

# **Why “Monitoring Quality” Matter in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)?**

**- Implications for Czech Republic -**

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# Today's Focus

- **Why does ECEC Matter?**
- **What is “quality” in ECEC?**
- **Which aspects of “quality” are being monitored in OECD countries? Why and how?**

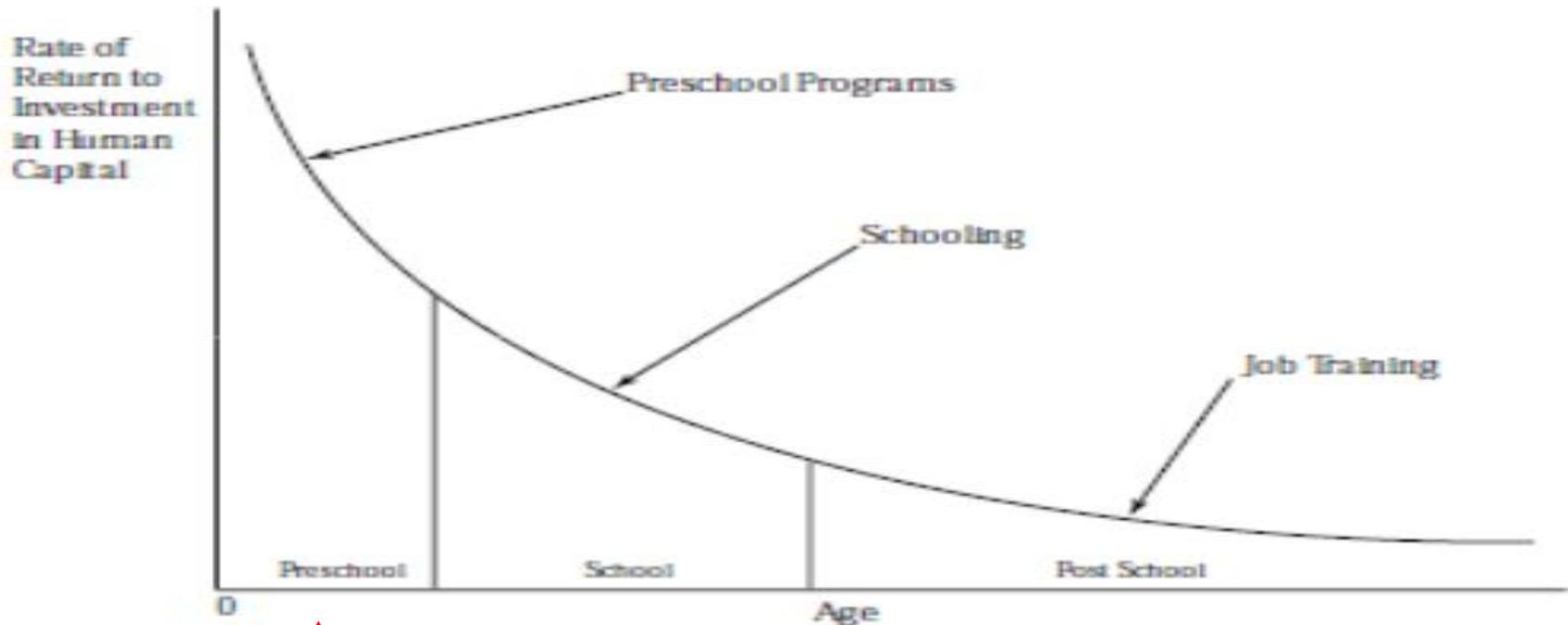
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# Why does ECEC matter?

