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Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare  
Towards a New Funding Model

Working Paper 3

Review of Working Conditions for Staff in Early Learning and Care

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## Glossary

Centre-based provision	Publicly regulated ELC provided outside the home.
Childcare	Broadly used to mean ELC and/or SAC.
Childminders	See home-based provision.
Contact staff	Individuals whose professional activity involves the care and transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills to children enrolled in an ELC or SAC setting.
Contact time	Time that staff spend with children in ELC or SAC activities.
Continuing professional development (CPD)	Activities designed to develop an individual's skills, knowledge and expertise as an ELC or SAC staff member, leader or head of a setting (or, more generally, a professional). These activities are formal and can include courses and workshops, as well as formalised collaboration and participation in professional networks. Professional development activities do not refer to everyday experiences and practice even though they may also be developing staff professionally.
Core practitioners	Any ELC or SAC staff required to have a higher qualification level than others working with the same group. All team members required to have the same qualification level are called core practitioners, while all others are assistants. Also called teachers.
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	See ISCED 0.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	All regulated arrangements to provide care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content. Includes ISCED 0 and ECEC services without a defined educational component. Also called Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).
Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)	All regulated arrangements to provide care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content. Includes ISCED 0 and ELC services without a defined educational component. Also called Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).
Experience	Time that an individual has been working in the ELC and SAC sector.

Family-based provision	See home-based provision.
Formal childcare	Centre-based ELC and SAC. May or may not include home-based provision.
Gross annual salaries	Annual earnings before taxes and deductions for employee social security contributions and pension scheme contributions, but after deduction of employers' premium for social security and pension.
Home-based provision	Arrangements to provide education or childcare within the home. Also called family-based provision, family childcare or childminders.
Hourly pay	Gross earnings per hour, usually derived as total earnings divided by the number of hours of work covered by the earnings period.
Integrated system	System where the responsibilities for ELC services are under one (leading) authority (at the national and/or regional level). Responsibilities may stretch from curriculum development to standard-setting, monitoring or financing.
ISCED 0	Any type of childcare with an educational component before the start of primary education. ISCED 0 is sub-classified into ISCED 01 and ISCED 02. Also called Early Childhood Education (ECE).
ISCED 01	Provision aimed at very young children aged 0 to 2, with a focus on self-expression and active play. Also called Early Childhood Educational Development (ECED).
ISCED 02	Provision aimed at children in the years immediately prior to starting compulsory schooling, typically aged 3 to 5. Focus on language and social skills, logical and reasoning skills, and alphabetical and mathematical concepts. Also called Pre-Primary Education (PPE).
Non-contact time / hours	Includes preparation, professional development, and consultation with parents or other supporting activities, in-service training and staff meetings.
Part-time work	Usually defined as working 30 hours or less each week.
Pre-Primary Education (PPE)	See ISCED 02. Sometimes used to refer to all of ISCED 0 for teacher statistics.
Purchasing power parity (PPP)	Rates of currency conversion that equalise the purchasing power of different currencies, by eliminating the differences in price levels between countries.

Purchasing parity standards (PPS)	An artificial common reference currency unit used to eliminate price level differences between countries. The PPS values are obtained by dividing the national currency units by the respective purchasing power parity (PPP).
Private provision	Provision administered or owned directly or indirectly by a non-governmental organisation or private individuals. Private settings may or may not be publicly subsidised.
Public provision	Provision managed by a public education authority, government agency or municipality.
Quality	Characteristics of ELC and SAC which have effects on children's development, learning and wellbeing. Includes process quality (the nature of the daily experiences of children) and structural quality (distal factors that are typically regulated, such as children-to-staff ratio, group size and staff training/education, and create the framework for the experiences of children).
School-Age Childcare (SAC)	Arrangements to provide childcare outside of normal school hours for school-going children, whether provided in formal or home-based settings. This includes before school, after school and school holidays, but excludes weekends.
Split system	System where ELC services are governed by different ministries or authorities at national/regional level. In many countries with a split system, policies for "care" and "early education" have developed separately and fall under the responsibility of different authorities.
Staff	See contact staff.
Statutory salaries	Scheduled salaries according to official pay scales, typically reported as gross amounts less the employer's contribution to social security and pension.
Teachers (in ELC)	Teachers are contact staff with the most responsibility for a group of children in ELC. They may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, core practitioners or pedagogical staff.
Teachers' aides	See assistants.
Tenure	Time that an individual has been working at their current setting.
Workforce turnover	The share of staff who leave a setting within a year.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

As part of the First 5 Strategy to improve outcomes for children in Ireland from birth to age five, a commitment has been made by the Irish Government to at least double public spending on Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) in Ireland by 2028. An Expert Group was tasked to deliver a report containing proposals for a new funding model which will help ensure that this additional funding can be used in the best way to deliver safe, high quality, affordable and accessible ELC and SAC. This report is the third in a series of working papers delivered by Frontier Economics in the role of Research Partnership to provide research support to the Expert Group.

A key objective for the new funding model is to support improvements in the quality of ELC and SAC in a way that enhances child cognitive and social development. An important element of this is a high quality workforce (as defined in the EU Quality Framework) with sufficient initial and ongoing training and supportive working conditions. However, there is a perception that, by international standards, the ELC workforce in Ireland is poorly qualified and low paid and operates in less desirable working conditions, which make recruitment and retention of staff challenging. In order to assess the validity of these perceptions, this report compares the workforce characteristics in Ireland with those in seven comparator countries.

### Methodology and scope

This report reviews the international evidence to consider how ELC<sup>1</sup> and SAC workforce qualifications, wages, conditions, and recruitment and retention in Ireland compare to international standards. Comparisons are drawn with seven countries: Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Norway. These countries

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<sup>1</sup> The term ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) is widely used in the international literature, but the term ELC (Early Learning and Care) is used here in place of ECEC in the original sources. Where the term ELC is used alone, it does not include SAC. The terms “childcare” or “child care” are widely used in the international literature to mean ELC and SAC and the use of the term “childcare” is maintained from original sources in order to avoid any confusion with the meaning.

were selected because of their mix of private and public provision; split and integrated systems; centralised and decentralised governance; and different levels of public funding and regulation.

Although the remit for the work included SAC (School-Age Childcare), no relevant evidence for the SAC workforce was identified. The report therefore focuses exclusively on ELC.

### Robustness of the evidence

International comparisons of ELC are compromised by issues of data comparability and the substantial variation in the interpretation and measurement of ELC characteristics across countries. Specific caveats and flaws are acknowledged and corrected where possible in this report, but the international comparisons should be regarded as indicative of differences rather than precise measures.

### Findings

Overall, the evidence suggests that the ELC workforce in Ireland can be characterised in the following ways:

- **Qualification requirements for teachers in ELC settings are lower in Ireland than in France, Germany, New Zealand and Norway, but higher than in England.** Twenty five percent of the ELC workforce in Ireland holds a tertiary qualification, higher than the share in England but much lower than the shares in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. This is despite the fact that the national workforce in Ireland is relatively well qualified. Indeed, ELC staff in Ireland are around half as likely to have a Bachelor's degree as the national workforce, while ELC staff in Germany and the Netherlands are more than twice as likely to hold such a degree as the national workforce.
- **Mean hourly pay for ELC workers in Ireland is lower than in all comparator countries except England.** While overall national hourly pay is also relatively low in Ireland, the ratio of ELC hourly pay to national hourly pay is still lower than for all comparator countries except England and Canada. Similarly, the difference between minimum wages and ELC hourly pay is lower than for all other countries except England.

- **Statutory child-to-staff ratios in Ireland are generally lower than those in the comparator countries**, although there are some exceptions in Canada, England and Norway. In practice, average child-to-staff ratios are low in Ireland, and the child-to-teacher ratio is lower than in all comparator countries for which data was available.
- **A relatively high share of ELC staff in Ireland work part time**, despite Ireland as a whole having a lower proportion of part-time workers than any comparator country for which data was available. ELC staff in Ireland were three times as likely to work part-time than their peers in other sectors.
- There are indications that **ELC staff in Ireland feel less recognised by society** than ELC staff in Germany or Norway. However, the evidence is limited and is derived from surveys which may not be completely comparable.
- **Comparisons of ELC staff experience, turnover, and recruitment and retention are limited by a lack of comparable evidence.** The ELC workforce in Ireland is relatively young by international standards, and there is some evidence that turnover in Ireland is substantially higher than in Germany and Norway.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and objectives

As part of the First 5 Strategy to improve outcomes for children in Ireland from birth to age five, a commitment has been made by the Irish Government to at least double public spending on Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) in Ireland by 2028. A new funding model is required to help ensure that this additional funding is used in the best way to deliver safe, high quality, affordable and accessible ELC and SAC which meets families' diverse needs. An Expert Group was tasked to deliver a report containing proposals for a new funding model which includes the costs, risks and implementation plans for different options.<sup>2</sup>

Frontier Economics was appointed as the Research Partnership for this Expert Group to provide research support and advice to the group. This report is the third in a series of working papers aiming to summarise the evidence in several key areas.

