

# Integrated family policy for families with young children in the European Union

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## INTRODUCTION

22/02/2024

## EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY

First Monitoring Report

## INTEGRATION IN THE ECEC SECTOR

Key experience  
across the EU

## FAMILY POLICY FIELD

Fragmented in service siloes

## SERVICE COORDINATION

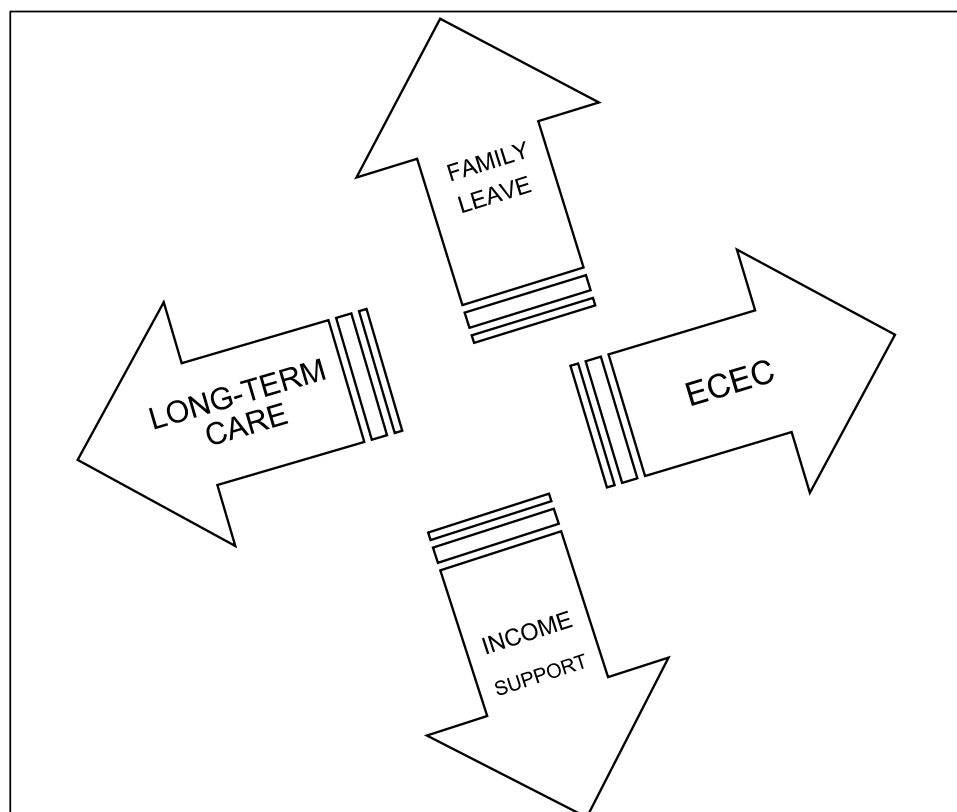
Multiple initiatives at national/  
sub-national level

## TOWARDS GREATER FAMILY POLICY INTEGRATION ACROSS EUROPE



REPORT OF THE  
EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY  
ON FAMILY POLICY

## THE ISSUE OF FRAGMENTATION



### SERVICE SILOES:

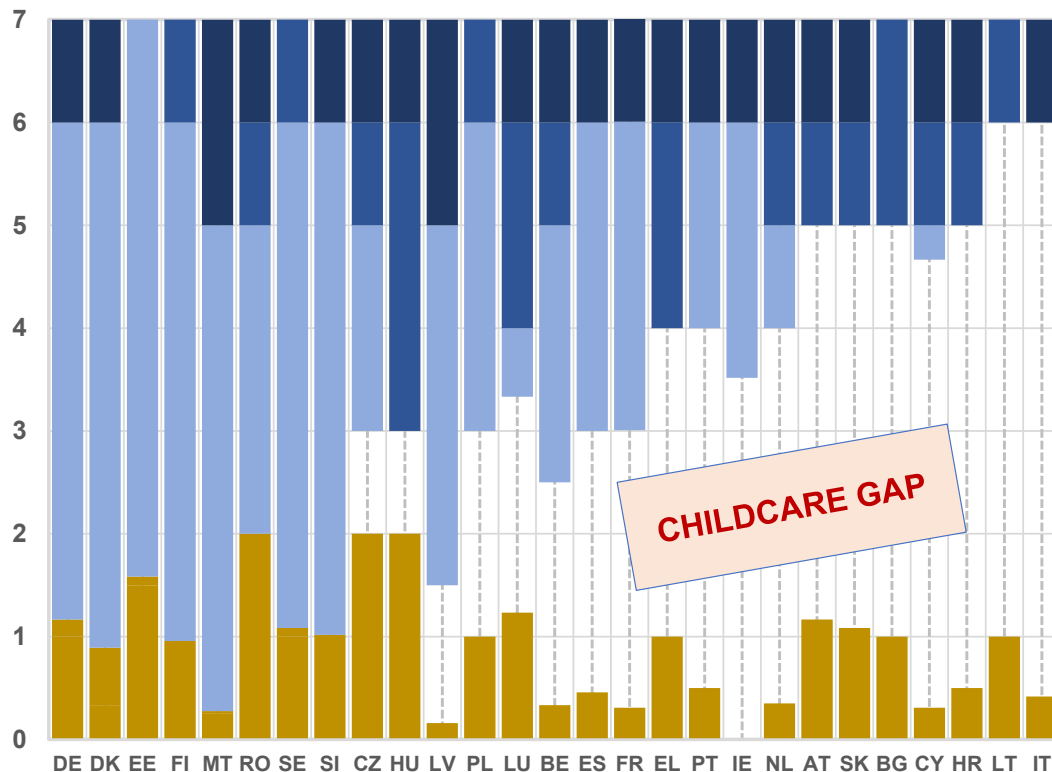
- Misalignment between families' need for continuity and segmentation of provision
- Service bubbles: eligibility requirements, enrolment procedures, duration
- Increased coordination improves outcomes for families

