

Chapter 2

The organisation and governance of transitions from early childhood education and care to primary school

Understanding how the transition between early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary education is organised and governed across the OECD is important to help policy makers ensure that the foundations laid in ECEC endure into primary education, promote a strong start in primary school and foster a more equitable early education system. This chapter provides an overview of transition systems across OECD and partner countries, focusing on trends in organisation and governance. It describes four main policy challenges for smooth transitions, accompanied by a wealth of practical strategies devised by participating countries for tackling them. Finally, it draws out some pointers for policy development to provide some food for thought on improving transitions.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

The data collected through the OECD questionnaire on transitions for Italy is published here under the responsibility of the National Institute of Evaluation of the Educational and Training System (INVALSI, Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione).

Key policy messages

Early childhood transitions are receiving greater political and social attention

- Policy documents, including education acts and curriculum frameworks, are placing greater emphasis on the need for smooth transitions. This is obliging local authorities, early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and schools to implement appropriate policies and practices. *Country examples: Denmark, Finland and Norway.*
- Responsibilities for ECEC are increasingly integrated in the ministry of education, which facilitates collaboration between education levels and can strengthen coherence between ECEC and schools. *Country examples: Nordic countries and Slovenia.*
- Curricula are being redesigned so as to ensure continuity of children's learning from one stage to another. *Country examples: Japan, Ireland and Wales (United Kingdom).*
- Primary school starting ages are being lowered to give children a stronger start at school. This can have significant implications for transition programming. *Country examples: Slovenia and Kazakhstan.*

International comparisons reveal some clear trends

- Annual expenditure per child is lower for pre-primary education than primary education. This is true for two-thirds of participating countries.
- A large share of children experience more than one transition before they start primary school (in 50% of participating countries). Many children transition from childcare to pre-primary education and then to primary school.
- A separate transition class, year or group is available for children in over half of the participating countries in their last year of ECEC. In almost half of these, this phase is compulsory.
- Compulsory education can start as early as age three, though most children start compulsory education at six. The range is broad: from three (Hungary and Mexico) to seven years old (Sweden). Children's starting age at primary school is rarely delayed, and is usually done so for health or developmental reasons. Most countries favour remedial support over grade repetition for children in difficulty.
- Transition policies and practices differ widely, being mostly designed by ECEC settings and schools. National policy documents (such as national curriculum guidelines for both ECEC and primary school) or the monitoring of transitions as part of inspections, can support the quality of transition practices and ensure quality is more even across different settings or schools.
- Transitions are not commonly monitored separately; they are often included in broader quality monitoring. Parental surveys are the most common tool, followed by child monitoring methods (e.g. portfolios, child development reports or development assessments).

Countries have developed a wealth of strategies to address the organisational and governance challenges affecting transitions

Challenge 1. Lack of coherence across regions and settings

- Develop a national plan or strategy to improve coherence, e.g. *Austria's ECEC-primary school project*
- Develop national guides or guidelines, e.g. *Norway's national guide, From the Eldest to the Youngest*
- Develop local guides or guidelines, e.g. *Denmark's local transition guidelines for settings*

Challenge 2. Difficulty in engaging all actors

- Include transitions in laws or mandatory curriculum frameworks, e.g. *Denmark's Act on Day Care and Norway's Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*
- Share example transition initiatives with local governments and settings, e.g. *the Japanese government's collection of transition examples*
- Monitor the state of transitions, e.g. *Japan's 5-step approach to monitoring municipality transition progress*

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Key policy messages (continued)

Challenge 3. Weak collaboration among stakeholders

- Review collaboration frequently, e.g. *Sweden's self-evaluation form for preschools and primary schools*
- Discuss transitions with key stakeholders regularly, e.g. *consultative approach by Norway's Ministry of Education and Research and the Directorate for Education and Training*
- Provide counselling and guidance, e.g. *Slovenia's counselling service*

Challenge 4. Inequity in transitions

- Provide language support, e.g. *Denmark's language assessment for preschool children*
- Set up financial support programmes, e.g. *Wales' Pupil Deprivation Grant for ECEC*
- Prioritise participation in ECEC for target groups, e.g. *Slovenia's priority to kindergarten places for disadvantaged children*
- Provide additional financial or human resources for ECEC settings, e.g. *extra funding in Finland for deprived areas*

Policy pointers for successfully governed and organised transitions

- View transitions through the lens of holistic early development approaches
- Address equity at all levels of education, not only transitions from ECEC to school
- Use sound evidence to inform transition policy decisions
- Promote strong leadership by municipalities
- Establish collaboration as the first step in creating continuity
- Align objectives of ECEC and schools

Introduction

The OECD Starting Strong reports (OECD, 2001; 2006; 2012) and international research point out that high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) benefits children's early development, their subsequent school performance, and even their outcomes later in life, including labour market participation and social integration. As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, a strong start in early education provides a crucial foundation for future learning and helps to develop the cognitive and social-emotional skills essential for future success (Elliott, 2006; Morrissey, Hutchison and Burgess, 2014; Ruhm and Waldfogel, 2011; Sammons et al., 2012; Sylva et al., 2004). At the same time, research has found that some of the positive effects of participation in ECEC can fade in primary school when transitions between ECEC and school are ill-prepared (Ahnert and Lamb, 2011; AIHW, 2009; Anders, 2013; Duncan and Magnuson, 2013; Elliott, 2006; Farrer et al. 2007). Low-quality transitions often affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds¹ more than their better-off peers (Isaacs, 2008; Melhuish et al., 2015).

Understanding how the transition between ECEC and primary education (Box 2.1) is organised across the OECD is important for policy makers to ensure that early years' policies ensure that ECEC benefits endure into primary education, promote a strong start in primary school and foster a more equitable (early) education system. In addition, a rich international knowledge base on how transitions can be strengthened to support children's development and well-being is important for policy design and implementation, as well as to inform educators and parents on the importance of transitions.

This chapter provides an overview of transition systems across OECD and partner countries, focusing on their organisation and governance. It draws on a literature review, in-depth country background reports by 8 OECD countries² and 1 partner country (Kazakhstan), and a questionnaire completed by 27 OECD countries and 3 partner countries (Colombia, Croatia and Kazakhstan) in 2015/2016 (see Annex A at the end of the report for details on the methodology).³ The chapter outlines

common challenges from the perspectives of participating countries and practical strategies they have devised for tackling them. Finally it draws out some pointers for policy development for strengthening transitions.

Box 2.1 Key definitions

Throughout this chapter the term **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** will be used to refer to regulated arrangements that provide education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age (in **integrated systems**), or from birth to pre-primary education in **split systems**. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is the reference classification for categorising education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields. The latest version (ISCED 2011) has nine levels of education, from level 0 to level 8, where **ISCED 0** refers to early childhood education and **ISCED 1** refers to primary education. Education programmes at ISCED level 0 are sub-classified into two categories depending on age and the level of complexity of the educational content: early childhood educational development (ISCED 01) and pre-primary education (ISCED 02). The latter include ECEC centres that provide services for children to support early development in preparation for participation in school and society, and that accommodate children from age three to the start of primary education. The focus of this publication is on ISCED 02 and the terms pre-primary, preschool and ECEC are used interchangeably.

Note also that different countries have different ways of referring to programmes classified as ISCED 0. For example: early childhood education and development, playschool, reception, pre-primary, preschool, kindergarten, Kita, Krippe or *educación inicial*.

For more information, see the Glossary and OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015), *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en>.

What are the goals and objectives of transitions from early childhood education and care to primary school?

Some countries set out policy goals specific to transitions; others tend to embed transitions in other policy goals. Among those who have specific goals on transitions, the scope and degree of specificity of the goals and objectives vary.

Broader goals tend to emphasise child well-being and support

Finland sets broad goals for transitions, such as promoting a sense of security and well-being and supporting their prerequisites for growth and learning. Successful transitions should ensure that each child's learning path is a flexible continuum founded on the needs of the child. Similarly, in Norway there is broad agreement that a good transition presupposes that both ECEC and school facilitate a holistic education that ensures the individual child's need for safety and continuity. The preparations for school must have a broad perspective and must be seen in connection with the child's surroundings, family, peers, preschool and school. Wales (United Kingdom) also sets broad goals for children: i.e. to ensure that all children and their parents experience practical and emotional support through all transitional stages to facilitate continuity in their care; support progression in their development and learning; enhance their well-being; and ensure that they have a positive experience of change.

These goals and objectives are rarely included in formal government documents. They are frequently mentioned in curricula, such as in Finland, Slovenia, Sweden, Norway and Wales (United Kingdom). In doing so, this obliges local authorities and ECEC facilities and schools to consider developing transition programmes. A few countries specify the broader goals of transitions in law, such as Denmark.

School readiness is a key goal in many countries, especially Anglophone countries

In some countries – such as Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Kazakhstan – the goals for transitions are driven by the school readiness policy narrative (see

Box 1.2 in Chapter 1). In Japan more than a decade ago, children who transitioned to primary school were not adapting and integrating well in the first year of compulsory elementary education (Box 2.2). As a consequence, the goal of kindergarten education was revised to account for the importance of transitions and it was defined as “to cultivate foundations for compulsory education and subsequent education”. In Kazakhstan, pre-primary education and the transition to school are increasingly focused on creating conditions for the development of competencies necessary for successful learning, and the development of creative and intellectual skills of a child. In the United States, school readiness gained attention when the National Education Goals (or “Goals 2000”) asserted that “all children in America will start school ready to learn” (National Education Goals Panel, 1998, p. 1). This goal was based on the belief that children’s success during the transition to formal schooling was strongly related to children’s abilities and skills at primary school entry (Meisels, 1999). Further attention to school readiness was given in the early 2000s with the inception of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This law was enacted to tackle the pervasive achievement gap between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds at the start of compulsory schooling. Other countries, such as the Nordic countries for instance, focus more on the school being ready for the child (see Box 1.2 in Chapter 1).

Some countries embed transitions in other policy goals

In other countries, there are no clear goals or objectives for transitions, although programmes and initiatives exist to support transitions. This is the case in Austria and Denmark, where different authorities are responsible for ECEC and primary school and the concept of transition is developed at the local- or setting- level only. As a result, no explicit cross-regional transition strategies or programmes exist, although there are more general goals for early learning across the country. For example, the stimulation of language development is one of Austria’s main country-wide policy interventions to prepare children for their future education and employment opportunities. In 2008, the government and the federal states ratified an agreement to make early language learning support mandatory. Transition is embedded in this strategy as its timing coincides with this critical stage of the language development.

What are the trends in organising and governing transition systems?

Transition is receiving greater attention

Early education systems (including transitions) differ between countries. These differences are shaped by the political and social context, and the societal values of each country. Overall, however, the political and social attention on early learning and the transition to primary schooling has increased in recent years in many countries. This is not only because the topics of lifelong learning and child-centred approaches have gained importance internationally (Chapter 1), but also because research finding that the benefits of early education can fade out in primary schooling has drawn attention to the subject. In addition, countries are experiencing challenges in organising high-quality transitions. In Japan, as in many other countries, transitions are receiving increased attention because children do not integrate well into primary school (Box 2.2).

Several trends in transitions can be analysed based on country’s policy changes over the last years. The surge in political interest in transitions is reflected in the inclusion of transitions in government policy documents and curricula framework. In some countries, there have been changes in national-level responsibilities for ECEC and primary education to better align ECEC and primary school. In other countries, primary school age has been lowered to support children’s transition to primary school, while in still others the various ECEC and primary schooling settings have been integrated to reduce the number of transitions for children.

Box 2.2 Case study: The issue of first graders in primary school in Japan

More than a decade ago, Japan experienced the so-called “first grader problem”: children transitioning to primary school were not adapting and integrating well in their first year of compulsory education. This issue increased the awareness in Japan of the importance of a good transition to primary school and resulted in a revision of the School Education Act in 2006. This included a revised objective for ECEC and changes to the curriculum for kindergartens (the Course of Study for Kindergartens) and other official guidelines for ECEC to reflect the importance of transitions. As a result, the topic of transitions received increased political attention at local level as well.

In response to a report on transitioning between kindergarten and primary school published by the consultative council for research and study of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2010, local governments nationwide have continued to promote collaboration between ECEC and primary schools. The development of transition curricula is encouraged throughout Japan. MEXT has held meetings for responsible supervisors and others on the boards of education in each prefecture and some cities with the purpose to strengthen transitions in these regions and cities. These meetings consist of, for instance, presentations by local governments on their policy initiatives for transitions.

Sources: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016; Government of Japan (2016), *Japan Country Background Report on Transitions*, Government of Japan, Tokyo, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-japan.pdf.

Transitions are increasingly included in government strategies and policy documents

In Austria the early years are now considered an indispensable part of education and human development. The topic of transition has become an integral part of the *Austrian Strategy for Lifelong Learning LLL:2020* (Republik Österreich, 2011), reflecting government commitment to the early years. The strategy aims to strengthen ECEC as a lasting foundation for development, and to prepare children for their educational career, thereby ensuring a continued process of education.

In Norway, the increased interest in transitions is revealed in a variety of reports and white papers. The 2008 White Paper *Quality in Kindergartens* includes a chapter on transition and coherence between kindergarten and school. The 2016 White Paper *Time for Play and Learning* also addresses the topic, mentioning the importance of coherence for children in transitions between ECEC and school. This has fed into Norway’s revised curriculum framework, to be implemented in August 2017. The new framework states that the kindergarten shall support children in acquiring experiences, knowledge and skills that provide them with a solid foundation and motivation for starting school. Kindergartens are required to support children in rounding off the time in ECEC in a good way and to be able to meet school with curiosity and confidence in themselves and their abilities.

In Denmark, political attention to transitions was enhanced with the introduction of the independent *Act on Day Care* (2007), which emphasised that one of the purposes of ECEC is to create better coherence between the various levels of education. The introduction of a pedagogical curriculum for ECEC (2004) and the establishment of a more education-oriented focus in kindergarten class (2003) also contributed to the awareness of the importance of good transitions. Making kindergarten class compulsory for all children in 2009 further increased awareness of the need to improve transitions for young children.

In Finland, the National Board of Education published a position statement on transitions in 2011: *How to make the start in school successful* (Opetushallitus Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2011). Due to this position statement and the international research findings it reflects, political attention to transitions has increased. The government has become more aware of the complexity of transitions and this has since been reflected in the education acts and curriculum documents (Box 2.3).

Japan’s philosophy of education is based on continuity and coherence. These are reflected in the goals set out for ECEC and school. According to Japan’s Basic Act on Education, which was extensively revised in 2006, the objective of early childhood education and care is to build the foundations for the lifelong formation of one’s character. The objective of compulsory education is then to build foundations

for an independent life within society, while developing the abilities of each individual, and to foster the basic qualities necessary to form a state and society. ECEC is regarded as a “period of awakening learning”, while school is a “period of self-conscious learning”: these flow seamlessly into one another.

