

Thematic Panel 20 – What ECEC services in the context of rising child poverty?

Thematic Panel 20

What ECEC services in the context of rising child poverty?

Conveners and Discussants:

Margarita Leòn, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain and Stefania Sabatinelli, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

ECEC services are considered pivotal in the Social Investment approach by virtue of their importance in terms of investment in children's human capital as well as of their work-life balance function. For the same reasons, ECEC services have a great potential in terms of prevention or reduction of child poverty. The Great Global Recession has caused an increase in child poverty rates in most developed countries. At the same time, the austerity policies related to the recession have in many contexts caused a decrease or a stop in the increase in the public funds destined to childcare provision and/or support. In the different contexts these trends have brought about a halt in ECEC expansion, a rise in their costs for families, and/or a decrease in the number of enrolled children. A situation that favors the growth of Matthew's effects, leaving out exactly those underprivileged children (and their families) that would benefit the most from attending them. This risks to reduce the potential of ECEC services in terms of equal opportunities and contrast to child poverty, and questions the basic assumptions of the Social Investment approach.

The panel welcomes paper proposals that tackle the relation between recession/austerity, ECEC development, access to services and child poverty in different contexts, also in comparative terms, using quantitative and/or qualitative analyses.