

## Preventing social exclusion and school failure in Europe



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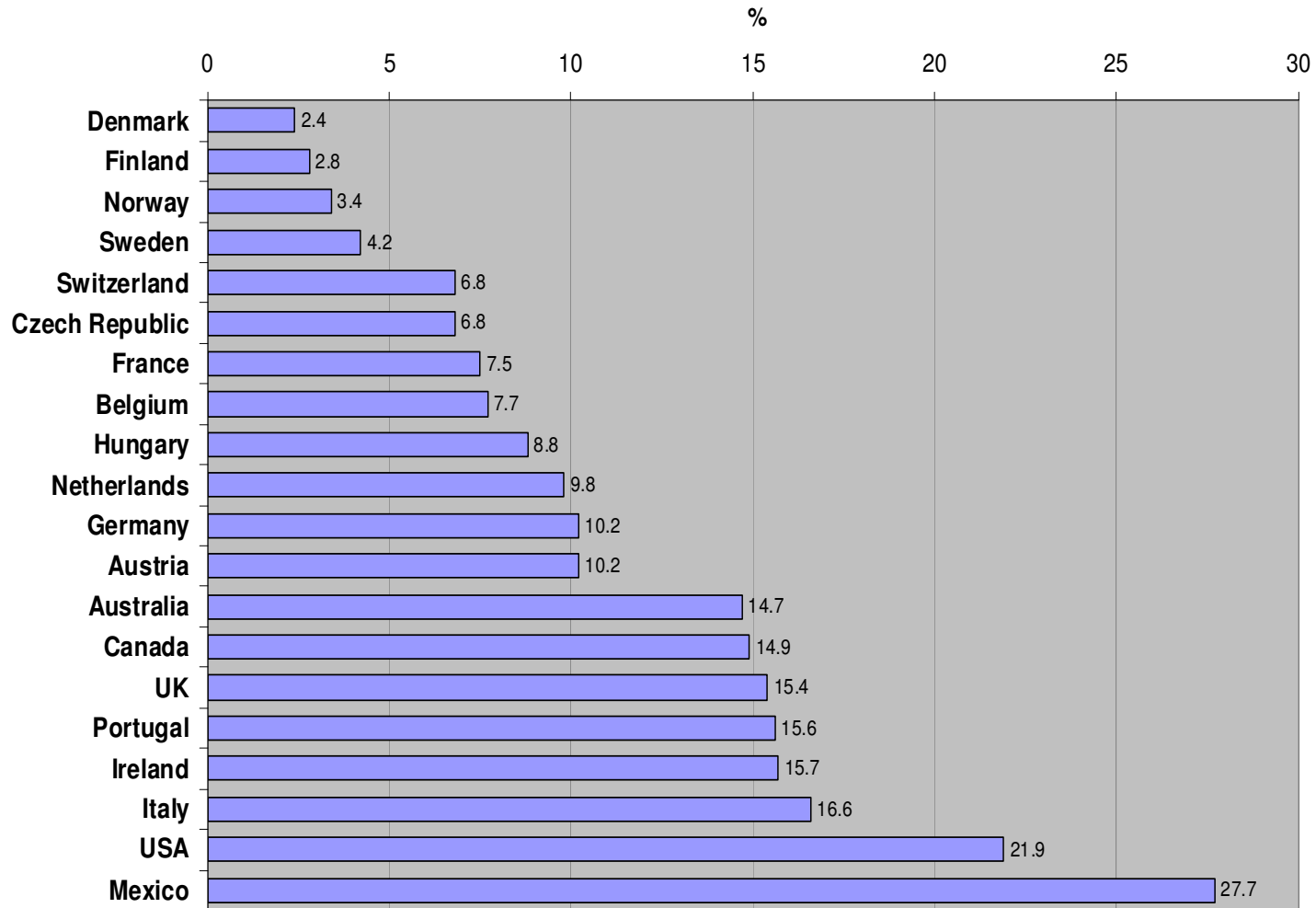
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# **1. Reducing child poverty**