On the other hand, although in Slovenia transitions topped their policy agenda in the 1990s, political enthusiasm has since waned. In the 1990s, curricular reform and the lowering of the school entry age from seven to six years ensured that transition became a well-discussed subject. Particular attention was given to adapting the curriculum to include six-year-olds, how to align this curriculum with ECEC, and how to better align the training of ECEC and primary school staff. In addition, high public spending on new or expanding schools instigated interest in transitions.

Box 2.3 Case study: The integration of transitions into Finland’s curricula

The “spirit” of Finland’s Act on Basic Education is the smoothing of children’s path to school. The specific goals for ECEC, primary education and the transition between them are depicted in the new core curricula for pre-primary and basic (primary) education. These revised versions emphasise more strongly the importance of good transitions than previous versions.

The revised National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education (2014) drafted by the Finnish National Board of Education now states that “It is important that early childhood education and care, of which pre-primary education is a part, and basic education form an entity that proceeds consistently in terms of the child’s growth and learning. The starting point for a high-quality entity is that teachers and other personnel are familiar with the different phases of the learning path, the objectives central to these phases, and their characteristics and practices. The goal is that each child’s learning path from early childhood education and care to pre-primary education and further on to basic education is a flexible continuum founded on the needs of the child” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016a). In addition, the curriculum also highlights that “...the transitions from home or early childhood education and care attended by the child before his/her start in pre-primary education, and from pre-primary education to school, are important phases for children. A successful transition promotes a sense of security and well-being in children and supports their prerequisites for growth and learning” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016a).

The revised National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) includes similar goals to ensure that ECEC, pre-primary school, and primary school staff have common objectives for the start of primary school and transitions between different settings (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016b).

In 2015, pre-primary education for six-year olds became compulsory in Finland and the curriculum for ECEC underwent further changes. A revised version of the ECEC curriculum was launched in October 2016 and will be implemented by the municipalities and the private sector in 2017.

Sources: sources for curricula documents are given in Table 4.A.7, Chapter 4; OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016; Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2016), *Finland Country Background Report on Transitions from ECEC to Primary School*, Department for General Education and Early Childhood Education, Helsinki, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-finland.pdf.

Governance changes are strengthening coherence between early childhood education and care and school

Other major changes have included new ways of governing ECEC. Placing the responsibility for ECEC and primary education under one ministry, as is the case in most countries with an integrated ECEC system – such as the Nordic countries and Slovenia – can strengthen coherence between ECEC and schools. In Norway, national responsibility for ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion⁴ to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2005. In 2012, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, which is the executive agency for the ministry, also delegated some of the responsibility for kindergartens in order to strengthen coherence between different levels of education, including ECEC and school. Norway has also seen debates on other topics affecting transitions, such as on making the final year of ECEC compulsory, revising the content of the final year of ECEC, documenting and mapping children’s learning and development in ECEC, and on the kind of documentation on the child that should be transferred from ECEC to school.

Curriculum revisions have been implemented to strengthen transitions⁵

Japan has revised its kindergarten curriculum to give a stronger emphasis to transitions (Box 2.2). Similarly, the curriculum for primary education, the Course of Study for Elementary Schools, has addressed the topic of transitions since 2011. And as of 2015, the Course of Study and Guidelines for Day Care for Integrated Centres for Early Childhood Education and Care also pays attention to transitions. The curricula now prescribe that educational settings must be mindful of each other when it comes to transitions. For example, the Course of Study for Elementary Schools indicates that schools should align the content of the first-year subjects with the content of kindergarten education. To stimulate the alignment of content, local governments encourage the development of local curricula that are based on the national curricula, but that pay attention to local needs and to the topic of transitions for the beginning of primary school and for ECEC.

Wales plans for a more integrated curriculum as part of a wide-ranging education reform, as set out by Professor Graham Donaldson in his report *Successful Futures* and by Professor John Furlong in his report *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (Donaldson, 2015; Furlong, 2015). This reform will include changes to initial teaching training, workforce development and the curriculum and assessment arrangements. The new curriculum and assessment arrangements will provide a more coherent curriculum programme and a clearer line of sight for progression for 3 to 16 year olds. This contrasts with the existing curriculum, which is organised into phases.

Austria has also implemented a range of curriculum changes to improve transitions. In the 2009 framework for ECEC services developed by the Charlotte Bühler Institut, the curriculum devotes considerable attention to the topic of transition (Charlotte Bühler Institut et al., 2009). This was followed in 2010 by the development of a special module for five-year-olds, the “Addition to the Austrian Framework Curriculum”, to support children in the final year of ECEC (Charlotte Bühler Institut et al., 2010).

In Ireland, both the quality framework for early childhood (Siolta), as well as the National Curriculum Framework (Aistear) for children from birth until six years, devote considerable attention to transitions. They provide numerous resources and strategies to promote successful and effective transitions in an online self-evaluation tool for ECEC settings. In addition, plans for a national transition initiative will improve how children’s development information is shared between ECEC and primary school. Transition templates are already being piloted. The initiative will also include the establishment of local networks, the dissemination of information to families, reciprocal visits by primary and preschool staff and children to schools and preschools and the development of materials and books to support children during the transition process.

Sweden’s main policy change for transitions has been to revise the ECEC curriculum in 2010. While this curriculum leaves much room for play and care, it puts more emphasis on children’s learning and preschool teachers’ education in more school-oriented areas. This indicates that ECEC and primary school are seeking ways to become more aligned.

In Kazakhstan, a specific curriculum for five and six-year-olds (*Biz mektepke baramyz*) was developed in 2009, improving the alignment between ECEC and primary education curricula. In the near future, the standards for preschool education will be revised to reflect the importance of transitions between ECEC and primary education.

The school starting age has been lowered in a number of countries

Research suggests that an early start in high-quality early education and care can be beneficial for children’s development (see Chapter 6). As a result, Kazakhstan made one year of pre-primary education compulsory for all five to six-year-olds to stimulate an early start in preschool education for all children. Other countries, such as Slovenia, have lowered the age at which formal schooling

starts. But the research remains rather inconclusive on whether starting formal schooling earlier has positive effects for children's development. While the research indicates that good quality ECEC can have beneficial impacts for young children (see Chapter 5), there is no research evidence to support the idea of starting school earlier. On the contrary, a large body of evidence indicates the crucial importance of child-led free play in young children's development (Gordon et al., 2003; Gray, 2009, 2012; Pellegrini, Dupuis and Smith, 2007; Pellis and Pellis, 2009; Whitebread and Jameson, 2010). Studies in New Zealand comparing children who began formal literacy instruction at age 5 or age 7 have shown that by the age of 11 there was no difference in reading ability level between the two groups, but the children who started at five developed less positive attitudes to reading, and showed poorer text comprehension than those children who had started later (Suggate, Schaughency and Reese, 2012). An early start in high-quality ECEC where play-based learning is fundamental, is found to have better outcomes than a more academically oriented programme. Marcon (2002), for example, demonstrated that, by the end of their sixth year in school, children whose preschool model had been academically-directed achieved significantly lower marks than children who had attended child-initiated, play-based preschool programmes. In the United Kingdom and Poland, for instance, the formal school starting age has been a topic of debate for some time now (Whitebread and Jarvis, 2015).

Slovenia's major changes in ECEC and primary education policies go back to the 1990s, following independence in 1991, which prompted the transition to a new constitutional and political system. Public services, including the education system, were reformed. The conceptual changes to the education system, including its main principles and theoretical framework, were presented in the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1995). The resulting new education legislation implemented numerous changes to organisation, goals, content, planning and practices, as well to the role of teachers and pupils. These reforms encompassed early childhood education and care (for ages one to six), primary and secondary education, as well as adult education. One of the largest changes included extending the length of compulsory schooling from eight to nine years by starting compulsory primary education at the age of six instead of seven. Lowering the school entry age had strong implications for transition and school programming as the schools' curriculum had to be adapted to the development level of younger children. As a result, new curricula were developed for all the subjects in the first year of primary education. These reflected the developmental characteristics of six-year-olds and included an age-appropriate pedagogy. In 2011, a new White Paper on Education was presented which introduced new subject areas to better prepare children to be part of future society, and which updated minimum standards.

Kazakhstan also lowered the school starting age in 1999, making pre-primary education compulsory and free for all five to six-year-olds. The main purpose was to improve children's school readiness and contribute to the more successful development of skills. The introduction of compulsory pre-primary education was also believed to improve continuity between ECEC and primary education as children are more used to a form of early education before starting primary school and the change from home to school will be less if children have already attended one year of pre-primary education.

Settings have been integrated to ease transitions

In a range of countries, such as Austria, various settings have been integrated to limit the number of transitions for children. For instance, the different ECEC settings, such as childcare and pre-primary education, may be integrated. Or pre-primary education settings and primary schools can be on the same premises so children do not have to move to a different location when starting primary school.

However, while sharing a location is not a problem, research indicates that when pre-primary education and primary school practices and curricula become too integrated, there is a risk of "schoolification" (Moss, 2013; and Box 1.2 in Chapter 1). This can blur the boundaries between early childhood education and the more formal primary education (Dahlberg and Lenz-Taguchi, 1994;

Moss, 2013). Several countries have avoided this by physically integrating pre-primary education and primary school on the same premises or providing them in the same building, while continuing to separate the two educational levels with each having different pedagogical approaches and/or curriculum frameworks.

In Austria, the last year of ECEC and the first two years of primary school will form a new “joint school-entry phase”. This new, three-year transition phase creates a structure for co-operation. It will ensure that important knowledge gained in ECEC is not lost, but instead used to facilitate integration into primary school.

In Japan, settings for early childhood education and care that function as both nursery centre and kindergarten were introduced in 2006 to provide integrated ECEC. Children participating in these integrated settings experience fewer transitions than those transiting from childcare to kindergarten and then on to school.

Research into transitions is also increasing

Increased political attention to transitions is also prompting greater research interest. Finland and Denmark’s political changes, for instance, have resulted in a higher number of research studies on the topic. Likewise, Ireland’s Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy 2011-2020 has increased attention on the funding of research into transitions (Department of Education and Skills, 2011).

Finland has seen more studies of vertical and horizontal transitions (for definitions see Box 1.1 in Chapter 1), as well as research into adults’ views on and practices for transitions. The child is increasingly studied from the perspectives of development and adaptation, and more recent research puts the child at the centre. Additionally, instead of reviewing the risk factors, school transitions are now studied from the standpoint of their opportunities for growth, development and well-being.

The greater political focus on transitions in Denmark is reflected in two government-funded research projects into transitions for children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. This stems from findings that such children lack the competences required for a successful transition and that these delays remain during their primary school career.

How do countries organise early childhood education and care transitions?

Data on the organisation of transitions were collected through the “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, sent to the OECD ECEC Network in 2015. In addition, data from Education at a Glance 2015 and 2016 are drawn on as needed (OECD, 2015; 2016; see Annex A). This section summarises the main trends emerging from the data analysis.

Table 2.1 summarises how the countries participating in this study organise ECEC and primary education. This includes the types of institutions children commonly attend by age, and whether the settings provide mainly childcare, early education, a combination of childcare and early education, or primary education (see Box 2.1). It also shows the ages at which children start compulsory ECEC when ECEC is compulsory, and primary school. Overall, the table provides an overview of the early education path children may follow, by country. It also visualises the transitions children experience between ECEC and primary education.

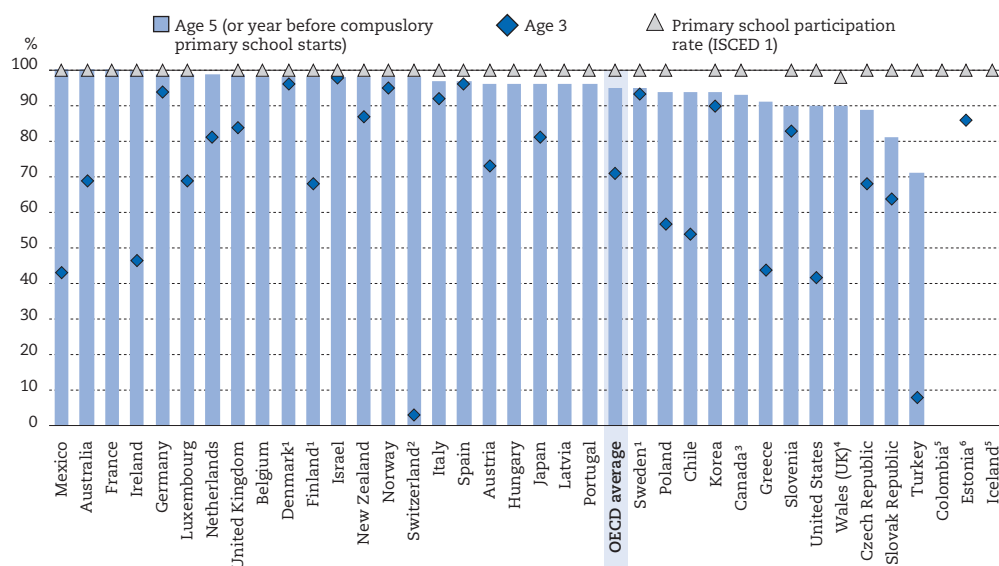
Almost all children participate in early childhood education and care before starting primary school

Although pre-primary enrolment rates are lower than for compulsory primary education (Figure 2.1), they have increased over time in almost all OECD countries (Figure 2.2). On average

across the OECD, 71% of all three-year-olds attend some form of ECEC, although there are large variations among countries. In France for example, all children aged three were in pre-primary education in 2014, while the figure for Turkey was only 8%. On average in 2014, 94.2% of all children who started primary education had attended ECEC the year before (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1 Pre-primary enrolment rates are still lower than for primary education (2014)

Enrolment rates at age three in ECEC, five in ECEC and primary education, and all ages in primary education (ISCED 1)



Notes:

Year of reference for data for enrolment in ISCED 1 is 2013.

Data for enrolment rates at age 3 refer to enrolment in all forms of ECEC (ISCED 0), including early childhood developmental programmes (ISCED 01) and pre-primary education (ISCED 02).

Data for enrolment rates at age 5 include all forms of ECEC, i.e. ISCED 0 (pre-primary education and childcare) as well as enrolment in primary school (ISCED 1).

Data for enrolment in primary education refer to enrolment in ISCED 1 in public and private settings.

1. For Denmark, Finland and Sweden, data for age 5 include data for children aged 6 as primary school starts at the age of 7 in both countries.

2. For Switzerland, data for 3-year-olds refer to enrolment in ISCED 02 only.

3. Year of reference for Canada is 2013 instead of 2014 for enrolment rates at ages 3 and 5 years; and 2012 for enrolment in primary education instead of 2013.