## COORDINATION IN FAMILY POLICY



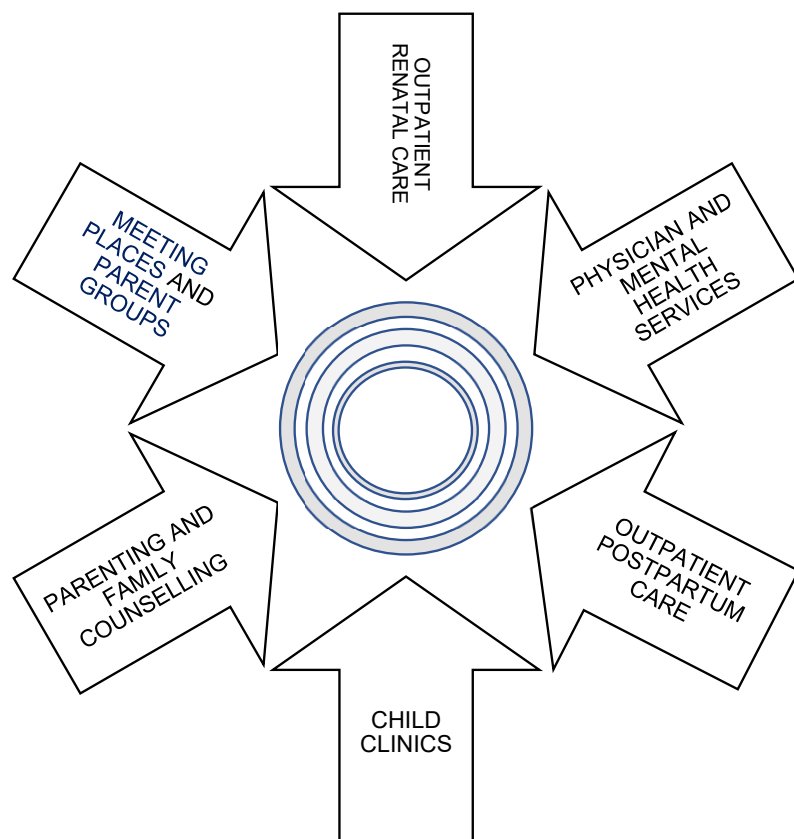
- Bridging the childcare gap
- Coordination between family-centred services of support, with particular attention to the perinatal phase (multi-generational approach)
- Alignment between ECEC segments

# BRIDGING THE CHILDCARE GAP

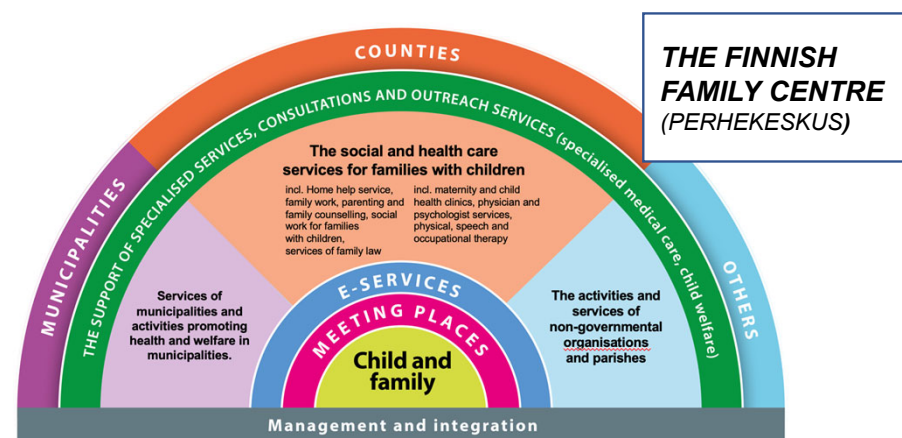


- Extension paternity/parental leave duration (*Implementation EU Directive 2019*)
- Enhanced Flexibility (*2022 Finnish leave reform*)
- Increase in ECEC coverage
- Development and reorganisation of the child benefit system (*2022 Italian Universal Allowance*)

