



# Child Care as a Central Aspect of Family Policy

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## Outline of the presentation

- Reasons to provide child care
- Families in Europe: Working families
- Child care services in Europe (focus on younger children)
- Leave facilities in Europe
- Child care services: quality issues
- Policy developments
- Conclusions



EU encourages member states to provide affordable and accessible child care

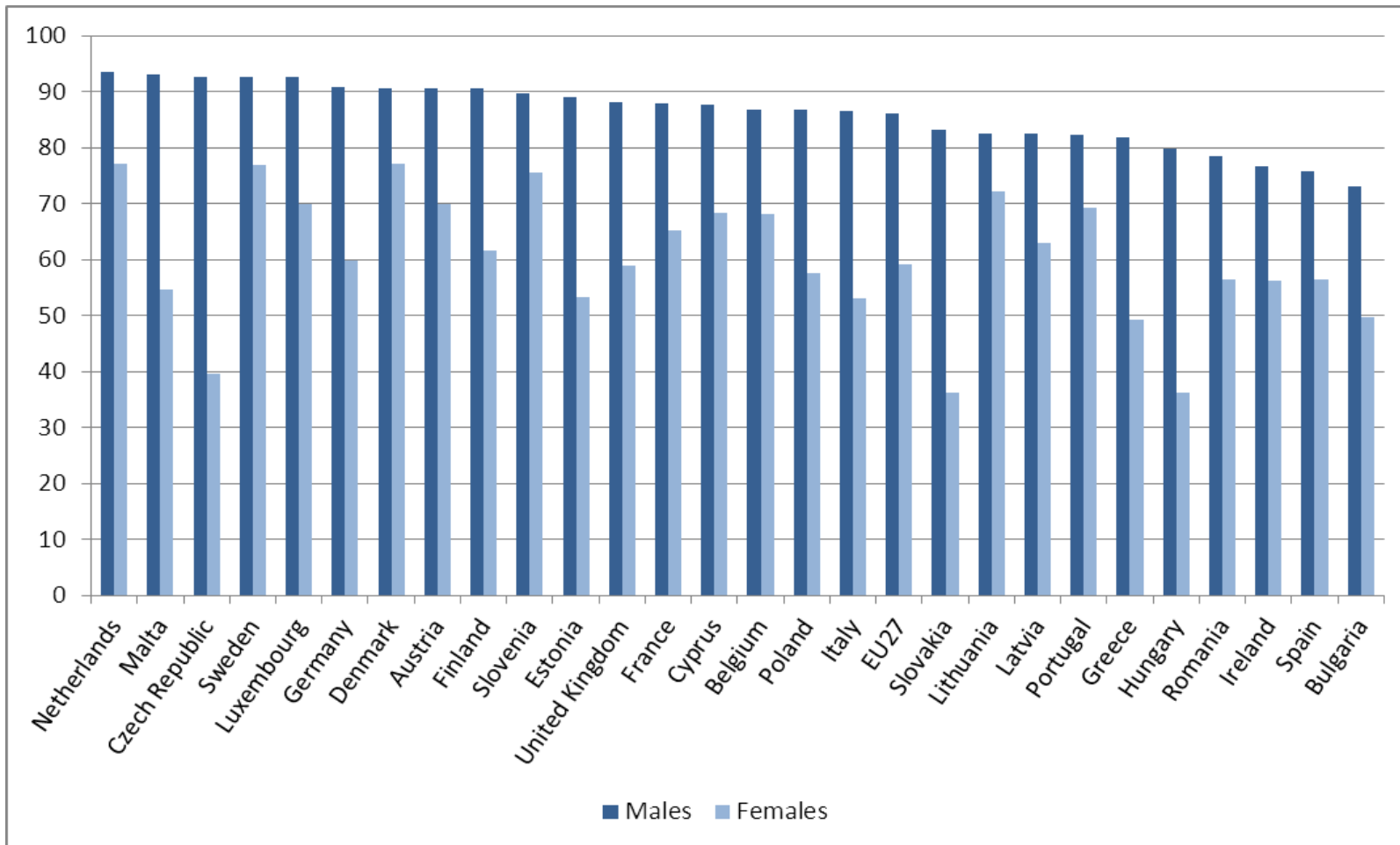
## **Why providing child care services?**

Focus is instrumental:

- to foster gender equality
- to increase female labour participation
- to increase fertility
- to improve social inclusion
- to support child development



## Employment rates of adults (15-64) with at least one child under the age of six, 2012



Source: EU LFS



## **Harmonised data on childcare: EU SILC**

Formal childcare refers to education at pre-school or equivalent, education at compulsory education, child care at centre-based services outside school hours and child care at day-care centre, organised/controlled by a public or private structure

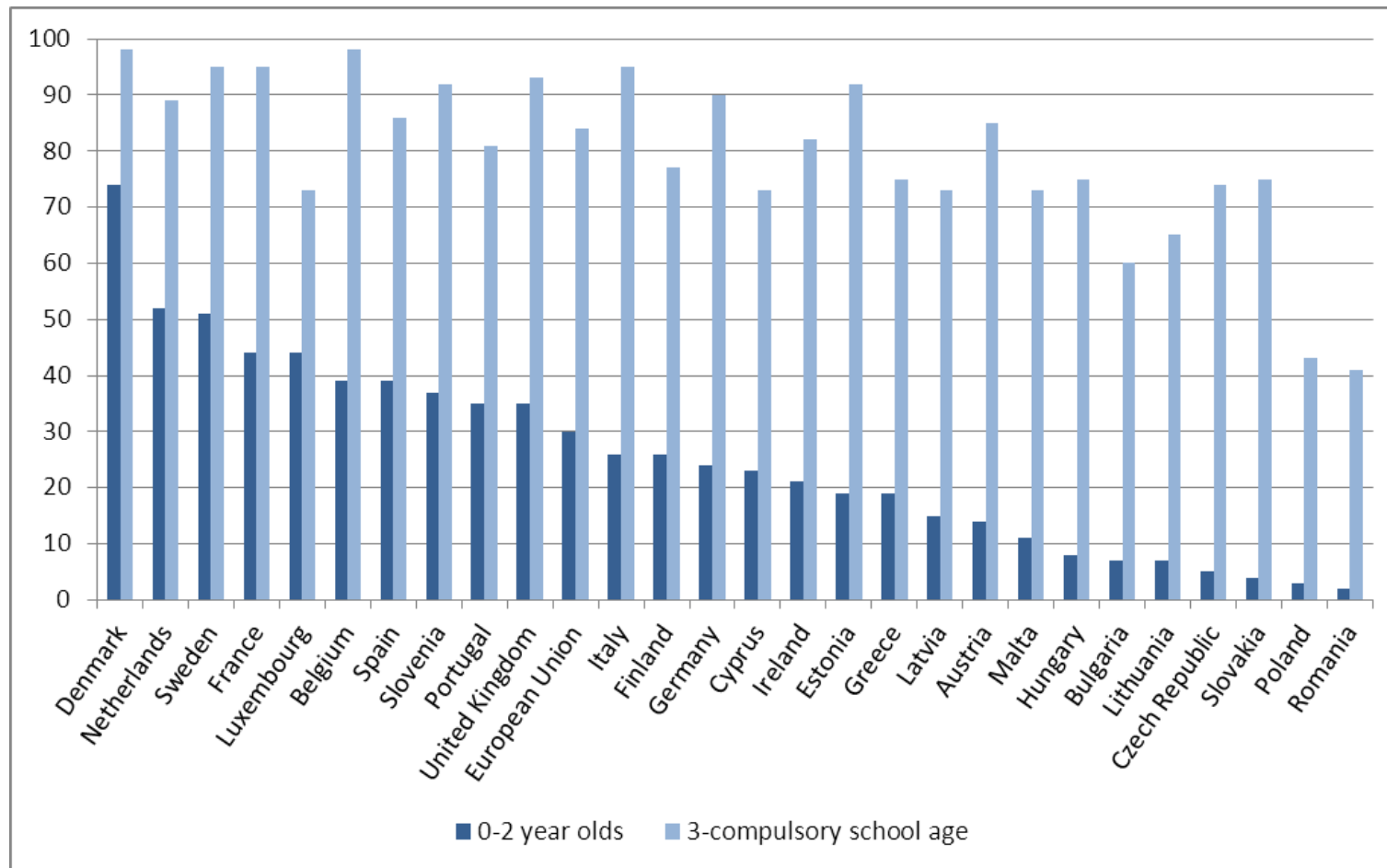
Other types of care: child care by a professional child-minder at child's home or at child-minders's home and child care by grandparents, other household members (outside parents), other relatives, friends or neighbours

