

Early Childhood Workforce Profiles

in 30 Countries

with

Key Contextual Data

Pamela Oberhuemer
and Inge Schreyer (eds.)

Munich 2018

ISBN 978-3-00-060262-7

Identical versions of the country-specific documents are available at:
www.seepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

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Foreword

Throughout Europe, the expansion and consolidation of national systems of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is ongoing. The workforce is a key component of these systems and the professional competence of pedagogical staff is viewed as an essential prerequisite for process quality in early childhood settings. At the same time, recent international analyses have indicated that approaches towards enhancing the individual competencies of staff need to be considered and located within the overall systemic context. This publication attempts to combine these two aspects by providing both a systematic description of the workforce in 30 countries and a synopsis of country-specific aspects of the ECEC system and relevant demographic data.

In recent years, reforms across countries have led to changes in the structures of initial qualifications and continuing professional development and also to a specification of competence requirements for working in the early childhood sector. In addition, demographic developments and the promotion of staff exchanges are leading to increasing mobility within the workforce in Europe.

In 2015, in the context of these trends, the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*) commissioned an update of the study "Systems of early education and professionalisation in Europe" (**SEEPRO**, lead researcher: Pamela Oberhuemer), which was conducted at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (*Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik*, IFP) in Munich and published in 2010. In the follow-up project **SEEPRO-R**, experts from all 28 EU countries as well as from Russia and Ukraine were invited by the project team to prepare detailed workforce profile reports.

This editorial volume presents the results of this updated and expanded project in 30 country chapters, each with two parts:

- **ECEC Workforce Profile** (country report) on the current status quo regarding the qualification requirements for early childhood education and care professionals (pedagogues, teachers, educators), the composition of the workforce, the systems of initial professional education and continuing professional development, current reform initiatives and research projects and selected aspects of the working conditions of staff. Building on a network of longstanding contacts in European universities, higher education institutions, research institutes and policy institutions, cooperation partners were recruited through international collegial networks. The initial reports were drafted according to a research specification which the cooperation partners received for comment before compilation of the data. The final versions are based on a long period of close collaboration between the editors and the authors.

- **Key Contextual Data** – a synopsis of the main features of the ECEC system and relevant demographic data. These synopses were compiled by the project team (with the exception of the contextual data for the Russian Federation) and reviewed by our cooperation partners in the 30 participating countries. Main data sources were international reports and European and national statistical sites, using a triangulation approach for cross-checking data.

This publication appears in English and in German, thus providing a resource for a wide audience of early childhood teacher educators in higher and vocational education, national and local government administrations, employers/service providers in the ECEC field, researchers, early years practitioners and other interested persons.

As chapters of this editorial volume, the country-specific documents are cited with the release date of the present publication (2018). However, they were finalised in 2017 and are identical to the individual online documents which can be accessed under www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm.

Pamela Oberhuemer, Inge Schreyer

Munich, July 2017

Cooperation partners

Austria	Marisa Krenn-Wache , BAFEP, College for Early Childhood Pedagogues, Klagenfurt
Belgium	Jan Peeters , VBJK Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, Ghent Florence Pirard , University of Liège and colleagues
Bulgaria	Rozalina Engels-Kritidis , University St. Kliment Ohridski, Sofia
Croatia	Dejana Bouillet , University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education
Cyprus	Eleni Loizou , University of Cyprus
Czech Republic	Barbora Loudová Stralczynská , Charles University, Faculty of Education, Prague
Denmark	Jytte Juul Jensen , <i>formerly</i> VIA University College Aarhus
Germany	Pamela Oberhuemer , Inge Schreyer , State Institute of Early Childhood Research, Munich <i>Current challenges:</i> Sigrid Ebert (<i>workforce</i>), <i>formerly</i> Fachschulstudiendirektorin, Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus, Berlin Detlef Diskowski (<i>ECEC system</i>), <i>formerly</i> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Brandenburg
Estonia	Marika Veisson , University of Tallinn
Finland	Eeva-Leena Onnismaa , University of Helsinki
France	Sylvie Rayna , EXPÉRICE – University of Paris 13 Sorbonne, Paris City
Greece	Elsie Doliopoulou , Aristoteles University, Thessaloniki
Ireland	Maresa Duignan , Department of Education and Skills, Dublin
Italy	Chiara Bove , Silvia Cescato , University of Milan-Bicocca
Latvia	Inese Šūpule , Iveta Bebriša , Lelde Jansone , Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, Riga
Lithuania	Hanna Siarova , Darius Buinauskas , Public Policy and Management Institute, Vilnius
Luxembourg	Michael-Sebastian Honig , University of Luxembourg Tina Bock , Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse (Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth), Luxembourg
Malta	Valerie Sollars , University of Malta
Netherlands	Ruben Fukkink , University of Amsterdam/Amsterdam Univ. of Applied Sciences <i>Current challenges (ECEC system):</i> Elly Singer , <i>formerly</i> Utrecht University, Department of Developmental Psychology
Poland	Malgorzata Żytka , Marta Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo , University of Warsaw, Faculty of Education
Portugal	Sara Barros Araújo , School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Porto
Romania	Laura Elena Ciolan , Romita Iucu , Anca Petrescu , Cristian Bucur , University of Bucharest
Russian Federation	Tatiana Volkova , Institute for Developmental Physiology, Russian Academy of Education, Moscow
Sweden	Maelis Karlsson Lohmander , University of Gothenburg, Department of Education, Communication and Learning

Slovak Republic	Zita Baďuríková , formerly Comenius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Bratislava Ludmila Šimčáková , formerly Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education, Bratislava Zuzana Pérez Renčíková , Comenius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Bratislava
Slovenia	Tatjana Vonta , formerly Educational Research Institute, Ljubljana Jerneja Jager , Educational Research Institute, Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education, Ljubljana
Spain	Ana Acheta Arrabal , University of Valencia, Department of Comparative Education and History of Education
Sweden	Maelis Karlsson Lohmander , University of Gothenburg, Department of Education, Communication and Learning
Ukraine	Natalia Sofiy , Ukrainian Step by Step Office, Kyiv Nickolas Kushnaruk , Project Manager, Kyiv
Hungary	Marta Korintus , formerly Institute for Family, Youth and Population Policy, Budapest
United Kingdom	Denise Hevey , University of Northampton, School of Education <i>Current challenges (ECEC system):</i> Liz Brooker , formerly University College London Institute of Education



AUSTRIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Marisa Krenn Wache

Vocational College for Early Childhood Pedagogues, Klagenfurt

Citation suggestion:

Krenn-Wache, M. 2018. "Austria – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 8-27.

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1. ECEC governance

The Republic of Austria is a federal republic and each of the nine autonomous states or provinces is responsible for legislation and implementation relating both to early childhood education and care for 0- to 6-year olds, organised in age-integrated (0-6) or age-separated (0-3, 3-6) settings, as well as to outside-school-hours provision for school-age children.

Within the framework of these federal structures, responsibility for early childhood education and care is located at three different levels: federal government, regional state governments and municipalities. At the *federal level* the Federal Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs is responsible for legislation regarding child and youth welfare services, including family day care, and for state subsidies for families and child care. The Federal Ministry for Education is responsible for the professional education/training of specialist pedagogical staff and for specifying the curricular content of early childhood education institutions. The *regional state governments* issue their own legislation and are responsible for the implementation of the framework regulations and for supporting the municipalities in the building of early childhood and out-of-school provision. The *municipalities* are responsible for establishing, maintaining and operating kindergartens and infant-toddler centres (Eurydice 2016).

Since September 2010, all children who have reached their fifth birthday by 31st August are obliged to attend a centre-based ECEC setting for at least 16 to 20 hours per week from September until June, excluding school holidays.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Regulations across the country stipulate that one core practitioner with a formal qualification as a Kindergarten Pedagogue should be assigned to each group of children. This professional qualification (see also *Section 3.1*) can be acquired at one of the 29 vocational colleges (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen*) or through a nationally regulated post-secondary course affiliated to one of the colleges. Following the renaming from 'College for Kindergarten Pedagogues' to 'College for Early Childhood Pedagogues', the terms early childhood pedagogy (*Elementarpädagogik*) and Early Childhood Pedagogue (*Elementarpädagogin*) are increasingly in everyday use.

Depending on the federal state, a Pedagogical Assistant may also be required to work in the kindergarten group on a half-time basis (one person for two groups) or in a full-day position.

According to the European Union Directive 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2016a), the two final years (4th and 5th grades) of higher vocational schools/colleges and also the two-year post-secondary *Kolleg* courses in early childhood pedagogy are recognised as short-cycle tertiary education and thus classified at ISCED (2011) level 5.

Table 1 provides a summary of the staff who work on a regular basis with children in centre-based settings. The core practitioners (i.e. persons with group or centre responsibility) are additionally categorised according to one of five professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at the end of this section).

Table 1

Austria: Staff in centre-based ECEC settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
<p><i>Kindergartenpädagogin / Elementarpädagogin</i> Kindergarten Pedagogue / Early Childhood Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	All forms of ECEC settings 1 to 6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1–6 years	5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy (<i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik - BAfEP</i>) <i>Awards:</i> University entrance requirement and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy or School leaving certificate (university entrance requirement) plus 2 years post-secondary professional course at a college (<i>Kolleg</i>) for early childhood pedagogy <i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
<p><i>Kindergarten- und Hortpädagogin</i> Kindergarten and After-School (Hort) Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	All kinds of ECEC settings and after-school provision (<i>Horte</i>) for school-age children 1–14 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1–14 years	5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy with a supplementary qualification in after-school (<i>Hort</i>) pedagogy or 5 years vocational college specialising in social pedagogy <i>Awards:</i> University entrance requirement and occupational certificate in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> pedagogy or General university entrance requirement and occupational certificate in social pedagogy or 2 years post-secondary professional course at <i>Kolleg</i> specialising in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> pedagogy or Vocational college specialising in social pedagogy <i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> peda-

¹ UNESCO 2012, 2014.² n/a = not applicable.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
				gogy, or occupational certificate in social pedagogy ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
<i>Sonderkindergartenpädagogin und Frühförderungsfachkraft</i> Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogue and Early Intervention Specialist <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (with specialism in special needs pedagogy)	All forms of ECEC settings 1–6 years Special needs education settings 1–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Individual work with children	1–6 years	4 semesters post-secondary professional course for 'Inclusive Early Childhood Pedagogy' at a vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy <i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate for inclusive early childhood pedagogy ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
As from 2018: <i>Pädagogische Assistentin</i> Pedagogical Assistant	All forms of ECEC settings 1–6 years	Supporting the core practitioner	1–6 years	3 years intermediate vocational school Since this qualification has not yet been implemented there is as yet no official ISCED classification. However, following similar kinds of vocational education/training, a classification in the ISCED 3 category is expected.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhumer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of the ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

In 2013/14, a total of 53,520 persons were employed in childcare settings. 30,224 persons (56.5%) were in possession of a specialist qualification (mostly Kindergarten and *Hort* Peda-

gogues or early childhood educators. The annual data compilation does not differentiate between those with a 5-year education/training and those with a 2-year post-secondary qualification in early childhood pedagogy. In both cases, the qualification award is classified at ISCED level 5 (see *Section 2.1*). 23,296 persons (43.5%) did not possess a relevant qualification; 3,526 persons (11.6% of core practitioners) had acquired a supplementary qualification (Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogues and therapeutic specialists); 1,056 persons (2% of the workforce) are males. The data on male staff in the statistics on childcare provision are not collated according to the specific area of work (e.g. kindergarten, infant-toddler centre). There are no validated data available for persons with a background of migration.

Table 2

Austria: Structural composition of the workforce in ECEC centres, 2014

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce overall
Staff with a relevant higher education degree	No national data available
Staff with a relevant post-secondary (short-cycle tertiary) qualification <i>including: Staff with supplementary qualification and specialist support staff</i>	56.5%
Staff with other, non-specialist or low-level qualification (Pedagogical Assistants, Helpers/Cleaners...)	43.5%
Male staff (no differentiation according to qualification)	2%
Staff with a migration background	No national data available

Source: Statistik Austria 2014 and own calculations.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

The qualification for core practitioners in ECEC settings in Austria is regulated nationwide through federal-level legislation in the 'Federal Law on the Employment Requirements for Kindergarten Personnel' (Bundeskazleramt Österreich 2016, BGBl. 406/1968). This specifies the specific entry requirements and qualification award for initial professional studies taking place at *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik*, BAKiP) according to a nationwide common curriculum. In 2016, during the course of legislation reforming the organisation of the education system and the curricular framework for IPS, these institutions were renamed *Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik*, BAfEP ('Educational institutions for early childhood pedagogy') (Bundeskazleramt Österreich 2017b, BGBl. II Nr. 204/2016 v. 27.7.2016).

At the end of the eighth grade in school, pupils in Austria can choose between two continuing school pathways: either the general upper secondary education track (AHS/Gymnasium) or the vocational upper secondary track; this is where the vocational colleges³ for early childhood pedagogy are located.

Initial professional studies for core practitioners working in infant-toddler centres, kindergartens, after-school provision and in settings for children with special educational needs is the exclusive responsibility of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy.

The current reform does not demand a structural change in the required qualification level for entry into the profession; it is the result on the one hand of political demands for a more specific focus on working with children below the age of 3 years within the BAfEP-IPS curriculum for kindergarten pedagogues, and on the other hand of European developments requiring compe-

³ Note by the translator: Strictly speaking, the term in German is 'vocational school'. However, in the international context this can be misleading and we have therefore chosen the term 'vocational college' for *Bildungsanstalt*.

tency and outcomes oriented curricula. Both aspects influenced the revision of the IPS curriculum.

Altogether there are 29 vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy across the country. These are either public institutions (16) or privately run (13), the latter predominantly organised by the Catholic Church. All vocational colleges work according to the same federal-level *BAfEP-IPS* syllabus.

The general entry requirement for attending an upper secondary school/college is successful completion of the 8th school grade. Studies at this type of school are of five years' duration and conclude with the double qualification of university entrance certificate and occupational certificate. The qualification award provides both the chance of entering a higher education study programme or of practising one of the regulated professions immediately on completion of IPS.

For admission to the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy a so-called 'aptitude test' is also required. Basic aptitude is examined both for initial professional studies and the occupation in the areas of 'musical potential, creative abilities, physical robustness and communicative ability'.

The EU Directive 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications (issued in January 2014) has had an interesting influence on the upper secondary schools in Austria. According to the 2011 ISCED classifications, the 4th and 5th grades (i.e. the two final grades in the vocational colleges/schools) are now placed at ISCED level 5 (*short-cycle tertiary education*). This level is conceptualised for a wide range of post-secondary qualifications which provide the award holders with professional knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in the context of a practical and occupation oriented approach. According to Article 13 of the Directive, Austrian vocational college awards will now be recognised in those European Union member states which plan to have an IPS model for the relevant occupation at level 'e' (post-secondary education/training of at least 4 years' duration) (Europäisches Parlament und Rat der Europäischen Union 2013).

Table 3

Austria: Kindergartenpädagogin / Elementarpädagogin

Title in German: Kindergartenpädagogin/Elementarpädagogin Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p><i>Route 1:</i> Entry requirements: Successful completion of the 8th school grade plus aptitude test (music, creativity, sport, communication) Professional studies: 5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy Awards: School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy) ECTS points: n/a EQF/NQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 Main workplaces: All ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i> Entry requirements: Successfully completed upper secondary school-leaving examination or an entrance examination or occupational examination and an aptitude test Professional studies: 2 years (part-time: max. 3 years) post-secondary professional studies (<i>Kolleg</i> specialising in early childhood pedagogy) Awards: Occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy ECTS points: n/a EQF/NQF Level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 Main workplaces: All ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds</p>

Table 4

Austria: Kindergarten and Hort Pedagogue

Title in German: Kindergarten- und Hortpädagogin Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: Successful completion of the 8th school grade <i>plus</i> successfully passed aptitude test (music, creativity, sport, communication) Professional studies: 5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy with a supplementary qualification in after-school (<i>Hort</i>) pedagogy Awards: School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood and after-school pedagogy ECTS points: n/a EQF/NQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 Main workplaces: all ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds; after-school provision for school-age children (6-14 years)

Table 5

Austria: Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogue and Early Intervention Specialist

Title in German: Sonderkindergartenpädagogin und Frühförderungsfachkraft Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (with specialism in special needs pedagogy)
Entry requirements: School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy Professional studies: 4 semesters (part-time: 6 semesters) post-secondary professional studies in inclusive early childhood pedagogy at a vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy Awards: Occupational certificate in inclusive early childhood pedagogy and early intervention ECTS points: n/a EQF/NQF Level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 Main workplaces: all ECEC settings and special needs settings for 1- to 6-year olds

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Following a recent amendment to the Schools Education Act (Bundeskanzleramt 2017a, BGBl. I Nr. 117/2008), ‘educational standards’ (i.e. specified learning outcomes relating to the curricular content at each level of the education system) were adopted in schools legislation in Austria. For vocational schools field-oriented and practical learning is foregrounded, where knowledge acquisition and cognitive abilities/skills are related to real-life contexts and occupational worlds. Educational standards in Austria are formulated as norm standards (intermediate level) and differentiate between general and professional competencies (BIFIE 2017a).

According to the Federal Law Gazette II Nr. 204/2016 from 27.07.2016 (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2017b), the updated curriculum for the vocational colleges specialising in early childhood pedagogy (which came into force in September 2016) allows for two basic competence profiles: (1) the qualification as Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogue (children aged 1–6 years) and (2) as an option after completion of the 3rd grade of the vocational college course, the supplementary qualification as *Hort* Pedagogue (children aged 1–14 years). An additional option for specialising in work with under 3-year olds which was added to the curriculum in 2004 has now been replaced by mandatory college-based and field-based course units with a focus on early childhood education and care for under 3-year olds.

Kindergarten Pedagogue – Hort Pedagogue

Competencies: According to §2 of the Schools Organisation Act (SchOG), vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy have “the task of transmitting to pupils the necessary professional attitude and the related professional knowledge and professional ability required to carry out upbringing and educational tasks in kindergartens as early childhood pedagogy institutions for children from the first year of life up to school entry and to guide them to university entrance qualifications. In accordance with §78, para.1, pupils may also be qualified to work as educators in after-school childcare provision (*Horte*)“ (Bundeskanzleramt 2017a).

The curriculum comprises a comprehensive catalogue of competencies; accordingly, it is expected that initial professional studies convey general, occupation-related, social and personal competencies such as the following:

“Certificate holders are in a position to:

- address the question of the meaning of life and to deal with ethical and social values as well as with the religious dimension,
- be sensitive and open towards philosophical, existential and religious questions, particularly those of the children (and young people) in their care,
- act in a socially responsible, respectful and appreciative manner,
- handle culturally, gender and diversity relevant aspects of upbringing and education sensitively,
- be ready for innovations, flexibility and mobility,
- apply a broad spectrum of communication forms (verbal and non-verbal),
- guide and supervise working and learning contexts in which non-predictable situations occur,
- examine and further develop both their own abilities and those of other persons, particularly of the children (and young people) in their care,
- communicate correctly in speaking and writing both in the language of instruction and in everyday life and, according to the requirements of the situation, also in a foreign language,
- participate in creating culture and in cultural life,
- analyse everyday and professional issues with the help of mathematical procedures, retrieve data and present them in a systematic way; acquire, interpret and present findings with the use of contemporary computer-based information technology,
- address in a critical manner current and relevant societal issues on the basis of a thorough knowledge in the areas of science, technology and entrepreneurship education, as well as knowledge in the arts and social science disciplines,
- review political processes at the national, European and international levels and be sensitive for democratic processes and peaceful cohabitation under consideration of interculturality and diversity, the environment and ecological sustainability, ,
- use their comprehensive and networked (pedagogical) knowledge in a reflective way in the context of practical experiences in their work and in their personal life situation,
- implement their knowledge of occupation-related legislation, particularly in the areas of safety, liability, hygiene, equipment, first aid, traffic education and (sexual) violence, in a manner appropriate to the situation,
- handle conflicts in a problem-solving and self-controlled way and avoid violence,
- act in a self-critical and cooperative way in teamwork,
- implement lifelong learning as an immanent component of their own life and career planning and promote appropriate attitudes and competencies in the children and young people under their guidance,
- handle physical and health-related aspects of education and upbringing in a sensitive way,
- handle the area of tension between normative standards and the individual development of learners,
- base their actions on the foundations of ‘scientific evidence’ and ‘reflective tacit knowledge’,
- plan educational processes appropriately on the basis of an inclusive attitude towards children’s individual developmental needs,

- implement a diverse repertoire of situation-appropriate didactic approaches which include various ways of working, communication and presentation,
- initiate situation-appropriate educational partnerships in their professional work and use them in a responsible way,
- assess and select centre-based childcare settings under consideration of ecological and economical aspects, using modern technological media and methods of quality management (quality development and quality assurance)“ (Bundeskanzleramt 2017b, BGBl. Nr. 204/2016, appendix 1, 4).

Curricular areas and pedagogic-didactic approaches: The curriculum subjects ‘pedagogy’, ‘didactics’ and ‘practice’ are the main occupation-related subjects through which the core competencies needed for independent and autonomous professional work are transmitted. The curriculum is conceptualised as a spiral model of learning, during which core content is handled and repeated during the five years of initial professional studies in increasing detail and growing complexity.

A particular characteristic of the Austrian approach to IPS for work in ECEC settings is the emphasis placed on the creative arts and on movement education. Subject teaching in ‘visual arts education’, ‘handicraft education’, ‘textile design’, ‘music education’, ‘voice training and elocution’ and ‘playing the guitar’ (or piano), ‘rhythm and music education’ and ‘movement education’ takes place throughout the five years and includes both general and occupation-related content and competencies.

Beyond these occupation-related areas, general subjects required for completion of the school-leaving examination (university entrance qualification) are also included, such as ‘German’, ‘English’, ‘history, social and political studies’, ‘geography and economics’, ‘applied mathematics’, ‘physics’, ‘chemistry’, ‘biology and ecology’.

Didactic principles specified in the curriculum include learning outcome orientation, systematic and networked competence building, cooperation and coordination between all tutors in a specific grade in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of the teaching process as a requirement for interdisciplinary thinking and understanding, maintaining an optimal transfer between theory and practice and connecting the content with the real-life situations of the learners.

It is difficult to weight the various curricular areas since, for example, the creative arts and movement education include both general education and occupation-related content. Also, subjects such as German (e.g. including children’s literature), English (e.g. including specialist terminology) and mathematics (e.g. with examples related to the occupational field) contribute to the professional goals of the IPS programme.

Table 6

Austria: Initial professional studies curriculum - programme for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues (estimated weightings*)

Distribution of main curricular areas in the IPS programme at a vocational college for early childhood pedagogy (<i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik</i>) 5-year programme (without supplementary course for prospective <i>Hort</i> Pedagogues)	Proportion of total hours
General education studies (excluding religion) German (including elocution, children’s literature) English History, social studies, political education Geography and economics Applied mathematics Physics Chemistry Biology and ecology (including physiological foundations, health, nutrition) Applied sciences Nutrition with hands-on practice Basics of computer science	40 %

Distribution of main curricular areas in the IPS programme at a vocational college for early childhood pedagogy (<i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik</i>) 5-year programme (without supplementary course for prospective <i>Hort</i> Pedagogues)	Proportion of total hours
Theoretical and field-based studies Pedagogy (including psychology and philosophy) Inclusive pedagogy Didactics Practice (15%) Organisation, management and legislation (including scientific work) Communication practice and group dynamics	33 %
Creative arts and sport Visual arts education Handicraft education Textile design Music education, voice training, elocution Instrumental studies Music and movement Movement education and sport	27 %

*own calculations

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

A further route for entry into the profession and one that is becoming increasingly popular is the qualification pathway at one of the 20 Colleges (*Kolleg*) for Early Childhood Pedagogy across the country. These colleges are usually established in one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. An updating of the syllabus and change of name took place in 2017.

The post-secondary programme of studies at a *Kolleg* takes four semesters to complete; a part-time option is also available over an extended period of six semesters. It ends with an occupational certificate award which provides the same professional entitlements as the vocational college award.

Qualified Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues have the possibility of enrolling at one of the 'Courses in inclusive early childhood pedagogy' which are offered in seven locations in Austria as a specialisation for working with young children (0-6 years) with special educational needs. These courses take four semesters to complete (or six semesters on a part-time basis) and can also be established at one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. The course ends with a diploma award in inclusive early childhood pedagogy. A reform of the curriculum is currently expected.

Arising from the acute staff shortages in some regions of the country (particularly in Vienna), four vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy are to offer as a pilot model a three-year course for prospective **Pedagogical Assistants** for supporting the work of core practitioners. It is intended to integrate these qualification pathways into the regular school system as 'Vocational Schools for Pedagogical Assistants'. A three-year follow-up course is also planned which will open up the possibility of gaining a general university entrance qualification and the occupational award in early childhood pedagogy. Entry requirements are successful completion of the 8th school grade and of an aptitude test.

The professional field of early childhood pedagogy offers few possibilities for career progression. A qualified Kindergarten Pedagogue may take on a post as Centre Head without any additional formal qualification, although in all federal provinces relevant CPD courses are offered which prospective lead staff are expected to attend. Being accepted for a post at one of the 'seminar kindergartens' attached to all vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy is considered to be a promotion. Seminar kindergartens are a legally defined component of the *Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik* and are operated according to college hours. Their main function is to provide a workplace setting for Early Childhood Pedagogue trainees.

There are few 'lateral entrants' into the early childhood field. Most are qualified pedagogical staff who previously worked in after-school settings. For other cases, it is in principle possible to qualify through examinations for external candidates at one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. However, since the amount of supervision needed to support such individual external candidates is very high, very few vocational colleges provide this option.

3.4 Current reforms, trends and debates

Raising the formal level of IPS for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues to a higher education degree has been an ongoing focus of professional and political debates for several years now. However, in the context of the recently implemented reform of the IPS for teachers of all school types, early childhood pedagogy was unfortunately excluded. Despite this, a number of initiatives have been launched by individual universities and higher education institutions; however, with one exception, these do not confer a professional qualification. According to the federal constitution, this continues to be the responsibility of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy.

Examples of higher education developments in Austria

Coblenz University of Applied Sciences: The only IPS programme at higher education level for Early Childhood Pedagogues has been implemented by KIWI (Children in Vienna, a private providers of ECEC and after-school settings) in cooperation with Coblenz University of Applied Sciences (in Germany) in the form of a dual distance learning study programme. A mandatory requirement for acceptance to this study programme is having a post in an ECEC setting. These posts are provided by KIWI, which is thus qualifying its own personnel.

Duration: 7 semesters, 210 ECTS points; *Award:* Bachelor of Arts in Education and Upbringing and – for Germany – State-recognised Social Pedagogue B.A. (Hochschule Koblenz 2017a, 2017b).

University of Salzburg: University study programme in early childhood pedagogy

Duration: 6 semesters, 120 ECTS points; *Award:* Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education (St. Virgil Salzburg 2017).

University of Applied Sciences - Campus Vienna: Part-time Bachelor's degree course for qualified Kindergarten Pedagogues with work experience and experience as a Centre Head; focus on an advanced qualification for leadership posts

Duration: 6 semesters, 180 ECTS points; *Award:* Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences (BA) (FH Campus Wien 2017).

Further developments and initiatives towards an academisation of initial professional studies for educational work with 0- to 6-year olds are the establishment of academic expert groups and of specialist chairs at individual universities:

Early Childhood Pedagogy Section in the ÖFEB: The 'Austrian Society for Research and Development in Education' (*Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen*, ÖFEB) is a non-partisan, nationwide and non-profit association for research, development and teaching in the educational sciences. In 2012, the most recent Section to be established was the 'Early Childhood Pedagogy Section'; membership numbers have increased within a period of four years from 22 to 106 (ÖFEB 2016).

Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy at the University of Graz: The first Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy in Austria was established in 2010 at the University of Graz (Institut für Erziehungs- und Bildungswissenschaft 2017).

Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy at the University of Innsbruck: In 2013, an Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy was established at the University of Innsbruck in cooperation with the University of Education in Bregenz (Universität Innsbruck 2017).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based learning in ECEC settings is an integrative component of the *BAfEP*-IPS for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues. The length and focus of field-based practice are specified in the federal-level curriculum and are therefore mandatory across the country. They make up 15% of the entire programme of studies.

In accordance with the curriculum syllabus, workplace-based learning takes place throughout the five years of basic education/training, with the level of demand increasing each year. According to the Europass guidance⁴, this component accounts for 490 hours plus an additional eight weeks of practical experience. The field-based hours take place either on a specified day of the week or as a block period. The eight weekly block periods are distributed across the five-year course of studies.

Competence specifications are set out in the federal-level syllabus for each of the five years. Trainees are prepared for the demands of workplace-based learning during specific practice-oriented curriculum units. The vocational colleges formulate the requirements as concrete work tasks which the trainees are expected to prepare and evaluate in written assignments. The ECEC settings are informed about these requirements and are expected to support the trainees in acquiring the specified competencies. Tutors from the vocational colleges visit and advise trainees in the workplace location. They thus have direct contact and exchange of information with the mentoring staff in the ECEC settings who contribute to the assessment of the trainees.

Box 2

Details on the length of practicum periods in the Europass guidance (adapted)

Kindergarten and Hort pedagogy: approx. 490 hours of day-long practicum periods in kindergartens and approx. 140 hours of day-long practica in after-school settings (*Horte*) plus an additional eight week-long practicum periods.

Kindergarten pedagogy with earliest years (*Früherziehung*) supplement: approx. 490 hours of day-long practicum periods in kindergartens, approx. 100 hours of day-long practica in settings for under 3-year olds plus an additional eight week-long practicum.

College (*Kolleg*) for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogy: approx. 360 hours of day-long practica plus an additional seven week-long practicum.

Course in inclusive education and early intervention: beyond the 240 hours of mandatory day-long practica, eight week-long practicum periods totalling 240 hours throughout the course.

Competence areas are set out for each subject in the curriculum for vocational colleges in early childhood pedagogy. Step by step these are expected to lead to the competencies needed to work independently after completion of the *BAfEP*-IPS programme.

For the subject area 'Practice', the competence specifications are described as, e.g.:

- Orientation towards values and norms,
- Self-management and professional socialisation,
- Communication and language,
- Organisation of developmental and educational processes.

⁴ Europass is a free service provided by the EU which presents the acquired competencies in five documents (CV, Language Passport, Mobility, Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement) in a uniform way (Europass Österreich 2017).

Individual assessment sheets are developed by the *BAfEP* institutions in alignment with the specific requirements of the curriculum. These are completed by the mentoring staff responsible for the trainees and, together with their personal notes, form the basis of the assessment of the trainee.

Unlike the situation of trainee mentoring in the field of primary education, no specific qualification is required in the case of personnel who support prospective Early Childhood and *Hort* Pedagogues in ECEC and after-school settings. However, depending on the region, many core practitioners do possess a mentoring qualification. Courses in mentoring are offered by the Universities of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) which qualify for the guidance of trainee teachers during their school practicum, and Kindergarten Pedagogues may also attend these courses. Through a mixed-methods approach of knowledge transmission, analysis and reflection, work shadowing and practical sessions as well as work on case studies from the student's own field of practice, the aim is to build a reflexive and inquiry-based attitude towards one's own educational work and the mentoring of trainees.

Tutors who teach didactics and support the trainees during their practica are qualified Kindergarten or *Hort* Pedagogues with work experience. As preparation for this tutoring role, a specific course is provided by the Ministry of Education which is concluded with an in-service qualifying examination. Since workplace-based learning and the related guidance of trainees is part of the initial professional studies programme, this post is firmly anchored in the staffing contingent of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy and is remunerated.

Supporting the trainees in ECEC settings and after-school provision takes place within the regular working hours of the staff with this responsibility. The IPS institution which allocates the trainees remunerates the staff members with a mentoring role.

5. Continuing professional development

The requirements and provision of continuing professional development activities and programmes vary considerably in the legislation of the nine federal states and range from 20 hours (two or three days) of mandatory CPD during working hours up to a maximum of five days during the holiday period. Requirements for support staff (assistants) are regulated individually by their employer.

There are no uniform regulations for covering the costs of participation in CPD. However, numerous course offers are made by regional state CPD centres which are either free of charge or require only a very small enrolment fee. The main providers of CPD are, for example, the CPD centres in the states of Carinthia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria and Tyrol, which coordinate closely and have written a joint working paper on aspects of quality in CPD; they also provide a considerable amount of information online (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Fort- und Weiterbildungsstellen der Länder* 2013).

Since September 2016, a resolution passed by the **Tyrol** regional government assigned the 'Tyrol University of Education' (*Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol*) the responsibility of providing and organising continuing professional development activities for Early Childhood Pedagogues and Pedagogical Assistants in early childhood education settings (*Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol* 2017).

The state of **Upper Austria** has established a comprehensive online platform for information and CPD for the early childhood sector (*Land Oberösterreich* 2017).

A large private provider agency in **Vienna** (*KIWI - Kinder in Wien*) offers a comprehensive CPD programme for its employees (*Kinder in Wien* 2017).

Regulations about the requirements and recognition of CPD participation vary both at the regional government level and the provider level. In most regions, CPD participation is granted for between three and four days per year and is considered to be part of regular working hours. There are considerable variations at the regional government level in terms of recognition of CPD course participation, for example when applying for a post of responsibility.

Professional requirements for taking on a post as Centre Head of a kindergarten, infant-toddler centre or an after-school setting are regulated by federal-level legislation.

The possibilities for attending a professionally relevant advanced course at higher education institutions and universities are described in *Section 3.4* (current reforms).

Participation in advanced courses is voluntary and is not generally funded. However, students may under certain circumstances be eligible for a stipendium from the Study Grant Authority, a federal-level authority affiliated to the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economics (Studienbeihilfenbehörde 2015).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Curriculum reform - vocational colleges of early childhood pedagogy

A focus on provision for the under-threes was already part of the government programme for the period 2008–2013, due among other things to the implementation of the Barcelona Targets (EC 13978/08). The political demand that all Austrian Kindergarten Pedagogues should acquire the necessary competencies for working professionally with under 3-year olds during their initial professional studies, as well as the European stipulation of developing competence and outcomes oriented curricula, subsequently led to a curricular reform in 2016 in which both these aspects were included.

Pilot projects on the fostering of comprehensive language skills in the early years sector

According to the Ministerial Council Decision adopted on 4th December 2012, children with special needs in terms of language development must be provided with special tuition. In May 2013, a multi-level programme for language support was issued, developed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the State Secretariat for Integration and numerous field experts (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2016b).

Pilot projects have been set up by all regional governments with the aim of developing programmes of comprehensive language support which reflect the specific regional and local contexts. A particular emphasis is placed on language support during the transition from kindergarten to school.

A formative evaluation of the pilot projects is being conducted by the Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development in the Austrian School System - BIFIE (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens 2017b; Bruneforth et al. 2016).

Reform project 'A NEW school start' (*Schulstart NEU*)

In September 2014, 35 networking projects with a focus on Kindergarten – Primary School were set up. The project phase ended in 2016 and a nationwide implementation was due to start in the school year 2016/2017 (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2015; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen 2015).

Goals of the reform project include:

- Improved cooperation between kindergarten and school,

- Improved flow of information between kindergarten and school,
- A child-appropriate assessment of school readiness and support needs,
- Planning the final year in kindergarten and the first two years in primary school as a coordinated unit,
- Language assessment tests in kindergarten and school as a basis for individual support.

As a support measure for the reform, a document on ‘Guidance for language support during the transition from kindergarten to primary school’ was developed by the Charlotte Bühler Institute. The Charlotte Bühler Institute had already provided a ‘Curriculum unit on language support in early childhood education settings’, as a complementary measure to the ‘Nationwide curricular framework for early childhood education settings’ (Charlotte Bühler Institut 2009a, 2009b, 2014).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Impact of male Kindergarten Pedagogues on children in everyday ECEC activities

Source: Aigner, J.C., L. Burkhardt, J. Huber, G. Poscheschnik, and B. Traxl 2013 (see *References* for full details).

Background: The study was conducted by the Institute for Psychosocial Intervention and Communication Research at the Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck and commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK).

Aims: The study looks at the question as to whether men and women pedagogues in kindergartens have potentially different impacts on children and have develop different relationships with them, not just in the case of intentional pedagogical measures and relationships but ‘without even noticing it’. The idea is to reveal attributions which happen unconsciously and the subsequent relationships which develop in the complex interchange of interactions between child and educator and educator and child.

Procedure: Participants in the study were 164 children and 22 pedagogues from five kindergartens with all-female staff and five kindergartens with mixed male and female teams, as well as 206 parents. Video observations of the pedagogues and children were made during everyday routines; staff and parents completed a questionnaire, and projective tests were carried out with a selective sample of children. Alongside questions about life satisfaction, education and work situation, survey participants were asked about their perception of similarities and differences in the ways female and male staff interact with children.

Results: “No significant preferences for either the one or the other gender’ (112) could be found to relate to the gender of the professional staff. However, it could be demonstrated that there is a tendency for female staff to interact more frequently with girls and male staff more frequently with boys.

Childcare Study Vienna: Settling-in phase of toddlers in childcare centres

Source: Fürstaller, M., A. Funder, and W. Datler 2012/2013 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The project aimed to support toddlers and their parents during the settling-phase in the best possible way. The researchers worked with groups of parents and pedagogues.

Procedure: In the context of the ‘Vienna Nursery Study’ (*Wiener Kinderkrippenstudie*), settling-in procedures of over 100 under 3-year old children were examined who were enrolled in four ECEC settings: one Vienna city kindergarten, two self-governed children’s groups and one church-affiliated kindergarten. The aim was to determine which factors are relevant in contrib-

uting to a successful start for the child in the ECEC setting during the transition period from the primarily inner-familial care situation. Research procedures included the evaluation of written notes made by the pedagogues, together with interviews with them and with the parents.

Results: The findings of the study resulted, e.g. in recommendations regarding staff qualifications and in the development of location-related programmes for the settling-in of very young children in infant-toddler centres and kindergartens, such as the Vienna project WIKO (*Wiener Projekt zur Entwicklung von standortbezogenen Konzepten der Eingewöhnung von Kleinkindern in die Kinderkrippe*).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Staff remuneration in the early childhood sector is either regulated in one of the state Public Sector Employment Laws (Burgenland, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol, Vienna) or directly in the state Child Care Laws (Carinthia, Salzburg, Vorarlberg). For Centre Heads, in most states supplements are envisaged based on the basic salary and the number of groups for which they are responsible. Supplements for Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogues are budgeted for in most federal provinces.

Starting salaries and maximum salaries for Early Childhood Pedagogues vary from province to province. According to a recent salary compass provided by the Employment Market Service, Kindergarten Pedagogues earn an average monthly starting salary of between 1,920€ and 2,130€ compared with 2,120€ – 2,360€ for Primary School Teachers (Arbeitsmarktservice 2017).

This means that career beginners are placed significantly above the minimum subsistence level, which is currently 1,163€ per month; nevertheless, it is not easy to meet the costs of living, particularly for single parents.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

According to Statistik Austria (2014), staff in ECEC settings work an average of 33 hours per week. Staff in a full-time position work a 40-hour week.

47% of staff work part time up to 30 hours per week, 53% are employed between 30 and 40 hours per week. 'Other staff' in ECEC settings (e.g. helpers, cooks, cleaning staff) are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis – on average for 27 hours per week.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Measures to support staff and for quality assurance are not regulated in a specific way at the state level, but are negotiated individually at the provider and setting level.

8.4 Non-contact time

The time for direct pedagogical work for staff in childcare settings is legislated by the regional governments and ranges from no regulated time at all for planning, team work, etc. up to ten hours per week. It is up to the provider to regulate non-contact time at a more favourable level than legislation specifies.

8.5 Staff shortages and staff recruitment

Strategies for staff recruitment are the responsibility of the provider and take place either at the provider level or at the state level.

A study conducted by the Austrian Institute for Family Research (Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung) on demographic developments (2016) shows that the population total of children aged 0 to 5 years will increase by approximately 8% over the coming ten years. The participation rates of 0- to 2-year old children have more than doubled during the past ten years and it is predicted that this trend will continue.

Based on an assumed middle-level rate of population growth, it is estimated that an additional 36,650 places in ECEC settings will need to be provided by 2020.

These figures demand appropriate political strategies and policy measures – both in terms of expanding the number of places and regarding the recruitment of staff.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

A particular challenge in Austria is the implementation of **initial professional study programmes for Early Childhood Pedagogues in the higher education sector** and, accordingly, the establishment of specialist chairs at universities as well as commissioned research regarding the further development of the early childhood pedagogy sector.

A further hindrance for a country-wide approach towards coordinated developments and implementation measures is the federal system and the exclusive responsibility of the regional governments for the early childhood sector. It would be beneficial to move **responsibility for the early childhood sector to the federal level**. A first step in this direction would be the establishment of a department or at least a specialist unit for early childhood education at federal ministerial level.

For strategies to improve the working conditions for specialist and assistant staff, **uniform trade union support** would be expedient. However, there is no strong union representation for this personnel branch since the pedagogues – if at all – are organised in diverse union groupings related to their specific employer.

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Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Marisa Krenn-Wache
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Austria – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 28-41.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Austria is a federally organised nation of nine autonomous provinces or states (*Länder*), each with its own legislative and executive competences. Within this federal framework, responsibility for early childhood education and care lies predominantly with the individual *Länder*. The education/training of pedagogical staff and the curricular framework for ECEC in provision for 0- to 6-year olds comes under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB). The Federal Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs (BMFJ) regulates child and youth welfare legislation, family day care in home-based settings and state subsidies for families and child care. The nine *Länder*, through their own legislation, are responsible for the broad field of early childhood education and care and for supporting the municipalities in the building of ECEC provision. The municipalities are assigned the task of establishing and maintaining the running of kindergartens and infant-toddler centres.

Sources: BMB 2017a.
Eurydice 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

Policy goals of the federal government in Austria (2013–2018) include improving equality of opportunity in early childhood education and care and language support before school entry, enhancing cooperation between kindergartens and schools, expanding places for under 3-year olds and giving early education a general boost. Related legislation in the nine *Länder* has as yet not been implemented.

The legislative framework at the federal level for early childhood education and care is the Youth Welfare Act (1989) with subsequent amendments; each of the nine *Länder* has its own kindergarten legislation.

Sources: BMFJ 2015c.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

In Austria, there is no universal entitlement to a place in a kindergarten or in an infant-toddler centre. However, since 2009, 5- and 6-year old children have a guaranteed place for the year before school entry, since the *Länder* are obliged to provide a kindergarten place for at least 16 to 20 hours per week over four week days for these children. Since September 2010, kindergarten attendance is compulsory for this age group. In addition to regular holiday times and school-free days, a three-week holiday is also permitted. Compulsory attendance may be waived under certain circumstances (illness, severe physical or cognitive impairment, medical grounds, living in a remote region, etc.). For children under 5 years of age, enrolment is voluntary.

Compulsory primary schooling begins on the 1st September following the child's 6th birthday and lasts for 9 years.

Sources: BMFJ 2015b.
Krenn-Wache, M. 2017.

Main types of provision

Kindergartens are the traditional form of provision for children aged 3 to 6 years and **infant-toddler centres** (*Kinderkrippen*) provide places for under 3-year olds. Beyond these two traditional types of institution, there are also **mixed-age groups** (*altersgemischte Gruppen*), mostly for 1- to 5-/6-year olds, which are usually attached to a kindergarten. In most infant-toddler centres and kindergartens, children of different ages are in the same group. Some of the mixed-age groups are **parent-managed children's groups** (*elternverwaltete Kindergruppen*) which are characterised through a high level of parental responsibility and decision-making. These groups range in size from 5 to 10 children.

Alongside the centre-based settings, family day carers (*Tagesmütter/Tagesväter*) provide home-based childcare in their own homes, mostly for very young children. In 2013, approximately 2% of under 3-year olds and 3- to 6-year olds across the country were in family day care provision**.

Opening times are organised by the centre provider. Approximately 92% of centre-based settings are provided on a full-day basis. Daily opening hours vary according to the region, province and provider. However, most centre-based provision is open for at least six hours daily and almost all (99%) are open over the midday break. The majority open at 7:00/7:30 in the morning and close around 17:00/17:30. On average, early childhood settings are closed for 21.9 days per year. In recent years, however, the opening hours have been considerably extended.

Over the past ten years there has been a significant expansion in the numbers of early childhood settings. Between 2005 and 2015/2016, the number of infant-toddler centres doubled and the number of mixed-age groups trebled during this period.

Table 1

Austria: Number of centre-based provision types from 2005 to 2015/2016*

	Infant-toddler centres	Kindergartens	Mixed-age provision	Total
2005	889	4,482	554	5,371
2010	1,208	4,694	974	6,876
2015/16	1,760	4,664	1,663	8,087

Sources: BMFJ 2015.
EPIC 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
**ÖIF 2014.
*Statistik Austria 2017.

Provider structures

Over half of all early childhood settings (55.9%, excluding after-school provision for school-age children) are run by public/municipal agencies, of which the vast proportion (98.9%) are municipal providers. The majority of private ECEC settings (65.8%) are provided by NGOs. Roughly a quarter (24.4%) of the private providers is church-affiliated and approximately 10% of settings are run by other independent entities, i.e. private persons and associations and also companies. The distribution of provider structures varies considerably across the nine *Länder*.

Table 2

Austria: Number of setting types according to provider, 2015*

Type of setting	Provider				
	Public	Private			
		Total private	of which are church-affiliated	of which are associations	of which are other independent entities
Infant-toddler centres	721	1,039	184	707	148
Kindergartens	3,386	1,278	568	593	117
Mixed-age groups	418	1,245	116	1,044	85
Total	4,525	3,562	868	2,344	350
		8,087	24.4%	65.8%	9.8%

Sources: Krenn-Wache, M. 2017.
*Statistik Austria 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Participation rates, particularly for the under 3-year olds, vary considerably between urban and rural areas and across the nine *Länder*. For example, in 2015, the attendance rates for under 2-year olds in Styria totalled 13.4% of the age group compared with 45.1% in the city of Vienna. Across all *Länder*, only about one quarter of under 3-year olds attend a centre-based setting, compared with nearly all 4- and 5-year olds (96% and 97.4% respectively). On 15 October 2015***, a total of 354,022 children in Austria were enrolled in an ECEC setting (including after-school provision for school-age children). The greater proportion of these children (217,952) enrolled in early childhood settings were attending kindergartens; 33,500 attended infant-toddler centres and 45,673 mixed-age provision.

Table 3

Austria: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age groups, 2015**

Age groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 1 year	2,255	2.7
1-year olds	18,653	22.4
2-year olds	42,122	51.7
0- to under 3-year olds	63,030	25.6
3-year olds	69,975	85.6
4-year olds	79,280	96.0
5-year olds	79,425	97.4
3- to under 6-year olds	228,680	92.6
0- to under 6-year olds	291,710	59.2

* Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

According to Eurostat data, the participation rates of under 3-year olds increased significantly in recent years. Whereas in 2005, only 4% of this age group were enrolled in an ECEC setting, by 2015 the proportion had risen to 22.3%. The proportion of children from age 3 up to school entry had risen to 85.3% by 2015.

Table 4

Austria: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % [†]
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % [†]
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	13.7	57.7
	Over 30 hours	8.6	27.6
	No attendance	77.8	14.7

Sources: ***BMFJ 2017.
*Eurostat 2017f.
**Statistik Austria 2017.

Financing and costs for parents

Early childhood education and care is mainly publicly funded. In 2014, government expenditure at the federal, province and municipal levels accounted for 85.4% of total costs, private households for 12.1% and private entities (associations, independent sponsors of ECEC provision) for 2.5%*.

Since 2010, half-day attendance in the year before school entry is free of charge. In some *Länder* this also applies to full-day enrolment. In Vienna, for example, enrolment at a publicly-run early childhood setting is free of charge for parents of children aged 0 to 6 years. Otherwise costs vary from province to province and are partly income-related. A place in an infant-toddler centre is generally more expensive than one in a kindergarten (ranging from 147€ to 333€ per month)¹. Parents always have to pay for meals (roughly 3€ per day).

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
*Statistik Austria 2014.

Staff-child ratios

Staff-child ratios are regulated by law.

Infant-toddler centres: one Kindergarten Pedagogue and one Assistant for 10 to 15 children. The maximum group size of 15 children may not be exceeded. The staffing ratio at full capacity ranges from 1:4 to 1:8*.

Kindergartens: one Kindergarten Pedagogue for 23 to 25 children. Group size may range from 20 to 25 children. The staffing ratio at full capacity ranges from 1:12 to 1:17*.

In Austria, depending on the province, one qualified member of staff and 1 Assistant, or in some cases 1 Assistant for two groups work together. This results in a variation of the real staff-child ratios between 1:10 to 1:17 (on average 1:13) if all adults are included or to a staff-child ratio of 1:20 to 1:25 (on average 1:24) if only the qualified staff are counted**.

All groups in centre-based settings are led by a qualified pedagogue (ISCED 5).

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Sources: *BMFJ 2015a.
Eurydice 2016.
**ÖIF 2017a.

Curricular Frameworks

An early childhood curricular framework across all nine *Länder* (*Bundesländerübergreifender BildungsRahmenPlan für elementare Bildungseinrichtungen*) for children aged 0 to 6 years was introduced in 2009. The play-based framework plan sets out 12 learning principles (e.g. integrated learning, inclusion, gender sensitivity, participation, transparency) and six learning areas (emotions and social relationships; ethics and society; language and communication; movement and health; aesthetics and creativity; nature and technology). Two additional sections focus specifically on (1) language and communication and (2) the final year in kindergarten. The early childhood pedagogues select situation- and context-specific and age-appropriate content and didactic approaches. They seek a balance between child-initiated activities and those guided by the pedagogues; these include theme-based project work and individual and group activities.

Sources: BMB 2017b.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

There are no statistical data available on the number of children under 6 years of age with (imminent) disabilities and special needs. Also, no data are compiled on the proportion of integrative and special institutions for children with disabilities. The tasks, goals and framework plans for these settings are regulated at the *Länder* level. If there are more than two children with special needs in one regular setting, an additional, full-time specialised support member of staff must be employed. Children with special needs enrolled in integrative settings count as two children. There may be no more than four children with special needs in one integrative group. In special therapeutic groups, up to 12 children with severe disabilities are cared for by specialist staff.

According to the Salzburg Childcare Act (2007, with amendments), an additional specialist member of staff must be available for children with special needs at least for some of the time. These special needs pedagogues are employed by the regional government; they cooperate with the regular ECEC staff and parents, and also provide advisory services for them. In small settings or in rural areas they just pay visits.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 14.5% of the total population had a non-Austrian background; almost half (49%) came from countries outside the EU28. In the age group of under 5-year old children, the proportions were 18.2% and 46.9% respectively*.

In 2015, 16.9% of children in ECEC settings had a background of migration, and almost half (45.5%) came from other EU countries**.

For children whose family language is not German, language support is provided in kindergartens and their language competence is assessed. The language assessment instrument introduced in 2008 (more recent data are not available), demonstrated that the language level of 90% of the 4½- to 5½-year olds attending kindergarten whose home language was German was age appropriate, whereas 58% of children in the same age group whose home language was not German needed additional support***.

Children from socially disadvantaged families or families with a history of migration are less likely to attend kindergarten than children without a migration background. The free final year in kindergarten aims to raise attendance rates in these groups.