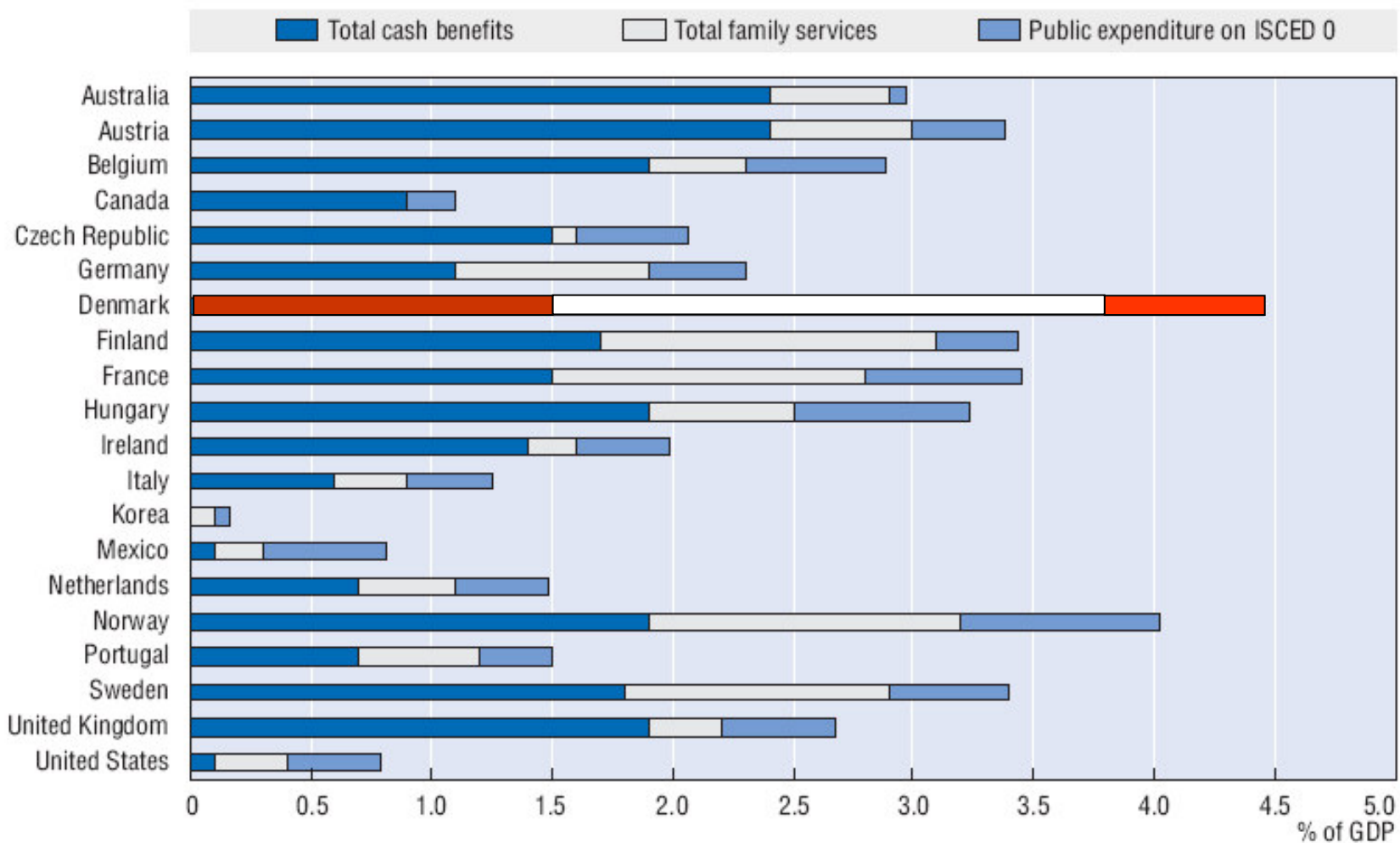
## Who are the children 'at-risk'?

- ***Children born into families with less than half the median income of the average family of 2+2***
  - **Children of families who are non-nationals or belong to indigenous groups**
  - **Children of lone mothers or in unemployed households**
- **These children often experience low birth weight, malnutrition and poor health; neglect or violence, sometimes on a daily basis. They suffer also from cultural poverty (low educational level of parents; low educational aspirations...) and perhaps speak a second language or dialect at home**

## Child poverty in many countries is still too high and the income gap is growing in almost all countries



## Spending on families and children's services can be impressive... or well below average



## **2. Tackle - at government and other levels - discrimination and racism**

## The current situation in Europe... examples

- **Hungary: among Hungarian Roma aged 15 and above, only 61% has completed primary education, and 13% secondary education (Open Society, 2006). Currently, around 90% of Roma children are completing primary education in Hungary.**
  
- **Ireland (Pavee Point, 2002)**
  - **Almost a quarter of Traveller families live on the roadside;**
  - **Life expectancy for women is extremely low: five times fewer Traveller women survive to the age of 55 years than in the settled community in Ireland. (ESRI, 1986);**
  - **Less than 10% of Traveller children attend pre-school; about 70% of Traveller children attend primary school regularly; about 25% of Traveller children enter post-primary education; and 0.3% achieve entry to third-level colleges...**

