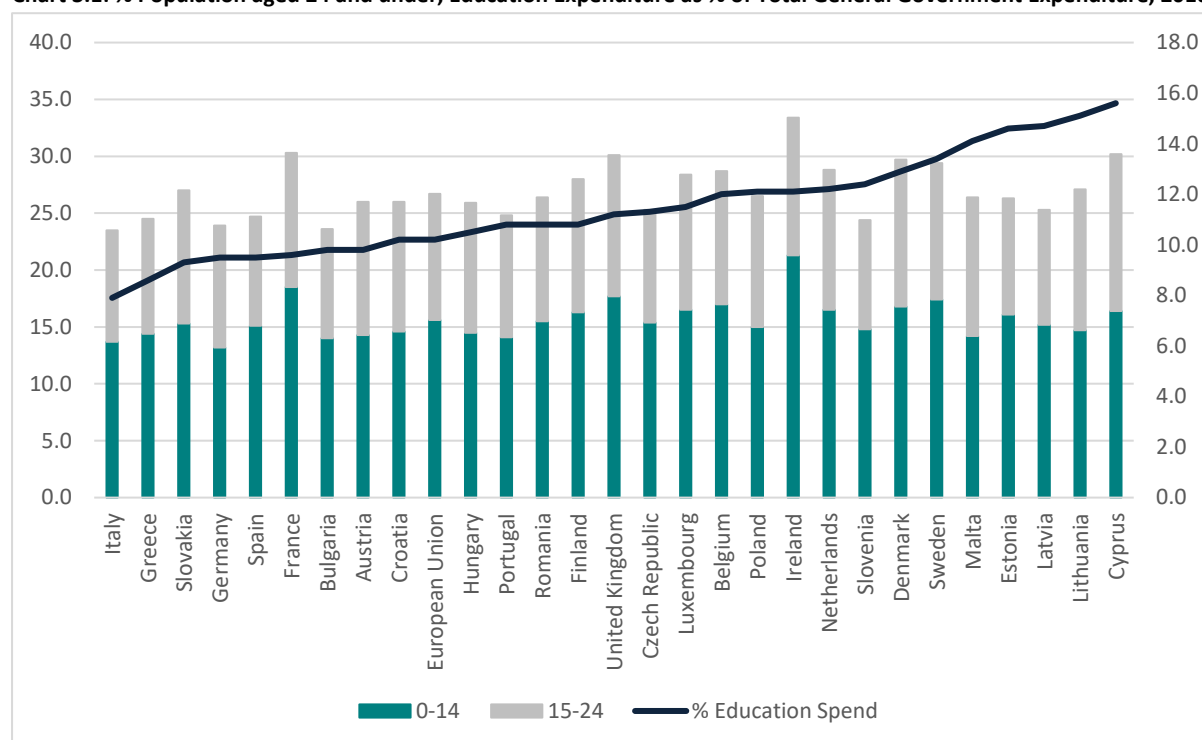


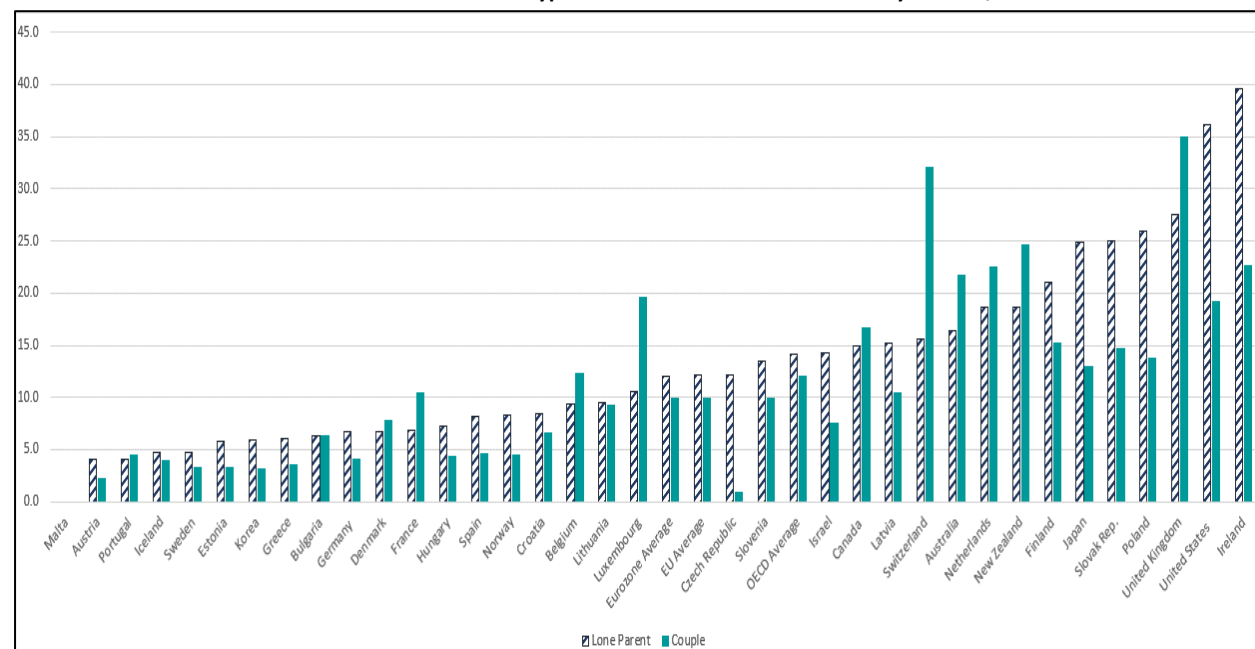
Education and Childcare

Chart 3.1: % Population aged 24 and under, Education Expenditure as % of Total General Government Expenditure, 2016



Source: Eurostat

Chart 3.2: Net Childcare Costs for full-time care at a typical childcare centre as % of Family Income, 2015*



Source: OECD, https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/Childcare_2015_EN_20170802.xlsx

*Full-time earnings = 100% of Average Earnings (LP) and 100% + 100% of Average Earnings (Couple)

Education and Childcare

Education



Access to quality education from a young age can have a transformative effect, particularly on children living in disadvantaged areas. The ESRI recently identified five barriers to social inclusion: belonging to a jobless household, being a lone parent, having a disability, being homeless or experiencing housing exclusion, and belonging to an ethnic minority. They reported that higher educational attainment is associated with a lower probability of social exclusion across all potential barriers.

The Government's commitment to the provision of quality education throughout the life-cycle is evidenced by how we compare to our European counterparts in terms of expenditure. Chart 3.1 shows that while Ireland has the highest proportion of people aged 0 to 24 in the EU28, our expenditure on Education ranks 10th as a percentage of total general government expenditure. Provision of quality education is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4). In his address to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Minister Naughten referenced Ireland's strengths in relation to education, however if we are to continue to maintain this strength, we must invest in it. Public investment is particularly lacking in the area of third level education where, according to the OECD, Ireland's expenditure on tertiary education was just 2.7% of public spending in 2014.

