

# Achieving Child Rights and Well-Being: The Need for Cross-Sector Collaboration

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*IAS Workshop*

**LEARNING FOR  
WELL-BEING  
INSTITUTE**



# Key messages

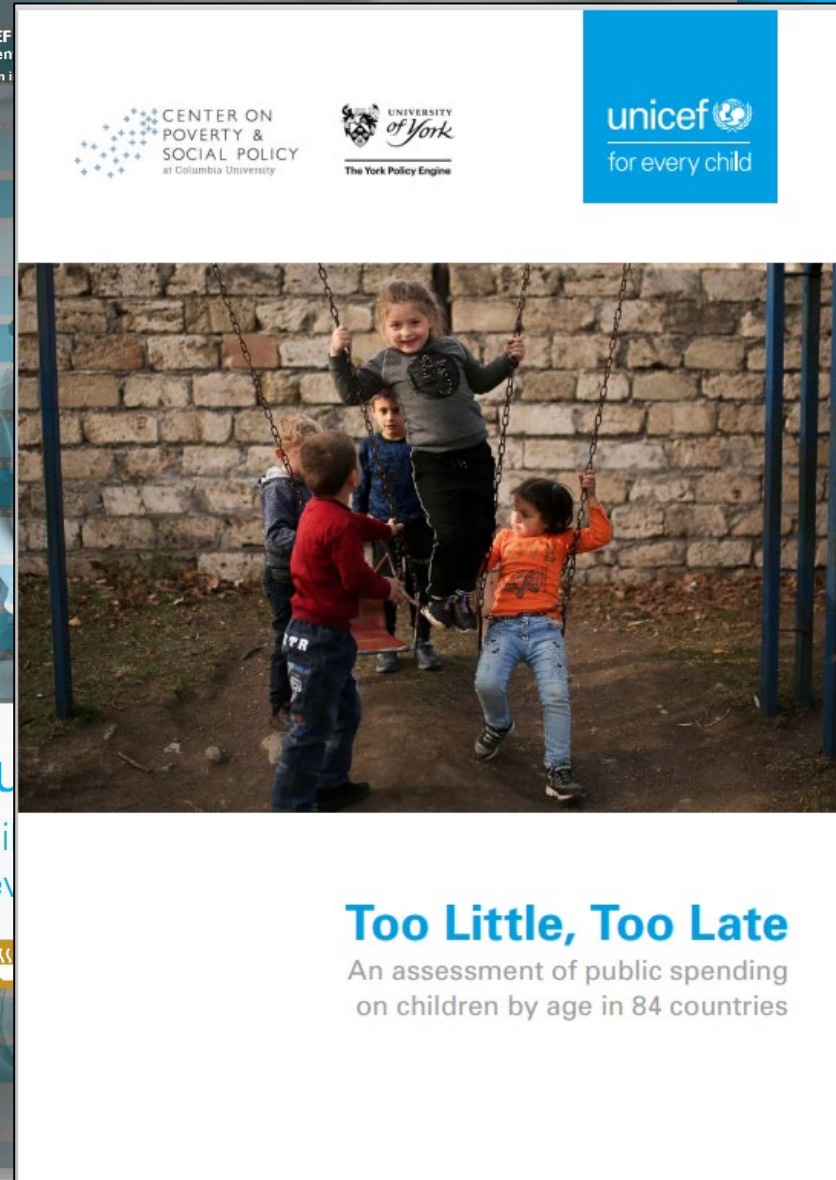
- We are a long way from achieving our promises to children
- Policy timing matters - Around the world, under 6s receive the smallest portion of all spending on children
  - Drives inequality nationally and globally
  - Direct contradiction to the evidence on child/human development
- Policy type also matters
  - Adequate, universal policies are cost-efficient, multiple effects
  - Family-centred design
- Policy portfolios are needed: Cross-sectoral approaches are needed



# A brief history of comparative child well-being in HICs

- A thesis on children's use of social capital
- Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union, mid-2000s
- UNICEF Report Card 7
- OECD Doing Better for Children / OECD child well-being data portal
- UNICEF Report Card 9
- Three OECD/EU/UNICEF child well-being consultations
  - Survey coordinators meetings (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS etc)
- Evaluating International Surveys of Children
- More UNICEF Report Cards
- Out of sight out of mind / COVID and Crises
- What Makes me?





# An example of (the parts of) an index

Country	At risk of child income poverty (threshold: below 60% of the median equivalised household income)	Mortality rate (all deaths) per 1000 children aged 5-14	Share of youth who are NEET (% of 15-19)	PISA: Reading Literacy Score	Suicide rate per 100,000 aged 15 to 19	Child homicide (death through intentional injury) rate per 100,000 aged 0 to 14
<b>SDG targets</b>	<b>1.2.1</b>	<b>3.2.2</b>	<b>8.6.1</b>	<b>4.1.1</b>	<b>3.4.2</b>	<b>16.1.1</b>
Austria	19.2	0.80	5.3	484	6.6	0.57
Germany	14.5	0.72	3.4	498	4.9	0.23
Luxembourg	22.7	0.36	1.5	470	0	1.06
Switzerland	19.0	0.66	4.1	484	4.6	0.08
United Kingdom	23.5	0.78	8.9	504	4.3	0.03
Average (int.)	19.6	1	6.3	485.1	5.9	0.3

# Some thoughts on measuring well-being

- Well-being indices, or social development indices do not come with instruction manuals
- Complementarities and trade-offs in multidimensional goal setting
- Underlying data missing out too many children / biases
- Time, and policy maturity
- From what we **have**, and what we **know**, to **how we are**...
- Influences how and when money is spent
- How we evaluate policy
- Governance / finance / regulation / accountability







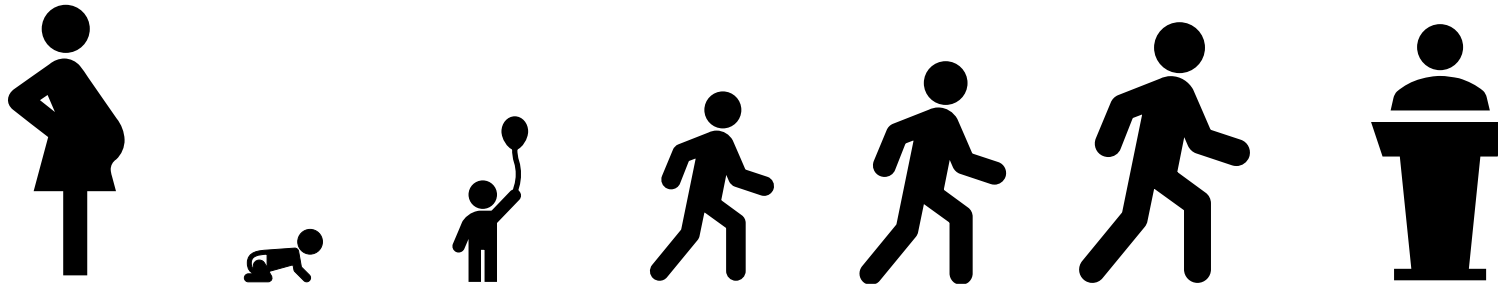
Source: Richardson, Vrolijk, Cunsolo, Cebotari (2021)