4. For Wales (UK), data for 5-year-olds refer to enrolment in ISCED 02 only.

5. Data are missing for enrolment rates at age 3 and 5 for Colombia and Iceland.

6. Data are missing for enrolment rates at age 5 in Estonia.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.3

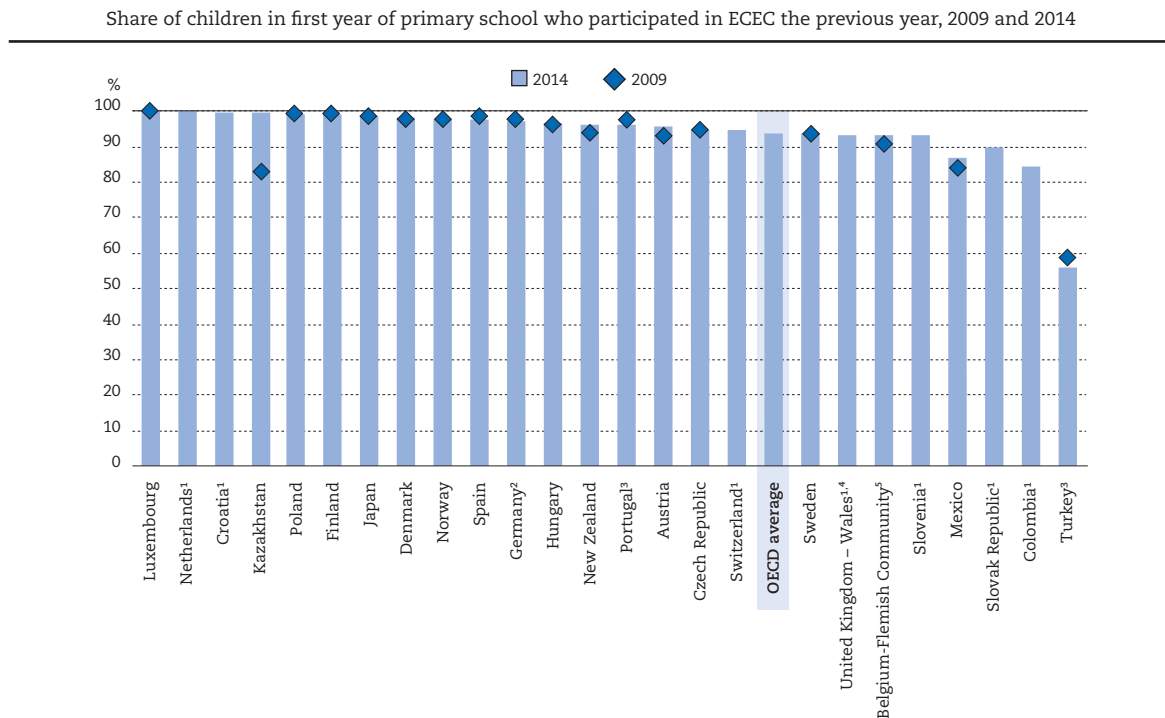
Source: For ages 3 and 5 years: Table C2.1, OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>; for primary education: Table C1.4, OECD (2015a), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495403>

In some countries – such as Chile, Poland and Finland – compulsory education starts in ECEC, which means that all children attend some form of ECEC before they enrol in school. In other countries enrolment in pre-primary education (kindergarten) before the start of primary school (see Table 2.3) is not compulsory but is still very common. For example, in the Netherlands pre-primary education is free for all children from the age of four in public settings. Kazakhstan's ECEC participation rate has benefitted from government financial support as well as the lowering of the compulsory education start age (see above). Whereas 83% of all pupils who started primary education in 2009 had attended preschool the year before, this had increased to nearly 100% by 2014.

In Turkey and Colombia, it is less common for children to have benefitted from some form of ECEC before primary school. This may be because there are insufficient places available in ECEC or because families are unable to travel to the nearest ECEC setting. It could also be related to lack of awareness by parents of the importance of ECEC or the limited coverage of early learning settings.

Figure 2.2 **The share of children participating in early childhood education and care is increasing (2009 and 2014)**



Notes: Information on “Share of children in first year of primary school who participated in ECEC the year before” is based on 25 countries. Countries are ranked in descending order for enrolment rates in 2014. The OECD average refers to the average of the countries included in this figure only.

1. For the Netherlands, Croatia, Switzerland, Wales (UK), Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Colombia there are no data for 2009.

2. For Germany, years of reference are 2013 instead of 2014 and 2010 instead of 2009.

3. For Portugal and Turkey, the year of reference is 2012 instead of 2009.

4. For Wales, the figure for 2014 is an estimate provided by the Welsh Government of between 90 and 97.5% children starting primary school who attended ECEC the year before.

5. For Belgium (Flemish Community), the year of reference is 2010 instead of 2009.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.4.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495411>

Children in half the countries experience two transitions between early childhood education and care and primary school

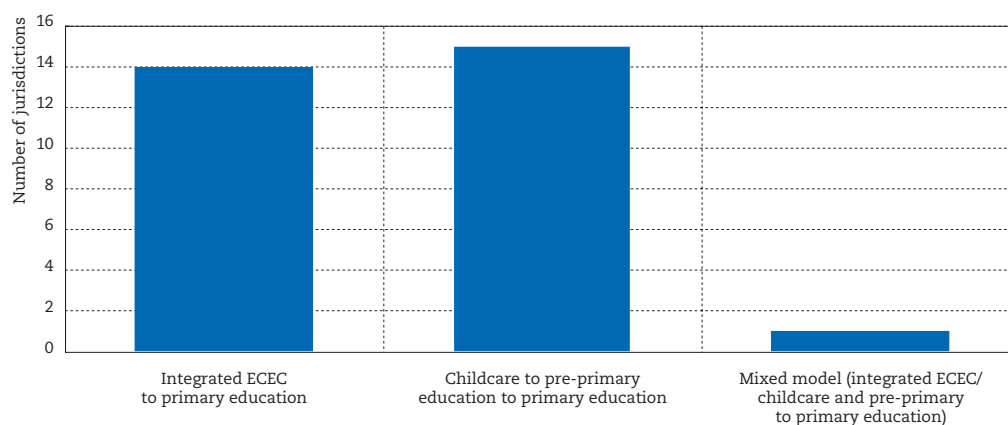
The fact that almost all children across the OECD attend some form of ECEC means that almost all children are experiencing a first transition from home to ECEC, followed by a second transition between ECEC and primary school. In addition, a large number of children have another, intermediate, transition to make before they reach primary school: from childcare (ISCED 01) to pre-primary education (ISCED 02). Some children may even transit from a pre-primary education provider or school to after-school care. In Sweden, for example, in the course of just over one year, children may experience two transitions between three types of school: from ECEC to preschool class (the separate transition year between ECEC and primary school), and then to compulsory school. A horizontal transition is added when starting in preschool class, when many children also begin to attend a recreation centre.⁶

In 15 of the 30 jurisdictions for which data are available (listed under Figure 2.3 and on Table 2.A.1), children have to make the transition from childcare to pre-primary education, and then from pre-primary education to primary school (Figure 2.1). This is the case in, for instance, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Switzerland and all Canadian provinces and territories (Table 2.1 and Table 2.A.1). In a few jurisdictions, preschool is integrated into primary school. In the

Netherlands for example, children start in childcare, and continue preschool education in primary school, after which they start first grade. In 47% of jurisdictions (14 out of 30), ECEC provision is integrated, meaning that there is no division between childcare and pre-primary education – ECEC is provided to the whole age range and children transit from an integrated ECEC setting to primary school. These integrated forms of ECEC mean that children experience fewer transitions.

Japan is an exception: children can either transit from an integrated ECEC setting to primary school, or they can start ECEC in childcare, move to a preschool and then start primary education. Japan is therefore shown as a mixed model in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 The majority of children experience at least two transitions before primary school (2016)




Note:

Information on “Organisation of transitions between ECEC and primary school” is based on 30 countries.

Based on data for the following 30 countries: Austria, Flemish Community of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales (United Kingdom).

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.1.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495429>

As mentioned by a few countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, transitions are more complex than 10 or 15 years ago. Nowadays not all children in an ECEC setting or preschool class attend the same primary school afterwards. This means that ensuring smooth transitions requires collaboration among several ECEC settings, preschool classes and primary schools, as arranging visits by children to all the future primary schools may not be feasible. How such collaboration is established and how to ensure transitions between these different settings is further discussed in Chapter 5.

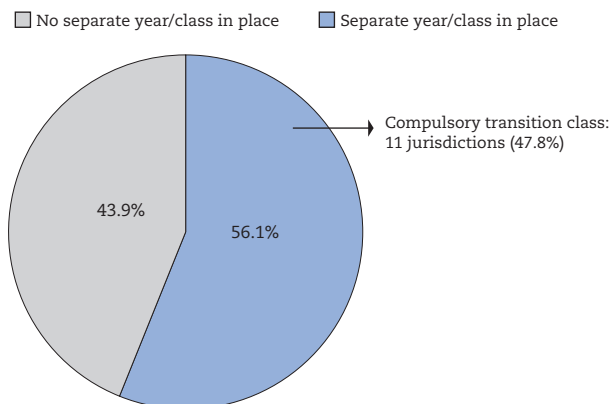
Transition classes are common

Some countries organise a separate year, class or group for children in their final year of ECEC or the year before children start primary school. Data derived from the 41 jurisdictions that responded to this part of the questionnaire⁷ find that over half (56.1% or 23 jurisdictions) have a separate transition year or a separate group, class or year in ECEC for children the year before they enter mandatory primary schooling (Figure 2.4). In 47.8% of these jurisdictions (11 out of 23⁸), this is a compulsory year or class.

In Sweden for instance, children start compulsory primary school at seven and there is a separate preschool class for six-year-olds to ease the transition between ECEC and school. In other countries the group or class for children’s last year before compulsory primary education is not as clearly separated from ECEC and primary education. This is the case in Sweden and also the Netherlands.

In the latter, five-year-olds are in *groep 2* before entering grade 1 in compulsory school and in *groep 1* when they are four years old. Both *groeps* are part of the primary school. In ten of the Canadian provinces and territories, children can participate in an optional kindergarten during the year before compulsory primary education. In the other three provinces, the kindergarten or “Grade Primary” year is part of compulsory primary education (Table 2.1).

Figure 2.4 **More than half the countries offer a separate year or class/group the year before compulsory primary school (2016)**




Notes:

Information on “Separate year or class/group in place for children the year before compulsory primary school” is based on 41 jurisdictions. Based on data for the 41 jurisdictions: Austria, Flemish Community of Belgium, Alberta (Canada), British Columbia (Canada), Manitoba (Canada), New Brunswick (Canada), Newfoundland and Labrador (Canada), Northwest Territories (Canada), Nova Scotia (Canada), Nunavut (Canada), Ontario (Canada), Prince Edward Island (Canada), Québec (Canada), Saskatchewan (Canada), Yukon (Canada), Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales (United Kingdom). Germany is excluded from this figure as some Länder have a separate group or class and others do not. Hence, both options are possible.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.2.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495432>

In most countries, pre-primary education is on the same premises as the primary school

While children may experience several ECEC transitions before they start school, these do not necessarily involve a physical move from one place to another. In the majority of jurisdictions (56.7% or 17 out of 30 jurisdictions⁹, pre-primary education is provided in the same building or on the same premises as the primary school (Table 2.2). This may soften the transition to school as children usually do not have to change building and are already familiar with the space and rooms, as well as with the staff. Moreover, the monitoring of child development may become more continuous as information can more easily be shared and methodologies more easily aligned. The topics of professional and pedagogical continuity are addressed in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

In Slovenia, there is no clear trend for the integration of ECEC settings and schools: just over half of all integrated preschool education settings are at the same location or in the same building as primary schools. For example, about one-quarter of Slovenian children attending ECEC do so in a kindergarten that is located in a school. Primary school in Slovenia is also integrated with lower secondary education, so children experience fewer transitions as the different levels of education are provided at the same location.

The Danish public school (*Folkeskole*) also covers both primary and lower secondary education, with the first stage of basic (primary) education including kindergarten class followed by grade 1

to 6, and second stage basic education including grade 7 to grade 9/10. Hence, *Folkeskole* provides education to pupils between the ages of 6 and 16/17 years.

In 15 jurisdictions (36.6%), ECEC and elementary schooling remain separate. In countries where pre-primary education is provided but some form of childcare is available too, childcare is usually not provided at primary schools. Norway and Finland keep ECEC and school mostly separate, although 20% of Finland's *Esiopetus* (pre-primary classes) are within primary schools. In Sweden it is common to have preschool class for six-year olds on the same premises as schools.

There can be some drawbacks in providing pre-primary education on the same premises, however. In Slovenia for example, since the counselling service in integrated settings is shared, counselling services felt that problems experienced by the school were treated as "more important" than problems experienced by the ECEC setting. Hence, they felt they were less able to provide their duties in giving advice and support to preschools. In addition, the preschool setting is often found to be less relevant or is even overlooked in self-evaluations when the two settings are integrated (Taštanoska, 2015).

Compulsory education does not always begin in primary school

The age at which compulsory education should begin is a topic of debate in OECD countries. Norway has had some discussion on whether compulsory education should start the year before primary school (which starts at six), i.e. whether it should make the final year of ECEC compulsory. The Norwegian Brenna Committee recommended keeping ECEC voluntary (NOU, 2010). One of the reasons was the lack of sufficient pedagogical staff in 2010.

This is also a topic of political interest in Sweden. A recent debate focused on whether preschool class should be made mandatory while remaining an independent form of education, or be replaced by a mandatory 10-year compulsory school starting at the age of six instead of seven. A commissioned report presented to the Swedish government in September 2015 recommended making the preschool class mandatory from the autumn of 2017 (SOU, 2015). At the time of writing, this was being considered by the government.

There is also some debate in Denmark over when children should start school. Several municipalities start school education in the spring instead of the usual primary school starting time of August. Children who start school in the spring usually do so in an after-school setting until August, when they can start actual primary school. But there are no curricular requirements for after-school settings and there is a risk that quality varies greatly between settings for this reason.

In most countries, compulsory education starts at the age of six, from the first year of primary school (Table 2.3). However, in some countries, compulsory education starts one year before the start of primary school, at the age of five; this is the case for Chile,¹⁰ Colombia, Croatia, Greece, and the Netherlands. In a few cases, compulsory education starts earlier, at the age of four (Luxembourg and Switzerland) and even at three (Hungary and Mexico). On the other hand, in a few countries, primary education does not start until seven (Finland, Kazakhstan, Poland and Sweden), although education is compulsory from the age of six (except in Sweden) (see Tables 2.1 and 2.3).

In countries with an early compulsory start of education (below the age of six), this involves mandatory schooling in some form of ECEC. In most countries this is in pre-primary education, preschool or kindergarten, although in a few it is in a transition grade, year or class (as in Colombia for instance).

Children start primary school at the age of six in almost all countries participating in this study. In the majority of countries, children also start attending primary school at the compulsory primary school age (94.8% in 2014).

In just a few countries, including Colombia and the Czech Republic, the start of school is more commonly delayed than in other countries. The most common reasons for children to start primary education later than normal include development and health issues. Most countries indicate that children who do not start compulsory primary schooling on time are deemed not “ready” to start school yet or have severe health issues which delay their start. When parents, guardians, ECEC settings or other early childhood professionals believe the child should stay one year longer in ECEC, at home, or another setting, a professional assessment of the child’s development is done. Based on this assessment, schools, professionals and parents (and sometimes local authorities) collectively decide to delay the child’s entry to primary education.

