

# Gender Balance

## EECERA Annual Conference 2018

The European institutions have discussed the need for more men in ECEC for over a decade, and national governments are starting to implement measures for better gender balance. But what do we need to know when developing strategies and policies for a better gender-balanced work force?

### Some recent research results on men and women in ECEC

The Netherlands: Female and male caretakers show similar sensitive behaviors towards infants, and boys and girls develop similar levels of attachment towards men and women.

Tandem Study, Germany: Male and female professionals don't differ much in dimensions of professional pedagogic behavior.

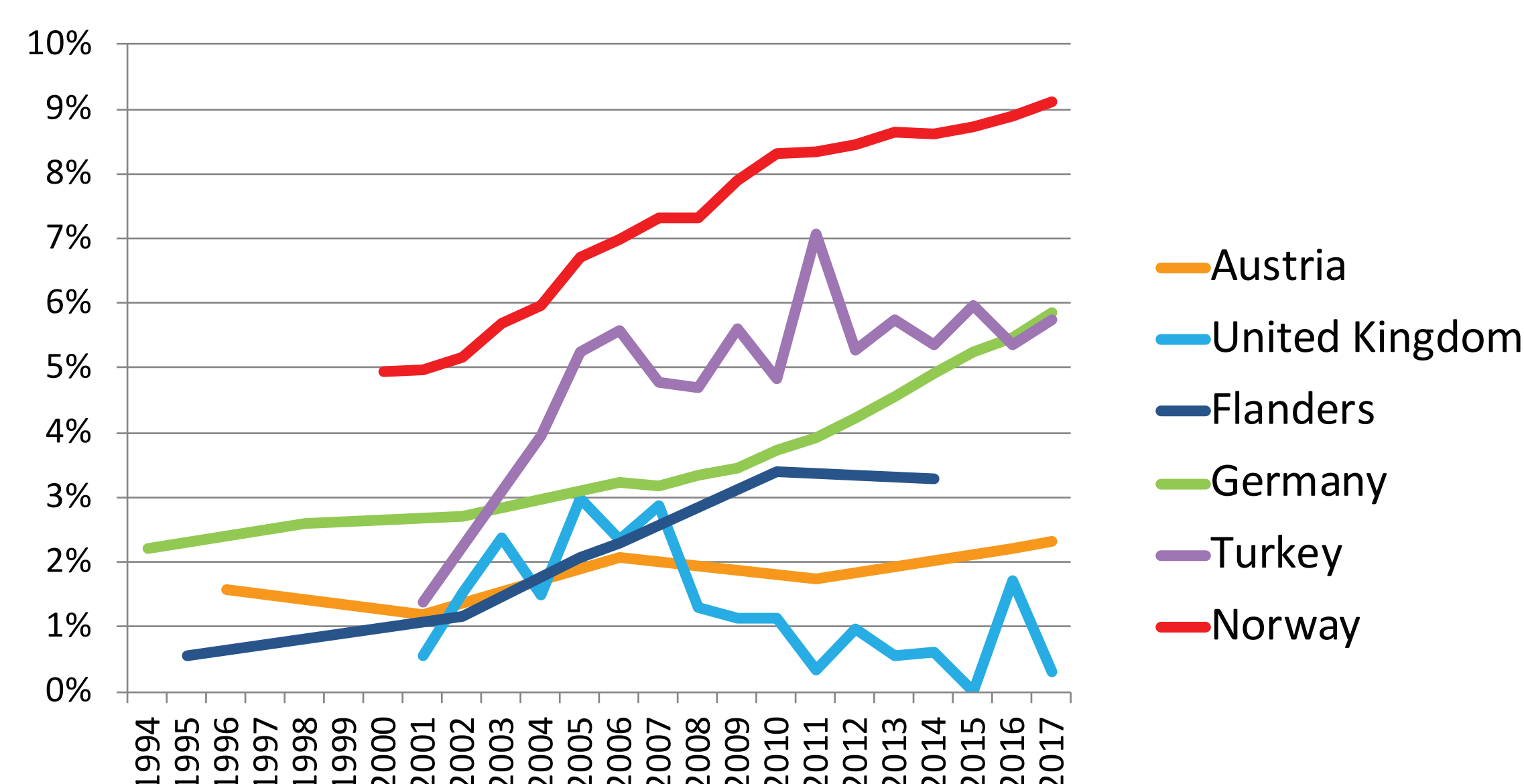
NUBBEK study, Germany: Female practitioners more often report higher quality of relationships towards girls, correlated to better verbal and social-emotional competences.

W-INN-Study, Austria: Male caregivers are less punitive, and boys more often seek contact and closeness to male caregivers.

Oslo, Norway: Boys and girls visiting child care centers with a higher share of male staff perform better on tests in language and mathematics in the early years of school.

Turkey: Male preschool teachers report more organizational cynicism and lower job satisfaction compared to their female counterparts.

### More men in ECEC: the statistics



Proportion of male workers in ECEC staff in selected European countries. Source: Authors' calculations from various national statistics. Definitions of "Male workers in ECEC" vary between countries.

### Results and implications

Statistics show an increase of male participation in several European countries which is partly connected to policies for more men in ECEC.

Recent research confirms few differences between male and female behavior towards young children, but relevant gender effects on the quality of teacher-child interactions and educational achievement in the course of transition to school.