# What Makes Me? Age-related development of innate human skills

Listening, Empathising, Inquiring

Discerning patterns, Embodying, Observing, Reflecting, Relaxing, Sensing

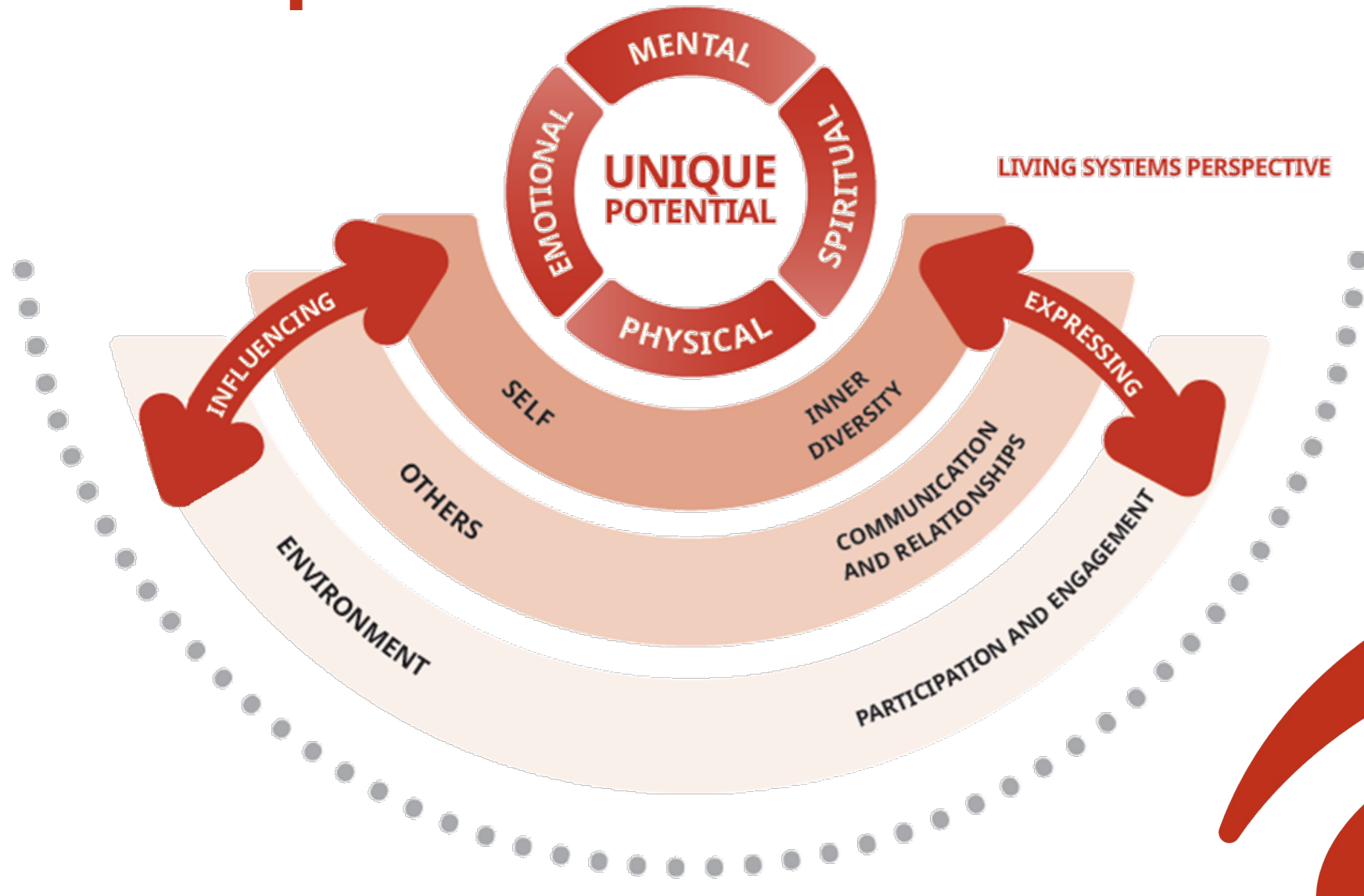
Fluency in ideation, divergent thinking, self-regulation, affective empathy, intuition



Speed of development and 'type' also matter!



# Human centred design and human relationships



# What to do first in policy? Well-being informed

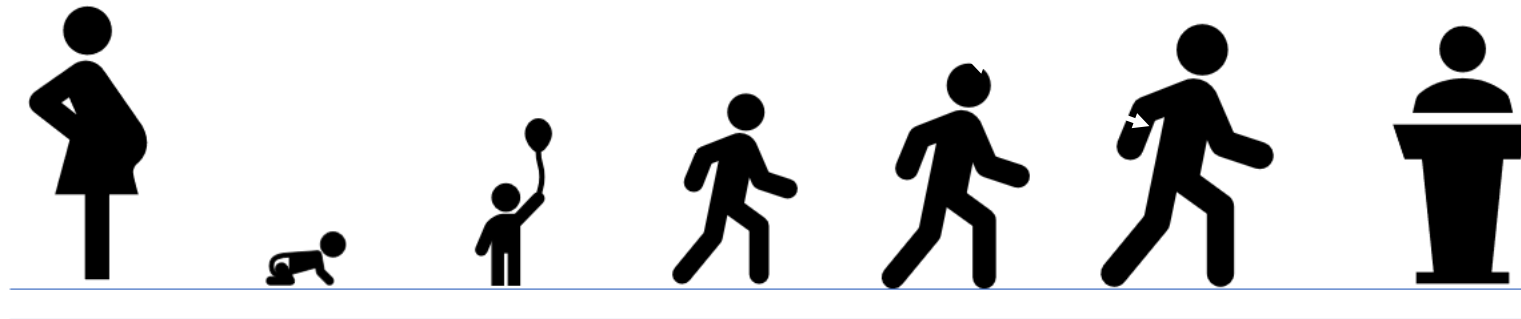
Material

Health

Education

Relationships

Risk behaviours



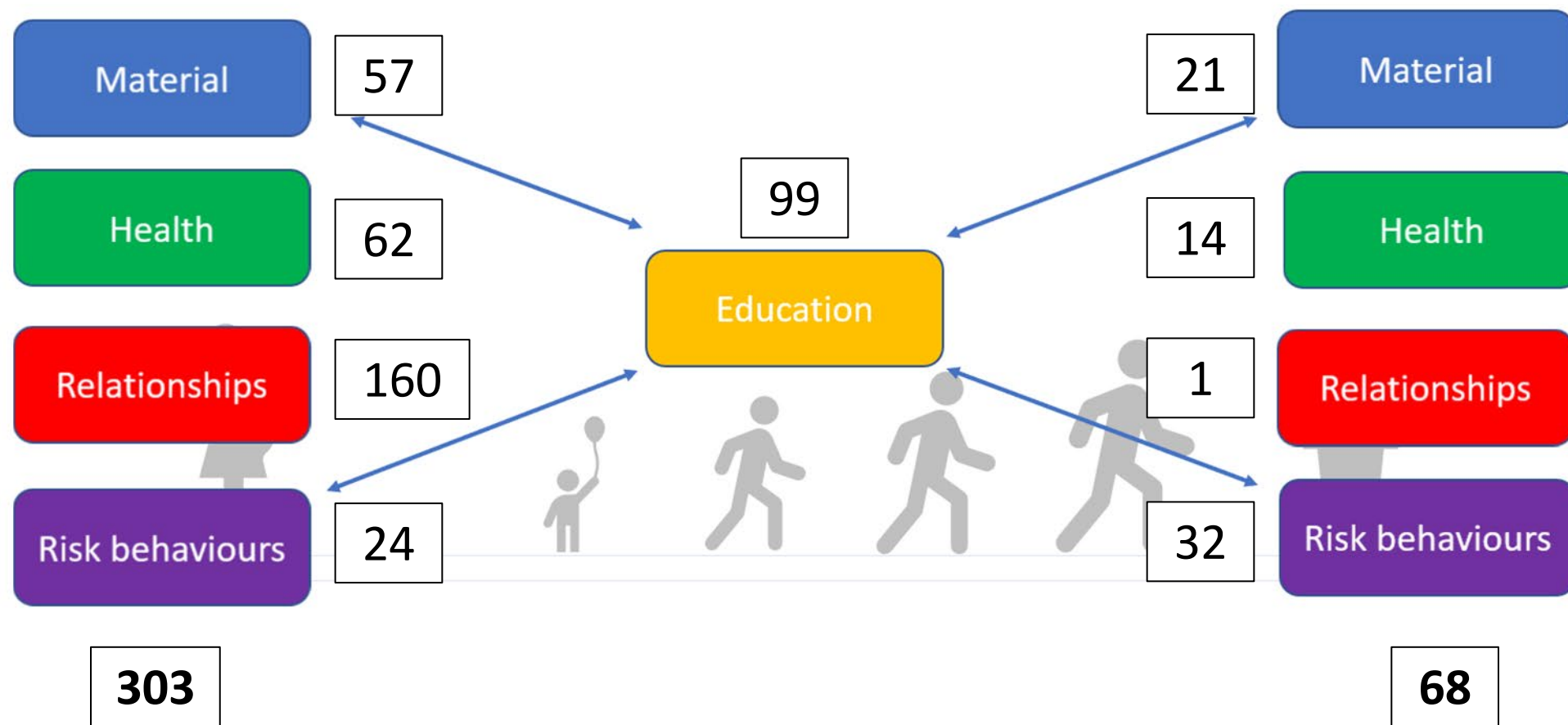
*Quality assured metanalysis of covered 300 studies, and 400 effect sizes linking child well-being outcomes globally (Richardson and Karamperidou, 2019, available on request)*