In Japan for example, there is a mandatory check for children before they start primary school to assess their physical and mental development. Based on this, treatment, advice and additional support to the child and parents can be provided (see Chapter 5). In 15 of the 16 German Länder there are also mandatory health checks for children before they start primary school (the exception is Bayern, where it is only mandatory in special cases). A paediatrician checks the child’s physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development and looks for visual, hearing or speech disorders. If the conclusion is that the child is not yet “ready” to start school, the child can receive additional support, including physiotherapy, ergo- or speech therapy. Preschools, however, are not informed of the results of the health check – the decision about a child’s readiness for school is taken by a paediatrician, whose advice is usually binding.

Postponing the start of primary school is becoming more common in Slovenia, where 5.5% of children had their start delayed in 2010, rising to 7.5% in 2015. According to Slovenia’s response to the survey, this increase is most likely due to a rise in parents’ requests to delay their child’s start in school, triggering a rise in school readiness assessments. Most children will then start school a year later, unless they continue to have severe problems (e.g. disability) and need care in a special institution or at home.

All countries note, however, that children with special needs are encouraged to participate in regular primary education. Policies strive to include special needs children in regular schools unless the severity of the development or health issue makes it impossible. In Wales, all children are entitled to start school at the same age, irrespective of their stage of development. Local authorities are required to ensure that children who have development delays are provided with the appropriate support to allow them to fully access education. The Foundation Phase curriculum framework supports this by emphasising the importance of meeting children’s individual needs. To ensure children receive the appropriate support, children are assessed at the start of the year in which they start primary education – i.e. the school year in which they turn five. This is done through the use of the Foundation Phase Profile, which was introduced on a statutory basis in September 2015. This profile is based on a range of observations and formative assessments of each child, through which an analysis of additional needs is made.

Other frequently mentioned reasons for children not starting public primary school on time are that they are home schooled, privately-schooled or attend school abroad. In Colombia, accessibility and cultural issues can prevent children from attending primary school. Some indigenous populations, for example, choose not to send their children to school as they have different cultural beliefs, or the distance to school is too far and families do not have the means to send their children to school. In Croatia, Roma children may not start primary education from the age of six, but they can participate in a two-year specially-designed preschool programme.

In some countries, children can start primary school earlier, although this is not common practice. In Finland for example, although children start primary school at the age of seven, a child has the right to start primary education one year earlier if psychological and, if necessary, medical reviews, state that he or she has the capabilities to do so successfully. In countries where early entrance is possible, most parents take this option.

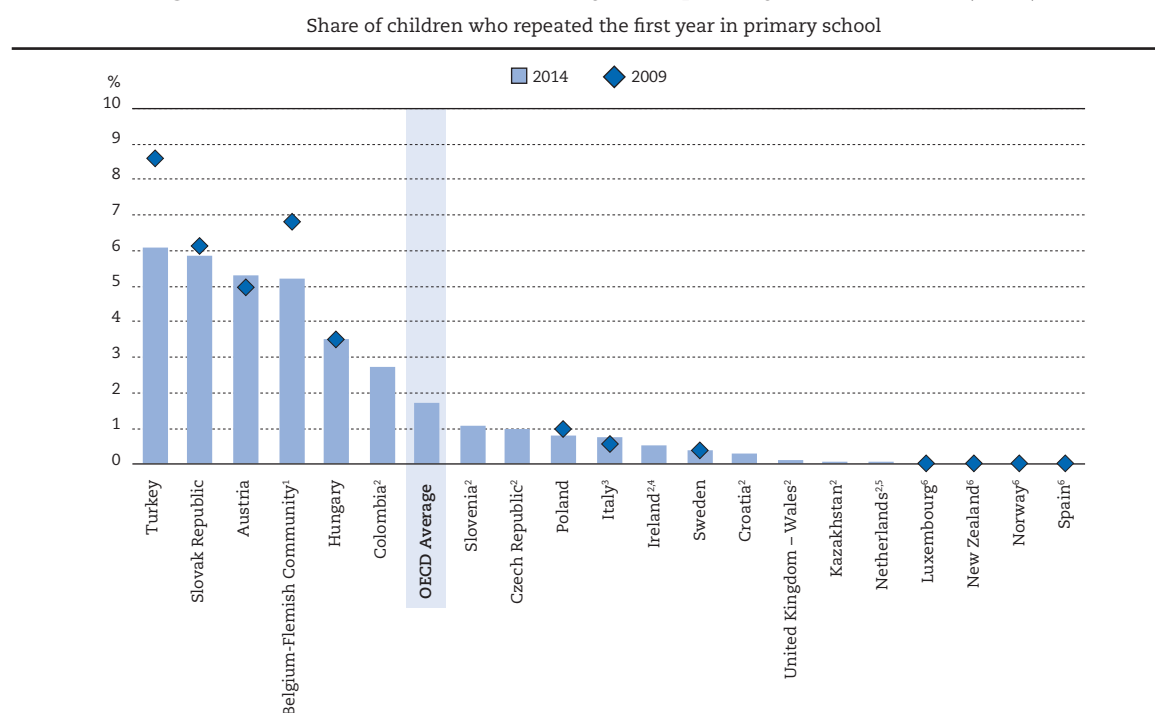
Retention in primary school is uncommon

The transition from ECEC to school plays an important role in a child's educational career and affects his or her success in primary education. A strong start in primary school and a high-quality transition from ECEC to primary school can reduce drop-out rates and increase academic engagement (UNICEF, 2012). A well-prepared start and transition are also linked to reduced grade retention, higher school completion rates, successful skill development and the acquisition of academic competencies and lifelong success (Arnold, 2004; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Duncan et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2012).

Of the 20 countries with data on first grade retention rates,¹¹ 80% allow children to repeat the first year of primary school, although in practice it is rather rare (Figure 2.5). Eight countries have retention rates of 1% or less. In Kazakhstan and the Netherlands repetition is virtually non-existent, at 0.08%. Slovenia's retention rate in 2014 was just above 1%. In four countries (Colombia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia), retention rates are between 1 and 5%, while in another four jurisdictions (Austria, Flemish Community of Belgium, Slovak Republic and Turkey), retention rates were over 5%. Turkey has the highest retention rate (6.1%), followed by the Slovak Republic (5.9%). Retention rates for the first year of primary school decreased between 2009 and 2014 in most countries.

Four countries (Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway and Spain) saw no children repeat their first year in primary school in 2014. This reflects their policy to avoid retaining children, opting instead for additional support to allow these children to continue to progress.

Figure 2.5 Retention rates in the first year of primary school are low (2014)



Notes: Information on "Retention rate in first year of primary school" is based on 20 countries.

1. For Belgium (Flemish Community), year of reference is 2011 instead of 2009.

2. For Colombia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Croatia, Wales, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands there is no data for 2009.

3. For Italy, year of reference is 2010 instead of 2009.


4. For Ireland, official numbers are below 0.5% but 0.5% has been indicated in this figure.

5. For the Netherlands, data refers to grade 2 repeaters (*groep 2*).

6. For Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway and Spain, data for 2014 and 2009 is 0% as there are no repeaters.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.5.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

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How do countries govern transitions?

Having explored some of the current trends related to transition, this section draws on the country data to explore how transition policies and practices are governed, designed and implemented. It also looks at how they are funded and monitored. Data come from the “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education” (Annex A), as well as from Education at a Glance 2016 (OECD, 2016).

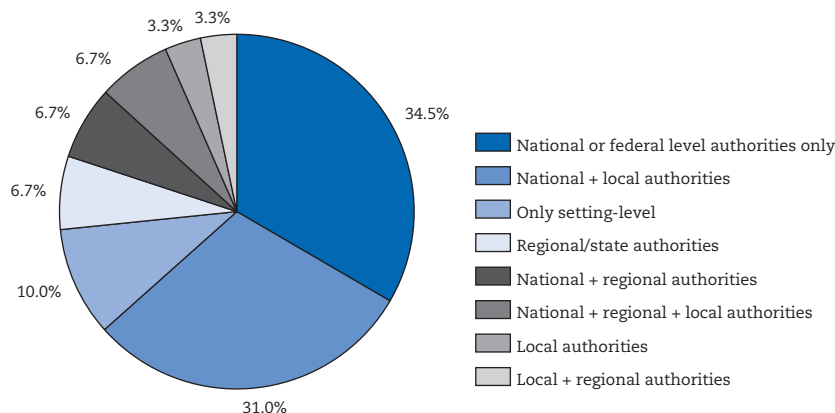
Countries vary in the administrative level at which transitions are governed

All countries mentioned that transitions are designed and implemented by the ECEC institutions and schools themselves. But national, regional and local authorities do have an influence on or say in transition policies. In over three-quarters of the countries that provided data (23 out of 29), national authorities are involved in the governance of transitions (Figure 2.6 and Table 2.4), though often in collaboration with another level of governance. In just over one-third of the countries, national authorities alone had the responsibility for designing, steering or guiding transition policies. This is the case in Chile, Colombia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Portugal and Turkey.

In 31% of the cases (9 countries out of 29 with available data), national or federal governments collaborate with local authorities (primarily municipalities): the four Nordic countries (Box 2.4), the Czech Republic, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Wales. It is less common for national/federal authorities to co-operate with regional governments on transitions, although this is the case in Austria and Spain. National or federal authorities collaborate with both regional and local authorities in Canada and Croatia (Table 2.4). In Canada, while there is no federal department of education, there are co-ordinating bodies such as the Provincial/Territorial Directors of Early Childhood Education and Care and the Early Childhood Learning and Development Committee, created to support the co-ordination of actions and activities in ECEC, along with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada¹² and the federal government. In countries where ECEC is mainly provided by private providers, the co-ordination with national, regional or local authorities may be even more complex.


Figure 2.6 **National government is involved in guiding transitions in three-quarters of participating jurisdictions (2016)**

Level of authorities involved in designing, steering or guiding transition practices



Note: The 29 countries included in the figure are: Austria, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales (United Kingdom). In all countries, settings decide on transition practices. The above data indicate whether authorities can be involved in designing, shaping or steering transition policies at setting level. For data by country, see Table 2.4 in Chapter 2 (below).

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495457>

In Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand, ECEC settings and schools have full autonomy over how, if and when to plan transitions. In New Zealand, school leaders and ECEC services develop and implement transition policies that best fit the needs of individual communities, often with support from Communities of Learning. This is a new initiative that aims to connect teachers from schools and ECEC services to share teaching practices and establish coherent educational pathways for children transitioning through the education system. The collaboration that occurs through these communities can inform the development and implementation of transition policies.

Box 2.4 Case studies: Local autonomy in governing transitions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

Denmark

In practice, ECEC settings and schools develop their own transition methods in Denmark, while local politicians set the overall political and economic framework for schools and ECEC in their municipality. Transitions are therefore not governed by national or regional authorities, but are instead steered by them through regulations or a national curriculum framework for both ECEC and primary education. The 98 municipalities are responsible for facilitating the children's transitions from ECEC to primary school and for formalising co-operation between the local ECEC settings and schools. Practices and policies thus differ across municipalities, although they all highlight the importance of mutual co-operation between ECEC settings and primary schools within municipalities.

Most municipalities in Denmark have developed transition guidelines for the settings involved. These may include the involvement of parents, communication between ECEC and school, and how to support a child with special needs.

Norway

In Norway, local authorities (municipalities) and the ECEC setting's owners (public and private) also decide on the organisation of the transition from ECEC to school. How ECEC settings and schools co-operate is not regulated at the national level. Hence there may be local differences in how transitions are arranged. This is in line with the principle of local and municipal autonomy in Norway, which allows for solutions based on local needs and in response to local challenges. The municipality is on the one hand the local authority for all ECEC settings, public and private, and on the other hand the owner of both schools and public ECEC settings. The municipality provides guidance to settings and ensures that kindergartens are operated in accordance with regulations and standards, which includes arranging a proper transition from ECEC to school. In addition, a county governor provides guidance to municipalities and setting owners on the national policies and administrative decisions. The county governor supervises the implementation of the responsibilities by the municipality. Local procedures for the transition between ECEC and school must be in accordance with the Kindergarten Act (to which ECEC settings adhere), the Education Act (for schools) and minimum regulations.

Sweden

The Swedish education system is also highly decentralised. The parliament and the government set out the goals and guidelines of education in the Education Act, various ordinances and national curricula. But the municipalities and independent education providers are responsible for organising the education within this framework. To ensure national legislation and guidelines are implemented, the National Agency for Education (NAE) and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate supervise, support, and evaluate the settings, including how they handle transitions, in order to improve quality and outcomes.

Sources: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016; Danish Ministry for Children and Social Affairs (2016), *Denmark Country Background Report on Transitions*, Ministry for Children and Social Affairs, Copenhagen, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-denmark.pdf; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2017), *Norway Country Background Report on Transitions from ECEC to Primary School*, Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, Oslo, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-norway.pdf; Swedish Ministry of Education and Research (2017), *Sweden Country Background Report on Transitions from ECEC to Primary School*, Ministry of Education and Research, Stockholm, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-sweden.pdf.

Other actors, such as inspectorates, can be involved in governing transitions

Besides governments and providers, other agencies can support the governance of transitions, including inspectorates, curriculum development agencies and early development agencies (Figure 2.7).

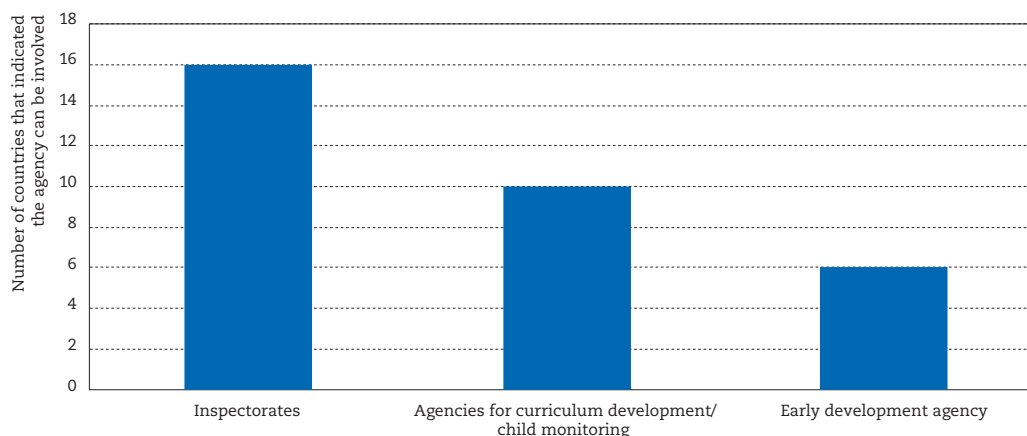
In 16 of the 18 countries that provided data, inspectorates can be involved in the governance of transitions by monitoring their overall quality, or in specific aspects such as collaboration with other education settings or parents. In Ireland for instance, the recently established Early Years Inspectorate in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) carries out early years education-focused inspections that complement the monitoring and regulatory inspection processes carried out by Tusla.¹³ These include inspecting children's educational and routine transitions, such as from home to the ECEC setting, from preschool to primary school, moving within or between rooms in the settings and between each element of the daily routine. The aim is to ensure they are sensitively managed and intentionally planned.