Sources: BMFJ 2015c.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, und Eurostat 2014.
*Eurostat, 2017g
Eurydice 2016.
**Statistik Austria 2017.
***Statistik Austria 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The Charlotte Bühler Institute in Vienna was established as a non-partisan forum with a focus on young children in families and society and since 1992, with funding support from the Federal Ministry for Science and Research, on practice-related research. The institute conducts a variety of projects, issues publications and makes recommendations in terms of quality improvement in the early childhood field.

There are no obligatory procedures for assessing children. However, a number of materials (e.g. portfolios) have been developed to support the monitoring of child development and the planning of educational activities. At least 15 months before school entry, language assessment procedures are conducted so that the support can be given in individual cases.

ECEC settings are visited on average once or twice a year by a supervisory person from the regional government. During these visits, the building is inspected, reports on the running of the organisation scrutinised and the quality or lack of quality of the setting assessed. Alongside these external evaluations, self-evaluation instruments for the pedagogical staff have also been developed. As from 2013 these were implemented and evaluated across the country. Some of the regional governments have been providing related training units since 2014/2015.

The Charlotte Bühler Institute recommends using the German adaptations of the ITERS-R (KRIPS-R*) and ECERS-R (KES-R**) rating scales as instruments for assessing and supporting pedagogical quality in ECEC settings. At the same time it is emphasised that they should not be used as purely evaluation and control measures. The Institute therefore provide various training courses for appropriate use of the rating scales.

Evidence-based studies and effects analyses on various topics related to child care, families and society are conducted by the Austrian Institute for Family Studies (*Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung*) at the University of Vienna***.

The professorial chair for early childhood education established at the University of Graz in 2010 (and newly occupied since 2016) carries out basic and applied research on topics such as concepts and theories of early childhood pedagogy, children and childhood from a social sciences perspective, social didactics in the initial and continuing professional development for early childhood pedagogues, professionalisation and academisation, children's culture and children's life worlds, diversity and specific research approaches and methods of childhood research****.

Through the establishment of an endowed chair for early childhood education at the University of Innsbruck in 2013, there is now a further research base for addressing issues of early childhood education and care and the development of modern employment and family forms.

Sources: Charlotte Bühler Institut 2015a, 2015b.
Eurydice 2016.
****Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz 2017.
***ÖIF 2017b.
Tietze et al. *2007a, **2007b (adaptation of the ITERS-R and ECERS-R scales for German language contexts).

Parental leave arrangements

Mandatory **maternity leave** (*Mutterschaftskarenz*) starts eight weeks before the birth date and continues for eight weeks afterwards. Payment is 100% of average income during the three months preceding the beginning of maternity leave.

There is no legal entitlement to **paternity leave** (*Väterkarenz*). Some employers grant a few paid days directly after the baby's birth. In the public sector, employees are entitled to a month's unpaid leave. In the case of children born after 1st March 2017, fathers are entitled to a so-called family time bonus (22.60€ per day) if they take between 29 and 31 days of full-time paternity leave within 91 days of the birth.

Parental leave (*Elternkarenz*) may be taken up to the child's second birthday. All employees are granted this (family) entitlement and during this time they are protected against dismissal. There are five options:

- 1) 436€/monthly for 30 months (if both parents take parental leave, for 36 months)
- 2) 624€/monthly for 20 or 24 months respectively
- 3) 800€/monthly for 15 or 18 months respectively
- 4) 1000€/monthly for 12 or 14 months respectively
- 5) 80% of previous net income for 12 or 14 months (for those who earn between 1000€ and 2000€/monthly)

In the case of options 1 to 4, an additional 60% of annual income can be earned in the year preceding birth. In the case of option 5, a maximum of 6400€ supplementary income may be earned.

Parental leave can either be taken by one parent or alternating by both. Together, only one month of parental leave is permitted – if parents choose this option, the total period is reduced by one month. It is possible to save up three months of parental leave up to the child's seventh birthday.

Parents of children born after 1st March 2017 may choose between the flexible flat-rate and the income-related allowance. The options 1 to 4 listed above were replaced by a total sum of 15,449€ (if both parents take parental leave) or 12,366€ (if only one parent takes parental leave). Besides this, 16,200€ or 60% of the previous income can be additionally earned. If the parents share parental leave equally, or proportionately at 60:40, each parent receives a 'partnership bonus' of 500€.

Nearly all those entitled to parental leave make use of it (93-96%). In general these are women. Since 2014, official statistics no longer differentiate between mothers and fathers when reporting on the take up of the different leave options: Option 1 is taken up most frequently (32% in February 2017), followed by option 2 (26%). Option 3 was chosen by 6%, option 4 also by 6% and 29% chose the income-related option 5.

Sources: EPIC 2015.
Rille-Pfeiffer, C. and H. Dearing 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1830	Establishment of the first custodial institution in Vienna for children from families in need of support
1863	Establishment of the first kindergarten with an explicitly educational mandate (based on Comenius, Oberlin, Pestalozzi, Fröbel)
1871	Founding of a professional organisation for kindergarten educators
1872	First kindergarten legislation with general country-wide standards
1872	A framework plan for the training of kindergarten educators is included in a ministerial decree

up to 1939	Expansion of kindergartens takes place mostly in Vienna
1939–1945	Under the national socialist regime, the number of kindergartens continues to expand and the pedagogical programme is changed to include goals such as obedience and heroism
1962	Legislative competence for kindergartens is transferred to the individual <i>Länder</i>
2008	Introduction of a framework plan for early childhood settings valid across the country (further guidance follows in subsequent years)
2008	Agreement between the federal and regional governments to expand early childhood provision with an emphasis on the under 3-year olds and language support
2009	Tax relief for childcare costs for all under 10-year olds
2009	Agreement between federal and regional governments to introduce a free and compulsory kindergarten year for 5- and 6-year olds
2011	Agreement between federal and regional governments to further expand childcare provision for under 3-year olds and to extend opening hours
2012	Ministerial Council Decision on language assessment (children in need of language support are given specific tuition)
2013	National Qualifications Framework Act (NQR): Professional education/training for Early Childhood Pedagogues placed at Level 5, Short Cycle Tertiary Education (ISCED 2011)
2016	Ministerial Council Decision on the reorganisation of the transition from kindergarten to school, including passing on information in the context of school enrolment
2016	Revision of the nation-wide valid curriculum for the professional education/training of early childhood staff (including a stronger emphasis on under 3-year olds) and a renaming of the training institutions as <i>Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik</i> - Educational Institution for Early Childhood Pedagogy (replacing the term Kindergarten Pedagogy)

Sources: Krenn-Wache, M. 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Austria

Country expert assessment by Marisa Krenn-Wache

Academisation of initial professional studies and establishment of professorial chairs for early childhood education

Since the beginning of 2017, the higher education institutions specialising in Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) have been developing (partly in collaboration with Universities) Bachelor study programmes in early childhood education, which will be on offer from 2018. However, legitimisation of the professional qualification will for the time being continue to be the responsibility of the *Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik*. The Bachelor study programmes will initially be categorised as a qualified CPD and specialisation. New legislation and study programmes for a recognised initial professional qualification, together with an appropriate remuneration, have yet to be issued.

Research and university teaching in the early childhood field are under-represented in Austria. The first chair in early childhood education – at the University of Graz – was not established until 2010, and in 2015 half a professorial chair in early childhood education was established at the University of Innsbruck. Three part-time Master's degree programmes began in 2014 in Salzburg (University course) and Vienna (BA studies). The Society for Educational Science (ÖFEB) founded a new section for early childhood education in 2012. A significant expansion of both basic and applied research is much needed.

Further expansion initiatives and staff recruitment measures

According to national statistics and the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning, a growth of approximately 8% is expected in the population age group of 0- to 5-year olds. During the past ten years, the participation rates of 0- to 2-year olds have doubled and it can be assumed that this development will continue. If population growth continues up to 2025, it has been estimated that a related 11,100 places will need to be made available in early childhood settings and an additional 3,600 places related to the increased enrolment rates. Targeted measures to ensure provision of places and to raise the attractiveness of the occupational field are needed across the country*.

Transferring responsibility for early childhood education to the federal level

Since 1962, legislation and executive powers for the early childhood sector have come under the auspices of the nine regional governments. The relevant professional organisation has long been demanding a transferral of responsibilities for early education and care to the federal government level. Federal framework legislation is seen as the way forward in order to improve and unify the very disparate conditions and terms of employment to be found in the individual *Länder* and offered by the various ECEC providers.

Source: *Neuwirt, N. 2016.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Austria totalled 8,690,076. This is a further indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 7,943,489 and 2005 total: 8,201,359).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.9% and children under 6 years of age for 5.7% of the total population. Since 2005 these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above.

Table 5

Austria: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	83,272
1-year olds	84,251
2-year olds	82,553
Under age 3 total	250,076
3-year olds	83,005
4-year olds	82,448
5-year olds	83,384
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	248,837
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	498,913

Table 6

Austria: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.6	3.3	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.1	6.8	5.8	6.2	5.7	6.2

† own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 75.1% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 3.2%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (3.1%).

Table 7

Austria: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent [†]
Households – total	808,700	
Couple households	607,200	75.1
Other types of households	176,000	21.8
Single households, total	25,500	3.2
Single households, women	24,900	3.1
Single households, men	600**	0.1

† Own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Austria was 75.1% and that of women 67.1%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 69% were employed in 2015, whereas 88.7% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. The employment rates of fathers in Austria were slightly, that of mothers significantly above the EU28 average in 2015.

Table 8

Austria: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015[†]

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Austria	2005	60.3	89.5
	2010	64.2	89.9

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	69.0	88.7
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

* own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 22.5% of children under age 6 in Austria were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This rate is below the poverty rate of the EU28 average (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 18.3%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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BELGIUM

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Jan Peeters

Ghent University, Centre for Innovation in the Early Years (VBJK)

Florence Pirard

University of Liège

with

Anne-Françoise Bouvy	ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance - Birth and Childhood Office), Brussels
Anne-Marie Dieu	OEJAJ (Observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à la Jeunesse-Observatory of Childhood, Youth and Youth Foster Care), Brussels
Anne-Sophie Lenoir	Administration Générale de l'Enseignement (AGE - General Administration of Education), Wallonia Brussels Federation
Marleen Rosiers, Geert De Raedemaeker	Erasmushogeschool (Erasmus University College), Brussels
Stijn van Keer	Studiedienst Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), Brussels
Katrien Van Laere, Brecht Peleman	Ghent University, Centre for Innovation in the Early Years (VBJK)
Catherine Reinertz	Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, Eupen

Citation suggestion:

Peeters, J. and F. Pirard, with colleagues. 2018. "Belgium – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 42-72.

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



State Institute of
Early Childhood Research



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Belgium is a federal, multi-lingual state comprising three autonomous Regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region, Brussels-Capital Region), three language Communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking), and four language areas (Dutch, French, German and in the Brussels-Capital Region bilingual, French/Dutch). Of a total population of 11.7 million in 2016, 6.4 million were Dutch-speaking and lived in the Flemish Region and 3.5 million were French-speaking, living in the Walloon Region. In the bilingual Brussels Region (1.2 million inhabitants) a large majority is French-speaking. The German-speaking Community accounts for 0.7 percent of the total population (76,645 inhabitants in 2016).

Wherever possible, separate accounts are given in this report for the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community. Otherwise, unless specifically stated, the data presented refer to the whole country.

1. ECEC governance

Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community, there is a clear division of responsibilities for 'education' and 'care' (OECD2006). The *kleuterscholen* (pre-primary education) for children from 2½ years up to school entry come under the general auspices of the Minister for Education and Training (*Vlaams ministerie van onderwijs en vorming*). In the case of provision for younger children and out-of-school provision for school children, the Ministry for Welfare, Family and Equal Opportunities (*Ministerie van Welzijn, Gezin en Gelijke Kansen*) delegates supervisory duties to a government agency called *Kind en Gezin* (Child and Family). *Kind en Gezin* is responsible for regulations, allocation of places, funding, quality standards and quality management. The day-to-day running of childcare centres is the responsibility of the service providers (local authorities, non-profit organisations, and also private for-profit providers). All childcare services must be registered with *Kind en Gezin* and 70% of the places are offered by services subsidised by *Kind en Gezin*. In cities such as Antwerp and Ghent, childcare services are overseen by a section of the education department.

French Community – (Wallonia-Brussels Federation - FWB)

In the French Community, the traditional split in the organisation of provision continues. The *écoles maternelles* (pre-primary education) for 2½- to 6-year olds come under the general auspices of the Minister for Education (*Ministre de l'Éducation*) and, more specifically, under three umbrellas: the state, local authorities or church-affiliated, subsidised organisations. In the case of provision for younger children and out-of-school provision for school children, the Minister for Culture and Childhood (*Ministre de la Culture et de l'Enfance*) delegates responsibility to a government agency called ONE (*Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance* - Birth and Childhood Office). All care facilities for children up to age 12 have to be registered with ONE and to comply with their specified quality standards (*Code de qualité de l'accueil*) issued in 1999, revised in 2004.

German-speaking Community – (Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft - DG)

In the German-speaking Community, responsibility for ECEC is shared between the Minister for Education and Scientific Research (*Minister für Bildung und wissenschaftliche Forschung*; pre-primary education) and the Minister for Families, Health and Social Affairs (*Minister für Familie, Gesundheit und Soziales*; childcare). The organising agency for childcare provision is the Regional Centre for Childcare Facilities (*Regionalzentrum für Kleinkindbetreuung– RZKB*). Besides providing family day care services, the organisation also supervises the two infant-toddler centres in the Community and an out-of-school facility for school-age children.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The administrative split in services for 0 to 6 year olds between ‘childcare’ for the under-threes and ‘education’ for children aged 2½ years up to school entry is also reflected in the qualifications required for work in these two different sectors. Core practitioners in pre-primary education receive their professional Bachelor education/training alongside teachers in the school system. Practitioners working with children in services for the under-threes are mostly Infant Care Workers (secondary vocational level). Management staff are medical nurses, social workers or pedagogical coach (Bachelor level).

Flemish Community

In April 2014, a new decree on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds was implemented (*Decreet Opvang van baby's en peuters*) in the Flemish Community. This legislation stipulates that all persons working in childcare have to have some kind of qualification by 2024 and that every Childcare Worker has the right to pedagogical guidance from a pedagogical coach. According to the new law, every provider of childcare will have to guarantee pedagogical guidance for all employed childcare workers. All unqualified staff are required to register for one of the available qualification routes which will ensure that they are fully qualified by 2024. The government has allowed for a transition period of ten years, otherwise contracts will be terminated.

In 2011, a new Bachelor's degree for pedagogical coaching (*Pedagogisch Coach – ‘Pedagogy of the Young Child’*) was established in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, and the first students graduated in 2014. These graduates take up a post as Pedagogical Coach or adviser, designing the pedagogical policy of the childcare centre with the practitioners with an upper secondary level qualification and supervising non-qualified staff working towards a qualification. They are also trained to work with children and their parents. Some of these newly qualified professionals work as part of the management staff in childcare centres, and it is envisaged that they will gradually replace the nurses and social workers currently working in childcare centres.

French Community (FWB)

In the French Community, a new law (Government Order) on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds is forthcoming. In view of this, three research programmes on Initial Professional Studies (IPS) under two project managers were commissioned by the ONE administration and the government (see *Section 7*). The projects proposed recommendations for improving the quality of the workforce in childcare and out-of-school services. A further research programme focusing on the IPS of teachers in general and including Pre-primary Teachers could stimulate a reform in the near future (see *Section 7*).

German-speaking Community (DG)

In March 2014, a new decree on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds was implemented (*Dekret über die Kinderbetreuung*) in the German-speaking Community. Amongst other things, it contains the conditions for the accreditation of childcare institutions and family day care services.

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of professionals working directly with children. Core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* below).

Table 1

Belgium: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p>Childcare Worker (Childcare centres)</p> <p>Auxiliary Worker (Pre-primary settings)</p> <p><i>Flemish Community</i> <i>Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang</i></p> <p><i>French Community</i> <i>Puéricultrice</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Health Care Professional</p>	<p>Childcare centres 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Flemish Community</i> <i>Kinderdagverblijf; groepskinderopvang</i></p> <p><i>French Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crèches • Crèches parentales • Prégardiennat • MCAE – Maison Communale d’Accueil de l’Enfance • Pouponnière <p><i>German-speaking Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinderkrippen and Mini-Krippen • Kinderhorte <p><i>In Flemish and French Communities only:</i> Pre-primary education 2½- to 6-year olds <i>Kleuterschool</i> <i>École maternelle</i></p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility in infant-toddler centres</p> <p>Qualified Auxiliary Worker in pre-primary settings, mostly with 2- and 3-year olds (not in the German Speaking Community)</p>	<p>0–6 years</p>	<p>Childcare Certificate 3 years upper-secondary qualification plus 1 year specialisation or through adult education</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a² EQF: Level 4 (upper secondary) and 5 (adult education) ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4/5</p> <p><i>Note:</i> <i>Flemish Community</i> For work in independent childcare centres (<i>zelfstandig kinderdagverblijf</i>), no minimum qualification requirements will be set until 2024.</p>
<p><i>Flemish Community</i> <i>Kleuterleider or Kleuteronderwijzer or Leraar Kleuteronderwijs</i></p> <p><i>French Community</i> <i>Institutrice préscolaire /Institutrice maternelle</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> <i>Kindergärtnerin</i></p> <p>Pre-primary Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Kleuterschool</i> <i>École maternelle</i> <i>Kindergarten</i></p> <p>Pre-primary education 2½/3-to 6-year olds</p> <p>A few also work in childcare centres 0–3 years</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p>	<p><i>Flemish and French Community</i> 2½-6 years</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community</i> 3-6 years</p>	<p>Bachelor’s degree 3 years university college</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>

¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

²n/a: not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Flemish Community Pedagogisch Coach Pedagogical Coach <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Kinderdagverblijf</i> Childcare centres 0–3 years <i>Initiatief voor buitenschoolse opvang</i> Out of school centres 3–12 years Some also work in a <i>Kleuterschool</i> 2½–6 years or <i>Lagere school</i> primary school 6–12 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head / management Pedagogical coach of teams	0–12 years	Bachelor's degree in 'Pedagogy of the young child' 3 years university college ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, usually broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community, over 90% of staff working in **pre-primary settings** with 2½- to 5-year olds have a Bachelor level qualification; around 10% of the workforce in the *Kleuterschools* are assistants qualified at upper secondary vocational level.

In the school year 2015-2016, 19,326 Teachers were employed in **pre-primary education**, of which 619 (3.2%) were male (Onderwijs Vlaanderen 2016). In June 2016, the Minister of Education declared that a total of '21,213 hours of childcare' had been allocated to the *Kleuterschools* (Commissie Onderwijs 2016).

Since the introduction of the new Decree on Childcare in 2014, all Childcare Workers in **childcare centres** for under-threes are obliged to have a secondary vocational qualification with one year of specialisation (EQF level 4). Currently, 87% of the workforce in childcare centres are qualified, of whom 11.3% are currently following a qualification pathway specially adapted for this work setting. By 2024, every Childcare Worker will be required to have this qualification.

In 2001, men comprised only 0.9% of the workforce in **childcare and out-of-school centres**; following a campaign, the proportion rose to 3.4% in 2010, then it dropped to 2.9% in 2014/15

2.2% of practitioners working directly with children in childcare settings and 4.5% of managers are male.

Table 2

Belgium - Flemish Community: Structural composition of ECEC workforce - qualifications, gender and ethnicity

Staff categories:	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	Pre-primary education: 2014/15: 90.6% Childcare sector: No data available
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	Pre-primary education: 2014/15: 9.4% (<i>kindbegeleiders</i> /infant care workers working as assistants) Childcare sector: 2016: 87%
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff without formal IPS/unqualified	Pre-primary education: No unqualified staff Childcare sector: 2016: 11.3% are in the process of obtaining a qualification
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	2014/15: 622 or 3.2% of workforce
Male staff	Pre-primary education: 2015/16: 3.2% of all teachers in pre-primary education 2014/15: 2.9% among staff with <i>Bachelor in het Onderwijs, kleuteronderwijs</i> (teaching qualification)* 2014/15: 11.8% of staff in pre-primary settings in the age-group 20- to 29-year olds and 12.3% in the age-group 30- to 39-year olds* 2014/15: 2.2% of special needs staff Childcare sector: 2010: 3.4% in childcare centres and out-of-school care 2014/2015: 2.2% of practitioners working directly with children and 4.5% of managers
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

Source: *Onderwijs Vlaanderen 2016

French Community (FWB)

In 2015, nearly 100% of Pre-primary Teachers (*institutrices maternelles*) were qualified: 95.5% with a specialised Bachelor's degree in pre-primary education (*bachelier instituteurs maternelles*), 2.3% with a Bachelor's degree in primary education (*bachelier instituteurs primaires*), 1.3% with a general Bachelor's degree and an additional specialisation (AESI, *Agrégation de l'Enseignement Secondaire Inférieur*), 0.6% with a Master's degree in Educational Sciences (*Indicateurs de l'Enseignement 2015*). These Pre-Primary Teachers are sometimes supported by an assistant in the first year of the *école maternelle* (*classe d'accueil*) with 2- and 3-year olds.

In 2015, in addition to these teachers, 818 (8.1%) full-time equivalent (FTE) *puéricultrices* (compared to 10,134 FTE *institutrices maternelles*) were employed as auxiliary workers in *écoles maternelles* financed by the FWB, others were employed and paid directly by the school heads (no data available). Assistants without any formal qualification may also be part of the staff, although it should be noted that not every *école maternelle* employs an assistant or an auxiliary worker. The fairly low number of specialist support staff tend to be mostly *maîtresses de psychomotricité* (742 FTE); only three speech therapists are employed in the French Community.

Data on workforce qualifications in publicly funded childcare services are only available up to 2010, and there are no data available for private ECEC settings. The proportion of publicly funded childcare services that require an upper secondary qualification for all practitioners has increased, from 40.9% in 2000 to 47.8% in 2013 (Pirard et al. 2015) and to 47.2% in 2014.

In the French Community, 97% of Pre-primary Teachers are female and there are only a small number of male workers in the childcare centres for under-threes (no official data). Recent research emphasizes that the current professional education/training needs to focus more on gender-neutral competences (Pirard, Schoenmaeckers, and Camus 2015).

Table 3

Belgium – French Community: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in public settings: qualifications, gender and ethnicity

Staff categories:	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 86.5% teachers FTE (10,134 FTE of 11,597 total) <i>Public childcare services:</i> No recent data
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: At least 7% (FTE) - 818 of 11,597 total childcare workers as auxiliary workers <i>Public childcare services:</i> No recent data
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff without formal IPS	No current data available
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 6% (742 FTE of 11,547) staff for psycho-motor support <i>Public childcare services:</i> No support staff
Male staff	<i>Pre-primary education:</i> 2015: 3% <i>Childcare sector:</i> No current data available
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

Source: Ministry of Wallonia Brussels Federation, Administration générale de l'Enseignement (unpublished)

German-speaking Community (DG)

No data available.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

For a long time now, the administrative split in services for 0 to 6 year olds between 'childcare' for the under-threes and 'education' for children aged 2½ years up to school entry has been reflected in the qualifications required for work in these two different sectors. Core practitioners in pre-primary education predominantly have a Bachelor's degree and core practitioners in childcare settings have a vocational qualification or no formal IPS at all. This is starting to

change since the Flemish Community decided to invest in a new Bachelor's degree in childcare. Holders of the degree will mostly work in management positions, but not necessarily. In pre-primary education a growing number of Childcare Workers now work as an Auxiliary Worker (Teacher's Assistant).

The IPS at Bachelor level take place at higher education institutions – university colleges – specialising in teacher education or pedagogy of the young child (*Hogeschool, Department Onderwijs – Institut Supérieur de Pédagogie - Autonome Hochschule*). The upper-secondary vocational qualification route for Childcare Workers takes place in secondary schools or adult education courses.

Table 4

Belgium: Pre-primary Teacher

<p>Job title in Flemish Community: <i>Kleuterleid(st)er, Kleuteronderwijzer, Leraar Kleuteronderwijs</i></p> <p>Job title in French Community: <i>Institutrice maternelle</i></p> <p>Job title in German-speaking Community: <i>Kindergärtnerin</i></p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling (general or vocational), upper secondary education school-leaving certificate. Applicants with vocational certificate: 1 extra year or equivalent qualification.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Hogeschool, Department Onderwijs</i>)</p> <p><i>French Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Institut Supérieur d'Enseignement Pédagogique or Haute école</i>)</p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> 3 years higher education institution affiliated to a university (<i>Autonome-Hochschule</i>)</p> <p>Award:</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> <i>Bachelor in het onderwijs: kleuteronderwijs</i></p> <p><i>French Community:</i> <i>Bachelier instituteurs maternels; bachelier instituteurs primaires</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> <i>Bachelor Kindergärtner/in</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Pre-primary settings <i>Kleuterschool, École maternelle, Kindergarten</i> (2½- to 6-year olds, in DG: 3- to 6-year olds). A few also work in childcare centres (0 to 3 years) or in primary education (6- to 12-year olds)</p>

Table 5

Belgium (Flemish Community only): Pedagogical Coach

<p>Job title in Flemish: <i>Pedagogisch Coach</i></p> <p>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling (general or vocational), upper secondary education school-leaving certificate. Applicants with vocational certificate: 1 extra year or equivalent qualification.</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years higher education college affiliated to a university (<i>Hogeschool, Departement Onderwijs, sociaalwerk en gezondheidszorg</i>)</p> <p>Award: <i>Bachelor pedagogie van het jonge kind</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Childcare centres (0 to 3 years), extra-curricular activities in childcare and out-of-school centres (3 to 12 years). A few also work in pre-primary education and youth activity centres.</p>

Table 6

Belgium: Childcare Worker

<p>Job title in Flemish Community: <i>Begeleid(st)er Kinderopvang/ Kinderzorg</i></p> <p>Job title in French Community: <i>Puéricultrice</i></p> <p>Job title in German-speaking Community: <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i></p> <p>Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years of schooling</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary level (vocational branch) plus 1 year specialisation</p> <p>Award: (1) Diploma (vocational secondary education)</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> <i>Kinderzorg</i></p> <p><i>French Community:</i> <i>Puéricultrice</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i></p> <p>ECTSpoints: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F:0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011:4</p> <p>Award (2): Certificate (adult education)</p> <p><i>Flemish Community:</i> <i>Begeleid(st)er in de kinderopvang</i></p> <p><i>French Community:</i> <i>Puéricultrice</i></p> <p><i>German-speaking Community:</i> <i>Kinderbetreuerin</i></p> <p>ECTSpoints: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F:0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 5</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Childcare centres (0 to 3 years), extra-curricular activities in childcare and out-of-school centres (3 to 12 years). A few also work in pre-primary education and youth activity centres. In both the Flemish and French Communities also as Auxiliary Worker in pre-primary education (<i>Kleuterschool, Écolematernelle</i>), mostly with 2- and 3-year olds.</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Flemish Community

Pre-Primary Teacher (*Leraar Kleuteronderwijs*)

In Flanders, a reform of teacher education programmes is once again on the agenda. The last reform dates back to September 2007 (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009). The so-called integrated teacher training programmes combine subject-specific, didactical and pedagogical/teaching components throughout the entire three-year study route for Pre-primary Teachers. They also focus on building capacity and experience in practice through extensive internships in authentic learning environments. The pre-primary route leads to a professional Bachelor's degree in Education (*Bachelor in het onderwijs: kleuteronderwijs*). The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a work load of 25 to 30 hours. The practical component accounts for at least 45 credits.

In 1998, and again in 2007, the first official professional profiles for Pre-primary Teachers were established which assigned the profession ten specific roles, including an instructional role (*lerende*) and an educational role (*opvoedende*) (Vlaamse Regering 2007). It was the first time that official documents on Pre-primary Teachers were written in a gender neutral style and consequently all references to 'motherly love' were eliminated. This curriculum forms the basis for the individual syllabus of the higher education institutions, which have autonomy in this area. The curriculum is based on developing and strengthening competences and attitudes such as decision-making skills; critical thinking; inquisitiveness; organisational skills; co-operative skills; sense of responsibility; flexibility (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009).

Competence specifications:

- Supporting young children in their learning and development processes, taking into account the starting situation of the group and each child's context;
- Setting achievable and challenging general and specific goals;
- Choosing curricular learning areas and experiences;
- Providing stimulating materials and adopting appropriate didactic approaches;
- Working autonomously and expressing himself/herself in 'Standard Dutch';
- Creating an agreeable, challenging, structured and safe environment to play, live and learn, paying attention to the social and emotional development of the children, the physical wellbeing of the group and the individual child;
- Employing a holistic approach, showing respect for the social, cultural and language diversity of the group and promoting empowerment, individual development and social participation;
- Having thorough knowledge both about developmental issues and the curriculum (Dutch, Mathematical Initiation, Lifeworld Orientation, Arts and Cultural Education, Physical Education and Cross-curricular themes), including the learning goals stipulated by the Minister of Education;
- Implementing an integrated approach, including digital technologies, and promoting digital literacy;
- Following trends and innovations with a healthy sense of criticism.
- Drawing up an activity plan that is both child and goal centred;
- Managing the expected administrative tasks;
- Taking responsibility for professionalism and innovation based on appropriate theoretical frameworks and academic research;
- Communicating with parents/caregivers about the child, school and education and involving them in the classroom and school life;
- Working in a team in a collaborative way and assuming responsibility for the implementation of school policy;
- Establishing contact and collaborating with education related initiatives and other partners;
- Participating in the public debate concerning educational topics and the role and place of the educator in society;
- Reflecting critically and in an open-minded way on developments in policy and politics, economics, cultural aesthetics and science.

Pedagogical Coach (*Pedagogisch Coach*)

Competence specifications (Bachelor: Pedagogy of the Young Child):

- *Educating*: creating a stimulating pedagogical and social climate in the group: positive, safe, healthy, hygienic, well-structured, child-oriented; responding sensitively to the basic needs of each child and supporting basic trust.
- *Supporting the holistic development of the child*: fostering interaction; using observation and documentation methodology to create a stimulating environment for the child.
- *Bridging the ECEC setting and the home environment*: guaranteeing a continuum between the child's family setting and the ECEC setting; organising pedagogical practice in cooperation with the centre staff and in dialogue with the parents on the basis of the individuality of each child, a clear set of values and a coherent vision.
- *Involving parents as partners*: establishing a confidential relationship with each parent in the interest of the child; working in partnership with parents based on professional expertise and respecting the parents as experts on the child.
- *Supporting the professional development of each staff member and of the team*: stimulating and motivating staff members to participate in professional development activities;

- trying to increase pedagogical competencies at the team level; emphasising the importance of partnerships with parents; acting as a role model for the team by reflecting on daily pedagogical practices and creating a learning community.
- *Co-constructing a social-pedagogical approach*: realising the social-pedagogical aims of the ECEC centre together with the multidisciplinary team; actively creating the conditions for a learning community at the team level.
 - *Involving external partners*: working in a proactive way in the local social context; initiating cooperative projects with external partners (e.g. neighbourhood and welfare organisations, schools...).
 - *Social orientation*: being aware of the societal importance of his or her profession and actively following relevant developments in society, in government policy and in the sector of ECEC at the regional and international levels (examples of interesting practice, research).
 - *Reflecting and innovating*: together with the staff team, co-constructing and implementing new pedagogical knowledge and integrating it into the policy of the service; using research based findings to create innovative pedagogical practices.
 - *Managing diversity*: being aware of personal values and beliefs and acting with respect towards the cultural, ethnic and gender identity of others (children, parents, staff and external partners); supporting the development of each child's identity.

The curriculum of this new Bachelor's degree also includes the coaching of employees with lower qualifications.

Childcare Worker (*Begeleider Kinderopvang / Kinderverzorger*)

For Childcare Workers in the Flemish Community, the required level of qualification is EQF level 4. Two programmes are relevant. One is a form of vocational education ('BSO') comprising a three-year training at the post-secondary level (18 plus 1). This IPS approach is embedded within a long history of occupational work with a focus on health/hygiene. On completion, students receive a diploma at EQF level 4.

The other option is a qualifying adult education course for Childcare Workers, which was introduced in 2003. This adult education programme at secondary level is very popular with non-qualified Childcare Workers and those completing the course are much in demand by employers. On completion, students receive a certificate at EQF level 5.

A new competence profile for the **Childcare Worker** has recently been developed and has had positive feedback from the advisory board of the Governmental organisation *Kind en Gezin* (2016). The competence profile consists of six clusters, as shown in *Box 2* below.

Box 2

Belgium, Flemish Community: Competence profile for Childcare Workers

<p>Cluster 1: Being able to educate and care for individual children and for a group of children and support their development. The Childcare Worker is able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to meet the basic needs of each child, to follow the rhythm of each child, to be sensitive and responsive towards children, with an approach tailored to each individual child; • to give children appropriate holistic developmental opportunities based on the child's strengths, with attention and respect for the child's self-regulation and autonomy: to create a stimulating learning and living environment; to encourage children to improvise and express themselves creatively, stimulating well-being and involvement; • to create an atmosphere of positive social relationships in the group, to be able to structure and set limits; • to observe a group of children and individual children, to be able to reflect on the basis of the observations and to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt the pedagogical approach.
<p>Cluster 2: Being able to cooperate with the child's family as partner in the educational process. The Childcare Worker is able:</p>

- to recognise and value the family as a partner in the education of the child, with an openness towards differing pedagogical values;
- to create a relation of trust with the family;
- to develop, together with the family, a coherent approach towards the child, starting from the idea that the family knows the child best;
- to actively ask the family for feedback about the childcare arrangements and to deal with responses in a constructive way;
- to stimulate mutual relationships with parents.

Cluster 3: Being able to cooperate with external persons and institutions on behalf of the wellbeing of the child.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to participate with children and/or families in activities in the neighbourhood;
- to work with external persons or institutions at the request of the parents regarding the special needs of children.

Cluster 4: Being able to cooperate with colleagues and Pedagogical Coaches.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to discuss pedagogical approaches towards working with individual children or a group of children and to deal with families, colleagues and external persons; to exchange information and to debate; to organise something together; to give feedback and to deal with feedback;
- to work according to the policy statement of the organisation.

Cluster 5: Being able to reflect on pedagogical practice and improving that practice accordingly.

The Childcare Worker is able:

- to reflect on one's own professional practice and to reflect with colleagues or under the guidance of the Pedagogical Coach within the four fields of action (child, family, team, community)
- To evaluate the reflection and, where necessary, make adaptations to professional practice.

Cluster 6: Being able to deal with the diversity of children, families, external persons and colleagues.

The childcare worker is able:

- to show respect for the identity and the diversity of others (children, families, external persons and colleagues) and to support children in developing respect for others;
- to deal with different values, to be conscious of one's own standards, values and attitudes towards children, families, external persons and colleagues.

Although the IPS programmes are expected to be based on this competence profile, this is not always fully visible in the programmes at the level of vocational secondary education (*7e jaar kinderzorg*).

French Community (FWB)

Pre-primary Teacher (*institutrice maternelle*)

The IPS of Pre-Primary Teachers in the French Community combines academic subjects, professional studies and social context studies. A common competence profile exists for pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers. The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a workload of 25 to 30 hours. Some forthcoming reforms could generate some changes (see *Section 6*).

Competence specifications for all teachers in the education system (Décret FI 2000 – MB 19/01/2001):

- Using knowledge of the human sciences for an accurate interpretation of situations encountered inside and outside the classroom and adapting school practices accordingly;
- Maintaining effective partnership relations with institutions, colleagues, and pupils' parents;
- Understanding their own role within the school and functioning in the profession as defined by the relevant laws;

- Internalising the disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge that underpins the work of teaching;
- Mastering the discipline's didactics which guide the teaching approach;
- Demonstrating a broad knowledge regarding general culture in order to awaken pupils' interest in the cultural world;
- Developing the relational skills commensurate with the profession's requirements;
- Understanding the ethical issues associated with day-to-day teaching practice;
- Working in teams;
- Developing, testing, evaluating and refining teaching aids;
- Maintaining critical and autonomous scientific reasoning;
- Planning, managing and evaluating learning situations;
- Reflecting on one's own practice and organising one's own professional development.

Each university college is required to organise the IPS for Pre-primary Teachers according to this official profile. Pedagogical methods and approaches are defined by members of the academic staff and presented in a pedagogical contract.

Childcare Worker (*puéricultrice*)

The *puéricultrices* in the French Community take a three-year upper secondary course, followed by one year of specialisation in working with infants and toddlers.

Competence specifications: It is expected that future Childcare Workers will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- guaranteeing care, hygiene and health;
- organising meals;
- organising sleeping;
- guaranteeing the children's safety and take the right measures in cases of child abuse;
- planning and organising activities according to the individuality of each child;
- organising appropriate interventions towards children and parents;
- supporting children in toilet-training
- developing a warm relationship with the child;
- planning and documenting professional practice for parents or colleagues;
- working in teams;
- communicating and constructing a professional relationship with parents;
- respecting ethical values.

German-speaking Community (DG)

Pre-primary Teachers complete a Bachelor-level degree at the *Autonome Hochschule*, the only higher education institution in the German-speaking Community. Initial professional studies combine professional basic knowledge, scientific approaches, generic and subject-specific as well as didactic training, and links between theory and practice. The total course comprises 180 ECTS points (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a work load of 25 to 30 hours. The practical component accounts for 43 credits.

Competence specifications: Pre-primary Teachers should be able to...

- communicate clearly and correctly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing;
- include both cultural/intellectual heritage as well as a critical examination and interpretation of facts and cultural assets in their professional approach and foster openness for cultural and linguistic diversity;
- listen to and observe the children and accept them as a person by consciously discerning their holistic educational needs as well as their socio-cultural needs in order to foster their search for identity, their independence and their sense of responsibility;

- consistently extend and deepen fundamental knowledge acquired within the subject areas, including the historical, scientific and health-promoting aspects;
- design the educational process as an active learning experience of discovery, while at the same time making clear decisions in relation to aims, fields of knowledge, learning and teaching methods, evaluation and certification within the framework of legal requirements;
- pursue one's own activities in close cooperation with the families, school authorities, education and cultural institutions as well as the community's interest groups within the framework of legal requirements;
- while respecting the individuality of the children, complete tasks related to the achievement and evaluation of developmental goals and competencies, both individually and together as a team;
- use information and communication technologies and integrate them into the preparation and managing of teaching and learning activities in the classroom as well as in their own professional development;
- develop a professional identity, handle complexity, uncertainty, conflicts, and setbacks professionally as well as understanding group dynamics and the functioning of organisations;
- reflect both individually and as a team on professional development needs both in terms of individual advancement and institutional innovation and assessing the ethical challenges related to the profession.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Flemish Community

The training for Pre-primary Teachers and the Bachelor study programme 'Pedagogy of the Young Child' are also organised as adult education in a format which enables the students to combine work and studying. Work experience with children and parents is taken into account in assessments and may lead to a shortening of course length.

French Community (FWB)

The system is characterised by little permeability and there are only a few alternative entry and qualification routes at the vocational qualification (upper secondary) level. The candidate's previously acquired competences are not taken into account when studying to become a *puéricultrice*. In terms of the higher education study programmes, some measures have been developed to relax the entry requirements of IPS (for example to become a Pre-primary Teacher). Staff at the IPS institutions can examine the former experiences of the student and in some cases give extra credits so that the student can follow a shorter track. This system of previously acquired competences (*VAE, Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience*) was implemented in universities at the end of 2009.

German-speaking Community (DG)

The German-speaking Nursing Care Union in Belgium (*Deutschsprachige Krankenpflegevereinigung Belgiens*) offers one-year qualifying adult education courses for Childcare Workers. There are no formal entry requirements. Participants are selected on the basis of an interview.

4. Field-based component in the IPS of core practitioners

Flemish Community

Pre-primary Teacher (*Leraar Kleuteronderwijs*)

According to guidelines of the Flemish department of education, the field-based component in the IPS of prospective Pre-primary Teachers consists of at least 45 ECTS points. These 45 credits (usually more) are spread across the curriculum, and are progressive in volume and complexity. The work experience can be structured as a ribbon placement throughout the semesters (one day weekly) or in blocks of one, two or five weeks. University colleges are free to implement their own system. These placements are mentored and evaluated by an experienced teacher in the pre-primary setting and by tutors at the university college. This mentoring role is taken on by motivated Pre-primary Teachers who coach students voluntarily, i.e. without additional payment.

Recent debate in education has focused on the issue of reducing the gap between IPS and the daily work of teachers. Steps towards the creation of intensive partnerships between university colleges and pre-primary and primary schools are being taken, with the purpose of sharing knowledge, training future teachers with a common vision, co-creating ownership and maximising the efficiency of learning communities.

Pedagogical Coach (*Bachelor Pedagogie van het Jonge Kind*)

The situation is similar to the field-based component of the Pre-primary Teacher. The three university colleges which provide the Bachelor study programme 'Pedagogy of the young child' (Erasmus University College Afstandsonderwijs; Artevelde University College Switch; Karel De Grote University College Flex) all have a field-based component. University colleges are free to implement their own approach. In general, there is a study route for graduates with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in the same area (education or social work) who have no work experience in ECEC, a route for students with work experience and a similar Bachelor's or Master's degree, and a route for students with work experience and a diploma at the secondary vocational level. The university colleges also take into account previously acquired competences (Accreditation of Prior Learning, APL). In such cases the student has to provide a portfolio with documentary evidence of previously acquired learning experiences.

Childcare Worker (*Begeleider Kinderopvang/ Kinderverzorger*)

The field-based component in the IPS of Childcare Workers is organised by Centres of Adult Education.

- The course itself encompasses in total 1,280 hours, 640 hours of which are dedicated to working in a childcare centre as an intern. The learning pathways are personalised for each student. A standard learning trajectory lasts two years or four semesters. In each semester the student attends course lectures for 160 hours and works in a childcare centre for 160 hours. They can do this at the organisation where they previously worked.
- The training institutions are autonomous in deciding how to organize the link between practice and theory. Some institutions decide to intertwine both, others require the completion of the theoretical part before starting the internship.

Schools for vocational secondary education (*Kinderzorg route*) also organise practical courses for those who already work in childcare. In a recent circular (Vlaamse Regering, 2015), the Flemish Minister of Education stated that the schools themselves and the umbrella organisations of the educational networks are fully responsible for the development of pedagogical plans, including the organisation of internships. There are no formal requirements regarding the field-based component. The field based component makes up 30% of the different curricula of the educational networks.

French Community (FWB)

Pre-primary Teacher (*Institutrice maternelle*)

A third of the ECTS points in the IPS of Pre-primary Teachers are dedicated to field-based studies and analyses of practice. At least 26 ECTS points throughout the IPS are dedicated to placements in pre-primary settings: two weeks in the first year (2 ECTS points each), four weeks in the second year (3 ECTS points each) and ten weeks in the final year (10 ECTS points). Students must be accompanied by tutors employed by the university college: at least one visit per week during placement periods from the second year onwards. They also have a mentoring teacher (*maître de stage*) who signs a covenant with the IPS institution that sets out a variety of partnerships in a range of professional settings.

The university colleges also organise professional workshops (10 ECTS points) to strengthen the link between practice and theory. These workshops are guided not only by university college tutors, but also by tutors who spend at least half of their working time in a pre-primary setting. Each university college can organise the field-based component of IPS according to specified guidelines (Decree focused on IPS of teachers, MB 19-01-2001). Forthcoming reforms could generate some organisational changes (see *Section 6*).

Childcare Worker (*Puéricultrice*)

According to the relevant legislation (*Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française du 6 septembre 2001*), 1,000 periods of 50 minutes (approx. 833 hours) must be dedicated to practical training in the field and focused on working with young children (up to 6 years). A further 1,000 periods should be dedicated to general teaching and 1,700 periods (approx. 1,416 hours) to technical and professional practice training at school - organised within three years. The law specifies different workplaces: childcare services, preschools, also maternity hospitals. At least 500 periods (approx. 416 hours) must be spent in a childcare service (*crèche, crèche parentale, préguardiennat, MCAE – Maison Communale d'accueil de l'Enfance, pouponnière*).

According to an official guideline (*Circulaire n° 5038 du 22/10/2014*), the head of the IPS institution appoints a tutor (*maître de stage*) for each student. This tutor is responsible for the preparation, pedagogical coaching and assessment of the practical training in the field. The tutor cooperates with a mentor (specified practitioner) in the ECEC services where the student is doing internship. External evaluation is conducted both by the tutor and the supervising practitioner; and there is a self-evaluation of the student. The mentoring practitioner is qualified, but is not trained specifically to accompany students. A contract must be signed by the IPS institution, the ECEC service and the student; this specifies the competencies and skills to be acquired. The student is required to maintain a regular written journal/portfolio (*carnet de stage*) with information and observations collected in the field (for example, observations about the learning environment, activities with children, children's behaviour). Since 2014, some projects have been financed by APEF (*Association Paritaire pour l'Emploi et la Formation*) to provide a framework for sustained cooperation between initial training institutes and ECEC services in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, with a view to improving tutoring and mentoring practices (François and Noël 2015a). An analysis of the tutoring practices resulted in the preparation of some guidelines (François, Noel, and Pirard 2015b). Students are accompanied by researchers (University of Liège) to conduct specific projects and to analyse the effect of these on the student's learning, the pedagogical coaching of the mentor and the tutor, and on the collaboration between initial training institutions and ECEC services. Research through video documentation shows how difficult it is for the tutor to support the reflective competencies of students in the field (Alonso Vilches and Pirard 2016; Alonso Vilches and Pirard forthcoming).

German-speaking Community (DG)

Pre-primary Teacher (*Kindergärtnerin*)

In the German-speaking Community, the field-based component in the IPS of prospective Pre-primary Teachers consists of at least 43 ECTS points. These 43 credits are spread across the curriculum, and are progressive in volume and complexity. The work experience is structured in blocks. These placements are mentored and evaluated by an experienced teacher in the ECE setting and by tutors at the university college. This mentoring role is taken on by motivated Pre-primary Teachers who coach students voluntarily, i.e. without additional payment.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

In Belgium there is an established tradition of pedagogical coaching to raise the level of professionalism in low qualified Childcare Workers. Such experimental approaches started in the 1980s and were supported by grants from the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In Flanders, the first coaching projects were set up in the 1990s in Ghent (Peeters 1993). These pedagogical counselling projects focus on practitioners as active actors in their own professionalisation process, which has a motivating effect on the learners (Peeters and Vandenbroeck 2011).

Across the country, Childcare Workers have many opportunities to participate in CPD activities. Specialised training centres offer a broad range of courses. The regional governments view the provision of professional development activities as part of their quality policy.

Flemish Community

Childcare sector

The recommendations of the CoRe project (Urban et al. 2011; Vandenbroeck, Urban, and Peeters 2016) have influenced new legislation on childcare. The new law (*Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters*; Vlaamse Regering 2014) states that every person who works with young children (from birth to 3 years) must be supported by a Pedagogical Coach. To implement this new law, a large-scale project on coaching was set up within independent childcare centres (Vlaamse Regering 2014). Nearly 50 Pedagogical Coaches, most of them graduates from the new Bachelor study programme (Pedagogy of the Young Child), started to conduct pedagogical coaching from 2015 onwards.

These coaches are employed in newly developed 'Pedagogical Support Centres' that receive funds for providing coaching to independent childcare centres and small scale services. This project will end in December 2017. Currently the governmental organisation *Kind en Gezin* is working on concrete plans for new formal regulations on the organisation of Pedagogical Coaching.

Currently, the sector is in a process of transition: a large scale research project (MEMOQ *Meten en Monitoren van de pedagogische kwaliteit van de kinderopvang* - Measuring and Monitoring the Pedagogical Quality of Childcare) developed a pedagogical framework for the 0-3 sector and investigated the pedagogical quality of the current Flemish childcare centres. Starting from these results, instruments for self-evaluation and inspection are now being developed and aligned with one another. During the coming years these instruments will be disseminated in the sector with the aim of quality improvement. Another important issue is the qualification requirement. Still a large part of the ECEC staff does not have the required qualification level and it remains unclear how they can update their qualification by 2024.

Apart from the above mentioned project on pedagogical coaching, individual child care centres can make use of a wide offer of training and coaching possibilities. Some of these are organised within their own umbrella organisation and therefore easily accessible for the services.

Others are organised by external training centres that are subsidised by the Flemish Government (FCUD) or by training centres that operate with private resources. Three organisations (Unizo, Voorzet, 't Opzet) offer specialised support for social entrepreneurs in childcare. *Kind en Gezin* is working on an ambitious plan to link all those different coaching projects to each other, in order to develop a policy on coaching for the whole childcare sector (0 to 3 and out of school).

Before the new Decree on Childcare, Childcare Workers were legally obliged to follow 12 hours per year of training. This regulation no longer exists, because providing pedagogical support for the staff is now the full responsibility of the management of the childcare centres.

Educational sector

Each pre-primary and primary school has to develop a training plan for the teachers. Schools need to follow-up on this plan otherwise they may lose their CPD budget. Notwithstanding, schools decide autonomously how to organise the plan. Consequently no minimum CPD hours are specified for the Pre-primary Teachers or Auxiliary Workers (Vlaamse Regering 2009). Only one collective pedagogical training day for all the teachers is obligatory (Vlaamse Regering 1991).

In Flanders, continuing professional development courses for Pre-primary Teachers (*Kleuteronderwijzers*) are provided mostly by the Community department of education, but also private organisations provide specialised courses in pedagogy, didactics, arts education, and so on. On-site professional development for teachers and teams in pre-primary schools is provided by educational guidance services (PBD – *Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst*) who coach individual persons or organisations. Each of the three educational umbrella organisations (private Catholic education, Flemish governmental education (go!) and municipal education) has its own educational guidance service, which ensures professional on-site support to schools and centres. Schools can call on them for educational and methodological advisory services (innovation projects, self-evaluation projects, support initiatives in the classroom) (Vlaamse Regering 2009). In recent years, increased pedagogical guidance has focused on teaching the Dutch language to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

French Community (FWB)

In the French Community, continuing professional development is mandatory (six half days per year) for all teachers, including **Pre-primary Teachers**. CPD is also compulsory for Childcare Workers, but not according to a specified period of time, and there are no measures in place for providing substitute staff while a colleague is engaged in CPD.

Since 2003, two public offices have been responsible for the regulating and funding of CPD provision: one is the governmental organisation *ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance)*, which provides an annual continuing development plan for all childcare practitioners according to an official three year programme approved by the government; the other is the IFC (*Institut de Formation encours de Carrière Inter-réseaux*), which offers an annual programme for all teachers, including Pre-primary Teachers. IFC has a contract of collaboration with ONE. As in the Flemish Community, each of the three educational umbrella organisations (service provider organisations) has its own educational guidance service for providing on-site CPD activities.

The IFC gives priority to providing CPD support to Pre-primary Teachers conducting specific projects. One of these titled '*Décollage*' aims at supporting the children's current level of development rather than expecting them to repeat the school year. It proposes observation and assessment tools and provides opportunities for sharing experiences and discussing appropriate ways of supporting children's progress (for the age-group 2½ to 8 years). Another project focuses on reading skills (*Plan lecture*). It aims to assign a key person in each *école maternelle* who is responsible for children's reading activities, including emergent literacy support through children's literature. A further project focuses on the identification and analysis of

learning problems at the beginning of preschool. It questions and underlines the learning opportunities in the activities organised by Pre-primary Teachers. It shows how these activities can combine playing and learning goals.

In 2003, *ONE* subsidised 739 CPD days (654,000€) for **Childcare Workers**. By 2015, the budget had doubled: 1,483 days were subsidised with 1,363,778.75€. Funding was used for different kinds of in-service training: specified sessions (from one to six days focused on a predefined topic); nomadic sessions (from one to six days focused on a topic and organised in a space negotiated with the participants); and pedagogical coaching in teams (in childcare services or a network of services, at least eight participants) where both the topic and the organisation can be negotiated with the training organisation.