A key objective for the new funding model is to support improvements in the quality of ELC and SAC in a way that enhances child cognitive and social development. An important element of this is a high quality workforce (as defined in the EU Quality Framework) with sufficient initial and ongoing training and supportive working conditions. However, there is a perception that, by international standards, the ELC workforce in Ireland is poorly qualified and low paid and operates in less desirable working conditions, which make recruitment and retention of staff challenging. In order to assess the validity of these perceptions, this report compares the workforce characteristics in Ireland with those in seven comparator countries.

### 1.2 Methodology and scope

This report compares the qualifications, wages, conditions, and recruitment and retention of the ELC workforce in Ireland with seven comparable countries: Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Norway. These countries were

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<sup>2</sup> The terms of reference for the Expert Group are available at <https://first5fundingmodel.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Terms-of-Reference-1.pdf>

selected because of their mix of private and public provision; split and integrated systems; centralised and decentralised governance; and different levels of public funding and regulation. Where distinct regional systems operate within a country, specific nations, states or provinces are used for comparison if possible. This applies to Canada (Ontario), the United Kingdom (England) and Germany (Bavaria).

Relevant evidence sources covering English-language international data sources for European and OECD countries were identified and critically reviewed. Country-specific evidence was used to supplement the international data where appropriate. International evidence was also collated on contextual factors that could be related to the variation in qualifications, wages and conditions.

For the presentation of the evidence:

- Evidence from peer reviewed publications, government reports or international organisation reports published since 2017 is used where available, and findings are annotated where time since publication or the independence of the source may compromise their validity.
- ELC is defined in the same way as ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) meaning any regulated childcare or education provision prior to primary education (including compulsory pre-primary education in some countries). The term ECEC is widely used in the international literature, but the term ELC is used here in place of ECEC in the original sources. Where the term ELC is used alone, it does not include SAC. The terms “childcare” or “child care” are also widely used in the international literature to mean ELC and SAC and the use of the term “childcare” is maintained from original sources in order to avoid any confusion with the meaning.
- Data from the eight countries is presented wherever it is sufficiently comparable and robust.
- Where data for a single metric is drawn from two or more sources, this is made explicit and any assumptions required to impute comparable metrics are stated.

- Mean wages and minimum wages are presented in Euros, adjusting for purchasing power parity (PPP) with Ireland. Year-specific exchange rates are used, but financial measures are not indexed for inflation.

Although the remit for the work included SAC (School-Age Childcare), no relevant evidence for the SAC workforce was identified. The report therefore focuses exclusively on ELC and the term ELC does not include SAC.

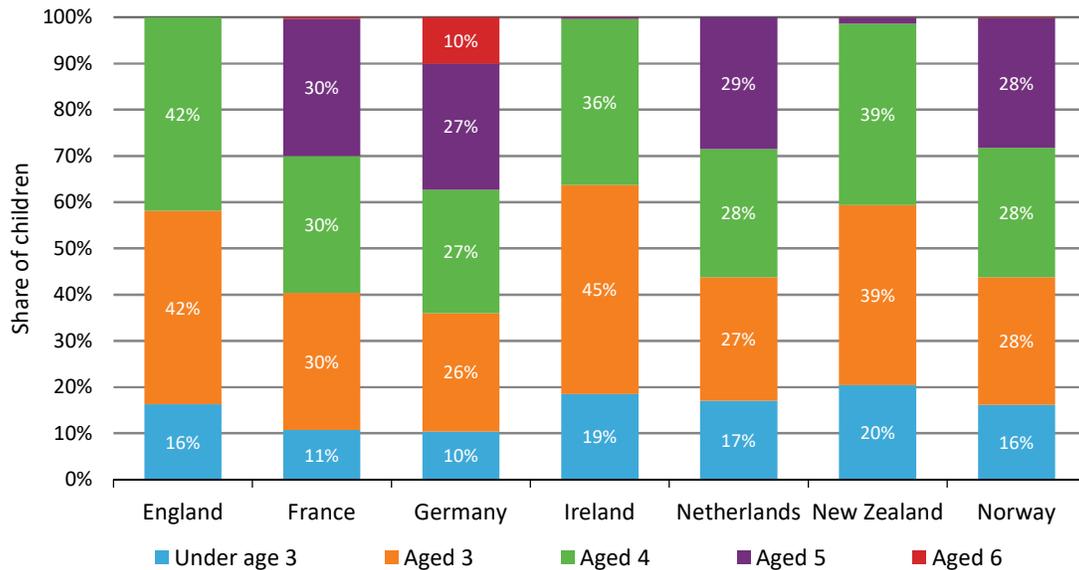
### 1.3 Robustness of the evidence sources

International comparisons of ELC are compromised by issues of data comparability and the substantial variation in the interpretation and measurement of ELC characteristics across countries. Specific caveats and flaws are acknowledged and corrected where possible in this report, but the international comparisons should be regarded as indicative of differences rather than precise measures.

There are also several key considerations about the structure of ELC in Ireland which have a bearing on the international comparisons:

1. **Ireland has a young child age profile for ELC.** The starting age for primary school is five years in Ireland, England and New Zealand (although children can start from age four in both Ireland and England), while it is six or seven in the remaining comparator countries. Consequently, it is estimated that 19% of the children in ELC in Ireland are under age three, while 45% are aged three and 36% are aged four.

**Figure 1: Age distribution of children in ELC**



Sources: Calculated from OECD (2019a, Table B2.2), Eurostat (ilc\_caindformal) and European Commission (2019, Figure B3).

Notes: Data is for 2017.

As shown in Figure 1, in England, Ireland and New Zealand, almost all children in ELC are aged under five. However, in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, 25% to 40% of the population is aged over five and in Germany one in ten children is aged six. As older children are more likely to be cared for by more qualified teachers in larger groups, these differences in age distributions will be important for interpreting workforce evidence. The figure also shows that children aged under three account for 20% or less of the ELC population in all countries, meaning that a majority of the ELC workforce care for children aged three and over.

**2. ISCED 0 statistics for children under age three may not be representative for Ireland.**

Data collected to assess education outcomes often only covers provision officially designated as ISCED 0, that is, provision meeting set educational content standards. For children under age three, 8% of children in Ireland are in ISCED 0 provision and 30% are in some other registered ELC.

**Figure 2: Type of provision**

	Children aged under three			Pre-school children aged three plus	
	Proportion of children in ISCED 0	Proportion of children in other registered ELC	Proportion of places at registered childminders	Proportion of children in ISCED 0	Proportion of children in other registered ELC
England *	18%	21%	Significant	100%	0%
France	4%	32%	Significant	100%	0%
Germany	37%	0%	Significant	95%	-
Ireland	8%	30%	Minor	96%	0%
Netherlands	0%	59%	Significant	94%	5%
New Zealand	44%	6%	-	93%	5%
Norway	56%	0%	Minor	97%	0%

Sources: Proportions in ISCED 0 and other registered ELC were calculated from OECD (2019a, Table B2.2), Eurostat (ilc\_caindformal and educ\_uoe\_enpr07). Proportions of places with registered childminders are from European Commission (2019, Figure A3).

Notes: Data is for 2017. \* All proportions are for United Kingdom except proportion with childminders is for England. Dashes indicate missing information.

Figure 2 shows that England, France and the Netherlands also have low proportions in ISCED 0 settings, while Germany, New Zealand and Norway have more than one-third to two-thirds in ISCED 0 settings. For children aged three and over, Ireland is typical of most countries, with all children in registered ELC reported to be in ISCED 0 provision. This implies that statistics based on ISCED 0 provision only are less likely to be representative of the experience in Ireland for children under age three than in other countries, but there is no corresponding caveat on ISCED 0 statistics for children aged three and over.

3. **ELC statistics do not include childminders for Ireland.** As shown in Figure 2, four of the comparator countries have a significant proportion (defined as 10% or more) of places for children under age three at registered childminders (also called home-based or family-based care), while one (Norway) has a “minor” proportion (meaning less than 10%). Ireland is officially listed as having a “minor” proportion, but it is unique in being

the only European country with a large, unregulated childminding sector.<sup>3</sup> Because almost all childminding is unregistered in Ireland, it is not included in ELC statistics. There is no precise information on the size of this childminding sector in Ireland,<sup>4</sup> but this means that the international statistics based only on registered ELC may not be as representative for Ireland as other countries and may be biased due to the omission of childminders.