Curriculum development agencies can also be engaged in defining or setting the scene for transitions by addressing transitions in the curriculum framework, for example. These agencies are usually part of the ministry responsible for ECEC and/or primary education. Over half of the countries (10 out of 18) indicated that a curriculum or child monitoring agency may be engaged in transitions. For example, in the Netherlands the SLO (Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling; Foundation for the Development of Learning Plans¹⁴) supports organisations and schools in developing plans to ensure smooth transitions, such as continuous learning trajectories.

Early development agencies that support child development can also support the transition. This was reported to be the case in six of the countries. They may, for instance, provide help to children with special needs or conduct health checks before or just after the transit to primary education to facilitate the transition and ensure children receive appropriate support (for more, see Chapter 5). For example, Greece highlighted that school advisors are available to provide guidance to settings on transitions, among other topics.

Figure 2.7 **A variety of agencies may be involved in transitions (2016)**

Agencies that can be involved in designing, steering or guiding transition practices




Note: Countries indicated which agencies can be involved in transitions, and some indicated more than one agency per country.

Based on data for the following 18 countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales (United Kingdom).

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.6.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495469>

Average annual expenditure per child is lower for pre-primary education than primary education in two-thirds of countries

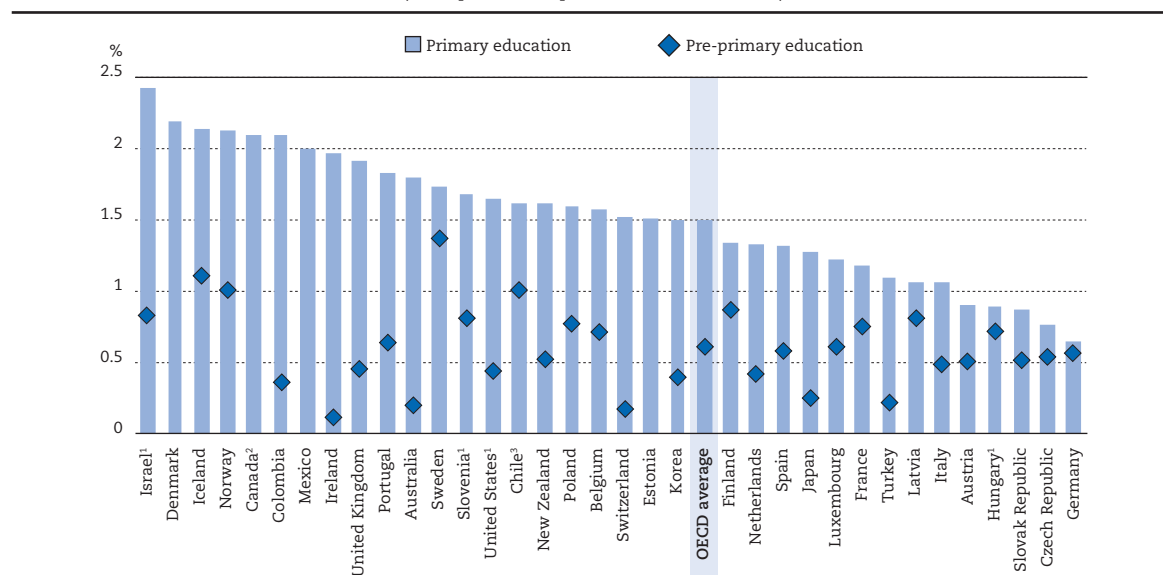
Across countries, spending levels on pre-primary education as a share of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) are much lower than spending levels on primary education. On average

across the OECD, 1.5% of a country's GDP is spent on primary education (ISCED 1), while 0.6% is spent on pre-primary education (ISCED 02), that is, less than half (Figure 2.8). However, many countries are increasing public spending to expand participation in quality ECEC. Expenditure by OECD countries on ECEC (ISCED 0) increased on average 45% between 2000 and 2013, from 0.48% of GDP to 0.69% (OECD, 2017).

There are large differences among countries in expenditure levels. Israel, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Canada and Colombia all spend over 2% of their GDP on compulsory primary schooling, while Austria, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Germany spend less than 1% on primary education. High levels of expenditure on primary education do not necessarily predict high spending on pre-primary education. Iceland and Norway have high spending levels on primary education and spend over 1% of their GDP on pre-primary education, which is well above the average. On the other hand, Colombia, Ireland, Korea, Switzerland, and the United States have average or above-average spending levels on primary education, but spend 0.4% or less of their GDP on pre-primary education, which is well below the average (Figure 2.8). These figures are influenced by differences in the age at which children in OECD countries transition from ECEC to primary school. In Australia, for example, children typically start primary school at five, whereas in some other countries children start primary school at six or seven. This means that some countries' expenditure on ECEC as a proportion of GDP includes the costs of educating five and even six-year-olds, whereas in other countries, such as Australia, these costs are typically captured as part of the "primary education" expenditure.

Figure 2.8 **Expenditure on primary education is consistently higher than on pre-primary education (2013)**

Expenditure on pre-primary and primary education institutions as a percentage of GDP (from public and private sources of funds)



Notes:

Countries are ranked in descending order by public and private expenditure on primary education.


1. For Hungary, Israel, Slovenia and the United States, the data for pre-primary education include some expenditures on childcare as well.

2. For Canada, year of reference is 2012 instead of 2013. Data for Canada on expenditure as a percentage of GDP for primary education include lower secondary education.

3. For Chile, year of reference is 2014 instead of 2013.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.7.

Source: OECD (2016) Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators, Tables B2.1 and C2.3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495477>

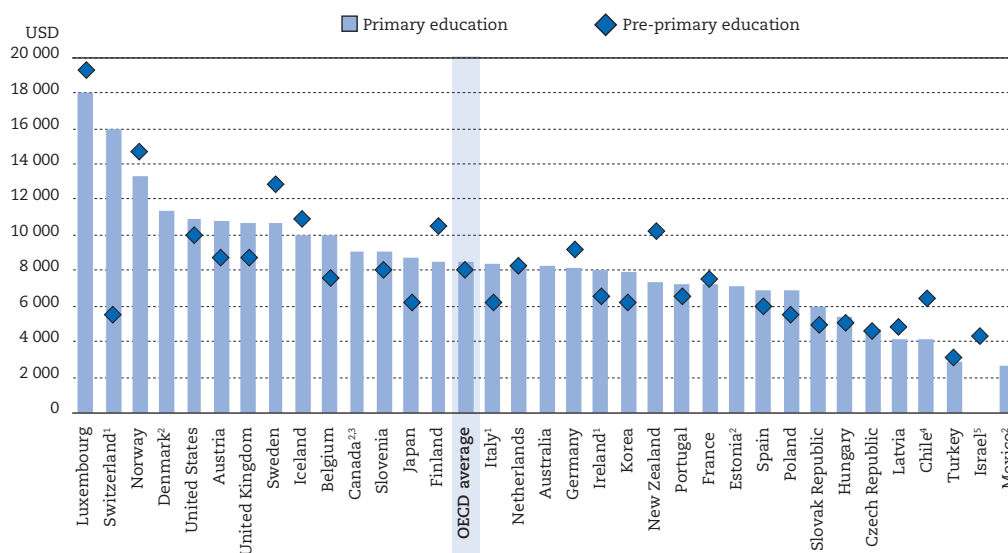
The greater share of spending on primary versus pre-primary may be partially explained by the compulsory nature of primary education, which means that participation rates are higher. Also, primary education continues for a longer period of time than ECEC, hence costs are higher. In addition, ECEC is not regarded as a policy priority in all countries.

For these reasons, the share of GDP spent on pre-primary versus primary education does not tell us what budget is allocated per child. This depends on the number of children participating in ECEC and compulsory primary school, and the total budget available for each educational level. Doing this calculation for countries with available data shows that the average annual public expenditure per child is slightly higher for children in primary education (Figure 2.9). On average in 2013, OECD countries spent USD 8 461 on every child attending primary school, compared to USD 8 070 for every child in a pre-primary setting. In two-thirds of countries (19 of the 30 countries with data available for both levels), annual expenditure per child was lower in pre-primary education than in primary education. But in one-third of countries (11 out of 30), including Australia, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden, expenditure levels for pre-primary education were higher. Hence, in the majority of OECD countries, per-child expenditure is higher at primary level than at pre-primary level. Differences in expenditure between pre-primary and primary are due to differences in staff qualifications, statutory salaries and child-staff ratios.

Luxembourg tops all other countries for per-child expenditure in both pre-primary and primary school. Austria, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States also have high levels of public expenditure for both levels of education. In Switzerland, spending per child in school is far above the average, while expenditure per child in pre-primary education is far below the average.

Figure 2.9 The majority of countries spent more per child for primary education (2013)

Annual public expenditure per child in pre-primary and primary education, equivalent USD converted using purchasing power parity (PPPs) for GDP, based on full-time equivalents



Notes:

PPP: Purchasing power parity

Countries are ranked in descending order by expenditure per child in primary education.

1. For Switzerland, Ireland and Italy data concern public institutions only.

2. For Denmark, Canada, Estonia and Mexico, data is missing for annual expenditure per child in pre-primary education.


3. For Canada, year of reference is 2012 instead of 2013.

4. For Chile, year of reference is 2014 instead of 2013.

5. For Israel, data is missing for annual expenditure per child in primary education.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.8.

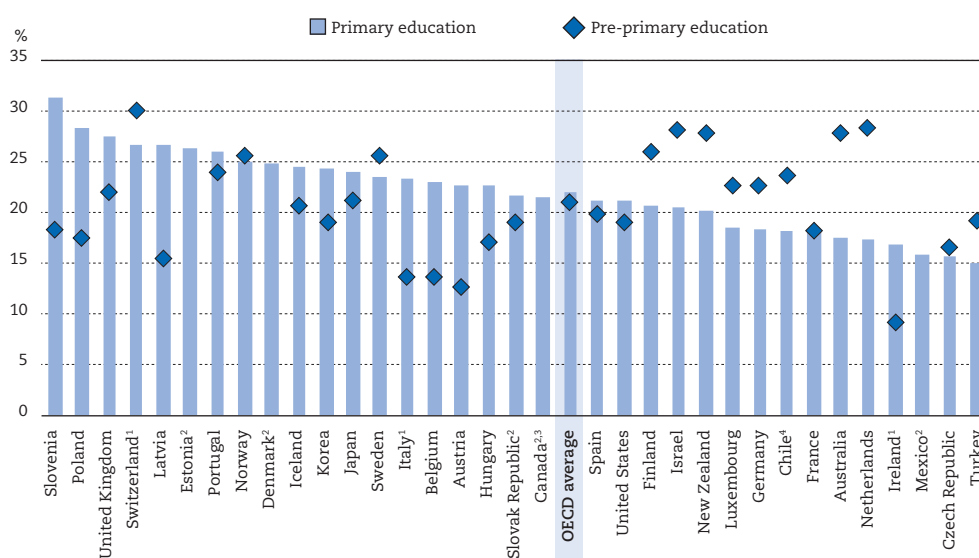
Source: Tables B1.1 and C2.3A, OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495488>

The share of spending per child in GDP per capita may be a better reflection of the priority given to pre-primary and primary education (Figure 2.10). This is particularly true for primary education, which is compulsory in all countries. Expenditure per child averages 22% of GDP per capita at the primary level and 21% at the pre-primary level. Countries with low levels of expenditure per child may show distributions of investment relative to GDP per capita that are similar to countries with a high level of expenditure per child. Poland, for instance, has below average expenditures per child at both primary and pre-primary level, but spends more per child relative to GDP per capita than the average.

Figure 2.10 **There are large variations in average annual expenditure per child as a share of GDP for primary education and pre-primary education (2013)**

Annual expenditure per child in pre-primary and primary education for all services, relative to per capita GDP (% GDP per capita)



Notes: Data for pre-primary education based on own calculations.

1 For Switzerland, Ireland and Italy data concern public institutions only.


2 For Canada, year of reference is 2012 instead of 2013.

3 For Chile, year of reference is 2014 instead of 2013.

4 For Chile, year of reference is 2014 instead of 2013.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.9.

Source: OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016*, OECD Indicators, Tables B1.4 and C2.3, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495495>

Monitoring transitions is not common

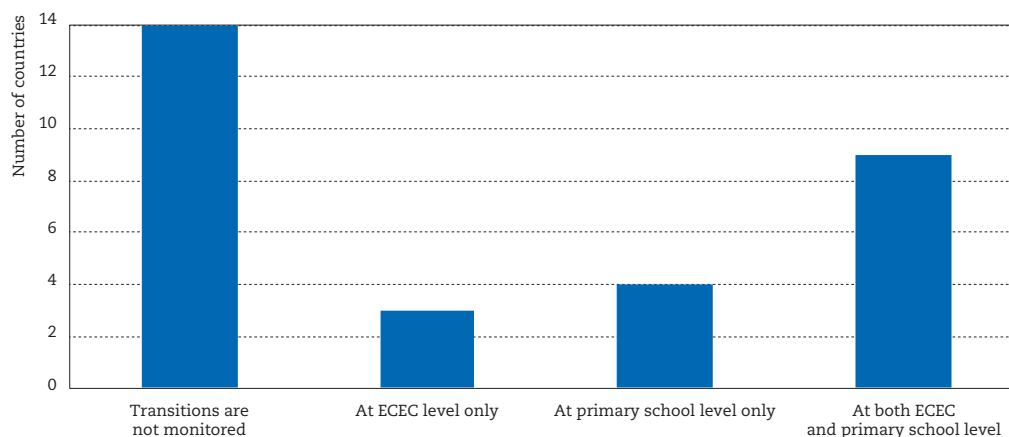
In many countries, monitoring transitions does not necessarily refer to a traditional form of inspecting or evaluating settings and their practices. It often refers to the collection of child development information at a certain point in time (before or after they start primary school); or school administration data that monitors whether children start primary school, what their background characteristics are, and whether they were in ECEC before starting school.

In 14 of the 30 countries with available data, it is not mandatory to monitor transitions (Figure 2.11), although providers can decide to monitor them themselves, as in Norway for instance. In the Netherlands, transitions are not monitored by inspectorates but can be the topic of research; researchers may monitor transition case studies, for example. Nevertheless, in the slight majority of countries (16 out of 30), transitions are monitored. In nine countries monitoring is done at both ECEC and primary school level: Canada, Czech Republic, Colombia, Hungary, Japan, Slovenia, Spain,

Sweden and Switzerland. In four countries (Denmark, Poland, Portugal and Wales) it is more common to monitor transitions at primary school level, while the remaining three countries monitor them primarily at ECEC level (Austria, Croatia and the Slovak Republic).

Figure 2.11 **Countries vary in the levels at which they monitor transitions (2016)**


Number of countries that indicated at what educational level transitions are commonly monitored



Note: This figure does not refer to national practices but indicates what is common in countries. In countries where transitions are not commonly monitored, local- or setting-level monitoring transition practices may occur.