Not all practitioners and centre heads in private childcare services, particularly those who are older than 50, attend CPD activities. Several reasons have been highlighted: small teams, low level of qualification and shortcomings of resources in the private childcare services (Fiasse, Bribosia, and Thirion 2015). Pedagogical coaching for a team in childcare services seems a better way of involving all practitioners than individual CPD sessions. Currently there are various coaching sessions offered by *ONE* which focus on curriculum issues and recent legislation (Code de Qualité de l'Accueil, 1999, revised in 2004), aiming to enhance quality development in childcare settings.

Since 2001, the inspectorate role of *ONE* has been significantly expanded and broadened. Beyond its traditional controlling/monitoring and supervisory functions it now includes an advisory approach towards staff development and mentoring. The 'inspectors' (*inspecteurs*) were renamed 'coordinators' (*coordinateurs*) and a new function has been created: 'pedagogical advisers' (*conseillers pédagogiques*) who collaborate with the coordinators in pedagogical coaching. This historical shift raises new issues, such as how to combine monitoring, evaluation and guidance. The newer focus on the educational function of child care, along with the new emphasis on pedagogical counselling, marks a decrease in bureaucratic control systems. According to one of the leading administrators of *ONE*, the emphasis on pedagogical coaching does not imply that standards or basic quality criteria will matter less. The assumption is that if supervision and pedagogical coaching are combined, appreciation for these standards will increase (Sommer and Vanvarembeghe 2002). This evolution underlines the emergence of a culture of professionalisation that views competence as the central theme in educational work, based on the hypothesis that action and actors can be jointly and simultaneously transformed (Pirard and Barbier 2012; Pirard, Camus, and Barbier, forthcoming).

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, it is stipulated by law that regular participation in continuous training is part of a teachers' job. In-service courses for Pre-primary Teachers are held by the Education Unit of the Community's Department of Education (Eurydice/Eurostat 2009), and they also have the possibility to take part in CPD sessions offered by other organisations.

During the career entry phase (three school years), Pre-primary Teachers (*Kindergärtnerinnen*) take part in eight meetings per school year with staff of the *Autonome Hochschule*, experienced Pre-primary Teachers, and other young professionals. The topics discussed in these meetings are chosen by the young professionals. They can bring forward specific cases they struggle with or ask more general questions on teaching and education.

In ECEC, childcare services are legally bound to offer at least 10 hours per year of complimentary further training to their staff (*Erlass der Regierung vom 22. Mai 2014 über die Dienste und andere Formen der Kinderbetreuung*).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Flemish and French Community (FWB)

It is well known that the workforce professionalisation in Belgium is falling behind according to European or OECD standards (OECD 2006; UNICEF 2008). Two major problems are common to the Flemish and French Communities: the low qualification requirements for Childcare Workers, and the fact that the training for managing child care centres hardly prepares them for this job. In addition, more specifically for the Flemish Community, a third and growing concern is the number of unqualified workers in the childcare sector.

Qualification of Childcare Workers

Childcare Workers in the **Flemish Community** receive a post-secondary training (18 plus 1) after completing seven years of secondary vocational school. This particular form of IPS is embedded in a long history of paramedical and technical professionalism and is poorly adapted to considerations on the educational and social functions of child care (OECD 2006). Moreover, until very recently, Belgium was among the dwindling number of European countries where no Bachelor's degree exists for preparing the workforce to work with families and children below 3 years of age.

A study on professionalism in Flemish childcare and some international reports (Peeters 2008b; OECD 2006; UNICEF, 2008; Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010) made the case for a Bachelor's degree to break the cycle of deprofessionalisation. Examples of interesting practice in France, Denmark, Italy and Ghent (Peeters 2008a; Vandenbroeck et al. 2016) have shown that professionals with a Bachelor's degree seem to be able to pass on the 'reflective practitioner' attitude to colleagues with only a secondary-level education. Therefore *Kind en Gezin* – in collaboration with experts – drafted a profile for a new Bachelor's degree. In September 2011, the initial training course 'Bachelor for the pedagogy of the young child', with more than 200 students in the first year, was established in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent and in 2014 the first graduates took up a post as Pedagogical Coach. Graduates of this 'Pedagogy for the Young Child' course can not only fill staff positions in childcare facilities, but also collaborate with colleagues who have lower qualifications in order to refine the pedagogical programme of the ECEC setting. Another important task for these new Bachelor graduates will be to provide pedagogical support for family day carers and to supervise those who are in the process of obtaining a qualification.

In April 2014, a new law on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds came into force (*Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters*), requiring everyone working in childcare to be qualified by 2024. Another important aspect of this new law is the attention it gives to pedagogical guidance as a tool to increase individual competencies, particularly in the case of non-qualified workers. According to the new law every provider of childcare is required to guarantee pedagogical guidance for all the employed childcare workers.

In 2013, two resource centres in the Flemish Community (*VBJK, Vernieuwing in de Basisvoorzieningen voor Jonge Kinderen* (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) and *CEGO, Centrum voor Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs* (Centre for Experiential Education) developed instruments for the childcare sector, training centres and pedagogical research centres that will be useful for pedagogical counsellors or coaches, including a 40-hour training module for family day carers.

In the **French Community**, reforms are forthcoming both in the education and childcare sector. Relevant research recommendations are under examination, and task forces have been organised to propose specific strategies for change in the future. In 2017, the Minister for Higher Education declared a reform of the IPS for of teachers (including Pre-primary Teachers) in the school sector: the duration should be longer (four instead of three years) and the collaboration

between university colleges and universities should be reinforced. No decision has been made for the childcare sector.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, the Decree of 14th March 2014 on Childcare implements the EU-directive 2006/123/EG in services in the internal market. On 22nd May 2014, a new Government Decree on services for childcare was implemented (*Erlass der Regierung über die Dienste und andere Formen der Kinderbetreuung*) based on needs arising from demographical and societal changes. This new decree provides, for example, a legal basis for establishing day nurseries for children under age 3 and provides a framework for the implementation of a shared conceptual orientation of all childcare services.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

The Belgian communities have been influenced in particular by two European studies: one commissioned by the European Commission on the competence requirements to work in ECEC (Urban, et al. 2011; Vandebroek, Urban, and Peeters 2016) and another commissioned by Eurofound - a systematic review on the effect of continuous professional development on quality and children's outcomes (Peeters et al. 2015).

Investing in continuous professional development

Flemish Community

Source: Peeters, J. and C. De Kimpe. 2017 (see *References* for full details)

Aims: Development of a research-based system of continuous professional development and development of a group reflection tool ('Wanda')

Procedure: Since 2008 several Flemish (case) studies have been conducted on professionalism in ECEC as a part of European research projects (Peeters 2008; CoRe 2011; Peeters et al. 2015; Vandebroek, Urban, and Peeters 2016). One of the main findings was that practitioners are in need of a method for critical reflection in groups. Inspired by '*analyse de pratique*' and '*appreciative inquiry*', and the Italian approach towards '*documentation*' (Malavasi and Zoccatelli 2013), a reflection method was developed and successfully validated together with staff in the ECEC sector (Sharmahd et al. 2013, 2016).

Recently, a case study of ECEC centres in Flanders operating as learning communities was conducted (Peeters and De Kimpe 2017). This research is integrating former results of research on professionalism and CPD and formulates five characteristics of ECEC centres that are open for improving quality.

Outcomes: The research on coaching and the development of Wanda and also the project-related book on documentation (Malavasi and Zoccatelli 2013) had an important impact on the 2014 Decree on Childcare, which included pedagogical coaching as a guaranteed right for childcare practitioners. The results of the recent study on professional learning communities will be the starting point for projects around CPD in ECEC centres.

Analysing the quality of the ECEC workforce

Flemish Community

Sources: Van Laere, K. 2017 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Strengthening competences to work in educare in a context of superdiversity

Procedure: In this PhD study, researchers focused alternately on European and Flemish fields of preschool education as compelling cases in relation to the alleged equalising potential of preschool education. By taking three different perspectives (parents, policies, preschool staff), they examined how care and education were conceptualised. In order to examine the policy perspectives, an analysis of policy documents in 15 European countries from 2010 and 2011 was conducted. In a subsequent study, ten focus groups were organised in the autumn of 2014 and spring of 2015 with parents with migrant backgrounds (n=66) in Ghent, Brussels, and Antwerp. In addition, six video-elicited focus groups (n=69) with diverse preschool staff in the cities of Ghent and Brussels were organised. In adopting a participatory approach, it was discovered how our study demonstrates the heterogeneity of possible meaning-making in preschool education by parents and staff. The stories resulting from the research show a continuum in which some participants, especially parents and teacher's assistants problematised the lack of care in preschool education - building on a conceptual coexistence of caring and learning, while at the other side of the continuum participants understood care as a burden for preschool education - building on a conceptual hierarchy between learning and caring. This conceptual hierarchy could also be identified in the policy documents of several European countries with regard to the workforce profiles of preschool teachers and teacher's assistants. Irrespective of whether or not teachers engaged in care, there was a clear consensus that care in preschool education did not fundamentally belong in the professional repertoire of teachers. This could also be related to the fact that care signifies a devaluation of the preschool teacher profession, historically associated with lower qualified women assumed to 'naturally care' for child.

Outcomes: This study encompasses many recommendations for international and Belgian ECEC policies and practices on different levels. It should be noted that Ghent University and VBJK, Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, have been working on putting these recommendations in practice. Throughout different action research projects, further research, organising conferences³ and consultancy, a continuous dialogue has been established with several actors in the field of ECEC as well as civil society and social policy makers, to discuss the results of this study and rethink preschool pedagogy and ECEC professionalism. The commission of education of the Flemish Parliament will visit Denmark to study the pedagogue training and visit educare settings in which practitioners do integrate caring and learning. Moreover, the Flemish departments of education, welfare and integration are developing actions to smooth the transition to preschool and establish dialogue between the childcare sector and the preschool sector to discuss quality and professionalism in ECEC.

French Community (FWB)

From 2011 to 2015, three participative research programmes were funded to analyse the quality of the workforce: one in school (preschool included, De Graef et al. 2012) and two others in childcare and out-of-school services (Cesar et al. 2012; Pirard et al. 2015).

Improving the initial professional studies of (Pre-primary) Teachers

Source: De Graef, V., A. Franssen and L. Van Campenhout. 2012 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study aimed to improve the initial professional studies of teachers in general, including Pre-primary Teachers.

Procedure: The method of group analysis was used, involving 600 stakeholders and more than 100 interviews with students, trainers, assistants, mentors, managers of school, inspectors. The resulting stories of concrete experience were then co-analysed by 112 people. 300 additional persons were included in the discussion of the findings of this participative research

³ 22nd September 2017 – *School ready children or child ready preschools?* – Conference in Ghent for Flemish policy makers and ECEC practitioners

programme. In total, a thousand actors took part in the research process that required diverse profiles of participants and developed an inductive analysis.

Findings: While participants are asked how to improve the initial training of teachers, they underline the importance of defining first a new job profile for teachers, one which relates to the purpose of the teaching profession, the working conditions and societal developments. Despite the existence of a job profile (see *Section 3.2*) and the availability of a lot of texts on this subjects, there is no consensus on what a teacher should be at the end of the initial training: practitioners ready to teach or with a theoretical and practical basis which can be reinforced?

Conclusions/implications: The need for a broader perspective on professional development is emphasised, one that takes an integrative perspective on initial professional studies, the induction period and continuing professional development. Teachers cannot be expected to be ready to cope with all the challenges of their job when they have just finished their initial training programme. It is suggested that IPS could be improved through supporting students to gradually become reflexive practitioners and social actors in the society. This has implications for both the theoretical and field-based components of IPS. Improving the IPS of prospective teachers also requires improving the training of their trainers. Finally, links between action and research as well as collaboration between initial training institutes and universities need to be reinforced. It is suggested that the duration of teachers' initial education/training (including that of Pre-primary Teachers) should be extended from three years to four, and be open for new perspectives.

Improving the initial professional studies of Childcare Workers

Source: César A., A. Dethier, N. François, A. Legrand and F. Pirard. 2012 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study aimed to provide evidence for the improvement of the initial professional studies of Childcare Workers in both early childhood and leisure-time centres, and for the managers of childcare services, and to analyse the main training curricula in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Procedure: The research procedures included documentary analysis of the curricula, two workshops for 150 participants focused on the core professional competences expected in Wallonia Brussels Federation and in Europe generally (drawing on the CoRe study), and consultation through questionnaires and focus groups with stakeholders (practitioners, trainers, representatives of trade unions and other experts).

Findings: Analysis of the data shows a gap between the curricular requirements and the expectations of stakeholders in the light of social change. Too many short training courses have been set up without effective professional development perspectives and without a consistent approach regarding the aims of childhood pedagogy. Both the level and orientation of current IPS programmes are not fit for purpose. A psycho-educational approach needs to be developed beyond the traditional social and hygienic goals. Opportunities for flexible qualification pathways and for career progression need to be developed. Working conditions need to provide opportunities for sustained reflection on practice with children, parents, other professionals and stakeholders within a systemic view of professionalisation.

Defining core competences of Childcare Workers and Childcare Managers

Source: Pirard, F., A. Dethier, N. François, and E. Pools. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The aim of this study was to define core competences of Childcare Workers in early childhood and leisure time centres, as well as of those in a management position.

Procedure: Analyses of the educational and training systems in France, Flanders, England and Sweden were conducted in collaboration with experts from these countries. Four workshops and conferences with a focus on each country were organised and 150 participants (practitioners, trainers, representatives of trade unions and other experts) received questionnaires and took part in focus groups. Most of these persons had already been involved in the first

research programme (see above), but some new participants from university colleges were also included.

Findings: The analyses of the data confirmed the results of the first research programme. The final research report proposed six principles to reform initial professional studies and continuing professional development in WBF:

- (1) identifying a professional position that can be understood from the parental position;
- (2) promoting a holistic approach that respects the children's needs and rights and takes into account their relationships;
- (3) identifying different work tasks which need developing (not only in the work with children, but also with families, with other professionals and the community);
- (4) taking care of all children and their families with respect to diversity;
- (5) considering and promoting relational/interpersonal and reflective attitudes beyond technical skills and
- (6) viewing taking care of children and working with their parents as a non-gender-specific competence.

Three interconnected competences were identified both in childcare (0-3 years) and out-of-school (0-12 years) services: relational, organisational and reflective competencies of practitioners. The competences of managers are based on a multidisciplinary approach and are related to those of the practitioners. The research report concludes with 12 recommendations for reforming the initial professional studies system. One of them is the creation of a Bachelor's degree focusing on childcare education for children from 0 to 12 that could be followed by a Master's degree dedicated to the management of childcare services. In 2015, ONE approved the research report and made it accessible on its website. Although several activities have since taken place with the aim of disseminating and reflecting on the recommendations (conferences) and considering implementation possibilities (informal meetings with administration representatives), as of May 2017 no official decisions had been reached regarding the childcare sector.

8. General workforce issues

The following information applies to all three Communities unless otherwise stated.

8.1 Remuneration

Pre-primary Teachers in Belgium receive salaries equivalent to those of primary and lower secondary teachers (OECD 2012). The salaries are comparable to other jobs that require a Bachelor's degree and are sufficient for living as a single parent in a major city. The salaries of Childcare Workers are lower but still enough for living on as a single parent.

The salary of staff in childcare centres with a Bachelor-level qualification is comparable to that of a Pre-primary Teacher.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

A full-time job in pre-primary settings comprises 26 hours per week of teaching, including six hours non-contact time, whereas in childcare services a full-time week comprises 38 hours, with no specified non-contact time.

69% of teachers in pre-primary settings across Belgium work full-time; there are no recent data on the proportion of full-time or part-time jobs in childcare services.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Flemish Community

The city of Ghent has a tradition of organising courses for new staff in childcare settings and also group trainings for staff in new childcare centres (Peeters, De Kimpe, and Brants 2016), but this is not the case for the whole of Flanders.

In contrast to the tradition of the 'lone teacher' approach, in recent years pre-primary and primary schools have been increasingly investing in new collaborative forms of teaching such as co-teaching, professionals visiting each other's classes, or learning networks with teachers of other pre-primary settings (Sharmahd et al. 2017)

French Community (FWB)

There are no official support measures, neither in the pre-primary nor in the childcare sector - they depend on the individual setting and its management.

German-speaking Community (DG)

Rapid societal change is confronting the pre-primary institutions and schools with challenges. The qualification and motivation of the staff are essential pillars of the educational system. In May 2015, the government of the German-speaking Community therefore launched the concept of 'Good staff for good education' (*Gutes Personal für gute Schulen*) in order to create an optimal framework that allows schools to respond best to those challenges. The concept focuses on strengthening the school's autonomy, fostering teamwork within the educational system, supporting young professionals, and developing new ways of career development.

In childcare services there are no official support measures - they depend on the service and its management.

8.4 Non-contact time

Flemish Community

In some Flemish cities there is a regulation of paid non-contact hours in childcare centres, but no general national regulations exist and there is no detailed information available. In pre-primary education, teachers have labour contracts of 26 hours. They need to teach at least 1,200 minutes per week (24 'lesson hours' of 50 minutes). That means they have 360 minutes left or approx. six hours per week for non-contact time. The school decides how this time will be spent.

French Community (FWB)

In the *écoles maternelles*, a required 26 periods per week are dedicated to teaching and 60 periods of 50 minutes per year (50 hours) to staff meetings (Decree about organisation of pre-school and primary school 1998, revised in 2008). There are no regulations for time allocated to preparation work: it depends on the personal organisation of the practitioner.

Puéricultrices who work in pre-primary settings work as auxiliary staff, partly with teachers and children in the classroom (1,400 minutes max.), partly alone with the children to help them eating or to supervise their free time (100 minutes) and partly without children to take part in meetings with teachers, parents and specialised centres (*centre psycho medico social*) (100 minutes) (Circulaire 2251).

Time allocated for preparation work, staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities in childcare services is unpaid.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the German-speaking Community, there is no regulation of paid non-contact hours in either pre-primary education or in childcare centres.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Flemish Community

There are currently no staff shortages in the Flemish Community for the childcare sector. However, in big cities like Antwerp and Brussels, a significant shortage of pre-primary staff is expected in the near future. Some local governments such as Antwerp have developed plans to attract more teachers in the future.

French Community (FWB)

There are currently no staff shortages in the French community, neither in the pre-primary nor in the childcare sector.

German-speaking Community (DG)

In the DG, minor staff shortages in both in the pre-primary and the childcare sectors may occur if staff resign in the near future.

However, the after-school care services for 3- to 12-year olds faces major staff shortages. This has resulted in almost one third of the staff working in after-school care being unqualified.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Flemish Community

Up-skilling unqualified staff

Although the new Law on Childcare in Flanders stipulates that every Childcare Worker should be qualified, three years after the Law came into force, a specific plan for providing all unqualified persons with a pathway towards qualification is still missing. On another level, the university colleges that have started with the new Bachelor study programmes have expressed disappointment that no requirements were included in the law regarding hiring persons with a Bachelor's degree to work with very young children. This is problematic for the employment of the graduates of this new initial education/training and indicates a number of related challenges for the future.

Diversity of staff

Regarding the Pre-primary Teachers, there is an ongoing discussion about the lack of diversity in the workforce (e.g. local municipality of Antwerp). There are few women from ethnic minorities and also very few male teachers. This is a problem especially in major cities, where sometimes the majority of children have a migration background but there are almost no teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. An ongoing study on the transition of poor and ethnic minority children (2.5 years old) between home and pre-primary settings shows that the communication between teachers and minority ethnic parents is complicated, partially due to this lack of diversity in the workforce (Van Laere 2017). Findings also show that measures are needed to strengthen the caring role of the pre-primary settings for the youngest children and to integrate care and education into a more holistic 'educare' approach.

French Community (FWB)

Similarly, in the French Community, a move towards a more holistic ‘educare’ approach for the ECEC system remains a challenge. Whereas some research programmes on quality and qualifications have been funded and reforms on how to improve the qualifications of all practitioners in the ECEC field are under discussion, there is no guarantee that investments will be made in this sector. Debate on the qualification of Pre-primary Teachers has been included in reform discussions of initial education/training programmes, but not in relation to the initial professional studies required for Childcare Workers and their managers.

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BELGIUM

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Jan Peeters and colleagues for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Belgium – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 73-91.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Belgium is a federal and multilingual country comprising

- three autonomous Regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region, Brussels Capital Region),
- three language Communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking), and
- four language areas (Dutch, French, German, and French-Dutch in the Brussels Capital Region).

Each Region and language Community has its own system of early childhood education and care. While some contextual data apply for the country as a whole, most vary according to the Region/Community and where this is the case, each language Community will be presented separately.

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Belgium is organised as a split-sector system. Different ministerial authorities are responsible for provision for children under 2½ years of age (childcare sector) and for children from 2½ years up to compulsory schooling at age 6 (education sector).

Regarding the education system, responsibilities were devolved to the three Communities in 1984. Only the age for starting and completing compulsory schooling and the minimum requirements for qualification awards are still determined at the federal level. Consequently, the federal government has only limited prerogatives in terms of education.

Flemish Community

Pre-primary education for children aged 2½ to 6 years comes under the auspices of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (*Vlaams ministerie van onderwijs en vorming*). Childcare provision for younger children is the responsibility of the Ministry for Welfare, Families and Equal Opportunities (*Ministerie van Welzijn, Gezin en Gelijke Kansen*) and is managed by the Flemish government agency 'Child and Family' (*Kind en Gezin*). The agency is also responsible for implementation strategies but is not a provider of childcare services. Municipal, private non-profit and private for-profit providers are responsible for the running of provision.

French Community

Responsibility for pre-primary education, primary schools and further education lies with the Parliament of the French Community. Pre-primary institutions for children aged 2½ to 6 years come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation*).

Childcare provision for children below the age of 2½ years comes under the responsibility of the Bureau for Birth and Childhood (*Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance - ONE*), an organisation affiliated to the Ministry for Culture and Childhood (*Ministère de la Culture et de l'Enfance*).

All childcare provision for children up to the age of 12 has to be approved by ONE. Together with the Community, regional administrative authorities supervise the management of the childcare buildings.

German-language Community

Kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. However, the Ministry of Family, Health and Social Affairs is responsible for the inspection of provision as well as funding, quality assurance and evaluation. The agency 'Services

for Children and Families' (*Dienst an Familie und Kind, DFK*) is responsible for administering these tasks.

ECEC settings for the under-threes are not viewed as educational settings. They are generally run by private, non-profit providers and come under the responsibility of the Ministry for Employment, Health and Social Affairs.

The Regional Centre for the Care of Young Children (*Regionalzentrum für Kleinkindbetreuung, RZKB*) is responsible for the administration and organisation of provision.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
Kind en Gezin 2015.
ONE 2017.
Peeters, J. and F. Pirard with colleagues 2017.
Statistik-Portal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017b.

General objectives and legislative framework

Since pre-primary education for 3- to 6-year olds is part of the education system in Belgium, the general objectives set out in the Decree on Primary Schools (1999) are applicable for both kindergartens and primary schools. Goals include the support and promotion of social-emotional, intellectual, psychomotor and artistic areas of learning. Legislation is mostly also valid for both kindergartens and primary schools.

The Constitution forms the overall framework, highlighting the freedom of education and the principle of equality of opportunity regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or religion.

Flemish Community

A new Government Decree on the organisation of childcare provision (*Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters*) came into effect in April 2014, to be fully implemented over a period of ten years. Since that date, all settings now have to have a licence and to be regularly inspected by the government agency *Kind en Gezin*. The legislation also stipulates that all persons working in childcare must possess a relevant qualification by 2024.

French Community

The overarching principles and goals of *ONE* are: 'Quality, Equality, Ethics, Continuity and Fair Treatment'. The agency supports children's development in the family and social community, and helps mothers and families in medical and social respects linked to the children's well-being.

German-speaking Community

According to the Government Decree on Childcare (2007), the most important goal is to offer each child according to his or her individual needs optimal chances for development, regardless of race, nationality, gender or ideology.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Kind en Gezin 2015.
ONE 2017.
Peeters, J., F. Pirard and colleagues 2017.
Statistik-Portal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017b.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Children aged 2½ to 6 years in Belgium are entitled to a free place in a pre-primary setting. The number of hours of entitlement varies according to the Community. Pre-primary education is not obligatory in general, only in some specific targeted cases. Compulsory schooling begins at age 6.

Flemish Community

In Flanders, 2½- to 6-year olds are entitled to a place in a pre-primary setting for 23-33 hours per week free of charge. Attendance is obligatory for a certain number of hours if the parents receive a school allowance. For example, a 3-year old has to attend the setting for at least 150 half-days per year.

French Community

Children aged 2½ years up to school entry have a free entitlement to 28 hours per week in a pre-primary setting.

German-speaking Community

In May 2015, a government decree on services and other forms of childcare came into force which stipulates that each family in need also has the right to a place in childcare for children under 2½ years of age.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
OECD 2017.

Main types of provision

Flemish Community

Childcare sector

Infant-toddler centres (*kinderdagverblijf*) for under 2½-year olds and all registered family day care staff are required, since April 2014, to have a licence; this is allocated if various requirements regarding the infrastructure, hygiene, safety and fire-protection measures, as well as the quality of staff qualifications are met, together with a confirmation provided by the municipality. The licences are inspected annually by *Kind en Gezin*; settings which cannot produce a licence have to close down. Infant-toddler centres are obliged to be open on 220 days per year and to guarantee opening times of at least 11 hours daily between 6:00 and 20:00.

In 2014, 65% of all childcare places for babies and toddlers in Flanders were provided by infant-toddler centres. A total of 2,058 centre-based settings provided 56,679 places; 5,827 home-based care settings provided 31,253 places. Beyond this, 328 age-integrated centres offered an additional 3,906 places.

Table 1

Belgium/Flemish Community: Number of settings and places for babies and toddlers, 2014**

	Number of settings	Number of places
Home-based settings	5,827	31,253
Centre-based settings	2,058	56,679
Age-integrated centre-based provision	328	3,906
Total number of babies and toddlers	8,213	91,838

Education sector

Since 2003, **kindergartens** (*kleuterschool*) have to comply with a new organisational structure of combined kindergarten/primary school. However, former independent (free-standing) kindergartens (less than 10% in 2011/12) may maintain their current organisation form. When children reach the age of 2½ they can be enrolled in a kindergarten at several points during the year (staggered entry). The settings open at the earliest at 8:00 and close at the latest at 17:00, with a one hour midday break. On Wednesday afternoons they are closed.

In 2015/2016, there were 162 free-standing kindergartens and 2,177 combined kindergartens and primary schools in Flanders, providing places for a total number of 269,740 children.

Table 2

Belgium/Flemish Community: Number of kindergarten settings and children enrolled, 2015/16****

	Number of settings	Number of children
Independent, free-standing kindergartens	162	
Primary schools with integrated kindergartens	2,177	
Total	2,339	269,740
Including: Special institutions and number of children enrolled	105	1,984

French Community

Childcare sector

Infant-toddler centres (*crèches*), municipal **children's houses** (*maisons communales d'accueil de l'enfance*) and registered **family day carers** are the main forms of provision for under 3-year olds. Each setting must have a licence from *ONE*. Infant-toddler centres are open throughout the year, usually from 7:00 until 18:30.

In 2015, 43,007 places (including home-based child care) were available for 165,509 children. 70.8% (30,464) were subsidised by *ONE* (see Table 3).

Table 3

Belgium/French Community: Number of settings and places for under 2½-year olds, 2015***

	Number of settings	Number of places
Settings subsidised by ONE		
Infant-toddler centres (<i>crèches</i>)	392	15,747
Day care centres (<i>prégardiennats</i>)	34	802
Municipal children's houses (<i>maisons communales d'accueil de l'enfance</i>)	197	3,356
Other forms	11	189
Home-based child care (<i>accueillant conventionné</i>)	2,671	10,370
Total subsidised settings/places	634 not including family day care 3,305 including family day care	20,094 not including family day care 30,464 including family day care
Settings not subsidised by ONE		
Children's houses (<i>maisons d'enfants</i>)	414	7,837
Sessional care (<i>haltes accueil</i>)	128	1,661
Independent family day carers (<i>accueillants et co-accueillants autonomes</i>)	771	3,045
Total non-subsidised settings/places	542 not including family day care	9,498 not including family day care

	Number of settings	Number of places
	1,313 including family day care	12,543 including family day care
Total subsidised and non-subsidised settings/places	1,176 not including family day care 4,618 including family day care	29,592 not including family day care 43,007 including family day care

Education sector

Kindergartens (*écoles maternelles*) are attended by children aged between 2½ and 6 years. They are open for 182 days a year over 37 weeks. They are usually open for nine half-days (on Wednesday afternoons they close), from at the earliest 8:30 until at the latest 16:00, with at least one hour's midday break. During the summer they are closed for two months. Many settings provide wrap-around facilities before and after attending kindergarten or during lunchtime.

German-speaking Community

Childcare sector

Under 3-year olds can be enrolled at a setting run by the non-profit Regional Centre for Babies and Toddlers (RZKB). Since 2015, there are two **infant-toddler centres** in the German-speaking Community – in 2016, 111 children were enrolled. They are open from 7:30 until 17:30 and close down for four weeks annually. Most under-threes are cared for in home-based settings. These are either organised by the RZKB (85 family day carers for up to 4 children each) or are independent and provide 10 hours care per day on 220 days in the year.

Education sector

Kindergartens are attended by 3- to 5- or 6-year olds. Children may be 2 years 8 months old when they start, since children whose third birthday falls by the end of December are admitted in September. Kindergartens are always attached to primary schools. Opening times are the same as those for schools: in general 5 mornings (mostly 8:30 till 12:00) and 4 afternoons (mostly 13:30 to 15:30). The younger children often attend mornings only.

In 2013, there were 61 kindergartens in the German-speaking Community (5 organised by the Community, 54 municipal, and 2 private/church-affiliated settings, all subsidised by the Community*. There are no more recent data available.

Sources: BISA 2017a, b.
DGlive 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
*Eurydice 2013.
**Eurydice 2015, 2016.
***flanders.be: 5, 11f.
Kind en Gezin 2015.
***ONE 2015.
Statistik-Portal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017b.

Provider structures

Across Belgium, **education sector** facilities for children from 2½ to 3 years of age are state-maintained.

A variety of providers are active in the **childcare sectors** of the three Communities:

Flemish Community

There are three main types of provider/provision: (1) settings run and fully financed by the Flemish Community; (2) subsidised public settings organised by local authorities; and (3) subsidised private settings – also confessional. Almost 64% of children in provision attend a private, mostly Catholic, setting, 22% municipal and 14% state-maintained settings.

French Community

The provider structures are similar: (1) public, state-maintained settings organised, managed and financed by the Community; (2) settings run and organised by the municipality which receive Community subsidies; and (3) private settings, also church-affiliated, which are also subsidised by the Community and managed by individuals or legal entities. In 2014/15, over half the children in provision (52.7%) were in municipal settings, 39% in church-affiliated, mostly Catholic settings and 7.3% in a setting run by the Walloon Federation Brussels*.

German-speaking Community

Childcare for under 3-year olds is mostly provided by private persons or non-profit organisations. The Regional Centre (RZKB) is responsible for founding and organising such provision.

Sources: *AGE 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
Peeters, J. and F. Pirard with colleagues 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data, there has been a significant increase in the participation rates of under 3-year olds in ECEC provision over the past decade or so. Whereas only 7% of children in this age group were enrolled in 2005, the participation rate had risen to just over 50% in 2015. Even by 2013, Belgium was one of only six countries to have achieved both Barcelona targets (33% of under-threes, 90% of children aged 3 up to school entry)**.

Nearly all children aged 3 to 6 years attend a kindergarten. In 2015, over three-quarters of these were enrolled for more than 30 hours per week.

Table 4

Belgium: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %†
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	23.3	21.7
	Over 30 hours	26.8	77.1
	No attendance	49.9	1.3

In 2015, the distribution according to age groups for the country as a whole was as follows (see Table 6). Since there are no data available for the under 2-year olds, it is not possible to calculate an enrolment ratio for the under 3-year olds or the under 6-year olds.

Table 5

Belgium: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015***

Age groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	No data available	
2-year olds	67,876	52.4
3-year olds	128,359	97.8
4-year olds	131,022	98.1
5-year olds	128,952	97.1
3- to under 6-year olds	388,333	97.9⁺
2- to under 6-year olds	456,209	86.7⁺

⁺ Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

Information relating to the three Communities are as follows:

Flemish Community

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, 82% of 2-year olds and 99% of 5-year olds attended a kindergarten in 2015 (*kleuterschool*). However, particularly children from disadvantaged milieus or children with a migration background are less frequently enrolled in a centre-based setting. In 2014/15, only 1.4% of children in the 2½ - 6 years age group were not enrolled in a centre-based setting. The number of children not attending at all or attending irregularly is highest in the large towns. The government and the government agency *Kind en Gezin* have both launched initiatives (e.g. the project *Kleuterparticipatie*) to increase participation rates – on the assumption that it contributes positively to later school achievements.

French Community – Walloon Federation Brussels

In 2014, 188,415 children aged 2½ to 6 years were enrolled in a kindergarten, i.e. over 90% of the age group. An additional 19,866 children aged 2½ to 3 years attended a centre-based setting. 42,046 places were available in 2014, most of them (19,597) in infant-toddler centres or registered home-based settings (10,293). A further 9,020 places were provided by non-subsidised settings and 3,136 by non-subsidised family day carers****.

Since one place is generally used by more than one child (according to *ONE*, 1.4 children in 2014), it can be assumed that the actual enrolment rate is higher. In 2014, 37,075 under 3-year olds attended publicly run and 16,775 non-subsidised settings and 19,866 a kindergarten, making a total participation rate of 44.1%.

German-speaking Community

In 2016, 2,367 children were enrolled in a kindergarten. In 2013, 598 under 3-year olds and 373 over 3-year olds were in family day care provided by 598 family day carers of the RZKB and 136 under 3-year olds and 43 over 3-year olds in settings provided by independent family day carers****.

Sources: BISA 2017c.
 EPIC 2016.
 **European Commission 2013.
 European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
 *Eurostat 2017f.
 ***Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
 Eurydice 2015.
 ****ONE 2015.
 Peeters, J., F. Pirard and colleagues. 2017.
 *****Statistik-Portal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017a, 2017b.

Financing and costs for parents

No fees are charged for attending a **kindergarten** in the education sectors in all three Communities. Parents are obliged only to cover costs for meals.

Flemish Community

Regulated **childcare settings** are partly financed by the government agency *Kind en Gezin*, which receives subsidies from the Flemish government, and partly through (income-related) parental contributions. Alongside general subsidies, municipal settings receive an agreed sum from *Kind en Gezin* for each place provided and also part of the staffing costs. In the private settings, parental fees are the main source of income; however, the government covers the difference between the parental contributions and the effective costs. Under certain circumstances they may also receive funding support from *Kind en Gezin*.

The level of subsidies provided by *Kind en Gezin* depends on various conditions which settings have to fulfil. For settings for under 2½-year olds, they are divided into four levels. At the highest level, a setting receives, alongside a basic subsidy, an income-related grant and additional funds. Parents pay a regulated, income-related monthly fee. These can range between 33€ and 650€¹, on average 297€ per month*.

On average, around 45% of childcare costs in Flanders are financed through parental contributions**.

French Community

Some of the settings licensed by *ONE* are fully funded by the agency. In non-subsidised settings, decisions on parental contributions are made by the setting itself. Fees for a place in an infant-toddler centre may vary between 50€ and 737€, on average 297€ per months*.

German Community

Parental fees for a place in an infant-toddler centre vary according to income and range between 1.39€ and 27.10 € per day*.

Sources: DGlive 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
*European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Kind en Gezin 2015.
**OECD 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Flemish Community

In childcare centres for the under-threes there are usually at least nine and at most 18 children in a group at any one time. A qualified staff member is responsible for a maximum of eight children. If several staff members are present, each one may also be in charge of nine children. During rest/nap times, a staff-child ratio of 1:14 is also permissible. There are ongoing attempts to reduce the staff-child ratio to 1:7.

Kindergartens are usually organised into single-age groups: 2½ to 3 years, 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years and 5 to 6 years. However, settings are free to choose their preferred group format and may also decide on group size.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156).

French Community

According to the standards issued by *ONE*, at least one staff member is responsible for six to seven children. Infant-toddler centres are usually organised in same-age groups. If there are enough children in a kindergarten, they are also usually organised in same-age groups.

German-speaking Community

In infant-toddler centres children are grouped according to their developmental stage. A maximum of six children per staff member is allowed*.

For kindergartens, there are no regulations regarding group formation – both same-age and mixed-age groups are possible. Group size depends on the staffing plan, and this in turn is dependent on the total number of children enrolled. If overall numbers are between six and 19 children, one post of kindergarten educator is allocated, 1½ posts if between 20 and 25 children, and two posts if between 26 and 32 children. If there are more than 33 children enrolled, a quarter of a full post is allocated for each additional group of 5, 6 or 7 children

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
Kind en Gezin 2015.

Curricular Frameworks

Flemish Community

For childcare centres for children below the age of 2½ years, a pedagogical framework was issued in 2014 by the Flemish Ministry for Health and Families. Commissioned by *Kind en Gezin*, the framework was developed by Ghent University and the Catholic University of Leuven. It describes in detail what is understood by pedagogical quality and how it can be achieved. Until now, there has been no obligation to publish how this programme is used, but it is expected that each setting can demonstrate how certain aspects of the pedagogical framework are implemented.

In the general core curriculum for kindergartens (*Ontwikkelingsdoelen*), developmental goals to achieve are formulated, covering five areas of learning: (1) physical education, (2) artistic education, (3) Dutch language, (4) world studies – nature, technology, humankind, society, (5) introduction to mathematics. During inspection visits checks are made to see whether these developmental goals are being followed. Each setting develops its own educational programme according to the different ages of the children which has to be approved by the government. 28 to 29 learning units of 50 minutes each are planned for each week.

French Community

Building on the Childcare Quality Code (1999), curricular guidance was developed (*Accompagner les petits – aspirer à la qualité; Accueillir les tout-petits – Oser la qualité*) for the work in both centre-based and home-based settings for children younger than 2½ years; these were based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommendations made by the European Commission Network on Childcare. Each setting develops its own programme accordingly.

For kindergartens, learning goals are set out in the Decree on the Mandate of Schools (1997) (*Décret définissant les missions prioritaires de l'enseignement fondamental et de l'enseignement secondaire et organisant les structures propres à les atteindre*). These include supporting children's socialisation, promoting self-perception, developing cognitive, social, affective and psychomotor skills and identifying possible difficulties in individual children.

German Community

No curricular framework is available for settings working with children below the age of 3 years, since they are viewed as purely care services.

For kindergartens, the Activities Plan (2004) sets out learning goals in the following areas: Home language, foreign language (between 50 and 200 minutes weekly in French as a first foreign language), psychomotor development, world orientation, arts education, developing mathematical thinking. There is no strict time plan regarding the individual areas. The Activities Plan also emphasises the importance of age-appropriate projects based on the interests and needs of the children.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Pirard, F. 2011.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In Belgium, children with special educational needs and disabilities should – as far as possible – be able to attend regular ECEC provision.

In the **Flemish Community**, extra hours are funded in regular ECEC settings for children who need additional support. Each setting can decide how these hours will be used (individual support, coaching staff, etc.). In special education settings, individual educational plans are produced for each child. Children have to be 2½ years old and provide an attestation before they can attend such a setting.

Children with special educational needs in regular ECEC settings in the **French Community** can be granted support by specialised staff. There are some special education settings which in particular provide for children with physical disabilities.

When required, children with disabilities in the **German-speaking Community** can participate in special educational measures. If children have an attestation from a psychological, medical or social services centre, when they reach the age of 3 years they can be enrolled in a special kindergarten.

Children with a background of migration

In 2017, 11.7% of the total population originated from a country other than Belgium. 67.4% of this population group came from other EU countries, 13.9% from African countries*. In the age group of children under 5 years of age, 12.7% were of non-Belgian origin; well over half of these children (58.3%) came from other EU states**.

In the **Flemish Community** in 2015/2016, settings for children older than 2½ years received 950€ as a temporary measure for each child who did not speak the Dutch language and was in need of additional support.

A Decree from 2012 in the **French Community** provides a framework for improved integration of immigrant children.

In 2016, 20.5% of the population in the **German-speaking Community** were of non-Belgian origin, whereby 86% of these persons came from other EU states***.

Sources: *BISA 2017d.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2015.
***Statistik-Portal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017c.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Flemish and French Communities

External evaluations (inspections) focus on features of the setting (e.g. equipment, rooms, hygiene, safety, staff-child ratio), staffing and staff qualifications, how the curriculum is implemented (only in the case of kindergartens), and children's achievements. Self-evaluation measures are also utilised to analyse team work and cooperation with the Centre Head, and also satisfaction with the working conditions. Checklists, rating scales, interviews and observations are the main instruments used for assessment.

Flemish Community

The Flemish Care Inspectorate is responsible for the inspection of all settings which have been approved and/or funded by the Ministry of Health and Families. *Kind en Gezin* assesses the settings for under 2½-year olds regularly and refers to the aspects noted by the Flemish Care Inspectorate during their evaluations. Since the 2014 Act on the Organisation of Day Care came into force, all providers of more than 18 places for under 2½-year olds have to comply with a quality manual setting out structural features of centre-based and home-based childcare.

Flanders has developed a new assessment and mentoring framework. A recently concluded research project (*Measuring and Monitoring the Quality of Childcare for Babies and Toddlers - MeMoQ*) has been involved in the development of assessment instruments: one to assess the overall quality of the ECEC sector in Flanders; another for the inspectorate to evaluate the quality of the centres and the family day care providers as well as a self-evaluation instrument for reflecting on the quality of pedagogical practice. These instruments are now used by the inspectorate and by most childcare centres to improve the quality of daily practice.

The Education Inspectorate (*Onderwijsinspectie*) is responsible for the inspection of kindergartens. Kindergartens may also develop their own assessment strategies. The frequency of inspections depends on the findings of the previous one.

French Community

Childcare settings for under 2½-year olds are inspected by the government agency *ONE* in terms of compliance with a mandatory Quality Code. Staff qualifications, overall quality, safety aspects of the buildings, and staff interactions with children are examined – in general every two or three years.

Implementation of curricular guidance has to be self-evaluated by the childcare centre as well as by *ONE*. Subsidised settings need a Quality Certificate which is awarded by *ONE* if the quality goals set out in the centre's quality improvement plan have been reached; the certificate is valid for three years. Child-related assessment procedures in terms of outcomes are not a priority, but the children's development is assessed from a medical point of view.

Internal assessments in kindergartens are generally based on observations of the children. Findings are summarised two to three times a year and discussed with the parents. A project called *Décollage!* (Start!) was introduced in 2012, with the aim, among other things, of ensuring that children with difficulties do not stay for an unnecessarily long time in kindergarten, but are supported in achieving a sound transition to primary school. During the children's third year of attending a kindergarten, external assessments ('maturity tests') are carried out by the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (*Centre des services psychologiques, médicaux et sociaux*). Depending on the results, parents may decide whether their child should be admitted to school at the age of 5 or whether school entry should be deferred for a year.

German-speaking Community

The Ministry of Family, Social Affairs and Health, through the agency 'Service for Child and Family' (*Dienst für Kind und Familie, DKF*), assesses and evaluates the childcare settings. Children under age 3 are not assessed.

In kindergartens an ongoing assessment of the children's progress is carried out, mostly through observations. The basis for this formative evaluation are the learning goals (see above). The in-

formation is documented in written form and shared with the parents. Some kindergartens also carry out school readiness tests.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Kind en Gezin 2015.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*Moederschapsverlof, congé de maternité*):

For employees and unemployed mothers the length of maternity leave is 15 weeks, up to 6 weeks of which can be taken before the due date. One week before the expected birth date and nine weeks after delivery are obligatory. Employees in the private sector receive 82% of their salary during the first month and 75% during the following weeks – up to a ceiling of 135€ a day. Employees in the public sector continue to receive their full salary. Maternity leave is financed over the Federal Health Insurance, i.e. over the employees and employers.

Paternity leave (*Vaderschapsverlof, congé de paternité*):

Employees are entitled to 10 working days, 3 of which are obligatory and fully paid; for the remaining days they receive 82% of their salary (up to a ceiling of 110€). These 10 days can be taken during the first 4 months following the baby's birth.

Parental leave (*Ouderschapsverlof, congé parental*):

Each parent may take 4 months of parental leave, receiving a net monthly payment of 721€. Parental leave can be taken flexibly, either on a full-time basis or as various part-time options during which it is also possible to work. Altogether, parental leave can be taken up to the child's 12th birthday and can also be taken by both parents at the same time.

Since 2015, it is also possible for employees in the private sector to take up to 4 years of parental leave or, for example, to work less hours for a period of 8 years in order to have more time at home for their children or for care work*.

No statistical data are available on the number of women who either make use of their complete maternity leave entitlement or only part of it. However, since the length of paternity leave was extended to 10 days in 2002, the proportion of fathers who take all 10 days of paternity leave has increased considerably. In 2014, almost 57,300 employees made use of parental leave (26.4% more than in 2007), most frequently in the Flemish Community. The part-time options are used significantly more often than the full-time model. Although most of those making use of the parental leave entitlement are women, the proportion of men rose from 8.3% to 25.7% between 2002 and 2012. Regional variations can also be found in this respect: whereas 1.8% of fathers in the Flemish Community made use of their parental leave entitlement, in the French Community this was the case for only 0.9% and in the Brussels Region for only 0.8%.

Sources: *EPIC 2016.
Merla, A. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1827	First educational institution for young children established (alongside the more custodial institutions founded by philanthropists, municipal administrations and factories)
1831	Establishment of Belgium as a nation state: Freedom of organising education is formalised – soon interpreted broadly as a right to education
1843	Educational institutions for young children first officially recognised by the State

1857	First Froebel kindergarten established
1858	First professional training courses for women working in kindergartens and primary schools
Since 1880	State-run and publicly funded ECE institutions for 3- to 6-year olds
1890	First early childhood curriculum issued, based largely on Froebel's ideas
Since 1927	Three-year higher education course of study a requirement for working with the 3- to 6-year olds
1950	Almost all 3- to 6-year olds attend a centre-based setting
1965	First admission of 2½-year olds into centre-based settings
1989	Responsibility for Education is devolved to the three Communities
1991/1995	Quality Decree including regulations on inspection, pedagogical guidance and the required developmental goals for kindergartens
1997	Kindergartens become part of the school system
2002	Belgium did not perform well on the <i>Programme for International Student Assessment</i> in terms of disadvantaged children; an 'equal opportunities decree' (GOK) followed, giving schools extra funding based on their socio-economic status and ethnic/cultural composition, and requiring schools and local authorities to respect priority admission rules in order to ensure a social and cultural mix in schools and prevent social segregation
2014	Ministerial Decree on the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream education. This is the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sources: Peeters, J., personal communication, April 2018.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Belgium

Country expert assessment by Jan Peeters

For the Flemish and French Communities, the transition of 2½-year olds to Kindergarten is a challenge. The kindergarten is not well adapted to the youngest children, and not enough attention is given to the care needs of toddlers. Especially for children with a family language other than Dutch or French, the first months in kindergarten can be emotionally very stressful. The groups are also very large (sometimes more than 25 children per qualified teacher). In some classes, childcare workers are employed to work alongside the teacher and are responsible for care tasks and for looking after the children outside the classroom periods (during meals at midday, in the playground). While meant to support the teacher, this is in effect resulting in a split between caring and teaching roles, whereas what are needed are educators with a holistic vision of ECEC.

In recent years, the childcare sector in the Flemish Community has been growing considerably, but these new places are mostly in childcare settings with staff qualified and paid at a low level. Although the new law of 2014 stipulates that the entire workforce needs to be qualified by 2024, there is as yet no concrete plan as to how the many unqualified childcare workers can receive a qualification before 2024. The low salaries are also a challenge because they contribute towards giving the sector a negative image, which could lead to further problems in the future; the sector will continue to grow and low salaries are likely to impede motivated and qualified persons in choosing a job in child care.

Another challenge in both Communities is that the qualification level of the childcare worker is low in comparison with other European countries. There should be at least one educator with a Bachelor's degree in each group of babies and toddlers in Belgium.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Belgium totalled 11,311,117. This is a further indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 10,130,574 and 2005 total: 10,445,852).

Table 6

Belgium: Population over time, 1996-2016**

	1996	2005	2014	2016
Brussels Capital Region	948,122	1,006,749	1,163,486	1,180,531
Flemish Region	5,880,357	6,043,161	6,410,705	6,471,996
Walloon Region	3,314,568	3,395,942	3,576,325	3,602,216 76,645
Belgium total	10,143,047	10,445,852	11,150,516	11,256,759

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 3.3% and children under 6 years of age for 6.8% of the total population. Since 2005 these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above.

Table 7

Belgium: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	122,381
1-year olds	126,288
2-year olds	127,278
Under age 3 total	375,947
3-year olds	130,321
4-year olds	131,908
5-year olds	134,243
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	396,472
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	772,419

Table 8

Belgium: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.2	6.8	6.2

[†] own calculations, deviations due to roundings

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Sources: **BISA 2017d.
Eurostat 2017a.
**IWEPS 2017.
**Statistikportal der Deutschen Gemeinschaft 2017c.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 79.1% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 6.5%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (5.8%).

Table 9

Belgium: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	1,184,200	
Couple households	936,200	79.1
Other types of households	171,400	14.5
Single households, total	76,500	6.5
Single households, women	68,100	5.8
Single households, men	8,400	0.7

⁺Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Belgium was 65.5% and that of women 58%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, only 67.4% were employed in 2015, whereas 84.4% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market.

The proportion of mothers in employment is higher in Belgium than the EU average, whereas for fathers the proportion is below average.

Table 10

Belgium: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Belgium	2005	66.3	88.9
	2010	68.7	87.5
	2015	67.4	84.8
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

*own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 21.1% of children under age 6 in Belgium were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion was below the EU average (24.7%) for this age group. This is the highest poverty rate in the EU28 (average = 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population also totalled 21.1%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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BULGARIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Rozalina Engels-Kritidis

Associate Professor, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski,
Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education

Citation suggestion:

Engels-Kritidis, R. 2018. "Bulgaria – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 92-112.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

In Bulgaria, early childhood education and care is organised as a split system: Pre-primary education is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo na obrazovaniето i naukata*) and takes place in kindergartens where children aged 2/3 up to 7 years “receive care, upbringing, socialisation and education” (Law on Preschool and School Education 2015, Art. 24). Traditionally, ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age are regulated by the Ministry of Health. Regional and local authorities provide maintenance of the buildings and guarantee compliance with health and safety regulations.

