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Children's Early Learning Experiences: Policy and Practice
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Children's Access to Education and Learning Spaces in International Perspective

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Aim of this paper

- I. Examine: do European ECEC systems meet conditions for successful 'social investment strategy'
- II. Suggestion: re-embedding 'social investment' in society – ECEC provision as community space and local infrastructure



The 'social investment turn'

- From the reactive welfare state to the activating social investment state; from protection *from* the market to integration *into* the market
- "education, education, education" & adult worker model
- **Early childhood education and care (ECEC) central:** supports positive life trajectories of children and labour market participation of parents
- **Logic 1:** Investing in ECEC leads to more equity (less poverty) and greater individual and social well-being



Conditions for successful 'social investment-strategy'

- Early investment: children aged 0-3
- "Access for all" to 'high-quality' ECEC provision
- Support parental employment (integrated 'reconciliation' policy)
- *Egalitarian education system (life long learning)*
- *'job generating' labour market and economic policies: "good jobs"*



Social investment and its two logics

- Logic 2: Social investment in 'ECEC' leads to increased elite formation and dualisation of the labour market (increasing inequality, societal disintegration).

→ What is social distribution of ECEC uses?



Under-3 year olds' participation in formal ECEC, in %

	2005			2011		
	Total	1-29h	30h+	Total	1-29h	30h+
Denmark	73	13	60	74	5	69
France	32	16	16	44	18	26
Germany	16	8	8	24	9	15
NL	40	36	4	52	46	6
Slovenia	24	2	22	37	3	34
Sweden	53	22	31	51	19	32
UK	29	24	5	35	30	5

Source: Eurostat. EU-SILC data.

Inequality in FTE formal childcare use, Under-3s Ratio 1st/5th income quintile



Source: Van Lancker (2013), EU-SILC Data



European ECEC models in comparison

	Integration of parental leave and ECEC for Under-3s (entitlement)	Main ECEC provider for 0-3 year olds	Parental fees	Integration care and education
Denmark	yes	public	low	high
Sweden	yes	public	low	high
Slowenia	yes	public	medium/high	high
Germany	Yes (Aug 13)	Independent/public	medium	medium
France	no	private (semi-public)	medium	medium
Netherlands	no	private	medium	low
UK	no	private	high	low

Sources: Naumann et al. 2013; fp7 project 'Families and Societies'

European ECEC costs in comparison

	Maternal employment rate (child under 6)	Net cost of ECEC, % of average wage	ECEC cost as % of net family income	ECEC spending as % of GDP, 2009
Denmark	79.7%	11.2	8.9	2.1
Sweden	74.1%	7.1	4.7	1.7
Slowenia	81.9%	19.9	13.7	0.65
Germany	60.5%	14.1	11.1	0.5
France	65.4%	16.5	10.4	1.4
Netherlands	76.1%	13.2	10.1	1.0
UK	59.4%	40.9	26.6	1.5