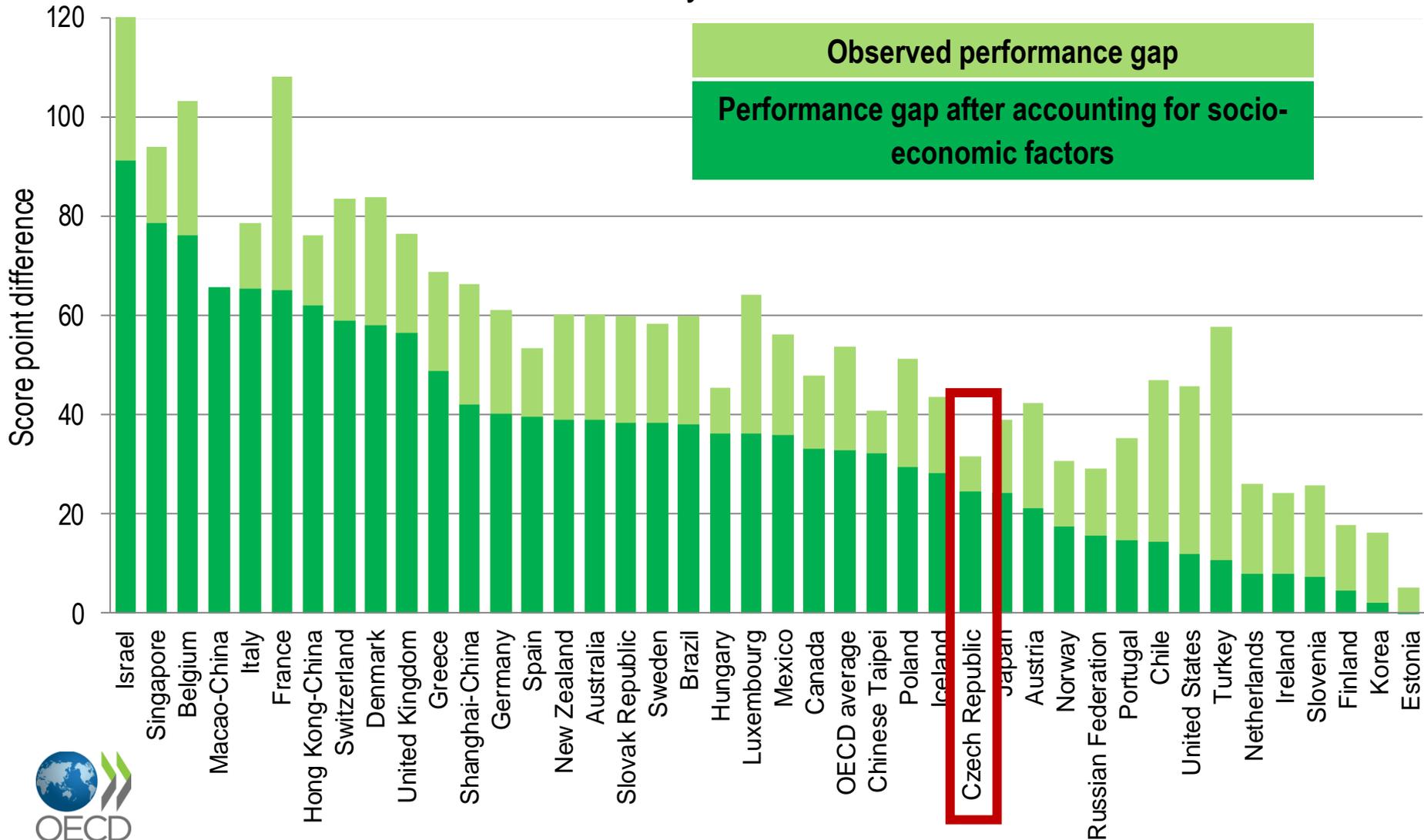
The human capital model suggests that ECEC can have significant economic payoffs.