2. Who belongs to the ECEC workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 gives an overview of the staff working directly with children and categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Bulgaria: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p><i>Detski uchitel</i> Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional or Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Detska gradina</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa/klas</i> <i>5-6-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten or Transition class in primary school 5- to 6-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa/klas</i> <i>6-7-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten or Transition class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head/ Kindergarten principal</p>	<p>0–7 years</p> <p>or</p> <p>3–11 years</p>	<p>Bachelor, 4 years</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p><i>Occasionally:</i> Professional Bachelor, 3 years</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Pomoshtnik-vazpitatel</i> Teacher’s Assistant</p>	<p><i>Detska gradina</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds</p> <p><i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> <i>5-6-godishni</i></p>	<p>Non-qualified co-worker</p>	<p>n/a²</p>	<p>No required qualification</p>

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

² n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
	Transition group in kindergarten 5- to 6-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa 6-7-godishni</i> Transition group in kindergarten 6- to 7-year olds			
<i>Muzikalen pedagog</i> Music Teacher	<i>Detska gradina,</i> Kindergarten (2)3- to 7-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> Transition group in kindergarten 5-6-godishni 5- to 6-year olds <i>Podgotvitelna grupa</i> 6-7-godishni Transition group in kindergarten 6- to 7-year olds	Directly interacts with children two or three times a week, organising activities and working towards goals in the educational area of music; often is attached as a concurrent member of the regular staff in two kindergartens.	3–19 years	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Pedagog na detska yasla</i> Nursery Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Detska yasla</i> Crèche/nursery Infant/toddler group 3 months to 3 years	Appointed to several nursery groups; responsibilities include arranging, planning and managing the educational activities for the children.	0–7 years	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Medicinska sestra</i> Medical Nurse <i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Health Care Professional	<i>Detska yasla</i> Crèche/nursery Infant/toddler centre 3 months to 3 years <i>Yasleni grupi kym detska gradina</i> Infant-toddler groups in kindergarten 3 months to 3 years <i>Domove za medico-socialni grizhi za detsa</i> Health and social care home 3 months to 3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	All ages	Bachelor, 4 years ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6

In most **kindergartens** a children’s nurse is on the premises all day; a paediatrician and speech therapist pay weekly visits. The centre director only works directly with the children if staff members are absent for one reason or another. They have the same basic training as the group leaders, but are required to complete an additional course in management and leadership issues. Non-qualified assistants are present in the room; they do not usually work directly with the children, but are expected mainly to perform custodial tasks such as clearing up and cleaning the room or distributing meals (Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010, 59).

Since budgets now come under the responsibility of the kindergarten principals, some, particularly those in larger cities, manage to fund a full-time position for specialist support staff, e.g.

speech therapists, psychologists, special pedagogues, even teachers in physical education (normally men), who work on site on a regular basis, and are on the kindergarten payroll.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Traditionally, Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria have always been highly qualified. For the past ten years, the percentage of teachers with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in pre-primary education has increased significantly. According to Kusheva et al. (2006), looking at the entire teacher workforce in the education system for the 2003/2004 school year, teachers with higher education accounted for about 90%.

The data on gender ratios in pre-primary education show that the overwhelming majority of staff is female. Even though each year several men graduate as Pre-primary Teachers with Foreign Language or as Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers, most of them do not take up work in this job mainly because of the low remuneration. However, during recent years there have been a number of men working in kindergartens, mainly in private ones. There are also at least two male Music teachers in Sofia kindergartens.

According to data for 2015/2016 (see *Table 2*) as well as data from Kusheva et al. (2006), the age distribution of Pre-primary Teachers shows that more than half (52.1%) are over 50 years old. It is a worrying fact that a large percentage of graduating professionals do not wish to pursue a career working in kindergartens, most probably because of the low status of ECEC teachers in Bulgaria, despite the high qualification levels.

Table 2

Bulgaria: Age distribution of teachers in kindergartens during 2015/2016 school year*

Age group	Number of teachers	Totals/age groups	Percentage
Under 25 years	293	4,941	24.2
25-29 years	1,058		
30-34 years	1,372		
35-39 years	2,218	4,843	23.7
40-44 years	2,213		
45-49 years	2,630	10,636	52.1
50-54 years	3,121		
55-59 years	5,092		
60 years and older	2,423		
Total number of teachers	20,420		

*National Statistical Institute 2016.

There are no recent national statistics about the overall composition of the ECEC workforce in Bulgaria that show the proportion of qualifications, gender or ethnicity.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes of main contact staff – higher education and vocational

The teaching positions in **pre-primary education** in Bulgaria are usually held by personnel who have completed the traditional university degree of *Pre-school Pedagogy* (a four-year university programme, started in 1984 and available until 1996), as well as one of the comparatively newer four-year degree programmes of *Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language* and *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy* (available since 1996). The first of the new degrees reflects the current need for qualified Pre-primary Teachers who, in addition to the mainstream pedagogical work, are proficient in early foreign language teaching. Graduates of this programme are eligible to teach pre-school children in state, private, specialised and profiled children's institutions, as well as to conduct foreign language teaching in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian (currently only English and German).

The basic premise of the second degree, the 'hybrid' specialisation in *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy*, is the idea of facilitating the transition of children from kindergarten to primary school by providing teaching professionals with a broad spectrum of competence and who are well-acquainted with the specifics of working with children of both preschool and primary school age. Graduates of the programme can organise and conduct instructional, educational, methodological, organisational-managerial, expert, advising, diagnostic-prognostic and cultural activities in the educational system, in administrative-managerial and cultural institutions, as well as in social and sport organisations for children of pre-school and primary school age.

According to the entry requirements for prospective Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers in the Candidate Student's Handbook of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski for 2016/2017 (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016a), there is an entrance exam in one of the following subjects, chosen by the candidate student: Bulgarian Language and Literature, Bulgarian History, Geography, Philosophy, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian Language. For enrolling in a programme of Pre-Primary Education with a Foreign Language, the entrance exam is in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian or Russian language. For both specialisms, the Bulgarian Language and Literature marks from the high school diploma also count towards each candidate's overall score.

The university study programme ends with written state exams. Students of Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language are additionally tested on the respective foreign language, while the students of the hybrid Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy specialisation are tested in a state exam on a pooled questionnaire.

After completing the four-year Bachelor's degree, students can continue for two full-time semesters (one year) or three part-time semesters for a Master's degree programme in the field of pre-primary education or in another area. Furthermore, a three-year course of doctoral studies for a PhD degree in pre-primary education is available.

It is important to note that there are still two Pedagogical Colleges in Bulgaria where, after three years (six semesters) of study, students can be awarded the acknowledged educational degree of Professional Bachelor in Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language (only English).

One is the Pedagogical College in Dobrich, affiliated to the University of Shumen; the other one is the Pedagogical College in Pleven, affiliated to the University of Veliko Turnovo. According to a recent ministerial decision (Decision № 328 dd. 03 May 2016), 74 students will be accepted in 2016/2017 for the Professional Bachelor degree in the field of Pedagogy of the Pedagogical College in Dobrich and 90 students in Pleven; however, the numbers for both colleges include students from three pedagogical specialties, so it can be assumed that around one third of them will be enrolled in Pre-school Pedagogy with English Language. Almost all graduates of these colleges continue in a Master's degree programme specifically created for these cases. In several Bulgarian universities there are special curriculum plans for the Master's degree programme in preschool education (four semesters) for those who have graduated from a college and have a "Professional Bachelor" degree and the qualification of Pre-school Pedagogy. An admission score is assessed, comprising average results from state examinations and average results from semester examinations (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016b). One of the beneficial ideas supporting the existence of such colleges is that they allow the respective universities to reach people from smaller towns and also increase their enrolment quotas.

The low percentage of Professional Bachelor degree holders among the teachers in the general field of pedagogy in Bulgaria can be seen in the data on tertiary education graduates in 2015. For the general sector "Teacher training and education science", 107 people graduated with a Professional Bachelor degree; 2634 with a Bachelor's degree; 2241 with a Master's degree and 113 with a Doctoral degree.

Teachers' Assistants who work in kindergartens graduate from high school (ISCED 3). They do not receive specific training. There is one exception: graduates of the 135th High School 'Jan Amos Comenius' in Sofia gain a special qualification. This is due to the vocational education/training with a 'pedagogical profile' that its students have been receiving since the 1980s during the four years following their eighth class; since 2012, those leaving school receive a certificate as *Assistant Educator in Children's Upbringing and Education*.

There are also various courses offered specifically for Teachers' Assistants. Some of the public and private centres for vocational education organise qualification courses in this area.

Table 3

Bulgaria: Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

<p>Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Detski uchitel</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (specialist focus 0–7 years) <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies until 1996: 4 years university (Pre-school Pedagogy) or 3 years Pedagogical College; Since 1996: 4-year degree programme Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language or Pre-primary and Primary School Pedagogy; a subsequent 1-year Master's study is possible.</p> <p>Award: State exam, Bachelor (= official requirement for core practitioners in kindergarten); although optional, it is common for Kindergarten Teachers to have a Master's degree (ISCED/EQF level 7).</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), transitions groups in kindergarten or primary schools (5–6 and 6–7 years), crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 months to 3 years)</p>

Table 4

Bulgaria: Nursery Teacher

Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Pedagog na detska yasla</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (specialist focus 0–7 years) <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies until 1996: 4 years university (Preschool Pedagogy) or 3 years Pedagogical College. Since 1996: 4-year degree programme Preschool Pedagogy with a Foreign Language or Pre-primary and Primary School Pedagogy; a subsequent 1-year Master’s study is possible.</p> <p>Award: State exam, Bachelor (=official requirement for core practitioners in kindergarten); although optional, it is common for Nursery Teachers to have a Master’s degree (ISCED/EQF level 7).</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), transitions groups in kindergarten or primary schools (5–6 and 6–7 years), crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 months to 3 years)</p>

Table 5

Bulgaria: Medical Nurse

Job title in Bulgarian: <i>Medicinska sestra</i> Profile: Social/Health Care Professional
<p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate, university entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years at a university/faculty specialising in medical studies</p> <p>Award: Bachelor</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Crèche, nursery, infant/toddler centre (3 month to 3 years), nursery groups in kindergarten (3 month to 3 years), health and social care homes (3 month to 3 years)</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Kindergarten Teachers (*Detski uchitel*)

Competence specifications

According to the Sofia University Study Curriculum for Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language specialty (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2014b), effective as of the 2014/2015 academic year, the students are required to attain the following professional competences:

- Application of acquired knowledge and abilities in pedagogical practice;
- Utilisation of creative approaches during the realisation of the educational aspects in the curricula for each respective age;
- Utilisation of modern and innovative formats and methods for interaction and education;
- Ability to transfer knowledge and techniques, to integrate current theoretical achievements in practice;
- Ability to communicate, to manage and overcome conflict, and to develop and manage pedagogically-relevant projects;
- Ability to create conditions and prerequisites for learning (definition of goals, process organisation, execution, self-control and self-assessment);

- Ability to select approaches, forms of organisation, methods, equipment and pedagogical activities for educational work as appropriate for specific circumstances;
- Ability to stimulate and assist children with cognitive activities, intellectual creativity, a positive attitude to learning, research, discovery and self-knowledge of the world;
- Ability to help children develop their national, social, ethnic, religious, etc. identity, their self-esteem, their self-respect and respect towards others, tolerance;
- Development of individual qualities such as tolerance, outgoing character, self-control, empathy, ability for taking initiative, creativity, etc. which are necessary for the conduct of effective educational and social interactions.

Curricular areas

The basic requirements for attaining the professional qualification of ‘Teacher’ (including ‘Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher’) are defined in the government Directive dated 11.11.2016, which is applicable as of the 2017/2018 academic year.

The directive stipulates that the theoretical preparation should include mandatory, elective mandatory and elective courses (art. 5), and defines the minimum of mandatory academic courses and their minimum duration in academic hours (art. 6), as follows:

Table 6

Bulgaria: Mandatory courses for qualifying as a Teacher (including Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher)

	Academic course	Minimum duration in academic hours:
1	Pedagogy	60 hours
2	Psychology	60 hours
3	Didactics/tuition methodology	90 hours
4	Inclusive education	15 hours
5	Information and communication technology in education; working in a digital environment	30 hours

According to the Directive (articles 9-12), “the practical preparation is conducted in kindergartens and schools that are part of the system for pre-school and school education and is realized in the following formats of tuition with a minimum duration in academic hours”:

1. Observational lesson (observing and analysing pedagogical situations in kindergartens and schools, conducted under the direct supervision of a university lecturer): 30 hours;
2. Ongoing pedagogical practice (practicum preparation through observing and conducting pedagogical situations in kindergartens and schools in collaboration with a mentor-teacher under the supervision of a university lecturer): 60 hours;
3. Internship practice (“independent participation of the students in the educational process via realisation of pedagogical situations or classes, as well as in other organisational formats in kindergartens and schools, conducted under the supervision of a mentor-teacher and an educator from the higher-education institution”): 90 hours.

Each Bulgarian university which has a pedagogical faculty and is accredited to train students in the field of Pre-school Pedagogy develops its own curriculum, based on the aforementioned minimum requirements.

As an example, according to the 2014/2015 curriculum of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, the study programme *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy*, which qualifies for work with 3- to 11-year olds in kindergartens and primary schools, comprises 3000 hours of study in 58 curricular areas and students are awarded 240 ECTS points on completion (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2014a). In the same university, the other study programme for work in kindergartens – *Pre-school Pedagogy with a Foreign Language* – comprises 2,610 hours of study, 44 curricular areas and 240 ECTS points.

Both study programmes include subjects such as Basics of Education; Didactics; History of Pedagogy and Bulgarian Education; Pedagogical Psychology; Pre-school Pedagogy; Pedagogy of Early Childhood (0-3 years); Pedagogy of Playing Games in Early Childhood; Pedagogical Diagnosis; Basics of Primary School Education; Children's Literature; Pedagogy of Language Use and Speech Development; Pedagogy of Child-Environment Interaction; Pedagogy of Mathematics; Pedagogy of Music; Pedagogy of Art; Pedagogy of Movement. The theoretical studies end with written state exams. Both study routes lead to a Bachelor's award.

The curriculum of the study route *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* is organised into four content areas: (1) theoretical foundations; (2) psychology and pedagogy; (3) practical application/methods; (4) optional subjects. Students are additionally tested on the respective foreign language (only English and German currently; French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian used to be options in the past); the foreign language component comprises 360 hours of study (29 ECTS points).

Most of the curricular areas mentioned above include separate hours for practical training, but parallel to this there is a main workplace-based cycle, focusing on the development of kindergarten teachers' practical skills (see *Section 4*). For the aforementioned courses, especially for the specific methodological ones, a common theoretical background has been created that enables students to gain a more holistic understanding of the interconnections between theoretical knowledge and didactic strategies, thus helping them to develop professional competences (Engels-Kritidis, Kikušová, and Osađan 2013).

Nursery Teachers (*Pedagog na detska yasla*)

Competence specifications and curricular areas required for prospective Nursery Teachers are exactly the same as those for Kindergarten Teachers. Graduates of the two previously mentioned Bachelor's degree programmes can also work as Nursery Teachers.

Medical Nurses (*Medicinska sestra*)

Competence specifications

According to the Directive for Unified State Requirements for the Attainment of Higher Education in the specialisms of 'Medical Nurse' and 'Midwife Nurse' at Bachelor level (introduced in 2005, with amendments and additions in 2006 and 2010), the study programme provides: (1) Appropriate knowledge of disciplines that are the basis of nursing, including adequate knowledge of the human organism, the psychological functions and the behaviour of healthy and diseased people, as well as the human social environment; (2) Adequate knowledge of the essence and the ethics of the profession and the general principles connected with health and nursing; (3) Appropriate practical clinical experience; (4) Ability to participate in the practical tuition of health personnel and work experience with this personnel; (5) Experience in collaboration with other medical specialists.

Curricular areas

Candidate students are required to have completed secondary education and to pass a written examination, determined by the higher education institute. The study programme for a Bachelor's degree in Medical Nursing takes four academic years (eight semesters) to complete and comprises 4,600 academic hours. Tuition includes theoretical and practical preparation. The theoretical preparation is conducted via mandatory, elective mandatory and elective courses delivered as lectures, seminars and practical exercises with a total duration of at least six semesters. The practical component of IPS takes place through educational (clinical) practice and internship. The mandatory courses (and their minimum duration in academic hours) more

closely associated with the nurses' work in nurseries and infant-toddler centres include the following: Practical Basis of Nursing (660 hours); Nursing in Pediatrics (45 hours); Nursing of Women in Labour and Newborns (30 hours); Nursing of Children and Adults with Disabilities (60 hours); Hygiene and Ecology (30 hours); Therapeutic Feeding and Nutrition (15 hours); Pathology – Knowledge of Diseases (405 hours); Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology (30 hours); Pediatrics and Neonatology (45 hours); Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases (15 hours); Health Promotion (15 hours); Children's Pedagogy and Children's Psychology (30 hours); Medical Safety in Emergency Situations (30 hours); Principles and Methodology of Teaching (45 hours), etc. The ratio between theory-based and practice-based IPS is determined by the higher education institution, but the proportion of academic hours allocated to practical experience in work placements should be no less than 50% of the total hours.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

The study route *Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy* is available on a full-time and a part-time basis. Part-time studies are for those in employment while studying. Having in mind the low salaries in the educational sector, some students work in completely different areas, but a large number work as Teachers' Assistants in kindergartens or as part-time Pre-primary Teachers until they take their final exams.

Candidates who have completed a Bachelor programme in another humanitarian discipline are also given the opportunity to take an extended two-year (four semesters) Master's programme in order to acquire the qualification for working as a Pre-primary Teacher (see Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski 2016b). An admission score is assessed, comprising average results from state examinations and average results from semester examinations during their Bachelor's degree course; the overall entry requirement is a score of at least 7.00. The interest in this Master's programme is very high – during recent years, each autumn more than a hundred people apply and enter this programme. Since the 2015/2016 academic year, a new curriculum has been approved by Sofia University; for candidates with a Bachelor's degree with a pedagogical qualification (regardless of the specific area), a shorter two-semester (instead of four) course of study has been launched. In order to put into perspective the scale of interest in these programmes, it should be mentioned that in the 2015/2016 academic year, 97 people enrolled for the regular four-semester programme, while 85 entered the Master's degree programme for candidates with a pedagogical qualification (Sofia University Master Degree Candidate Campaign 2015/2016).

On the other hand, Bachelor's degree students who graduated with the *Pre-school and Primary School* or the *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* specialisms can continue their Master's degree in a different area, giving them an additional pedagogical qualification in order to expand their expertise and field of competence, e.g. a Master's degree in Speech Therapy, in Special Education, in the Pedagogy of the Aesthetics of Mass Communication. Graduates of *Preschool Education with a Foreign Language* can also apply for Master's degree programmes in the Faculty of Classical and New Philology of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teachers (*Detski uchitel*)

The practical element of the study route *Pre-school and Primary School* also entails work placements of 750 hours out of a total of 3,000 hours, i.e. comprises 25% of the overall study

programme. The number of hours spent in kindergarten or school increases per semester, and the final, eighth semester comprises a practical placement only (240 of the total 750 hours), split equally between a kindergarten and a primary school. Each part ends with a state exam, and the final mark is an average of both separate marks – one for the kindergarten and another for the primary school. In the study route *Pre-school Education with a Foreign Language* the curriculum comprises 780 hours in practical placements out of a total of 2,610 hours (26 ECTS points), i.e. approx. 30%. The eighth semester (240 of the total 780 hours) is spent entirely in a kindergarten placement.

Students need to be able to transfer their acquired theoretical knowledge into the kindergarten's educational context. The whole system of field-based studies ensures that students gradually move from observation and analysis of teaching situations e.g. by carrying out small projects and research studies (during the first several semesters of their study), to enacting pedagogical situations (during the following semesters, usually in pairs) and finally, during the seventh and eighth semesters, to independent performance in everyday pedagogical conditions (Roussinova and Angelov 2008).

The practical element of initial professional studies is not regulated by national, regional and/or provider guidelines. For the placements in a real-life educational environment, universities have contractual agreements with specially selected nurseries, kindergartens and teachers/mentors. Most of the mentoring/supervising staff in partnership institutions do not receive any monetary compensation but may be rewarded in symbolic terms (e.g. through promotion). There are also kindergartens and supervisors who work in placement settings on a voluntary basis.

The contracted teacher trainers/mentors are highly-qualified pedagogues with experience in activities related to the development, application and evaluation of innovative practices. Most of them also have a qualification in Mentoring (according to the Bulgarian national five-level qualification scale – see also *Section 5*), most often acquired through courses at the Department of Information and In-Service Training of Teachers of Sofia University, or at other universities. Some of the teacher trainers/mentors have attained the highest professional qualification level, which involves the presentation of innovations introduced by the teacher through publications.

The organisation, realisation and evaluation of field-based studies is part of the overall evaluation of each study programme by the relevant university tutor. These depend on conditions defined by each particular university tutor for his/her subject.

The overall aim for all types of field-based studies is for the student to obtain a comprehensive view of the educational process, to gain professional and organisational competences connected with the role of the teacher, as well as competencies related to the realisation of educational activities in kindergartens.

The student has the chance to understand and verify the realisation of modern didactic strategies in a real-life educational context and thus to acquire key competencies such as: implementing educational projects at the level of kindergarten; orienting himself/herself in the programme systems for pedagogical interaction of kindergartens; realising general methods of education and general didactic of teaching in kindergarten; diagnosing the reasons for children's problems and preparing appropriate pedagogical intervention to resolve them; communicating his/her knowledge with specialist educational and psychological services; preparing methodically educational sessions related to particular educational content (Engels-Kritidis, Kikušová, and Osad'án 2013).

As a form of student self-evaluation and also external evaluation, students are required to prepare a portfolio – a summary of necessary documents which give evidence of their educational activities. At Sofia University, this is called a *pedagogical diary*. This diary (or *portfolio*) has to contain all proposed and realised curricular projects, didactical approaches and other documents, including self-assessment by the student. The content of each project and the

relevant preparations have to be discussed with the tutors responsible for the teaching of didactics in the relevant courses.

In most universities in Bulgaria, some of the students win competitions for participation in student exchange programmes such as Erasmus+, DAAD, etc. They spend various periods of time (usually a semester) in another European country mainly for improvement and exchange of knowledge and skills in the field of practical training.

The project *Student internship* (2014-2015 – see link below) realised with the financial support of the Operative Programme ‘Human Resources Development’ and co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union) offered an opportunity to students specialising in pedagogy/education to conduct their field-based studies (paid internship – one-time payment of 246 EUR (480 BGN) for 240 hours in kindergartens, schools, etc. in another country. The project was realised in partnership with all 51 higher education institutions in Bulgaria. The practical education was attended by over 60,000 students in total, including a large number of students placed in preschool institutions. The project budget included funding for the compensation of academic mentors from the universities, as well as mentors assigned by the employers. Another phase of the same project is currently underway across the country (www.praktiki.mon.bg).

Nursery Teachers (*Pedagog na detska yasla*)

Prospective Nursery Teachers undergo the same format of workplace-based learning as prospective Kindergarten Teachers.

Medical Nurses (*Medicinska sestra*)

As already mentioned, the ratio between theoretical and practical preparation in the curriculum for Medical Nurses is determined by the higher education institution, but the academic hours allocated to practical preparation should be no less than 50% of the total hours. The practical preparation during IPS is realised via educational (clinical) practice and internship; this is organised and conducted in faculties and/or affiliates of higher education institutions, as well as clinical settings that have been accredited for student education.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

According to the national system for in-service training, all Bulgarian teachers (including Kindergarten Teachers) can develop their qualifications on a five-level qualification scale. The first two levels involve education on contextual and technological innovation, as well as the sharing of the teachers’ individual experiences and pedagogical practices, while the latter three levels focus on activities related to the practical application of innovations and the creation and practical testing of individual innovative practices. The highest professional qualification level represents the dissemination of innovations introduced by the teacher through publications (Kusheva et al. 2006).

In the new Law on Preschool and School Education of 2015, there is a separate Section 4, titled ‘Career development of pedagogical specialists’, which defines different teaching levels – Teacher, Senior Teacher, and Head Teacher – also applicable for young children’s teachers. As

foundations for the career development of pedagogical specialists, the document mentions acquired qualification credits, acquired professional qualification level, as well as results of performance appraisals; a larger number of qualification credits and a higher professional qualification level are bases for a faster career development of pedagogical specialists, regardless of their years of service. The requirements and the procedure for acquiring teaching levels are defined by the State Educational Standard for the Status and Development of Teachers, Head Teachers and other Pedagogical Specialists, which is currently in development.

The Collective Labour Agreement applicable for the public education system (Art. 33, 2014) states that the budget for educational staff qualifications is defined at the start of each calendar year and should amount to no less than 0.8% of the annual salary of pedagogical staff. The budget is used for the enrolment of pedagogical staff in qualification courses after discussion in the educational committee and approval by the Centre Head. Some of the courses are optional, while others may be obligatory. Therefore, ECEC employers cover the costs of attending continuing professional development activities in the size of the expenditures according to the mentioned budget, divided between members of the pedagogical team. If the cost of qualification is higher, the teachers have to cover the difference themselves.

The main providers of continuing professional development across the country are university departments of information and in-service training of teachers; the National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System; some pedagogical faculties; educational inspectorates; non-governmental organisations; foundations, and other public and private providers at national, regional and local level.

The options for paid absence for education of full-time employees in Bulgaria (including Pre-primary Teachers and Teachers' Assistants) are defined in the Labour Codex (last amended in January 2016). According to the codex, Teachers and Teachers' Assistants who are studying at university while in employment can be granted 25 days of paid leave per year; additionally, they can request 30 days of paid leave for preparing and taking matriculation or state exams, or the preparation and defence of a thesis, graduation project or dissertation. For preparation of a PhD thesis, the students can request six months of paid leave. For taking an entrance exam for a university or PhD course, students can request 12 days of paid leave.

The Collective Labour Agreement (Art. 45, 2014) states that the employer "can approve paid leave for qualification development, acquisition of new and/or additional qualifications of pedagogical staff, as long as the qualification form is related to improvement of the quality of the educational activity, the strategy of development of the educational unit and the National Strategy for Development of Educational Staff" (2016). Usually, there are no problems regarding access opportunities to CPD – Centre Heads approve and generally encourage such leaves and they organise internal staff substitutes for the period of the paid leave (substitute teachers working overtime are compensated accordingly).

Participation in specific forms of CPD is formally recognised in terms of career advancement.

According to the Rules for organising calls for candidates for the post of Principal/Centre Head in public kindergartens in the Municipality of Sofia (2015), candidates for kindergartens (with or without nursery groups) have to meet the following main criteria: to have a Bachelor's or Master's degree with a professional qualification as Pre-primary Teacher and at least five years of full-time pedagogical experience, to not have a criminal record, and to have not been stripped of the right to work as a teacher. The call for candidates is published and the assessment is performed in two stages: part one comprises a 25-question test with questions related to application of the legal framework relevant to the educational system; the second part is an interview.

For the qualification of school or kindergarten heads/principals and teachers, the National Institute for Education and Qualification in the Educational System was founded in 2006. The aims of the National Institute are to organise educational activities for administrative staff of Bulgarian schools and kindergartens, to develop educational programmes and to participate in international projects. So far, 11,438 head teachers and 35,077 teachers have participated in

different educational activities. Topics include Kindergarten Management – a basic programme for newly-appointed Head Teachers, Financial Management of Kindergartens – management of delegated budgets, Project Management, Management of Educational Processes, Human Resources Management in Schools, Control and Assessment of Teachers’ Work, Assessment and Self-assessment of School Management, Working with Interested Parties – models of interaction between school/kindergarten and parents, Leadership Programmes – education of national or regional leaders, Mentorship Education, Development and Improvement of Specific Professional Competences for Teachers – entrepreneurship, application of information technologies in the educational process, integration of pupils with special educational needs.

Some (relatively few) private kindergartens cover tuition costs for the university studies of their Teachers’ Assistants or part-time substitute teachers to become qualified teachers, or for their teachers to be awarded a Master’s Degree.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

A comprehensive policy initiative introduced in 2016 is the National Programme titled *Development of Pedagogical Specialists*. It is planned to invest in the professional development activities of pedagogical staff, their quality and effectiveness. For the ECEC sector, priority areas for competence development include the following:

- Developing methodical guidelines for the application of new curricula and standards introduced by the 2015 Law on Preschool and School Education;
- Developing practical skills for assessment of educational handbooks for teachers and children;
- Improving the effectiveness of educational processes in an intercultural context;
- Educating teachers and head teachers in creating attractive, supportive and motivational environments for young members of staff in the educational institutions;
- Preventing problematic behaviour in kindergartens and schools;
- Improving co-operation between educational institutions and families;
- Educating head teachers for effective work with young teachers;
- Enhancing teachers’ basic therapeutic skills and techniques for working with children with special educational needs – e.g. children with autism, hyperactivity, dyslexia;
- Enhancing teachers’ basic therapeutic skills and techniques for working with children with aggressive or challenging behaviour and with children who have been victims of emotional neglect, exploitation, violence, etc.
- Enhancing teachers’ practical skills and techniques for working with children from different minorities and immigrant children.

As an indicative parameter, the Programme aims to provide approx. 4,000 pedagogical specialists with continuing professional development in these areas.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Students’ views of a ‘good kindergarten teacher’

Source: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2015b (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Bearing in mind the importance of interactions during the initial seven years of a child’s life, as well as the wide gamut of qualification requirements for preschool pedagogues

throughout Europe (see Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010), the understanding of the essence of the notion of a ‘good children’s teacher’ becomes much more interesting and worthy of qualitative analysis. Specifically, the study aimed to mark some of the most important differences in the relevant viewpoints of first-year students in comparison to the opinion of graduate students.

Procedure: Research was carried out on the views of 72 students of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, enrolled in the 4-year Bachelor’s degree programme “Pre-school and Primary School Education”. Half of the participating students (36) were approached at the beginning of their university education; the other half (36) participated during their last year. The main method used was analysis of the students’ individual written essays on the subject ‘My idea of a good/quality kindergarten teacher’. All students provided informed consent for the use of their essays in analysis; however, in order to avoid bias, the students were not informed of the specifics of the research procedure. All students were educated using the same curriculum, which was not altered during their entire time in the university. The collected essays were subjected to qualitative analysis aimed at distribution of the contained opinions into an unlimited number of semantic categories, provisionally divided into two main groups:

- General personal qualities: mainly qualities, but also some skills, attitudes, etc. which are mainly inherent qualities of the person (60 in number);
- Specific professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc. (76 in number).

Findings:

A hierarchical list of the most frequently-mentioned categories was presented;

- First-year students are more actively concerned with concepts related to the general personal qualities group, as opposed to graduating students, who predominantly tend toward more specific pedagogical specifications. This makes sense, bearing in mind the specialised education in their professional field which graduating students have received during their time in the university;
- With regard to general personal qualities, in the eyes of first-year students a ‘good children’s teacher’ is someone who is patient; loves children, smiling, friendly; a friend and confidant; with broad general knowledge; a good person; is kind; responsible; balanced and calm; creative, imaginative; discerning; selfless; with a sense of humour; attentive; optimist; incentivising; etc. Comparing the results of both groups, it can be summarised that, for graduating students, the larger part of the qualities mentioned is repeated, with some of them being closely correlated: loves children; with broad general knowledge; etc. Regarding general personal qualities, students ending their university studies reassert with even more conviction the importance of creativity, selflessness, and tolerance, while from the specialised professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc., graduating students quite categorically value the teacher’s role as a factor and an inspiration in the child’s development. Also, graduating students categorically define the importance of innovativeness of the Kindergarten Teacher, who sets realistic goals and aims at discerning each child’s talent(s), always seeking collaboration with parents;
- With regard to specific professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc., the first-year students view a ‘good children’s teacher’ as a person who understands the children, is empathetic; improves his/her qualifications; loves his/her job; follows appropriate individual approaches; is a role-model; supportive, ready to help the children; is a factor in the child’s development; explains in a fun way; etc. Once again there is a similarity to the opinions of graduating students, but the correlations are different and deserve a deeper analysis. Also, it is interesting that graduating students add mentions of a wide array of specialised skills, most of them not mentioned by first-year students - always explains why; has fine art skills; has skills in the field of physical education; uses illustrative methods and tools; develops children’s thinking; focuses on insight; sets realistic goals; discusses issues from several viewpoints; balances personal qualities and modern technology skills; ensures feedback; dis-



cerns each child's talent(s); is open to learning from children; provides clear and precise instructions; ensures learning experiences; organizes pedagogical interaction as per regulations; does not raise his/her voice. The analysis of all these specialised professional qualities, skills, attitudes, etc. mentioned here could yield very useful information on the adequacy of study plans, curriculums, etc.;

- Special attention needs to be focused on the fact that both first-year (36.1%) and graduating students (25%) regard the profession of children's teacher as a vocation;
- While the difference of concepts between first-year students and graduating students as to what makes a 'good/quality kindergarten teacher' can be examined through the information present in their essays, valuable conclusions can also be drawn from the apparent lack of mention of certain skills, qualities, etc. in the essays, particularly in those of the graduating students. For example, none of the participating students indicated the specific skills that teachers need in relation to interacting with children with special educational needs. The lack of mandatory tuition in this area had been noted even before the start of this research; as of the 2014/2015 academic year, along with the aforementioned elective module, students' tuition on this issue is at least partially covered by the newly-introduced mandatory module on 'Special pedagogy', whose study plan contains a section dedicated to inclusive education.

Another absence from the researched categories which deserves attention is an understanding of the importance of the children's teacher's intercultural competence. Only a single student (interestingly enough, a first-year foreign student) touched upon the "Displays intercultural competence in pedagogy" category. This clearly shows that even though these issues are covered in the study curriculum in elective modules such as "Playing and intercultural competence", the students still understand intercultural education as separate and partially-applicable, related to individual pupils, not as a pedagogical method in education which is valid for all.

Implications:

- Updating and restructuring the academic curricula related to Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teachers' initial education: the results could be used for researching projections of the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes of students during the time of their university education by interpretation of the difference between the more general idea of the essence of the 'good/quality kindergarten teacher' in first-year students, compared to the presumably more specific and more 'professional' understanding of the graduate students. This was also a way to evaluate and analyse the quality of the current university curriculum and to try to find any gaps in it;
- The 136 categories presented in the publication above are being used by the author as the basis for creating a questionnaire, to be used as a tool for objective and detailed assessment of the quality of the work of in-service Kindergarten Teachers.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Staff in kindergartens and primary schools receive the same salaries and have a similar professional status. In both cases they are not civil servants. The average net salary of a Kindergarten Teacher in Bulgaria (regardless of whether they are beginners, experienced or work in a city or rural area) is roughly 350€ per month (after taxes). *Table 7* shows the minimum starting salary (before taxes) according to Directive № 1 from 04.01.2010 regarding the salaries of employees in the public education sector. It is very hard to live on this salary without additional support,

especially if the teacher is a single parent with one or more children and lives in a major city. In comparison: a rented apartment in Sofia costs on average between 150 and 300€ per month.

Teachers' Assistants in kindergartens receive at least the national minimum wage, which is currently 215€ (420 BGN) per month.

Table 7

Bulgaria: Minimum starting salary (before taxes) of employees in the public education sector

Group	Position	Minimum salary/month (01.10.2015)
I. Pedagogical staff with management functions	Head Teacher (principal)	385€ (750 BGN)
	Assistant Head Teacher	359€ (700 BGN)
II. Pedagogical staff	Teacher	308€ (600 BGN)
	Senior Teacher	321€ (625 BGN)
	Mentor	338€ (660 BGN)

According to the relevant Collective Labour Agreement for the public education system (Art. 33 of 2014), for attained professional qualification levels teachers are entitled to a minimum additional payment of between 6€/12 BGN (for the 5th level) and 33€/65 BGN (for the 1st level). For those with a PhD, the amount is 44€/85 BGN.

Regarding remuneration of Medical Nurses who work in ECE, as of April 2016, the average salary in Bulgaria is 260€/520 BGN; however, professional associations are campaigning to raise the starting salary to at least 3 times the minimum wage, i.e. a little over 500€/1,000 BGN (Lazarova 2016).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

All staff in kindergartens are employed on a full-time basis (40 hours per week).

8.3 Staff support measures

In terms of staff support measures in the workplace, Centre Heads usually arrange pairs of teachers so that a newly qualified teacher is paired with a Senior Teacher, the second acting as a mentor for the first one. Kindergartens from the same municipality often exchange observational sessions, aiming at exchange of good practices.

8.4 Non-contact time

Six hours daily are spent in direct contact with the children, so two hours a day are non-contact time (preparation work, staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities). The working times of the two members of staff responsible for any one group overlap during the midday break for one hour. Teaching staff in both kindergartens and primary schools are entitled to 48 days of paid annual leave.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

It is often the case that Centre Heads recruit retired Kindergarten Teachers (as well as Teachers' Assistants), especially when someone from the staff is temporarily absent from work (maternity leave, illness, etc.). An example of good practice is when kindergartens with a partnership contract with a university recruit students in their final year and attract them for a future full-time employment contract.

A successful measure for ensuring an additional number of qualified Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers who wish to work in the area was the project titled *Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists 2013-2014* (2014), realised with the financial support of the Operative Programme 'Human Resources Development' (2007-2014) and co-financed by the European Social

Fund of the European Union. The project offered the opportunity for completing a one-year specialised training in a higher education setting in order to gain an additional qualification/prequalification as *Pre-school or Primary School Teacher* as a way of improving the qualifications of young educational specialists (up to 35 years old) who had been awarded a different Bachelor's degree. The project was conducted by the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in cooperation with the Pedagogical Faculty of St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo. The training was attended by 310 graduate teachers with other teaching specialties throughout the country. Tuition took place on a part-time basis. The course comprised 270 hours over 37 study days, spread over three semesters, and included lectures, seminars, practical preparation, as well as days for exams and the final practical state exam taken in the final semester.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

It is currently a worrying fact that a large percentage of graduates from pre-primary study routes do not pursue a career working in kindergartens, which is most probably a result of the low status and low pay of Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria. In addition, as mentioned previously, the age distribution of Kindergarten Teachers shows that the overwhelming majority of them are older professionals. On the other hand, the fact that many people with different Bachelor degree backgrounds apply for a Master's degree in *Pre-primary Education* has been a hopeful sign during recent years. These candidates are highly motivated to stay in the profession and to pursue continuing professional development.

The field-based studies component of IPS accentuates a form of training that allows educators to adapt to the constantly changing educational needs of children. In this respect, increasing the number and quality of exchange programmes for students and teachers-as-mentors will be essential for ensuring that they are always up-to-date with good pedagogical practices developed by other European countries and worldwide.

In the context of national and global developments, priorities for the continuing professional development of Kindergarten Teachers in Bulgaria are related to:

- enhancing their practical skills and techniques for working with children from different minorities and migrant children;
- updating the existing pedagogical policy and technology for equal tuition opportunities for children with special educational needs;
- providing training opportunities to develop a differentiated and an individualised approach to working with each child (not only with those with a background of migration or SEN/D) during the organised group activities, even in large classes (see also Engels-Kritidis 2015a);
- enhancing the training of Centre Heads in effective kindergarten management and promoting educational entrepreneurship in a competitive context;
- raising the social status of pre-school teachers via national initiatives for improving their qualifications and creating models for career development, including a new remuneration system.

These challenges are connected mainly to the quality of the workforce profiles in systems of early childhood education and care but also define the scope and potential of improving and enhancing theory and practice for ECEC in its entirety.

While incorporating a desire for learning from relevant European practices and legislation in the ECEC field, the Bulgarian educational system constantly looks for way of preserving and promoting positive national traditions in education (Engels-Kritidis 2012). Building upon a solid historical and theoretical basis and encompassing the overall transformation of social life in

the country, early childhood education and care in Bulgaria is now being further reformed in order to adapt to the constantly changing educational needs of children and demands of the educational system. The child and her/his needs are firmly established as the core focus of contemporary early childhood pedagogy. With the new Law on Preschool and School Education 2015, in which pre-school education is seen on an equal footing with school education, a significant success has been achieved for the sector. On the other hand, Bulgarian Kindergarten Teachers should be aware of possible negative effects which could occur: to counter the early onset of strictly didactical methodologies which may develop through the compulsory attendance for 5- and 6-year olds, and to be able to keep the idea of the 'preciousness' of childhood at the core of their practice.

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BULGARIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Rozalina Engels-Kritidis
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Bulgaria – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 113-125.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Bulgaria is organised in two sectors, i.e. it is a 'split system'. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo na obrazovaniето i naukata*) is responsible for kindergartens and compulsory pre-primary education for 2/3- to 7-year olds and for the implementation of curricular frameworks and education reforms. Regional and local authorities are in charge of providing kindergarten buildings, their maintenance, supervising health and safety aspects, and providing meals and transport for the children. Nurseries/infant-toddler centres for children up to age 3 come under the auspices of the Ministry of Health.

Sources: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012.
Eurydice 2014.

General objectives and legislative framework

Basic overall principles of the Bulgarian education system are: (1) quality of education; (2) active partnerships between all stakeholders (staff, parents, employers, unions, NGOs); (3) competitiveness between settings in striving for quality; (4) system transparency and flexibility; (5) equal access for all children, with an emphasis on integrating socially disadvantaged groups.

The overall goal of ECEC is to create the necessary conditions for children to be able to develop their potential and to ease their transition into school, as stated in the *National Programme for Schools and Early Childhood Education – 2006-2015*. In particular, the importance of early childhood education is highlighted, including the chance it provides for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Improving the quality of education is also emphasised as well as achieving equality of access. The concept of lifelong learning is given high priority.

The current relevant legislation for pre-primary education is the completely revised *Pre-school and School Education Act (2015)*. Key goals include promoting integrative education and the development of standards for early childhood education. Standards for integrative education are also planned.* The Implementation Regulations of the Act define kindergartens as preparatory institutions providing care and education for children aged 3 years up to school entry. Framework conditions for the education and care of under 3-year olds are set out in the 2004 Health Act, last amended in 2016.

Sources: EFA 2015.
*EPIC 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer and M.J. Neuman 2010.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Young children in Bulgaria do not have an entitlement to a place in an ECEC setting.

Kindergarten attendance for 3- to 5-year olds is not obligatory. Since 2003, it has been a statutory requirement for 6- and 7-year olds to attend a pre-primary group. In 2010, the Public Education Act 1999 was amended to extend compulsory pre-primary education to 5-year olds. Thus, since 2012/13, attending a pre-primary group during the two years preceding school entry is compulsory (and, as for the younger age groups too, free of charge).

Statutory schooling in primary schools starts at 7 years of age.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

Main types of provision

Kindergartens (*detski gradini*) are largely free-standing institutions, although sometimes the pre-primary groups for 5- to 6-year olds and 6- to 7-year olds (see below) may be located in school buildings. The children are allocated to same-age groups (3-4 years, 4-5 years, 5-6 years and 6-7 years), occasionally (in the smaller villages or towns) to mixed-age groups. According to the recent 2015 Pre-School and School Act, 2-year olds may also be admitted into kindergartens. Kindergartens comprise a minimum of four and, in a large city like Sofia, may also have ten groups or more.

Most children attend on a full-day basis in settings which are open from 7:00 to 19:00. The much smaller number of half-day kindergartens (see *Table 1*) are open mornings only. Some weekly boarding kindergartens are available for parents who work night shifts, but these are rarely used. Free transport to the nearest kindergarten is usually provided for children living in isolated areas.

National statistics show that most kindergarten places are full day*. Only 1.4% of children attending kindergartens are in privately-run settings, where the total number of children in each setting is generally considerably lower than in public kindergartens (37 on average compared with 120 children in public kindergartens). Currently, the overall number of places available matches the number of children wishing to attend, although this is not the case in the larger towns and cities.

Table 1

Bulgaria: Number of children in kindergartens according to type, 2015/2016*

Kindergarten type	Number of children
Full-day kindergarten	210,707
Half-day kindergarten	19,349
Weekly boarding kindergarten	907
Other kindergarten types (special needs, seasonal, health and social care)	1,062
Total	232,025
Of these: children in private kindergartens	3,333 (1.4% [†])

[†] own calculations

Pre-primary groups (*podgotvitelna grupa*) provide for 5- to 6-year olds and 6- to 7-year olds on a compulsory basis. They are usually located in kindergartens, but also in a large number of primary schools, partly also as a measure to solve infrastructure problems.

Nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*detski yasli*) can admit children from 3 months up to 3 years. These may be stand-alone settings, or a unit attached to a full-day kindergarten. As a rule, children start attending this kind of provision once they have learned to walk. The 2015 Pre-school and School Act defines the appropriate age range as 10 months to 3 years. Staff in these settings

have a recognised Nursing qualification; they are supported by a university-qualified Nursery Teacher who is allocated to several settings at the same time.

Age-integrated EC centres (*obedineni detski zavedenia*) are a less common form of provision, catering for children aged 10 months to 7 years.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012, 2017.
Eurydice 2016.
*NSI 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 37ff.

Provider structures

The large majority of kindergartens are run by local authorities. However, during recent years the proportion of privately-run settings rose from 3.1% in 2013 to 4.6% in 2015. Many of these kindergartens are run on a for-profit basis and are generally too expensive for most parents.

Table 2

Bulgaria: Number of kindergartens according to provider, 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015/16
State/municipal	2,062	2,005	1,910
Private (mostly for-profit)	65	75	92
Total	2,127	2,080	2,002
Proportion of private kindergartens in % ⁺	3.1	3.6	4.6

⁺own calculations

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to national statistical sources**, there were 812 nursery settings in Bulgaria in 2015, providing 32,040 places for 29,576 children (7,535 1-year olds and 21,236 2-year olds) – a participation rate of 4%. Only a small number of children were younger than one or over 3 years old.

Whereas a large majority of under 3-year olds did not attend a nursery setting, neither in 2010 nor in 2015, the relative share of participating children aged 3 to 6 years increased during this time from just over half the age-group (54%) to 71.5%.

Table 3

Bulgaria: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years to school entry, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	n/a	n/a
	Over 30 hours	n/a	n/a
	No attendance	n/a	n/a
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	4
	Over 30 hours	6	50
	No attendance	93	46
2015	1 to 29 hours	0.5	3.3
	Over 30 hours	8.4	68.2
	No attendance	91.0	28.5

National statistics** report 81% of 3- to 6-year old children attending a kindergarten in the year 2015/16.

Table 4

Bulgaria: Relative share of children in ECEC provision according to age, 2015/16**

Age group	2015/16	Total number of children in the age group (Eurostat*)	proportion in % [†]
under 3 years	5,605	199,451	2.8
3 years	47,991	68,885	69.7
4 years	51,958	69,320	75,0
5 years	61,934	72,927	84,9
6 years	63,714	70,279	90.7
7 years	761	67,800	1.1
over 7 years	62	66,949	0.1
Total: 3 to 7 years	226,420	416,160	54.4
Total: 0 to 7 years	232,025	615,611	37.7

[†] own calculations on the basis of Eurostat data for the age group, quotas are approximation

According to a 2013 UNICEF study (quoted in EFA 2015), financial problems in families and regional disparities in the availability of places are the main reasons for children not attending a kindergarten or pre-primary group.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Engels-Kritidis, R. 2017.
*Eurostat 2017f.
**NSI 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

Almost 87% of the Bulgarian education system is state funded. Kindergartens and compulsory pre-primary groups, which are mainly provided by local authorities, are funded primarily through municipal budgets. The two years preceding school entry are free of charge, otherwise parents pay on average a fee of 23€¹ a month (to cover subsistence) in public kindergartens and between 230-430€ a month in private settings. In the latter, fees can be as high as the average monthly wage (roughly 467€ gross).

Private kindergartens are not funded through the state or municipal budgets. However, since the 2015 Pre-school and School Act, they may now apply for a state subsidy if they provide the compulsory places for 5- and 6-year old children.

The funding of nursery groups which are part of a kindergarten comes from the budgets of the local municipalities and the Ministry of Education and Science; the funding of independent nursery institutions comes from the budgets of the local municipalities and the Ministry of Health.

For each child attending a nursery, the parents are charged a fee of approx. 60 leva (30€) per month, but if the child is absent due to health reasons, this fee is reduced proportionally to the number of days of his/her absence. As a measure to combat the demographic crisis in smaller towns and villages, some local municipalities have decided to waive nursery and/or kindergarten fees for children born in their area.

¹ The amounts in Euros refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156).

Sources: EFA 2015.
Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012, 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2014.

Staff-child ratios

In full-day kindergartens two qualified members of staff (ISCED 6 or 7) per group work on a shift basis, one from 7:00 to 13:00, the other from 13:00 to 19:00. They are supported by a non-qualified Co-worker who works for eight hours daily, but who is largely responsible for cleaning and clearing up tasks. The children stay with the same staff up to school entry.

The maximum number of children under one year of age in a group may not exceed 8, in groups with 1- and 2-year olds 16, and in groups with 3-to 5-year olds 22.* However, in reality, the required maximum group size is very often exceeded, particularly in the larger towns.

Sources: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012, 2017.
*European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2014.

Curricular frameworks

The first State Educational Requirements for early childhood education and preparing children for primary school (for ages 3-7) were issued by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2000 and revised in 2005. For early childhood education preceding compulsory pre-primary education these requirements included the Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, the social environment, nature, play culture, art and literature for children, music, constructional and technical activities, everyday life, physical education**. The conceptual framework focussed on the developmental needs of children and was based on two programmes developed in 1993: *Educational Programme for Children Aged 2-7 Years* (Roussinova 1993) and *Children's Kindergarten Activities* (Vitanova 1993).

Since 2003, a curricular framework was issued for **compulsory pre-primary education**, comprising the following learning areas: personal, emotional and social skills, language development and communication skills, physical and health education, literacy, numeracy and cognitive skills, knowledge of the world, artistic expression and creativity, early foreign language learning and preparation for school*. Learning is organised in three groups: (1) children without kindergarten experience whose first language is Bulgarian; (2) children with kindergarten experience whose home language is Bulgarian; and (3) children with no kindergarten experience whose first language is not Bulgarian.

Since 2016, new State Educational Standards apply to all age groups in kindergartens. They define knowledge, skills and attitudes for children to reach by a certain age and for each learning area.

In terms of a curricular framework for work in nurseries/infant-toddler centres, a team of psychologists and early childhood experts under the initiative and support of UNICEF Bulgaria developed *Standards for development and learning in early childhood: from birth to three years* (2014)***. They form the basis of a regulation for early childhood development (10 months to 3 years) which was signed in 2017 by the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Health. The document has been discussed in public and it could be that it will be affirmed as an official document.

For children aged 3 to 5 years, a number of daily adult-led activities of 15 to 20 minutes' duration are recommended; for the pre-primary groups the recommended duration of one activity is 20 to 30 minutes. The rest of the day consists of free play, activities in the garden and the learning of a

foreign language. Kindergartens work with materials and programmes approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, but staff are free to choose their preferred programme systems.

Sources: ***Atanasova-Trifonova et al. 2014.
Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012.
*European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
**European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2014.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with a home language other than Bulgarian, who live in isolated areas, or who have special educational needs, are those at particular risk of being excluded from participation in early childhood education.

In 2016, a Regulation for Inclusive Education was issued by the Minister of Education and Science which includes the state educational standard for inclusive education. The regulation governs the public relations activities of the institutions involved in the provision of inclusive education, providing support for the personal development of the children and pupils in the early childhood and school system.

It is planned to create appropriate conditions (materials and equipment, building facilities, specialised support staff) for children with special educational needs and disabilities (set out in detail in the Implementation Regulations of the Education Act) so that they can participate in mainstream ECEC provision. A team comprising the centre head, specialist support staff, psychologists or therapists, makes an initial assessment and subsequently monitors the child's development. An individual plan is created which is aligned to the main educational programme but focuses on the acquisition of skills and abilities the child needs in order to become more independent and socially integrated.

Diagnosing developmental delays as soon as possible is emphasised as a key factor in supporting effective inclusion. Psychologists and other support staff work closely with the regular teachers, amending educational strategies for children with special support needs as appropriate.

Across the country, there are 18 segregated institutions (residential homes for under 3-year olds, for 3- to 7-year olds and for 7- to 18-year olds) specialising in health and social care (*Domove za mediko-socialni grizhi za detsa*) for children who cannot participate in an integrative mainstream setting. A team comprising representatives of the regional education inspectors and a committee of experts at the Ministry of Education is responsible for this kind of provision. In 2015, 849 under 3-year olds (719 of these younger than one year) were cared for in these specialist centres.

