

Despite an aging population and the lingering economic crisis in Portugal, state support for childcare, often in partnership with the private sector, has not lost importance, which continues the policy trajectory that the government had been on since the 1990s (Pessanha, Aguiar, & Bairrão, 2007, pp. 204-205). In the span of just five years, from 2005 to 2010, the percentage of children aged 0 to 3 participating in pre-school or childcare services increased from 30% to 45%, outranking participation rates in the UK (European Union, 2015; Table 1). Comparatively speaking, in 2010 participation rates in Portugal for children up to five years of age are higher than in both the OECD and EU-27 countries.

Portugal has one of the highest rates of employment for working mothers in the EU (Pessanha, Aguiar, & Bairrão, 2007, p. 205). Table 2 demonstrates that in 2011 Portuguese women with their youngest child aged 2 and below on average work longer hours than their counterparts throughout the OECD and the EU. Indeed, Table 3 (below) shows that despite of the economic crisis and relatively high unemployment rates, Portuguese parents with young children work full time at much higher rates than those in EU and OECD countries.

	Under 3 years	3 to 5 years
<b>Netherlands</b>	60.6%	95,.3
<b>Norway</b>	54.0	96.2
<b>Poland</b>	6.9	59.7
<b>Portugal</b>	45.9	84.1
<b>Spain</b>	39.3	99.3
<b>Turkey</b>	..	27.0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	42.0	93.3
<i>OECD average</i>	32.6	80.6
<i>EU 27 average</i>	29.0	82.6

Table 1. Comparative participation rate in childcare and pre-school services among children aged 0-5 years (%), 2010  
Source: OECD Family Database (2015)

	1-29	30-39	40-44	45+
<b>Netherlands</b>	74.0%	21.5	4.0	0.6
<b>Poland</b>	16.9	9.1	62.8	11.3
<b>Portugal</b>	5.5	26.5	59.9	8.2
<b>Spain</b>	26.5	30.7	34.6	8.3
<b>Turkey</b>	20.2	11.4	34.8	33.7
<b>U.K</b>	56.4	26.7	10.0	6.9
<i>OECD-17 average</i>	28.9	26.2	37.2	7.6
<i>EU-24 average</i>	23.4	23.5	47.2	6.0

Table 2. Distribution of working hours among women in couple families with youngest child 0-2 years old (%), 2011  
Source: OECD Family Database (2015)

	Both parents full-time	One parent full-time	One full- time, one part-time	Neither in employment	Both parents part-time	One parent part-time	Other
Netherlands	6.2%	19.4	58.7	3.5	8.8	3.0	12.2
Poland	42.5	43.9	6.4	5.5	0.4	1.3	1.7
Portugal	65.9	25.6	4.2	2.9	0.0	1.3	1.4
Spain	35.8	43.0	17.1	3.0	0.2	1.0	1.1
Turkey	10.7	73.9	2.3	10.9	0.6	1.6	2.3
U.K	21.2	32.5	35.4	6.4	1.0	3.3	4.6
<i>OECD-23 average</i>	27.4	45.9	18.8	4.6	1.2	2.2	6.4
<i>EU-25 average</i>	35.1	42.1	15.1	4.7	0.9	1.8	3.1

Table 3. Employment patterns among couple families with youngest child aged 0-2 (%), 2011  
Source: OECD Family Database (2015)

Given these realities in Portugal, in order to provide more support for the balance between work and family time, many publicly-supported crèches are open up to eleven hours per day (European Union, 2015). Portugal also outranks the EU average in terms of the percentage of children up to age 12 who are looked after via informal childcare as well (Table 4).

	0-2 years old	3-5 years old	6-12 years old
Netherlands	51.9	47.5	34.0
Norway	4.3	2.3	6.0
Poland	29.9	29.8	20.0
Portugal	25.4	35.9	19.5
Spain	19.5	9.1	6.2
United Kingdom	31.7	36.9	32.2
<i>EU average</i>	23.6	24.8	17.8

Table 4. Use of informal childcare arrangements (%) by child's age, 2011  
Source: OECD Family Database (2015)

## References

- European Union. (2015). [http://europa.eu/epic/countries/portugal/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epic/countries/portugal/index_en.htm)
- Pessanha, M., Aguiar, C., & Bairrão, J. (2007). Influence of structural features on Portuguese toddler child care quality. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22, 204-214.