***“Early skills breed later skills because early learning begets later learning”***  
(Heckman and Masterov, 2007)

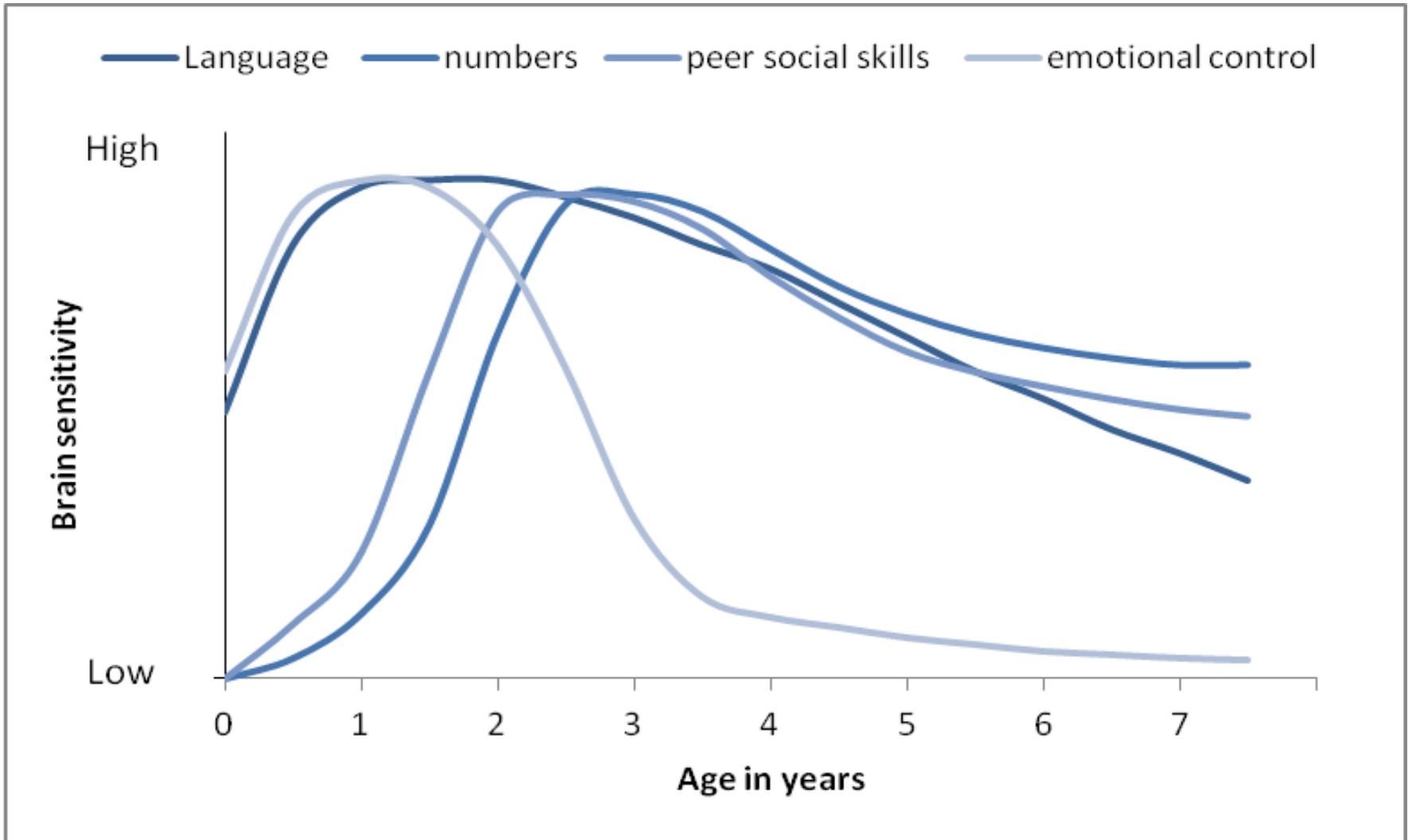


# International comparative analysis has shown that participation in ECEC is associated with better student outcomes at age 15.

Performance difference in PISA 2009 between students who attended pre-primary school for more than one year and those who did not