# Organising the evidence by the lifecourse



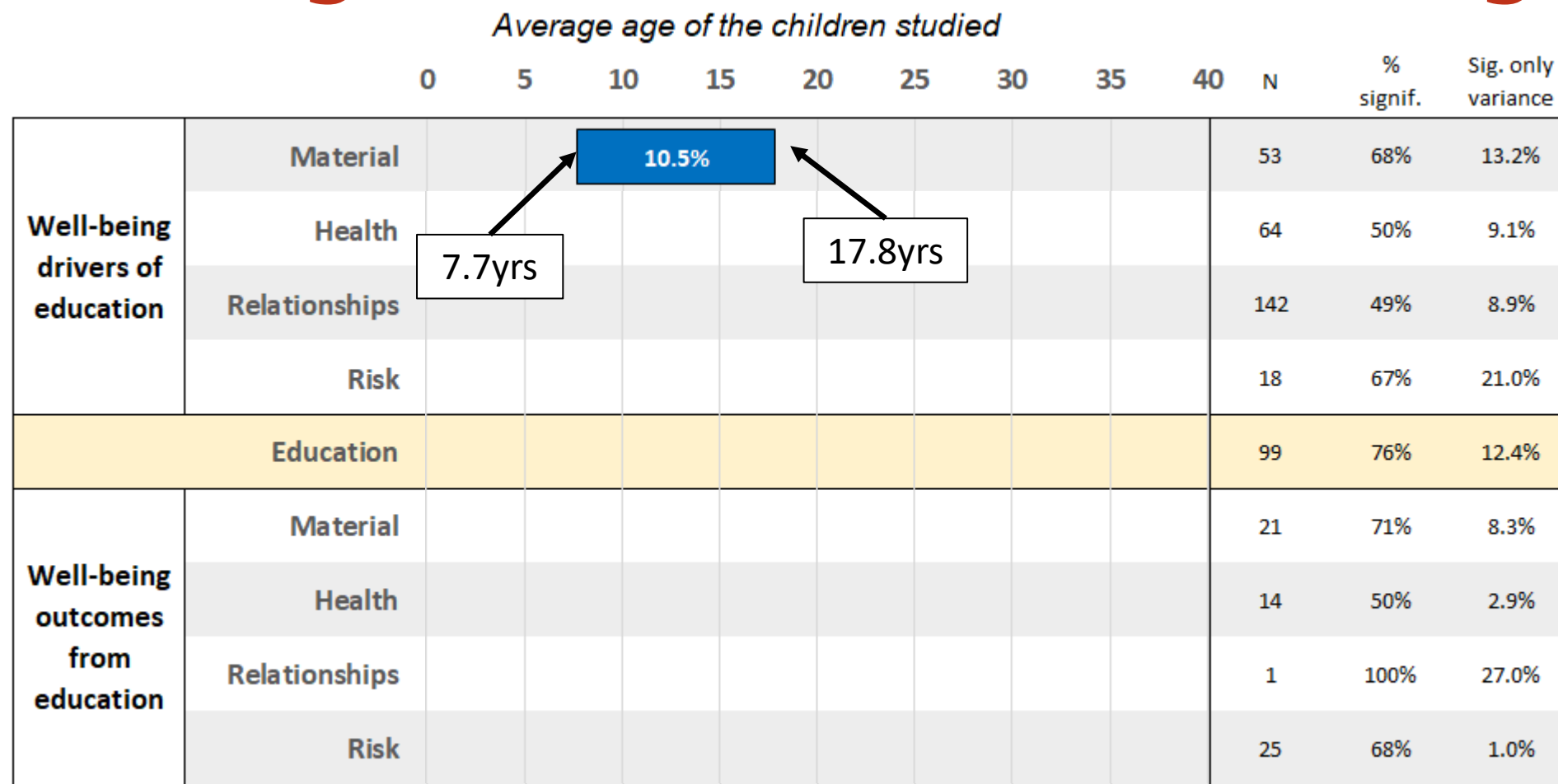
*Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019*

# More than 400 well-being to education effects



Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019

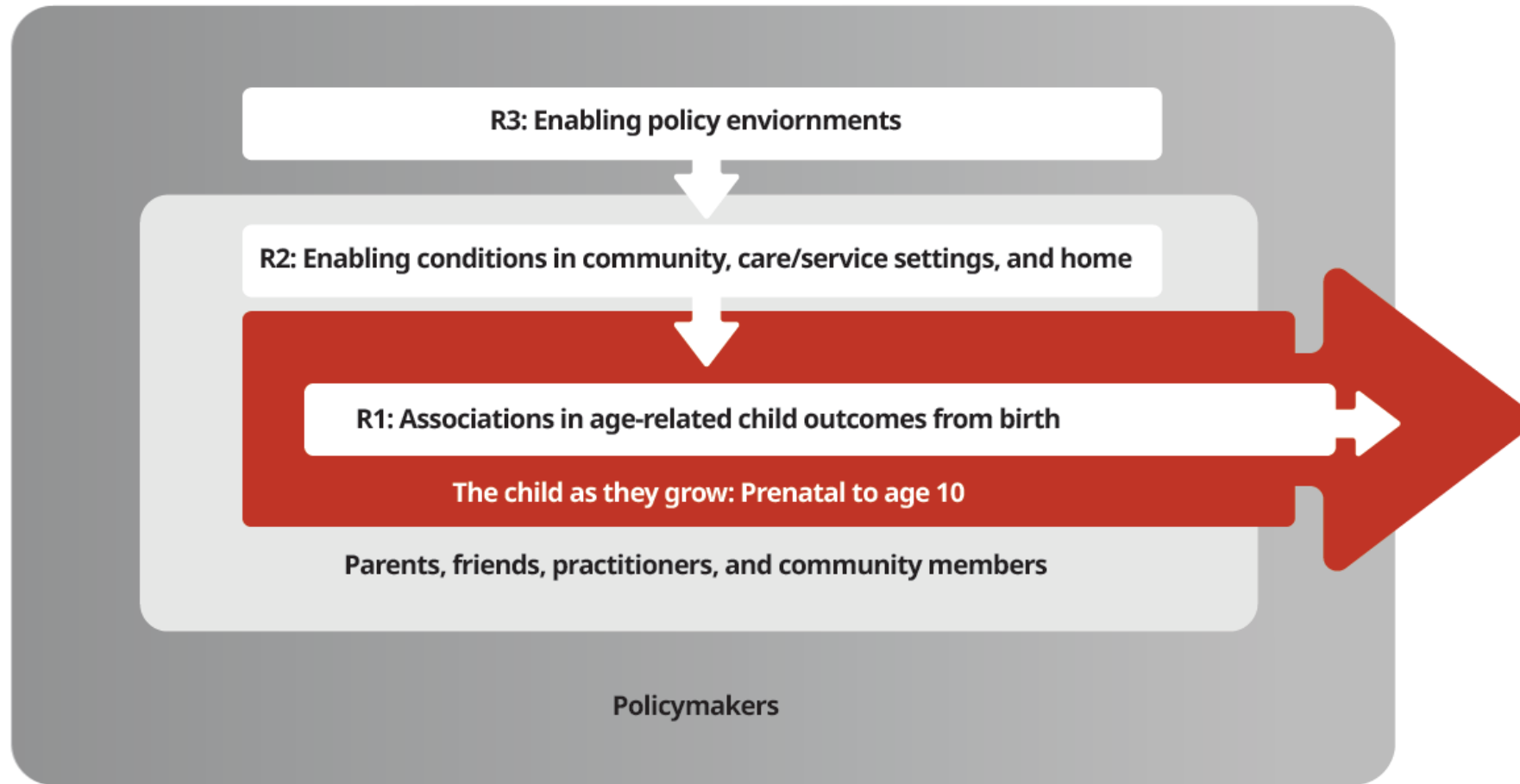
# Well-being determinates of well-being



Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019



# Family, the home and foundational learning



*Over 200  
additional  
studies,  
from 2020  
to 2023*

*Source: Richardson, Olsson, & Richardson, 2024*

# Family, the home and foundational learning

- Poverty and home learning environments explain more of the variance in later school achievement and skills development than early literacy or preschool
- Parenting styles matter - lower-stress, warm and affectionate improve family relations, school performance, cognitive development, social competences, and children's self-esteem
- Children's housing conditions significantly affect literacy and numeracy, cognitive development, and well-being
- Family engagement with child professionals can unlock children's learning potential and development
- Systems today place an unmanageable burden on education to deliver on child and human development
- Cross-sectoral policies are more effective, with family participation where possible – but contexts matter