## Government action...

- Recognise that prejudice exists: employment in France...
- That prejudice and inequity are always difficult to overcome and that permanent institutions and effort are needed, e.g. gender inequality
- That it is even more difficult to overcome prejudice and inequity when a group is excluded from the main economy...
- That there is a real difficulty for many Roma and excluded groups about public education: not only past history... but to what purpose? A question mark in the minds of Roma parents: *Is the offer of public education the right way for us go forward culturally, for our survival...*
- That any other ethnic or social group placed in the same conditions as the Roma – subject to racial prejudice, economic segregation, exclusion from mainstream society, extreme poverty - would show similar features of dependence on, yet distrust of mainstream society and its institutions
- ...at the same time, care about using ethnic markers

### **3. Pay more attention to gender equality**

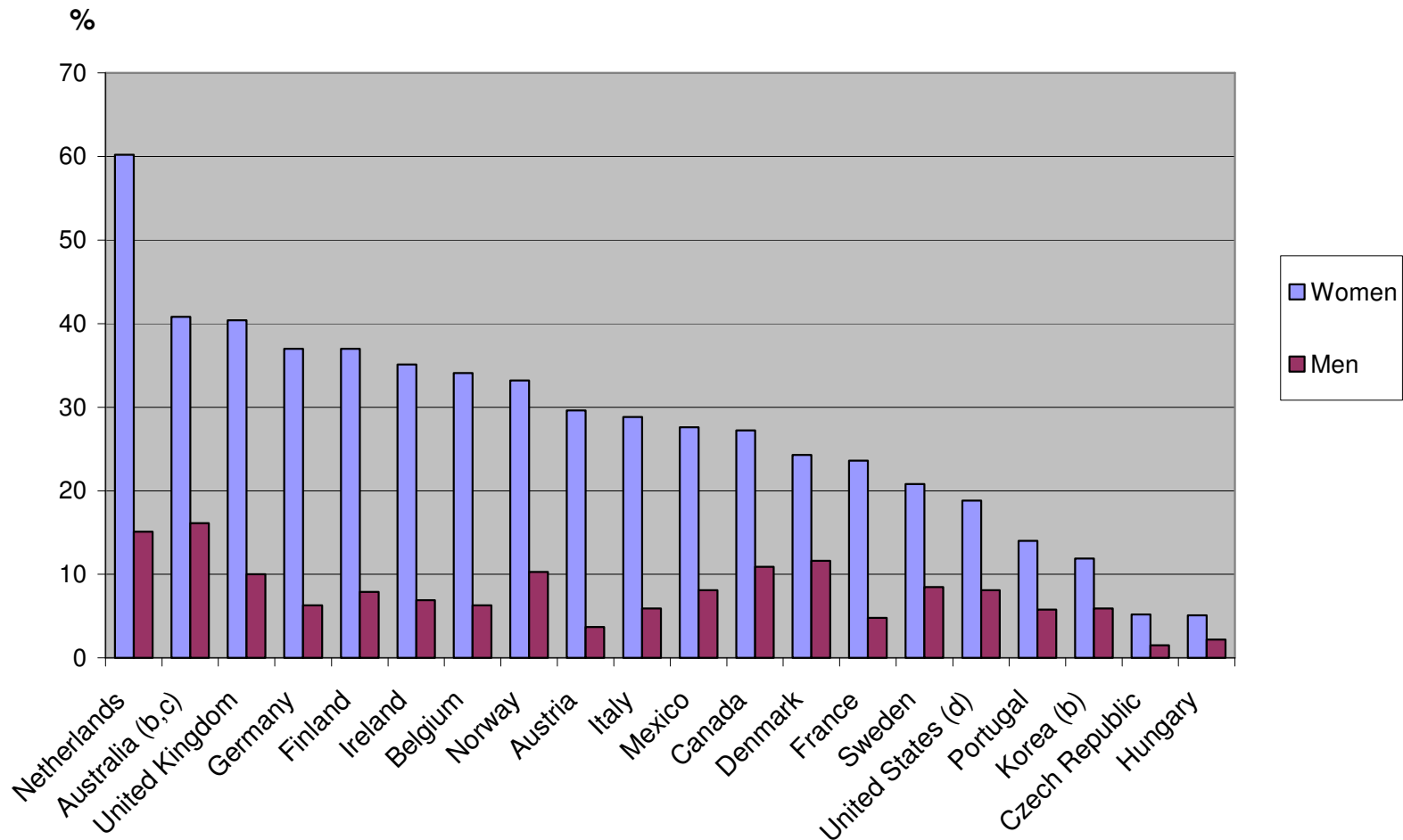
