer home learning guidance	117
Chapter E – Evaluation and Monitoring	121
Supporting children's learning is often a focus for the external evaluation of settings for older children	121
A third of European education systems have no regulations on the internal evaluation of ECEC settings for children under 3	126
Children rarely participate in setting evaluation	129
A majority of countries monitor the wider ECEC system on the basis of findings at setting level	133
References	137
Glossary	143
Annexes	149
Annex A: Additional data to Figures	149
Annex B: Authorities responsible for governing ECEC provision	156
Annex C: Top-level educational guidelines for ECEC provision	160
National System Information Sheets	163
Acknowledgements	209