# SDGs covered: and how they were selected

- Group consultation led to a selection of focal goals:



- And 2 targets within each (e.g. SDG 1: No Poverty)
  - **1.1** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere
  - **1.2** Reduce at least by half, % of people living in poverty in all its dimensions

Effects on >>>	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Policies and programming for						
1 NO POVERTY		e.g. Access to health in multiple countries, and health outcomes				
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING						
4 QUALITY EDUCATION						
5 GENDER EQUALITY						
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH						
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS						

- **Observed SDGs connections via family focused policy and programming**
- Strong spillover effects found in the majority of cases
- Yet to cover:
  - Health system effects

# What did the study tell us?

- Family cash benefits consistently reduce poverty and deprivation – effectively promote employment and gender equality
- Home factors are key to education success
  - Family policies work for school access – less so learning
- All family policies need to be gender neutral in outcomes
- Family focused health approaches are effective – behavioral interventions need family therapists too
- Violence prevention more than education, changes in conditions required (Nurse family partnerships)



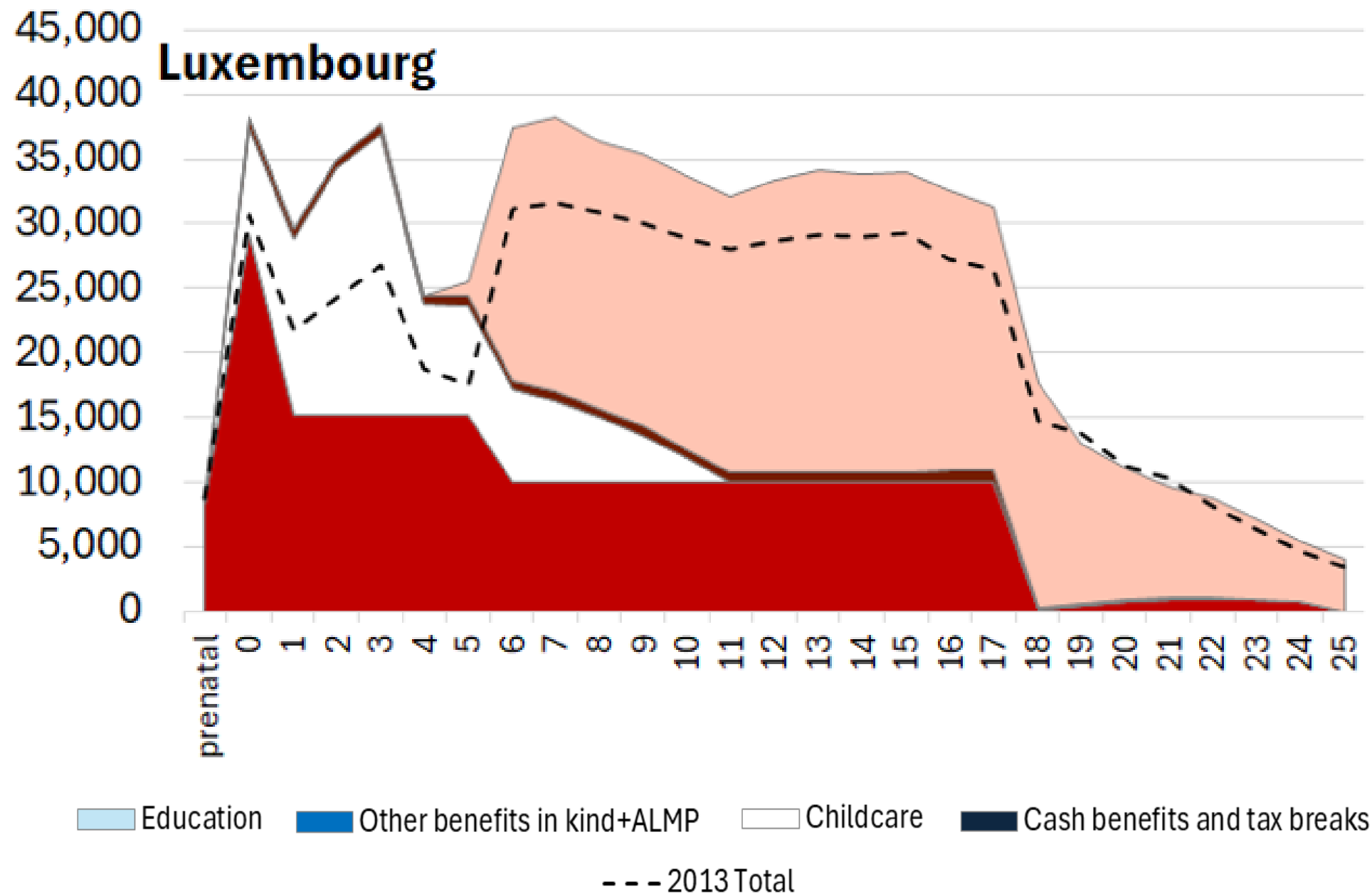
# Understanding the when and how of investment on children

- Consensus on importance of early childhood dev. across sectors
- Critical for inclusive development
  - Within and between country inequalities
- Demand for greater effectiveness and efficiency
- Limited resources?
- Achievement of the SDGs