4. **Almost all ELC provision is privately delivered in Ireland.** Ireland is also unusual in having almost all (99%) of ISCED 0 provision for children aged three plus (ISCED 02) delivered by private institutions (see Figure 3), implying that most ELC provision is privately delivered. Apart from New Zealand, no other country has more than two-thirds of ISCED 02 places delivered by private institutions. This means that statistics based only on public provision will be unrepresentative for Ireland (and even absent) and that almost exclusive private delivery may have implications for the cost of provision and nature of the workforce.

**Figure 3: Proportions of ISCED 0 places in private institutions**

	ISCED 01 (Children under age three)	ISCED 02 ( Children aged three plus)
Canada	-	7%
England	81%	49%
France	-	13%
Germany	73%	65%
Ireland	-	99%
Netherlands	-	30%
New Zealand	99%	99%
Norway	52%	48%

Sources: OECD (2019a, Table B2.2) and UNESCO UIS Education Statistics (UNESCO 2020).

Notes: Data is for 2017 (or earlier). Dashes indicate missing information.

<sup>3</sup> See pages 22-23 in European Commission (2019). No evidence on whether this is unique across all OECD countries was identified.

<sup>4</sup> DCYA (2019) suggests that there could be around 19,000 childminders in Ireland caring for around 80,000 children, based on data sources from 2009, 2012 and 2015.

Finally, it should be noted that the research for this report was undertaken prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic and that some information may have subsequently changed as a result.

#### **1.4 Report structure**

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** describes the qualifications of the ELC workforce in each country and presents evidence on training and continuing professional development (CPD) entitlements. **Chapter 3** describes ELC sector wages and compares these to national average wages and national minimum wages where applicable. **Chapter 4** describes a range of other ELC workforce conditions including child-to-staff ratios, working hours and social recognition. **Chapter 5** describes available evidence on recruitment and retention including staff age profiles, tenure, turnover and recruitment.

## 2. Qualifications and training

The qualifications and training of the ELC workforce are key drivers of setting quality and child outcomes, as well as influencing workforce experience. This chapter presents three measures of workforce qualifications and training:

- Statutory qualification requirements for teachers for ISCED 01 and ISCED 02 centre-based settings and for staff in home-based settings;
- Average qualifications measured as the share of the ELC workforce with at least a tertiary qualification and how this compares to the national workforce; and
- A qualitative description of statutory CPD regulations and access to CPD.

### 2.1 Statutory qualification requirements

Figure 4 presents the qualification requirements<sup>5</sup> for teachers in ELC centre-based settings at ISCED 01 and ISCED 02 levels for staff in home-based settings.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that teachers are defined as the staff members with the most responsibility for a group of children and may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, core practitioners or pedagogical staff.<sup>7</sup>

The requirements for teachers in centre-based settings are higher in Ireland than in England and in ISCED 01 in the Netherlands, but are lower in Ireland than in France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway and in ISCED 02 in the Netherlands (and are the same as in Canada). While

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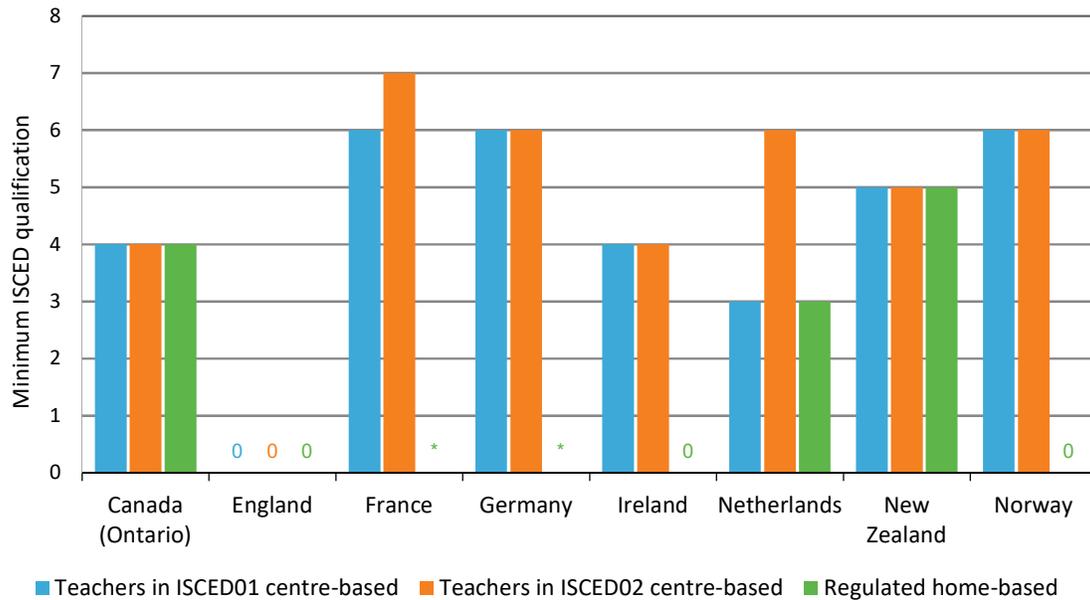
<sup>5</sup> Qualification levels are presented using International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) with classification: ISCED 3 Upper secondary; ISCED 4 Post-secondary non-tertiary; ISCED 5 Short-cycle tertiary; ISCED 6 Bachelor's degree (eq.); ISCED 7 Master's degree (eq.); ISCED 8 Doctoral degree.

<sup>6</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on statutory qualification requirements were identified but not presented. OECD (2019a) describes the minimum ISCED qualification required to enter ECEC professions (ISCED 0) for England, France, Germany, New Zealand and Norway. These are consistent with European Commission (2019) for children aged three years and over for all countries. It states that the minimum requirement in New Zealand is ISCED 6 rather than ISCED5. Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) describe qualification requirements for a number of countries, but these are not presented here as they are dated. European Commission (2019) also has data on qualification requirements for head teachers and assistants for some countries, but these are not presented here as there were too few observations for meaningful inference.

<sup>7</sup> Assistants (sometimes called teachers' aides) are individuals whose role is to provide support to teachers, and they usually have lower qualification requirements than teachers.

Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand impose qualification requirements on staff in all home-based settings, staff in almost all home-based settings (childminders) in Ireland have no requirements because the sector is almost entirely unregistered.

**Figure 4: Minimum ELC workforce qualification requirements**



Sources: European Commission (2019, p. 150-153, Figures C1-C5) (France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway); Ontario (2019, pages 26-27) (Canada); Department for Education (2017, Sections 3.23-3.26) (England); Irish Government (2016, p. 12) (Ireland); New Zealand Government (2008, Section 44) (New Zealand).

Notes: Core practitioners in Ontario are required to be members of the College of Early Childhood Educators, which requires an ISCED 4 qualification or equivalent work experience. European Commission (2019) suggests that the qualification requirements for centre-based settings in England are ISCED 3 and ISCED 6 respectively, but this applies to only a sub-set of the sector: there are no minimum qualification requirements that apply across all centre-based or home-based settings. France, Germany, Ireland and Norway do not have qualification requirements applicable to home-based settings, although in France and Germany specific training is required. European Commission (2019) suggests that there is an ISCED 4 qualification requirement for Irish home-based settings, but this is not relevant for almost all home-based settings as so few are licensed.