Based on available data for the following 30 countries/jurisdictions: Austria, Flemish Community of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales (United Kingdom). Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A10.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495509>

Transitions are monitored using several instruments

No one single method is used for monitoring transitions, and it is uncommon to monitor transition practices only or independently. Instead, transitions are part of broader monitoring of ECEC or school settings and are usually conducted at local level. This is in line with the trend described earlier, whereby transition policies and practices are commonly developed and implemented at local or institutional level. Of the 16 countries that monitor transitions, 9 indicated that transitions can be included in inspections (Figure 2.12; Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland). Twelve jurisdictions and countries mentioned that parental surveys were common tools for assessing or evaluating transitions (Austria, some Canadian jurisdictions, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Japan, New Zealand, Poland and Portugal).

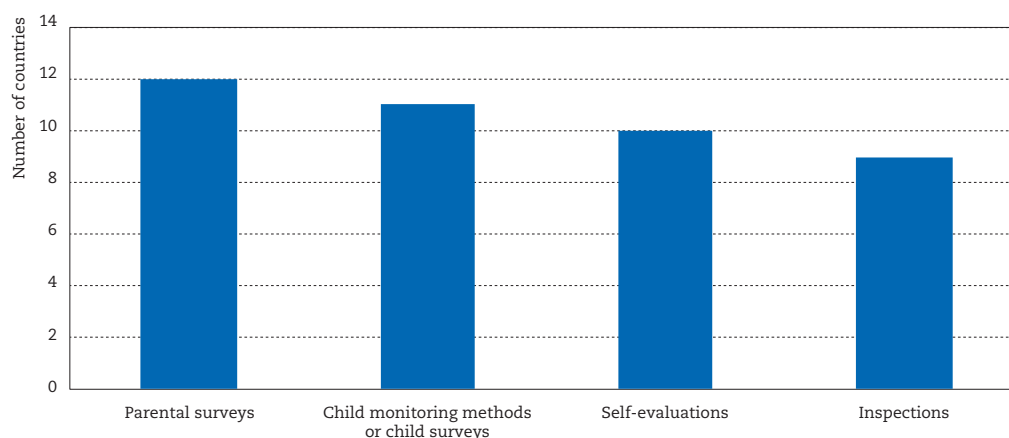
Ten countries mentioned the use of self-evaluations by settings: Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.

Child monitoring methods, such as in the form of portfolios, child development reports or development assessments, are another common tool for monitoring transitions in 11 countries (Austria, some Canadian jurisdictions, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland). Canada uses teacher report cards, individual educational plans or the Early Development Instrument. In Denmark, there is a mandatory language assessment in place for all children in preschool class which aims to adapt a teacher's planning and practices to the child's language skills. In Hungary, an examination of a child's maturity for school education can be conducted based on child development documentation. If additional assessment is needed, the support of specialised pedagogical services or experts (e.g. psychologists) is called for. These services

screen for any special needs of the child. In Switzerland, an assessment of a child's readiness for school is part of transition process. Further information on the use of child assessments or child development information in transitions can be found in Chapter 4.

Figure 2.12 **Parent surveys are the most commonly used monitoring instruments (2016)**

Number of countries mentioning common use of instrument




Note: This figure does not refer to nationally prescribed tools or instruments but indicates what tools can be commonly used in countries. Countries were able to indicate more than one instrument or tool.

Based on available data for the following 16 countries: Austria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland.

Data by country can be found in Annex 2.A, Table 2.A.11.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933495510>

As transitions are usually monitored at the local level, settings may conduct their own evaluations to monitor the transition to school. Eleven countries mentioned using these self-evaluations: Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Box 2.5 explains how inspections and self-evaluations can contribute to monitoring transitions in Sweden. Further information on monitoring practices and policies in ECEC can be found in *Starting Strong IV* (OECD, 2015b).

Box 2.5 Case study: Monitoring transitions in Sweden

In Sweden, transitions can be subject to national inspections and can also included in settings' self-evaluations.

On a national level, the Swedish School Inspectorate conducts regular supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from preschool to adult education. Activities are scrutinised on a number of points, transitions included. The Education Act stipulates that every education provider within the school system should systematically plan, follow up, evaluate and develop their education through evaluations. This should be done with the participation of teachers, preschool teachers, other staff and pupils. Children in the preschool and their guardians should also participate in the evaluation and development of education.

No practices or tools are prescribed, although the National Agency for Education provides a self-evaluation form for preschool classes and schools to assess transition. The form is to be filled out by both preschools and primary schools with head teachers being responsible for pulling together the results. The form aims to analyse what has worked well and what needs to be improved, and covers topics such as co-operation with parents and guardians, collaboration with stakeholders, documentation on transition, transition dialogues, and the ability to meet the needs of the child.

Sources: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016; Swedish Ministry of Education and Research (2017), *Sweden Country Background Report on Transitions from ECEC to Primary School*, Ministry of Education and Research, Stockholm, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SS5-country-background-report-sweden.pdf.

What are the common organisational and governance challenges and how are they overcome?

While the topic of transitions is gaining political attention, and progress has been made, challenges remain. Learning from the experiences of countries that have tackled issues in designing and implementing transition policies can be instructive and provide inspiration to others.

This section explores some common organisational and governance challenges facing countries in their attempts to improve transitions, and outlines the strategies that various countries have used to overcome them (summarised in Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 **Challenges and strategies in strengthening transitions**

Challenges	Strategies
Lack of coherence across regions in transition approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national plan or strategy to improve coherency • Develop national guides or guidelines • Develop local guides or guidelines
Difficulty in engaging all actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the state of transitions • Include transitions in laws or mandatory curriculum frameworks • Inform local governments and settings of example transition initiatives
Weak collaboration among stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review collaboration frequently • Discuss transitions with key stakeholders regularly • Provide counselling and guidance
Inequity in transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide language support • Set up financial support programmes • Prioritise participation in ECEC for target groups • Provide additional financial or human resources for ECEC settings

Challenge 1: Lack of coherence across regions in transition approaches

In federal countries there can be large regional differences in curriculum content, pedagogical concepts, or minimum standards as the responsibility for regulations, design and/or content lie with individual state governments. In most other countries, responsibilities for transitions are with local authorities or the provider (see above). This may also complicate support for children transitioning from an ECEC setting to school as standards for ECEC and primary education settings may vary widely between states. When ECEC is offered mainly by private providers the co-ordination between ECEC and primary school settings or between different levels of authorities may be even more complex.

Where settings themselves have autonomy in deciding how transitions are taken care of, the result can be a wide range of practices with little alignment between them. In Austria for instance, because of the decentralised ECEC system, ECEC settings often do not co-operate with primary schools. Denmark and Norway also highlight that the decentralisation of transition responsibilities results in variations between municipalities in how transitions are handled, and thus, in varying levels of transition quality. What strategies have countries devised to improve coherence?

Strategy: Develop a national plan or strategy

Wales was experiencing challenges in implementing the Foundation Phase, the curriculum framework for three to seven-year-olds. It was found that the framework was not implemented everywhere coherently, resulting in variations in quality, in transitions and in how the framework was used. In response to this issue, a Foundation Phase Action Plan¹⁵ was developed and published in late 2016 (Welsh Government, 2016). The plan consists of a number of approaches to improve consistency across ECEC and primary schools. These include updating training of staff, improving initial teacher training, providing further parental engagement support materials, and school-to-school support.

Austria has developed a cross-national strategy to facilitate co-operation between ECEC and schools to strengthen transitions (Box 2.6). Many stakeholders were involved in the development phase of this strategy, which is expected to ensure good guidance for settings involved in transitions, and should improve the co-ordination of school entry.

Box 2.6 Case study: Developing a national transition strategy in Austria

In September 2014, the network project “ECEC – primary school” was initiated in Austria. A steering committee consisting of a wide range of stakeholders including boards of education, federal state governments, school psychologists, university colleges of teacher education, representatives from different ECEC settings and schools were actively working on a cross-regional strategy for transitions.

The aim of the project was to facilitate co-operation between teachers of kindergartens and schools, to ensure qualitative guidance, and to better co-ordinate the phase of school entry. The last year of ECEC and the first two years of primary school are regarded as the school entry phase. A total of 35 primary schools and co-operating kindergartens across the country’s nine federal states participated in the project.

The project researched the factors associated with a successful transition, and what aspects are important for staff initial and in-service education and training to ensure a strong start in school. The project has so far resulted in improved co-operation between ECEC and primary school through collaborative projects; the collection of best practice examples; the development of transition teams to support the school and the ECEC setting in the transition (see Chapter 5); and portfolios to guide transitions.

Building on the project’s output, a school entry and primary school legislative package was passed in July 2016. Guidelines on transition from ECEC to primary schooling were published by the Charlotte Bühler Institute. Implementation began at the start of the school year 2016/17.

Sources: OECD Network on ECEC, “Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education”, June 2016; Charlotte Bühler Institut (2016), *Austria Country Background Report on Transitions from ECEC to Primary School*, Charlotte Bühler Institut, Vienna, www.oecd.org/edu/school/SSS-country-background-report-austria.pdf.

Strategy: Develop national guides or guidelines

The Ministry of Education and Research in **Norway** published the national guide, *From the Eldest to the Youngest*, in 2008 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2008). The guide was developed for municipalities, ECEC settings and schools and aims to strengthen the coherence between ECEC and school, and create a smooth transition for children starting school. It is based on research findings and experiences from local transition projects. It also refers to *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006) and relevant Norwegian White Papers from 2008 and earlier. It is not mandatory to use the guide, though a survey in 2010 showed that about one-third of kindergartens do use it as a basis for their work in preparing children for school (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training published a guide in 2014 on transitions for children with special needs in particular. Another interesting initiative is the development of a checklist and guidelines for good transitions between ECEC and school by the National Parents’ Committee for Kindergarten in co-operation with the National Parents’ Committee for Primary and Secondary Education and the Union of Education Norway. These are available online.¹⁶

Strategy: Develop local guides or guidelines

Locally developed resources and advice on transitions are also available in **Norway**. The municipality of Oslo has developed a guide with practical examples of how kindergartens and schools should co-operate on transition. The municipality of Bergen has a co-operation plan for ECEC and school. This plan includes a description of the foundation for co-operation and coherence, including relevant regulations and steering documents, research and knowledge about learning, relevant learning content and the learning culture in both ECEC and school. It also includes information about how co-operation can and should happen in Bergen municipality.

In **Denmark**, although responsibility for transitions lies with the municipalities, schools and ECEC settings can decide what practices they use. Most municipalities have developed local transition guidelines for settings, including information on involving parents, communication between ECEC and school settings, and how to support a child with special needs. These guidelines help settings strengthen transitions as they provide some support and guidance. A national network (named BKF) including municipal representatives of ECEC, school, and social affairs allows best practices to be shared on the use of the guidelines and municipalities to learn from each other in order to better align transitions.

Challenge 2: Difficulty in engaging all actors

While national or federal authorities, and research findings, may emphasise the importance of continuous learning experiences and good transitions from ECEC to primary school, it is important that this enthusiasm is shared by local authorities and all the settings involved in implementing them. A challenge arises, though, when certain actors are not actively involved in drafting or implementing transition approaches or when actors are not very keen on or proactive about collaborating.

Strategy: Include transitions in laws or mandatory curriculum frameworks

Several countries include the topic of transitions in their (mandatory) curriculum frameworks or in laws. This obliges local authorities, ECEC settings and schools to implement them. **Denmark's Act on Day Care of 2007** emphasises that one of the purposes of ECEC is to create better coherence between different levels of education, and hence municipalities and settings are mandated to ensure this coherence.

Norway's Education Act and the Quality Framework for schools state that good and systematic co-operation between different education providers eases the transition from one education stage to the next in the course of one's education. These documents express the expectation that there should be good connections between ECEC and school.

In both its curriculum for pre-primary education and curriculum for primary education, **Finland** emphasises that the different settings, as well as other stakeholders involved in transitions, should collaborate and ensure a smooth transition. They mention that the different actors and levels of education should form an "entity" and they should be well aligned with one another.

Strategy: Share example transition initiatives with local governments and settings

In **Japan**, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) organises meetings for boards of education and the supervisors of schools and ECEC settings to encourage them to strengthen transitions, amongst other areas. These meetings, held in each prefecture, consist of presentations by local governments on their innovative policy initiatives for transitions. In addition, in 2009, the national government prepared a collection of case examples on transitions. These examples were published and distributed to prefectural and municipal governments. In 2016, the national government plans to implement a programme which deploys early childhood education advisors to settings to provide guidance and advice on improving quality of care and education, including transitions where needed.

Strategy: Monitor the state of transitions

One strategy for keeping track of whether municipalities and settings are developing and implementing practices and approaches to improve transitions can be to monitor them. **Japan** does thus under its nationally published *Report on the Seamless Connection between Early Childhood Education and Primary Education* (2010) as a measure for promoting transition-related initiatives. The report provides guidance on how municipalities can evolve from co-operation to connection in transitions. This is indicated in the form of steps. Step 0 means that there are no plans for co-operation in

place; Step 1 indicates that the municipality is at a stage where it wishes to start co-operation on transitions; Step 2 means that several classes, meetings and other events are organised but no curricula regarding transitions have been implemented yet; Step 3 is similar to Step 2, but the municipality has developed and implemented transition curricula; and Step 4 indicates that reviews are being conducted on how to further improve transitions and the accompanying curricula. Japan conducts annual surveys of the actions municipalities have taken to strengthen transitions and to record the step they have reached. The 2014 survey results revealed that 59.6% of the municipalities were at Step 2, 17% at Step 3, and 9.6% were at Step 0. Compared to the previous surveys, the number of municipalities at Step 3 had increased and the number of municipalities at Step 0 had decreased. These results suggest that the implementation of transition practices is growing across the country, though further efforts are needed to extend them.

Challenge 3: Weak collaboration among stakeholders

Collaboration between ECEC settings and primary schools, and with parents and other relevant stakeholders, play an important role in ensuring transitions are successful. Yet countries indicate that arranging collaboration among the different stakeholders involved in transitions can be difficult. For example, stakeholders do not co-operate with one another at all, or if they do, collaboration can be weak. To support or strengthen stakeholder collaboration, some countries review collaboration, while others discuss the topic of transitions with different stakeholders regularly, or provide guidance to stakeholders.

In addition, training in transitions for ECEC and school staff can support collaboration and improve transitions for children. Chapter 3 on professional continuity addresses the topic of training, among others, while Chapter 5 addresses the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and country strategies to ensure collaboration in more depth.

Strategy: Review collaboration frequently

In **Sweden**, the National Agency for Education (NAE) has developed a self-evaluation form on transition for preschool classes and schools. This form aims to analyse what has worked well and what needs to be improved during transition phases. Through the use of this form, settings can evaluate co-operation with parents and guardians, and with stakeholders, documentation on transition, transition dialogues, and the ability to meet the needs of the child. It provides useful insights into what needs to be improved.

