



OECD releases Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care

On September 19, 2006, the OECD released the final summary report from the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care, begun in 1998. A total of 20 countries took part in the study. Canada is one of eight countries that took part in the second round, reporting in 2004.

Starting Strong II outlines progress made by the 20 participating countries in responding to key aspects of successful ECEC policy outlined in *Starting Strong* (2001). The report offers many examples of new policy initiatives adopted in the ECEC field. In their conclusions, the authors identify ten policy areas for further critical attention from governments.

Background to the OECD thematic review

The Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy was launched by the OECD Education Committee in March 1998. In their communiqué, the education ministers prioritized improving access to and quality in early childhood education and care. The rationale for the review was to strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning. Not only was the provision of care and education for young children considered as necessary to ensure the access of women to the labour market but increasingly, early development was seen as the foundation stage of human learning and development. When sustained by effective fiscal, social and employment measures in support of parents and communities, early childhood programming would help to provide a fair start in life for all children, and contribute to educational equity and social integration.

Since 1998, the Thematic Review has reviewed the provision of early childhood services in 20 countries; held a series of workshops on key topics and published the background papers for these; produced updated Country Profiles; and developed the first summary report, *Starting Strong*. An international conference focusing on *Starting Strong II* is being held in September 21-22, 2006 in Reggio Emilia, Italy, co-sponsored by the OECD, Associazione TreeLLLe and Reggio Children.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

The OECD is forum where the governments of 30 industrial countries address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalization. The OECD helps governments understand and respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organization provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Commission of the European Communities takes part in the work of the OECD.