## 2.2 Average qualifications

Statutory qualification requirements may not reflect the average qualification level of the ELC workforce for a number of reasons, including:

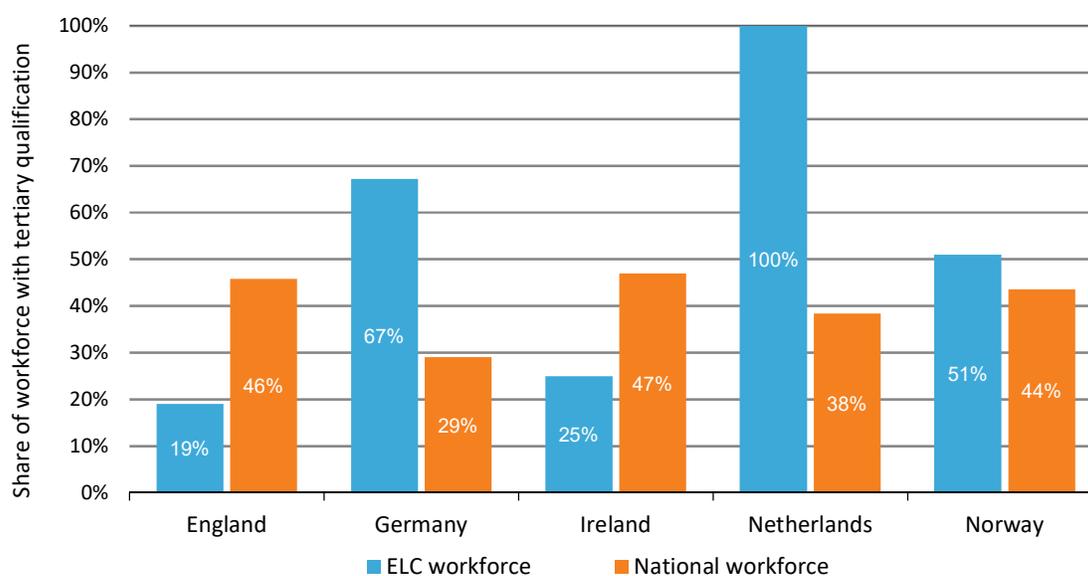
- Some staff may have a higher level of qualification than required.
- Qualification requirements at centre-based settings may be higher than for the ELC workforce as a whole, particularly in countries with a large share of home-based settings such as England and Ireland.

- Qualification requirements may have exceptions. For example, 6% of the ELC workforce in Ireland does not have the required ISCED 4 qualification because of exemptions for teachers near retirement and because some of these staff are only responsible for school-aged children (Irish Government 2016).

It is therefore important to also consider the average level of qualifications rather than the statutory requirements in drawing international comparisons.

Figure 5 presents the share of the ELC workforce with at least a tertiary qualification (ISCED 6) for England, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway (representative data was not available for the other comparator countries). The share of the national workforce (all sectors) with a tertiary qualification is also presented for context.

**Figure 5: Average workforce qualifications**



Sources: Cattoretti et al. (2019, Table 50) (England); Pobal (2019, Figure 7.12) (Ireland); OECD (2019b, Figure 3.3) (Germany, Norway); OECD (2019a, Annex 2) (Netherlands).

Notes: The share of the ELC workforce with a post-tertiary qualification is 17% in the Netherlands and 1% in Norway and Ireland. The figure for Germany is based on ISCED 02 which accounts for 90% of children. More than 95% of teaching staff in Norway have a tertiary qualification, compared to 50% to 60% of teacher's assistants. National workforce data is for the United Kingdom rather than England.

The figure shows that 25% of the ELC workforce in Ireland holds a tertiary qualification, higher than the share in England but much lower than the shares in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, where more than half of the staff have a Bachelor's degree.<sup>8</sup>

Importantly, the figure also shows that ELC staff in England and Ireland are relatively low qualified when compared to the national workforce, while staff in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway are relatively highly qualified. ELC staff in Ireland are around half as likely to have a Bachelor's degree as the national workforce, while staff in Germany and the Netherlands are more than twice as likely.

### 2.3 Continuing professional development

There is significant variation between countries with regard to the amount of time and funding that is allocated to continuing professional development (CPD).

There is no regulated minimum CPD for staff in centre-based settings in Ireland (European Commission 2019, p. 84, p. 153). This is broadly consistent with comparator countries, which either do not have national regulations mandating CPD (Bavaria,<sup>9</sup> the Netherlands), or specify only that it is a "professional duty" (England, France for ISCED 01). The exceptions are France for ISCED 02, New Zealand and Norway:

- **France.** Teachers responsible for children aged three or older in centre-based settings are entitled to 18 hours of CPD per year, while non-teaching staff are entitled to two days over five years (European Commission 2019, p. 84, p. 153). Public-sector ISCED 02 teachers who have worked for at least one year are entitled to 24 hours per year of CPD in their first five years, and 12 hours per year for the next three years (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, p. 390).
- **New Zealand.** Licensed service providers are required to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to provide ELC staff with adequate "professional support, professional development opportunities, and resources". Centre-based settings are

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<sup>8</sup> Ireland has set a target that 30% of centre-based ECEC staff should have tertiary qualifications by 2021, and 50% should have tertiary qualifications by 2028.

<sup>9</sup> ELC staff in Germany are generally entitled to up to five days of fully paid educational leave per year, but this does not apply in Bavaria (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, page 445).

required to budget for professional development costs as part of their licensing requirements (Cherington 2017, pages 1-2).

- **Norway.** Staff are entitled to five days (37.5 hours) per year for professional development and pedagogical development activities.

No regulations were identified for Canada.

In addition to comparing regulation, comparisons can be drawn regarding the observed amount of CPD that is made available to ELC staff by governments and/or settings.

In Ireland, ELC practitioners usually attend CPD in their own time and at their own expense, although in some instances employers or the government may subsidise such training (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, p. 569).<sup>10</sup> Approximately 86% of ELC staff in Ireland reported conducting training in their own time according to a trade union survey (SIPTU 2019, p. 20).

CPD arrangements vary substantially across comparator countries:<sup>11</sup>

- **Canada (Ontario).** Ontario allocated €5 million (7 million CAD) in 2018/19 to grants for 1,500 ELC staff to obtain early childhood education qualifications and to establish three Centres of Excellence for Early Years Child Care to support workforce CPD (Ontario 2019, Table 5 and pages 35-36).
- **England.** One study suggests that ELC staff at a third of settings have access to CPD on a monthly basis, while staff at a quarter of settings have access to supervision at least once a month. Almost all settings have a CPD plan, but fewer than two-thirds have a budget set aside for CPD (Paull and Popov 2019, Table 5).

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<sup>10</sup> A number of programmes in Ireland support CPD, including the Better Start Quality Development Service, which provides mentoring for ELC staff, and the 'Aistear and Play' and Access and Inclusion Model programmes which provide targeted in-service training. City and County Childcare Committees, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and some third parties also provide a variety of training courses, including: Children First, Equality and Diversity, Healthy Ireland Smart Start, First Aid and Corrective Action Preventive Action.

<sup>11</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on CPD were identified but not presented. Notably, OECD (2020a) based on the 2013 TALIS survey describes a range of CPD metrics for England, France, the Netherlands and Norway. The data is not presented as it covers secondary school teachers rather than ECEC.

- **Germany.** In 2018, 83% of staff responsible for children aged under three and 84% of ISCED 02 staff reported participating in professional development (OECD 2019b, Figure 3.7).<sup>12</sup> Participation in training was higher for staff with higher pre-service qualifications. The main topics covered in CPD related to child development, working with parents and documenting child development (OECD 2019b, Table 3.2).
- **The Netherlands.** ELC staff can volunteer to attend a number of CPD programmes which are paid for by the employer. However, qualifications gained from these training programmes are not formally recognised for the purposes of career advancement (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, p. 834).
- **Norway.** In 2014, 80% of ELC settings (kindergartens) surveyed offered mentoring to newly qualified teachers in educational leadership, parental cooperation and similar topics, with 67% of teachers receiving mentoring. Mentoring is provided by supervisors or experienced teachers, and 58% of settings report setting aside designated time for mentoring (European Commission 2014, p. 37). In 2018, 95% of staff responsible for children aged under three and 94% of ISCED 02 staff reported participating in professional development (OECD 2019b, Figure 3.7).<sup>13</sup> As in Germany, staff with higher pre-service qualifications also participate in more CPD, with teachers having five days per year set aside for training.

## 2.4 Summary

Qualification requirements for teachers in ELC settings are lower in Ireland than in France, Germany, New Zealand and Norway, but higher than in England. Twenty five percent of the ELC workforce in Ireland holds a tertiary qualification, higher than the share in England but much lower than the shares in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. This is despite the fact that the national workforce in Ireland is relatively well qualified.

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<sup>12</sup> Percentages based on a weighted average of participation rates for staff with and without tertiary qualifications (see Figure 5: Average workforce qualifications).

<sup>13</sup> Percentages based on a weighted average of participation rates for staff with and without tertiary qualifications (see Figure 5: Average workforce qualifications).

### 3. Hourly pay

Hourly pay is a key component of the working experience for ELC staff and is an important influence on the nature of the workforce. This chapter presents evidence on three measures of hourly pay: absolute levels of mean hourly pay for ELC staff, and mean hourly pay for ELC staff relative to national mean hourly pay and relative to national minimum wages.