In **Japan**, each ECEC setting and school monitors their own performance and practice through self-evaluations, as well as through stakeholder reviews. Settings and schools draw up a plan for collaboration and exchange at the beginning of each school year. This plan sets out their goals and initiatives for the coming year. At the end of a school year, a review meeting is held to assess and review the content of the plan and its goals. The issues that arise at this review meeting are taken into account when setting up the following year's plan. This contributes to self-awareness within settings of their co-operation, while providing the opportunity to improve their collaboration and strengthen transition for children.

Strategy: Discuss transitions with key stakeholders regularly

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Directorate for Education and Training in **Norway** consult regularly with key actors on current issues, including transition from kindergarten to school as necessary. Among the key actors are the National Parent's Committee for Kindergarten, labour unions, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the National Association of Private Kindergartens. This creates greater support from the field for transition practices and policies, including ECEC settings and schools, as well as families.

When it comes to larger changes and reforms, the **Swedish** Government uses major consultations with the key stakeholders involved in setting school policy. A common practice is to refer proposals to the stakeholders for consideration. This practice has been a part of the Swedish policy-making process for a long time with the main purpose being to inform the government of the various possible consequences of a proposal. The public and other stakeholders can provide statements and opinions, or suggestions. All opinions are combined and taken into consideration by the government, but are not decisive to the outcome of the policy-making process. This can be seen as an opportunity to foster political participation and strengthen democracy.

In **Slovenia** too, there are consultation procedures among the stakeholders in designing education policy, including transitions. The Ministry of Education proposes new or changes to laws and legislation in co-operation with representative associations of municipalities. Though it is not obligatory, the ministry usually also seeks the opinions of other relevant associations, including the associations of kindergartens, ECEC heads, and parents. When changes affect the minimum quality standards, the Minister of Education also seeks the opinion of the Expert Council for General Education and the teachers' union as well as the Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia.

Strategy: Provide counselling and guidance

In **Slovenia**, counselling services are available in ECEC settings and schools. These services help settings in organising their education, and when needed, transitions between the two settings. The counselling service participates in the planning, establishment, and maintenance of appropriate conditions for a safe and supportive educational environment that allows for optimal development – thus also during transition periods. The counselling service can also support ECEC and primary school teachers and parents.

In the **Netherlands**, the SLO (Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling, or the Foundation for the Development of Learning Plans) designs or helps design continuous learning trajectories for ECEC organisations and schools to ensure better and smoother transitions. SLO serves as the national institute for curriculum development in the Netherlands. It is an independent, non-profit organisation, bridging the contexts of policy, research and practice.

Challenge 4: Inequity in transitions

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often perform less well in education compared to their more advantaged peers (see Chapters 1 and 6). Therefore, countries implement a wide range of policies and programmes to improve equity in the early years and support disadvantaged groups of children, such as children with learning difficulties. Most of these equity programmes are usually not focused on the transition phase per se, but aim at helping children with specific needs throughout their early years, including the period when children transit to primary school. Disadvantaged children can benefit from additional support during the early years and start of primary school, and from high-quality transitions between ECEC and primary school (see Chapter 1).

Some countries, such as Wales, are taking regulatory measures to ensure equity across ECEC and schools. The introduction of a new Additional Learning Needs Act in the next few years will strengthen the role of local authority nurseries and settings in supporting children with additional learning needs. The new code accompanying the act will contain guidance on transitions for those with additional learning needs. Other opportunities for tackling inequity include setting up financial support programmes, prioritising participation in ECEC for certain target groups and providing additional financial or human resources for ECEC settings. Initiatives aimed at collaborative partnerships with parents and other stakeholders include the development of family support initiatives such as the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) programme and the Flying Start Initiative, and providing language support, are further explained in Chapter 5.

Strategy: Provide language support

Local authorities in **Denmark** are responsible for performing a language assessment for children aged three if any linguistic, behavioural or other issues indicate that the child may need additional language stimulation. The municipality is also obliged to conduct a language assessment of all children aged three who are not enrolled in ECEC. If the assessment indicates any development delays the municipality will provide 15 or 30 hours of language development support per month in an ECEC setting. The purpose of this programme is to ensure that all children have an equal level of language and literacy skills when starting school. Some municipalities do another language assessment when the child is five or six, but this is not a formal requirement.

Strategy: Set up financial support programmes

In **Wales**, the *Rewriting the Future* strategy document sets out a range of actions to be delivered nationally and locally to reduce the gap in attainment between the children from the most deprived background (as measured by entitlement to free school meals) and their peers. The strategy promotes the use of approaches known to have a disproportionate effect on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and is supported by a Pupil Deprivation Grant provided to ECEC settings, which included an element for three to four-year-olds for the first time in school year 2014-15. It includes GBP 300 (or around USD 373) for each child likely to be entitled to free school meals when they begin school. This should support children and their parents at the start of school. There is also a target to reduce the gap in attainment at the end of the Foundation Phase (seven-year-olds) by 12% compared with the 2012 level.

Japan also makes use of financial aid to support families in need. The costs of school supplies, transport, and lunches, among others, can be covered by the government for families who have difficulties in covering these costs. Additionally, to ensure that more children can benefit from formal early learning experiences, municipalities may cover the parental fees for ECEC. To lower the financial burden of ECEC on low-income households, fees are set according to the income of parents, fees for the second child have been halved, and ECEC has been made free for every third or further child.

To ensure all children can have access to ECEC, parents in **Denmark** and **Norway** with an income below a certain threshold receive an “aided place subsidy” from the local authority in addition to the general subsidy for a place in ECEC. This will lower the costs parents pay for ECEC. For parents with very low incomes, the “aided place subsidy” covers all parental costs.

In **Slovenia**, preschool programmes in kindergartens (integrated ECEC settings for children from one to six years old) require parental contributions. The fees are determined based on parental income and families’ wealth. If more than one child from a family attends kindergarten, the fees are reduced for the second child and waived for subsequent children.

Strategy: Prioritise participation in ECEC for target groups

In **Slovenia**, children with special education needs and from disadvantaged families¹⁷ have priority when allocating kindergarten places. Given the importance of high-quality ECEC for these groups in particular, the priority allocation can be viewed as supporting transition to school.

Strategy: Provide additional financial or human resources for ECEC settings and schools

When ECEC settings in **Slovenia** have a large number of Roma children, or when a group has a minimum number of Roma children, additional support is provided to ensure that all children benefit from ECEC and can transit well to primary education. This might include additional staff for groups, hiring Roma assistants to help educate Roma children, and additional public funding for materials, staff, decreasing group sizes and smaller group teaching.

In **Sweden**, schools can receive additional funding based on their needs. Many of the state grants or subsidies for various measures for which the education providers can apply are weighted, with a certain amount of money being earmarked for schools that are facing difficulties. Achieving an equitable education and providing the possibilities for this is a priority to the government. For example, the National Agency for Education identifies, sets up contracts with, and actively supports schools with development measures in order to improve the results and outcomes. The measure does not, however, cover preschools or preschool classes.

To improve educational equity and quality, schools in **Finland** can also benefit from additional funding – for example in areas where there are a large number of families from poor socio-economic backgrounds. This additional funding can be used, for instance, to lower group sizes so that children receive extra attention.

Policy development pointers

This final section draws out some policy themes emerging from countries' experiences and struggles in improving the organisation and governance of transitions. These are exploratory and seek to provide a source of inspiration when designing and revising policies and practices.

View transitions through the lens of holistic early development approaches

As Finland mentioned, it is important not to view a transition as an individual part of system, but as a holistic practice (Chapter 6). It is also essential to understand that there is not just one transition in place, but that there are many horizontal and vertical transitions involved – such as the transition between ECEC and primary school, as well as the transition between home and school, or between school and an after-school setting. When viewed as a holistic concept, it becomes clearer that transitions are multi-faceted and should not merely involve the settings the child moves away from and transits to. Rather, transitions should address pedagogical, developmental, and professional aspects involving staff, teachers, managers, other authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

Address equity at all levels of education, not only transitions from early childhood education and care to school

As noted by the Nordic countries and Slovenia, equity is an important topic throughout education and not only in ECEC. This reflects a continuous need to address equity in all levels of education, including during the transitions from ECEC to school. Children should continuously receive the support they need to succeed in education and develop, not only at specific ages or stages (e.g. transitions).

Use evidence-based policy

Evidence-based policy and practice are an important approach in the field of education, including transitions. As Austria notes, putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes, and projects. They point out that to ensure evidence-based policy making is successful, the development, implementation, and dissemination of sustainable strategies require intensive co-operation between researchers, politicians and administrators. In addition, co-operation with the media is important as they exert considerable influence on political decisions.

To date, there is not much research on the topic of transitions and what elements of transitions are linked to improved child development. Chapter 6 outlines some of the specific areas where greater research is needed. Countries can also collect evidence on transitions themselves, and feed it into policy design (see the example of Japan in Challenge 2 above).

Promote strong leadership by municipalities

When there is little leadership or focus by national or local authorities in transitions, successful transitions are harder to achieve. Local leadership can decrease the tensions in establishing transitions. Japan highlighted that it is important that prefectures and municipalities demonstrate leadership, given that transitions are mostly arranged at the local or setting level. This can set an example to ECEC and school settings and can encourage them to collaborate. In Japan, a prefectural or municipal board of education usually formulates basic policies on transitions. The board of education of a municipality or prefecture can then provide support to settings to implement these through joint training workshops for teaching staff at kindergartens, nursery centres and primary schools. They can also establish a transitions liaison council consisting of different schools and settings to encourage collaboration.

While local leadership is key in Denmark, the local responsibility for ECEC and transitions to school results in variations in how the municipalities handle children's transition from ECEC to school. Denmark noted that national requirements for ECEC and primary education on goals and content of (successful) transitions can help reduce the large variance in policies and practices among municipalities and ensure a minimum level of consistency.

Lastly, as noted by Finland and Denmark, when the responsibility for ECEC and (primary) education lies with the same (local) department, this facilitates the development of transition practices. As with national ECEC policies, the integration of ECEC and primary education can make it easier to align transition practices.

Establish collaboration and mutual understanding as the first step in creating continuity

Transition-related initiatives should start with collaboration, such as exchanges between ECEC and primary school staff, to allow both parties to share the issues they face. These can be the first steps towards continuity and coherence, from where further steps to smooth transitions can be taken – such as the development of a transition curriculum. This is confirmed by a report on transitions by Japan's consultative council for research and study of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

As Denmark indicated, the lack of shared knowledge about the ideas, values and methods in schools versus ECEC, such as differences in pedagogy, philosophy and practices, can make collaboration difficult. Hence, it is very important to have a mutual understanding of each other's work and expectations of one another. This will benefit communication and can bring collaboration to the next level. Austria highlighted the importance of this in its very decentralised ECEC system where there are different pedagogical concepts in place. This complicates support to children transitioning from an ECEC setting to school. Slovenia also highlights how differing perspectives on methods, pedagogy and philosophy in kindergarten and primary schools cause tensions and can harm transitions. Addressing these challenges are the subjects of Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Align objectives of ECEC and schools

To increase mutual understanding, Denmark proposes that broad objectives for ECEC should be brought into line with the targets and goals for primary schools, or vice versa. Discussions around this process, and the final outcome, will create more common ground, and can improve mutual understanding of each other's methodologies and aims. The ultimate outcome would be greater coherence between ECEC and school. Slovenia and Norway also believe that when the objectives of early education and primary school are better aligned and more clearly communicated, this can benefit collaboration between the two settings and can support the implementation of transition practices. In Slovenia for instance, differences in perspectives on the objectives of ECEC and primary schools makes communication and co-operation between the different settings harder. Training in each other's objectives, for both ECEC and school staff, can align objectives better and improve transitions.

Annex 2.A. Detailed country-by-country responses

For **WEB** tables, see: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>

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WEB	Tables 2.A.10	Monitoring transitions (2016)
WEB	Tables 2.A.11	Common tools/instruments used to monitor transitions (2016)

Table 2.1. **Common organisation of regular ECEC and primary education, by jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	0 year-olds	1 year-olds	2 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds	7 year-olds	8 year-olds	9 year-olds	10 year-olds
Austria	Crèche (in parts of Austria this is integrate in Kindergarten)		Kindergarten	Mandatory last year of Kindergarten	Vorschulstufe (Pre-primary school for children aged 6 who are not mature enough to start primary school)	Volksschule (starts at 6 years if children are mature enough)					
	Day care parents/mothers										
Belgium – Flemish Community	1,00		1,00	Kleuterschool (nursery education)		Lagere school				Up to 12	
Canada*	See notes by Canadian jurisdictions below										
Canada – Alberta	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes					Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – British Columbia	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes					Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
	Strong Start Program*										
Canada – Manitoba	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Junior kindergarten (in some schools)	Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school (compulsory from age 7)				Up to 12
Canada – New Brunswick	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes*					Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – New Foundland and Labrador	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Kinderstart Program*	Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Northwest Territories	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Junior kindergarten (in some schools)	Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Nova Scotia	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes					Grade Primary	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Nunavut	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes					Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Ontario	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Junior kindergarten	Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Prince Edward Island	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes					Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Québec	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Full-time école maternelle for children with disadvantaged backgrounds, and part-time for children with special needs and low SES	L'éducation préscolaire (kindergarten)	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
Canada – Saskatchewan	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes			Pre-K (in some communities)		Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school (compulsory from age 7)				Up to 12
Canada – Yukon	Various licensed/regulated early childhood education and care programmes				Pre-K (in the majority of communities)	Kindergarten	Primary/elementary school				Up to 12
	Learning Together Program										
Chile**	Educación Parvularia (Sala Cuna y Nivel Medio Menor/ Pre-primary education (day care and lower middle level)		Jardines Infantiles (Childcare Centres)	Nivel de Transición 1 (1 st transition level in pre-primary education)	Nivel de Transición 2 (2 nd transition level in pre-primary education)	First cycle of primary school					

Table 2.1. **Common organisation of regular ECEC and primary education, by jurisdiction** (continued)