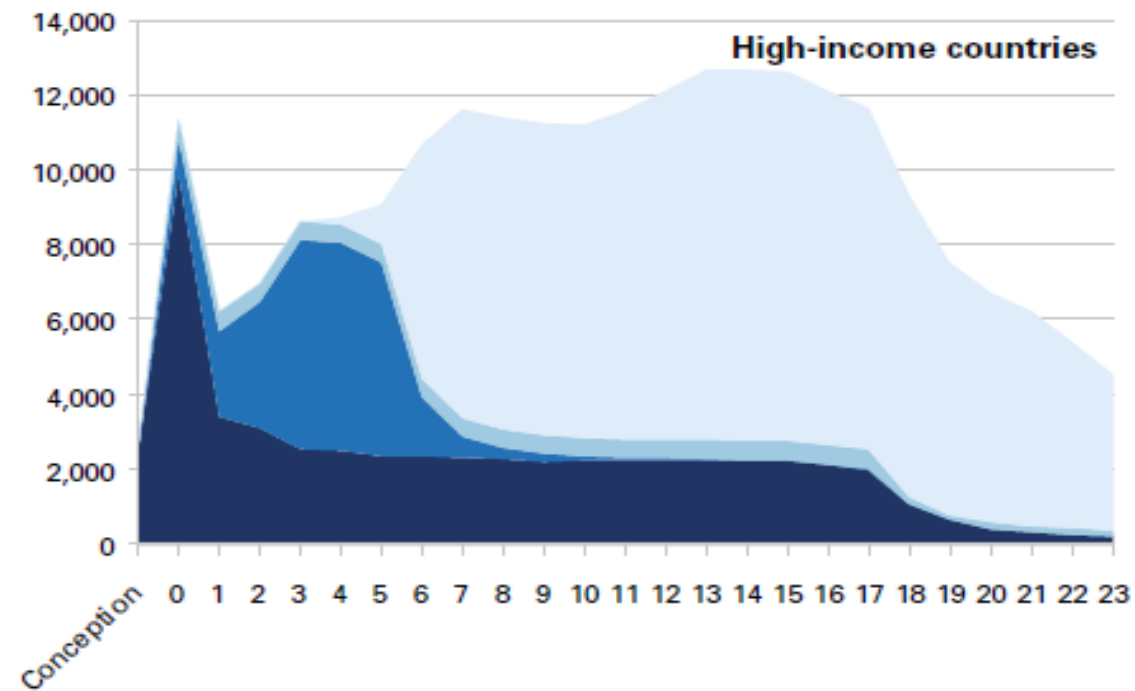
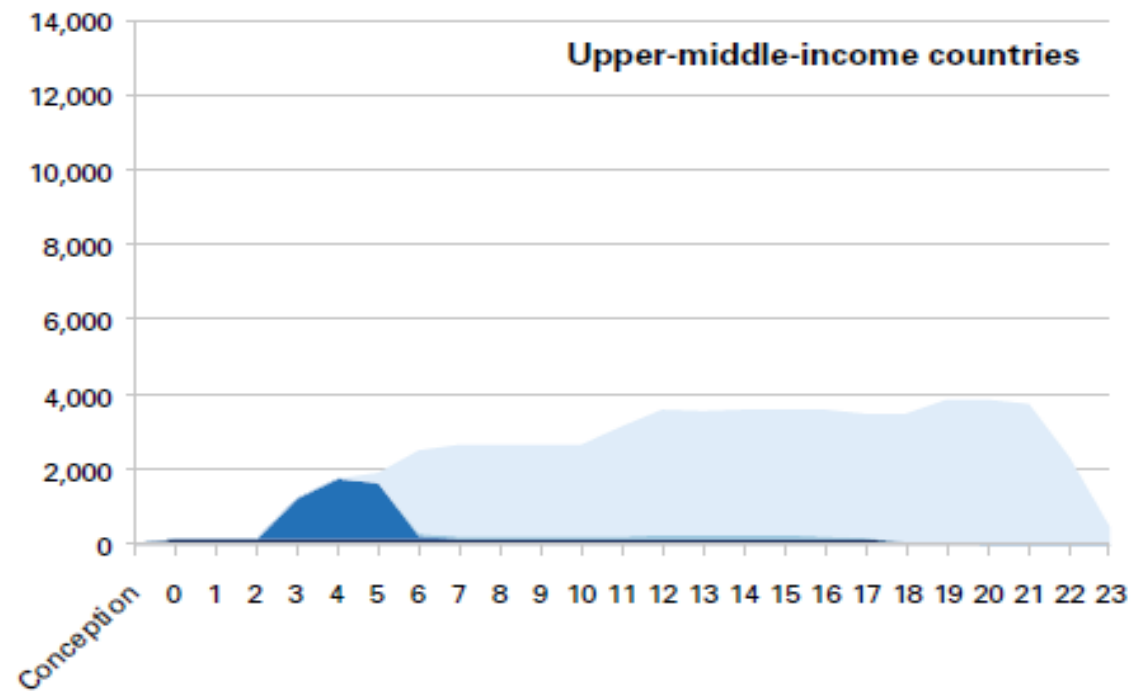
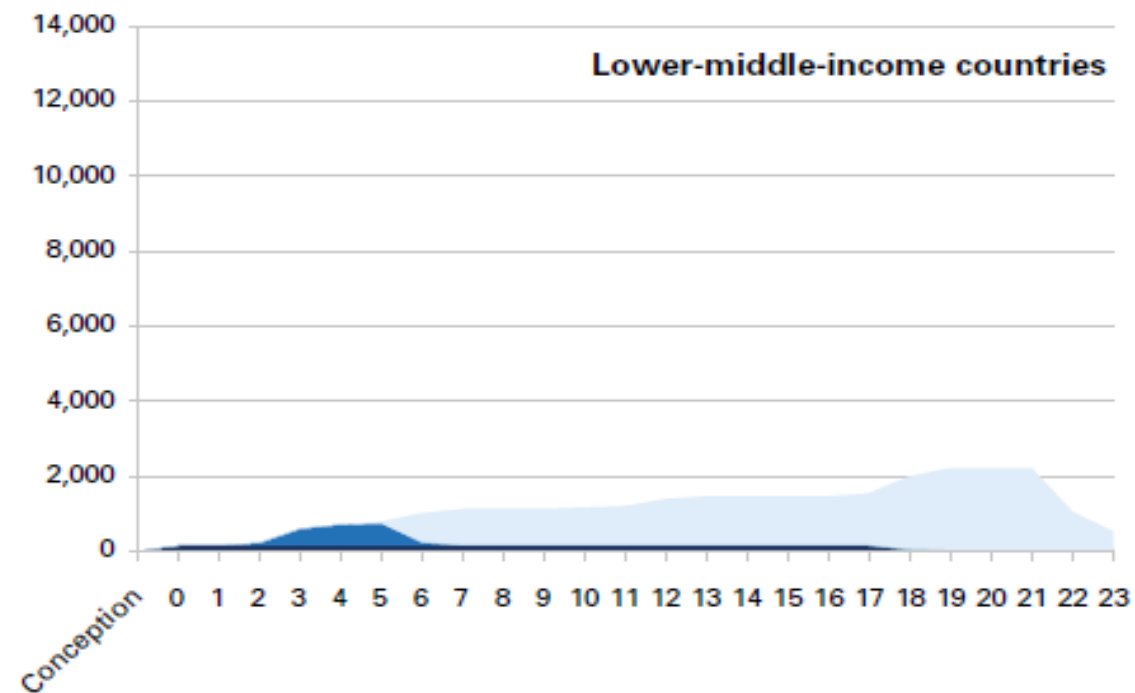
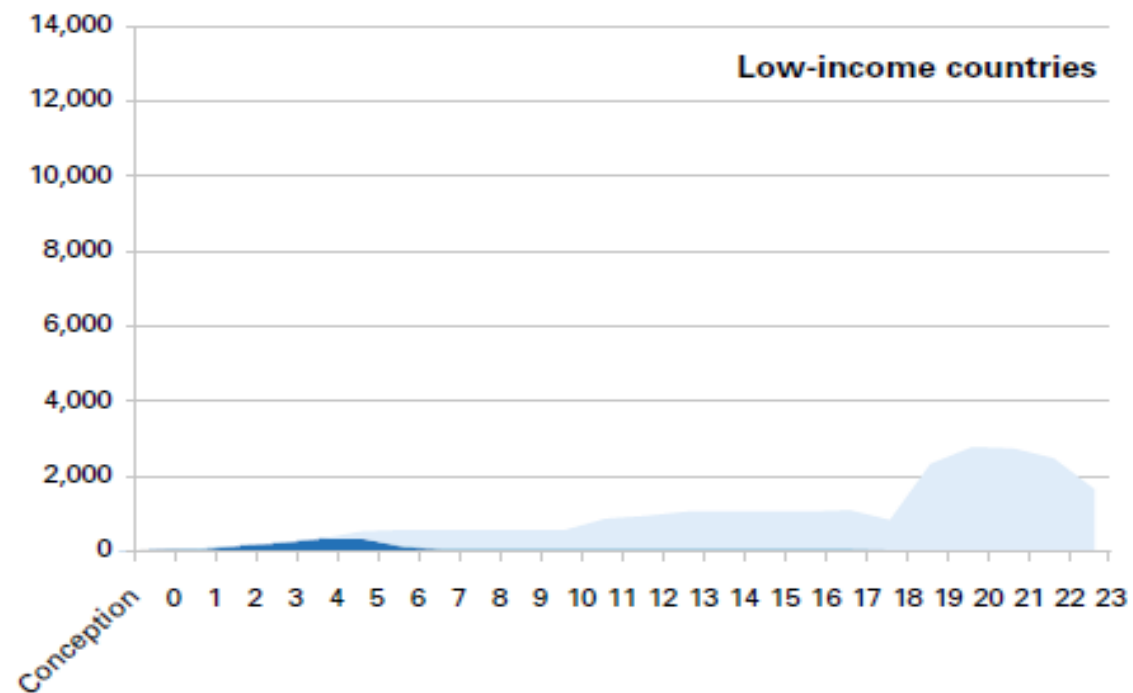