#### 3.1 Data caveats

International comparisons of ELC pay is challenging because no single dataset covers all countries. Collating evidence from different data sources is complicated by three factors:

- **Different units of measurement.** Some data sources present average hourly pay, while others present monthly or annual earnings. Comparing monthly or annual earnings with hourly pay requires careful adjustment for the number of hours worked per period in each country.
- **Different currencies.** Data sources present pay and earnings values in local currency units. All measures for comparator countries are converted into EUR, normalised for purchasing power parity with Ireland. Values are not adjusted to account for earnings growth as all data are within the period from 2017 to 2019.
- **Sector and staff coverage.** Different data sources cover different segments of the ELC workforce. The comparability of these definitions with the ELC sector in Ireland is made explicit in each case.

Further detail on the units of measurement and definitions are presented in the Annex.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on pay were identified but not presented. Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) describe hourly wages and earnings for England, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands, but many of the original sources of evidence are dated and underlying sources were checked for updates. Eurofound (2014) describes wages for Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands but the evidence is also dated. OECD (2020a) describes average annual wages for staff in public settings for England (UK), the Netherlands and Norway, but is not used because public institutions are not representative of sector averages. SIPTU (2019), Early Childhood Ireland (2016a, 2016b) describe hourly wages for Ireland, but the surveys are not as broad or as up to date as Pobal (2019).

### 3.2 Mean hourly pay

Figure 6 shows that mean hourly pay in PPP terms is lower in Ireland than in all comparator countries except England (and is only slightly lower than Canada).

**Figure 6: Mean hourly pay**

Country	Mean hourly pay (in Euros adjusted for PPP)	Year	Source	Comments
Canada (Ontario)	€12.84	2019	Government of Canada (2020)	Converted from median wage of €11.70/hr
England	€11.56	2019	Cattoretti et al. (2019, Table 22)	-
France	€19.92	2017	OECD (2019a, Table D3.4)	For teachers in public, centre-based settings
Germany	€18.54 – €30.49	2019	Oeffentlichen-Dienst (2020)	Statutory salaries in public settings
Ireland	€12.55	2019	Pobal (2019, Figure 7.13)	All staff
Netherlands	€26.04	2017	OECD (2019a, Table D3.4)	For teachers in public, centre-based settings
New Zealand	€15.06	2018	NZEI (2018, Table 1)	-
Norway	€19.13	2017	OECD (2019a Table D3.4)	For teachers in public, centre-based settings

Sources: See column 4.

Notes: All values in Euros, adjusted for PPP with Ireland. Hourly pay is presented for comparative purposes and does not imply that staff are on hourly contracts. The range of values for Germany reflects the range of the pay bands for ELC teachers. Consideration of the mean wage in Ireland for only ECEC room leaders (€13.24) does not substantially affect the relative position for Ireland and is not representative of the entire workforce.

A number of factors should be taken into account when making direct comparisons between countries.

First, the hourly pay presented for Germany is based on the statutory monthly salaries for public-sector teachers, rather than average hourly pay of the whole ELC workforce:

- Monthly earnings are converted to hourly pay using statutory working hours. This will overstate hourly pay if average hours are higher than statutory hours.

- Two-thirds of places in Germany are in the private sector and are not obliged to comply with these pay scales.

Second, the wages presented for France, the Netherlands and Norway are based on average annual salaries for teachers in public, centre-based settings.

- Annual earnings are converted to hourly pay using statutory working hours. This will overstate hourly pay if average hours are higher than statutory hours.
- For France and the Netherlands, pay for teachers in public settings is likely to be representative of the sector. In France, 95% of children aged three and over are in centre-based settings, 87% of ISCED 02 places are public and 67% of ISCED 0 staff are teachers. In the Netherlands, 85% of children aged three and over are in centre-based settings and 70% of ISCED 02 places are public.
- In Norway, pay for teachers in public settings may be less representative. While 88% of children aged three and over are in centre-based settings, only 52% of places are public and only 40% of the workforce is categorised as teachers. However, pay negotiations in Norway are undertaken on a centralised basis and there is little variation in pay across the public and private sectors.

### 3.3 Pay relative to national means and minimum wages

To understand the extent to which ELC staff are “low paid”, it is important to consider average pay levels relative to the national workforce average pay and relative to any national minimum wage regulations.

Figure 7 presents the mean hourly pay for ELC staff as ratios of the national mean hourly pay for all sectors and of the national minimum wage (all in local currency for 2018). Mean ELC hourly pay is lower than mean national hourly pay in all of the countries. The ratio of ELC hourly pay to national hourly pay in Ireland is very slightly higher than that in Canada and England, but notably lower than that in other comparator countries.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Note that this comparison does not adjust for differences in the workforce characteristics between the ELC and national workforces. Figure 5 suggests that these are likely to be significant and to vary by country.

**Figure 7: Mean hourly pay wages for ELC staff relative to national mean hourly pay and national minimum wages**

Country	Mean hourly pay in ELC (in national currencies)	National mean hourly pay	Ratio of ELC mean hourly pay to national mean	Minimum wage (per hour)	Ratio of ELC mean hourly pay wage to minimum wage
Canada (Ontario)	\$18.00	\$39.50	46%	\$12.86	140%
England	£10.19	£23.54	43%	£7.75	131%
France	€19.04	€25.31	75%	€9.88	193%
Germany	€17.59 - €28.92	€30.33	58% - 95%	€8.84	199% - 327%
Ireland	€12.55	€26.88	47%	€9.55	131%
Netherlands	€25.68	€33.04	78%	€14.34	179%
New Zealand	\$27.71	\$38.80	71%	\$16.19	171%
Norway	NOK 237.67	NOK 397.09	60%	n/a	n/a

Sources: Figure 6 and OECD (2020b).

Notes: National mean hourly pay and minimum wages for Canada (Ontario) and England are for Canada and United Kingdom respectively. All figures are in national currencies for 2018. National mean hourly pay is average annual wages divided by average annual hours actually worked per worker. Hourly minimum wage for the Netherlands is the annual amount divided by average annual hours actually worked per worker. Norway does not have a minimum wage.

Figure 7 also shows that the difference between the mean ELC hourly pay and the minimum wage is smallest for Ireland and England and substantially lower than in any comparator country except for England and Canada. In Ireland, average ELC wages are 31% above the minimum wage, compared to France, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand, where they are more than 70% above the minimum wage.

### 3.4 Summary

Mean hourly pay for ELC staff in Ireland is lower than in all comparator countries except England (and is only slightly higher than that for Canada). Relative to average national pay and to national minimum wages, the ELC workforce in Ireland is also low paid compared to ELC staff in the comparator countries.

## 4. Workforce conditions

Workforce conditions refer to the broad set of circumstances that influence the workforce experience, including such factors as child-to-staff ratios and working hours. This chapter presents evidence on five measures of working conditions:

- Statutory maximum child-to-staff ratios: most countries have regulations setting maximum ratios by age of child and sometimes by type of provision;
- Average child-to-staff ratios: these may be lower than statutory maximums to differing degrees across countries;
- The proportion of ELC staff working part time and how this compares to the proportion in the national workforce;
- Qualitative information on non-contact hours per week; and
- The share of ELC staff who believe their profession is valued.

### 4.1 Statutory maximum child-to-staff ratios

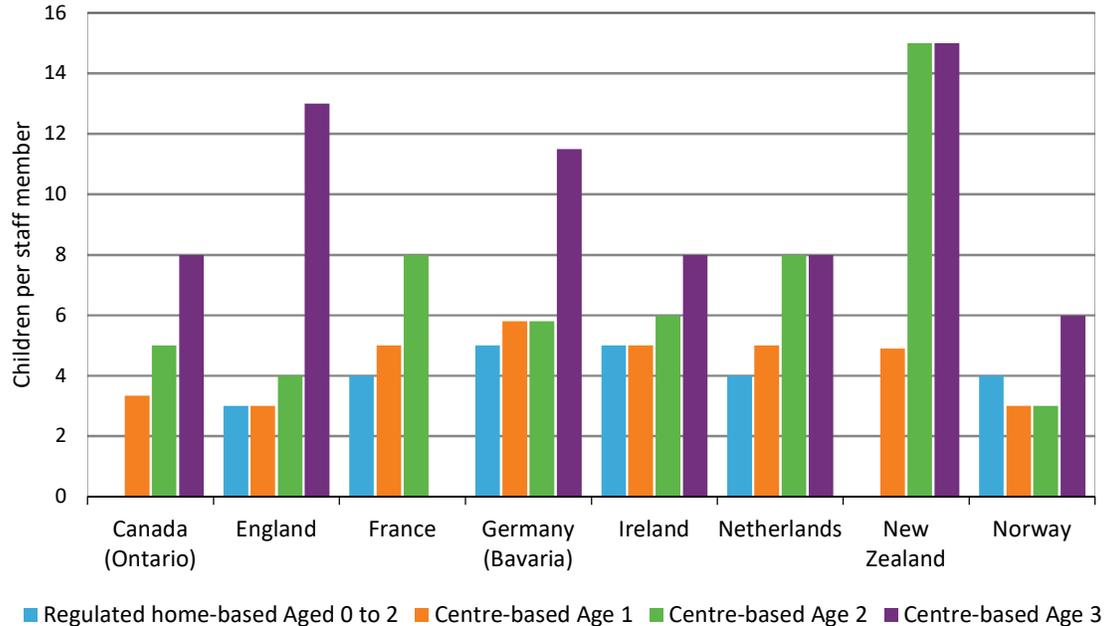
Figure 8 compares the statutory maximum child-to-staff ratios with the comparator countries for children under age three in regulated home-based settings and for children aged one, two and three in centre-based ELC.<sup>16 17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on statutory child-to-staff ratios were identified but not presented. Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) describe statutory ratios for England, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands. These are broadly consistent with European Commission (2019), although there are notable differences for England, Ireland and the Netherlands. However, data is based on older versions of European Commission (2019) and is therefore not presented. Department for Education (2017), Irish Government (2016) and Dearing et al. (2018) are consistent with European Commission (2019) for England, Ireland and Norway respectively. Data was not available to facilitate comparisons of contract types or benefits.

