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## Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care

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### Abstract

Economic development and rapid social change have significantly modified family and child-rearing patterns across OECD countries. This review of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in twenty OECD countries describes the social, economic, conceptual and research factors that influence early childhood policy. These include increasing women's labour market participation; reconciling work and family responsibilities on a more equitable basis for women; confronting the demographic challenges faced by OECD countries; and in particular, addressing issues of access, quality, 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. Starting Strong II outlines the progress made by the participating countries in responding to the key aspects of successful ECEC policy outlined in the previous volume, Starting Strong (OECD, 2001). It offers many examples of new policy initiatives adopted in the ECEC field. In their conclusion, the authors identify ten policy areas for further critical attention from governments. The book also presents country profiles, which give an overview of ECEC systems in all 20 participating countries. This book is relevant for the many concerned by child development, work/family balance and early childhood education and care policy. Countries covered: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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