Three ministries are responsible for the annual revision of a national plan for these children: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Health. The ministries co-operate with the Child Protection agency, local authorities and non-governmental organisations.

A *Social Inclusion Project* (SIP) was conducted in 2010 with the aim of providing new services for disadvantaged children and families, of promoting the early childhood education of disadvantaged children and of emphasising risk prevention. Since the project started, almost 1,900 new nursery and kindergarten places have been created*.

Children with a background of migration

Regarding the integration of children from ethnic minority families, a key policy document is the *National Strategy for the Integration of Roma (2012-2020)*, in which the right to education for all is emphasised. The *Strategy for the Educational Integration of Ethnic Minority Children and Pupils (2005-2015)* aims to close down Roma-only kindergartens and to pursue the development of inte-

grated ECEC settings and schools. Children with family languages other than Bulgarian are given special tuition in Bulgarian.

In 2016, only 1.1% of the total population in Bulgaria had a non-Bulgarian background. Three-quarters of these came from non-EU countries. Only 0.5% of under 5-year olds had a background of migration, and nearly all of them (95.2%) came from countries outside the European Union.**

Sources: EFA 2015.
Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012, 2017.
*EPIC 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2013.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Individual children’s progress is continuously assessed through observations made by the teacher, who informs parents on a regular basis. Assessment takes place at the beginning and end of each year in kindergarten. In the pre-primary groups, the teachers hold talks with each child, assessing in particular their skills in the Bulgarian language and in other areas relevant for school, and inform parents of the outcome. Each child receives a certificate at the end of the pre-primary education period which confirms their ‘school readiness’ and is required for entry into the first class of primary school.

Assessments of ECEC settings and staff are compulsory and conducted at the national and regional level and also in the settings themselves.

Staff qualifications are controlled by specialist units of MEYS, in particular the *Centre for the Control and Assessment of Quality in Education*. The 28 regional education authorities are also involved in monitoring activities – the municipal mayors monitor in particular the funding of ECEC.

State-funded programmes on early childhood education initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science have been promoted in recent years and implemented over the regional education authorities. One example is the national programme “Development of the system of preschool education”, which aims to improve the quality of early childhood education and to ensure an equal start for children before they enter the school system.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Parental leave arrangements

The duration of **maternity leave** (*otpusk za bremennost i razhdane*) in Bulgaria amounts to 410 days, 45 of which are taken before the expected birth date. When the child is 6 months old, the entitlement for the rest of the time can be transferred to the father. Mothers who were employed for at least 12 months in a job with social insurance contributions receive 90% of their gross wage during the 410 days from the *National Health Insurance Fund*. For the first child, all mothers are granted an allowance of 250 BGN (128€, 31.03.2017).

Fathers are entitled to 15 paid days of leave directly following the child’s birth, at 90% of average income over the past eighteen months*.

The maternity leave period is followed by a parental leave entitlement (*otpusk za otglezhdane na dete*) up to the child’s second birthday. This can also be transferred to the father or to a grandparent. During the parental leave period, the family is granted a lump sum which is equivalent to the minimum basic wage (340 BGN, 175€*).

Sources: Angloinfo Bulgaria 2015.
*OECD 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1882	First EC institution established
1934	Official integration of kindergartens into the education sector
1935	First day nurseries for under 3-year olds established
1991	Pre-primary groups for 6-year olds introduced
1993	Modern programmes for preschool education developed: <i>Educational Programme for Children Aged 2-7 Years</i> (Roussinova et al 1993) and <i>Children's Kindergarten Activities</i> (Vitanova et al 1993).
2000	State Educational Requirements for early childhood education and preparation of children for primary school were established by the content of Decree № 4, issued by the Ministry of Education and Science, with further additions published in 2005.
2002	Pre-primary groups for 6-year olds made obligatory.
2010	Obligatory pre-primary education extended to 5-year olds
2014	Standards for development and learning in early childhood: from birth to three years published (Atanasova-Trifonova, M., et al 2014)
2015	Law of Preschool and School Education
2016	New State standards for early childhood education established through Decree № 5 for Preschool Education (2016), issued by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Sources: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2012, 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Bulgaria

Country expert assessment by Rozalina Engels-Kritidis

Conceptually, the child and his/her needs are firmly established as the core focus of contemporary Bulgarian early childhood pedagogy. From an administrative aspect, with the new Law of Preschool and School Education (2015), which defines early childhood education as being on an equal basis with school education, the important role of ECE in the overall educational system of Bulgaria is confirmed and a significant step forward has been achieved for the sector. However, at the same time, the new State Educational Standards for Preschool Education (2016), which are directly linked to the new Law, include very narrow definitions, such as: educational content, distributed not only in areas (close to school subjects), but in all age sub-groups as well; duration of one organised activity ('pedagogical situation') with children; number of pedagogical situations per week / per age sub-group in each educational area (between 11 and 17 at minimum), etc. In this regard, the biggest challenges in the near future for Bulgarian early childhood education and care will be to counter the early onset of strictly-didactical methodologies and to be able to keep the idea of the 'preciousness' of childhood at the core of pedagogical practice in kindergartens, not only with children at earlier ages, but also with 5-6 and 6-7 years-old children, attending two years of compulsory pre-school education.

Sources: Engels-Kritidis, R. 2016.
State Educational Requirements 2016.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Bulgaria totalled over 7 million (7,153,784). Over the past 20 years the total population has sunk significantly (from 8,427,418 in 1995 to 7,688,573 in 2005).

Children under age 7

Table 5

Bulgaria: Proportion of children under 7 years from the total population, 2016

Age of children	Number of children
under 1 year	65,537
1-year olds	67,241
2-year olds	65,022
Under 3-year olds. total	197,800
3-year olds	67,425
4-year olds	68,946
5-year olds	69,332
6-year olds	72,946
3- to under 7-year olds, total	278,649
0- to under 7-year olds, total	476,449

Table 6

Bulgaria: Proportion of children under 7 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995-2016, in %[†]

	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	2.9	3.3	2.5	3.1	2.8	3.0
3- to under 7-year olds	4.7	4.7	3.4	4.2	3.9	4.2
0- to under 7-year olds	7.6	8.0	5.9	7.3	6.7	7.2

[†] own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, slightly more than half of all households with children under the age of 6 years were couple households. Households with single parents account for only 2.9% and are usually single mother households; the proportion of single fathers is very low at 0.3%.

Table 7

Bulgaria: Households with children under 6 years old, 2015

Household type	Number of households	Households in per cent ⁺
Households total	626,000	
Couple households	319,900	51.1
Other types of households	287,600	45.9
Single parent households, total	18,400	2.9
Single parent households, women	16,600	2.7
Single parent households, men	1,800 ⁺⁺	0.3

⁺ own calculation, ⁺⁺ data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the labour force participation rate of men (15-64) in Bulgaria totalled 65.9% and that of women 59.8%.

During the same year, 53.8% of women with at least one child under 6 years of age were in the labour force. Even though a far higher proportion of men than women with children under age 6 (77.3%) were in the labour force, this was still the lowest rate among the EU28 (see Table 8). The labour participation rate of mothers in Bulgaria was also significantly lower than the EU28 average.

Table 8:

Bulgaria: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

		Mothers , in %	Fathers , in %
Bulgaria	2005	44.7	72.4
	2010	47.9	76.1
	2015	53.8	77.3
European Union	EU15 - 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 - 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest employment rate	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech. Republic – 93.0
Lowest employment rate	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

⁺ own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 40.8% of children under the age of 6 were threatened by poverty or social exclusion. This is the second highest rate in the EU28 (EU average = 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 41.3%, the highest in the EU28 countries.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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CROATIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Dejana Bouillet

Full Professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb

Citation suggestion:

Bouillet, D. 2018. "Croatia – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 126-155.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

Since 1997, early childhood education and care in the Republic of Croatia has been regulated as a sub-system of the education system (*Preschool Education Act*, Official Gazette, No. 10/97, 107/07 and 94/13). ECEC institutions are managed through local self-governments, while the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (*Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja*) verifies and approves all ECEC programmes. ECEC includes nurseries, kindergartens and pre-primary classes. Nursery education units in kindergartens cater for children between 6 months and 3 years of age, while kindergartens and pre-primary classes cater for children between 3 and 6 or 7 years of age. Since 2014, pre-primary transition groups are obligatory for all children for one year before starting primary education (Official Gazette, No. 107/2014).

ECEC in Croatia is thus both unified and decentralised. The dominant providers of ECEC are public institutions established by local governments and supervised by the Ministry of Science and Education. Home-based childcare services ('nannies') are also available. They are mostly financed through private sources and come under the supervision of the Ministry for Demography, Families, Youth and Social Welfare.

The responsibility for financing and developing ECEC capacities is set at the local level. This has resulted in pronounced and persistent regional differences in childcare availability as their development has been heavily dependent on the economic performance of a particular local area in Croatia (Dobrotić et al. 2010). There are also pronounced regional differences in the quality and affordability of provision, meaning that children are entering the ECEC system under different rules, according to their residential status.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In Croatia, staffing in ECEC provision is regulated by *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC* (Official Gazette, No. 63/08; 90/10).

Table 1 distinguishes between different types of contact staff and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1
Croatia: ECEC staff in centre-based settings in Croatia

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>Odgojitelj predškolske djece</i> ECEC Teacher (sometimes called Kindergarten Teacher) <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	6 months - 7 years	Bachelor's degree, 3 years university ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012; 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Pedagogy Professional				
<i>Stručni suradnik – pedagog</i> Pedagogue (specialist support staff)	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Specialist support staff	Broad focus (children and adults)	Master's degree (3 +2 years university) ECTS points: 300 EQF Level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0111 ISCED 2011: 7
<i>Stručni suradnik – psiholog</i> Psychologist	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Specialist support staff	Broad focus (children and adults)	Master's degree (3+2 years university) ECTS points: 300 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0313 ISCED 2011: 7
<i>Stručni suradnik – edukacijski rehabilitator ili logoped</i> Special Needs Teacher (Rehabilitator, Speech Therapist)	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Specialist support staff	Broad focus (children and adults)	Master's degree (3+2 years university) ECTS points: 300 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 7
<i>Viša medicinska sestra</i> Nurse <i>Profile:</i> Social/Health Care Professional	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Qualified co-worker particularly in health issues	Broad focus (children and adults)	Bachelor's degree 3 years university ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Osobni pomoćnik</i> Assistant	<i>Predškolske ustanove</i> ECEC institutions 6 months - 7 years	Non-qualified co-worker They help in supporting children with developmental difficulties.	No formal IPS	Completed secondary school education plus completion of a further education programme for working with children with special educational needs ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013: n/a ISCED 2011: 4

Table 1 illustrates how many different professionals work in Croatian ECEC institutions, but the only professional staff specifically qualified for working with children up to 7 years of age and who work with them full-time are the ECEC Teachers (*Odgojitelj predškolske djece*). After completion of a three-year undergraduate university study programme (six semesters), the specialist Bachelor's degree in Early and Pre-primary Education prepares them for duties and tasks related to nurturing young children up to compulsory school age (from 6 months to 7 years of age), caring for them and educating them in different ECEC settings. They can then continue to follow a post-graduate two-year university study programme (four semesters) for a Master's degree in Early and Pre-primary Education, qualifying them to perform highly professional, research and developmental work in the field of early and pre-primary education.

Other professionals who work in ECEC settings have followed different university study programmes (pedagogy, psychology, educational rehabilitation, speech therapy) and work in ECEC settings is just one aspect of their professional interest. It means that they are qualified to work in different settings, with different populations (young children, school pupils, teenagers, and adults). If they work in ECEC institutions, their main role is to support the teachers, children and parents in the educational process. According to the *Preschool Education Act* and the *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC*, each ECEC institution decides which kind of experts will be employed in each institution (depending on needs and the number of children and educational groups of children). They follow the children's psycho-physical development, identify individual needs and decide on potential interventions. They also participate in CPD programmes for ECEC Teachers.

One nurse works in each ECEC. The nurse works as independent specialist health staff member and provides care for children's health in ECEC by: helping to oversee, maintain and organise a clean, tidy, child-friendly environment; working with children, parents and professionals in the field of protection of children's health and a healthy environment; other professional activities.

The task of assistants is to support ECEC teachers to help children with a wide range of developmental difficulties. They are allocated to the kindergarten and work under the direction of the ECEC teachers. The assistant can be a person who has only completed secondary education, under the condition that they have attended a special educational programme for working with children with developmental difficulties. Educational programmes for assistants are not regulated at a national level.

Persons with an illegal or crime record are banned from working with young children.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social/ Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

According to national data (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a), at the beginning of the year 2015/2016 there were 1,602 units in Croatia implementing ECEC programmes. These included 1,432 kindergartens and 170 other legal entities (basic schools, playrooms in libraries or other institutions or organisations). Out of the total number, 288 were self-contained kindergartens, whereas 266 were kindergartens with affiliated units/departments (878)². Compared to the previous year, the total number of units increased by 0.75 % and the total number of children in reporting units by 0.6 %. The data about kindergartens and other legal entities implementing ECEC programmes are shown in *Table 2*.

² 288 kindergartens work in only one unit/department, while 266 kindergartens have several departments/units in various locations.

Table 2

Croatia: Kindergartens and other legal entities implementing ECEC programmes, 2015/2016*

Provider	Total	Kindergartens (6 months – 6 years)			Other legal entities		
		Self-contained	With affiliated units	Affiliated units	Primary schools	Play-rooms in libraries	Other institutions
State maintained	3	1	-	-	-	-	2
		1					
Local government and self-government units	1,232	142	198	738	136	3	15
		1,078					
Other legal entities ³	313	134	54	113	6	1	5
		301					
Religious communities	54	11	14	27	-	-	2
		52					
Total number of kindergarten units	1,602	288	266	878	142	4	24
		1,432					

*Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a.

In these ECEC settings, 18,791 persons are employed. Among them, 17,381 (92.49 %) are full-time employees. Part-time employees work in pre-primary classes (for children who do not attend regular kindergarten programmes but are obliged to attend the pre-primary class one year before entering primary school (see also *Section 8.2*). 95.7 % (17,984) of all employees in Croatian ECEC institutions are women. The structural composition of ECEC employees in Croatia is presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3

Croatia: Persons employed in ECEC institutions, by staff qualifications and gender, at the beginning of 2015/2016* (in kindergartens, preschool institutions and other ECEC settings)

Staff categories	Total	Women %	Men %
ECEC Teachers (61.4 %)	11,538	99.1	0.9
Nurses (3 %)	564	98.6	1.4
Pedagogues (2 %)	385	98.4	1.6
Psychologists, Rehabilitators, Speech Therapists (2.6 %)	493	97.2	2.8
Administrative staff (4.8 %)	895	89.0	10.9
Other staff (26.2 %)	4,916	88.2	11.8
Total	18,791	95.7	4.3
Staff with specialist higher education degree (Master)	1,458	95.5	4.5
Staff with specialist higher education degree (Bachelor)	10,755	98.9	1.1
Technical staff with specialist vocational qualification (secondary education)	4,452	86.8	13.2
Staff with no formal IPS	1,578	98.9	1.1

* Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a, own calculations

³ Private organisations, social and health institutions

Table 4

Croatia: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender and ethnicity in kindergartens (total 14,896, full-time employees), 2015/16*

Staff categories	ECEC Teachers	Nurses	Specialist support staff	Administrative staff	Total	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree (BA)	10,051	262	75	279	10,667	71.6
Staff with specialist higher education degree (MA)	310	7	872	186	1,375	9.2
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	580	286	2	408	1,276	8.6
Staff with non-specialist qualification	0	0	0	0	1,578	10.6
Men	27.1 % (including male administrative staff; no systematically compiled data by qualifications and work place)					
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data; (estimated: 9.6% in 2011)					

* Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a, own calculations

While the data shown in *Table 3* represent persons employed in all ECEC institutions, including kindergartens, preschool institutions and other ECEC settings (such as libraries, for example), the data in *Table 4* is directed just to the persons employed in kindergarten settings, due to the fact that Croatian Bureau of Statistic does not follow all the data related to all kinds of ECEC programmes.

However, it is possible to conclude that the greater majority of staff in ECEC institutions are women. In terms of qualifications, over two thirds of the personnel have a specialist higher education degree. Some unqualified persons still work in Croatian kindergartens, for example as teachers or special support staff, because they took up their post based on qualifications required by the old legislation, and retained their workplace (*Labour Act*, Official Gazette No. 93/2014). At the same time, around 3% of all ECEC teachers have a Master degree, which has a positive impact on the qualification of persons who are directly involved in working with children. Persons with a vocational education work predominantly as administrative and technical staff. Support staff such as cooks, cleaners or janitors are predominantly non-qualified persons who have completed 8 years of compulsory schooling.

National data about the ethnicity and migrant status of employees are not available because they are not systematically compiled. However, according to the last census held in 2011 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015b⁴), the majority of the population are Croats (90.42 %), meaning that predominantly Croats work in Croatian ECEC institutions.

⁴ The population of Croatia is 4,284,889, of which 48.2 % are men and 51.8 % are women.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

ECEC/Kindergarten Teachers (*Odgojitelj predškolske djece*)

Since 2005, professional studies for prospective ECEC Teachers in Croatia have been transformed significantly through the implementation of the Bologna process. The major change was raising all initial ECEC Teacher education programmes to the tertiary level. Since then, Croatia has a binary higher education system, meaning that prospective students can choose between two types of higher education studies: (a) university studies consisting of academic programmes that are conducted solely at universities; and (b) professional studies consisting of programmes leading to professional qualifications offered by universities of applied sciences (polytechnics) or colleges of applied sciences. In some exceptional cases, ‘Professional Bachelor’ degrees can also be implemented in universities, as was the case with the IPS programmes for ECEC Teachers. However, most universities have recently changed their IPS programmes for ECEC Teachers and have begun to offer university studies for prospective ECEC Teachers. Table 5 shows which six universities offer these programmes. Five of them offer the university study programme, while just one faculty still offers the ‘Professional Bachelor’ programme. It is possible to study early childhood and pre-primary education at Master’s level at three faculties (in Zagreb, Rijeka and Osijek).

Table 5:

Croatia: Universities providing IPS for prospective ECEC Teachers by types of study programme

University	Type and duration of study programme	ECTS points	Academic title
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Faculty of Educational Sciences	Professional studies, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	‘Professional Bachelor’ - Pre-school Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	University, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	University Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences	University, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	University Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education	University, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	University Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Zadar, Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education	University, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	University Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education	University, 3 years (6 semesters)	180	University Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 6; ISCED 2013-F 0102
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences	University, 2 years (4 semesters)	120	Master’s degree – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 7; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education	University, 2 years (4 semesters)	120	Master’s degree – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 7; ISCED 2013-F 0102
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education	University, 2 years (4 semesters)	120	Master’s degree – Early Childhood/Preschool Education EQF 7; ISCED 2013-F 0102

It is important to stress that some faculties (in Zagreb, Pula, Osijek and Zadar) offer part-time and full-time studies and that faculties in Zagreb and Osijek have affiliated departments in

other locations (in Petrinja, Čakovec and Slavonski Brod). It means that it is possible to study early and preschool education in nine different Croatian towns. For all above-mentioned undergraduate studies, entry requirements are the completion of a four-year gymnasium or vocational secondary school plus the national graduation exam, particularly in the Croatian language, a foreign language and basic mathematics. For graduate studies, access requirements are: a completed university level undergraduate study programme in Early and Preschool Education, or a university level undergraduate study programme in the Social Sciences in the fields of Pedagogy, Psychology, Education and Rehabilitation, (educational) Kinesiology, Sociology and interdisciplinary social sciences, or a specialist professional study in Early Childhood/Preschool Education, providing that the applicant has completed a specialised programme based on competencies needed for enrolment in the graduate study programme.

Graduates with a **Bachelor's** degree in Early Childhood/Preschool Education are qualified for:

- efficiently planning, programming and evaluating educational contexts as developmentally stimulating, while respecting children's abilities, needs and interests; that is, implementing an integrated education;
- independently constructing, implementing and evaluating an integrated curriculum in all developmental areas through activities and materials in accordance with contemporary child development theories;
- acting as a reflexive practitioner and assessing his/her implicit pedagogy by questioning its effectiveness in constantly improving quality;
- creating educational contexts appropriate for all children regardless of their sociocultural and economic status;
- building close, reciprocal and trusting relationships with parents by encouraging a partnership approach and actively engaging in improving cooperation between local communities and kindergartens;
- constantly pursuing professional development in the context of lifelong learning.

The qualification attained enables the holder to access the profession of ECEC Teacher in ECEC institutions as a trainee. Independent work is only allowed for individuals who have additionally completed a trainee programme, passed the professional exam and have been assessed as being capable of working as an ECEC Teacher. Upon completing the undergraduate university study of Early and Preschool Education, the holder of the qualification has the right to enrol in a graduate university study course, or follow a specialist professional Master's study of the same kind without any additional requirements. The requirements for continuing education in other fields of study are determined by a higher education institution offering study programmes in those fields.

A **Master's** degree in Early Childhood/Preschool Education qualifies for performing highly professional work as well as research and development in the field of Early Childhood/Preschool Education, in particular:

- participating in complex, multi-level processes of early childhood and preschool education and contributing towards shifting the boundaries of the standard definition of a Kindergarten Teacher's career;
- coping effectively with the increasing challenges in the field of Early Childhood/Preschool Education;
- encouraging the creative and active research component in education;
- thinking in an integrated way in the context of one's own profession and relating it to other professions;
- pursuing professional development regularly in the context of lifelong learning.

The qualification attained provides access to jobs in the ECEC field, performing work tasks and duties at a qualitatively higher level. Moreover, the holder is qualified for highly professional work in science and higher education, in the public sector, in state institutions and local and regional self-governing institutions whose work involves childcare and early childhood/preschool education and care. Following completion of Master's studies, the holder has

the right to enrol in a corresponding postgraduate university study, or a postgraduate specialist professional study, under the conditions given by the university. For the moment, the *Preschool Education Act* does not recognise the difference between a Bachelor and Master in early childhood/preschool education. Consequently, professionals with a Master's degree work under the same conditions in ECEC institutions as those with a Bachelor's degree. Moreover, the *Preschool Education Act* allows all those who have completed initial professional studies for ECEC Teachers to apply for the same positions, regardless of whether they have a 'University Bachelor' or a 'Professional Bachelor' degree. However, since 2017, some providers of ECEC (for example, the capital of Croatia – Zagreb) award differences in the salary level of ECEC teachers according to whether they have a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

Table 6

Croatia: ECEC Teacher

<p>Job title in Croatian: <i>Odgojitelj predškolske djece</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: completion of 4 years gymnasium or vocational secondary school and final exam Professional studies: 3 years study at a university Award: Bachelor – Early Childhood/Preschool Education ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0102 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: ECEC settings, 6 months - 7 years</p>

Table 7

Croatia: Specialist support staff

<p>Job title in Croatian: <i>Stručni suradnik</i></p>
<p>Entry requirements: completion of 4 years gymnasium or vocational secondary school and final exam Professional studies: 5 years study at a university (undergraduate and graduate study programme in Pedagogy, Psychology or Education and Rehabilitation Sciences) Award: Master's degree Total ECTS points: 300 (180+120) EQF level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0111 (pedagogue), 0313 (psychologist) or 0112 (special needs teacher or speech therapist) ISCED 2011: 7 Main ECEC workplaces: As pedagogues, psychologists, experts in inclusive education and rehabilitation or speech therapists in ECEC institutions, 6 months - 7 years old. Graduates also may work in schools, public sector services, state institutions and local and regional self-governing institutions (with children, youth and adults).</p>

Table 8

Croatia: Nurse

<p>Job title in Croatian: <i>Viša medicinska sestra, Zdravstveni voditelj</i> Profile: Health Care Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: completion of 4 years gymnasium or vocational secondary school and final exam (= university entrance exam) Professional studies: 3 years study at a university of applied sciences Award: Bachelor Total ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Working with children, parents and professionals in the field of protection of children's health and a healthy environment.</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

ECEC Teachers (*Odgojitelj predškolske djece*) – Bachelor programme

General competence specifications

Upon completion of a Bachelor programme in Early Childhood/Preschool Education, students are expected to be able to:

Instrumental competencies

- have a thorough understanding of their professional field at multiple levels;
- possess skills for organising and planning autonomous learning and professional development, including critical self-reflection and critically reflecting on scientific theories;
- have acquired the necessary knowledge for generating new ideas and adapting them to new situations;
- have developed the skills needed for writing a research-based paper on a specific topic;
- be able to communicate on ECEC issues in a clearly argued manner in their first language and in a foreign language using a context-appropriate style.

Interpersonal competencies

- possess skills to make decisions according to the situation;
- be able to work in a team and interact/cooperate at different levels through a partnership approach;
- show abilities for continuous evaluation and self-evaluation of their own work;
- demonstrate appreciation for differences in a multicultural society;
- demonstrate the dispositions and qualities needed to reflect on and develop their professional field of work;
- have developed professional ethics.

Systematic competencies

- be able to work autonomously and continuously using different sources and learning methods
- have developed skills as a reflective practitioner who continuously evaluates his/her own achievements;
- be able to adapt to new and unexpected situations by actively using acquired knowledge, skills and abilities;
- be trained for developing a creative dimension in their work;
- show respect for and dedication to the work as a professional in early childhood education and care;
- actively pursue further personal and professional development and be able to demonstrate and promote the importance of their field of expertise;
- encourage and develop continuous evaluation regarding the quality of their professional work.

Specific competence specifications

Upon completion of a Bachelor programme in Early Childhood/Preschool Education, students are expected to be able to:

- know and understand contemporary scientific theories about children's learning in early childhood and about different ways of socialisation and upbringing;
- demonstrate knowledge of education-related sciences in order to explain processes, regularities and phenomena in their field of work at both theoretical and practical levels;
- demonstrate knowledge of efficient strategies in stimulating children's developmental potential during early childhood;
- create supportive relationships with children;
- create a rich learning environment appropriate for the group and for each child individually according to their abilities, skills, needs and interests, and on that basis create an integrated educational approach;
- establish and maintain a kindergarten environment which promotes children's health, ensures their safety, and provides them with appropriate care and mealtimes;

- demonstrate knowledge of monitoring and evaluating a child's activities and abilities as a basis for the creation of an integrated curriculum which takes into account the children's developmental and educational needs;
- understand ways of acquiring speech and language and be able to promote a child's creative potential in a holistic way (physical, cognitive, social);
- independently create, implement and evaluate an integrated curriculum in different fields (kinesiology, music, art, language and communication and research and cognition);
- use activities and materials in accordance with contemporary developmental theories;
- demonstrate practical competencies, evaluate and self-evaluate their own implicit pedagogy by questioning its effectiveness in view of constant quality improvement;
- promote equal opportunities for all children in kindergarten regardless of their socio-cultural and economic status;
- establish close and cooperative partnerships with parents;
- actively engage in community networking in the kindergarten neighbourhood.

ECEC Teachers (*Odgojitelj predškolske djece*) – Master programme

General competence specifications

Upon completion of a Master programme in early childhood/preschool education students, are expected to be able to:

Instrumental competencies

- demonstrate a higher level of knowledge and understanding using analysing, synthesising and evaluating skills in the field of theory and practice of early and preschool education;
- demonstrate skills for information management from different sources using various learning resources (texts and information and communication technologies);
- learn through approaching problems in new and unfamiliar situations in a wider (multidisciplinary) context;
- successfully solve problems and make decisions within their professional role;
- possess skills for oral and written communication in a foreign language;

Interpersonal competencies

- possess a higher level of abilities to communicate and share information, ideas and problems;
- conduct interdisciplinary work in a team and with experts within their own and other specialist fields;
- develop abilities to understand and accept multiculturalism.

Systematic competencies

- use new educational possibilities via formal, informal learning and e-learning, and implement contemporary approaches and strategies in their personal and professional development;
- develop new learning skills as predispositions for lifelong learning;
- create new information and ideas in a creative way in their professional field;
- demonstrate a higher level of ability to interpret and evaluate research data within their professional and research field;
- reflect on and evaluate their own practice;
- develop independent leadership skills both at the setting level and in inter-professional work in the ECEC field;
- understand and accept children's developmental diversity;
- demonstrate a high level of personal commitment and dedication to the ECEC profession.

Specific competence specifications

Upon completion of a Master programme in early childhood/preschool education, students are expected to be able to:

- have relevant knowledge in anthropological, psychological, cultural, historical, sociological and other theories for interpreting contemporary childhood;
- demonstrate knowledge of different theoretical perspectives and practical approaches regarding the concept of 'institutionalised childhood';
- design an integrated curriculum and implement new strategies in the context of contemporary understandings about child development and early childhood education;
- demonstrate higher level specialist and scientific knowledge within the chosen specialism;
- actively participate in contributing towards developing ECEC policies;
- analyse, evaluate and promote concepts, theories, policies and practices in early childhood education and care;
- design research projects to be carried out in kindergartens, choose appropriate methods, analyse and interpret the results;
- critically reflect on continuity and discontinuity regarding educational assumptions and knowledge and current practices in ECEC in terms of the quality of 'child outcomes';
- demonstrate the ability to understand and shape knowledge and contribute to academic discussion by expressing views at the level of research review articles.

Curricular areas

The main topics in the Bachelor and Master studies programmes are: play, learning, and child development; learning environment, curriculum design; reflection and self-reflection; cooperation with family and community; and professional development. A selection of curricular areas is shown in *Table 9*.

Table 9

Croatia: Curricular areas of study programmes (Krstović, Vuičić, and Pejić Papak 2016)

	Groups of courses	Per cent (%)	
Bachelor study programme, University of Rijeka			
Compulsory courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines (developmental psychology, inclusive pedagogy, pedagogy of early and preschool education, Croatian language and communication, children's literature, visual arts, music arts, kinesiology, ICT in early education, professional identity, philosophy, ethics, etc.)	15-35	70
	Related disciplines and inter-disciplinary approaches (integrated preschool curriculum, preschool-based experience, visual arts in integrated curriculum, music in integrated curriculum, methodology of kinesiology, etc.)	25-45	
	Development of research competencies (statistics, introduction to scientific work, methodology of qualitative research, methodology of quantitative research, etc.)	10-30	
	Development of practical competencies (communication skills, partnership with parents, healthcare education, practical experiences in preschool institutions, etc.)	5-15	
Elective courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	0-15	30
	Related disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches	0-15	
	Development of practical competencies	0-15	
	Other courses (English language, German language, physical exercises, etc.)	0-15	
Master study programme, University of Rijeka			
Compulsory courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	25-40	70
	Related disciplines and inter-disciplinary approaches	10-25	
	Development of research competencies	10-25	
	Development of practical competencies	20-35	
Elective courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	0-15	30
	Development of research competencies	0-15	
	Other courses	0-15	
Bachelor study programme, University of Zagreb			
Compulsory courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	25-40	70

	Related disciplines and inter-disciplinary approaches	10-25	
	Development of research competencies	10-25	
	Development of practical competencies	20-35	
Elective courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	0-15	30
	Related disciplines and inter-disciplinary approaches	0-15	
	Development of practical competencies	0-15	
	Other courses	0-15	
Master study programme, University of Zagreb			
Compulsory courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	25-40	70
	Related disciplines and inter-disciplinary approaches	10-25	
	Development of research competencies	10-25	
	Development of practical competencies	20-35	
Elective courses	Fundamental scientific disciplines	0-15	30
	Development of research competencies	0-15	
	Other courses	0-15	

Common pedagogical-didactical approaches in study programmes are lectures, seminars, methodical exercises and practice. Approximately, 45% of the programmes are made up of lectures, 15% seminars, while 40% of the programmes are allocated to practical experiences in ECEC settings. However, each faculty has its own study programme, with specific courses, learning outcomes, structures and quality criteria.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualifications frameworks, as well as alternative pathways of entry into ECEC work, are not developed in Croatia. ECEC workers can continue their professional development by entering advanced formal education study routes or through life-long learning activities, without possibilities of changing their professional position or workplace. Even though the Croatian Government has adopted many different strategies and laws that focus on informal learning, these initiatives are still waiting to be implemented.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

One of the most important principles of Croatian universities is their autonomy, which includes (*Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act*, Official Gazette, No. 123/03; 198/03; 105/04; 174/04; 02/07; 45/09; 63/11; 94/13; 101/14; 60/15)

- Deciding on the internal organisation of the university.
- Establishing specific educational, scientific, artistic and professional programmes.
- Developing financial autonomy in agreement with the above-named law.
- Making independent decisions regarding the approval of projects and international cooperation.

The curriculum of each higher education institution for each study programme is defined at the institutional level. Before the approval of study programmes, all higher education institutions have to undergo an accreditation process by the Agency for Science and Higher Education. *The Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act* (2003, with amendments) stipulates that curricula should be in line with the latest scientific achievements, national priorities, professional demands and be comparable to EU curricula. There are no compulsory or core subjects defined at the national or regional level, but most study programmes do have some required core/compulsory subjects.

This means that learning in the early childhood workplace (practicum) is incorporated in the curricula of each faculty that provides a study programme for early childhood and preschool education. Each methods course has some classes directed to practical exercise (between 15 and 45 per semester). During these sessions, students visit ECEC institutions and practise activities with the children related to the course topic (arts, music, physical activities, literacy, etc.), with the support of their university tutor and colleagues.

The cooperation between faculties and ECEC institutions and their complementary roles are regulated by an Ordinance on ‘the training centre and experimental programmes’ in ECEC institutions (Official Gazette, No. 49/2004). The status of the ECEC institution as training centre, which serve as professional development centres, is determined by the Ministry of Science and Education for between one to four years, based on the requirement of the faculty that organises the students’ placements. An ECEC institution serving as a training centre is expected to ensure:

- a high level of the quality of the educational process;
- appropriate space for different forms of learning and consultation for the students (including individual consultations);
- sufficient materials for various didactical approaches;
- qualified professional staff; and
- an annual plan and programme of training.

Mutual obligations of the training centre and the faculty are regulated through a signed contract which is renewable on an annual basis. This contract includes a plan of the work with students, as well as regulations for the financial support for mentors and the ECEC institutions where the placement will be realised. This financial support is provided by faculties and is based on the number of students who decide to spend their practicum in each institution.

The length of time spent on field-based studies and the number of ECTS points allocated are presented in *Table 10*.

Table 10

Croatia: Placements in ECEC institutions as part of the IPS of core practitioners (Bachelor’s degree)

University	Hours/days of practice	ECTS points
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Faculty of Educational Sciences	1 st year: 50/10 2 nd year: 75/25 3 rd year: 100/20 Total: 325/55	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	2 nd year: 40/8 3 rd year: 60/12 Total: 100/20	2 2 Total: 4
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences	1 st year: 30/6 2 nd year: 30/6 3 rd year: 30/6 Total: 90/18	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education	2 nd year: 60/12 3 rd year: 60/12 Total: 120/24	4 4 Total: 8
University of Zadar, Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education	1 st year: 30/6 2 nd year: 30/6 3 rd year: 30/6 Total: 90/18	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education	1 st year: 40/8 2 nd year: 80/16 3 rd year: 80/16 Total: 200/42	2 4 4 Total: 10

The placements in ECEC settings are organised as a separate course at most faculties which takes place outside the regular teaching process (during the months that are allocated to exams). Students choose their place for the practicum individually. During the time they spend at the workplace, students receive support from a mentor, who should have at least five years of working experience. This is the only requirement for taking on the role as mentor. Specific qualifications or working conditions for this position have not been developed. The mentor is expected to support the work of the student, through planning, preparing and evaluating the student's activities. The position as student mentor is awarded 3 points in the process of the professional promotion of ECEC Teachers (Official Gazette, No. 49/2004).

During the practicum period, students are expected to become familiar with the organisational, legal and pedagogical aspects of ECEC institutions, as well as with all aspects of an ECEC Teacher's work. For example, the students' obligations at the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek 2009b) are:

- to become familiar with the curriculum for educational groups;
- to inspect all administrative and pedagogical documentation of educational groups;
- to participate in daily classroom activities;
- to become familiar with team work in the kindergarten, including collaboration between teachers and parents;
- to initiate some activities with children (according to the practicum plan, as agreed with the mentor).

Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to monitor and evaluate children's activities and wellbeing, as well as their commitment to early childhood education. They are expected to develop a capacity for continuously evaluating and self-evaluating their own work and that of the teachers, and to demonstrate their sensitivity for children, parents, colleagues and other professionals who work in the ECEC setting.

Student assignments become more demanding during each year of study, but the competences to be developed through field-based work remain the same.

Work placements are also part of the **Master's study programmes**. The main aim at this stage is for students to qualify themselves for independent working with specialist methodological knowledge and skills, as well as for the reflection and improvement of ECEC theory and practice. At the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (2009b), during each of the two years of study, students spend 60 hours (3 weeks or 15 days) in an ECEC setting (8 ECTS points). During the practicum, students are expected to:

- demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of analysing, synthesising and evaluating field-specific theories and practices;
- apply modern technologies;
- demonstrate a high level of interpretation and evaluation of research data within their professional and scientific field of work;
- achieve higher-level skills through reflecting and evaluating their own practice (see *Section 3.2* for further competence specifications).

All students are obliged to keep a diary of work, as well as other documentation defined in the course syllabus. The mentor is obliged to evaluate the quality of the student's practice through a written report. At the end of the practicum, the student hands in the various forms of documentation to the responsible university tutor, who checks whether all obligations have been fulfilled. This is the only formalised procedure of self-evaluation and evaluation of student's practice. However, each university tutor can give the students special assignments connected with specific lectures or courses. In such cases, students evaluate their work within the framework of these courses and reflect on their work together with their university tutors.

It can be concluded that workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners is not sufficiently defined in Croatia. This can be deduced from the low number of ECTS points allocated

for this part of IPS, from the lack of formal procedures for organising and evaluating these processes, and from the lack of qualification requirements for field-based mentors, who are not well recognised and supported. However, some reforms are planned for this area of ECEC in Croatia. More precisely, the new Ordinance on the training centre and experimental programmes in ECEC institutions are expected to be adopted in 2017.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The continuing professional development of ECEC personnel is regulated by:

- *the Preschool Education Act* (Official Gazette, No. 10/97, 107/07 and 94/13);
- *the Ordinance on the manner and conditions of taking the professional exam of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions* (Official Gazette, No. 133/97); and
- *the Ordinance on the manner and conditions for the promotion in the profession of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions* (Official Gazette, No. 133/97).

CPD is defined as the participation of ECEC Teachers and other staff in educational activities prepared and organised by Ministry of Science and Education, as well as other professional institutions and non-governmental institutions.

Promotion in the ECEC profession is based on three requirements, one of which is participation in CPD courses (Official Gazette, No. 133/97). Those are:

- Achievements in the direct educational work with children;
- Achievements in professional activities alongside the work in ECEC institutions; and
- Participation in professional development (CPD).

For professional activities alongside their pedagogical work, staff can be awarded a specific number of credit points (not ECTS points).

- 1 credit point for speaking at or co-ordinating professional meetings in an ECEC setting at the local/regional level;
- 2 credit points for publishing a paper in a professional journal or magazine, presenting at a national congress or conference, or participating in a research project;
- 3 credit points for a review of a professional book or textbook;
- 4 credit points for the translation of a professional manual or other educational books;
- 6 credit points for the authorship of educational books or scientific papers and participation in scientific research projects.

During their professional career, ECEC Teachers can advance to the status of a mentor or counsellor, dependent to a certain extent on their participation in CPD courses.

Requirements for the status of mentor are:

- at least six years of work experience;
- excellent or good assessments of their work;
- at least 7 credit points (as defined above);
- participation in continued professional training.

Requirements for the status of a counsellor are:

- at least eleven years of work experience;
- excellent assessments of their work;
- at least 15 credit points (as defined above);
- participation in continued professional training.

However, the term ‘participation in continued professional training’ is not defined in terms of a specific number of days or hours, or in terms of topics or other such requirements.

The **main provider** of CPD in Croatia is the *Education and Teacher Training Agency* (Official Gazette, No. 85/06), a public institution responsible for the provision of professional and advisory support to all levels of the education system. This includes:

- participation in the preparation, development and implementation of the national curriculum;
- providing assistance and guidelines for educational institutions, their principals, teachers, and school counsellors;
- organising and implementing in-service training for teachers, school counsellors and school principals;
- licensing examinations for teachers and for school counsellors, in accordance with special regulations.

The professional staff of the Agency are 110 subject-specific Senior Advisers working in the Central Office in Zagreb, and in three regional offices in Split, Rijeka and Osijek. The education provided by the Agency and other providers of CPD is not connected with the ECTS system.

The Agency organises CPD at state, inter-regional and regional level through different trainings for different professional groups. Each year the Agency organises around 1,000 trainings, while around 3,000 trainings are organised by counsellors at the regional level (Education and Teacher Training Agency 2016). However, only one small segment of these trainings is directed to the field of ECEC.

CPD activities organised by the Agency are financed through the state budget. It is possible to use the services of other CPD providers, but the fees usually have to be covered by the teachers unless the training is organised within the framework of EU project funding, ministry funding, or funding from other sources. Some organisations that organise trainings for Preschool Teachers or other supportive professional staff on a regular basis are: the Croatian office of the International Step by Step Association; the Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, and the Centre for Life-long Learning of the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka.

Even though the system of the CPD is organised, neither core practitioners, nor qualified and non-qualified co-workers in preschool institutions are *obliged* to participate in these activities. Thus, participation depends on their interest in the advancement of their professional status. According to data compiled by the Education and Teacher Training Agency (2013), 64.5% of all ECEC Teachers in Croatia are registered in the CPD system. However, since local authorities are responsible for regulations regarding CPD participation, each ECEC institution decides on the CPD activities of teaching staff.

The Preschool Education Act defines that the heads of ECEC provision should be fully qualified ECEC Teachers or be a member of the professional support staff (members of the expert team) and have at least five years of work experience in the ECEC field. They do not have to fulfil special qualifying requirements, but the Agency organises some special trainings exclusively for the managers of ECEC institutions.

Unfortunately, no large-scale research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel have been funded over the past five years. The Agency conducted an analysis of the system of CPD of educational staff in general, the results of which were published in 2013 (Gabrček 2013). However, ECEC Teachers were not included in the analysis. The only recent study to specifically include ECEC Teachers was an IPA project conducted in Croatia from 2013 to 2015 on *Qualification standards and improvement of the quality of study programmes for preschool and primary school teachers*. However, the project has not as yet had any impact on ECEC policy in general or on the professional development of ECEC staff.

Early childhood education care and the continuing professional development of ECEC staff is thus neither a topic in public debates nor in government reform initiatives.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (CQF 2013), as a major public, political and legislative framework, opens a door to the professional development of ECEC Teachers and other ECEC professions in Croatia and represents a key reform instrument governing the system of qualifications standards. The Act supports the standardisation and harmonisation of qualification standards for all professions across the education system. It steers higher education institutions towards the systematic application of a learning outcomes approach as a basis for curriculum planning (Beljo Lučić at al. 2011). In order to ensure quality and transparency of its implementation, a *Register of the Croatian Qualifications* is currently being designed, with the aim of achieving a better balance between the needs of the education sector and those of the labour market. The Register will contain a list of all professions with their respective competence specifications and learning outcomes. The Register is also planned as a basis for the development of an internal and external quality assurance system, because only those educational programmes that comply with the qualification standards of the Register are entitled to use the Croatian Qualifications Framework levels.

In order to implement the CQF, several projects have been initiated in order to define qualification standards for teacher education programmes in terms of learning outcomes, involving teacher education faculties from different universities. The project *Qualification standards and improvement of the quality of study programmes for preschool and primary school teachers* is the only project focusing on teacher education in the early childhood field. The project (2013-2015) was co-ordinated by the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education in cooperation with the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education. The aim was to develop a proposal for core standards across the relevant Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Croatia (Krstović, Vujčić and Pejić Papak 2016, 15)⁵. Two sets of students and teachers in Bachelor and Master study programmes at the two partner universities contributed towards defining two kinds of standards:

- standards for the ECEC teaching profession and specialist support staff (planning, organisation and analysis of the work; workplace preparation; operational activities related to the profession/workplace; commercial tasks; communication and cooperation with others; research, development activities, innovation; quality assurance; health and environment protection; professional development);
- standards for the qualifying process, i.e. what ECEC teachers need to learn during their initial professional studies (see *Section 3.2* for details).

Another recently adopted and significant document is *the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge* (Official Gazette, No. 124/14). The Strategy identifies and defines five objectives that refer to the entire system of education, including the ECEC system. Those are:

- developing a system for identifying, promoting and developing the capabilities and potential of individuals, and strengthening the services for lifelong personal and professional guidance;
- improving the quality of education and establishing a quality assurance system;
- developing processes and a system for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills;
- improving the system of continuing professional development of educational staff;
- enhancing the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and learning.

Key aspects of professionalisation are seen as:

⁵ The project also involves primary education, but this part of the project will be not presented here.

- general awareness of a teacher's work as socially valuable and enjoying high social status;
- high level of specific knowledge and skills which enable autonomous decision-making in complex situations;
- acquisition of professional competences through a long period of initial university education followed by a formal induction period ending with an exam for full license;
- lifelong competence development based on formal continuous professional development and informal learning and periodical evaluation of competences (re-licensing);
- programmes for initial teacher education which, besides professional knowledge and skills, enhance acquiring professional values and building a teacher's professional identity;
- establishment of professional associations which regulate, by means of a code of ethics and other acts, the criteria for entering a profession and professional practice.

The professionalisation of the teaching occupation in the way envisioned in the Strategy should be a joint endeavour of different key stakeholders. Currently, the academic community and educational experts are leading the implementation of specific activities, but for the full realisation of this goal more support from other stakeholders, such as policy makers, teacher unions, and professional teacher associations is required.

Even though the Strategy had the full support of all Croatian political parties, there are still some missing parts in the implementation strategy. These are:

- the existence of clearly defined outcomes for each level of the education system (here the Croatian Qualification Framework represents an important tool);
- the existence of a quality assurance system that could examine the success of learning processes and research work; and
- improvement of the initial education system and continuous professional training.

Recently, some important changes have occurred in the field of the ECEC. These are:

- the development, since 2011, of Master's level university studies for ECEC Teachers;
- changes following the 2013 Preschool Education Act, when:
 - the qualifications required for work in ECEC institutions were harmonised with the titles awarded upon the completion of ECEC study programmes in Croatia;
 - employment in ECEC was strictly banned for all persons who have problems with the law (because of some crime or offence act from the list in the Act);
 - employment procedures for work in ECEC institutions were more clearly defined (requiring a public announcement of vacant posts by the workplace);
 - the implementation of the national curricular framework for ECEC was made mandatory;
 - 250 hours' kindergarten attendance was made obligatory for all children in the year before entering primary school, accompanied by an Ordinance about the content and duration of a pre-primary programme (Official Gazette, No. 107/14);
- adoption of a *National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education* (Official Gazette, No. 5/15) which is in line with contemporary research knowledge on childhood, and the purpose and importance of ECEC.

It can be concluded that Croatia is characterised by a relatively rich activity in terms of policy documents directed towards improving the quality of the education system as a whole. However, in comparison with primary, secondary and tertiary education, reforms in the field of ECEC do not have such a high level of attention from policy makers, researchers and professional associations. All initiatives in the field during the last five years were mentioned in this report.

Moreover, it is important to note that the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education started a project on the self-evaluation of ECEC institutions in the year 2010. The aim of the project was to develop a methodology and instruments adapted to the ECEC sector. The findings were published in a handbook (Antulić 2013), which provides a resource for supporting all ECEC institutions in the process of quality assurance, and is thus a significant tool in the professionalisation of ECEC Teachers and other relevant ECEC staff.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Representative research studies focusing on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues do not exist in Croatia. Studies conducted in the last five years mostly cover only small samples and do not represent the ECEC profession of overall Croatia. Some of these studies are presented below – sources are available at the central portal of Croatian scientific journals (Portal of scientific journals in Croatia, www.hrca.hr).

Evaluation of a new study programme in early childhood education and care at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka.

Source: Tatalović Vorkapić, S., L. Vujičić, and Ž. Boneta 2016. (see references)

Aims: The study aimed to investigate the motivation of ECEC Teachers and graduate students to enrol in a new Master's study programme at the University of Rijeka, the levels of competence developed during their studies, and the predictive power of three significantly connected motives in relation to those competencies.

Procedure: 44 preschool teachers participated in this study, all females with a mean age of 34 years (SD=7.5), ranging from 23 to 51 years of age. The average length of working experience was 10 years (SD=7.92), ranging from 2 to 32 years of working within ECEC. A questionnaire with 39 items was used. Participants were supposed to estimate their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale. To analyse the ECEC teachers' motives for enrolling in this graduate study programme, a set of ten items was used.

Findings: Statistical analysis revealed a highly positive perception of relevant competences gained. This finding confirmed the hypothesis that continuing professional development through formal higher education contributes significantly to improving ECEC Teachers' performance while coping with changing and growing job demands. Moreover, the participants demonstrated an intrinsic motivation for enrolling for such a course. Extrinsic motives were indicative of a more negative, while intrinsic motivation led to more positive perception of learning outcomes and gained competences. Overall, the evaluation was highly positive and the findings confirmed the importance of satisfying the professional needs of ECEC Teachers.

Principals' attitudes towards (self)evaluation in ECEC institutions

Source: Magaš, M. and S. Tatalović Vorkapić 2015. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this study was to examine and analyse principals' attitudes toward the (self)evaluation of work performance in ECEC institutions and the relation between the characteristics of these institutions, principals' socio-demographic characteristics, and their attitudes toward (self)evaluation.

Procedure: This study included 62 kindergarten principals across the country, representing 9.2% of the total number of ECEC institution principals in Croatia. A questionnaire with 31 statements was created for the purpose of this study.

Findings: The principals expressed positive general attitudes toward (self)evaluation. A positive correlation was found between the principals' professional qualifications and their attitudes toward (self)evaluation, i.e. the principals with higher professional qualifications tended to express a more positive attitude towards (self)evaluation. These results indicate the significance of studying attitudes toward quality and (self)evaluation and confirm the important role of principals in ensuring and improving kindergarten quality.

Preschool teachers and counselling with parents

Source: Skočić Mihić, S., D. Blana Trošeč, and V. Katić 2015. (see references)

Aims: The research set out to test the hypothesis that ECEC Teachers feel only partially competent in parents counselling, which is connected with their age, life experience, working experience and level of education.

Procedure: The study included 136 ECEC Teachers who completed a scale for self-assessment of competences for counselling parents constructed for the purpose of this research. A factor analysis resulted in several subscales.

Findings: The results indicate that ECEC Teachers evaluated their counselling competences as mediocre. Differences could be shown in relation to their age, life experience and work experience and the type of their initial education. Professional experience proved to be the key element in acquiring competences for counselling which correlated with life experience and the level of education. This suggests that teachers who are at the beginning of their careers are at a disadvantage when it comes to parent counselling. This could be avoided if counselling competences were included in the learning outcomes during initial professional education.

Situation-related coping with stress among ECEC Teachers

Source: Pavlović, Ž. and J. Sindik 2014. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this study was to examine the possibility of forecasting situation-related coping with stress on the basis of predictors such as personality traits of ECEC Teachers (optimism/pessimism, emotional competence, self-efficacy), seniority, dispositional styles of coping with stress and how teachers perceive different sources of stress on the job.