<sup>17</sup> Statutory maximum ratios for centre-based care are the same for children under age one as those aged one in all countries except in Ireland and in the Netherlands (where the ratio is 3 for those under age one). There is no ELC provision for children under age one in Norway. The ratios for ELC at age four are the same as those for age three in all countries except France and the Netherlands (where ratios for four-year-olds are not nationally regulated). Additional regulations for children under age two in Ireland (a ratio of two children per staff member for children under age 15 months) are broadly in line with additional regulations in England (a ratio of one child per staff member for children under age one), New Zealand (a ratio of two children per staff member for children under age two) and Netherlands (a ratio of two children per staff member for children under age one), while no such additional regulations were identified in the remaining four countries.

**Figure 8: Statutory maximum number of children per staff member**



Sources: European Commission (2019, pages 154-155) (Centre-based for Ireland, England, France, Netherlands, Norway); European Commission (2019, Figure C9) (Home-based for England, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway); New Zealand Government (2008, pages 36-38) (New Zealand); Ontario (2019, p. 27) (Canada); OECD (2019b p. 229) (Bavaria).

Notes: Ratios for centre-based provision for Canada are for Ontario and show the lower within-year ratio where the regulation changes at 18 months and 30 months. Ratios for centre-based provision for England for three-year-olds are 8 if a qualified teacher is not present. Ratios for centre-based provision in France for two-year-olds are for “accueil du jeune enfant” settings. Ratios for home-based ELC in Ireland are for regulated settings which account for only a small share of the home-based sector. Ratios for centre-based ELC in Germany are specific to Bavaria. Ratios for centre-based care in New Zealand are lower in some circumstances (such as small group sizes). The ratio for centre-based provision in Netherlands is 16 if the staff member is a core practitioner. For home-based settings, four countries (England, Ireland, New Zealand and the Netherlands) have additional lower ratios for children under the age of two and the ratio for Germany (not specific to Bavaria) does not include the teacher’s own children.

The figure shows that:

- The statutory maximum child-to-staff ratio for children under age three in regulated home-based settings is higher in Ireland (five children per staff member) than in all other countries (except Germany), where it is typically four children per staff. However, only a minority of home-based settings in Ireland are regulated, and unregulated settings are not permitted to care for more than three pre-school children, implicitly implying a maximum ratio of four children per staff member for most childminders.
- The statutory maximum child-to-staff ratios for centre-based provision in Ireland are generally lower than those in the comparator countries. The exceptions are the

higher statutory ratios in Ireland for one- and two-year-olds than for Canada and England and for all three ages in Norway.

#### 4.2 Average child-to-staff ratios.

Figure 9 shows the average child-to-staff ratios for ISCED 01, ISCED 02 and ISCED 0 for all contact staff and for teaching staff.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 9: Average number of children per staff member**

Country	All contact staff			Teaching staff		
	ISCED 01	ISCED 02	ISCED 0	ISCED 01	ISCED 02	ISCED 0
Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-
England	-	7.6*	-	-	-	-
France	-	15.6	15.6	-	22.6	22.5
Germany	4.6	8.7	7.0	5.0	9.5	7.6
Ireland	4.6	7.2	6.3	-	-	-
Netherlands	-	14.0	-	-	16.2	-
New Zealand	-	-	-	3.6	6.3	4.9
Norway	3.3	5.7	4.5	8.2	14.4	11.3

Sources: OECD (2019, Table B2.3) (France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway); OECD (2018, 2020a) (Netherlands); Paull and Popov (2019, Table 6) (England); Pobal (2019, Table 7.10) (Ireland).

Notes: \* Paull and Popov (2019) is used in place of OECD (2019) data for England as it is based on a survey of child and staff numbers in each group, rather than a headcount ratio. Dashes indicate missing data.

<sup>18</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on average child-to-staff ratios were identified but not presented. OECD (2020a) also presents average teacher staff ratios for France, Germany, New Zealand and Norway. These are identical to OECD (2019a), which is preferred because it provides a breakdown by ISCED 01/02 and also provides estimates for contact staff ratios. European Commission (2020) describes the ratio of children to contact staff (including and excluding teachers' aides) for England (United Kingdom), France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. The data is consistent with OECD (2019a) data for all overlapping countries, except for France, where the Eurostat value is marginally higher, and the Netherlands, where the Eurostat value is aligned with the OECD (2020a) value for public institutions, but is higher than the OECD (2019a) value for all institutions. The data is not presented as evidence is not available for Ireland or New Zealand, or by ISCED 01/02. OECD (2019b) presents ratios for by ISCED 01/02 and staff type for Germany and Norway. The ratios are generally substantially lower than those in OECD (2019a), likely reflecting the fact that OECD (2019b) is based on a survey of child and staff numbers in each group (as in Paull and Popov 2019), as opposed to the headcount ratio (as in Pobal 2019). OECD (2019a) is preferred for consistency with countries that are not in OECD (2019b). World Bank (2019) describes the headcount ratio for all comparator countries. The data is not consistent with OECD (2019a), likely reflecting differences in the definition of children and staff, reporting errors related to enrolment rates and the time period of the data (the most recent data available for Ireland is from 1997).

The figure shows that the average child-to-staff ratio for all staff is lower in Ireland than in England, France and Germany.

Comparisons between countries should be made with caution for two reasons:

- All sources used in the figure (except that used for England) calculate child-to-staff ratios by dividing the total number of registered staff by the total number of registered children (a “headcount” ratio). This may misrepresent the true ratio because not all staff work full time, not all children attend settings full time, and some children may be registered in more than one setting. Moreover, substantial variations in these factors between countries make comparisons difficult. For example, 70% of staff in the Netherlands work part time, compared to 14% in France (see Figure 10).
- The age groups covered by ISCED 02 (and therefore ISCED 0) vary substantially by country. In England, Ireland and New Zealand, almost all children in ELC are aged under five. However in France, Germany, Netherlands and Norway, 25% to 40% of the population is aged over five (see Figure 1). As regulated ratios increase sharply between the ages of three and six, small variations in the age range can have a substantial impact on the average ratios.

### 4.3 Part-time work.

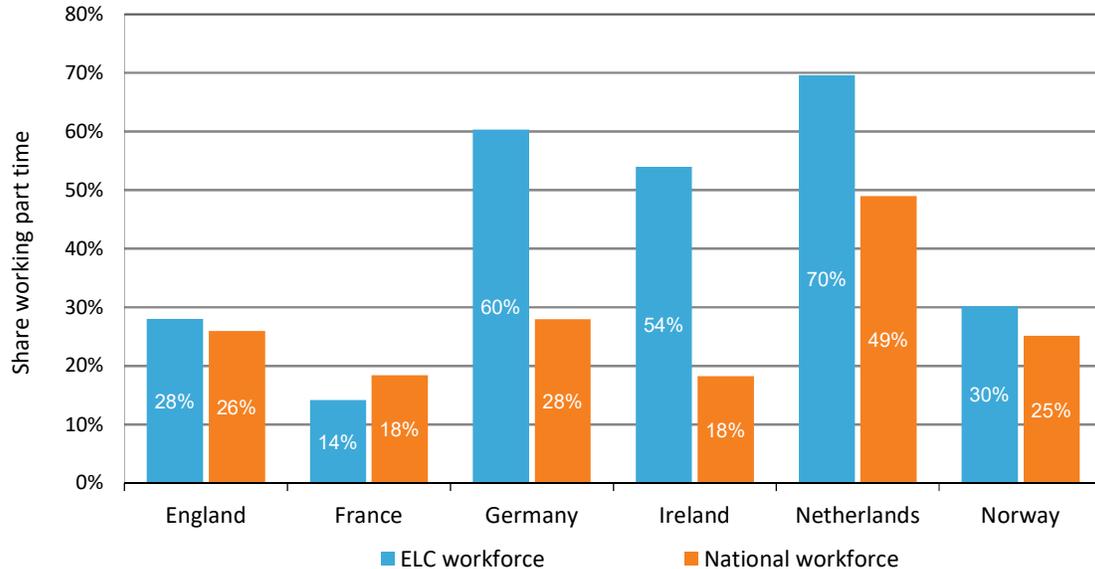
Figure 10 presents the share of ELC staff that work part time,<sup>19</sup> together with the proportion of the national workforce that works part time. The share of staff working part time in ELC may reflect the availability of flexible working conditions in the sector which may be