Working in gender-mixed teams can sometimes result in stereo-typing, but in general it will challenge established routines and can open up new ways for gender-sensitive pedagogy.

In summary, results clearly support measures for a better gender balance in ECEC. Nevertheless, the development towards gender-mixed teams has to be accompanied by gender-sensitive reflection and strategies and measures towards gender equality.

### Gender-mixed teams – rollback to stereotypes or pathway to gender equality?

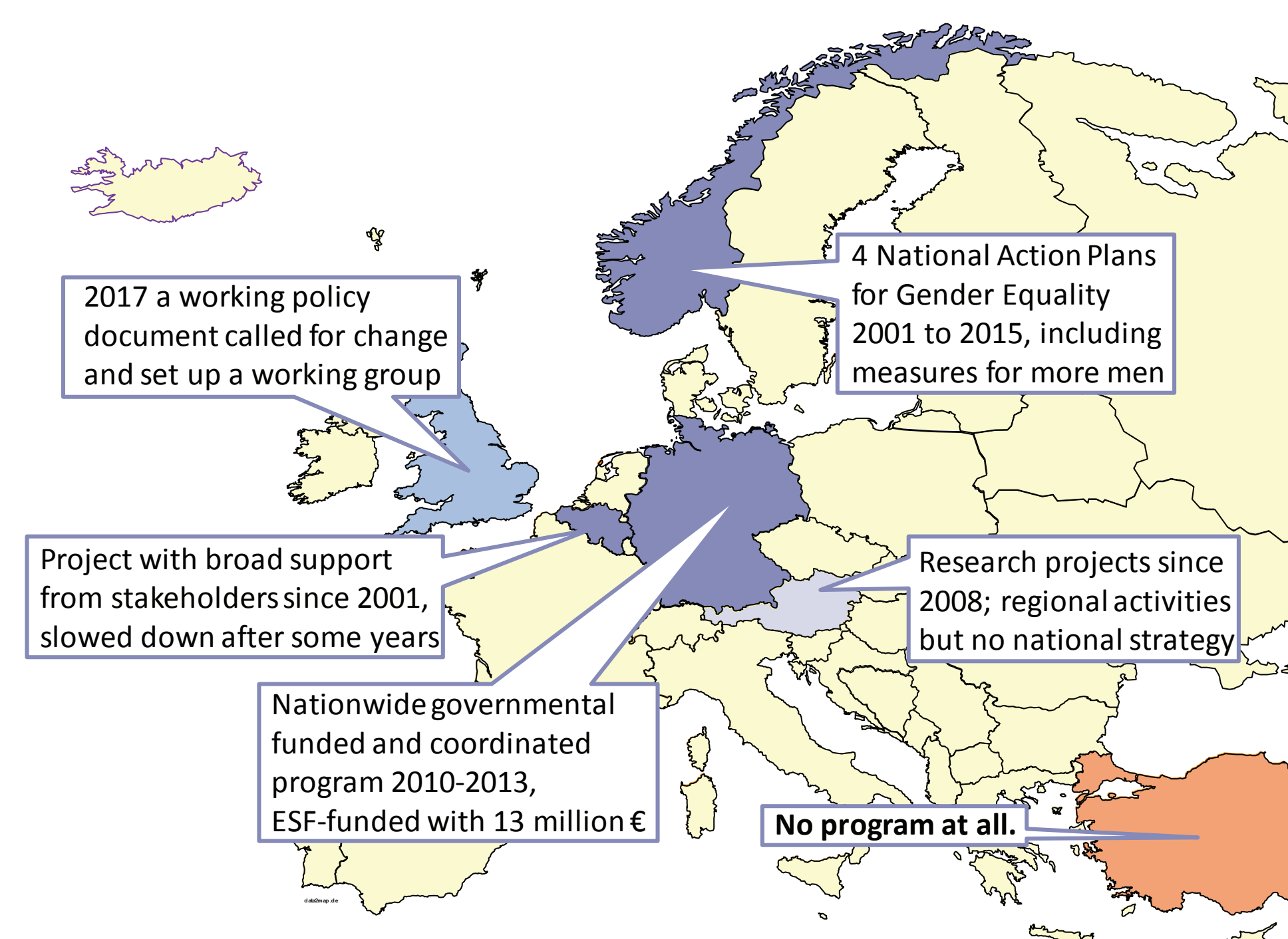
Research has revealed that in gender-mixed teams, workers sometimes tend to divide tasks and activities in gender-typical ways. Moreover, an implicit gendered subtext accompanies pedagogic behavior and daily routines.

Measures for more men have been criticized as leading to more stereotyping in ECEC work, thus working against the aim of gender equality.

On the other hand, research shows that many men working in ECEC show less stereotyped attitudes and behavior, compared to other men and also to their female colleagues. However they are often expected to act in gender-typical ways, and sometimes do.

Most important are the interrelations between children's and adults' gendered behaviors.

### Strategies for a better gender balance



### EECERA Special Interest Group Gender Balance

The SIG gender balance supports a research-based, critical and reflective approach on gender issues in early childhood. It has its focus on the relevance of men for children's development, and on ways to develop a better gender balance in ECEC.

Current research issues are cultural differences, children's and parent's views, male drop-outs from ECEC, and the connections between gender balance, gender-sensitive pedagogy and gender equality in general.



"Being a man is not a particular feature of quality."

ECEC counselor, Germany



Measures for more men in ECEC have to be embedded in strategies for gender balance and gender equality



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