## **Why focus on gender equality**

- **Discrimination against women is the largest unseen field of public prejudice**
- **Today, one of the major causes of family poverty is the growing dependence of children on the income of mothers**
- **The need to tackle discrimination to work and in work...**
- **Greater attention to remunerated parental leave policy and accessible early childhood services would lead to:**
  - **Greater equality of opportunity for women;**
  - **Increased revenues for families**
  - **Increased tax revenues for governments**
  - **The easing of pressures and the work-life balance ...**
  - **Better health for infants and family bonding...**

## What is actually happening in Europe?

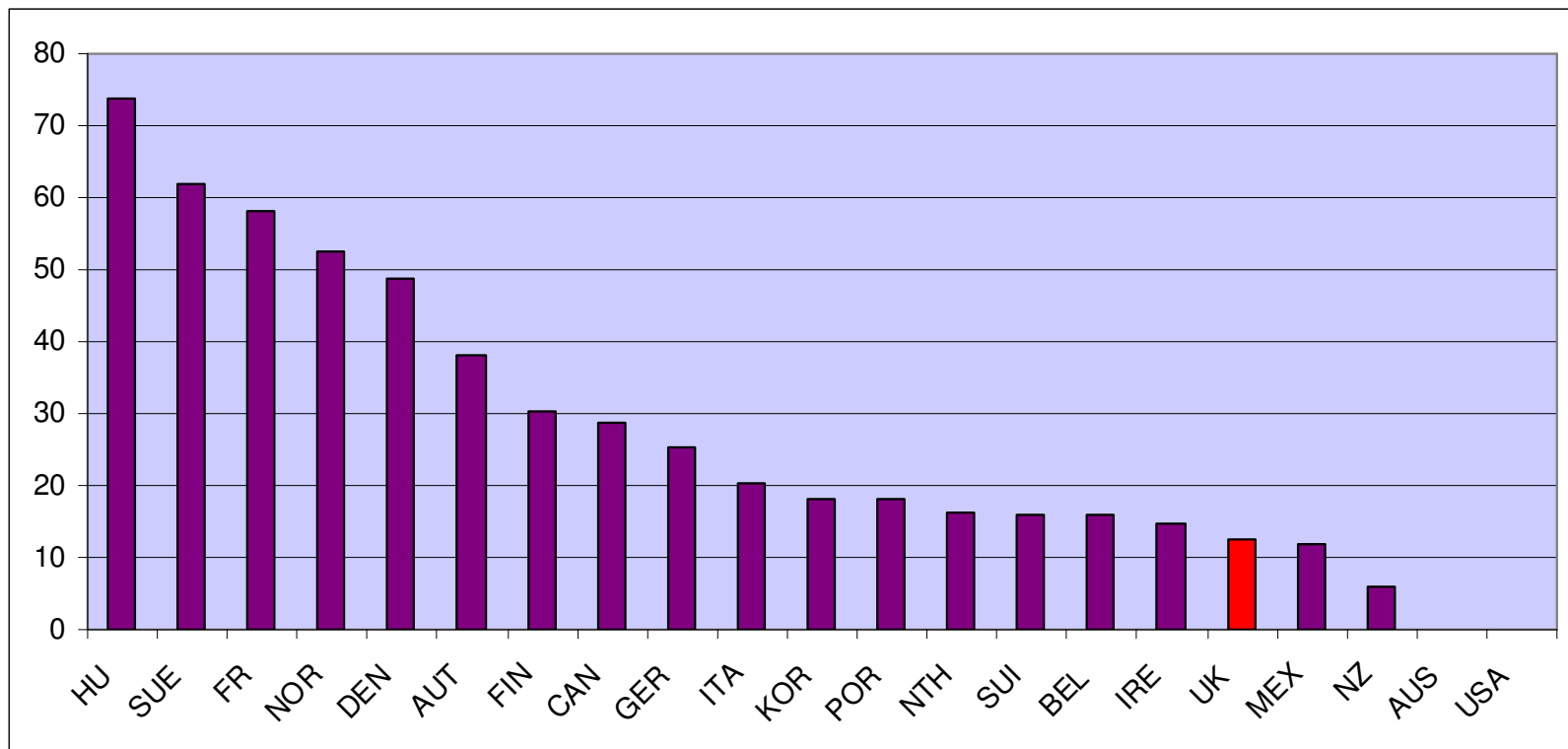
- **A denial of equal opportunity for women both *to* work and *in* work:**
  - **Wage discrimination against women... c. 80% of male wage for equal work**
- **Insufficient supply of childcare services**
- **Services unaffordable for families on modest incomes: the case of Ireland**
- **Family-friendly policies weak;**