Jurisdiction	0 year-olds	1 year-olds	2 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds	7 year-olds	8 year-olds	9 year-olds	10 year olds
Colombia***	Centre-based, community-based or family-based care (can extend to 3 and 4-year olds)			Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Transition Grade	Educación básica primaria (primary education)				Up to 12
Croatia	Kindergarten					Preschool programme	Primary/elementary school				Up to 15
Czech Republic	Child care			Matejská škola (kindergarten)			Základní škola (1 st stage of primary school)				Up to 11
Denmark	Dagtilbud (integrated ECEC settings)					Obligatorisk børnehaveklasse (obligatory kindergarten class)	Folkeskole (public school)				Up to 16
Sweden	Förskola (preschool)					Förskoleklass (preschool class)	Grundskola (primary school)				Up to 16
Finland	Päiväkoti (integrated ECEC settings)					Esiopetus (pre-primary education)	Comprehensive school/basic education				Up to 16
Germany (can differ between Länder)****	Krippen (crèche, day nursery)			Kindergarten (kindergarten)			Vorklassen (preschool class)		Grundschule		
Altersgemischte Einrichtungen (mixed-age settings) or Tagespflege (family day care)				Schulkindergarten (school kindergarten)							
Greece	Βρεφικός και Παιδικός Σταθμός / Vrefikos & Pedikos Stathmos (kindergarten and early childhood)			Νηπιαγωγείο / Nipiagogio	(Pre-primary education)	Dimotiko Scholio (primary education)				Up to 12	
Hungary	Korai gondozási és nevelési programok (early care and education programmes)			Óvoda (Kindergarten)			Általános iskola (general school)				Up to 15
Ireland	Preschool ECCE Scheme			Preschool ECCE Scheme or Junior infants (part of primary school)	Senior infants (part of primary school)	Primary school				Up to 12	
Italy	Nido (Nursery/child care)			Scuola dell'infanzia (pre-primary school)			Scuola primaria (primary school)				Up to 11
Japan	認定こども園 Nintei Kodomoen (Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care)					小学校 shōgakkō (Elementary school)					
	保育所 Hoikusyo (day nursery)										
	幼稚園 Youchien (Kindergarten)										
Kazakhstan	Mini-centres or kindergartens					Pre-primary class (generally for 6-year olds but can also be used by 5-year olds or 7-year olds)	Primary school (generally started at age 7, but can also be started at age 6 or 8)				Up to 11
Luxembourg	Child care (crèches)			Enseignement education/	fondamentale cycle 1 (1 st cycle of pre-primary education)		Primary school (second cycle of enseignement fondamentale)	Primary school (third cycle of enseignement fondamentale)		Primary school (fourth cycle of enseignement fondamentale)	Up to 11
Mexico	Educación Inicial (early childhood education)			Educación Preescolar (pre-primary education)			Primary education				Up to 12
Netherlands	Kinderopvang en peuterspeelzaal (child care and playgroups)			Targeted ECEC programmes for disadvantaged children	Groep 1 (group 1 of pre-primary education – part of primary school)	Groep 2 (group 2 of pre-primary education – part of primary school)	Basisschool (primary school)				Up to 12

Table 2.1. **Common organisation of regular ECEC and primary education, by jurisdiction** (continued)

Jurisdiction	0 year-olds	1 year-olds	2 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds	7 year-olds	8 year-olds	9 year-olds	10 year-olds	
New Zealand	Integrated centre- or home-based ECEC; playcentres						Primary school (most children start primary school at age 5 instead of compulsory school age 6)				Up to 12	
Norway	Barnehage (kindergarten)						Barneskole (primary school)				Up to 12	
Poland	Złobek (child care)			Edukacja przedszkolna (preschool education)			Mandatory preschool education	Edukacja w szkole podstawowej (primary education)				Up to 15
Portugal	Crèche (child care)			Educação Pré-escolar (pre-primary education)			First cycle of Ensino Básico					
Slovak Republic	Nursery school			Materska Skola (kindergarten)			Primary school				Up to 15	
Slovenia****	Vrtec (kindergarten)						Osnovna šola (basic school; integrated primary and low-secondary level of education)				Up to 15	
Spain	Primer ciclo de educación infantil (early childhood education)			Segundo ciclo de educación infantil (pre-primary education)			Educación Primaria (primary education)				Up to 12	
Sweden	Förskola (preschool)						Förskoleklass (preschool class)	Grundskola (primary school)				Up to 16
Switzerland	Kindertagesstätten / crèches / nidi d'infanzia (crèches)				Kindergarten / école enfantine / scuola dell'infanzia (kindergarten)		Primarschule / école primaire / scuola elementare (primary school)				Up to 12	
Turkey	Erken cocukluk donemi (child care)			Okul öncesi eğitimi (pre-primary education)			İlköğretim Okulu (primary school, usually starts at 5.5 years)					
United Kingdom - Wales	Most commonly a non-maintained setting e.g. childminder				Most commonly a maintained setting e.g. school-based nursery	Foundation Phase - the first phase of compulsory primary education		Key Stage 2 - the second phase of compulsory primary education			Up to 11	

* In Canada – New Brunswick, the mandated curriculum and staff requirements will increase with the 2016-2017 legislation for licensed/regulated ECEC programmes.

** In Chile, there is one curriculum framework, but children are grouped by age. The national curriculum for ECE has a comprehensive approach to education, establishing terminal objectives for the entire ECEC level (0-6). Nonetheless, in terms of structure, the system is organized in six educational levels located in separated settings.

A- Integrated ECEC settings. These settings receive children from birth and offer educational services integrated with care provision.

0 – 11 months: Sala Cuna Menor (Lower Nursery)

1 – 1 year and 11 months: Sala Cuna Mayor (Upper Nursery)

2 – 2 years and 11 months: Nivel Medio Menor (Lower Middle Level)

3 – 3 years and 11 months: Nivel Medio Mayor (Upper Middle Level)

B- The last two years of ECE are commonly located in the same grounds as primary schools and serve as transition years before primary school.

4 – 4 years and 11 months: Primer Nivel de Transición (1st Transition Level or Pre-kindergarten)

5 – 5 year and 11 months: Segundo Nivel de Transición (2nd Transition Level or Kindergarten)

*** In Colombia, the following settings exist:

Institutional Settings

- Centers for Child Development (CDI) – this is the official institutional modality for children 0-5 that provides education and care, including education, nutrition, psychological and socio-emotional support.
- Community gardens (*jardines comunitarios*) – children between 2 and 4 years and 11 months old. Children receive education and care, including education, nutrition, psychological and socio-emotional support.
- Child care homes (*hogares infantiles*) – children 6 months to 5 years old for low-income or displaced families. Specialized in providing early childhood education and care for children of parents with work commitments.

Community Settings

- Community homes for family wellbeing (HCBF) – principally for children between 2 and 5 years old, this setting is in community centers or homes and run by “community mothers” who are in charge of providing care. Groups of Community Homes share an interdisciplinary team that includes coordinators, administrators, psychologists, health and nutrition professional, auxiliary, and pedagogical specialist.
- Community homes FAMI (HCB-FAMI) – the community homes focus on vulnerable or displaced families, mainly in rural areas. This setting serves both pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as children younger than 2 years old.

Family settings

- Family care setting – in very low income areas, this setting focuses on children age 0 to 2, but also provides care for children up to 6 years old. Children receive care in a group setting once a week and receive monthly home visits by educational agents that also serve to train families in child care.

Pre-jardín and *jardín* (pre-kindergarten and kindergarten).

7. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten – for children ages 3 and 4 within public schools. Provide integral care, including education.

The transition grade

- Transition grade – the pre-primary transition grade is mandatory for children age 5 and provides integral care and education in preparing children ahead of the beginning of primary education.

**** In Germany, there is currently a trial of a “Schuleingangsphase” in the Länder except Saarland. This is a special form of school entry. Grades 1 and 2 are combined and the children learn in mixed-age groups, according to their abilities. Furthermore, all children in compulsory primary school age start school when they are 6 years old. Possible missing competencies are compensated with individual support.

***** In Slovenia, preschool education is mostly organised in kindergartens (integrated ECEC settings for children from 11 months to 6 years old).

Table 2.2 In most participating jurisdictions, ECEC and schools are physically integrated¹ (2016)

	Professional continuity	
	ECEC and primary education are usually not integrated	Pre-primary education (preschool, nursery education, kindergarten) is commonly integrated with schools
Austria ²	✓	
Belgium – Flemish Community		✓
Canada		✓
Chile		✓ (nivel de transición 1 y 2)
Colombia		✓ (transition grade)
Croatia ³	✓	
Czech Republic	✓	
Denmark		✓ (kindergarten class)
Finland	✓ (for pre-primary education in 80% of cases)	
Germany	✓	
Greece		✓
Hungary	✓	
Ireland ⁴		✓ (junior and senior infants)
Italy		✓
Japan	✓	
Kazakhstan		✓ (pre-primary classes)
Luxembourg	✓	
Mexico	✓	
Netherlands		o (groep 1 and 2)
New Zealand	✓	
Norway	✓	
Poland	✓	
Portugal ⁵		✓
Slovak Republic	✓	
Slovenia	✓ (in around 48% of cases)	✓ (preschool education part of primary education in around 52% of cases)
Spain		✓
Sweden		✓ (preschool class)
Switzerland ⁶		✓
Turkey		✓
United Kingdom – Wales		✓ (maintained settings such as school-based nurseries)

Notes:

1. In which ECEC and primary schools are on the same premises or provided in the same building.
2. In Austria, pre-primary education for six-year-olds who are not ready for school yet is part of primary school.
3. In Croatia, preschool programmes are only integrated with school in areas without kindergartens.
4. In Ireland, junior and senior infant classes for four and five-year-olds are part of primary school, while the preschool ECCE scheme is not. Children aged four can either attend a junior infant class or the preschool ECCE scheme.
5. In Portugal, it is most common that schools and pre-primary education are integrated; however, schools and pre-primary education can be completely separate too (not integrated) or pre-primary, primary and secondary education can be integrated.
6. In Switzerland, kindergarten is, from an institutional point of view, an integrated part of primary school but is not always provided on the same ground or in the same building.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

Table 2.3 **Most, but not all, children start both compulsory and primary education at the age of six (2016)**

Compulsory and primary school starting age, in years

Country	Start compulsory education	Start primary education
Austria	6	6
Belgium – Flemish Community	6	6
Canada ¹	6	6
Chile	5	6
Colombia	5	6
Croatia	5	6
Czech Republic	6	6
Denmark	6	7
Finland	6	7
Germany	6	6
Greece	5	6
Hungary ²	3	6
Ireland ³	6	6
Italy	6	6
Japan	6	6
Kazakhstan ⁴	6	6
Luxembourg ²	4	6
Mexico	3	6
Netherlands	5	6
New Zealand	6	5
Norway	6	6
Poland	6	7
Portugal	6	6
Slovak Republic	6	6
Slovenia	6	6
Spain	6	6
Sweden ⁵	7	7
Switzerland	4	6
Turkey	6	5,5
United Kingdom - Wales	5	5

Notes: The start of primary school refers to the start of ISCED 1 (Grade 1 or the first class in primary school) and does not refer to pre-primary education (ISCED 02) or pre-primary education (ISCED 02) that is part of primary school.

1. Data for Canada refer to the most common primary education starting age and most common compulsory school starting age. Exceptions are New Brunswick where compulsory education starts at the age of 5, Saskatchewan where compulsory and primary education starts at the age of 7 and Manitoba where primary education (Early Years) begins at Grade 1 and school is compulsory at age 7, or 6 years of age but turning 7 on or before December 31 of that year.

2. In Hungary and Luxembourg, primary school starting age depends on date of birth and school maturity and can be at 6 or 7 years.

3. In Ireland, statutory maximum school starting age is 6 years (in first class of primary school) but children in Ireland start primary school at the age of 4 or 5 years (in junior infant or senior infant classes).

4. In Kazakhstan, compulsory education can start at the age of 6 or 7 years.

5. In Sweden, there are plans to make the preschool class for 6-year-olds compulsory.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

Table 2.4 **Level of authority involved in transition policies, by country (2016)**

Country	National/federal authorities	Regional/ state	Local	Only setting-level
Austria	✓	✓		
Belgium – Flemish Community		✓		
Canada ¹	✓	✓	✓	
Chile	✓			
Colombia	✓			
Croatia	✓	✓	✓	
Czech Republic	✓		✓	
Denmark	✓		✓	
Finland	✓		✓	
Germany				✓
Greece	✓			
Hungary	✓			
Ireland	✓			
Italy	✓			
Japan			✓	
Kazakhstan	✓			
Luxembourg	m	m	m	m
Mexico	✓			
Netherlands				✓
New Zealand				✓
Norway	✓		✓	
Poland	✓		✓	
Portugal	✓			
Slovak Republic	✓		✓	
Slovenia	✓		✓	
Spain	✓	✓		
Sweden	✓		✓	
Switzerland		✓	✓	
Turkey	✓			
United Kingdom – Wales	✓		✓	

Notes: m = missing.

In all countries, settings decide on transition practices. The above data indicate which authorities can be involved in designing, shaping or steering transition policies at setting level.

1. In Canada, national/federal authorities are involved in transitions through their role in supporting indigenous education on-reserve, including on ECEC.

Source: OECD Network on ECEC, "Survey on transitions between ECEC and primary education", June 2016.

Notes

1. Disadvantaged children can be from low-income backgrounds (“economically disadvantaged”), from poor areas or regions, with poorly educated parents and/or with one or more immigrant background parent who may face learning disadvantages due to a different language spoken at home. In some countries, disadvantaged children include those with special needs because of mental or physical health issues (adapted from a definition used by the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/school/doc/ecec-report_en.pdf).
2. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and Wales (United Kingdom).
3. Canada and Germany and sometimes Austria provided information disaggregated by provinces or Länders. Hence, there can be close to 60 jurisdictions for some indicators (see Table 2.1 for a list).
4. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs until 2006.
5. Source details for all the curricular documents mentioned here can be found in the annex to Chapter 4, in Table 4.A.7.
6. A recreation centre is an out-of-school setting for pupils aged 6 to 12 years whose parents are working or studying. These centres stimulate the development and learning of the pupils while offering meaningful free time and recreation. These centres are covered in Lgr 11, the curriculum for preschool class, primary education and recreation centres. Since July 2016, the recreation centre has had its own chapter in Lgr 11, which clarifies the purpose and the core content of the centres.
7. Germany and Canada provided information disaggregated by jurisdiction for this question.
8. These 11 jurisdictions are: New Brunswick (Canada), Nova Scotia (Canada), Prince Edward Island (Canada), Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Poland.
9. Data for Slovenia have been double-counted for both “ECEC and primary schools are usually not integrated” and “pre-primary education and primary schools are commonly integrated” as just over half of preschools are integrated in primary schools, and in the other half of the cases, preschools and primary education are separate.
10. In Chile, a bill has been approved on this although it has not yet been implemented.
11. The 20 countries with available data on retention in the first year of primary school are: Austria, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Wales (United Kingdom).
12. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) is an intergovernmental body that provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education.
13. Tusla or the Irish Child and Family Agency, is a dedicated state agency responsible for improving well-being and outcomes for children. It represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland, and operates under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (www.tusla.ie/about).
14. SLO serves as the national institute for curriculum development in the Netherlands. They are an independent, non-profit organisation, bridging the contexts of policy, research and practice.
15. See <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/foundation-phase/action-plan/?lang=en>.

16. For further details on National Parents' Committee (FUB) guidelines for good transitions, please consult their website: www.fubhg.no/brosjyre-om-overgang-barnhage-skole.187505.no.html.
17. Including low-income families, and those given a recommendation by a social work centre for being families with medical, financial or social problems.

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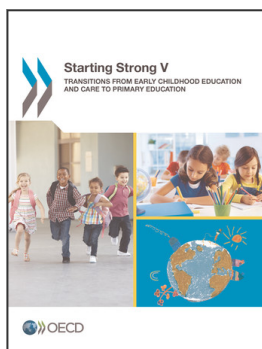
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