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<sup>19</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on wages were identified but not presented. Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) describe the shares of staff working part time for England, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands. These are similar to Eurostat data for France: Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) note that the share of part-time work is 12% in French *écoles maternelles* (part-time is defined as fewer than 35 hours per week). These are marginally higher than Eurostat data for Germany: Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) note that the share of part-time work is 67.1% and 76.0% for staff in German ECEC for western and eastern states respectively (part-time is defined as fewer than 38.5 hours per week). Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) agree with Eurostat that the part-time share is 60% if only teachers are considered, but suggest that this share is lower in western states. OECD (2019b) describes the shares of part-time staff for Germany and Norway. These are marginally lower than in Eurostat Data: 53% to 57% and 24% to 26% respectively (the ranges reflect that the shares are different for children aged under three and ISCED 02; part-time hours thresholds are not defined). Eurostat data is preferred to Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) and OECD (2019b) for consistency.

desirable for some workers. On the other hand, it could reflect a lack of full-time opportunities in ELC, which may reduce the attractiveness of working in the sector.

**Figure 10: Share of ELC workforce working part time**



Sources: Eurostat (2020, Variable educ\_uoe\_perd05) (France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway); Cattoretti et al. (2019, Table 50) (England); Pobal (2019, Figure 7.3) (Ireland); OECD (2019b) (National workforce).

Notes: The Eurostat value for England was replaced with the Cattoretti et al. (2019) value, which is more reflective of the ELC sector. Part-time is defined as working fewer than 30 hours in England and Ireland and fewer than 90% of nationally defined statutory working hours for France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. Part-time shares for the national workforce assume national definitions of part-time work which are below 30 hours per week in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway.

The figure shows that 54% of ELC staff in Ireland work on a part-time basis, defined as working 30 hours or fewer per week. This is similar to the part-time share in Germany and Netherlands, but substantially higher than the part-time share in France, England and Norway.

The figure also shows that the share of the ELC workforce in Ireland working part time is approximately three times the national average. This compares to Germany, where part-time work in ELC is twice the national average; England, the Netherlands and Norway, where it is marginally higher than the national average; and France, where it is lower than the national average

#### 4.4 Non-contact time

Another determinant of workforce experience is how much working time is set aside for non-teaching activities. Non-contact time may include CPD, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.3.

ELC staff in Ireland have an average of 5.6 hours of non-contact time per week out of a total of 27 hours (Pobal 2019, Figures 7.3, 7.4). Limited comparable data is available for comparator countries:

- **England.** Teachers in some centre-based public settings are entitled to five non-teaching days per year, and ten hours per week for preparation and marking. These regulations only apply to a minority of ELC staff, with the majority expected to attend to administrative requirements when children are asleep or are being supervised by another staff member (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, pages 1241, 12, 53).
- **France.** Most ISCED 01 staff have access to three days per year for planning and reflective activities (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, page 398). Paid non-contact time is rare, with meetings and administrative requirements carried out during rest periods. However, staff are generally allowed morning and afternoon breaks in addition to lunch breaks. ISCED 02 staff are entitled to 108 non-contact hours per year, split between individual tuition, teamwork, meeting parents, pedagogical play work and participation in school meetings.
- In **Germany** and the **Netherlands** there are no national regulations on non-contact time, which vary by region.
- **New Zealand.** ISCED 0 staff are entitled to have 12.5% of their total work time set aside for non-contact activities including assessment, preparation and planning, parent contact and administration (NZEI 2018, page 22).
- **Norway.** All kindergarten teachers are entitled to four hours per week for planning and preparation, in addition to the days reserved for CPD.

There is insufficient evidence to draw clear conclusions on differences in non-contact time.

## 4.5 Social recognition

A final component of workforce conditions is the degree to which staff feel recognised and valued by society.

In Ireland, only 14% of respondents to a trade union survey believed that they were “recognised as a professional by society”. Two-thirds of respondents added that a “lack of recognition” was one of the main issues faced by the workforce, second only to “low pay” (SIPTU 2019, pages 9-13).

These measures cannot be directly compared with data for other countries as framing and context in survey questions are likely to have a significant impact on results. The most comparable evidence for comparator countries are the TALIS 2018 survey, which found that 36% of ELC staff in Germany and 53% of ELC staff in Norway agreed or strongly agreed that “ECEC staff are valued in society” (OECD 2019b, Figure 3.15). An earlier version of the TALIS survey covered more comparator countries, but the sample was mainly secondary school teachers who are likely to have different perceptions of social value to ELC staff (OECD 2020a).<sup>20</sup>

## 4.6 Summary

Statutory child-to-staff ratios in Ireland are generally lower than those in the comparator countries, although there are some exceptions in Canada, England and Norway. In practice, average child-to-staff ratios are low in Ireland, and the child-to-teacher ratio is lower than in all comparator countries for which data was available.

A relatively high share of ELC staff in Ireland work part time, despite Ireland as a whole having a lower proportion of part-time workers than any comparator country for which data was available. There are indications that ELC staff in Ireland feel less recognised by society than ELC staff in Germany or Norway, although the evidence is limited and is derived from surveys which may not be completely comparable.

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<sup>20</sup> The survey found that 30% to 40% of school teachers in England, the Netherlands and Norway believe that the teaching profession is valued in society, compared to only 5% of school teachers in France.

## 5. Recruitment and retention

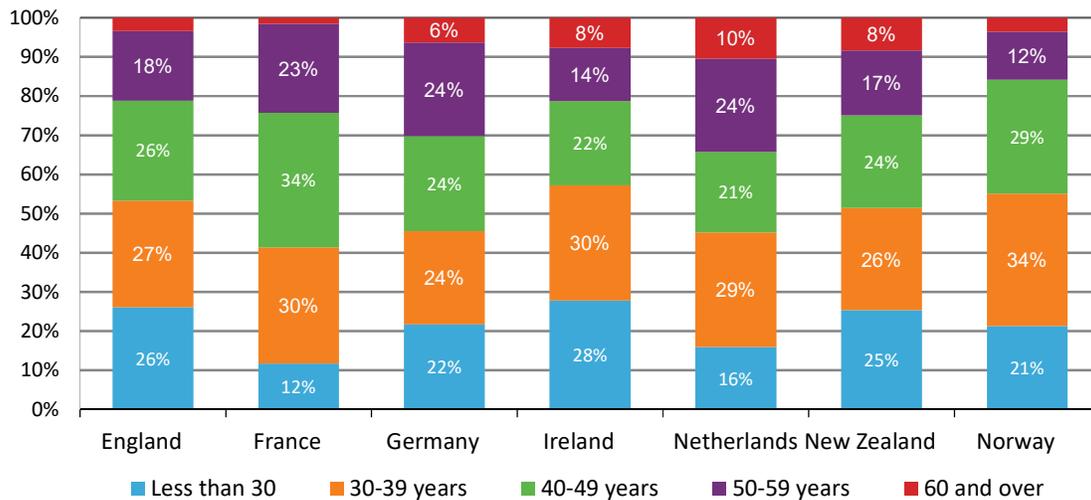
The health of the ELC workforce can, to some extent, be measured by the ability of the sector to recruit and retain suitably experienced staff. Low pay and poor working conditions may make it difficult to retain staff in ELC settings or in the sector more generally. This chapter presents four measures related to recruitment and retention:

- The age distribution of the ELC workforce
- The average years of experience and tenure for the ELC workforce
- The share of ELC staff that leave their setting in a given year (turnover)
- A qualitative description of recruitment issues.