**Gender equality is important for OECD countries as a HR principle and also because increasingly women are the main support of children**  
**Part-time work rates of men and women in OECD countries**

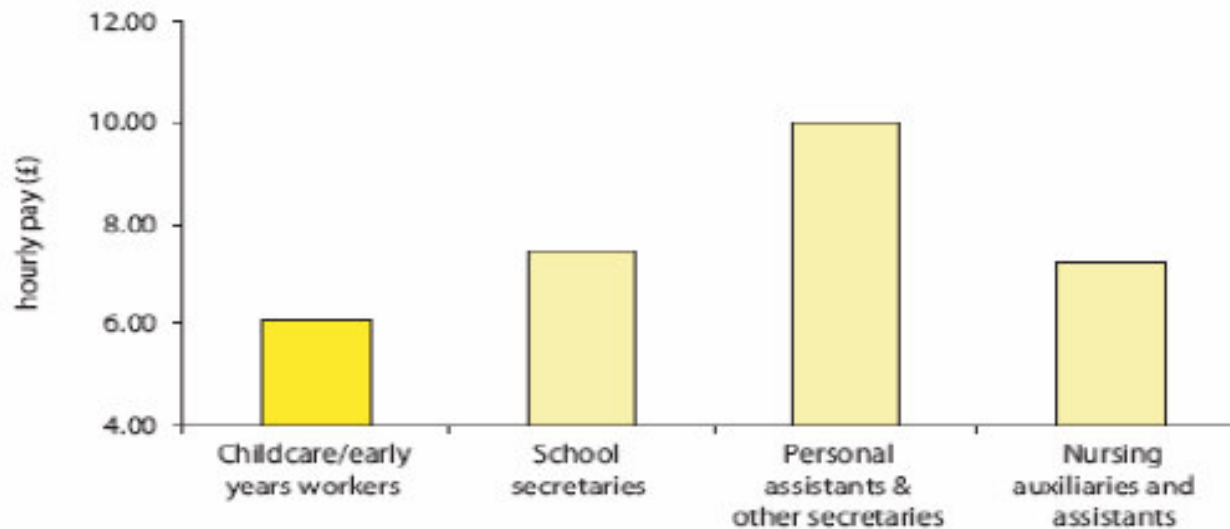


# Effective parental leave: weeks paid at 100% APW

**EPL = length \* remuneration (Y axis = FTEs)**



## Comparative average hourly pay in 'female' occupations, UK 2003



Source: Labour Force Survey, Winter 2003

**“Despite having higher levels of formal education than the average American worker, ECEC professionals earn dreadfully low wages – on average only \$16,980 dollars per year (funeral attendants = \$17,320; garbage collectors = \$25,020). In addition, they rarely receive benefits or paid leave. Not surprisingly, given the low salaries, staff turnover is high in early childhood programmes outside the public schools. Some estimate it to be around 36% a year.”**

**Kagan & Rigby (2003)**

# Women's place in society - the Global Gender Gap

Gender Gap Index 2006		
Rank	Country	Score*
1	Sweden	0.8133
2	Norway	0.7994
3	Finland	0.7958
4	Iceland	0.7813
5	Germany	0.7524
6	Philippines	0.7516
7	N. Zealand	0.7509
8	Denmark	0.7462
9	UK	0.7365
10	Ireland	0.7335

\*0 to 1 scale: 0=inequality, 1=equality

- Spain= 11 Portugal = 33
- Albania = 61 Greece = 69
- Malta = 71 Italy = 78

➤ The Global Gender Gap report (2006) measures the size of the gender gap in four critical areas of inequality between men and women:

- **1. Economic participation and opportunity** – outcomes on salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment
- **2. Educational attainment** – outcomes on access to basic and higher level education
- **3. Political empowerment** – outcomes on representation in decision-making structures
- **4. Health and survival** – outcomes on general health and life expectancy

**4. Give special attention to children 'at-risk' in (and outside) early childhood services**

# The educational needs of young children at-risk

## Children 'at-risk' need:

- Improved **access** to services
- **Highly resourced services**: *equal is not enough*. Example: financing of children 'at risk' in the Netherlands, teacher bonuses, pedagogical resources...
- **Greater duration of early education**: early access ('first call' on services) in long-day, year long services
- **More effective pedagogy**, while respecting early education research and the child's natural learning strategies.

