

Keynote Address II:

“New conclusions from the OECD Starting Strong reviews”

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Economic development and rapid social change have significantly modified family and child-rearing patterns across OECD countries, and focused attention on early childhood education and care services. These services are viewed increasingly as the first step in lifelong learning and a key component of a successful social, family and education policy agenda. However, several challenges remain, for example: the resolution of the demographic challenges faced by OECD countries; the quality of services provided to young children; the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities in a manner more equitable for women; and in particular, issues of diversity, child poverty and educational disadvantage. How countries approach such issues is influenced by their social and economic traditions, their understandings of families and young children, and by accumulated research on the benefits of quality early childhood services.

This paper, based on the volume *Starting Strong II*, describes the process of the OECD policy reviews and outlines the progress made by the participating countries: **Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.** It offers many examples of new policy initiatives adopted in the ECEC field and identifies ten areas for further critical attention from governments.

- *To attend to the social context of early childhood development:*
- *To place well-being, early development and learning at the core of ECEC work, while respecting the child’s agency and natural learning strategies:*
- *To create the governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance*
- *To construct with the stakeholders broad guidelines and curricular orientations for all ECEC services*
- *To base public funding estimates on achieving quality pedagogical goals.*

- *To reduce child poverty and exclusion through upstream fiscal, social and labour policies, and increase resources within universal programmes for children with diverse learning rights:*
- *To encourage family and community involvement in early childhood services:*
- *To improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff:*
- *To provide autonomy, funding and support to early childhood services:*
- *To aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy:*