Procedure: The participants were 336 ECEC Teachers from the county of Split-Dalmatia. The following instruments were applied: Scale for assessing stress of Preschool Teachers, optimism-pessimism scale of general self-efficacy, social desirability scale, emotional competence questionnaire EUK-15, questionnaire on coping with stressful situations.

Findings: The main finding of this research was that ECEC Teachers perceived their work as extremely stressful. The results indicated that dispositional coping mechanisms focused significantly on personality traits such as self-efficacy (to a lesser extent), and seniority. Participants perceiving extreme stress tended to be less content with their job. The findings contribute to a better understanding of stress among ECEC Teachers. This can contribute towards an improved design of stress prevention programmes for ECEC Teachers.

Students' views on the ECEC Teacher profession related to level of professional education

Source: Borovac, T. 2014. (see references)

Aims: The study aimed at highlighting differences in students' perceptions of the ECEC Teacher profession related to their level of education.

Procedure: A questionnaire compiled for this study comprised three subscales: understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, images of children and childhood, and perception of competences and professional duties. The research was conducted with students in their final (third) year of an undergraduate study programme in early childhood/pre-school education and students of the final (fifth) year of the Master study programme (N=74).

Findings: Statistical analysis led to the conclusion that the students of the third and the fifth year differ in significant ways in their perceptions of the ECEC profession in all three subscales. These results can be used for further analysis of students' perceptions of their future profession, especially in terms of meta-competences, and for evaluating the effectiveness of the study programme for prospective ECEC Teachers.

Educators' views on competencies for the effective management of problem situations

Source: Modrić, N. 2013. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this research was to examine ECEC Teachers' attitudes towards specific knowledge and skills relevant for the daily work of educators, especially for the management of problem situations. The author investigated how these skills were assessed by ECEC Teachers and to what extent they have mastered them. The specific aim of the research was to investigate whether the assessments of the teachers involved in the programme of education for Problem Situation Management (PSM) differed from the assessments of those who were not involved in this programme.

Procedure: The sample consisted of 155 ECEC Teachers in five preschool institutions in Zagreb and Samobor. The participants completed a specially compiled questionnaire.

Findings: The research results showed no statistically significant differences in the assessment of the importance of educators' knowledge and skills among participants. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the self-assessment regarding their mastering these skills and knowledge, towards a greater competence of the participants who completed the PSM education.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

There are two main differences between ECEC Teachers and other teachers in Croatia. Firstly, the qualification requirement for primary and secondary school teachers is a Master's degree, whereas for ECEC Teachers it is a Bachelor's degree. Secondly, teachers in schools are paid at a nationally agreed level, whereas ECEC Teachers are paid according to local regulations (because municipalities are responsible for ECEC in Croatia). It means that the source of salaries for teachers in schools is the national budget, while the sources of salaries for ECEC Teachers are municipality budgets which fund the specific ECEC institution. Some ECEC institutions are financed by private and other sources (for example, religious communities). Generally, the salaries of teachers in schools are the same across the country, whereas the salaries of Pre-school Teachers are highly variable.

Table 11 presents examples of monthly salaries (gross) of ECEC Teachers in eight Croatian towns from two regions.

Table 11

Croatia: Examples of monthly salaries (gross) of ECEC Teachers in two counties*

Town	Kuna	EUR (approx.)
Ludbreg	6,198	821
Novi Marof	6,357	842
Koprivnica	6,648	881
Ivanec	6,837	906
Čakovec	7,014	930
Lepoglava	7,362	975
Varaždin	9,300	1,232
Krapina	9,500	1,258

* Harači Pintarić, I. 2016.

Table 11 clearly illustrates the inequalities in ECEC Teachers' salaries, which are dependent on the economic development and financial possibilities of towns and municipalities as providers of ECEC institutions. Regional differences in salaries compared to the national average (7,739 kunas/1,032€, according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2016) can be up to 18% higher than or up to 10.6% lower than the national average salary.

It is important to note that the average salary of ECEC Teachers across Croatia is lower than the salaries shown in *Table 11*, since many municipalities in Croatia cannot offer proper salaries to their employees. Furthermore, the table shows the gross levels of salaries, meaning that ECEC Teachers have to live on much less (on average, around 5,633 kunas/748€ according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2016)). ECEC Teachers thus have relatively modest incomes regarding the level of their education. However, in some municipalities they are paid better than teachers who work in schools. The average net salary of employees who have acquired academic qualifications in the education sector is the lowest average salary of employees who have obtained academic qualifications in Croatia. Generally, such salaries are adequate for the necessities of life. If ECEC Teachers experience particularly difficult living conditions, their rights are regulated by other laws and they receive support from other public services (for example, from centres for social welfare according to the Social Welfare Act).

ECEC Teachers receive additional payment for:

- a post as centre head or deputy leader;
- years of work experience;
- the status of mentor or counsellor (see *Section 5*);
- working overtime.

They can also receive extra money if they participate in certain professional activities not connected to the ECEC institution (as a member of a non-governmental professional organisation, as a participant in a professional project, etc.).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Table 12 shows that the majority of ECEC staff is employed on a full-time basis. The exception are staff in preschool programmes organised in other facilities (for example, in primary schools or libraries), since these programmes last between three to five hours daily. According to the *Ordinance on the content and duration of preschool programmes* (2014), each child that does not participate in regular early and preschool education should spend 250 hours in one of these alternative facilities during the year preceding primary school entry.

Table 12

Croatia: Persons employed in ECEC institutions, by full-time and part-time work, 2015*

Preschool institution	total	Full time (40 hours per week)	Part time (20 hours per week)	Per cent of the full-time employees
Kindergartens	18,243	17,180	1,063	94.2%
Preschool programmes out of kindergartens	267	0	267	0%
Other legal entities	281	201	80	71.5%
Total	18,791	17,381	1,410	92.5%

*Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a

Some part-time employees in ECEC settings work as assistants for children with developmental difficulties. Since these children mostly attend for only four to five hours daily (whereas the majority of children attend for 10 hours), these staff tend to work less hours.

As already mentioned, each institution decides on the kind and number of professional support staff according to the *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC* (2008). This document links the number of children in each institution with the possible support employees (peda-

gogues, psychologists, rehabilitators...). Some of them are employed on a part-time basis, whereas some work in multiple preschool institutions.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The *Preschool Education Act (1997)* stipulates that ECEC Teachers and other professionals (pedagogues, psychologists, experts in the field of education and rehabilitation, speech therapists) who are employed in preschool institutions for the first time are to begin their job as a probationer. A probationer's internship lasts for one year and is completed by passing a professional exam. The process and content of a probationer's internship, the support to be provided by other personnel, as well as the content of the final exam are regulated by the *Ordinance on the manner and conditions of taking the professional exam of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions (1997)*. The professional exam is obligatory for all probationers employed in ECEC institutions with a permanent or a limited contract, with a full-time or part-time contract, as well as for all persons who participate in different forms of educational work with children and their parents (volunteers, external collaborators).

The probationer receives support from the centre head/director, a specified mentor, and from members of the expert team. During the year of probation, ECEC Teachers should become familiar with:

- the legal framework of their work (the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Preschool Education Act, National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education, as well as other legislation and regulations);
- general and profession-related regulations (statute, organisations, rules, management ...);
- specific characteristics, needs and dynamics of a child's development up to compulsory school age;
- aims and procedures of care, education and upbringing of young children;
- organising resources for educational processes with young children;
- relationships and communication among professional staff, children and parents;
- planning, programming, preparation, realisation and evaluation of educational programmes;
- pedagogical documentation.

Each probationer is required to be present in her/his mentor's classroom for at least 30 hours during the year while the mentor is obliged to observe at least 10 hours of the probationer's work per year. The content of the probationer's programme is a written official document.

However, after the probation period, regular supervision of work in the ECEC setting is not regulated, only that of the teachers who are interested in a career promotion. The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education initiated a project on self-evaluation in ECEC institutions in the year 2010 (Antulić 2013). Some ECEC settings follow the proposed model, but there is no obligation to participate in this system of monitoring. As shown in a recent UNICEF research (Bouillet, forthcoming), some ECEC institutions have developed a system of professional reflections on the quality of their work, while others follow the more formal framework above. According to the *Strategy of education, science and technology (2014)*, these inconsistencies should be changed in the near future, meaning that a certain form of self-evaluation is likely to become obligatory.

8.4 Non-contact time

Both the content and daily schedules of work in ECEC settings are regulated by the *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC (2008)*. According to this document, ECEC Teachers work in direct contact with children for 27.5 hours weekly. The rest of the time (12.5 hours) is allocated for the planning, programming and evaluating of work, preparation, organisational and material resources, collaboration with parents and other participants of ECEC processes - and

for professional development. The same regulations apply for rehabilitators who work in special (segregated) educational groups for children with developmental disabilities. Assistants are expected to work full time directly with children.

Members of the specialist support staff and nurses should be involved in the direct work with children, teachers and parents for 25 hours per week. The remaining 15 working hours are designated for collaborative work with other institutions, professional development, planning, preparation of work and other obligations. This is a general rule, regardless of the number of ECEC institutions in which someone works.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In general, ECEC Teachers do not have problems finding a job, even though each year around 500 students graduate from the Bachelor study programmes. Problems are more likely to arise from the relatively small number of specialist support staff, especially speech therapists and rehabilitators. Only one faculty in Croatia (at the University of Zagreb) provides a study programme for these professionals. The number of graduates from the faculty is not sufficient to meet the needs of ECEC institutions across the country. Moreover, the majority of these professionals prefer working in towns rather than in rural areas. Even though it is a huge problem, there are no specific recruitment strategies to deal with this issue. This is one of the negative consequences of ECEC coming under the jurisdiction of local communities. Small towns and municipalities do not have the financial and human resources to deal with this problem, while state institutions (especially the Ministry of Science and Education) do not feel responsible for this problem.

A systematic approach is needed, which involves the academy, the responsible ministry and the local communities. However, both current practices and research (Bouillet, forthcoming) have shown that the collaboration among the different sectors and levels of government is not well developed. Bearing that in mind, no solutions are visible in the near future.

There are also differences between urban and rural areas: whereas the capital city of Croatia (Zagreb) and some regional centres (for example Split and Rijeka) are faced with too many applicants for work in ECEC settings, in less developed areas there is a shortage of ECEC professionals.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The required qualification level for ECEC Teachers can be highlighted as a positive feature of the ECEC system in Croatia. The transition from vocational to university-based studies for prospective ECEC Teachers has been an important step in the professionalisation of ECEC staff. Also, the increasing number of Master's study programmes has opened up possibilities for a formalised form of continuing education for ECEC Teachers. However, changes in the Croatian ECEC legislation are needed which recognise and acknowledge the differences between Bachelor's and Master's degrees on a formal level.

The *Strategy of education, science and technology* (2014) indicates that candidates for ECEC Teacher study programmes do not have the highest achievements in secondary education and state university entrance (*matura*) examinations. "The issue concerning the real career intentions of these candidates regarding employment in the education sector also remains open, especially taking into account the salary that may be earned in the profession" (Official Gazette, No. 124/14, 66). Recognition of a Master's degree in ECEC in terms of payment could be one of the motivational factors for attracting and retaining the best students into the ECEC field. The quality of the teaching and learning processes at faculties is another important factor

for increasing of the status of the teaching profession in society. The third most important precondition is the systematic improvement of ECEC Teachers' salaries at the national level.

In Croatia, there is a formally established system of in-service teacher training, also for ECEC Teachers. However, the forms, programmes and topics of the training are not well harmonised. In most cases trainings only take place on a 'one-off' basis, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for experiential/incidental learning and reflection, and their application lacks monitoring and support. The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of in-service training and the development of mechanisms that will ensure that all ECEC staff are obliged to participate in that form of training during their whole career is needed. The *Strategy of education, science and technology* recommends several changes in this direction:

- improving the quality of the mentorship system during the traineeship/probationary period;
- aligning the continuing professional development of teachers with competence standards;
- implementing the teacher licensing system (including ECEC Teachers).

The following procedures are suggested (Official Gazette, No. 124/14):

1. preparing key documents for the professionalisation of the teaching occupation: a National Competence Standard for the Teaching Profession based on the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) and a Code of Ethics for Teachers;
2. developing a model and introducing a system of (re-)licensing for the acquisition and retaining of the license to work in education institutions;
3. developing a system of career advancement with the possibility of career flexibility based on the National Competence Standard for the Teaching Profession;
4. improving the income level of teachers;
5. stimulating interest in studying at faculties of teacher education and applying rigorous criteria for selecting the best candidates;

The first step in the implementation of the Strategy in the field of the ECEC is the project *Qualification Standards and Improvement of the Quality of Study Programmes for Preschool and Primary School Teachers* (Krstović, Vujičić, and Pejić Papak 2016). However, the results of the project do not as yet have any formal effect on implementation in the ECEC system.

A comprehensive Curriculum Reform also began in the year 2015, based on the Strategy. This reform includes the conceptualisation of the curriculum for all stages of education. Within this framework, the ECEC curricular framework is under revision.

The UNICEF Office for Croatia recently signed a programme of collaboration with the Croatian Government for the period from 2017 to 2020. The priority of this programme is ECEC, and it could be a boost for the further improvement of ECEC in Croatia. The basis for this is an analysis that aims (Bouillet, forthcoming):

- to inform UNICEF and relevant stakeholders about the existing equity issues regarding the access to preschool education;
- to provide evidence for UNICEF advocacy efforts in respect to this problem;
- to support the Croatian government in identifying and implementing strategies for enhancing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the early childhood education system, primarily in respect to the needs of the most vulnerable children.

All above-mentioned reforms and initiatives could lead to the further professionalisation of ECEC; however, the government of Croatia needs to make ECEC a political priority. Good ideas need political support; without political will, the implementation of defined measures will not be possible.

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CROATIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Dejana Bouillet
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Croatia – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 156-171.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

ECEC in Croatia functions as a unitary system and comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Education (*Ministartstvo znanosti i obrazovanja*). The MSES provides national guidance, and a framework for the accreditation and monitoring of educational provision. From an operational perspective, the system is highly decentralised, and the funding and management of provision is the responsibility of local authorities.

Sources: Bouillet 2017.
Eurydice 2014.

General objectives and legislative framework

Early childhood education and care in the Republic of Croatia has been an integral part of the education system since 1997. It is provided for children from the age of 6 months up to school age at 6 (7) years. General objectives and principles across all sectors of the education system include: children's right to high quality education; equality of educational opportunities; acquisition of key competencies as a right and obligation; inclusion; democracy; and pluralism in institutional forms and pedagogical programmes.

The ECEC system, including 250 hours of compulsory pre-primary education in the year preceding formal schooling, is regulated by the 1997 Preschool Education Act (*Zakon o predškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju*), which was amended in 2007 and 2013. In 2008, the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) for Preschool Education was adopted. This Standard regulates the minimum infrastructure for both public and private ECEC provision, including financial, material and human resources. Regulatory measures cover the opening hours; the education and care of children belonging to national minorities; criteria for the number of children per group; criteria for the number of educators; and basic equipment. The content, duration and implementation of the compulsory preschool programme were regulated in 2014*.

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES) 2011.
*Official Gazette, No.107/2014.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Children do not have a basic right to a place in ECEC provision. However, since 2014, in the year immediately preceding school entry they are guaranteed a place for 250 hours per year and also obliged to attend for this minimum length of time (see *Statutory enrolment age* above).

Since 2014/15, kindergarten attendance has been obligatory and free of charge for a minimum of 250 hours per year during the year preceding school entry. This includes all children who have turned 5 years 6 months by 1 September 2015 (or who will have turned 6 years of age by 31 March 2016). The so-called 'preschool programme' is generally located in a kindergarten, but

sometimes also (mostly in rural areas) in a school. It is co-financed by the State, the regions and the municipalities. The programme may be offered for three consecutive months or be distributed over the kindergarten year.

Compulsory schooling starts in the September following the child's sixth birthday. However, a fairly large number of children do not start school until they are 7 years old. In 2011, only 20.8%* of 6-year olds were enrolled in the first class of primary school. This is in line with the national regulation that defines the age at which children should start their primary education. According to the Croatian Primary and Secondary School Education Act**, this includes all children who are at least 6 years and 5 months old. Younger children begin their primary education based on their parent's request and based on the special conditions prescribed by the Ordinance of the procedure of determining the physical and psychological condition of the child***.

Sources: Dobrotić, I. 2014.
 *European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
 **Official Gazette, No. 87/2008, with amendments.
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 SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Types of provision

In the Republic of Croatia, in 2015/16 there were 1,602 facilities implementing early childhood education and care programmes: 1,432 kindergartens and 170 other kinds of accredited provision operated by legal entities other than the state.* 288 were self-contained kindergartens and 266 were kindergartens with affiliated units, also in different places (altogether 878 units). Compared with the previous year, the overall number of kindergarten units rose by 0.75% and the number of children enrolled by 0.6%. *Table 1* shows the range of provision that provides early childhood programmes.

Table 1

Croatia: Kindergartens and other kinds of accredited ECEC provision 2015/2016*

Service provider	Total	Kindergartens (6 months – 6 years)			Other accredited forms of provision		
		Self-contained	Kindergartens with several units/groups	Total number of units/groups	Primary schools	Play rooms in libraries	Other
State maintained	3	1	-	-	-	-	2
		1					
Local authority and self-governed	1.232	142	198	738	136	3	15
		1.078					
Other legal entities ¹	313	134	54	113	6	1	5
		301					
Religious communities	54	11	14	27	-	-	2
		52					
Total number of kindergarten units	1.602	288	266	878	142	4	24
		1.432					

According to the 1997 Preschool Education Act, a **kindergarten** (*dječji vrtić*) is an institution providing organised forms of non-familial education and care for children from 6 months up to school age. Kindergartens operate from Monday to Friday both on a full-day and half-day basis.

¹ Private Organisationen, soziale und Gesundheitseinrichtungen

Opening times are generally from 7:00 until 17:00, but can also be adjusted to parental needs. Children may attend for no more than 10 hours daily. The children are usually grouped in three age-bands: 6 months to 1 year; 1 year to 3 years; and 3 years to the start of primary school. Kindergartens comprise at least one group with a maximum of 25 children, but generally cater for around 200 children. Larger institutions, e.g. in cities such as Zagreb, may cater for up to 500 children, have up to 50 members of staff, and be located in more than one building. The distance from the child's home to the building should not exceed 1 km.

Alternative approaches: Five kindergartens work according to Montessori principles and five (privately owned) Waldorf kindergartens are based on Steiner pedagogy. One kindergarten, founded by Kiara Lubich, bases its work on the Agazzi sisters' approach. These alternative approaches are welcomed by the Ministry of Education, as is cooperation with NGO initiatives and organisations such as the International Step-by-Step Association (ISSA).

Children may also attend a **playgroup** (*igraonica*) run by institutions such as libraries or other cultural organisations. This kind of sessional provision must be accredited by MSES.

In 2013, legislation regulating **home-based provision** (family child care) was passed. The government introduced an *Act on Nannies* (2013)** to regulate the grey market and as a response to a shortage of places in the ECEC facilities. A family child carer (so called "nanny") has to be registered and is allowed to care for a maximum of six children in the age up to 14 years. Usually these services are financed by parents' fees, occasionally the municipality provides funding. This kind of service is supervised by the Ministry for Demography, Families, Youth and Social Welfare and is not part of the ECEC system.

Sources: Bouillet 2017.
*CBS 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
MSES 2011.
**Official Gazette, No. 37/2013.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Provider structures

Whereas three quarters of ECEC institutions are run by public providers, a number of other providers, such as legal and natural persons and religious communities, also operate ECEC provision.

Table 2

Croatia: Providers of ECEC and number of children per provider agency, 2015/16*

Provider type	Number of settings	Number of children		Provider type in per cent
		under 3 years	3 to 5 years	
Public	1,079	19,637	40,984	75.4
Private	301	3,510	6,599	21.0
Church-affiliated	52	489	1,349	3.6
Total institutions/units	1,432	23,636	48,932	100.0

All providers of ECEC, regardless of their public or private status, are required to respect the Institutions Act (1993)** which regulated that profit made by the institution should be exclusively used for the further development of the institution.

Sources: *CBS 2017.
Eurydice 2014.
MSES 2011.
**Official Gazette, No. 76/1993, with amendments.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Between 2010 and 2015, the share of children under 3 years of age who did not attend a centre-based setting decreased only slightly. Likewise in 2015, only marginally more 3- to 6-year olds attended centre-based provision.

Table 3

Croatia: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % ⁺
2005	1 to 29 hours	n/a ²	n/a
	Over 30 hours	n/a	n/a
	No attendance	n/a	n/a
2010	1 to 29 hours	0	14
	Over 30 hours	10	34
	No attendance	89	53
2015	1 to 29 hours	2.3	6.5
	Over 30 hours	9.5	46.5
	No attendance	88.2	47.1

* deviation to 100% due to rounding errors

According to national statistics, the age distribution in 2015/16 was as follows:

Table 3

Croatia: Enrolment in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015/16**

Under 3 years in per cent	3 to 5 years in per cent	6 to 7 years in per cent
17.6	36.4	46.1

Table 5 shows an age-disaggregated breakdown of the number of children attending ECEC provision and the relevant enrolment ratio.

Table 5

Croatia: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015**

Age-groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	8,533	10.8
2 year olds	15,268	36.6
Under 3 year olds	23,801	19.7
3- year olds	22,796	55.6
4- year olds	25,723	59.6
5- year olds	28,134	64.0
3 to under 6 year olds	76,653	22.0
0 to under 6 year olds	100,454	40.3

* Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

In 2013/2014***, nearly 80% of children (126,625 children, 79.3%) attending early childhood provision were in regular full-day (8 to 10 hours) programmes, only 11.4% were in short programmes of up to three hours per week.

There appears to be a considerable discrepancy between the statistics on maternal employment (just above the EU average, see Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 below) and child participation in ECEC. However, no national statistics are kept on the whereabouts of children who are not attending ECEC provision. According to anecdotal evidence, quite a large informal ('grey') market exists for home-based day care. Regional disparities in participation rates are considerable. Whereas in the city of Zagreb, 85% of children aged 6 months to 6 years attend

² n/a = not available

kindergarten, participation rates in other parts of the country are much lower. In Zagreb, approximately 40.000 children attend public provision and 5000 attend private centres. The public kindergartens (60) tend to be much larger than the private and church-affiliated institutions (68 in all) institutions. There is a great need for expansion, but new buildings are very expensive and difficult to realise. However, bearing the Europe 2020 Strategy in mind, expansion is one of the greatest challenges for the ECEC system in Croatia.

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.
**CBS 2017.
***Vidović, T. and D. Drviš. 2015, 4.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

Since 1993, ECEC provision in Croatia is co-financed by the State, local authorities and parents. Kindergartens established by local and regional authorities have the right to charge parents for their services. Although fees are income-related, they differ considerably from municipality to municipality.* An 'economic price' is calculated for each kindergarten, which includes the staffing formula, facilities and equipment, meals, and the number of children in need of special support. Monthly costs per child range from 200€ to 800€. The parents contribute a maximum of 40% to this economic price; the remainder is covered by the local authorities. In the capital city of Zagreb, parents pay the lowest fees across the country (a minimum of 20€ and a maximum of 80€ monthly), although salaries are the highest. New buildings are currently mostly financed through EU funds. Kindergarten-specific funding is approved by a Managing Board (1 parent, 3 local politicians, 1 member of staff) and then forwarded to the local authority finance office.

Fees are usually set by the municipalities; the maximum rate is approximately 80€ per month, including food. The year before the start of compulsory school is free of charge, i.e. financed by the State.**

Sources: **European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2014.
*Šikić-Mičanović, L. et al. 2015.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Staff-child ratios

There are no regulations in Croatia regarding the maximum number of children per member of staff.* Specifications in the national preschool standard relate to the maximum number of children per group.

In the regular (same-age) kindergarten programmes** the group size requirements are:

- 5 children aged 6 to 12 months
- 8 children aged 13 to 18 months
- 12 children aged 19 to 24 months
- 14 3-year-old children
- 18 4-year-old children
- 20 5-year-old children
- 23 6-year-old children or
- 25 7-year-old children

Requirements for mixed-age groups** are:

- 10 children between 1 and 2 years
- 12 children from 1 to 3 years
- 20 children from 3 years to school-age or
- 22 children from 4 years to school-age.

In all kinds of educational groups only one child with mild disabilities may be included. In such cases the group size is reduced by two children.

The standards cannot always be maintained since the demand for places in city regions exceeds the number of places available. In large kindergartens two members of staff may be divided between one group in two shifts, i.e. for children from age 3 upwards, 30 children per staff member, with one hour of overlapping working.

Experts consider that the larger groups are to a certain extent offset by the special programmes and generous staffing formula of associated experts who work in and with the kindergartens. In the city of Zagreb, 300 experts work on a daily basis with the 10.000 children with special needs (disabilities, autism, allergies, diabetes, language problems and so on).

Sources: **CBS 2017.
*European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2014.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Curricular frameworks

The *National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education* came into force in 2015, having been piloted from 2010 onwards. The legislative framework is the 2013 Act on Amendments to the Preschool Education Act. It is part of a comprehensive curricular reform of the education system. The curricular framework for work with young children is structured according to three broad areas of learning and competence acquisition: (1) the child as an individual (e.g. self-image), (2) the child in interaction with others (family, other children, the immediate social community, kindergarten, local community), and (3) the child and the surrounding world (the natural and the wider social environment, cultural heritage, sustainable development). Within this framework, the aim of early childhood education and care is to foster a holistic and age-appropriate, humanist-developmental approach. Within the framework specifications, each kindergarten designs its own centre-specific programme according to the local context. These programmes, which include the goals for working with parents, have to be approved by the Ministry of Education. They are made public on the kindergarten webpage (see references for a sample webpage of a private Kindergarten in Zagreb in English: <http://www.djecja-igra.hr/default.aspx?id=56>)

The new National Curriculum builds on the former *Programme Orientation for Education and Care of Preschool Children* (1991), which aimed to enhance all developmental domains in accordance with each child's abilities, and also to take into account the varying social, cultural and religious needs of families. The document set out basic principles for work with children up to school entry. These include implementing a pluralistic spectrum of ECEC programmes and encouraging alternative and innovative pedagogical approaches. It also included requirements for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of achievements and changes in ECEC provision.

Many kindergartens integrate 'special programmes' into their curriculum at additional costs for the parents, e.g. learning a foreign language, music, theatre, art, healthy eating, sustainable development. Some kindergartens provide special tuition for gifted children. In 2014, 70% of children aged 4 to 6 years were learning a foreign language in 552 programmes validated by the Ministry of Education.

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
MSES 2010.
Vidović, T. and D. Drviš 2015.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

It is a requirement that children with disabilities should be included in regular kindergartens. Special education support staff are usually employed on a one-year contract. Inclusive measures are funded exclusively by the state (100€ per month for each child with special needs and disabilities). Educational programmes for children with disabilities and for children of national minorities are organised within the framework of the National Curriculum according to their specific needs. For children who cannot participate in the regular kindergarten programme despite additional support, five special education institutions exist across the country for groups of children with a similar disability. Group size increases with age: from 1 to 2 years up to 3 children; from 2 to 4 years or 3 to 7 years up to 5 children; and from 4 to 7 years up to 7 children. Settings catering for children with different disabilities or of mixed ages are generally smaller.

In 2013/14, 5.5% of preschool children were children with special needs, and 2,570 (2.1 %) were minority ethnic children**. In 2016, only 1% of the overall population had a non-Croatian background, 61.6% of whom came from non-EU28-countries. Regarding the group of the under-fives, these shares were 2.1% and 61.2% respectively.

*Roma population**

In 2013, the Croatian government introduced a “National Roma Inclusion Strategy” which will operate until 2020. According to the 2011 census, 16,975 (0.41% of the total population) are of Roma origin – but this estimate is probably too low. Young Roma children aged 0-4 years make up 16% of the total Roma population. 1.3% of children aged 0-4 years are of Roma origin, and 1.2% of children aged 5-9 years. According to a study by UNDP, the World Bank and the European Commission in 2011, 21% of 3-6 year old Roma children participate in ECEC provision (compared with 45% of non-Roma children). The Roma population is very young, with an average age of 21.9 years compared to 41.7 years of the total population. Overall in 2013/2014, 769 Roma children were registered in ECEC provision, roughly half (379) in the (now compulsory) pre-primary programme. In the city of Zagreb, approximately 140 Roma children attend kindergartens for a special two-year, individualised programme (not just the compulsory preschool attendance) which is free of charge for the parents. A Roma assistant makes contact with Roma families and encourages them to send their children to kindergarten.

In general, preschool programmes for minority ethnic groups exist in different home languages and as bilingual programmes.

Sources: EPIC 2015.
Eurydice 2014.
Eurostat 2017g.
MSES 2015.
*Šikić-Mičanović, L. et al. 2015.
UNDP et al. 2011.
**Vidović, T. and D. Drviš 2015.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Monitoring– Evaluation – Research

All ECEC institutions are required to monitor the quality of their work. Annual reports are sent both to the Ministry of Education and the municipal authority. Quality assurance in ECEC is managed and monitored by the national Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA), which has a dual role of ‘enhancing’ and also ‘inspecting’ ECEC provision. ETTA is also responsible for the state examination which is taken at the end of new teachers’ first year in the profession. Passing this exam is a requirement for a permanent post and the kindergartens meet the examination fee (EUR 250). Both external assessment and self-evaluation procedures are required. External evaluations of the educational system are carried out in collaboration with the National Centre for Exter-

nal Evaluation of Education. The National Centre also provides support for self-evaluation, set out in a comprehensive handbook published in 2013. It recommends setting up a quality assurance team for ongoing centre-based evaluation comprising: the centre leader; at least two members of staff (one working with under-threes, one with 3 to 6 year-olds); at least one specialist (psychologist, special education); at least one member of the administrative staff; at least one parent representative; and at least one representative of the local community. Team self-evaluations are carried out on a weekly basis within the kindergartens, whereas longer-term evaluations take place six times a year. The larger municipalities such as the city of Zagreb have their own quality development approaches.

Child-related assessment is based on data collated by the educator at the beginning of the educational year and a report by the educator to the child's parents at the end of the year.

A government-funded National Foundation of Research supports research projects, but there is little relevant research undertaken in the ECEC field and no strong research tradition, since the professional requirements for entry into the profession were only raised to bachelor level in 2005, and the first master's programmes were not introduced until 2013.

The city of Zagreb funds projects which are generally conducted by NGOs – topics such as the inclusion of Roma children, or a popular project on 'children in nature' (a five-day programme for 6-year-olds).

A recent research study conducted by UNICEF's office in Croatia focused on the community-based services and support for parents of young children in Croatia (Pećnik 2013). Participants were 1,271 mothers and 350 fathers of children aged between 6 months and 6 years old. The sample is representative for all of Croatia. Participants were interviewed with pre-defined questions and filled out specific questionnaires constructed for the purpose of this research.

The findings showed that a significant number of children (mainly those living in families with a lower socio-economic status) enter the ECEC system at a later age (immediately before entering primary school). A smaller number of them do not attend any kind of ECEC programmes before entering primary school and preschool is often somewhat shorter than recommended by the State Pedagogical Standard. Half of the parents do not see ECEC programmes as affordable, which is one of the main barriers for their children's participation in ECEC. They also report on groups being too large and a lack of proper equipment, as well as problems with the opening hours of childcare facilities. UNICEF's research additionally indicated problems of availability and affordability of other community based services in Croatia (e.g. different services in the healthcare system, support groups for parents, counselling services etc.), particularly among parents with a lower socio-economic status and those living in rural areas.

Step by Step International Organisation in Croatia, in cooperation with UNICEF's Office for Croatia, implemented and evaluated the Programme "Step towards inclusion" in three Croatian counties (Sisak-Moslavina, Vukovar-Srijem and Šibenik-Knin) over a period of three years (2013-2015). The main goals of the programme were:

- (a) To support local preschools to better serve the children and their families by increasing the quality of the services;
- (b) To support ECEC Teachers in improving their everyday performance through the principles of learner-centred, interactive pedagogy and cooperation with colleagues/peers, families and communities;
- (c) To advocate an integrated approach to early childhood education; and
- (d) To inform different stakeholders about the need for quality early childhood education and engage them in dialogue about quality so that better systems are put in place.

The evaluation of the programme involved surveys of ECEC Teachers' attitudes and feelings towards competency, mentors' reports on quality issues, and focus groups*. Findings show that teachers made positive changes in their attitudes toward inclusion. For example, teachers began to feel more competent and confident in working with children belonging to vulnerable groups, especially with children with disabilities. They also demonstrated reduced misconceptions about

tolerance, lack of understanding of the effects of prejudice and discrimination on minority groups, etc.

UNICEF and the organisation 'Step by Step' are also sponsors of the Study Analysis on Equity Issues Regarding Access to Quality Preschool Education: Comparative Situation Analysis in Targeted Communities**. The main purpose of the analysis is to inform relevant stakeholders on the existing equity issues regarding the access to ECEC and provide evidence for UNICEF's advocacy efforts regarding this problem. The main objectives of this analysis are to:

- (a) Identify and provide evidence on present disparities regarding access to ECEC based on data/information from selected communities, with regards to four targeted groups of children from 3 years to preschool age: children living in poverty, Roma children, children with disabilities and children from rural (remote) areas;
- (b) Provide insights into barriers, bottlenecks and enabling factors which either constrain or support the access to quality preschool education of the targeted groups of children;
- (c) Provide policy recommendations for the harmonisation of legislation, budgeting and quality assurance mechanisms with regards to each of the four targeted groups of children.

The analysis shows that the Croatian ECEC system needs to change in terms of the ECEC setting conditions such as the admission criteria for parents and children and the programme content (which should be more diverse). Issues around quality assurance are also noted. The biggest problems regarding access to ECEC are regional discrepancies; not all communities are in a position to fulfil the needs of all children in their area and the absence of national standards and support that would ensure access to high level quality ECEC for all children, regardless of the place where they live.

Sources: **Bouillet 2017, in press.
Eurydice 2014.
*Milinović and Brajković 2016.
MSES 2011.
National Centre for External Evaluation of Education 2013.
SEEPRO-R research visit 18-22 January 2016.

Parental leave

Maternity leave (*rodiljni dopust*)

Full paid maternity leave (based on 100% of average earnings on which health care contributions were paid during the six months prior to birth) begins 28 days before the birth date and continues until the child turns 6 months. It is obligatory for the mother to take 98 uninterrupted days (28 before and 70 after birth) – the remaining days can be taken on a part-time basis or by the father.

There are no legal provisions for **paternity leave**.

Parental leave (*roditeljski dopust*)

Parental leave begins when the child is 6 months old and is granted for four months per parent for the first and second child. Two of these months can be transferred to the other parent. For the first six months payment equals 100% of previous average earnings, at the most 80% of a basic tariff, currently 448€. If both parents make use of the parental leave entitlement, payment is guaranteed for eight months.

Parental leave can be used either at the same time or consecutively and in various ways: (1) in one period; (2) partially (max. two times a year for no less than a month at a time); (3) part-time (with duration doubled and compensation at 50%). Parental leave can be taken until the child turns 8 years.

In 2015, only 0.3% of eligible fathers made use of the transferable time from the mother's maternity leave. Parental leave is taken up mainly by mothers; in 2015, only 4.5% of eligible fathers chose to make use of their entitlement.

Sources: Dobrotić, I. 2017.
EPIC 2015.

Historical shifts and junctures

1432	First recorded institution for the care of abandoned and (later) illegitimate children opened in Dubrovnic.
1842	First custodial institution established in Karlovac for the children (3 to 7 years old) of factory workers – sometimes claimed to be the first kindergarten in Croatia.
1855	First pedagogically oriented institution for poor children opened in Zagreb.
1869	First institution with specifically educational aims established by Antonia Cvijić in Zagreb.
1880/81	First professional course for the training of pre-school teachers established in Zagreb.
1882	Opening of a kindergarten in Zagreb funded by the municipality - considered to be the start of public early childhood education and care in Croatia.
1945	In the post-war years, public parks and open spaces were considered to be the best places for the systematic education of young children. Up to 1955 no significant number of kindergarten-type centres for children. First regulation for the establishment of ECEC institutions for children aged from 3 to 7 years old.
1949	Ordinance on the organisation and work of kindergartens adopted.
1951	Regulation on the financing of preschool institutions adopted.
1958	Gradual expansion begins. Provision is mostly half-day and although kindergartens are officially seen as educational institutions, in reality they remain institutions for social care.
1962	According to the Law on financing education, parents should pay more for the ECEC of their children.
1967	Kindergartens regulated through further legislation. Local funds for preschool education are established.
1968	First university-level course of studies for prospective kindergarten teachers introduced, but not compulsory.
1974	ECEC is allocated from national to local/regional level and the municipalities start participating in the cost of ECEC. The first preschool programmes for children who have not participated in ECEC established.
1980	The tasks of ECEC are defined by law.
1990	The right to access ECEC from an early age is defined by law.
1993	The local funds for preschool education are closed. The regional and local communities are responsible for financing the ECEC.
1997	First Croatian Preschool Education Act adopted.
2005	Colleges for the education/training of ECEC teachers become part of universities (Bachelor degree).
2007	Amendments to the Preschool Education Act adopted.
2008	National pedagogical standards for ECEC adopted.
2013	Further amendments on the Preschool Education Act adopted. Preschool education one year before entering primary education becomes obligatory (250 hours).
2013	First generation of students of Bachelor and Master university programmes for ECEC teachers begin their studies.
2015	National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education adopted.

Sources: Bacalya, R., S. Zrilić, and T. Kisovar-Ivanda 2014.
Baran, J., Dobrotić, I., Matković, T. 2011.
Strugar, B. 2011.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Croatia

Country expert assessment by Dejana Bouillet

Bearing in mind that all young children should have the right to access high quality ECEC, the main challenges of the system of ECEC in Croatia are to ensure that each child is able to do this, regardless of the financial and economic status of their family or any other characteristics of their biological, geographical or ethnic status. This means that ECEC legislation should be changed so that all local communities are able to provide ECEC for each child. This initiative would need to include financial support, as well as the regulation of quality standards for all ECEC programmes and institutions.

Even though the required qualification level for ECEC teachers is a positive feature of the ECEC system in Croatia, ECEC teachers still show a lack of confidence in working with children belonging to vulnerable groups. They also express dissatisfaction with the support in their professional environment (inside and outside of the institutions). It means that all participants in the education of ECEC teachers should evaluate existing educational programmes, highlight the core competencies for contemporary ECEC teachers, and develop programmes that will ensure the achievement of defined competencies, as well as a comparability of diplomas reached at different universities. The Education and Training Agency should ensure life-long learning programmes for ECEC staff, and stimulate the process of licensing of ECEC teachers, as well as professional supportive staff.

The third challenge for the ECEC system in Croatia is the promotion of evidence-based practice and encouragement of the scientific work of practitioners, in collaboration with researchers. This could have multiple effects on the quality of ECEC programmes, because the results of scientific work could provoke changes in everyday educational practice, as well as in policy initiatives to improve the ECEC system in Croatia.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Croatia totalled 419,669. It decreased slightly over the last 20 years (1995: 4,658,893, 2005: 4,310,861).

Children under age six

In 2016, a total of 241,424 children under age 6 lived in Croatia, comprising 5.8% of the total population, while children under age 3 account for 2.8%. These proportions, while still under the EU average of the respective years, rose slightly from 2005 to 2016.

Table 6

Croatia: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	37,238
1-year olds	39,302
2-year olds	39,649
Under age 3 total	116,189
3-year olds	41,551
4-year olds	40,739
5-year olds	42,945

Age	Number of children
3 to under age 6 total	125,235
0- to under 6-year olds total	241,424

Table 7

Croatia: Children under 6 years of age, years from 1995 to 2016, in %*

	1995	Ø EU15 ³	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	n/a	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	n/a	3.5	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	n/a	6.8	5.7	6.2	5.8	6.2

* own calculations, differences in the sums are caused by rounding errors

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age six

In 2015, more than half the households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single households accounted for only 0.5% - almost all of them were single mother households.

Table 8

Croatia: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	448,100	
Couple households	241,100	53.8
Other household type	204,400	45.6
Single households, total	2,500	0.6
Single households, women	2,100	0.5
Single households, men	400**	0.1

* own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age six

In 2015, the overall employment rate for men was 60.1%, for women 51.5%.

Approximately 64% of mothers and 79.8% of fathers with a child under 6 years of age were in the employment market. The employment rate for mothers is thus slightly above the EU28 average, whereas the employment rate for fathers is the third lowest in the EU28.

³ The 1995 data relate to the EU15 countries (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); by 2005 the countries CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK had joined the EU and the basis of the 2014 data are the EU28 and include BG, RO und HR.

Table 9

Croatia: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 in Croatia and the EU

		Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Croatia	2005	61.2	83.2
	2010	61.7	79.5
	2015	63.3	79.8
European Union	EU15 - 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 - 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Country with highest employment rate	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Country with lowest employment rate	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁴

In 2015, 22.6% of children under 6 years in Croatia were registered as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion (compared with 24.7% for the EU average of this age-group). The relative share of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 29.1%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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⁴ "At risk of poverty or social exclusion" refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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CYPRUS

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

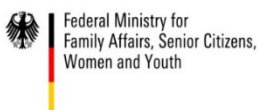
Eleni Loizou

University of Cyprus, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Department of Education, Nicosia

Citation suggestion:

Loizou, E. 2018. "Cyprus – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 172-192.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Cyprus is organised as a split-sector and partly parallel system divided between two ministries: the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (*Ypurgeio Ergasias, Pronoias kai Koinonikon Asphaliseon*) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ypurgeiu Paideias kai Politismu*). Specifically, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has sole responsibility for provision for children under 3 years of age, whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for state-maintained, community and private kindergartens for 3- to under 6-year olds. Children aged 3 to 5 years 8 months may fall under the jurisdiction of either ministry, depending on whether they attend a kindergarten or a childcare centre.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

A number of adults work directly with children in childcare and pre-primary settings for 0- to 6-year olds. Alongside the regular Nursery and Childcare Teachers for younger children (0–3) and the Kindergarten Teachers and centre heads/principals for older children (3–5), there is a Teacher’s Assistant and there may also be special education staff who, according to the children’s needs, can be a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, a psychologist, as well as a child’s ‘accompanier’ (an adult who accompanies and supports children with special needs in the classroom). Teachers’ Assistants are responsible for cleaning the classrooms, tidying materials and toys, helping with the preparation of activities, being responsible for the children’s safety when the teacher is out of the room, and other similar activities.

Table 1 provides details of each staff category working in the two sectors of ECEC. It also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Cyprus: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
Childcare sector				
<i>Vrefokomos/Vrefonipiagogos</i> Nursery and Childcare Teacher	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Infant-toddler centres 3 months–3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	n/a	Minimum requirement when working with under-threes: Compulsory school leaving certificate ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 3

¹ In Cyprus, there is no National Qualifications Framework and no reference to EQF or ISCED levels in official ministry or university documents. The classifications are therefore personal ratings made by the author. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014.

² n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
<i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> Childcare centres 3 months– 4 years 8 months			ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
		Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head	4 months– 5 years 8 months	Minimum requirement when working with older children: 4-year degree at a higher Technological Educational Institute (TEI) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 (645/655)
<i>Sxoliki Voithos</i> Teacher's Assistant	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Infant-toddler centres 3 months–3 years <i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> Childcare centres 3 months– 4 years 8 months <i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
Education sector				
<i>Nipiagogos</i> Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten/Preschool 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class in kindergarten 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3–5 years 8 months	4-year degree at university ECTS: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Voithos Diefthintria</i> Assistant Principal Diefthintria Principal <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten/Preschool 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class in kindergarten 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Centre head	3–5 years 8 months	4-year degree at university ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0111 ISCED 2011: 6 plus a Master's degree in Education

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
				plus a specified number of years working in the field
<i>Sxoliki Voithos</i> Teacher's Assistant	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Infant-toddler centres 3 months–3 years <i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> Childcare centres 3 months–4 years 8 months <i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<i>Synodos</i> Child Support Practitioner	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class in kindergarten 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Co-worker with no formal IPS Supports practitioner for individual children with special needs	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
Offsite Professionals				
<i>Epitheoritria</i> Pre-primary Education Supervisor	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class in kindergarten 4 years 8 months–5 years 8 months	Visits schools to assess the work of the kindergarten teachers	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's Degree in ECEC or Master's degree in Education ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0111 ISCED 2011: 6/7 plus a specified number of years working in the field and a specified number of years working in the positions of Assistant Principal and Principal.
<i>Ekpaideytikos psychologos</i> Educational Psychologist (for children with spe-	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten/Pre-primary education 3–5 years 8 months	Responds to referrals for psychological assessment and recommenda-	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's degree in Psychology ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6/7

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
cial learning needs – cognitive, auditory, visual impairments)	<i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	tions, but not a member of daily contact staff		ISCED 2013-F: 0313 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)
<i>Eidikos Ekpaideytikos / Paidagogos</i> Special Education Teacher	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten/Preschool 3–5 years 8 months <i>Prodimotiki</i> Pre-primary class in kindergarten 4 years 8 months– 5 years 8 months	Responds to referrals for special education based on a diagnostic evaluation of child's special needs, but not a member of daily contact staff	3–5 years 8 months	Bachelor's degree in the specific specialisation (speech pathology, occupational therapy) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

There are no systematically compiled national data in general regarding the proportion of different staff categories in the workforce. Statistics do not differentiate between qualification categories of staff working with children of several age-groups. It is also important to note that in terms of teaching personnel and type of ECEC institution, the data do not necessarily describe the age of children served. This is because a kindergarten can be approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture because it runs a classroom for children aged from 4 years 8 months to 5 years 8 months (*prodimotiki*). However, such settings can also serve children from 1 year old upwards if they have the necessary licence from the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

Education sector (3 years to 5 years 8 months)

Data suggest that ECEC personnel in all types of kindergartens/preschools are mainly women. *Table 2* shows the number of kindergartens, children and teachers from 2012 to 2016. It is important to note that even though the number of children in kindergartens/preschools has increased in the public sector, the number of teachers decreased in the year 2013/2014. This can be explained by teachers choosing to take early retirement (MOEC 2017).

Table 2

Cyprus: Number of kindergartens, children, teachers, and type of provision, 2012/13 to 2016/17

		2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Public kindergartens	Number of settings	264	268	268	271	271
	Number of children	11,769	11,920	12,064	12,233	12,254
	Number of teachers	752	734	741	761	774
Community kindergartens	Number of settings	75	81	83	83	80
	Number of children	2,113	2,170	2,190	2,056	1,999
	Number of teachers	108	115	115	111	110

Table 3 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full-time and part-time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of kindergartens/preschools in 2013/14 (Statistical Service 2016, 89).

In 2013/14, only 0.6% of the workforce in kindergartens and only 1.7% of centre heads (kindergartens) were men. The majority of teaching staff (95.2%) and principals/centre heads (92.7%) worked full-time.

Table 3

Cyprus: Full- and part-time teaching and management personnel in kindergartens/preschools, 2013-2014

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	3	694	0	0
Community	0	115	1	10
Private	6	570	2	56
Total	9	1,379	3	66
	Kindergarten principals/centre heads			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	72	0	0
Community	0	7	0	3
Private	4	134	3	11
Total	4	213	3	14

Childcare sector (6 weeks to 4 years 8 months)

Table 4 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full-time and part-time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of childcare settings during the year 2013/14 (Statistical Service 2016). In comparison with Table 3 it can be seen that childcare services for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers (6 weeks to 4 years 8 months) are mainly provided by the community and private sector.

The distributions in the childcare sector regarding gender and working time are very similar to the pre-primary education sector: In 2013/14, 2.6% of childcare principals were men while there were no men working as teaching personnel. The greater majority of both teaching staff (91.7%) and principals (90.5%) worked full-time.

Table 4:

Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare sector provision, 2013-14

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	41	0	0
Community	0	152	0	9
Private	0	236	0	30
Total	0	429	0	39
	Centre heads/Management personnel			
	full-time		part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	2	0	0
Community	0	32	0	6
Private	2	68	1	4
Total	2	103	1	10

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Cyprus there are four higher education institutions which offer courses of study for work in kindergartens (3 years to 5 years 8 months). These are the public University of Cyprus and three private universities: European University, Nicosia University and Frederick University. The University of Cyprus offers two degrees: a Bachelor's Degree in Primary School Teaching and a Bachelor's Degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching. The European University offers a BA in Early Childhood Education and a BA in Primary Education. Nicosia University offers a BA in Pre-Primary Education and a BA in Primary Education. Finally, Frederick University offers a BEd in Pre-Primary Education and a BEd in Primary Education.

Prospective Childcare Teachers (4 months to 5 years 8 months) have to attend one of the three Departments of Early Childhood Education at a Higher Technological Educational Institute (TEI) in Greece in order to obtain a degree. The TEIs offer four-year degrees in early childhood education. But in order to work with children between 3 months and 3 years they only need to have a compulsory school leaving certificate, like the Teacher's Assistants. *Table 5* provides details of the IPS requirements of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, and *Table 6* details of the IPS requirements for Childcare Teachers.

Table 5

Cyprus: Kindergarten Teacher (IPS)

Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC (only for the University of Cyprus)
Professional studies: 4 years university
Award: Bachelor's Degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching
ECTS points: 240
EQF level: 6

Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 645/655 Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months)

Table 6

Cyprus: Nursery and Childcare Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Vrefonipiagogos</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: General higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC Professional studies: 4 years university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Technological Educational Institutes (T.E.I.) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina) Award: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Studies ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 (EQF 3 for work with children under 3 years of age) ISCED 2013-F: 0112 (ISCED 2013-F: n/a for work with children under 3 years of age) ISCED 2011: 645/655 (ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354) for work with children under 3 years of age) Main ECEC workplace: childcare centre (3 months to 5 years 8 months)

Table 7

Cyprus: Special Education Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Eidikos Paidagogos Eidikos Ekpaideytikos</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Special Education Professional
Entry requirements: General higher education entrance certificate Professional studies: 4 years university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Technological Educational Institutes (T.E.I.) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina); general higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MOEC Award: Bachelor's degree in Special Education ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 645/655 Main ECEC workplace: They work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months) and in primary schools.

Table 8

Cyprus: Educational Psychologist (IPS)

Job title in Greek: <i>Ekpaideytikos Psychologos</i>
Entry requirements: General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organized by the MOEC. Professional studies: 4 years university Award: Bachelor's Degree in special education ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0313 ISCED 2011: 645/655 Main ECEC workplace: They work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary education (3 years to 5 years 8 months) and in primary schools.

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

All universities in Cyprus offering early childhood studies, both public and private, have the same course framework. In April 2016, the University of Cyprus, Frederick University, European and Nicosia University stated on their websites that the framework for these studies includes compulsory, compulsory optional and general education courses covering the following areas: educational science (e.g. early childhood pedagogy), teaching methodology (e.g. creative drama), content area courses (e.g. pre-mathematical concepts), foreign language instruction and field experience courses.

Some of the universities give students the option to replace two courses (e.g. compulsory or optional courses) with a course titled 'Independent study' that involves the writing of a dissertation in the field of education (e.g. University of Cyprus, Frederick University).

The goal of these studies is to prepare prospective Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers for work in private/community or public pre-primary settings. There are no specified competence requirements but students are prepared to be able to implement the national curricula.