Data refer to share of children cared for by child care arrangement as indicator of availability

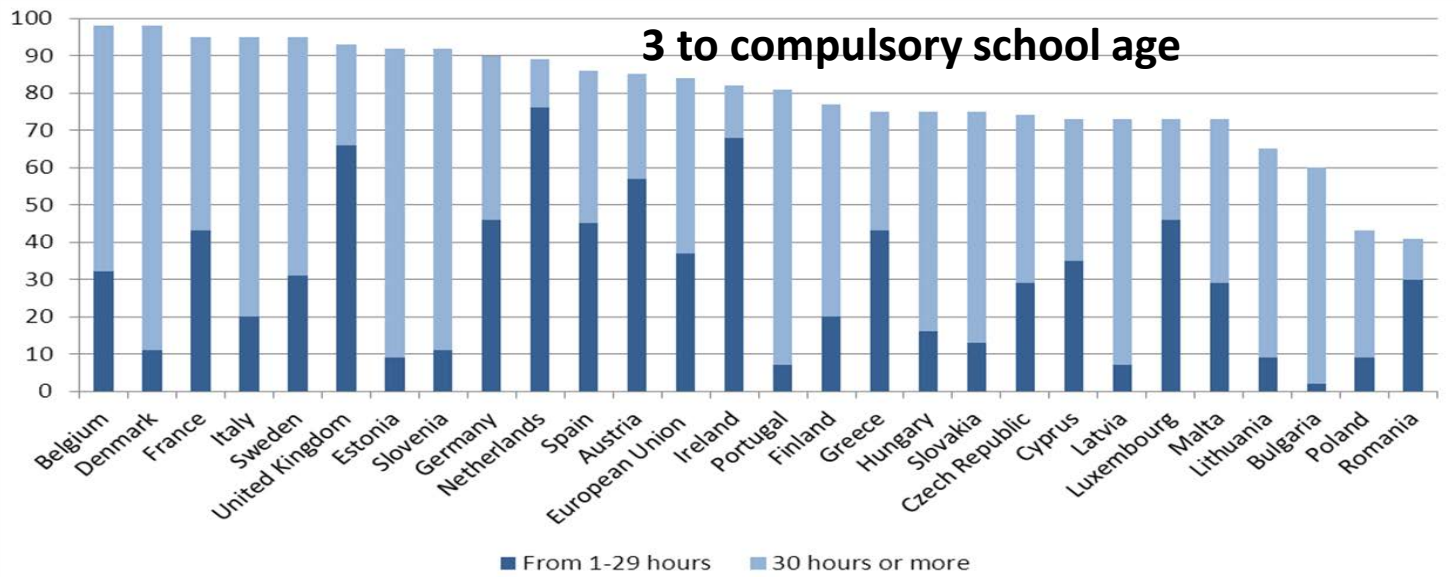
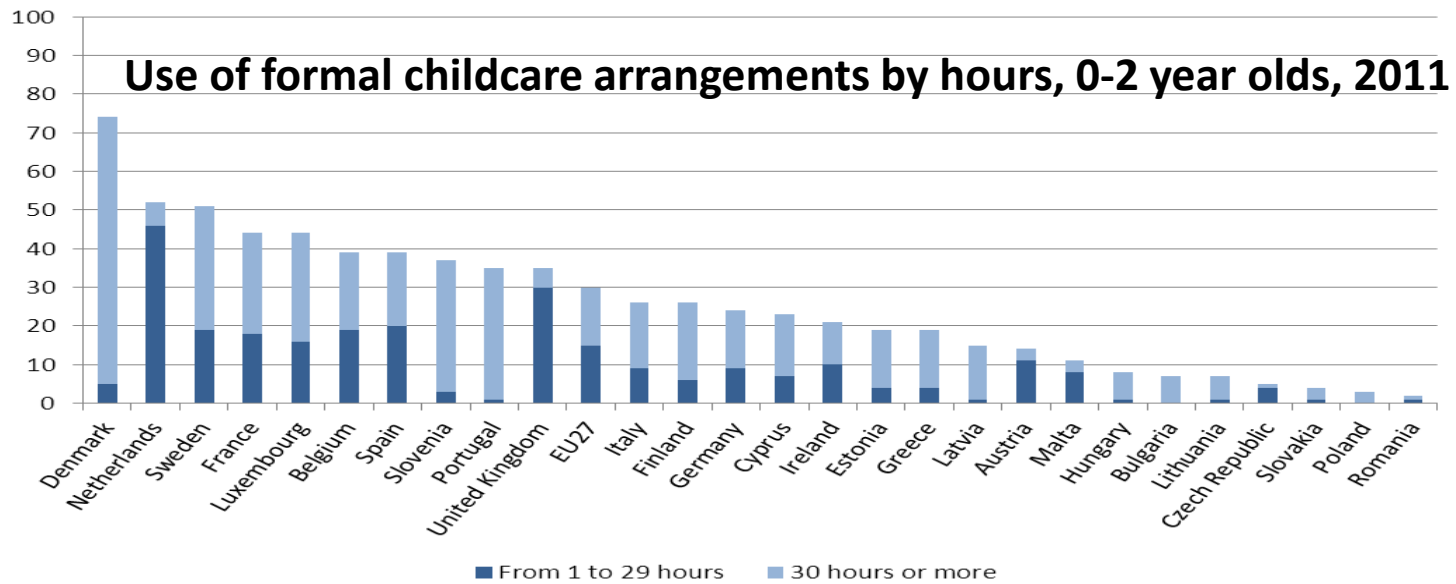
Age groups: 0-2, 3-compulsory school age