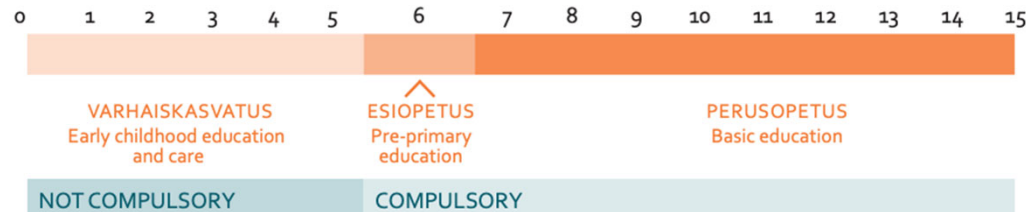
# COORDINATION BETWEEN FAMILY-CENTRED SERVICES



- Health, social, educational services
- Alignment at (mostly) municipal level between child-targeted and parent-targeted services (two-generation)
- ‘Hub’ model for coordinated provision
- Improvement of accessibility for families through co-location and a 'no wrong door' intake process
- Established ex novo as multi-service networks, or grown by expansion of one lead “backbone” agency



# ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ECEC SEGMENTS



## INTEGRATED BUT DIFFERENT

- Alignment between ECEC segments takes different forms (*FIN, ITA -> under Education* *GER -> Family and S.A*)
- Historical context matters
- Integration processes extremely complex to manage/govern -> outcome variability



**SPOTLIGHT ON ITALY:  
2017 REFORM  
INTRODUCING AN  
INTEGRATED ECEC  
SYSTEM FROM 0 UNTIL  
6 YEARS – ‘ZEROSEI’**

22/02/2024

## MACRO GOALS

Expansion of coverage for U3 (*Barcelona Targets*) -> bridging territorial gaps

Inclusion of the U3 segment in the broader educational cycle (pedagogical guidelines, minimum qualification standards)

Consolidation and dissemination of new multilevel governance model (*based on a coordination arrangements already present in specific regions*)

Enforce a 'warm' type of integration, not top-down, mindful of:  
(i) professional/institutional traditions of the two ECEC segments  
(and of local expertise)

Evolution of participation, territorial coverage and municipal expenditure per resident, 2003-2018  
'high performing' and 'low performing' Italian Regions

Region	Participation, % of relevant age group (0-2)			Territorial coverage, % of council with ECEC			Municipal expenditure, Euros per resident (0-2 age group) (a)		
	2003	2018	Δ2003-2018	2003	2018	Δ2003-2018	2004	2018	Δ2004-2018
Emilia-Romagna	22,5	25,2	2,7	73,9	88,8	14,9	1.517 €	2.331 €	814 €
Tuscany	16,3	22,7	6,4	52,3	85	32,7	1.256 €	1.709 €	452 €
Trentino	7,6	24,9	17,3	10,3	84,1	73,8	1.537 €	2.966 €	1.429 €
Campania	1,2	3,1	1,9	11,1	61,8	50,7	173 €	262 €	89 €
Calabria	1,2	2,2	1	5,6	18,8	13,2	75 €	130 €	55 €
Italy (mean)	9,1	12,9	3,8	29,4	56,6	27,2	849 €	1.059 €	210 €

(a) Includes current municipal expenditures covered through family contributions (enrolment fees) Source: Calculations on ISTAT database; Data retrieved from: <http://dati.istat.it/?lang=en&SubSessionId=a650d398-8793-4a2c-84e7-4e3085fcb891>.

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## INTEGRATIVE DEVICES

'Hubs' for early childhood (*'Poli per l'Infanzia'*)

Platforms for pedagogical coordination (*'Coordinamenti pedagogici'*)

+

*Key steering role to be carried out by the central level  
(Ministry of Education and Expert Commission for ECEC)*

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## PLATFORMS FOR COORDINATION

1. at the provider level (municipality, not for profit organisation): cyclical meetings that bring together staff and nurseries in co-ordination, mid-management positions; ensure pedagogical coherence and uniformity between services under the same provider;
2. at the Municipal/district level: similar roundtables bringing together senior coordinators, staff in managerial position responsible for coordination within individual providers (*'coordinamento pedagogico provinciale/comunale'*)

Key 'horizontal' mechanism for coherent programming and monitoring of professional development across the field.

Staat van het gezinsbeleid van 2023

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## STATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

Increase in supply, but the 0/6 system remains very unbalanced towards pre-school.

Great dynamism. Confusion persists, however.  
Regions are deliberating in random order.

Hubs. There is ferment, but the hubs remain a residual experience

The central level (State) is not playing any real guiding and steering role.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### RECONCILIATING PLURALISM + STEERING PREROGATIVES

Crucial challenge -> enhancing service development at regional level without imposing top-down models that risk erasing the richness and traditions of local 'communities of practice', HOWEVER, steering remains vital to prevent pluralism from becoming a trap, with the 'high-performers' getting better and better and the 'laggards' accumulating more and more disadvantage.

COMMON FRAMEWORKS for the local development of relevant forms of coordination

PROFESSIONAL PLURALISM IS AN ASSET BUT REQUIRES COMMITMENT AND CONTINUOUS EFFORTS TO PROTECT IT

Staat van het gezinsbeleid van 2023

Thank you for the attention.

