

### 3. Increased enrolment in early childhood care and education in all regions of the world

From the moment that any adequately paid leave for the provision of care ends and until the time that their children start school, assuming that primary schooling is universally available and effectively free, working parents need to find a childcare solution. If an adequate continuum of care solutions is not available from childbirth, women are likely to drop out the labour force or reduce their time spent in paid work. Along with maternity protection (see Part One) and leave measures for fathers (see section B below), childcare services, as part of early childhood care and education, are therefore an essential element of the continuum of care solutions for working parents. Early childhood care and education cover the period from birth, through pre-primary school, to the start of primary education.<sup>51</sup> This sector is expected to continue expanding under the pressure of demographic changes, as the world's under-five-year-old population is projected to increase from 738 million in 2005 to 776 million by 2020. Such regions as sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, the Arab States will be particularly affected (ILO, 2012d).

Across the world, more young children are now enrolled in early childhood care and education. Between 1999 and 2012, the global gross enrolment increased from 33 per cent to 54 per cent, covering almost 184 million children globally (UNESCO, 2015). This improvement represented an increase of 81 per cent in developing economies and of 87 per cent in middle-income countries. At the regional level, 74 per cent per cent of young children were enrolled in Latin America and the Caribbean, 55 per cent in South and Western Asia and 20 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (Shaeffer, 2015).

The enrolment rate is generally higher for children aged from 3 to 6 than for children under the age of 3. This increase is also the result of the introduction of laws to mandate participation or fee abolition, such as in Ghana and Peru, where the gross enrolment rate (GER) in early childhood care and education for children between 3 and 5 years of age increased from 47 and 56 per cent respectively in 1999 to 116 and 78 per cent by 2012. In all, 40 countries had instituted compulsory pre-primary education by 2014. The GER for children between the ages of 3 and 5 exceeds 80 per cent in countries such as Angola, Cuba, Latvia, Lebanon, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Thailand (UNESCO, 2015). In OECD countries,<sup>52</sup> the average participation rate for children aged from 3 to 5 increased by about 10 percentage points between 2002 and 2013, with the largest increases (20 percentage points or more) occurring in Chile, Ireland, Mexico, Poland and Turkey. Coverage is virtually universal in countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2015b).

As regards participation rates in formal childcare for children under 3 years, data on coverage are less widely available for developing countries. On the other hand, in many of these countries, an increasing number of infants are cared for in early childhood institutions and programmes (ILO, 2012d). In most higher and middle-income countries, about 20–50 per cent of children aged 0–2 are enrolled in formal childcare. Between 2006 and 2013, the average participation rate in 35 countries increased from 28 to 33 per cent, with the biggest increases observed in Germany (15.7 percentage points) and the Republic of Korea (23.2 percentage points) (figure 32). Over the same period, participation rates for 0–2 year olds fell in six countries particularly affected by fiscal consolidation measures (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom), with the largest decrease in Spain (–6.6 percentage points).

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51. According to the International Standard Classification of Education, early childhood education (ECE) refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component aiming to develop children's socio-emotional skills as well as foundational skills for academic learning. ECE prepares children for entry into primary education (ILO, 2014h). The Dakar Framework for Action resulting from the 2000 World Education Forum, adopted by the governments of 164 countries and other key stakeholders, adopted the more comprehensive term early childhood care and education (ECCE), which refers to a broad range of services, including support for children's and often mothers' or carers' health, nutrition and hygiene, and also for cognitive and socio-emotional development. It also includes pre-primary schooling for children of the appropriate age, and other forms of care for children below the pre-primary school age.

52. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) consists of 34 economies, namely: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.