Given current trends towards globalisation, as well as technological advancements, a failure to invest in education, skills development, and lifelong learning could result in high levels of both vacant jobs and unemployment. The Final Report of the Independent Expert Panel (the Cassels Report) recommends a transparent model of funding providing clarity on where such

funding is channelled. It further recommends flexibility of funding allocation depending on student demand and discipline-based weightings in favour of institutions providing courses which are high-cost, such as STEM, in line with the Government's policy to build skills bases in these areas

Childcare



As can be seen in Chart 3.1, Ireland has the highest proportion of people aged 0-14 across the EU28. The provision of quality, affordable, accessible childcare for parents is essential, particularly for families who have moved away from their home base (towns and counties), and familial support structures, to take up employment. Childcare is also essential for those who are furthest from the labour market to gain the skills and confidence necessary to participate fully in society and to take advantage of employment and training opportunities.

High childcare costs present a barrier to employment, particularly among young women with children. Chart 3.2 shows that, as a proportion of average earnings, the cost of full-time care at a typical childcare centre is highest for lone parents in Ireland and accounts for almost 23% of the full-time earnings of a couple. Lack of community and affordable childcare presents a significant barrier to labour-market participation for low-income families, particularly women who may wish to return to employment following the birth of their children.

Policy Priorities

- Implement the funding provisions contained in the Strategy for Funding Higher Education.
- Increase the Community Childcare Subvention (Universal) Scheme for under 3s.