### 5.1 Workforce age distribution

The average age of the ELC workforce is a proxy for the experience of the workforce and how long individuals remain working in the sector. The age distribution of the ELC workforce for Ireland and the comparator countries is presented in Figure 11.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 11: ELC teachers by age**



Sources: OECD Education Database: Share of teachers by age range for ISCED 0 (Early childhood education) except for Ireland, which is derived from Pobal (2019, Figure 7.8).

<sup>21</sup> OECD (2019b) describes the workforce age distribution for Germany and Norway. It is not presented here as the OECD Education Database covered more countries.

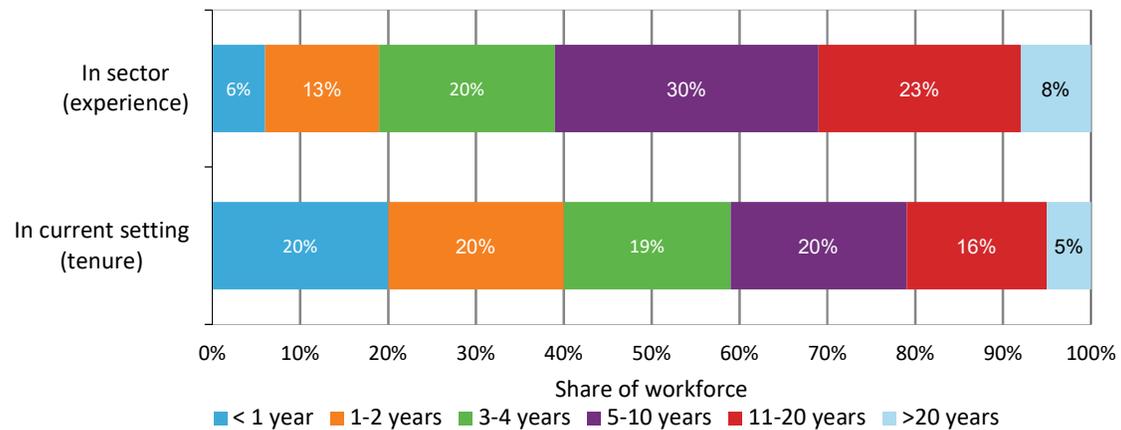
Figure 11 shows that the ELC workforce in Ireland is relatively young; 28% of staff are aged under 30 and 57% are aged under 40, compared to an average of 20% and 49% respectively for the remaining <sup>22</sup>comparator countries.

## 5.2 Workforce experience and tenure

Workforce experience (time working in the sector) and tenure (time working within a given setting) can also be measured directly.

Figure 12 shows that the median ELC staff member has been in the sector (experience) for five to ten years and in their current setting (tenure) for three to four years. Assuming a uniform distribution within each band in Figure 12, the mean experience and tenure can be estimated to be approximately nine years and six years respectively.

**Figure 12: Share of ELC workforce by experience and tenure, Ireland**



Sources: Pobal (2019, Figure 7.7).

Comparable figures were only identified for England, where mean experience is approximately seven years and mean tenure is six years, based on data from 2012-2014 (Simon et al. 2015).

For context, average tenure with current employer for the national workforces was nine years in both England (UK) and Ireland (OECD 2020b).

<sup>22</sup> Due to rounding, the total for the 28% and 30% in the column for Ireland in figure 11 is 57%.

### 5.3 Workforce turnover

An alternative measure of tenure is workforce turnover, defined as the share of staff who leave a setting in any given year. In Ireland, ELC staff turnover is 23% (Pobal 2019, page140). Of these, 37% moved to another ELC or SAC setting, 39% left the sector altogether and 12% left Ireland (the destination of 12% of leavers was unknown).

This rate of turnover is substantially higher than in other countries where comparable data is available. In Germany and Norway, 10% and 7% of staff left their setting in the previous year (OECD 2019b, Figure 1.15).<sup>23</sup>

### 5.4 Recruitment challenges

Low pay and poor working conditions might also make it difficult to recruit new ELC staff and fill vacancies. Importantly, recruitment difficulties may also reflect changes in the demand for ELC staff, which means that cross-country differences should be interpreted with caution.

While recruitment has not historically been a challenge in Ireland, the introduction of statutory qualification requirements in December 2016 and the expansion of free provision have made recruitment more difficult (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2018, page 572).

Currently, around 23% of ELC settings in Ireland have a staff vacancy at any one time, while 53% of settings recently reported that they had difficulties recruiting suitably qualified staff in the past 12 months (Pobal 2019, pages 142-143).

Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) show that recruitment challenges vary by comparator country:

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<sup>23</sup> A number of alternative sources with evidence on retention were identified but not presented. OECD (2011), Simon et al. (2015) and Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) report turnover rates which suggest that average annual staff turnover in Ireland was 15%, compared to 11% in the England, 9% in Netherlands, 21% in New Zealand and “significant” in French ISCED 01 settings. These figures are not presented as they are all from before 2015 and likely to be out of date. Eurofound (2014) reports that in Germany 58% of private centres and 68% of public centres (with 50 children or fewer) reported staff changes in the preceding two years. The corresponding values for larger settings were 75% and 76% respectively. These figures are not reported as OECD (2019b) provides more up-to-date evidence on Germany.

- **England.** Historically, staff shortages in private settings have not been a problem, except in urban areas with high living costs. The number of active vacancies in full-time and part-time ELC settings was 24% and 17% respectively in 2014 (page 1248).
- **France.** There are significant staff shortages across the ELC sector. Existing recruitment strategies are not sufficient (page 398).
- **Germany.** There are significant staff shortage across the ELC sector (page 453).
- **The Netherlands.** There are no significant staff shortages in the ELC sector due to declining demand (page 837).

## 5.6 Summary

The ELC workforce in Ireland is relatively young by international standards, and there is some evidence that turnover in Ireland is substantially higher than in Germany and Norway. However, there is insufficient evidence to facilitate any strong conclusions on the international comparisons of experience, tenure and recruitment.

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## Annex: Description of derivation of hourly pay in ELC

Figure 13 describes the sources and definitions that were used to construct Figure 6: Mean hourly pay.

A number of conversions and adjustments were necessary:

- Canadian Dollars (CAD), Norwegian Kroner (NOK), Pounds Sterling (GBP) and New Zealand Dollars (NZD) were converted to Euros using OECD exchange rates, adjusting for PPP with Ireland.
- Monthly and annual earnings for France, Germany and the Netherlands were converted into hourly wages using OECD data on statutory annual hours (OECD 2019a, Table D4.1b). Annual earnings for Norway were converted into hourly pay using the number of statutory teaching days per year, assuming eight hours per day (OECD 2019a, Table D4.1b).
- Hourly pay in Germany is statutory monthly salaries for teachers. Salary bands are lower for “childcare providers” and higher for “social pedagogues” and head teachers, and may not be an accurate reflection of average wages.
- Hourly pay in Canada is reported as medians rather than means. The source shows information on the distribution of hourly pay which suggests that the mean is higher than the median. Mean hourly pay is estimated to equal 19.75 CAD, using the ratio of mean to median hourly pay for the Educational Service sector in Ontario (1.097) (Statistics Canada 2019).

**Figure 13: Comparison of sources for mean hourly pay in ELC**

	Canada	England	France	Germany	Ireland	Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway
Source	Government of Canada (2020)	Cattoretti et al. (2019, Table 22)	OECD (2019a Table D3.4)	Oeffentlichen-Dienst (2020)	Pobal (2019, p. 134)	OECD (2019a Table D3.4)	NZEI (2018, Table 1)	OECD (2019a Table D3.4)
Region	Ontario	England	N/A	Germany	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Units	Hourly	Hourly	Annual	Monthly	Hourly	Annual	Hourly	Annual
Mean / median	Median	Mean	Mean	Range	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Actual / statutory	Actual	Actual	Actual	Statutory	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Gross / net	Gross	Gross	Gross	Gross	Gross	Gross	Gross	Gross
ELC Type	All	All	ISCED 0	All	Only registered	ISCED 0	Only registered	ISCED 0
Public / private	All	All	Public	Public	All	Public	All	Public
Centre / home	All	All	Centre	All	Centre	Centre	All	Centre
Age	All	All	All	All	All	All	All	All
Staff type	All	All	Teacher	Teacher	All	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
Year	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019	2018	2018	2018
Currency	CAD	GBP	USD	EUR	EUR	USD	NZD	USD
Raw value	18.00 CAD \$ per hour	10.19 GBP £ per hour	40,457 USD \$ per year	€2593 - 4264 per month	€12.55 per hour	54,598 USD \$ per year	27.71 NZD \$ per hour	43,534 USD \$ per year
Imputed hourly pay	€12.84	€11.56	€19.92	€18.54 – €30.49	€12.55	€26.04	€15.06	€19.13