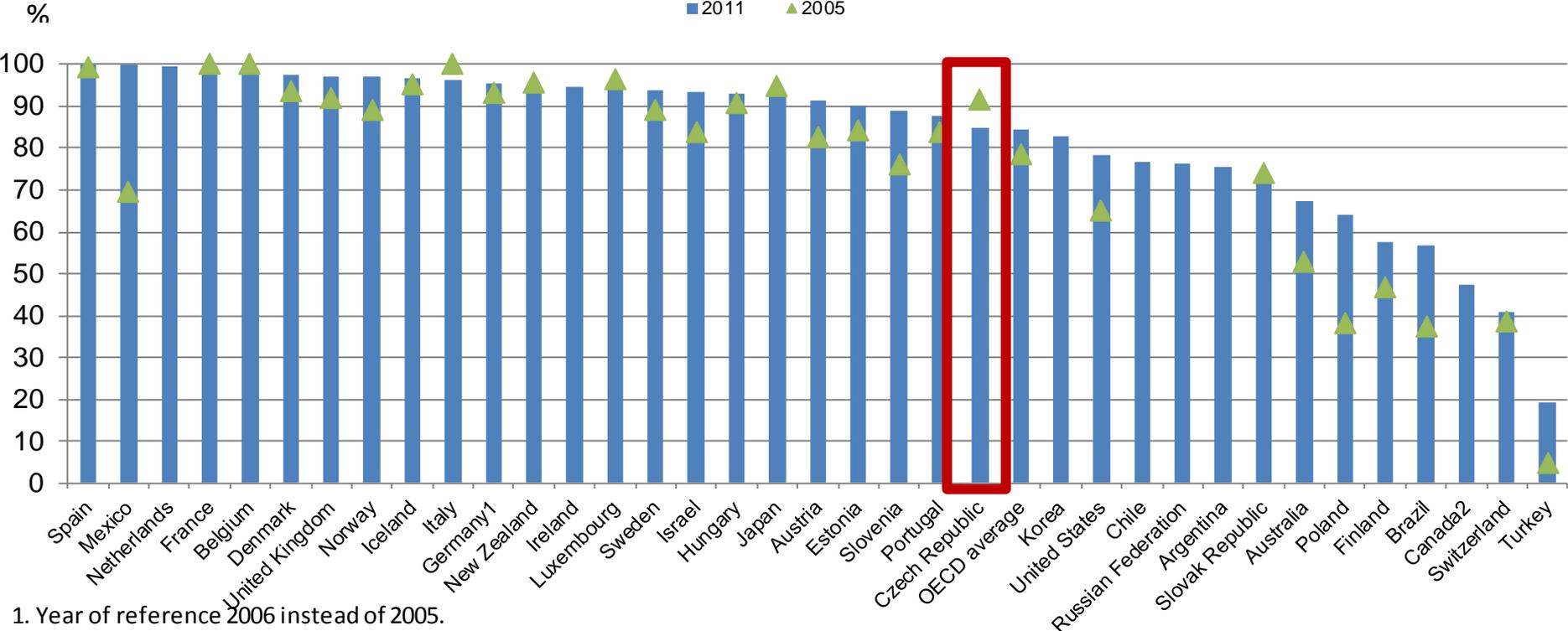


Brain research indicates the peaks of brain development and learning of important basic skills: all occur before the age of 4



# However, ECEC participation at age four has decreased in Czech Republic from 2005 to 2011.

Chart C2.1. Enrolment rates at age 4 in early childhood and primary education (2005 and 2011)