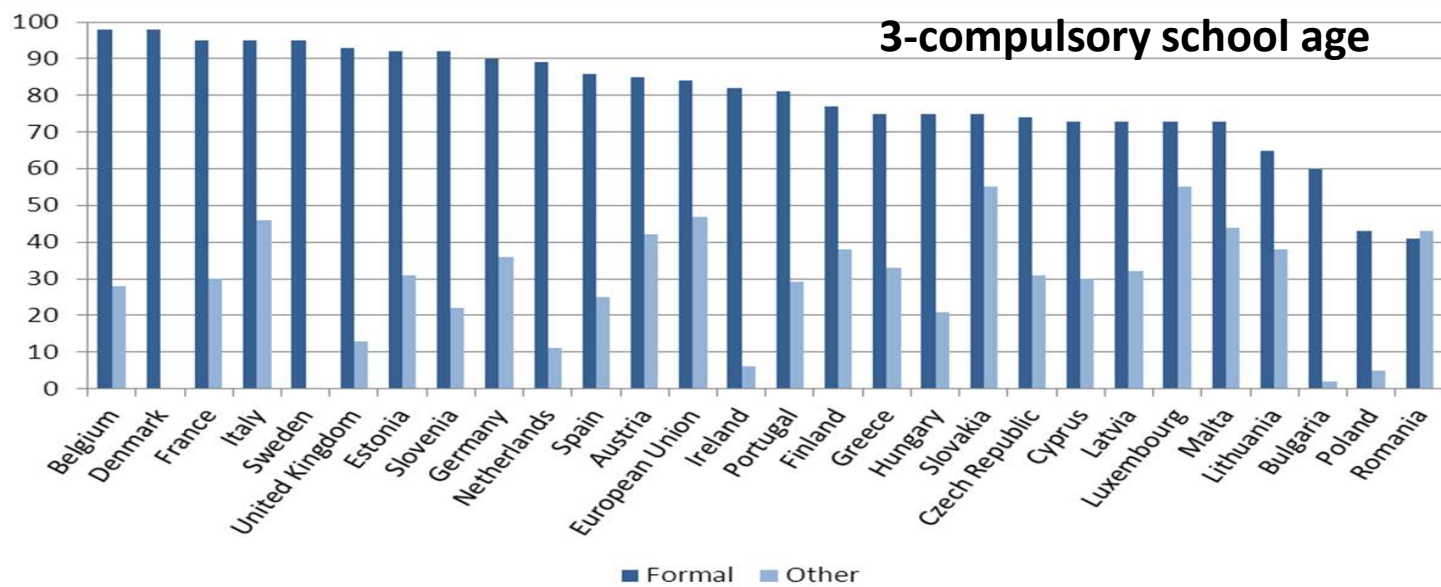
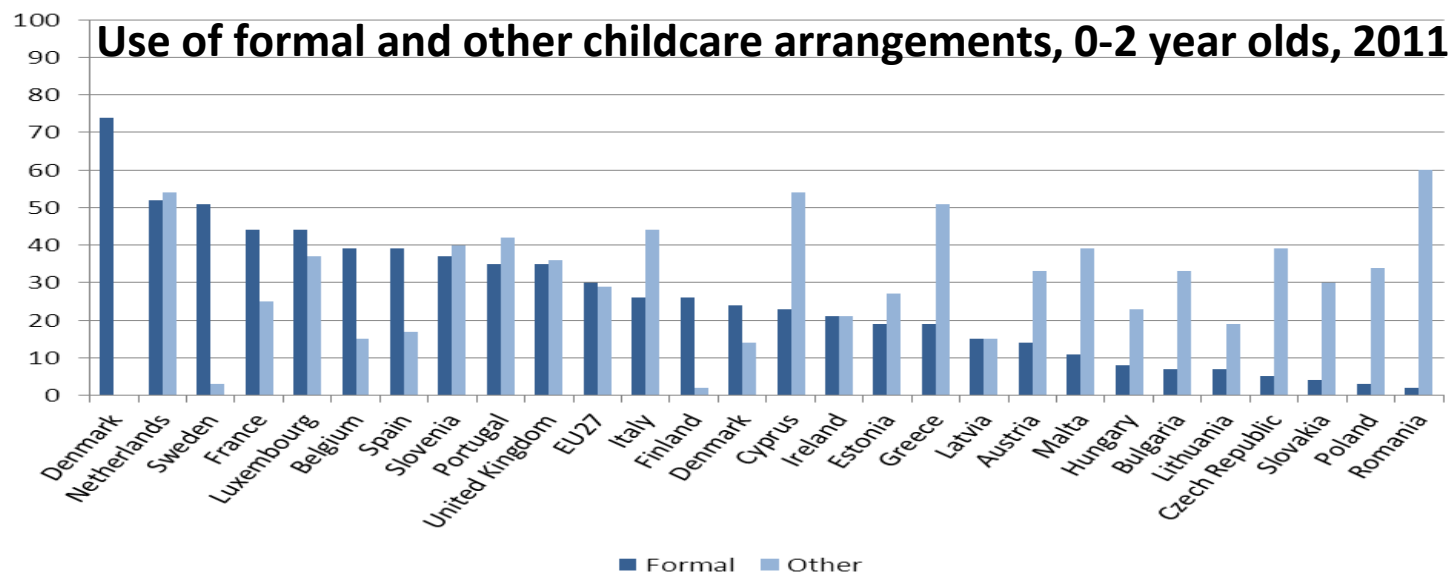