Child age		Prenatal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+	
Social protection cash benefits	Family allowances		Child and family benefits, child disability benefits, family tax breaks, advances on maintenance payments																		
	Leave and family care policies	Maternity/ paternity leave and benefits		Parental leave and benefits		Child raising/ homecare allowances															
			Birth grant																		
Social and human services	Child protection		Services for children (e.g., institutional care, social work interventions)																		
	Family services	Home visiting, nurse–family partnerships																			
		Additional services in support of child-rearing (e.g., food packages, family accommodation services, family centres and parenting interventions)																			
	Employment/ training																			Active labour market participation for youth	
		Public work supports for caregivers																			
Education and care supports	Subsidies		Fees waiver, or school or childcare fee subsidies, free meals or equipment																		
	Services		Childcare and preschool																		
										Primary					Secondary and post-secondary						
Family health services	Subsidies	Health insurance or health cost waivers																			
	Family health services		Primary and secondary care																		
	Mother and infant health	Prenatal checks	Birth services, postnatal checks, immunizations																		

Source: Richardson, Harris, Hudson, MacKinder, 2023



**How & when money is spent on children matters!**



## Classification of cash benefits in 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009

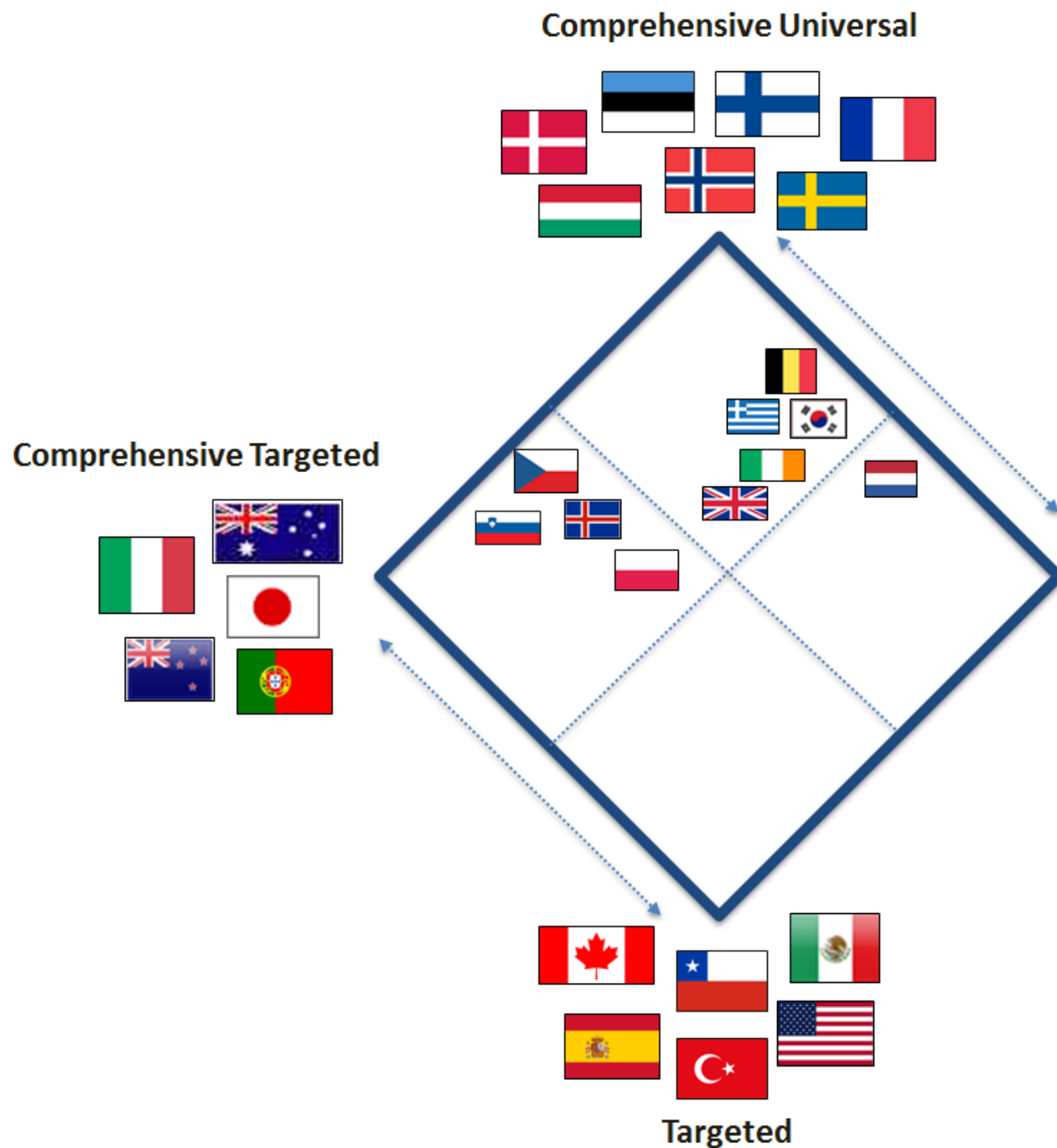
	How family cash benefits are delivered			
	Main Child Benefit is <b><u>not</u></b> means-tested	Tax Breaks paid	Sole-parent Supplement	Strong leave Structures
Comprehensive universal	Yes	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Universal	Yes	Yes	No	Sometimes
Comprehensive targeted	No	Sometimes	Yes	No
Targetted	No	Sometimes	No	No
All remaining combinations are 'hybrid types'				

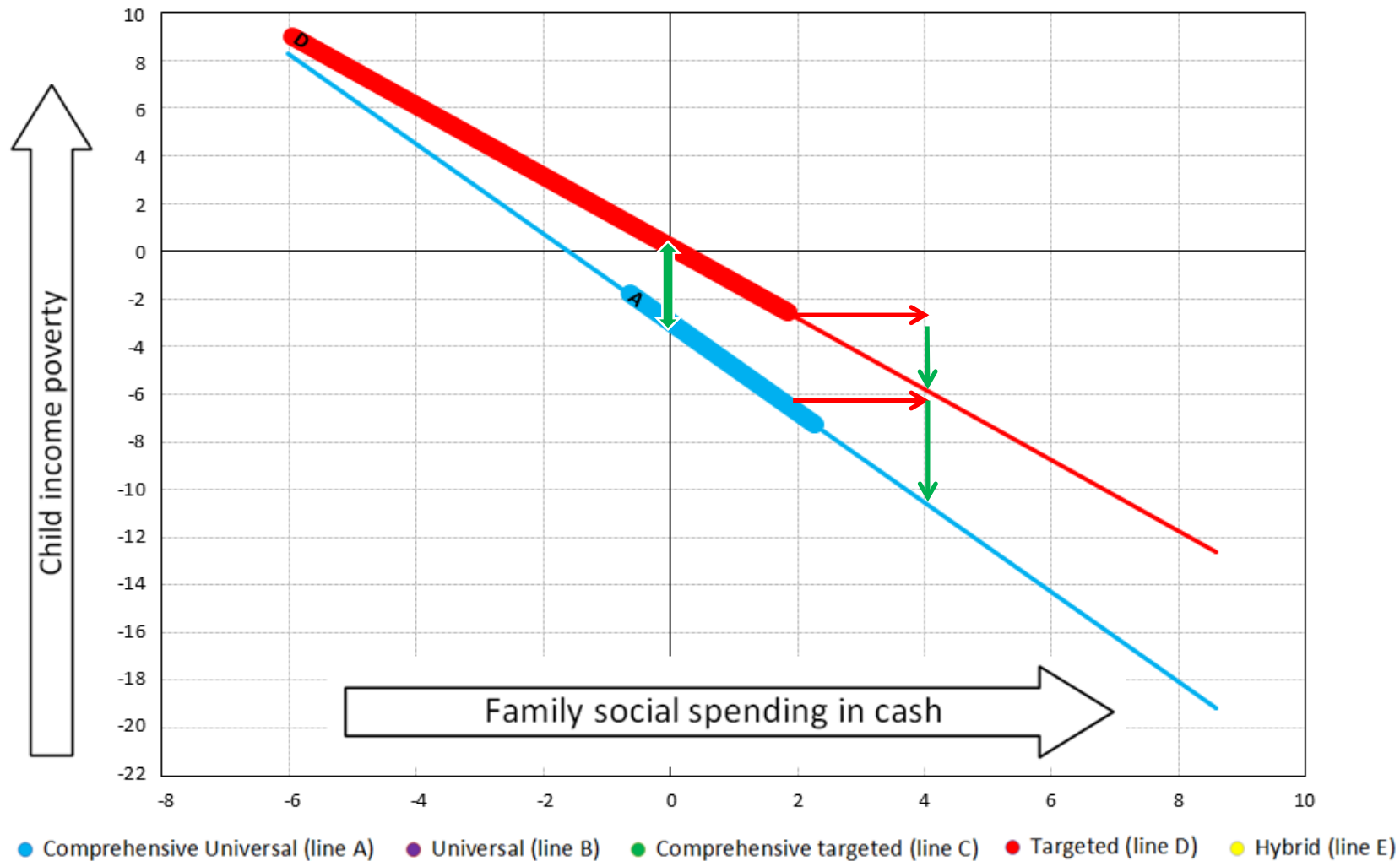
**Family  
policy  
portfolios  
matter**