The Greek TEIs providing Early Childhood Education and Care studies have a similar framework with compulsory and optional compulsory courses. For example, as of April 11, 2016, the Technological Educational Institute of Athens mentions psychology and other theoretical courses as well as field-based experiences in different childcare settings in their program of studies. Also, during their final semester, students are required to complete an undergraduate dissertation as a means of specialising in a topic/subject of their interest. The goal of these studies includes the scientific exploration and knowledge of the field of early childhood and the development of specific skills for working in an ECEC environment

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There are no alternative entry routes for working in public and community settings. Regarding the private sector for both childcare and pre-primary settings, the owners of provision can employ people from other disciplines, for example a psychologist to work with under-threes or a biologist to work with pre-schoolers. Also, in the case of childcare provision, the official requirement, as explained earlier, is a high school diploma, thus service providers tend not to employ people with higher education degrees.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

During their studies early childhood students participate in different levels of academic and field-based studies. These include lectures at the higher education institution as well as participation in an ECEC setting, which varies according to the specific degree course they are pursuing and based on the requirements of the higher education institute they are studying at.

For the degree in Early Childhood Studies at the TEIs (higher education institutions) in Greece, the practicum involves 10 to 20 ECTS for one semester during which the prospective Nursery and Childcare Teachers attend a private or public childcare setting daily. They participate in the regular activities of the centre and demonstrate their skills and specialised knowledge. They are guided and assessed by the head of the childcare centre, who receives payment for the services the setting provides.

For the degree in Pre-Primary School teaching (Greek-Cypriot higher education institutions), field-based studies are allocated 30 ECTS and are spread over three semesters. During each semester the prospective teachers are entrusted with a progressive workload; for example, they start by playing with a group of children and then go on to organising play activities for

the whole class; or they implement one lesson plan for mathematics and then go on to implement a series of lessons. During their final practicum course they have to attend a kindergarten/preschool daily throughout one semester (approximately four months). During their daily interaction with the children, the expectation of the 'School Experience Programme' course is to conduct a number of lesson plans in different content areas (e.g. language, mathematics, science). For example, the students of the University of Cyprus have to plan a project with the children and are also expected to prepare 68 lesson plans within the different content areas. Some of these lesson plans can be related to the project approach.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development for staff in ECEC provision in the public and private sector is undertaken mainly by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (C.P.I.). In addition, all higher education institutions in Cyprus offer professional development seminars, workshops and conferences. These are optional for all staff in ECEC provision and take place during their own time and at their own cost.

The C.P.I. is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture and is responsible, among other services, for providing professional development activities for serving teachers in all sectors and at all levels of education by offering compulsory and optional seminars.

1. The compulsory number of optional seminars may include general pedagogical or specific themes for every level of education and/or content area. The seminars are free of charge and take place in the afternoons (i.e. after kindergartens/schools have closed) and comprise five sessions lasting 2½ hours once a year.
2. The C.P.I. also offers seminars which take place in kindergartens/schools. Groups of teachers within the same or nearby public kindergartens who are interested in participating in such seminars meet together in one institution to attend such seminars.
3. The C.P.I. also offers seminars for newly appointed teachers and their mentors. Mentors are the in-service teachers who are trained to support newly appointed teachers.
4. Finally, the C.P.I. offers seminars for kindergarten/school heads which aim to improve management strategies and to help them cope with current challenges focusing on modernising the Cypriot system in relation to EU policies. (Source: C.P.I. 2016a)

Regarding the *private* sector, the kindergarten owners are responsible for providing their staff with professional development but they can also participate in the optional seminars offered by the C.P.I.

The only obligatory professional development for teachers in *public* kindergartens/schools takes place during the first week of September before school starts. Teachers attend one-day seminars either at their kindergarten/school or in large teams based on themes that the Ministry of Education and Culture considers necessary. For example, during 2015-2016, teachers attended professional development seminars on the new Early Childhood Curriculum which was revised during the recent Educational Reform. In addition, two periods weekly (80 minutes altogether) are dedicated to professional development during which the principal/centre head organises planning activities, or teachers who have participated in other types of professional development share their experience, knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

Moreover, during the academic year the Early Childhood Supervisors (*Epitheoritries*) organise seminars or conferences according to what they consider is important for the field. During these seminars, teacher representatives from the larger kindergartens (e.g. with two and more classrooms) attend and they are then obliged to share the information of the seminar with the other teachers in their team. These seminars take place during working hours.

The C.P.I. offers an in-service programme for newly appointed principals. During the year in which they take up their position, principals attend a weekly professional development session during their working hours. They are supported in developing leadership, managerial/ administrative and organisational abilities and skills. In addition there are several optional seminars offered by the C.P.I. over the course of each year and other conferences organised by higher education institutions which they can attend during their own free time and at their own cost.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers may participate in optional workshops during their own time, sometimes covering the costs in order to have these documented in their assessment file. Attendance is taken into account for a teacher's annual assessment but there is no direct impact on remuneration. Career advancement is mainly accomplished through years of experience and post-graduate degrees.

Being part of the European Union provides early childhood teachers opportunities to participate in different programmes and seminars. For example, the optional seminars organised and provided by the C.P.I. are co-funded by the European Social Fund of the EU. In addition, early childhood teachers have the opportunity to participate and visit other European countries to enrich their own professional development. One example is the Pestalozzi programme which accommodates a number of teachers to participate, for example, in the 2016 programme titled "Knowledge, construction and epistemology in a diverse changing society: developing reflective practices across the curriculum" which aims at enhancing their research-based knowledge of different areas of the curriculum. Once attending the specific programme, which is free of charge, participating teachers are obliged to share their experiences, knowledge and skills with their schools.

There are no specific professional development options for *Teachers' Assistants*, and employers do not expect them to participate in CPD activities. The *Child Accompaniers* decide for themselves whether to participate in different optional seminars or conferences to enrich their knowledge and skills. Finally, the *Special Educators* (e.g. Speech Pathologist) who visit the schools to provide special assistance to the children who need it follow the same scheme of professional development provided by the C.P.I. or their department at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Programme for newly appointed teachers and mentors

The support of newly appointed teachers was one of the issues discussed by the European Union Ministers of Education at their meeting in 2009. The C.P.I. designed a programme for the professional development of teachers and mentors in order to develop a culture of collaboration within the kindergarten units. The goal is to provide new teachers with the skills and competencies needed in their new position but also to develop a mentoring relationship with experienced teachers in order to be able to critically reflect on their practice. Tables 9 and 10 describe the details of the programmes (C.P.I. 2012).

Table 9

Cyprus: Professional development programme for newly appointed teachers

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase A		Meetings in the whole group of teachers	3 afternoon meetings which cover 5 periods (45 minutes)	Effective teaching Classroom management	October

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase B	Activities within school for six months	Meeting in the whole group of teachers	1 afternoon meeting of 5 periods	Enactment of teaching practices based on outcomes of Phase A	October –May
	Develop own action plan			Sharing of appropriate and effective practices	February
	Implement 10 lessons during which they will be observed by the mentor				
	Co-teach 6 lessons with mentor or other teacher in the school				
Phase C		Meeting in the whole group of teachers	1 afternoon meeting of 5 periods	Presentation of practices and assessment of the programme	May

Teachers who participate in this professional development programme for the 25 periods receive a stipend of €250.

Table 10

Cyprus: Professional development programme for mentors

Phases	Expected work		Duration	Content	Time schedule
Phase A		Meetings in the whole group of mentors	4 afternoon meetings which cover 5 periods (45 minutes)	Mentoring relationship Effective teaching Counselling psychology (e.g. self-awareness, stress management) Classroom management	October
Phase B	Activities within school for six months	Meeting in the whole group of mentors	2 afternoon meetings of 5 periods	Reflection and sharing of appropriate and effective practices and counselling issues	October –May
	Observe and give feedback on 10 lessons				February
	Document teacher needs - develop an action plan				
	Co-teach with teacher in the school				
Phase C		Meeting in the whole group of mentors	2 afternoon meetings of 5 periods	Presentation of practices within the school setting and assessment of the programme	May

The teachers who will successfully complete the professional development programme for mentors for the duration of 20 periods will receive a stipend of €200 (C.P.I. 2012).

Action research as a form of professional development for teachers

The C.P.I. has been employing action research as a professional development strategy for several years, and in 2014-2015 it was officially implemented as a method of in-service professional development within kindergartens/schools. This new professional development practice considers teachers to be active participants in the learning process, within which they develop their specific teaching perspectives based on pedagogical theories and praxis analysis. Moreover, the idea is to decentralise the professional development programmes and provide kindergartens and teachers with the power to define their own needs and explore their potential as professionals. The goals of the programme are to help teachers understand their beliefs and practices, to reflect on teaching issues and their causes, to consider how they can resolve those issues, to develop action plans and to collect data to assess the outcomes of their actions and accordingly adjust continuing planning.

The C.P.I. has prepared guidance for teachers based on a year-long project conducted in public kindergartens and aims to encourage settings and teachers to experiment freely with an action research approach as a means of independent professional development. The guidance includes a literature review of the principles, processes and ways of supporting teachers' professional development through action research and includes a five-step analysis procedure: (1) Understanding and recording needs; (2) Exploring the issues; (3) Action planning; (4) Formative evaluation of the actions; and (5) Re-planning. Specific questionnaires and tools are provided to support teachers in each step. In other words, this is a strategy for self-evaluation (C.P.I. 2016b).

New Teacher Appointment System

The Educational Service Commission of the Ministry of Education and Culture considers the appointment of new teachers in public kindergartens/schools to be one of the main problems facing the public education system since most teacher candidates are appointed for the first time many years after they graduate. Because of the fact that there is no immediate need to employ teachers in the public school system, whoever graduates with a BA in Education is signed up on the public school system list of educators. Thus, a graduate may not be employed in the public system until five to ten years after completing initial professional studies since this is the time it can take for a position to become available in public kindergartens or schools. In the meantime this person may have been teaching in the private sector or may have been engaged in an entirely different profession all these years.

Therefore, following the guidelines of UNESCO 1997 and those of the committee for Educational Reform in Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a proposal in 2014 for a new process of appointing new teachers in the public education sector. In 2015, the Greek-Cypriot Parliament passed a specific bill in accordance with the Ministry's proposal and a new teacher appointment system will take place as from 2017

The criteria taken into consideration for including teacher candidates in the Appointments List include the following:

1. Written examination (45 points)
2. Additional academic qualifications (up to 20 points - 15 for a Master's degree and 20 for a Doctorate)
3. Educational experience (25 points)
4. Year of graduation (first degree) (5 points)
5. Average grade of first degree (3 points for Excellent, 2 points for Very Good and 1 point for Good or when there is no grade on the degree)
6. Service with the National Guard (2 points)

The written examination will take place every two years and is open to new applicants and those already on the Appointments List wishing to improve their overall score. The examination score of each candidate is valid for ten years. To stay on the list they have to take the exam again within two years before the end of the tenth year.

Candidates who fulfil all the requirements and are on the Appointments List will have to follow an assessment programme during which their pedagogical and methodological abilities are assessed. If they are assessed as inadequate they will be obliged to participate in a special course offered by the C.P.I. with the aim of enhancing the necessary skills to be effective in their teaching. If the teachers who participated in the special programme are still assessed as inadequate when they return to their teaching position, they will be removed from the list (MOEC 2015).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

There are limited current research projects which focus on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues. Some studies were conducted in the 1990s, when the University of Cyprus replaced the Pedagogical Academy (formerly responsible for the professional education/training of teachers in the field). Nevertheless, the following research examples provide a general picture of professionalisation issues in the field, focusing on the role of the practicum/work placement in initial professional studies and on continuing professional development.

Mentor-student relationships

Source: Loizou, E. 2011. "The diverse facets of power in early childhood mentor–student teacher relationships". *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 34 (4), 373-386.

Aims: The study looked into the experiences of students studying for a Pre-Primary Teaching degree during their practicum in public kindergartens over a period of one semester, analysing the relationship with their on-site mentors.

Procedures: This was a qualitative study which used reflective journals as the main data source. Both students and mentors were asked to complete a journal with specific guiding questions focusing on their relationship and how it developed.

Findings: Findings suggest that the students not only experienced this relationship in different ways, but that there was a pattern of relationships which included a 'powerful' mentor and an 'empowered' student. Constructive discussions contributed to the implementation of their respective teaching ideas.

Implications: 'Power', in terms of imbalance in the relationship between student teacher and mentor during the teaching practicum and mentoring programme, is an issue which needs to be explicitly discussed.

Teacher education on inclusion

Source: Symeonidou, S. and E. Phtiaka. 2014. "My colleagues wear blinkers ... If they were trained, they would understand better. Reflections on teacher education on inclusion in Cyprus". *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 14 (2): 110–119.

Aims: This study examines vital issues in reference to inclusion. Specifically, it examines teachers' knowledge, attitudes and skills in relation to inclusion as a way to develop specific in-service programs to meet teachers' needs.

Procedures: This study used a mixed methodology, with a survey that produced quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews with in-service Greek-Cypriot teachers, focusing on 13

factors (e.g. beliefs about special schooling) drawn from the survey. Then a focus group interview was used to assess the teachers' reflections on the implementation of the training programme.

Findings: Some of the findings suggest that teachers are not satisfied with their initial teacher education on integration; they have not received any training since the implementation of the Education of Children with Special Needs Law (N. 113(I)/1999 law) in 1999; and that their choices (voluntary mainly) of in-service training are limited and sometimes inappropriate in terms of the philosophy of inclusion.

Implications: The authors discuss these findings in terms of initial teacher education and in-service training. They suggest that in-service teacher education programmes need to address theoretical and practical aspects of inclusion considerably more effectively than has been the case up till now.

Action research as a professional development strategy

Source: Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou, P., M. Eracleous, and P. Kouratou. 2015. "In-service teacher training by the C.P.I.: Reflective observations of the implementation of action research as the context of school level seminars." *Newsletter of C.P.I.*, Vol.17., 4-11 [in Greek]

Aims: This recent project refers to the critical reflection of the implementation of action research (AR) as an instrument of professional development. The Pedagogical Institute attempted to expand its professional development perspective since its administrators often suggested CPD seminars without really knowing the needs of teachers.

Procedures: The use of AR was implemented in some schools in order to encourage teachers to reflect on their own learning processes through a different type of professional development. The AR steps were followed within each school setting and a co-ordinator from the Pedagogical Institute supported each school and classroom teacher.

Findings/Implications: The research team reflects on the potential of using this methodology within the entire educational system. The specific methodology responds to previously unsuccessful approaches where knowledge, information and suggestions were usually provided to teachers through seminars, before they even investigated their thinking and actions. Thus respecting, supporting and empowering the teacher was one of the advantages of the specific methodology. In addition, collaborations, meaningful interactions, focusing on specific themes and actions were noted by the staff developers and the teachers, making the experience more productive for all.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

In the **childcare sector**, Nursery and Childcare Teachers work full-time and are paid as little as 600-750€, lower than the minimum wage. Also, they are often laid off at the end of the year so that they do not have to be paid during the summer holidays and the providers do not have to raise their salary. There is no set regulation in terms of working and salary conditions in the private sector and regardless of the teachers' qualifications, the providers offer the same salary.

In the **education sector**, all teachers working in the public sector, regardless of the level of education or specialisation, earn the same amount. Therefore Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers earn as much as elementary school teachers. The public sector has a yearly average increase based on inflation and tax index.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has issued regulations in terms of the functioning of (non-profit) community kindergartens along with the remuneration of the Kindergarten Teachers in these settings. An EC Teacher working in a community kindergarten earns less than one working in the public sector but it is still considered to be a fair/good wage.

In the private sector, remuneration is the lowest and working hours are the longest. There have been cases where someone is forced to be absent from work and as a result their employer deducts a certain amount from their salary. There is no agency to control what the private sector offers in terms of working conditions and salaries. People working in the private sector do not earn enough to support themselves (e.g. to rent their own apartment) or a family because they usually earn the minimum wage or close to that. *Table 11* shows the remuneration of ECEC teachers according to the setting they work in.

Table 11

Cyprus: Remuneration of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, 2016

Type of ECEC provision	Remuneration
Public kindergartens	A8-A11 or combined (based on years of service) A8: 17,946€ - 27,593€ per annum A10: 25,112€ - 34,720€ per annum A11: 29,684€ - 39,292€ per annum
Community kindergartens	1,042€ per month
Private kindergartens	Depends on the owner of the setting. Usually they offer the lowest average wage. The lowest average wage per month in Cyprus is currently 870€ and after six months of work 924€.

The Teachers' Assistants in public and community schools, who do not have a higher education degree, earn 870€ monthly and within six months their wage is raised to 924€ through the regulations applying to the public school system.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

The working hours in community kindergartens differ from those in public kindergartens and the private sector. Staff in community kindergartens work 36 hours per week with a daily schedule between 7:45 and 14:45 and they do not have as much annual leave or as many sick leave days as staff in the public school system. Teachers who work in the private sector always work one or two afternoons (until 18:00) and have no sick leave days.

Staff in kindergartens/pre-primary settings

In the public sector, Kindergarten Teachers usually work on a full-time basis. In general, only those who substitute for other teachers due to health issues or maternity leave work part time. In the private sector, however, there tend to be more teachers working on a part-time basis, since the wages are then lower – a benefit for the owner of the setting only – and the practitioners have fewer benefits.

As already shown in *Table 4* for the academic year of 2013/2014, full-time work is predominant among teaching and management personnel in kindergartens. Overall, only 4.7% of teaching staff and 7.3% of management staff work part-time, with above-average shares of teaching staff (9.1%) and management staff (9.2%) working part-time in the private sector.

Staff in the childcare sector

Table 12 provides information which refers to the number of full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel (teachers and principals respectively) working at the different types of childcare centres during the academic year 2013/2014 (Statistical Service 2016)

Overall, 8.2% of the teaching staff and 9.5% of the management staff work part-time. Management staff in community services comprise the highest proportion of part-time workers (15.8%), followed by teaching staff in the private sector (11.3%).

Table 12

Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare centres, 2013-2014

Type of school	Teaching personnel		Management personnel		Total
	full-time	part-time	full-time	part-time	
Public	41	0	3	0	44
Community	152	9	32	6	199
Private	236	30	70	5	341
Total	429	39	105	11	584

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The C.P.I., as described earlier, offers seminars for newly appointed teachers and their mentors. Mentors are the in-service teachers who are trained to support newly appointed teachers to get acquainted with their new position in the most positive way. The goal is to develop a culture of collaboration within the school team and to enhance the personal and professional development of both novice teachers and mentors. The seminars provide guidance in developing their effectiveness in the classroom and their mentoring relationship. More specifically, such seminars focus on the development of the knowledge and skills of planning, organising and assessing effective teaching and learning within groups of students of different abilities.

The programme takes place in three phases. Phase 1 takes place in October, during which the teachers participate in seminars in groups; Phase 2 lasts from October to May and takes place within the school, during which mentors observe a number of the teacher's lessons and provide feedback; in February there is another group meeting for all teachers and mentors to reflect on the experience and exchange good practices. Finally, Phase 3 takes place in May during which all teachers and mentors meet to share their experiences and evaluate the programme (see also section 6) (C.P.I. 2012)

8.4 Non-contact time

Table 13 illustrates the number of teaching periods (40 minutes) and non-teaching activities undertaken by each type of personnel in the public sector (MOEC 2016).

Table 13:

Cyprus: Number of weekly working hours and activities undertaken by personnel in the public sector

Personnel	Teaching time periods (40 minutes)	Non-teaching activities within the school	Staff meeting	Educational Seminars
Principals in schools depending on the number of teachers in the school	11 to 21	14 to 24	1	2
Assistant Principals	23	12	1	2
Primary school, Pre-primary and Special Teachers depending on the years of teaching	25 to 29	6 to 10	1	2

Principals teach fewer hours than assistant principals and teachers; the higher the number of teachers in a setting, the lower the number of hours the principal has to teach. With increasing years of teaching experience, teachers have to spend less time teaching. Regarding the private and community sectors it is up to the providers and principals of the school to arrange non-contact time but it is generally uncommon.

All teachers, regardless of the number of their teaching periods, are obliged to stay at school for the whole day. After teaching they have time to cooperate with parents and attend staff

meetings that usually start at 13:15 after the school day ends. Finally, all teachers have two periods a week to attend educational seminars/conferences.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In the field of ECEC there are more teachers than required since there is no direct correspondence between the number of people studying and graduating as ECE teachers and the actual number of teachers needed in the public, community and private sector. As a result often overqualified people work with age groups for which they were not trained, and are poorly paid.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There are specific issues within the EC field in Cyprus which are directly related to quality and have an impact on the educational system and specifically on the effectiveness of the experiences we provide for children and thus their learning and development.

Quality issue 1: salaries in the ECEC field

The field of early childhood education has always been underestimated by society and the government in terms of the importance of early education and care. This is reflected in the fact that people working with children aged 3 months to 3 years do not need to have a degree; a school leaving certificate is considered sufficient. In addition, in the private sector, which is the largest provider of places for children from birth up to 4 years 8 months, Nursery and Childcare Teachers are rarely acknowledged by their employers and are mostly underpaid (see 8.1). Since there are a lot of early childhood teachers with a degree in ECEC the providers are always in the safe position to find someone when the need arises. This affects the quality of education and care offered to children and will continue to do so in the near future. Teachers will be less and less motivated to work with children and this will definitely have an impact on children, their development and learning and finally an impact on society.

Quality issue 2: professional development in ECE

With reference to professional development there are two issues: (1) There is no real motivation for participating in the different seminars and programmes offered since these are not taken into account for someone's career advancement or salary increase; and (2) a lot of the CPD programmes are not carefully planned and implemented. So ECEC teachers who do attend different professional development seminars, obligatory and/or optional, experience them in a superficial way since there is no reflection of their practice. This is partly because these seminars take place out of the school context, and the activities involve lectures or theoretical discussions; or because the teachers are not truly interested in making a change but just want to get a certificate of participation and add it to their portfolio. This lack of in-depth quality of their CPD experience creates a group of teachers who receive different certificates without truly enhancing their professional learning. So teachers will look good on paper but not necessarily in the classrooms, which also can have a negative effect on the quality of early education.

Quality issue 3: initial teacher education

In recent years, fewer people are showing interest in studying to become EC teachers. Due to the economic crisis and the high unemployment rate, more young people do not seem to consider their interests when studying but rather take into account what could provide them with the best job opportunities. Therefore, in Cyprus most people tend to earn a Bachelor's degree

in whatever field they can in order to have a degree and to be competitive in the workforce. Thus, the choice of becoming an EC teacher is just another option in their list of choices when applying for the Pan-Cyprian examination in order to study at the University of Cyprus or in Greece for free, or when choosing to study at a private university. This of course creates a group of EC teachers who do not have the necessary passion for the field, do not necessarily consider innovative practices, do not focus on the quality of their teaching and do not fight for their working rights, teaching hours and salaries. This is a cycle that creates a sense of negativity within the field which then affects the quality of education provided and the teachers' teaching effectiveness.

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CYPRUS

Key Contextual Data

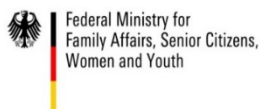
Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Eleni Loizou
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Cyprus – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepror.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 193-205.

Funded by:



Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in Cyprus is organised as a split and partly parallel system. Day nurseries for children under age 3 come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (*Ypurgeio Ergasias, Pronoias kai Koinonikon Asphaliseon*), whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ypurgeiu Paideias kai Politismu*) is responsible for state-maintained, community and private kindergartens for 3- to under 6-year olds. Age-integrated ECEC centres for children up to either 4 years 8 months or 5 years 8 months come under the auspices of both ministries according to the specific age-group in question.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

The current government programme includes a “National Strategy for Lifelong Learning” (*Ethnikä Stratägikä gia tä Dia Biu Mathäsä 2014-2020*), which sets out general reform objectives for all levels of learning (formal, informal, non-formal). These include: access for all; improving the quality and efficacy of education and training; funding related research and development; and improving employment chances. Part of the National Strategy is an Action Plan (2014) for the reform of the education system, which also includes aspects of the early childhood education and care system (in particular the demands made for reform of the continuing professional development of teachers).

The Children Act (Day Care) 1993 (*O Peri Paidion Nomos tu*), amended in 2011, is the legislation regulating the day nurseries and the age-integrated centres for children aged up to 4 years 8 months. The relevant legislation for the state-maintained kindergartens is the Elementary School Act 2012 (*O peri Stoiceiodus Ekpaideusäs Nomos*); private and community kindergartens fall under the Private Schools and Institutions Act 2012 (*O peri Idiotikon Scholeion kai Phrontistärion Nomos tu*). The Special Education Act 1999, amended in 2001 (*O Peri Agogäs kai Ekpaideusäs Paidion me Eidikes Anankes*) specifies that children with special educational needs are to be included in mainstream settings, but only if these offer an appropriate infrastructure and the necessary support measures.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

There is no universal entitlement to a place in early childhood provision in Cyprus. However, since 2004, children who have reached the age of 4 years 8 months are obliged to attend a kindergarten or an age-integrated centre during the year before starting school. Attendance is free of charge.

Since 2015/16 attendance is ensured for at least 26.5 hours per week. For children younger than 4 years 8 months, attendance is not compulsory.

Statutory schooling begins in the September after the children have reached the age of 5 years 8 months.

Sources: EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2015.

Types of provision

Infant-toddler centres (*vrefikos stathmos*) for children from 6 weeks up to age 3 and age-integrated **childcare centres** (*vrefokomikoï/paidokomikoï stathmoï*) for children up to the age of 4 years 8 months, and sometimes 5 years 8 months, usually exist as stand-alone institutions but can also be integrated into kindergartens. They are open from 1st September till 30th July, and close during August and also on 12 religious holidays. They are usually open for 10 hours, from 7:00 to 17:00.

Kindergartens (*nipiagogeio*) take in children from age 3 (if the child's birthday falls before the 1st September) up to school entry age at 5 years 8 months. Since 2004, attending a **preschool class** (*prodimotiki*) in the kindergarten for the year preceding school entry has been compulsory and free of charge.

State-maintained kindergartens (*thimosio nipiagogio*), which are available from mid-September until the end of June, are usually open mornings only, from 7:45 to 13:05. Few public kindergartens stay open until 16:00. In the (non-profit) community kindergartens (*kinodiko nipiagogio*) the opening hours are usually negotiated with the parental board in order to accommodate parents' working hours. Private (mostly for-profit) kindergartens (*ethiodiko nipiagogio*) are generally open on a full-day basis.

Early childhood provision is made available in all places populated by more than 10 children. A free bus service to the nearest ECEC setting is provided for children living in villages with fewer than 10 children.

In 2013/14 there were 172 ECEC settings for children under 3 years and 515 kindergartens for children from 3 years up to compulsory schooling age* (see also *Table 1*).

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
Oberhuemer, P, I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
*Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2016, 79.

Provider structures

In Cyprus, both the day nurseries/age-integrated centres and the kindergartens can be categorised according to three main types: (1) state-maintained institutions founded and fully financed by the state; (2) state-subsidised community ECEC centres run on a non-profit basis by non-governmental organisations; (3) private for-profit facilities founded and funded by a legal entity such as a private person or company.

State-maintained day nurseries are founded by the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, and state-maintained kindergartens by the Ministry of Education and Culture; both types of centre are run in co-operation with local authorities. In order to set up a private non-profit (community) or

private for-profit facility, the owners have to gain permission from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Places in state-maintained day nurseries are limited, since they are available to a much lesser degree than community or private nurseries. Parents have to apply for a place and acceptance depends on a number of specified criteria such as whether both parents work, or the number of children in the family. In 2014, 58% of children attended private for-profit and around 37% private non-profit day nurseries or kindergartens, while only 6% attended state-maintained institutions (see *Table 1*).

However, more than half of children aged 3 to 6 years attended state kindergartens, more than one third private for-profit and only 10% private non-profit (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

Cyprus: Number of ECEC centre-based settings, children and staff[†] according to provider type, 2013-2014*

	State-maintained	Private non-profit (community)	Private for-profit	Total
Day nurseries/age-integrated centres				
Institutions	9	55	108	172
Staff (full-time equivalent)	44	191	326 (3)	561
Children	321	2,086	3,303	5,710
Share of children ^{**}	5.6%	36.5%	57.8%	
Kindergartens				
Institutions	265	80	170	515
Staff (full-time equivalent)	770 (3 [†])	125 (1)	750 (15)	1,645
Children	11,910	2,271	8,557	22,738
Share of children ^{**}	52.4 %	10.0%	37.6%	

[†] number of men in brackets

^{**} own calculations

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.
*Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2016, 79.

Participation rates in regulated provision

In 2013/14, 28,448 children under age 6 attended 687 institutions with 2,206 staff (full-time equivalent, see *Table 1*). Male ECEC staff are an exception and mostly to be found in private for-profit settings.

The majority of children under age 3 in Cyprus do not attend centre-based ECEC provision (cf. *Table 2*). Although the overall proportion of children attending has risen slightly since 2005, over three-quarters of the youngest children are still not enrolled in a formal ECEC centre. This can be at least partly explained by the fact that informal care arrangements with grandparents or other relatives are still common across Cyprus. By way of contrast, nearly 80% of children aged 3 up to school entry age have been attending ECEC provision over the past decade or so, although the share of children has not increased over this period.

Table 2

Cyprus: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings according to age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %**	3 to under 6 years in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	7	40
	Over 30 hours	12	38
	No attendance	81	22

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %**	3 to under 6 years in %
2010	1 to 29 hours	10	34
	Over 30 hours	16	45
	No attendance	75	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	9.4	18.6
	Over 30 hours	11.4	49.4
	No attendance	79.2	32.0

** Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

Country-specific statistical data in 2013/14 show enrolment ratios of 8.7% of children under 3 years in infant-toddler centres and 10.8% of 3- to 6-year olds. 7.9% of the under-threes and 68.3% of the 3- to 6-year olds attended kindergartens. Overall, 16.6% of the under-threes attend an ECEC setting and 79.1% of the 3- to 6-year olds (see *Table 3*).

Table 3

Cyprus: Number and share of children in ECEC centre-based settings according to age, 2013-2014*

	Number	Share in % of the total age-group population ⁺
Infant-toddler centre/Age-integrated centres		
Under 1-year olds	179	1.9
1-year olds	643	6.4
2-year olds	1,672	17.5
Under 3-year olds	2,494	8.7
3-year olds	2,046	20.5
4-year olds	1,054	10.6
5-year olds	102	1.1
3- to under 6-year olds	3,202	10.8
Under 6-year olds	5,696	9.8
Kindergartens		
Under 1-year olds	86	0.9
1-year olds	414	4.1
2-year olds	1,774	18.5
Under 3-year olds	2,274	7.9
3-year olds	4,071	40.9
4-year olds	7,267	73.1
5-year olds	8,820	91.6
3- to under 6-year olds	20,158	68.3
Under 6-year olds	22,432	38.5
Total, all institution types		
Under 1-year olds	265	2.9
1-year olds	1,057	10.6
2-year olds	3,446	36.0
Under 3-year olds	4,768	16.6
3-year olds	6,117	61.4
4-year olds	8,321	83.7
5-year olds	8,922	92.6
3- to under 6-year olds	23,360	79.1
Under 6-year olds	28,128	48.2

* own calculations based on the total age-related population, 2013 (Eurostat)

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Eurostat 2015a, 2015d.
*Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2016, 39, 82.

Financing and costs for parents

State-maintained ECEC centres are funded by the government – either directly or through the local authorities. They are not permitted to receive any other kind of funding.

Although kindergarten attendance is free of charge for children aged 4 years 8 months to 5 years 8 months, parents of younger children in the state-maintained settings are required to pay a monthly contribution of 42€.** Under certain circumstances, this flat-rate fee may be reduced according to certain criteria set by the setting. Private kindergartens do not receive any subsidy from the government.

Fees usually depend on whether the setting comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Both the community day nurseries and community kindergartens receive government subsidies (between 6,834 and 11,960€ per year) and also draw on parental fees for their funding.

In 2012/13, the average monthly fee for the community kindergartens was approximately 80€, and for the private for-profit kindergartens 260€.^{1*}

Sources: **EFA 2015.
* European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.

Staff-child ratios

There are no legally binding regulations regarding group size or the ratio of staff to children in day nurseries and age-integrated centres. The centre head decides how large the groups are to be and how staff will be deployed. However, official recommendations suggest the following ratios of staff to children:

- under 2 years of age: max. 1 : 6
- 2 - 3 years: max. 1 : 16
- 3 - 4 years: max. 1 : 24
- 4 years and older: max. 1 : 28

In state-maintained kindergartens the children are mainly grouped in same-age groups:

- 3 years to 3 years 8 months
- 3 years 8 months to 4 years 8 months
- 4 years 8 months to 5 years 8 months

It is also recommended that groups do not exceed 25 children, with 10 being the lowest number of children for any one group to be formed. Private kindergartens can make their own decisions about group size and staff/child ratios.

A group of children older than 3 years must be led by an ECEC professional with a tertiary-level qualification.*

¹ The amounts in Euros refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
*European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016, 12.

Curricular frameworks

There is no official curricular framework for working with children in day nurseries and age-integrated centres. An overall plan is outlined by the centre head and the staff choose relevant methods and approaches of working with the children along these lines. The main goals are providing a safe environment and age-appropriate activities for the children.

For the work in state-maintained, community and private kindergartens a new curricular framework (*Analytika Programmata*) was introduced in 2011. It is based on fundamental educational and professional principles and central curricular goals and areas of learning are: knowledge about the natural sciences; becoming a democratic citizen; and developing capabilities and competencies needed for the '21st century knowledge society' (e.g. critical thinking, theory-practice-transfer, empathy). The approach is child-oriented and play-based, and alongside an emphasis on cognitive and problem-solving skills, key elements are enhancing social competencies and emotional, psychomotor and affective skills. The university educated teachers are free to choose their own pedagogical approaches towards implementing the official curricular goals.

In the state-maintained kindergartens the daily programme is the responsibility of the teachers. Usually they also decide whether the three teaching periods (approximately 30 to 45 minutes) per day are teacher-led activities. The remaining time is usually spent on free play indoors or outdoor activities. Community and private kindergartens develop their own timetables, but these have to be approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Source: Eurydice 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The majority of children with special educational needs attend mainstream ECEC provision and every effort is made for them to receive the necessary support. Sometimes these children are grouped together in a separate room within a regular type of provision, or they may attend a separate special institution. An individualised learning programme (IEP) is developed for each child, mostly emphasising psychological and social aspects, but also other areas of learning. The IEP has to be approved by the Ministry of Education.

In terms of children with a background of migration, there are no specific procedures regarding integration and inclusion.

However, in 2013/14 there were also private for-profit ECEC settings with a language of instruction other than Greek: 1,253 children attended kindergartens where English was the main language and 50 children were enrolled in French-speaking settings. 472 children under 3 years of age attended English-language and 35 Russian-language infant-toddler centres.

Children with a background of migration

In 2013/14, 12.6% of children (3,588) under the age of 6 in ECEC provision were non-native born. Nearly two-thirds (62%) came from other EU countries.*

Overall, Eurostat data indicate that in 2016, 17.3% of the population were not native born, with nearly three-quarters coming from other EU countries. In the group of children under 5 years, this share is 9.4%, 73% of whom come from EU countries.

The current influx of refugees and asylum seekers is initiating demands for new strategies in the education and the ECEC system, not least in terms of the continuing professional development of staff and of targeted support measures such as curricular reforms and language tuition.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2015.
*Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2016, 85ff, own calculations.

Monitoring– Evaluation – Research

The monitoring and evaluation of the education system in Cyprus has not been regulated up till now. However, it is expected that a newly established *Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation* (CERE) will be conducting evaluation studies at all levels of the education system.

Quality assurance in day nurseries, age-integrated centres and family day care is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Both ECEC facilities and ECEC staff are inspected by the Ministry's Social Welfare Department. A personal file is kept for each child in the ECEC settings in which the staff document the child's progress. The first report is completed 15 days after the child starts attending, and is updated at least every three months.

Child-related assessments in kindergartens are usually conducted by portfolios, photos, writing samples, etc. At the beginning of the kindergarten year each child is observed closely, and a report is written on the basis of a formal test of the child's cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development and an informal report which includes descriptions of the child's behaviour in the group. There are three supervisors across the country who are responsible for ECEC settings.

Formative evaluations take place through the year by means of spontaneous and planned observations of the child's behaviour in different situations.

A summative evaluation at the end of the kindergarten year gives the staff information for their own self-evaluation and also for the assessment and further development of the centre-specific educational programme.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave entitlement begins between two to six weeks before the expected birth date and lasts 18 weeks. Two weeks before and six weeks after the expected date of birth are compulsory. Mothers who have paid social insurance contributions for at least 26 weeks before leave begins receive a weekly allowance of around 75% of their gross earnings (174,38€ in 2015). If the mother is caring for other dependent family members during this time, the allowance may be increased to 80, 90 or 100%. If the average weekly wage over the preceding year is higher than the minimum wage, the mother receives a monthly allowance which covers 75% of the difference (up to a maximum of 1.046€). Additionally, mothers paying social insurance contributions and who are citizens of Cyprus are entitled to a lump sum maternity grant (521€ in 2011).*

There is no statutory provision for paid **paternity leave** in Cyprus.

Both working parents are also entitled to an additional 18 weeks of **unpaid parental leave**. In order to make use of this entitlement, the child must be younger than 8 years of age, and the parent must have worked for at least six months for the same employer. After two weeks of parental leave have been taken by one of the parents, two weeks of the remaining leave can be transferred to the other parent. At least one week and not more than five weeks can be taken per year (in

families with one or two children). Social insurance contributions are covered by social security during parental leave.

Sources: Department of Labour Relations 2015.
*EPIC 2016.
Infocypus 2016.

Historical shifts and junctures

1880	Founding of first establishment for young children in Larnaca, shortly after the onset of British dominance
1898	First curricular guidelines for early childhood education issued, following the example of Greece
1920-1930	44 preschool groups attached to primary schools set up and subsidised by the (colonial) government (39 for the Greek community, four for the Turkish and one for the Armenian community)
1933	Following an uprising on the island, only 15 of the centres survive
1933-1960	All public institutions lose government subsidies and are transferred to the private sector – by 1960 there are 48 centres for 3- to 6-year olds, mostly unlicensed and staffed by professionally unqualified persons
1960	Independence
1960s to 1973	Only 10% of children aged 3;8 to 5;8 attend the existing 13 public and 37 private centres
1974-1979	Following the Turkish invasion, 55 of 133 primary schools and public kindergartens demolished and only 89 of 121 private institutions remain undamaged
1977	First community kindergarten opened
1979	Government expansion plan to increase number of public sector ECEC centres to 300
1996	Number of community kindergartens reaches 166
2004	Compulsory and free of charge attendance in a pre-school setting (<i>prodimotiki</i>) accredited by the Ministry of Education and Culture
2008	The official Educational Reform at the Ministry of Education and Culture begins and includes early childhood education
2013/14	The majority of kindergartens (265 / 515) are state-maintained, whereas the majority of day nurseries and age-integrated childcare centres (108 / 172) are private for-profit facilities
2014	The second phase of the Educational Reform begins

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2016.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Cyprus

Country expert assessment by Eleni Loizou

Teacher-Child Ratio

One of the most crucial challenges in the ECEC field is the high teacher-child ratio. This means that teachers are not able to implement appropriate and progressive practices, individualised education and care, play practices or group work. It makes it difficult for them to document children's development and learning progress on a regular basis.

Diverse population – non-diverse staffing practices

Cyprus has a diverse population of children from different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Educators are not well prepared to address this situation in ECEC settings; they need further professional development in developing appropriate practices to welcome children from different backgrounds and also support their learning and development in ways that respond to their personal needs based on their experiences and not in terms of a set curriculum.

A limited number of early childhood education supervisors and policy makers with no ECEC specialist knowledge

It is a fact that ECE is under-represented in the Ministry of Education and Culture. There are only three ECE Supervisors for the whole island, whose duties are to supervise, assess and support teachers in all public and community settings. This ratio is inappropriate and does not allow for quality support. At the same time, teachers are dissatisfied with the professional development they receive since there are not enough staff to support them on a daily basis. Moreover, policy makers are often politicians who are not informed about ECE and do not seem to have a vision for the field thus their decision making is based on economic and other political variables only.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population of Cyprus totalled 848,319. The population has been rising steadily over the past 20 years (in 1995: 645,399 and in 2005: 733,067).

Children under age 6

In 2016, 3.3% of the total population were children under 3 years of age, and nearly 7% were children under 6 years of age. Although the relative share of young children in the population was considerably higher than the EU average in 1995, this had changed to a lower level by 2016, but the total share of children under age 6 continued to be slightly higher than the EU average (cf. *Table 5*).

Table 4

Cyprus: Number of children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
under 1-year olds	9,159
1-year olds	9,262
2-year olds	9,280
Total under 3-year olds	27,701
3-year olds	10,037
4-year olds	9,634
5-year olds	10,017
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	29,688
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	57,389

Table 5

Cyprus: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	5.0	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.0
3 to under 6 years	5.0	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.1
0 to under 6 years	10.0	6.8	6.9	6.2	6.8	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

Three quarters of all households with children under age 6 are couple households. In 2015, single parent households accounted for only 2.7% of all households. According to the official statistical data, these are nearly exclusively single mother families.

Table 6

Cyprus: Households with children under age 6, 2014

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	87,900	
Couple households	69,800	76.3
Other household type	15,600	17.0
Single households, total	2,500	2.7
Single households, women	2,300	2.5
Single households, men	200**	0.2

* own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the labour market participation of men (aged 15-64) in Cyprus was 66.7%, and the employment rate of women of the same age was nearly 59%.

During the same year, 69.8% of all women and 85.9% of all men with children under age 6 were registered as employed. Whereas the maternal employment rates are higher than the EU28 average, the employment rates of fathers are slightly lower (cf. Table 6).

Table 7

Cyprus: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Cyprus	2005	68.4	95.3
	2010	72.4	91.3

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	69,8	85.9
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32,7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 28.4% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. This positions Cyprus as having a higher proportion of children at risk of poverty than the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The relative share of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 28.9%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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CZECH REPUBLIC

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Barbora Loudová Stralczynská

University lecturer, Charles University, Prague, Faculty of Education,
Department of Primary Education

Citation suggestion:

Loudová Stralczynská, B. 2018. "Czech Republic – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 206-245.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic is organised as a segregated system. Pre-primary education in kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) for children aged 2/3 years up to 6/7 years and preparatory classes for 6- to 7-year olds with deferred school entry come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for ‘children’s groups’ (*dětské skupiny*) – a new form of provision for 1- to 6-year olds. The previous day nurseries no longer exist in their original form. However, some are being continued as social care institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Responsibilities are thus divided between three different ministries, which experts in the early childhood field consider to be less than optimal. In its inspection report for the school year 2014/2015, even the Czech School Inspectorate describes centre-based early childhood education and care (0-6 years) as complex and recommends inclusion within a framework of cross-ressort inter-ministerial cooperation (CSI 2016, 31).

Overall the steering system is centralised. However, responsibility for kindergartens and preparatory classes, which are part of the school system, has partly been transferred to the regional or municipal level.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes

The qualification requirements for core practitioners and other staff in ECEC provision vary according to the specific setting in which they work. The law states that ‘pedagogues’ or ‘pedagogical employees’ work in the kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) and preparatory classes (*základní školy*). In everyday terms these are usually called **Kindergarten Teachers** and this is the terminology mostly used in this report.

In both kindergartens and preparatory classes, a (mostly qualified) **Educational Support Worker** may be employed for part of the time to support individual children. Since September 2016, the specialised support staff in kindergartens may be Educational Support Workers or School Support Workers, or non-pedagogical staff; they may also be Social Pedagogues, Special Needs Pedagogues, School Psychologists¹ and Childcare Assistants; the latter support the core practitioner in groups in which at least two 2-year olds are enrolled. To this end, the Ministry of Education initiated a support programme between May 2016 and June 2017. Since September 2017, regular kindergartens are responsible for integrating 2-year olds. Staffing and general resources such as rooms and equipment are adapted accordingly.

Staff in ‘children’s groups’ (*dětské skupiny*) and other forms of centre-based provision

The diverse staff categories working in *dětské skupiny* and other ECEC institutions are described under the umbrella term of **Caregivers**. It is possible for persons with very varied qualifications to work in *dětské skupiny*: Kindergarten Teachers, Primary School Teachers, Educators, general Nurses, Midwives, Paramedics, Healthcare Assistants, Childcare Assistants, Social Workers, Social Services employees, Medical Doctors, Health Services employees, (Clinical) Psychologists. A

¹ Information source: Ministry of Education [MŠMT], 01.09.2016

‘Childminder for children up to school entry age’ – a new occupation in the Czech Republic, whose profile can be compared with that of a family day carer in other European countries – may also be employed in children’s groups.

Table 1 gives an overview of the regular contact staff employed in the education sector and the childcare sector. The core practitioners (i.e. persons with group or centre responsibility) are classified according to one of five professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this Section).

Table 1

Czech Republic: Regular contact staff in early childhood centre-based settings

Job title and professional profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
Education sector				
<p><i>Učitelka</i> Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary education professional</p>	<p><i>Mateřská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3–6/7 years (up to school entry)</p> <p><i>Speciální mateřská škola</i> Special needs kindergarten Children with special educational needs 2/3–6/7 years</p> <p><i>Přípravná třída Základní škola</i> Preparatory class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds with additional educational needs</p> <p><i>Dětská skupina</i> Children’s group 1–6 years (up to school entry)</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre Head (with mandatory additional management qualification)</p>	<p>Predominantly 3-6 years</p> <p>However, IPS programmes increasingly include curricular topics related to work with under 3-year olds</p>	<p>4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation; subject-related higher education entrance qualification</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a³ EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F 0112 ISCED 2011: 354</p> <p>Further options: 3 years higher education institution (tertiary professional school, <i>vyšší odborné školy</i>) degree/ diploma award</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655</p> <p>or 3 years university studies; Bachelor’s degree</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 645</p>
<p><i>Asistent pedagoga</i> Educational Support Worker</p>	<p><i>Mateřská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3–6/7 years (up to school entry)</p>	<p>Qualified support worker, particularly for children with special educational needs</p>	<p>3–6 years</p>	<p><i>Minimum:</i> 4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation;</p>

² UNESCO 2012, 2014

³ n/a = not applicable

Job title and professional profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
	<i>Speciální mateřská škola</i> Special needs kindergarten Children with special educational needs 2/3–6/7 years <i>Přípravná třída Základní škola</i> Preparatory class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds with additional educational needs			subject-related higher education entrance qualification ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 or many other qualifications accepted – see <i>Table 6</i>
Childcare sector				
<i>Pečující osoba</i> Caregiver <i>Profile:</i> No explicit profile because of the diverse staffing options (see <i>Table 6</i>)	<i>Dětská skupina</i> Children's group 1–6 years (up to school entry)	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Varies according to the qualification route completed	<i>Minimum:</i> 4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation; subject-related higher education entrance qualification ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 or many other qualifications accepted – see <i>Table 6</i>

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of the ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Personnel statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education only refer to public kindergartens, i.e. those with municipal/district providers or which are run by the Ministry itself. No statistical data are available regarding the qualification routes of staff in church-affiliated and private kindergar-

tens or in other forms of provision (children's groups and social care institutions regulated by the Trade Licensing Act, 1991); they are therefore not included in this section.

Table 2

Czech Republic: Staffing structures in public kindergartens, 2015/2016

Staff categories	Proportion of kindergarten workforce / comments
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant university degree	18%*
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant award from a tertiary professional school	4.5%**
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant upper secondary qualification	76.5%
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with other, non-specialist qualification	1%
Staff with no formal IPS	5.3% (the number of unqualified staff is on the decrease)
Specialist support staff such as Pedagogical Support Workers	Mostly not on site; may be employed as additional staff in cases of need
Male staff	Up to 1989 there were no male staff working in kindergartens and this has only changed marginally (0.5% of core practitioners/educational specialists), although the number is increasing year by year, particularly in the cities and larger towns (MŠMT 2017)
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a migration background	No national data available***

* The proportion of staff with a relevant university degree is on the increase (14% in 2013/2014; 16.2% in 2014/2015; 18% in 2015/2016). Concomitantly, the proportion of staff with an upper secondary qualification is on the decrease, as is the proportion of staff with other qualifications and of those with no qualification at all.

** The proportion of staff with a relevant degree from a tertiary professional school is on the rise: 3.2% in 2013/2014; 4.1% in 2014/2015; 4.5% in 2015/2016 (CSI 2016, 18).

*** Persons with a migration background in kindergartens are rare – particularly as core practitioners; in recent years they may be found working as support staff (e.g. as Educational Support Workers or, since September 2016, also as Childminder or Childcare Assistant) in groups with a high proportion of children with a migration background (usually in the context of pilot projects in large towns/cities).

In the kindergartens that were inspected during the school year 2015/2016, 5.3% of the workforce did not have a relevant qualification (CSI 2016, 14).

Statistical data about the qualifications structure of the **Educational Support Workers** in kindergartens and preparatory classes are limited. They are only presented as a proportion of all employed support staff, but not according to the various stages in the education system or the type of institution⁴.

Generally speaking, support staff in public education institutions mostly have a higher education (subject-related) entrance qualification (56.4%), followed by persons with a skilled worker's certificate (18.4%), a higher education degree (Bachelor or Master, 18.2%) or a technical college diploma (4.0%; reference year 2015, MŠMT 2016a).

In recent years a gradual increase in the level of qualifications of support staff can be observed. Persons with the lowest qualification level (lower secondary school certificate) represent the smallest group (3%). Although the relevant legislation makes it possible for persons with a very low qualification level to access this occupation, the actual qualification structures show that employees on the whole are more highly qualified (upper secondary and higher education levels) than the minimum requirements.

⁴ Statistical data are only available for the highest qualification level of the Pedagogical Support Workers, but not for the qualification routes and the kinds of study programme. It is therefore not possible to make a statement about the most frequent qualification routes or the number of lateral entrants into the profession.

Table 3

Czech Republic: Formal qualification levels of Educational Support Workers in kindergartens, preparatory classes and schools, 2011 to 2015, in %

Highest completed level of qualification	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
9 years of basic schooling (lower secondary school certificate)	5.7	4.8	4.4	3.7	3.0
Upper secondary vocational (skilled worker's certificate)	25.2	24.1	22.4	19.8	18.4
Upper secondary vocational (subject-related higher education entrance qualification)	54.6	55.6	56.0	56.2	56.4
Tertiary professional school (degree/diploma)	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.0
University (Bachelor's/Master's degree)	11.7	12.7	14.2	16.5	18.2

Source: Compiled by the Ministry of Education on the basis of ISP data (MŠMT 2016b).

The **average age** of staff in kindergartens is high. Current figures show that in recent years mostly the 26- to 35-year old cohorts and those aged 56 years and older are on the increase. *Table 4* presents the current data. The recruitment of younger specialist staff therefore needs to be systematically pursued in future.

Table 4

Czech Republic: Proportions of kindergarten staff according to average age, 2016

Age group in years	Proportion in %
Up to 25	8.4
26–35	15.5
36–45	22.6
46–55	33.9
56 and older	19.6

Source: MŠMT 2017.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

In the following section the qualifying options for three categories of staff will be presented:

- **Kindergarten Teacher** (core practitioner in kindergartens for 2-/3- to 6-/7-year olds);
- **Educational Support Worker** (support staff in kindergartens with responsibility for children with special educational needs);
- **Caregiver** (umbrella term for diverse staff categories with different qualifications in children's groups for 1- to 6-year olds – also as core practitioners).

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher (*Učitelka*)

There are currently three qualification routes available for prospective Kindergarten Teachers. However, until now, only the first option is the minimum *requirement* for occupying a post in a kindergarten.

