

# Introduction

The Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was launched by the Education Committee of the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1998. It was motivated by a 1996 meeting of the OECD Education Ministers on the topic “Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All”. With the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning, the ministers set a goal of improving access to and quality in early childhood education and care and recommended conducting a Thematic Review (a cross-national study).

Through national Education Ministries, OECD member countries were invited to participate. By the end of the project, twenty countries had participated in the review’s two rounds.

Early in the review process, country representatives agreed upon the framework, scope and process of the review, and identified the major policy issues for investigation. Each country agreed to prepare or commission a Background Report to provide contextual/demographic information and respond to a set of questions about its provision of ECEC programs and family policy. Each country was then visited by a four member international expert team that met with ECEC officials and community groups and visited ECEC programs. The team then prepared for the OECD a Country Note presenting an analysis of the country’s ELCC issues. Two summary reports were developed; *Starting Strong*, in 2001, and *Starting Strong II* in 2006. In addition, a series of international workshops on key topics (curricula and pedagogies; financing; ECEC for children from low income families; data), commissioning a paper on each topic.

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