**'Cash'  
types**



# Family cash benefit typologies





## Comparing approaches to family cash benefits

Regression lines of child poverty on family cash spending as a function cash benefit structures, 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009.

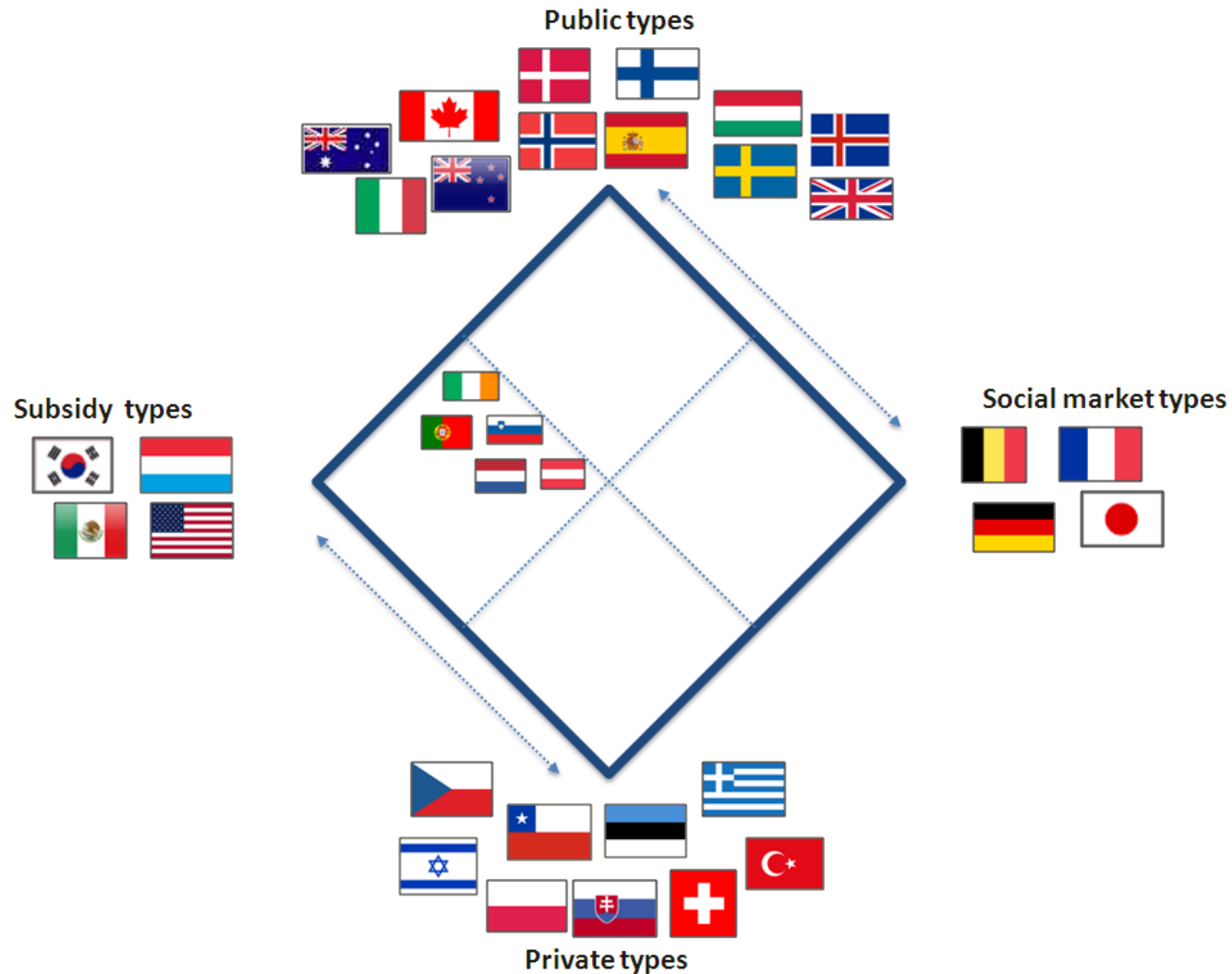
Source: Richardson et al., OECD Report to the European Commission, 2014.

# Policy design matters: 'in-kind' types

Classification of early childcare services in 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009

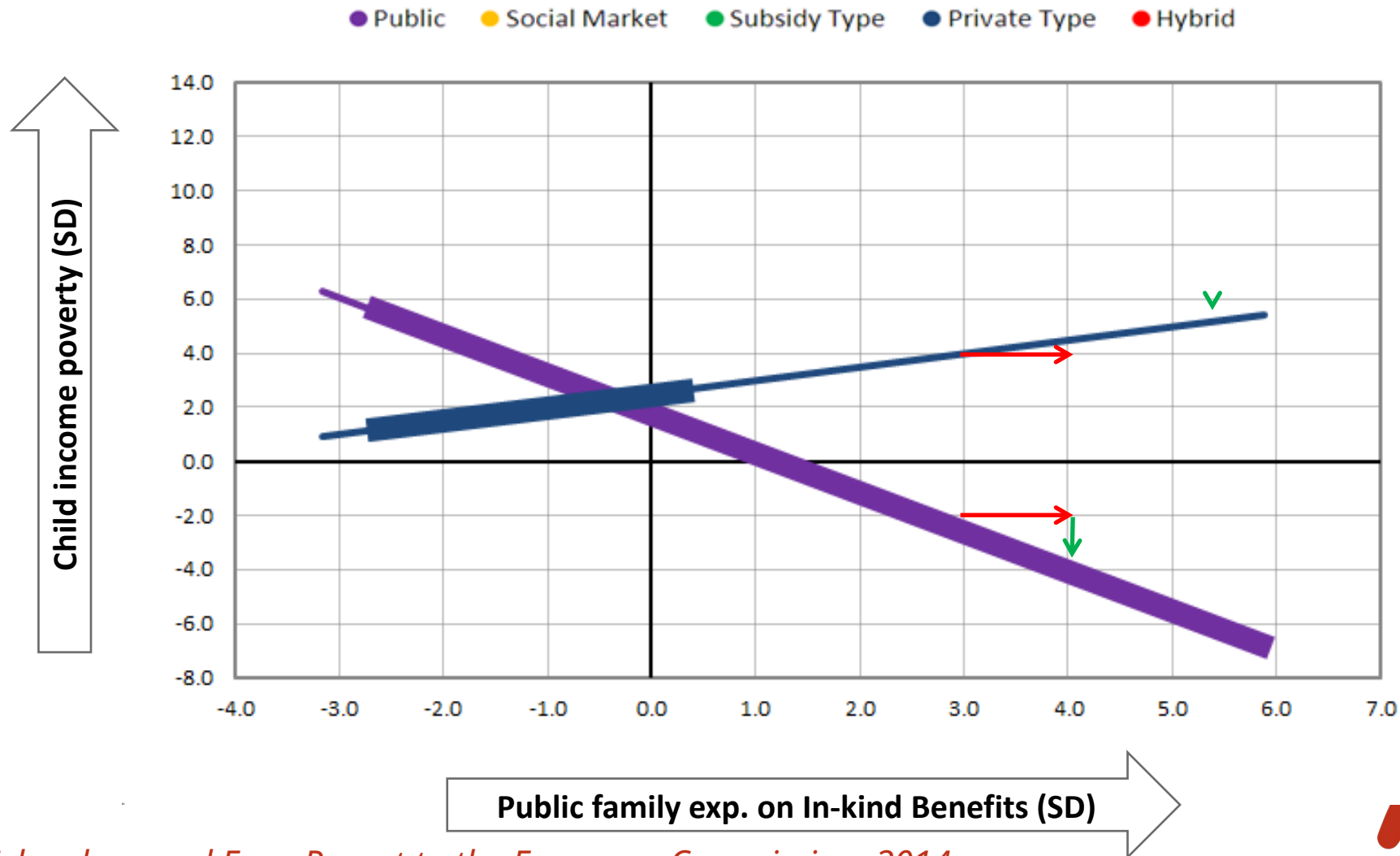
	How early childcare services are delivered		
	<i>Is childcare universal?</i>	<i>Is there a childcare payment to families?</i>	<i>Are birth services free at point of use?</i>
Public	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Social market	Yes	Yes	No
Subsidy setting	No	Yes	No
Private	No	No	Sometimes
All remaining combinations are 'hybrid types'			