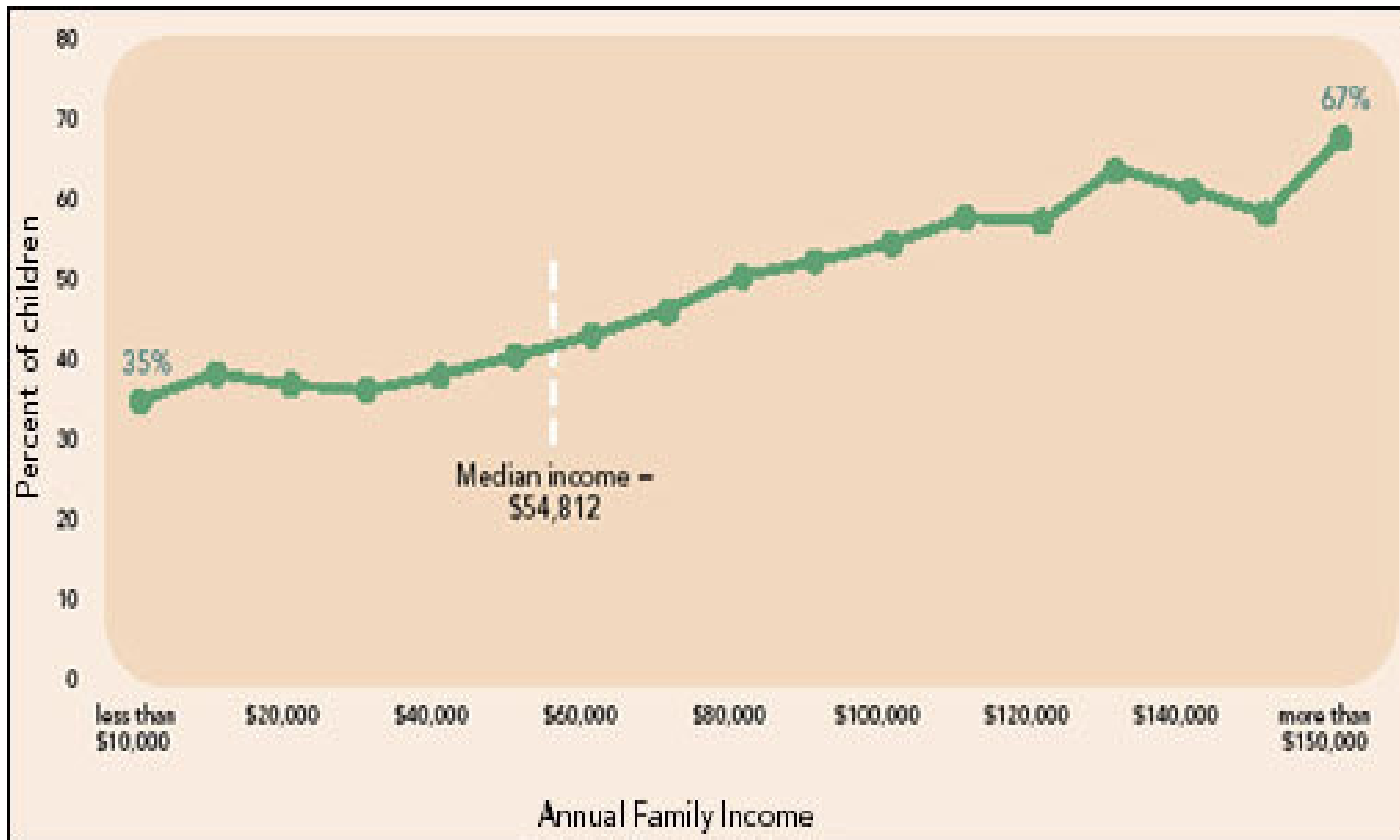
## What is the actual situation of children 'at-risk'?

Impressive access to early education in Belgium, yet...