Sources: OECD, *Doing better for families*, 2011; Naumann et al. 2013

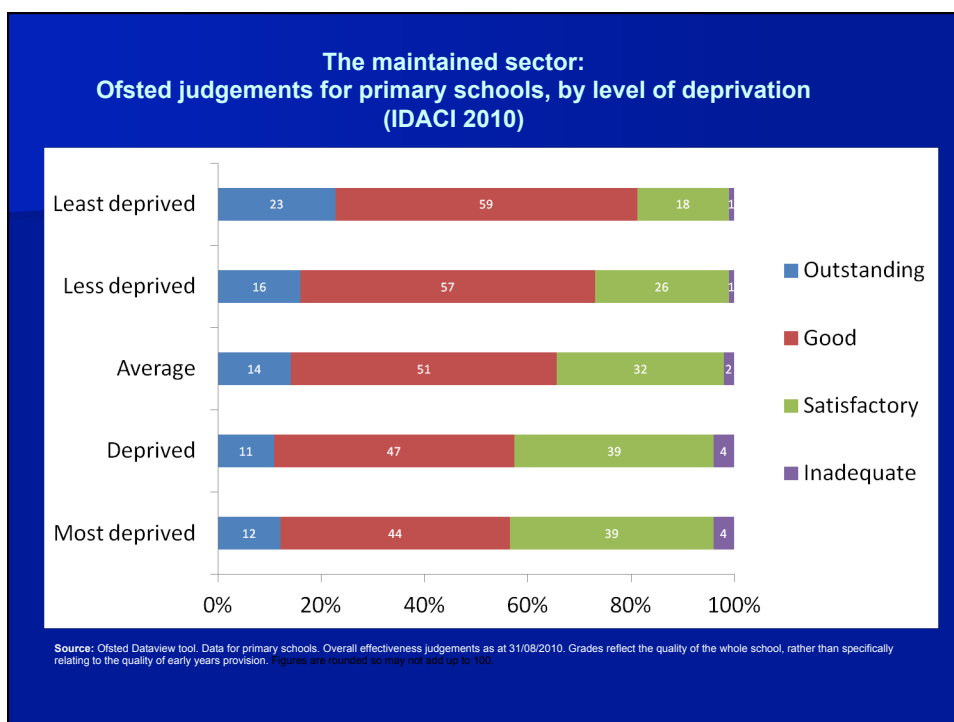
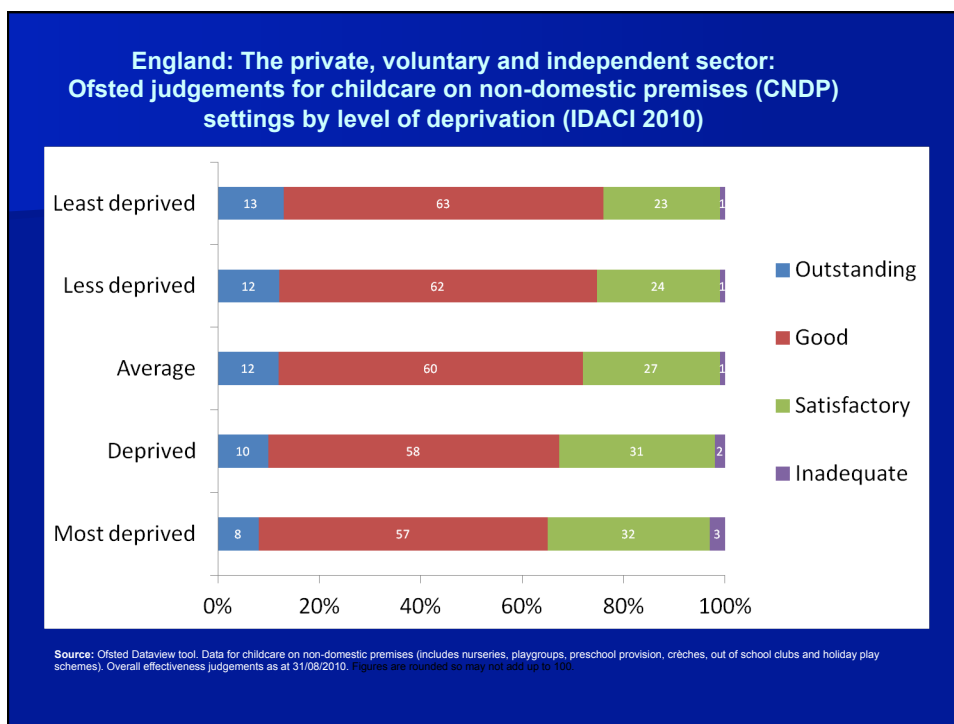
'Quality' proxies

EC Commission recommendations (2011)

- Level of integration of ECEC system
- Level of staff qualifications, professionalisation
- Level of engagement with curriculum and standards

OECD Starting Strong III: Quality Toolkit

- Engagement with families and communities

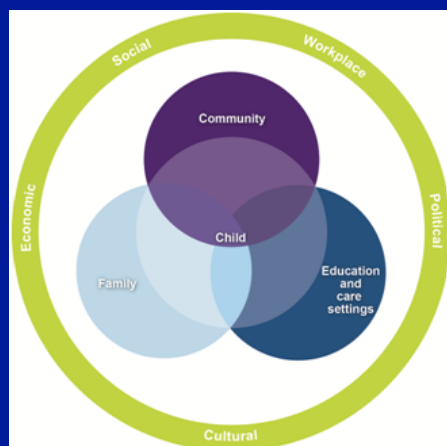


Summary: social investment in context

- Most European ECEC system are still far from implementing an effective social investment strategy.
- Institutional design matters: universal ECEC models and public supply side funding seem to work better than targeted, market based and demand-side oriented options.
- Developed social investment states also tend to have developed redistributive systems.
- However: not a single European country supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds more than more affluent children
- → if current trends persist (increased marketization of ECEC, targeting) , social investment will lead to increased 'elite formation' and 'widening the gap' (2nd logic).



In lieu of a conclusion: Local ECEC provision: key infrastructure and community spaces



From
www.kidsmatter.edu.au;
 adapted from
 Bronfenbrenner, U (1979)
*The Ecology of Human
 Development*, Harvard
 Univ. Press.

**Thank you for your
attention!**