# Family service benefit typologies



# Comparing approaches to in-kind supports

Regression lines of family in-kind spending on child poverty as a function of spending types, 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009.



Source: Richardson and Frey, Report to the European Commission, 2014



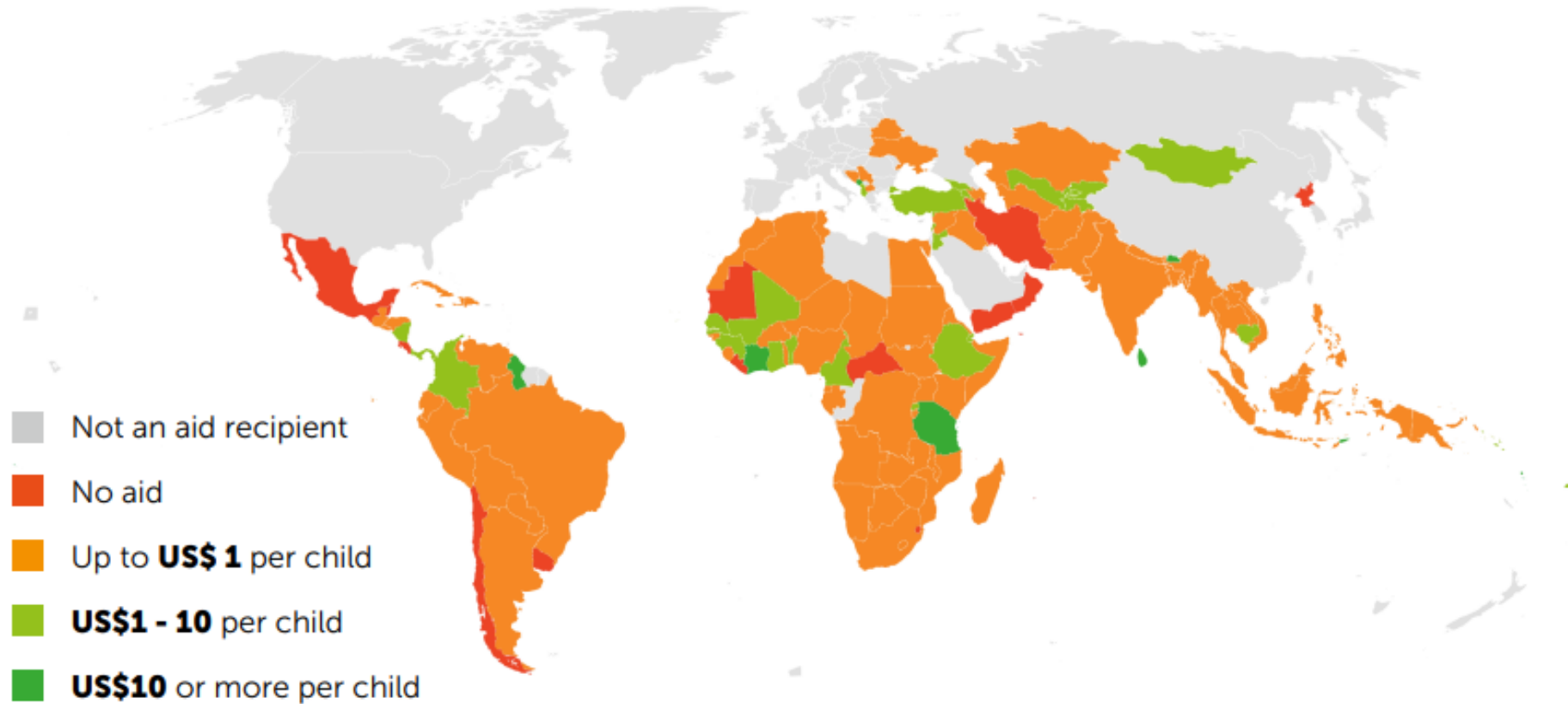
# How money is spent matters

*Associations between expenditure by child allowance policy type and child and family outcomes*

		Relative child income poverty	Female labour market participation	Net primary school enrolment
Child allowances all types	<i>t-1</i>	++	-	+**
	<i>t-2</i>	-	---	+***
	<i>t-3</i>	+	-	+
Child allowances are not universal	<i>t-1</i>	---	_*	---*
	<i>t-2</i>	---	_**	---*
	<i>t-3</i>	++***	-	--
Child allowances are universal	<i>t-1</i>	_**	-	-
	<i>t-2</i>	--***	-	+
	<i>t-3</i>	_***	+	+

*Source: Theirworld, in partnership with the Learning for Well-being Institute (2024)*

# Pre-primary education aid per capita, 2021



Dealing in  
dollars per  
child!!!

Source: Authors' calculation based on OECD Creditor Reporter System. Accessed February 2024.

# Main challenges to achieving successful integration



Estimating need and optimising take-up in vulnerable groups



Managing flows of people and money

Wrong pockets, shifting clients



Governing administrative change

Data sharing

Finance pooling



Building the evidence base

Transferable practices?

Target setting and unobserved effects

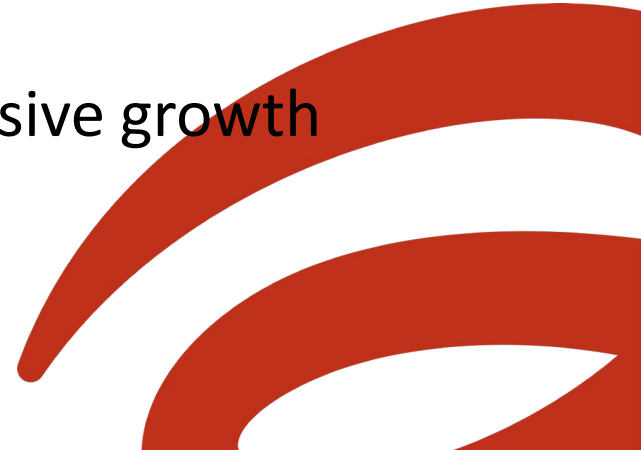
# Promising practices

- Delivery practices
  - Case management, and one-stop shops
  - Substitutions for emergency and/or out-of-home care
  - A 'whole system' approach
  - Early intervention and prevention
  - Making use of locked social resources
- Administration practices
  - *The use of 'linked' performance targets or targets of cooperation*
  - Legislation-backed integration
  - Joint oversight of financial integration



# Opportunity to get it right for children and families

- From material well-being to eudemonic well-being
- Mismatch between evidence and policy action, with major implications for child and social and economic development
- Rights are indivisible, non-discriminatory
- Spend more and earlier: Domestic resources
- Spend smarter: Coordinate the portfolio, follow evidence
- Promote inclusivity: the costs of inequality, benefits of inclusive growth
- Marginal new investments target age-spending inequities



**Thank you**

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