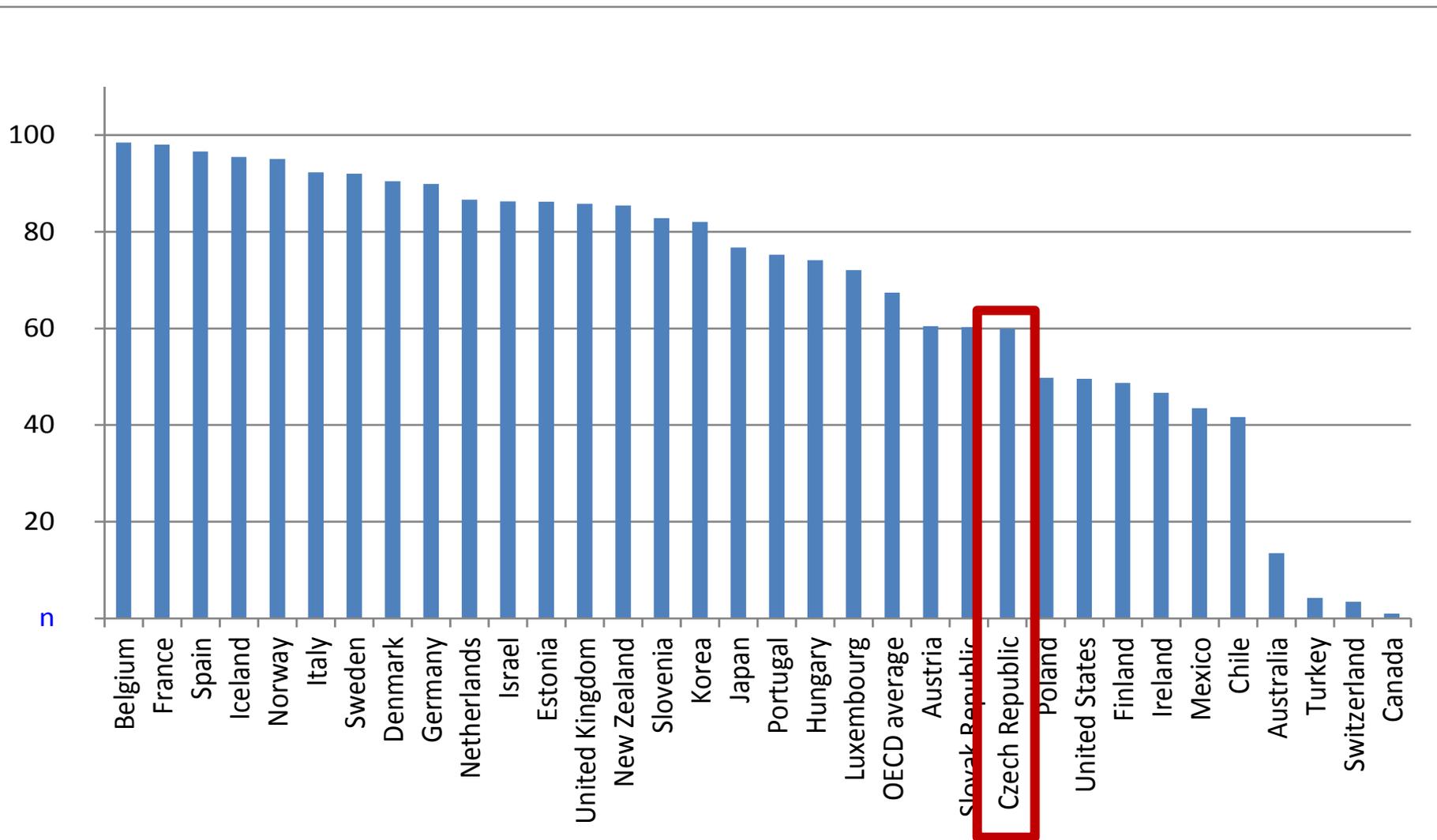
1. Year of reference 2006 instead of 2005.

2. Year of reference 2010 instead of 2011.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the enrolment rates of 4 year-olds in 2011.

Source: OECD. Argentina: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators Programme). Table C2.1. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

# Furthermore, participation at age three is below the OECD average.



Improving **participation at age 3 and 4** is a priority policy issue for Czech Republic to ensure better child outcomes as well as the society's well-being in the long term.

**One of the key policies** is to expand access **while ensuring quality**, in particular for disadvantaged children.

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# Definition of 'quality' may vary among policymakers, service providers, staff, parents and children....

- **Structural quality: System-level (national or regional)**
  - Minimum standards (e.g. staff-child ratio, staff qualification, space per child)
  - Curriculum framework or learning / well-being standards
  - Staff qualification, education and training
  - Staff remuneration and other benefits
  - etc.
- **Process quality: Service-/ Staff -level**
  - Quality of interaction between staff/ child
  - Quality of interaction between staff/ parent
- **Quality in child outcomes: Individual level**
  - Cognitive development
  - Non-cognitive child development

# Many OECD countries are increasingly interested in ensuring 'process quality' and 'quality in child outcomes' than 'structural quality'.

Research suggests that higher staff qualifications per se will not necessarily lead to better child outcomes. It is '**staff's pedagogical quality --- staff's knowledge, skills and interactions**' that matters.