## Use of formal childcare arrangements, 0-2 year olds and 3 to compulsory school age 2011



Source: EU SILC









## Leave facilities

Important facility to enable people to care for children, particularly the very young

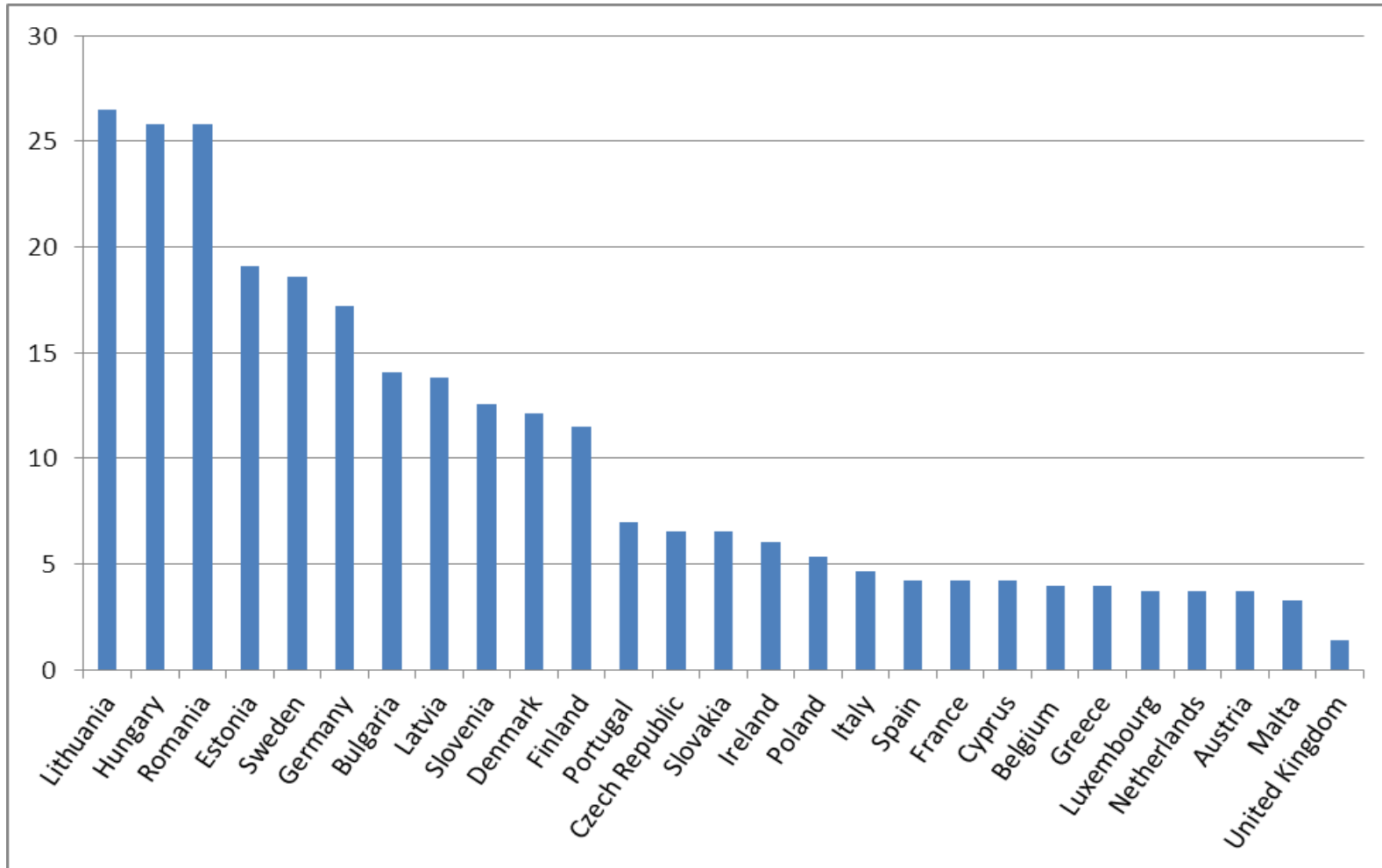
- Maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Parental leave
- Other forms such as leave to care for sick children

Large variation in EU Member States in duration, payment, flexibility and entitlements

Indicator: number of months of maternity, paternity and parental leave with benefits replacing at least two thirds of salary (developed by EC within the context of the EES)



**Total number of months of maternity, paternity and parental leave with benefits replacing at least 2/3 of salary, 2010**





Each country has its unique constellation of child care and leave arrangements

Some have a well developed system of leave and affordable, high quality services: e.g. Nordic countries where child care is framed as a social right

Other countries have limited leave and limited child care facilities: e.g. United Kingdom and Ireland

Long leave, limited availability of formal child care: e.g. several Eastern European countries

*In a large number of countries the supply of child care facilities, especially for the youngest age group, is rather limited*



## Quality of child care

Aspects that contribute to the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child

No harmonised statistics

Work in progress: development of child care quality index

Based on 3 elements of structural quality:

- group size (10-14 youngest; 20 to 25 for 4-6 year olds)
- staff-child ratio (1:3-6,4 youngest; 1:6-14 for 4-6 year olds)
- educational level of child minder (lower vocational training to university training)