### Analysis of access to child care

<b>Family background</b>	<b>Regular use</b>	<b>No use</b>
<b>All Flemish children</b>	<b>55.7%</b>	<b>34.2%</b>
<b>All ethnic background children</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>69.5%</b>
➤ <b>Children from 'at-risk' ethnic minority families</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>79.4%</b>

## Access to pre-K in the USA in relation to family income (Source: EPE Research Center, 2007)



## What can early intervention do?

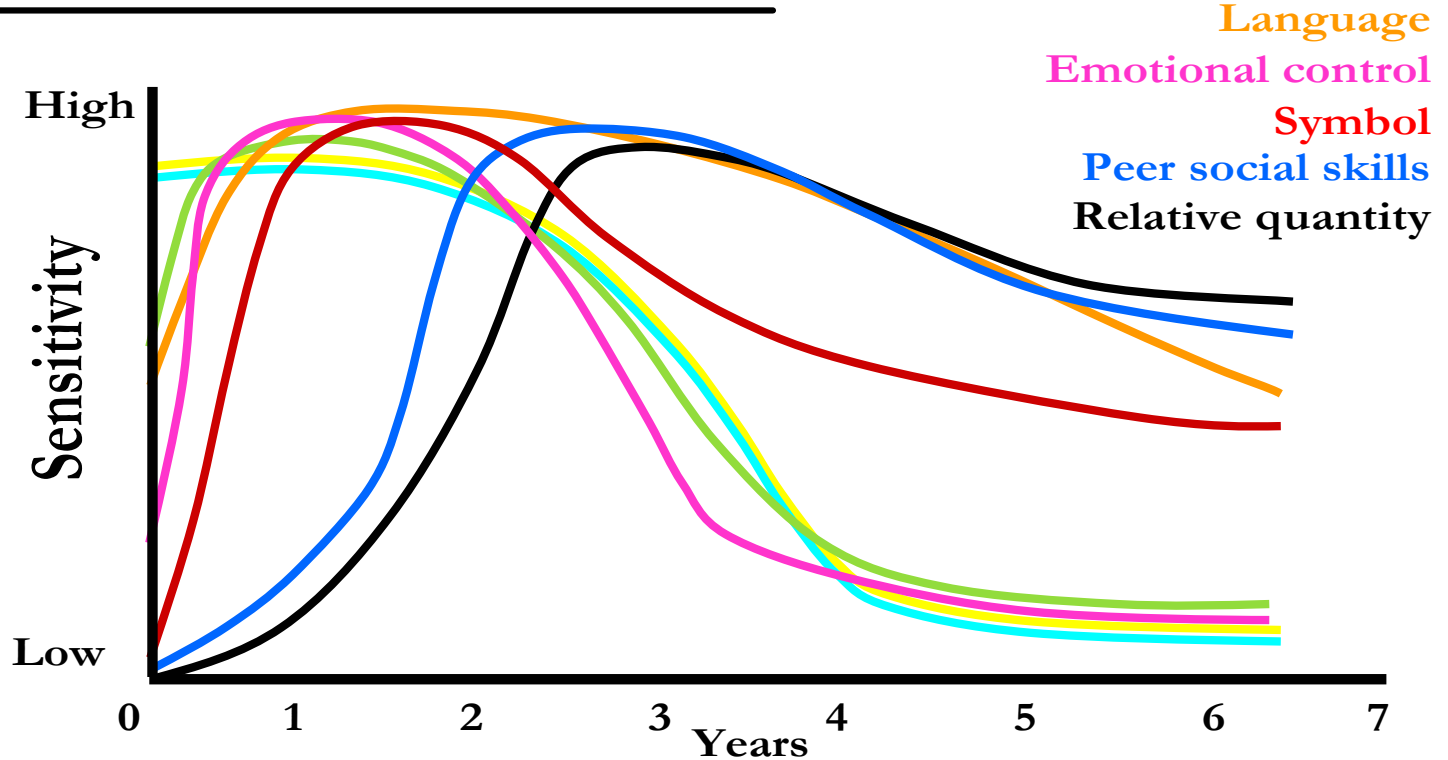
- **Cost-benefit research... James Heckman:** *The most cost-effective strategy for strengthening the future American workforce is to invest greater human and financial resources in the social and cognitive environments of children who are disadvantaged, beginning as early as possible (Heckman et al. PNAS, 2006).*
- **Among the benefits of participation in quality ECEC are:**
  - **Health and physical development are improved**
  - **Children learn routines and competencies useful for transition to school and stay in school longer**
  - **Better educational outcomes**
  - **A significant reduction in juvenile crime**
  - **A reduction in both adult crime and victim costs**