Research also suggests that **high staff quality** includes:

- ✓ Good initial education; continuous professional development
- ✓ Good understanding of child development
- ✓ Good knowledge of curriculum elements
- ✓ Ability to praise, comfort, question, scaffold, be responsive, and stimulate development
- ✓ Skills for problem solving and development of lesson plans
- ✓ Strong leadership (of ECEC staff and management)

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# International overview: Monitoring

**Monitoring** is more commonly practised in kindergartens/preschools than in child care and family day care.

## Subjects being monitored:

### *System level*

- regulation compliance/ minimum standards
- curriculum implementation
- workforce supply and working

### *Service-/ Staff level*

- service quality
- staff quality

### *Individual level*

- child outcomes
- parent satisfaction



# 1. Monitoring curriculum implementation

## Instruments

### *External evaluation*

- Inspections (part of larger monitoring)
- Testing

### *Internal evaluation*

- Peer reviews
- Self-assessments

# 1. Monitoring curriculum implementation

## Effects

- Very little research available, however, monitoring the curriculum implementation can:
  - strengthen better staff practices
  - contribute to better understanding on what challenges settings face in implementation,
  - point to needs of improvement, training needs, implementation support needs
- USA: Implications for ECE from school practices. Monitoring in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade through checklists, portfolios and feedback enhanced teaching and improved learning

## 2. Monitoring service quality

### Instruments

#### *External evaluation*

- inspections:
  - standards
  - procedures/ processes
  - surveys by parents

#### *Internal evaluation*

- self-assessments:
- surveys by staff/management

\* *Surveys – often used as an individual survey or part of larger monitoring exercise*

## 2. Monitoring service quality

### Effects

- Difficult to assess the impact of monitoring per se as it is often accompanied with improvement measures, however:
- USA: Use of QRIS - quality improved over time
- GBR: Inspections – quality of provisions is assured
- Literature points out to the importance of family engagement, in particular, good understanding of what “service quality” means

# 3. Monitoring staff quality

## Instruments

### *External evaluation*

- Inspections
- Tests: staff / child test results
- Interviews and surveys

### *Internal evaluation*

- Self-evaluations
- Peer reviews
- Surveys

# 3. Monitoring staff quality

## Effects

- Little consensus on the effects of monitoring staff quality: e.g.,
  - 
  - UK: self-assessment - no significant impact on quality improvement
  - Child test results are found to be insufficiently valid and not reliable in making any fair conclusions about staff quality: child outcomes is not a direct result of activities of staff
  - +
  - Linking monitoring staff quality to professional development can have positive effects
  - NJ/USA: observation and rating scales were found to have a positive impact on staff practices and significant effects on child language and literacy skills
  - FL/BEL: process-oriented self-evaluation instrument contributed to prof development, teamwork, and better understanding of children's needs

# 4. Monitoring child outcomes

## Instruments

### *Direct*

- Tests: standardised or not
  - Summative vs. formative assessments
- Screening

### *Indirect*

- Staff observations: through rating scales and checklists
- Narrative assessments: portfolios and storytelling

# 4. Monitoring child outcomes

## Effects

- Little research available on the effects; where available, impacts differ according to practice and purpose
- Single monitoring practice at one point in time – no valid predictor of children's potential
- School readiness tests possibly delay entry to school: This can have negative impacts
- Positive relationships are found between child outcomes and non-formal practices, or on-going observations in natural environments

## 4. Monitoring child outcomes (cont.)

- USA(Head Start): portfolios → significant improvements on classroom quality
- AUS(EDI):
  - increased community awareness on the importance of ECEC, therefore, better collaboration between stakeholders
  - informed staff practices and better able to meet children's needs
- VAN/CAN(EDI): led to the development of support programmes on literacy skills and parental support programmes on how to stimulate child learning

# Conclusions: 8 Key issues with the design and the implementation of monitoring systems

1. Defining quality
2. Aligning purposes and practices
3. Ensuring practical relevance
4. Involving stakeholders
5. Training evaluators
6. Developmental appropriateness (age, different skills, cultural differences)
7. Piloting before implementation
8. Dissemination of results (linked to purpose)