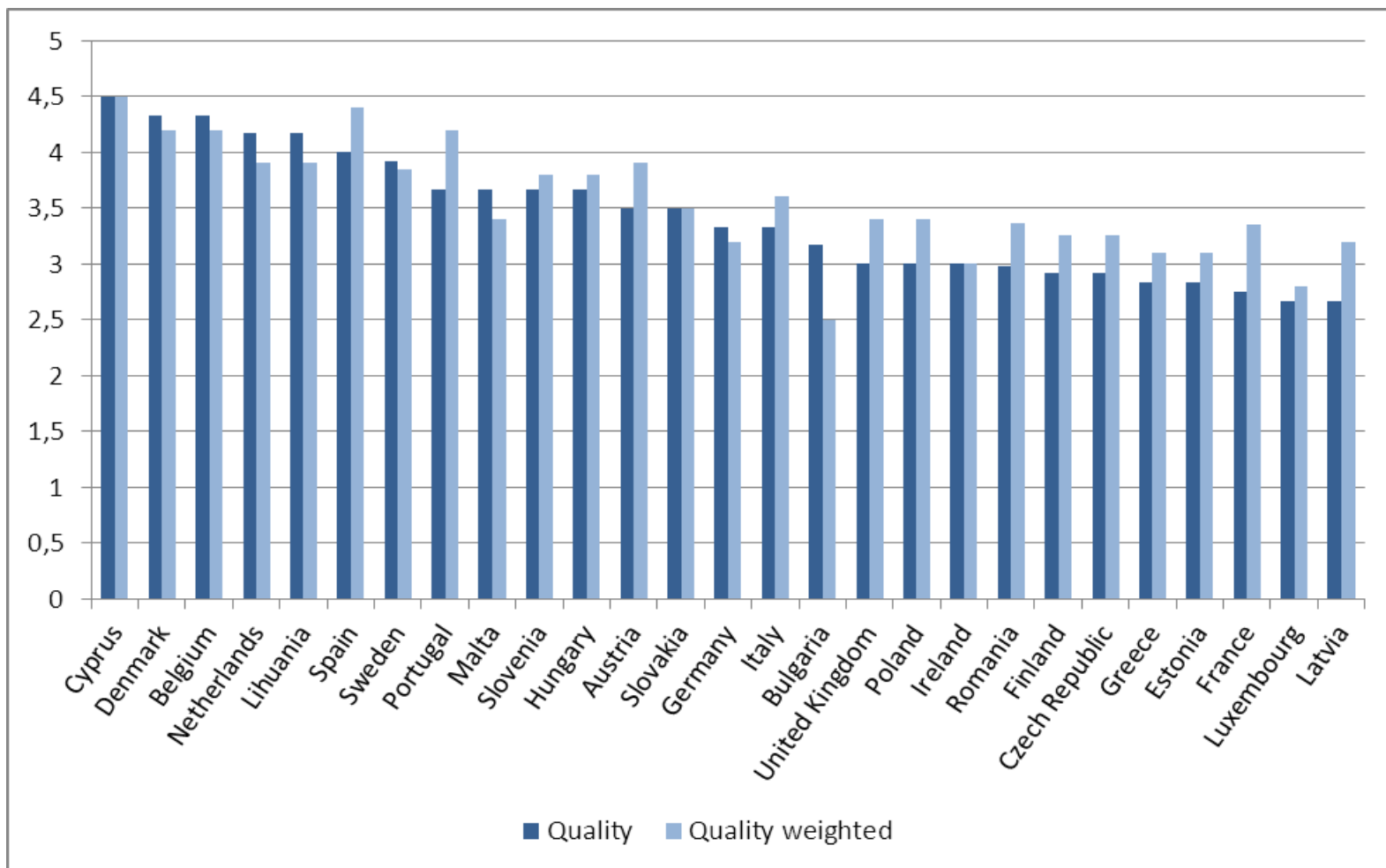
Quality aspects not always regulated

Scores per element (maximum score for countries with the “best” regulation)

Average score and weighted score (more weight on educational level)



## Average score on structural quality of day care (0-compulsory school age) in EU Member States





## **Challenges and policy developments**

Policy objectives not always compatible: e.g. objectives on labour participation, gender equality, fertility, child development, social integration

European countries are rebalancing the actual policy mixture between provision of services and time, e.g.:

Increasing the provision of services

Increasing parental choice

Shortening the use of leave facilities

Impact of the economic crisis unclear yet



## **Main conclusions**

Families in the European Union are working families

Child care (and leave) facilities are important to support working families

Policies are highly differentiated across European Member States, each having its own mixture of facilities and services

The challenge is to reconcile the interest of the parent and the child



**Thank you for you attention**

Comments, remarks and feedback welcome!

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See for more details:

J. Plantenga & C. Remery (2009), The provision of childcare services. A comparative review of 30 European countries, Luxembourg: Office for official publications for the European communities (online available)

J. Plantenga & C. Remery (2013), Reconciliation of work and private life. In: F. Bettio et al. (eds), Gender and the European labour market, pp. 92-107, Oxford: Routledge