# **No more failure in schools**

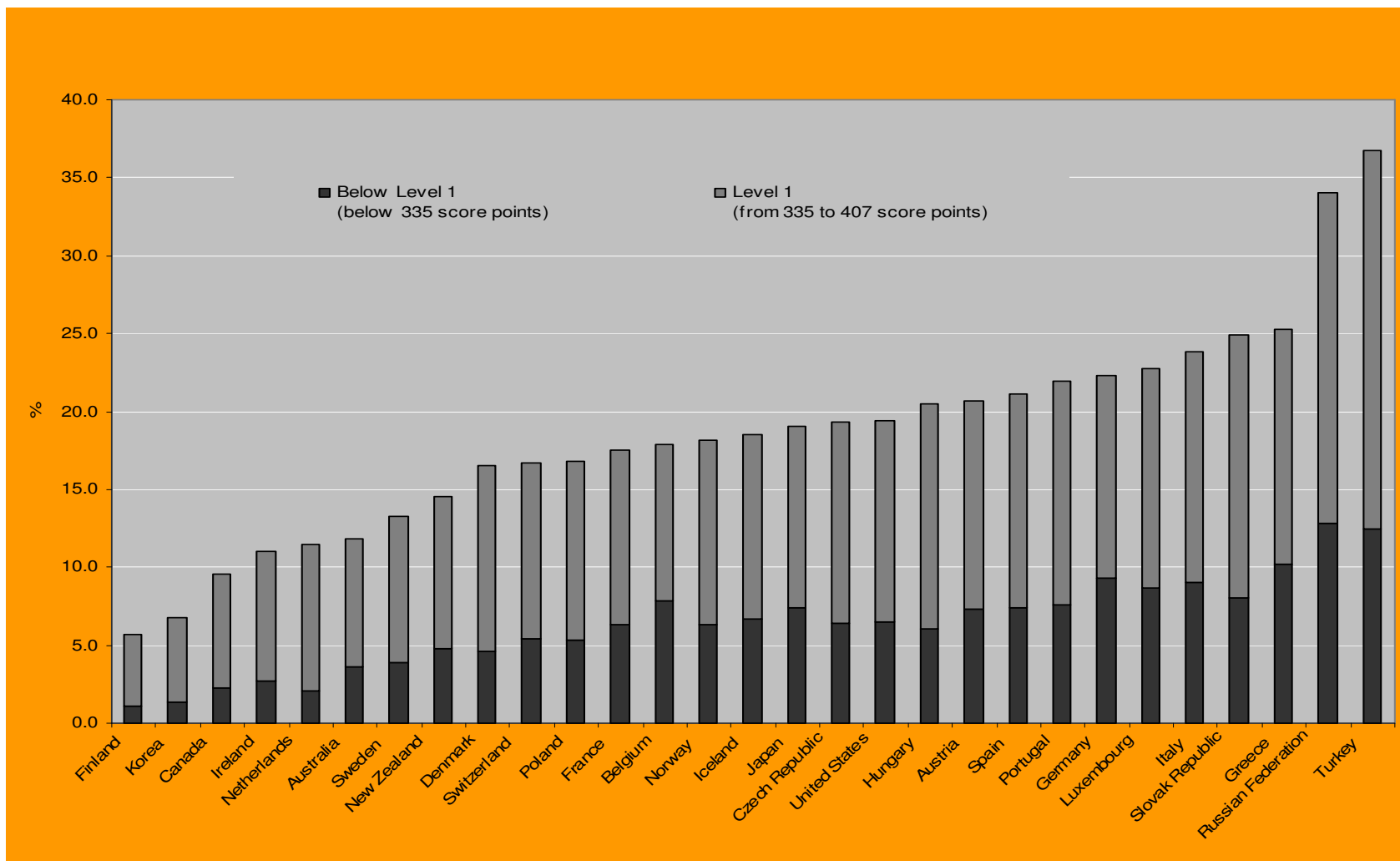
# The importance of the early years..

- Period from birth to 3 years is a privileged stage for brain development, physical and motor development, concept and language acquisition...

## ‘Sensitive periods’ in early brain development



# % of very poor readers at age 15



Source: OECD, 2006

**Help disadvantaged parents to help their children to learn, strengthening the links between school and home.**

➤ **Why?**

Parents role in education both crucial and a source of inequity.

➤ **Obstacles.**

The school gates

➤ **It can be done.**

After school homework clubs in many countries. Home school links in Sweden

Source: OECD, 2007 (Simon Field)

## Toward good practice...

### ➤ **Unsatisfactory school practices**

- **Traditional school pedagogical practices, e.g. teacher talking, large groups, little meaning-making or experiential learning**

### ➤ **And the good...**

- **The importance of many experiences, oral expression, and project work...**
  - *Prof. Kris Van den Branden, Centre for Language and Education,*
- **Finland and its PISA results**

# **A reflection: values and the economy**

# What should Europe do?

➤ **For discussion....**

**Thank you**