Qualifying route 1 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Vocational school (upper secondary level) – specialisation in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

After nine years of compulsory schooling, and following the completion of a personal eligibility test and demonstration of proven skills in music, sports and the arts, it is possible to enrol at a vocational school with a pedagogical specialisation. However, this qualification route is not available at all vocational schools and is not on offer every year. A good general state of health and non-conspicuous pronunciation are requirements for admission⁵.

The qualifying programme usually lasts four years and ends with a subject-related higher education entrance qualification (ISCED 354). Altogether, 33 vocational schools (of which four are church-affiliated and ten privately-run) are accredited to offer the classical form of training leading to this specialist qualification (i.e. four years of full-time studies or a one- to two-year option for those who already possess a (subject-related) higher education entrance qualification in another field. A total of 23 vocational schools offer a distance learning programme which varies in length: three to five years or one to two years for applicants with a (subject-related) higher education entrance qualification in another subject area – depending on the previous course content, their eligibility and the completed qualification levels and orientation. This qualifying option (so-called combined⁶ or evening education sessions of up to 18 hours per week) may take up to a year longer than the regular qualification programme to complete.

In 2016, 16 vocational schools (14 of which were publicly run, one church-affiliated and one private school) offered this specialist route as a full-time programme and eight vocational schools as a distance learning option.

The initial professional studies in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy qualify the vocational school leavers for a broad field of work. As fully qualified practitioners they may occupy the following posts:

- Pedagogue in a kindergarten (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 6) or pedagogical employee in other kinds of ECEC setting (MŠMT 2015a);
- Educator (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 16) and Leisure-time Pedagogue (Act on Educational Staff 563/2004, paragraph 17) in outside-school-hours provision (child-care settings, children's and young people's centres, children's centres);
- Educational Support Worker (Act on Educational Staff 563/2004, paragraph 20);
- Childcare Assistant for children under three years of age (in social care institutions regulated by the Trade Licensing Act) or in groups for older children (commercial enterprises).

Qualifying route 2 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Tertiary professional school – study programmes in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The second qualification option for prospective Kindergarten Teachers is the study programme in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy at one of the four tertiary professional schools in the Czech Republic which specialise in early childhood education. The tertiary professional schools are a relatively new form of higher education providing initial professional studies – they were established as part of the Czech education system in 1991 (during the first four years as an experimental model). In the meantime there are now public, church-affiliated and private professional schools. Right from the early days these higher education institutions have offered both regular courses of studies and distance learning options.

⁵ The requirements are similar when applying for a place at a tertiary professional school and for a degree programme in early childhood education at a university and usually include a written specification from a general medical practitioner and a speech therapist.

⁶ The combined qualifying option is a mixture of face-to-face sessions and forms of distance learning; the students attend both taught classes and also complete certain tasks independently.

Entry requirements vary somewhat among the higher education institutions. Basic requirements are the general or subject-related university entrance qualification and an entrance examination (in aesthetic disciplines, pedagogy, psychology – often also a personal eligibility test or an interview with the applicant). The regular study programme lasts three years (distance learning option four years) and is completed with a diploma award (ISCED 655). It is not necessary to have completed previous vocational studies with a pedagogical specialisation in order to be accepted; admission is determined by the result of the entrance examination. The regular study programme is organised in winter and summer semesters (16 weeks of teaching and three weeks of examinations). The distance learning programme comprises 22 consultation meetings (200 hours) per academic year and three weeks of examinations. The consultations take place on a specified weekday (roughly nine hours of teaching twice a month) (Rýdl and Šmelová 2012, 115). The study programme prepares students for work in similar positions as those listed above for the vocational school leavers (i.e. as a Pedagogue in kindergartens or other ECEC settings and in preparatory classes, as an Educator in out-of-school childcare settings and social services, as an Educational Support Worker).

Qualifying route 3 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher **University studies in early childhood education**

Since 1970, it has been possible to study early childhood education at a university. The first accredited Bachelor programme was introduced in 1993 in Prague (Charles University), later also at other universities. Within the framework of the Bologna process, all degree courses are currently organised in Bachelor and Master programmes. Three-year Bachelor courses can be studied at nine universities in the Czech Republic (usually in the Faculties of Education) and two universities offer a consecutive two-year Master programme. Both the Bachelor programmes in Kindergarten/Pre-primary Pedagogy (literally: Qualification for teaching in kindergartens, *učitelství pro mateřské školy*) and the Master programmes in Pre-primary Education are offered as a full-time option and as a part-time, so-called combined course of studies.

Entry requirements are a general or subject-related university entrance qualification and a successfully completed entrance examination (usually a practical and theoretical examination, e.g. in aesthetic subjects, an oral examination in pedagogy, psychology, children's literature, and a personal eligibility test or test of the applicant's suitability for academic studies) – the specific conditions vary from university to university. For the Bachelor study programme there are more applicants than places – in Prague, for example, admission restrictions (*numerus clausus*) are applied. From a total of approximately 120 applicants, only 25 to 30 are accepted. Many school leavers therefore apply for a place at several universities or also for other educational study programmes (e.g. Primary Education, Special Needs and Remedial Therapy Education).

The three-year Bachelor programme includes field-based and theoretical elements. The students are awarded 180 ECTS points and at least 10% of these are optional (e.g. in Prague). The course syllabi and examination content vary from university to university. No unified professional standard currently exists for the Bachelor and Master programmes⁷. Both programmes are organised according to mandatory, elective and optional courses which aim to promote the students' general, occupation-specific, didactic and pedagogical-psychological knowledge, abilities and skills.

Table 5 describes the different qualification routes for prospective Kindergarten Teachers (*učitelka*).

⁷ A draft Professional Standard was produced within a project in 2001 but was not generally accepted.

Table 5

Czech Republic: Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Title in Czech: Učitelka ('Teacher') Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p><i>Route 1</i> (= the only <i>requirement</i> for occupational practice):</p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years of compulsory schooling; entrance examination; competency test (music, sports, the arts)</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational, specialist field pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy. Field placement of at least 10 weeks and teaching practice of at least 7 hours per week throughout the four years</p> <p>Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (<i>maturita</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 354</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General or subject-specific university entrance qualification; entrance examination and competence test (aesthetic-artistic field, pedagogy, psychology)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at a tertiary professional school, either specialising in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy or in initial professional studies for Educators who have successfully passed an examination in early childhood education as part of their university entrance qualification</p> <p>Award: Diploma/degree</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p> <p><i>Route 3:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General or subject-specific university entrance qualification; entrance examination and competence test (aesthetic-artistic field, pedagogy, psychology – varies according to university); it is possible to enrol for a subsequent two-year Master full-time or distance learning programme</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year Bachelor study programme specialising in pre-primary education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree/Pre-primary education</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 645</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p>

Beyond these three qualifying routes, alternative routes have also been introduced: since 2005, Remedial Therapists with a higher education qualification may now work in kindergartens as a fully qualified core practitioner; since 2012, persons with a higher education qualification as Educator, Primary School Teacher, Leisure-time Pedagogue or graduates of the university degree programme in Education *after completion* of an additional professional development pro-

gramme for Kindergarten Teachers (within the context of life-long learning programmes at the universities).

Educational Support Worker (*Asistent pedagoga*)

Since 1993, Educational Support Workers have been employed as additional staff⁸ in groups for socially disadvantaged children (in regular kindergartens, special kindergartens or preparatory classes in primary schools) and since 1997 in groups for children with health impairments (in integrative regular kindergartens or in special kindergartens⁹).

Legislation regarding the competencies, professional study programmes and work tasks was passed in 2004 to 2005. However, no **one** qualification route was specified. The occupation is still not seen as a 'lifelong' profession, although the Educational Support Workers are an increasingly fixed part of the ECEC workforce. The work is often undertaken by mothers (who have had experience with their own children with a disadvantage/disability and are re-entering the employment market) or former teachers, social workers, etc. It is mainly an alternative career option for these persons. However, it is expected that this situation will change and that the Educational Support Workers will become a regular part of the ECEC workforce in connection with new, pro-inclusive legislation (amendments to the Education Act) which came into force in September 2016. During the early 1990s, Roma women often worked as Educational Support Workers in order to improve the integration of Roma children.

The qualification routes described below are of equivalent value, extremely diverse and characterised by high permeability. However, the minimum qualification requirement is very low (completion of lower secondary school plus a qualification course); this is viewed negatively in specialist circles and is also linked to low pay.

Generally speaking, all those with a pedagogical specialism at upper secondary level or at tertiary level can work as an Educational Support Worker, without having to complete a further specialist qualifying course. Attending one of these courses (*so-called Study Programme for Educational Support Workers or Pedagogical Study Programme¹⁰*) is only obligatory for persons with a non-pedagogical vocational background. Tertiary professional schools and universities currently offer one or two professional development programmes which also include preparation measures for prospective Educational Support Workers.

The following qualification routes are specially oriented towards the professional preparation of Educational Support Workers.

Qualifying option 1 – Educational Support Worker

Upper secondary vocational school – Qualifying programme for Educational Support Workers

Only three vocational schools currently offer a fully accredited IPS programme in *Pedagogy for Support Workers in the Education System (Pedagogika pro asistenty ve školství)*; it is currently on offer by one vocational school, and only as a distance learning programme (five years for students with a lower secondary school certificate either as a combined programme or as evening classes and a one- or two-year regular qualifying course for persons with a completed upper secondary award in another field). Launched in 2008, the qualifying programme aims to enable these persons to acquire an upper secondary level qualification and is therefore offered as an

⁸ They may be the second or third person in the group if working in special kindergartens for children with serious health problems.

⁹ Legislation (Education Act 561/2004 [most recent amendment 2017], paragraph 16) differentiates between types of kindergarten or special classes/groups for children with the following disabilities: intellectual, physical, psychological, visual, hearing, language disorders, serious developmental disorders affecting learning, serious behavioural disorders, autism, combined disorders.

¹⁰ According to the law, 'Pedagogy Studies' is a general term for qualifying and professional development courses with a pedagogical orientation, without explicitly specifying them.

extra-occupational option¹¹. However, this qualifying option is only of minimum importance since both types of Educational Support Workers are mostly recruited through persons with another kind of pedagogical qualification.

This IPS route (as is the case for all accredited upper secondary vocational programmes) is planned according to a national framework of specifications for the vocational education institutions. Alongside general education subjects (525 teaching hours) it comprises 310 teaching hours of pedagogical-psychological preparation and 150 teaching hours related to the pedagogical tasks of a Support Worker. The minimum length of the field-based component is 100 hours. The qualifying route aims to prepare learners for supporting children with special needs (i.e. not just specifically for work in primary schools or kindergartens).

Qualifying option 2 – Educational Support Worker

Further education programme for Educational Support Workers

The *Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*¹² is the most common form of gaining the minimum qualification requirement for both types of Educational Support Worker.

The programme is currently on offer at various higher education and further education institutions (20 providers in all). Each institution has to have its own particular programme accredited. Course content varies according to the specialisation, such as preparation for work mostly with children with a migration background or with socially disadvantaged children.

The individual courses can usually be completed within a year. The focus lies on the practical aspects of the work rather than a theoretical grounding. This study programme is of at least 120 hours' duration (full-time option) – 80 hours of theory and 40 hours of practically oriented work. Many courses may be longer.

A further possibility for gaining the minimum qualification for working as one of the two types of Educational Support Worker is the *Pedagogy Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*. This further education programme is also provided by various higher education and further education institutions. The *Pedagogy Study Programme* is for persons with a completed upper secondary or a higher education award in a **non-pedagogical** field. The course runs for a minimum length of 80 teaching hours.

A third option for acquiring the minimum qualification for working as an Educational Support Worker (both types) is to attend a *Professional Development Study Programme* in the context of courses offered by higher education institutions and universities.

Table 6 gives an overview of the various qualifying routes for the occupation of Educational Support Worker. The Act on Educational Staff (No. 563/2004, paragraph 20) differentiates between two types and various qualification pathways within this occupational profile:

Type 1: The Educational Support Worker carries out direct pedagogical work in a group in which children with special educational needs (such as health problems or socio-cultural disadvantages) are enrolled or in a school where these children are integrated on an individual basis.

Type 2: The Educational Support Worker carries out direct pedagogical work which constitutes an educational *support* measure in a school or other educational institution. Qualification specifications are lower for this type.

In kindergartens and preparatory classes, it is mostly Type 1 Educational Support Workers who are employed.

¹¹ Personal communication with Dr Jana Kašparová, National Education Institute, 23.09.2016.

¹² In accordance with legislation (Law No. 563/2004, paragraph 20e and Regulation No. 317/2005, paragraph 4).

Table 6

Czech Republic: Educational Support Worker

Title in Czech: <i>Asistent pedagoga</i> ('Educational Assistant')
<p>Type 1 There are currently six qualification pathways to become an Educational Support Worker (Type 1) in kindergartens and preparatory classes. These practitioners do not work in children's groups and social care institutions.</p>
<p><i>Route 1.1</i> Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational with pedagogical specialisation Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (<i>maturita</i>) ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)</p> <p><i>Route 1.2</i> Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification with a <i>non</i>-pedagogical specialisation Professional studies: Award of one of the three following supplementary qualification options: Award: Certificate (1) Qualifying course of studies with pedagogical specialisation at a higher education institution or university (2) <i>Pedagogy Study Programme</i> of at least 80 hours' duration offered by a higher education institution/university or other accredited education institution, specialising in the work as Educational Support Worker (3) <i>Professional Development Programme for Educational Support Workers</i> of at least 120 hours' duration offered by a higher education institution/university or other accredited education institution (<i>Study Programme Educational Support Workers</i>). Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)</p> <p><i>Route 1.3</i> Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school with <i>pedagogical specialisation</i> Award: Diploma/degree* ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 655 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support) *The tertiary professional schools are not yet integrated into the Bachelor/Master system, although according to ISCED (2011) their awards are located at level 655 and in the EQF they are placed at level 6. Permeability of these professional studies is limited – only one university accepts a selection of the examinations in its Bachelor study programme, otherwise the tertiary professional school graduates have to complete the full course of studies.</p> <p><i>Route 1.4</i> Entry requirements: Diploma/degree from a tertiary professional school with a <i>non</i>-pedagogical specialisation (3-year professional studies programme) Professional studies: Supplementary qualification programme (see Route 1.2) Award: Certificate from the supplementary qualification programme Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6-</p>

Title in Czech: Asistent pedagoga ('Educational Assistant')

to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 1.5

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years university, Bachelor study programme with a specialisation in Educational Science; it is possible to enrol for a subsequent two-year Master's degree programme

Award: Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0111

ISCED 2011: 645

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 1.6

Entry requirements: Completed Bachelor study programme in a *non*-pedagogical specialisation

Professional studies: Supplementary qualification programme (see Route 1.2)

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Type 2

There are currently five qualification options available for Educational Support Workers (Type 2) in kindergartens and preparatory classes (but not in children's groups and social care institutions); until now it is only the first route that is the *requirement* for employment in such a post.

Route 2.1

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling

Professional studies: Accredited supplementary qualifying programme (*Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*) of at least 120 hours' duration which is offered by further education institutions

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.2

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: Upper secondary vocation offering a specialism in the preparation of Educational Support Workers (in the case of a subject-related university entrance qualification in a *non*-pedagogical subject the professional studies can be completed within 1 to 2 years or as a distance learning programme within 1 to 3 years)

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0113

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.3

Entry requirements: Skilled worker certificate

Professional studies: Supplementary *Pedagogy Study Programme* (offered by a higher education or another kind of accredited educational institution lasting at least 80 hours, specialising in the work as Educational Support Worker)

Title in Czech: *Asistent pedagoga* ('Educational Assistant')

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.4

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification in a *non-pedagogical* discipline

Professional studies: Supplementary *Pedagogy Study Programme* or *Study Programme for Educational Support Workers* or (see Route 1.2)

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.5

All further qualifying options for Type 1 Educational Support Workers (see Routes 1.1 to 1.6)

Caregiver (*Pečující osoba*)

There are no specialist qualifying programmes or initial professional studies for Caregivers in children's groups (*dětské skupiny*). The work may be undertaken by persons with various but at the same time field relevant qualifications. As a rule (apart from the first example 'Teacher with qualification for work in kindergartens'), the qualification profiles do not have an explicit specialisation in early childhood education and care for under 6-year olds (or only to a certain extent in comparison with Route 1).

Since September 2016, persons with vocational qualifications in the pedagogical, social or health occupations (ISCED 354) or with a qualification as Childcare Assistant (see Route 11) or as a helper (*chůva* – Childminder) may work in kindergartens which also admit 2-year olds.

Table 7 gives an overview of the 14 different professional awards which are specified as valid for employment in a post as core practitioner in the age-integrated children's groups.

Table 7

Czech Republic: Caregiver

Title in Czech: *Pečující osoba*

Profiles: Diverse

1. *Teacher with qualification for work in kindergartens*

See **Table 4** for the three study routes

2. *Teacher with qualification for work in primary schools*

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 5 years Master study programme with specialisation in Primary Education

Award: Master's degree

ECTS points: 300

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0113

ISCED 2011: 746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

3. Educator

3.1 Educator (Diploma/Bachelor)

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme specialising in studies for Educators (literally: *Study Programme in Educational Science*, i.e. specialisation for work with 7- to 18-year olds in schools and out-of-school provision)

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree; a subsequent Master's programme can be followed in the case of the Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 645/655

3.2 Educator (upper secondary vocational award)

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational with specialisation in Professional Studies for Educators

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

4. General Nurse

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

5. Midwife

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years Bachelor study programme

Award: Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

6. Paramedic

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

7. Healthcare Assistant

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocation with a relevant (non-pedagogical) specialisation

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

8. Caregiver

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary vocational with a relevant specialisation and a practicum of at least 700 hours

Award: Skilled worker's certificate

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 3

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 343

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

9. Social Worker

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree, subsequent Master's and Doctoral degrees possible

ECTS points: either n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0923

ISCED 2011: 645/746/747/844/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

10. Social Services Employee

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: accredited qualifying course (at least 180 hours) 'Worker in Social Services'

Award: Certificate

ECTS- Points: n/a

EQF-Level: 2

ISCED 2013-F: 0923

ISCED 2011: 244

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

11. Childcare Assistant (literally 'Childminder for children up to school entry age')

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification

Professional studies: 1) none, just an examination without previous formal professional studies, 2) Further Education programme for lateral entrants of 160 hours (60 hours field-based studies)

Award: Certificate

ECTS points: n/a

EQF-Level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 344/354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

12. Healthcare and Social Services Employee

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree, subsequent Master's degree possible

ECTS points: either n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/746/655/746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

13. Medical Doctor

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 6 years university studies

Award: MUDr. (*Medicinae Universae Doctor* – General Practitioner in the Czech Republic)

ECTS points: 360

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0912

ISCED 2011: 747

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

14. (Clinical) Psychologist

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 5 years: 3-year Bachelor's degree and subsequently a 2-year Master's degree

Award: Bachelor's and Master's degree

ECTS points: 300 (180+120)

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0313

ISCED 2011: 746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

3.2 Competencies und curricula in IPS programmes

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher (*Učitelka*)

Qualifying route 1

Upper secondary vocational school – IPS in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The curricular foundations for this qualification are set out in the *Educational Framework Programme for the Field of Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy* (2009), which forms the mandatory basis for all vocational schools with this orientation. The document defines not only general but also occupation-specific competencies and subjects based on the four goals for lifelong learning for the 21st century (the 'Four Pillars of Learning model'¹³ in the Delors Report¹⁴). The programme aims to link abilities and skills included in the nine-year basic school curriculum with core general and occupation-specific competencies:

- The core competencies are: learning competence, problem-solving competence, communicative competence, personal and social competence, civic competence and cultural awareness, work and business competence, mathematical competence and application competence regarding information and communication technologies.
- The occupation-related competencies focus on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of pedagogic, artistic and leisure-time activities of young children and school-age children. Vocational school leavers should also be aware of safety measures and health protection at work and strive for the highest possible quality in their own work in accordance with

¹³ Learning to know; learning to do; learning to be; learning to live together.

¹⁴ Deutscher UNESCO-Kommission. 1987. Eds. Lernfähigkeit: Unser verborgener Reichtum. UNESCO-Bericht zur Bildung für das 21. Jahrhundert [Learning Competence: Our Hidden Resource. UNESCO Report on Education for the 21st Century]. Neuwied; Krieffel; Berlin: Luchterhand. See also: <https://www.unesco.de/infothek/publikationen/publikationsverzeichnis/delors-bericht.html>.

the concept of lifelong learning. Each vocational school develops its own curriculum; these are organised either in subjects or in modules.

Table 8

Czech Republic: Curricular areas (vocational school) – Pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

Learning areas	Minimum number of hours during IPS	
	Weekly	Total number of hours
Language education: Czech language	5	160
Language education: foreign language	10	320
Civic education	5	160
Science education	4	128
Mathematics education	8	256
Aesthetic education (music, the arts, drama)	5	160
Health education	8	256
Education in information and communication technologies	4	128
Economics education	2	64
Pedagogical-psychological education	21	672
Didactics of pedagogical work	30	960
Disposable hours	26	832
Total	128	4096

Source: MŠMT 2009b. Framework Plan Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy, 58

Private vocational schools may also work according to the framework programme *Education and Socialisation of Children in the Early Years and in the Early School Years*, which guarantees the full qualification as a Kindergarten Teacher. However, up till now it has only been accredited by two vocational institutions.

Qualifying route 2

Tertiary professional school – Study programme in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The study programme comprises theoretical and practical components and focuses mainly on pedagogical work with 3- to 6-year olds in kindergartens, but also in other settings. The specific content of the curricular areas is decided by the individual tertiary professional schools. Each higher education institution has its own accredited programme; these have a common foundation, but vary in terms of implementation, duration and orientation. In general, both general (foreign language, ICT, etc.) and occupation-specific curricular areas are included, i.e. pedagogy, psychology, didactics, legislation and school management and subjects which promote specific competencies (communicative, artistic, physical). A number of optional subjects linked to current pedagogical issues (intercultural education, second language/foreign language learning, environmental education), or to provide in-depth knowledge in a specific area (e.g. in an aesthetic discipline), are also available for the students. The higher education institutions organise the study programmes in modules (mandatory, elective, optional). Field-based studies are conducted as a weekly practicum, mostly during the first and second year of studies, as well as during the academic year or during holiday time.

The study programme ends with a diploma award (*absolutorium*) which comprises three examinations: an oral examination in a foreign language, a theoretical and/or practice-based examination in field-related subjects, and defence of the diploma dissertation.

Qualifying route 3

University – degree course in early childhood education

The Bachelor study programme curriculum focuses on the following professional competencies (Opravilová 2007): respect for children, children's development, creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and understanding. Observing the children provides the foundation for the educational processes which are then adapted according to their needs and abilities. Pedagogical approaches and activities should be selected in order to address the specific situation and developmental level of the children and decisions made analysed and justified accordingly. Activities should be planned and conditions provided which benefit the development of individual children and the group, including children with special support needs. The skilled provision of child-appropriate music, art and drama experiences should correspond with the early childhood environment and the teacher's own abilities. In general, individualisation and differentiation are key concepts in pedagogical work for which the students need to be prepared.

The study programmes are starting to react to current societal problems and increasingly include the pedagogical challenges arising from them in their curricular frameworks: the education of children with enhanced support needs; inclusive education; fostering learning in children with a migration background and socially disadvantaged children; transitions (particularly in connection with starting school); at some universities also foreign language learning in the early years, etc.

Curriculum content aims to prepare students for competence-oriented pedagogical work in the context of contemporary concepts of education and socialisation in early childhood settings (particularly kindergartens) and for the increasing importance of special needs pedagogy. Societal developments highlight the need for preparation in these areas – which compared to the situation in other European countries are relatively new issues in the general pedagogical discourse in the Czech Republic – and are prompting the university faculties to redesign their study programmes accordingly. Whereas curriculum content has previously focused exclusively on the early years, particularly from 3 to 6, courses/modules or topics on the upbringing and education of under 3-year olds are now being increasingly integrated¹⁵). The pedagogical and psychological disciplines form the core of study programme content. Social topics or social and leisure-time pedagogy are not included, or at the most only marginally.

Field-based studies in early childhood settings are organised differently from university to university (see *Section 4*).

Faculty kindergartens are often attached to the universities; these may be regular kindergartens and also ones with alternative/innovative pedagogical approaches (Montessori, Waldorf/Steiner, Dalton Plan, Reggio Emilia, Forest Kindergartens, Step-by-Step or 'Health Support Kindergarten'¹⁶), which cooperate on a long-term basis with the relevant professorial chair and ensure the field-based component of IPS together with the university tutors. The students acquire theoretical knowledge and practical experience with alternative pedagogy programmes and with other types of early childhood settings.

The course of studies is concluded with a Bachelor's degree comprising a written thesis and an oral examination which as a rule includes sub-examinations in pedagogy, psychology, in a specialist area or in children's literature and defence of the thesis. For those wishing to continue their studies, a subsequent two-year Master's degree programme can be followed.

Graduates of the university programmes are qualified to work as core practitioners or Centre Heads in regular and special needs kindergartens, in other early childhood settings, in kindergar-

¹⁵ For example, at the Education Faculty of the Charles University in Prague, a Master study programme with a specialisation in work with children under 3 years of age (so-called Early Childhood Studies).

¹⁶ This innovative pedagogical concept is of Czech origin and was developed in the early 1990s as a response to the holistic and humanist oriented approach. It was particularly influential in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century. Nowadays, elements of this approach are an integral part of most curricular programmes in kindergartens and primary schools.

tens offering alternative pedagogy programmes and in kindergartens attached to hospitals, convalescent homes and sanatoriums.

Educational Support Worker (*Asistent pedagoga*)

Qualifying option 1

Vocational school programme

The few vocational schools that offer this programme include the following topics in their curriculum: Czech school system; basic approaches towards pedagogy in early childhood and other educational settings; special education topics (supporting children with disabilities, socially disadvantaged children and their families); family living conditions and childrearing; mobbing in children's groups; problems of addiction in families; communicating with parents; behaviour and individuality of children, etc. The field-based component prepares learners primarily for ways of effectively cooperating with the core practitioner in the group and for working individually with children and respecting their needs.

Qualifying option 2

Supplementary training for Educational Support Workers

Curriculum content includes topics from general and social pedagogy, psychology, educational theory and educational diagnostics. Neither a national framework programme nor a national curriculum exists. Each course provider has its own programme accredited and specifies the content (also in connection with the regional needs of the educational institutions).

Example of a supplementary training for Educational Support Workers

Provider: National Institute for Professional Development (NIDV)

Course length: January 2016 to June 2016, 147 hours (107 hours theory, 40 hours practice)

The curriculum includes the following topics: educational institutions kindergarten and school, education work and the role of the Educational Support Worker, fostering children's learning, system of early childhood care, pedagogical-psychological and cultural features of the work of Educational Support Workers, computer basics, social-pathological phenomena and prevention, supporting abused and neglected children. Learners can also choose between two of the following modules: characteristics of the Czech and Romany language, literature, adapting teaching materials (NIDV 2016).

Caregivers (*pečující osoba*) in children's groups

Diverse qualifying options

As previously mentioned, the children's groups (*dětské skupiny*) are a new form of early childhood setting. They partly take the place of the former children's nurseries and are also a measure for reducing the current lack of places in kindergartens due to the high birth rate.

The staff in *dětské skupiny* are not pedagogues or teachers as in kindergartens or primary schools. They are neither considered to be pedagogical employees, since according to the relevant legislation they do not provide educational work, nor are they recognised as social workers or health workers, since they do not provide social or health services. The work in *dětské skupiny* can be undertaken by persons with different pedagogical, social or health qualifications (altogether 14 options, see *Table 6*).

The qualification requirements for staff working in children's groups has been widely discussed and criticised in specialist circles, since the general requirements for running the children's groups and the qualifications of staff are distinctly lower than those for work in kindergartens, even though the children's groups often appear to offer very similar services.

There are no current statistical data on the qualification structure and qualification routes of staff in children's groups; it is therefore not possible to differentiate between these and other qualifying paths or to describe them. Instead, the lowest possible qualification level will be presented, together with a new specialised training programme for prospective staff without a relevant qualification who wish to work in children's groups and in social care institutions for under 3-year olds.

The lowest qualification level is that of **Childminder for children up to school entry age** (*Chůva pro děti do zahájení povinné školní docházky*, see Table 6, 10). This new occupation was introduced in 2012. From 2013 to 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs awarded 38 training authorisations. The condition for acquiring the qualification is a successfully completed examination which can be sat without having had some previous form of training (MPSV 2014). Between 2013 and 2015, a total of 454 persons passed this examination. In the context of the Trade Licensing Act, they may work as care personnel outside a regular setting (e.g. in a child's home, as a caregiver in a children's group, etc.). There are no statistical data available on the number of persons with this examination who work in children's groups.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has created a 160-hour **Professional Development Programme for Lateral Entrants** (for persons without relevant training and competencies). The programme is to prepare those interested for the examination and to transmit competencies in the following areas: ethical principles and guidance of children (values education); developmental stages and children's socialisation; challenging educational situations; guiding children in hygiene habits; developmentally appropriate methods and approaches in pedagogical work; operational and safety regulations in work with children; first aid and accident prevention; basics of a healthy style of living; caring for sick children; relevant legislation.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher – alternative qualification routes

The three standard qualifying paths for staff in kindergartens are available both as full-time and combined options/studies. The combined form represents the **first alternative** regarding entry into the profession and initial profession studies usually take longer than the regular full-time option.

Second alternative: A further option was opened up for Remedial Therapy Pedagogues in 2005¹⁷, who may now work as fully qualified core practitioners in kindergartens without needing further examinations or certification.

Third alternative: Since 2012, other persons who have studied education at a university (with a degree in primary education, pedagogy, leisure-time pedagogy or completed studies for Educators) within the framework of a so-called lifelong learning programme specialising in kindergarten pedagogy can also acquire the certification needed to work as a fully qualified core practitioner in a kindergarten. Participants in this lifelong learning programme produce a final thesis and have to pass an oral examination at the end of the course.

Fourth alternative: Persons with a vocational award from the training programme for Educators can gain the relevant qualification if they additionally pass the partial test in early childhood education of the university entrance qualification.

Fifth alternative: Persons without a relevant qualification can carry out pedagogical work in kindergartens and preparatory classes in the following cases:

(1) If they were at least 55 years old on 01.01.2015 and can produce evidence that they have had at least 20 years of experience either in a kindergarten or a preparatory class;

¹⁷ Since 2005 for Remedial Therapy Pedagogues with a university degree in Special Needs Pedagogy, since 2012 also for award holders of this study route at tertiary professional schools.

(2) If the educational institution can demonstrably show that no person with a relevant qualification is available to carry out the pedagogical work. The non-qualified person may only practise pedagogical work until a qualified staff member is found.

Educational Support Workers in kindergartens and preparatory classes – alternative qualifying routes

The qualifying pathways of Educational Support Workers in kindergartens and preparatory classes are not documented in official statistics or inspection reports. It is therefore not known how often a specific qualification route is followed (see *Table 5*). These Support Workers are not employed in other early childhood settings (children's groups, social care institutions).

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher – formal connectivity options and career opportunities

- Kindergarten Teachers who have acquired the relevant qualification in the context of a university degree in special needs pedagogy may also work as teachers in higher levels of the education system.
- Kindergarten Teachers with a specialist Master's degree in early childhood education may work as Primary School Teachers if they supplement their qualification in the framework of the lifelong education programme – a professional development programme which focuses on the preparation of Primary School Teachers. This is mostly conducted through a three-year distance learning course at the faculty of education which is linked to a final examination and defence of a dissertation. These persons do not acquire a further independent certification, but just extend/supplement their initial qualification.
- Conversely, persons who have studied primary education may work in a kindergarten if they supplement their initial qualification through participation in a lifelong education programme which focuses on the preparation of Kindergarten Teachers.
- Pedagogical staff in all stages of the school system (also in kindergartens as ISCED level 02) have two promotion possibilities. They can either (1) assume a specialist post in the setting or (2) take on a leadership assignment (posts of responsibility). The Ministry of Education is currently preparing a new Career System for pedagogical staff which will open new promotion prospects through the development of profession-related competencies and a corresponding promotion in the Career System. A Career System does exist in the Czech Republic but its effectiveness has been questioned since career advancement is anchored in other legislative classifications (Eurypedia 2016): The Education Act (No. 561/2004, paragraph 131) determines the competencies and the appointment procedures for Kindergarten/School Heads (MŠMT 2015b). Qualification requirements are specified in the Act on Educational Staff (No. 563/2004, paragraph 5). A Centre Head is appointed by the service provider. For a lead position in a kindergarten, the applicant must be able to prove that he/she has had at least three years of work experience 1) as a Kindergarten Teacher or (2) in other settings which require expertise of a similar specialist kind or (3) another leadership post or (4) at least three years of work experience in research and development. A Kindergarten Teacher can enrol for a course in 'Headship Studies'(professional development for pedagogical staff according to the Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 24, section 4 a) that must be finished after a maximum of two years in the leadership post.
- For Centre Heads who have completed the 'School Management' programme at a higher education institution or university professional development programme on organisation and leadership in the school system, this course of studies is accepted as an alternative to the course in 'Headship Studies' (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 25, section 3).
Most kindergarten staff in a leadership position are in the 46-55 age category and have between six and eleven up to 15 years of experience in such a post (CSI 2016, 14). A higher

education degree is therefore not obligatory for kindergarten Centre Heads.

- Experienced staff (mostly former Centre Heads) can apply for the post of School Inspector in the Czech Schools Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*). School inspectors are civil servants, and not necessarily staff with a specialisation in pedagogy. Requirements are a completed Bachelor's or Master's degree and at least five years of work experience (for persons with an upper secondary qualification 20 years).

In the Czech Republic, there is no uniform and legislatively regulated system of mentoring. Until now, no remuneration system exists or reduction of contact time with children for those Kindergarten Teachers working as mentoring staff with career beginners. However, the Centre Head may be granted a financial allowance for this assignment. The new Career System is meant to change this situation and to specify explicit requirements regarding the qualification, payment and working hours of staff with a mentoring role.

Entry options for persons with a non-relevant qualification – career changers/lateral entrants

Entry options for persons without the required qualification have already been described. In the Act on Educational Staff (2004) and in legislation which sets out the qualification requirements for other staff working in ECEC settings, no distinction is made between the alternative options for career changers who wish to enter the occupation.

System permeability

The tertiary professional schools continue to have a relatively problematic position in the qualification system for early childhood staff: on the one hand they provide initial professional studies at tertiary level, on the other hand there exists very little permeability in terms of studying for a Bachelor's degree at a university and little acknowledgment or recognition of the previously acquired qualification. The professional schools are still not integrated into the Bachelor-Master system although the diploma award is placed at level 655 of ISCED (2011) and level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework. The diploma qualification is considered to be at a lower level than the Bachelor's degree. Only one university (*České Budějovice*) recognises part of the diploma studies for their study programme in leisure-time pedagogy (the three-year course of studies can be completed within a year and graduates may go on to study for a Master's degree. Other universities do not recognise the diploma qualification and diploma holders have to complete all modules of the Bachelor study programme.

Studying at a tertiary professional school is for many school leavers with the university entrance qualification an alternative, second way (besides studying early childhood education at a university) of acquiring a tertiary-level qualification. Compared with the university studies in early childhood education for the Bachelor's degree, the higher education institution study programmes are relatively broad, without an in-depth specialisation in pedagogical work with young children.

Employment of specialist staff from other European Union countries

All persons who apply for a post as a core practitioner or support worker in kindergartens and preparatory classes (assistants are excluded for the time being) have to fulfil the following legislative requirements (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraphs 3, 4 and 6):

- The *general conditions for educational staff*, who in the Czech Republic belong to the so-called regulated professions, are: legal capacity, qualification (recognition according to Law No. 18/2004, paragraph 6), integrity, state of good health, proficiency in the Czech language.
- All applicants who have acquired the relevant qualification in a language other than Czech are required to take a proficiency exam in the Czech language. The assessment is conducted by the university faculties of education, by language schools with authorisation to hold state

examinations in the Czech language and by professional development institutions for educational staff.

This examination of competence in the Czech language is **not** required by the following persons:

- a) Persons who will work in an educational institution with a language of instruction other than Czech,
- b) Persons who have passed an exam in the Czech language as part of their university entrance qualification,
- c) Persons who teach in another language (also applies to staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes) or give conversation classes.

Kindergarten Teachers and Primary School Teachers are not permitted to submit proof of their competence in the Czech language if the examination was taken in another country – in these cases the examination must take place in the Czech Republic.

The necessary recognition of specialist qualifications for persons from other EU countries, EEA countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway) and Switzerland is undertaken according to Act No. 18/2004 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

Staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes who are recognised as qualified in another EU country and may practise their profession there (i.e. in the case of Germany, mostly those who have a qualification as Educator (*Erzieherin*), Childcare Assistant (*Kinderpflegerin*) or Childhood Pedagogue (*Kindheitspädagogin*)), are also recognised by the Ministry of Education as qualified for the work in kindergartens or other ECEC settings in the Czech Republic¹⁸. During the recognition procedures, not only the formal initial professional studies are taken into account but also the applicant's non-formal competencies and previous work experience as well as further acquired competencies (e.g. through professional development activities). It does not matter that the curricular content of the IPS of Educators in Germany and Kindergarten Teachers in the Czech Republic vary in a number of respects. What is crucial for the recognition procedure is whether the applicant possesses a relevant qualification and permission to practise the profession in the country of origin. In such cases the qualification is then recognised in the Czech Republic and if the person fulfils further legislative requirements then he or she can work as an early childhood specialist.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

The practicum is a firm component of all initial professional study programmes for core practitioners in **kindergartens**. For staff working in **children's groups** and social care settings the situation is more diverse, since not all IPS routes specialise in education and not all focus on young children. This means that the initial workplace-based learning of staff in children's groups may have been in an educational, social services or health services setting and not necessarily have focused on pedagogical work with under 6-year olds.

For the upper secondary level **vocational schools**, the field-based component of the IPS programmes is regulated nationally, not regionally or through provider specifications. The relevant document is the national *Educational Framework Programme for Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy* (75-31-M/01; MŠMT 2009b). In the context of the national curriculum reform embodied in the National Education Programme of the Czech Republic (so-called White Paper) and in the Education Act No. 561/2004, three different IPS programmes were reconceptualised and merged. The current broader field is intended to replace the three previous IPS programmes

¹⁸ Confirmed by Mgr. Dagmar Němečková, Ministry of Education, responsible for the recognition of qualifications (05.05.2016).

Pre-primary and out-of-school pedagogy (75-31-M/005), Leisure-time pedagogy (75-31-M/004) and Education of children before school age and in the early years of school (75-31-M/008).

The practical component of IPS is organised individually by each vocational school. A so-called specialist practicum (*odborná praxe*) lasts at least ten weeks throughout the qualifying course (often organised in block periods in a kindergarten). The so-called teaching practicum (*učební praxe*) takes place for at least seven hours a week throughout the school year and throughout the entire IPS programme. The field-based component may also take place during school holidays but not for more than three weeks within the overall programme. Each vocational school specifies the concrete conditions within its own IPS curriculum. It is therefore not possible to make further general comments on the organisation of the practical component.

The vocational schools cooperate with kindergartens in the vicinity where the practica take place. There is no national framework of requirements for the cooperation between IPS institutions and the ECEC settings. Each institution has its own internal regulations (recruitment, remuneration, participation, etc.) and locations for the placements. The IPS institutions uphold the quality of the practica by establishing a network of cooperating settings and organising training sessions for practitioners with a mentoring assignment.

Tertiary professional schools and universities have their study programmes accredited by the Ministry of Education (Act No. 563/2004). The IPS programmes all include field-based components which are diversely organised: as continuous sessions on specified weekdays during the entire semester (individual subject-related hours or half-days with more general implications for the educational work) or as block periods (one- to three-week practicum in a kindergarten during the semester or in the school holidays). Beyond this general framework, smaller development projects may also be conducted.

Structure of workplace-based learning

The IPS institutions determine the organisation and length of the practica themselves. For the vocational schools, the minimum length is nationally regulated. The following tables illustrate three different examples of how the practical component of IPS can be organised (*Tables 9, 10 and 11*).

Table 9

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the four-year vocational school qualification route (Example: Litomyšl vocational school)

IPS year	Pedagogical practicum	
	Number of hours per week (16 weeks/semester)	Block periods Number of weeks in IPS year
I.	0	2
II.	0	2
III.	3	3
IV.	4	3

Table 10

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the three-year qualification route at tertiary professional schools (Example: Litomyšl vocational school and tertiary professional school)

Type of practicum	Number of weekly hours per semester						Total
	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	
Semester							
Specialist practicum (Seminar)		2					2
Specialist practicum 1			3	3			6
Specialist practicum 2					4	4	8

Table 11

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the Bachelor study programme at universities (Example: Charles University in Prague, 2016/2017)

Length	Year of study / semester	Type and focus of practicum
5 days	I./ winter semester	Introductory practicum Observation visits; familiarisation with the setting, room organisation and work of the Kindergarten Teachers (in faculty kindergartens only)
1x weekly and two-week block period at the end of the semester	II./ summer semester	Pedagogical practicum Supporting the core practitioner; observation assignments; some independent work with children (in faculty kindergartens only)
5 days	III./ winter semester	Practicum in settings with alternative educational approaches/programmes Closer familiarisation with alternative and innovative educational programmes; observation assignments; support work (predominantly not in faculty kindergartens)
10 days	III./ summer semester	Practicum in ECEC settings Independent pedagogical work (predominantly not in faculty kindergartens)

ECTS points are awarded only by the universities (not by the tertiary professional schools). The number of ECTS points varies according to the accredited university programme – for example, at Charles University 10 points are allocated to the field-based component within the current Bachelor study programme. The remaining field-related studies are occupation-related, i.e. they are included in the relevant courses (e.g. didactics of sports teaching). Within the new accreditation of IPS programmes (since 2017/2018), 15 ECTS points are now allocated for the general field-related components in the obligatory subjects and a further 8 ECTS points for optional courses related to practica, an indication of the growing importance of this component of the study programme.

Competencies in the field-based components of IPS

Students are expected to acquire workplace-based experiences in the planning and preparation, implementation, documentation, reflection, cooperation with staff members and with parents, etc. Moreover, they are expected to familiarise themselves with further aspects of the work of the staff, with the organisation and the running of an early childhood setting. They begin their qualification route with observation visits and at the end they should be in a position to take over the work of the core practitioner to a certain extent. They should be able to realise theoretical knowledge in practical situations and to acquire experience in working with individual children and with groups, with different pedagogical approaches and in different types of early childhood settings. There is no general specification of skills and competencies (an exception is the *Educational Framework Programme for Vocational Schools* (MŠMT 2009b), which describes the competence specifications – see above).

Evaluation

The students are assessed both by the tutors from the IPS institution and the responsible mentoring staff in the early childhood settings. This is mostly the case in kindergartens only; other early childhood settings are rarely used for practica and then mostly in the context of practica in settings with alternative and innovative programmes. Peer evaluation among the students is also utilised, particularly if the practica are conducted in pairs or in small groups.

Qualification of mentoring staff in ECEC settings

No specified qualification is currently required for the staff who undertake mentoring tasks in the settings. They are mostly selected on the basis of their work knowledge and experience and their occupation-related and individual competencies. Each IPS institution chooses both the

cooperating settings and the staff and often has its own selection criteria. They usually prepare the mentoring staff for their guidance of the students themselves.

The Career System for teaching staff, included Kindergarten Teachers, envisages a position for staff with a mentoring role. These are deployed in the context of practica for vocational schools, tertiary professional schools and universities and are paid for their work by the IPS institution. There is no generally binding or regulated time allocation for this work. The Centre Head decides on the time management of mentoring staff in kindergartens.

Reforms, trends, debates on workplace-based learning

There are no current national debates about the practical component of the programmes of initial professional studies. The introduction of new inclusive measure in September 2016 and the obligatory pre-primary year in September 2017 (see *Czech Republic - Key Contextual Data*) are likely to have implications for the field-based component of IPS. A new debate on the appropriate innovations needed is expected.

The practica are continuously adapted by the IPS institutions to comply with new demands and expectations. This means that the students generally are given the chance to visit different kinds of early childhood setting (such as the new children's groups, social care settings, family centres, etc.) and to become familiar with alternative and innovative pedagogical approaches. Some IPS institutions even offer the students study trips to visit ECEC settings abroad. These are not reforms, but trends in the direction of familiarising students with new forms of early childhood education and care.

5. Continuing professional development¹⁹

According to the Employment Act (No. 262/2006), all employers are obliged to support the skills development of their employees. This means providing obligatory extra-occupational CPD. Professional development is aimed both at (1) broadening skills or (2) raising the formal qualification level. The employer can order the employee to participate in courses to broaden their skills (also outside working hours, as overtime).

For staff in social care facilities for under 3-year olds there is no further framework of requirements other than the Employment Act (2006).

Main forms

The main forms of CPD provision are the same for both core practitioners and support workers. The following options are available:

- (1) According to the Employment Act, all pedagogical staff are required to renew, sustain and extend their qualification. For staff in public education institutions the conditions for CPD are set out in the *Act on Educational Staff* (No. 563/2004) and in the *Regulation on the Professional Development of Educational Staff* (No. 317/2005). The Centre Head puts forward a professional development plan for the kindergarten staff. The plan may also include provider-specific requirements.
- (2) The kindergarten staff can also participate in CPD activities and either broaden their competence or aspire to a formal (higher) qualification. The latter can involve studying for a new (academic) award or an additional specialisation.
- (3) According to Act No. 563/2004, self-study is also classified as CPD.

¹⁹ In the Czech language, no distinction is made between different categories of professional development – *další vzdělávání* is used as an umbrella term.

The *Regulation on the Professional Development of Educational Staff* (No. 317/2005) envisages three forms of professional development:

- 1) **CPD to acquire the qualification requirements for the post of employment:** This includes, for example, the courses for Kindergarten/School Heads (100 hours) or for Educational Support Staff (120 hours), which qualify for these posts. Study programmes leading to a supplementary qualification also belong to this form of CPD – this applies particularly to educational staff without a relevant qualification. This kind of qualifying path is usually concluded with an oral examination by the examinations committee and the defence of a written piece of work. The costs are covered by the practitioner, although the employer may contribute towards them.
- 2) **CPD to acquire additional qualification requirements for the post of employment:** This includes, for example, a course for those in educational leadership posts (350 hours). In this case, too, the course is concluded with an oral examination by the examinations committee and the defence of a written piece of work. The costs are usually covered by the Centre Head, although the employer may contribute towards them.
- 3) **CPD to broaden skills and competencies** is for the ongoing consolidation of occupation-related competencies. CPD sessions focus on current theoretical and practical issues in early childhood education and care. The most common forms are courses and seminars of at least four hours' duration. Costs are mainly covered by the employer. However, if practitioners wish to attend a financially more expensive course than usual, it could be that they are expected to cover part of the costs themselves.

There are no national regulations for in-house CPD activities. These take place according to decisions made by the Centre Head regarding the necessity for team CPD sessions and the thematic focus. In-house CPD usually takes place at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

Leave entitlement

Leave entitlement depends on the specific form of CPD:

- 1) **Self-study:** Staff in schools and kindergartens are entitled to 12 paid days of leave for self-study purposes per year if there are no compelling reasons within the setting against granting it.
- 2) **Participation in CPD activities:** Particularly the kindergarten staff often have problems in being granted free days for the more time-consuming forms of CPD and often have to attend courses during their holiday leave.

The following leave provision may be granted for forms of CPD which lead to a higher formal qualification:

- All teaching days within the course;
- Two working days for every examination taken at higher education institutions and universities;
- Five working days for preparing and taking the examinations or the university entrance qualification;
- Ten working days for preparing and defending the final written paper, thesis or dissertation;
- 40 working days for preparing and taking the state examination or doctoral examination.

The granting of leave for CPD activities (roughly two to five days per year) is not particularly problematic. In the case of longer-term CPD courses, however, this can be more difficult. The legal entitlement to leave days may not be granted for 'business reasons'.

CPD providers

The main provider is the National Institute for Continuing Professional Development (*Národní institut pro další vzdělávání*, NIDV), founded in 2004, which is funded by the Ministry of Education and has 13 regional branches. The NIDV coordinates the planning and organisation of CPD programmes and prepares the national programmes. It is also responsible for organising government priority topics such as management, curricular framework programmes, foreign lan-

guages, the new Career System. CPD courses are mostly financed over the European Social Fund and over Ministry of Education development programmes. They are therefore usually free of charge for participants or require only a small fee. The ECEC settings thus have few costs to reimburse for the CPD of their pedagogical staff. Replacing the staff who attend CPD sessions is the responsibility of the Centre Head and takes place mostly in the form of overtime or through a change in the organisation of shift work. However, CPD activities also often take place in the evening or during weekends. The Ministry of Education national programmes are primarily targeted at teachers working in the higher levels of the school system. However, the number of courses on offer for Kindergarten Teachers has been increasing in recent years.

Further important providers of CPD are the tertiary professional schools and the universities. They are the exclusive providers of certain CPD programmes²⁰ within the framework of the lifelong learning system (Eurypedia 2016).

CPD sessions are also provided by educational settings, non-profit organisations, private CPD providers whose programmes have been accredited by the Ministry of Education (43 in Spring 2016) and are often financed within the context of European projects, meaning that the participants have only to contribute a small fee.

Formal recognition of CDP

Participation in CPD provision has not been formally recognised up till now. However, within the new Career System (in preparation), recognition of CPD and further work experience will be included. Educational staff will be expected to take examinations in certain intervals which will enable a further step up the career ladder and will be combined with a higher salary and with taking on a specific post of responsibility.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads

Alongside their basic qualification as Kindergarten Teacher, kindergarten principals are required to complete a professional course for school leaders within two years of taking on the position. An exception is made for those Centre Heads who have acquired leadership knowledge and skills in the context of a higher education study programme in school management or in a professional development course on school leadership and organisation within the lifelong learning programmes offered by tertiary professional schools/universities; an exception is also made for persons who already have ten years of experience as a Centre Head. The heads of other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care settings for children under age 3) are not obliged to complete certain CPD courses or modules.

Kindergarten staff are obliged to maintain and extend their professional competencies. However, since there are no posts of responsibility other than that of Centre Head – neither in kindergartens nor in other ECEC settings – supplementary, formal qualifications through CPD are not obligatory. At the same time, for regular staff in early childhood settings a broad range of non-mandatory offers of CPD are available. The selection of CPD courses and topics is made in accordance with the interests of the staff member and the needs of the setting (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004).

Opportunities of formal CPD

All educational staff have the possibility of acquiring an additional formal qualification or attending further studies in the context of the CPD programmes offered by the tertiary professional schools and universities in early childhood education or related fields (e.g. primary education, educational science, special education, etc.). The professional schools and universities also offer distance learning options. No state grants are available for these forms of formal CPD and the costs are mainly borne by the participants. Employers usually only cover costs for non-formal

²⁰ What is meant here are longer-term CPD programmes: Studies in the field of educational science of 250 hours duration (supplementary to the current educational qualification), studies for extending the basic qualification (e.g. for a higher school level, to carry out special needs work with children with a disability), studies for educational leaders, etc.

CPD activities. However, no tuition fees are required for studying for a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree at a public university²¹.

It may be the case that an employment contract specifies certain conditions, e.g. that if the employee undertakes a longer-term professional development option or university studies they are obliged to work for this particular employer for a certain length of time (however, this period may not exceed five years).

Research projects on the topic of CPD

During the last five years or so, no large research projects have been conducted with a focus on the CPD of early childhood staff. However, CPD institutes tend to offer quite a few projects which include CPD sessions and are linked to smaller research projects. Small research projects are also carried out by staff in the faculties of education (focusing e.g. on the evaluation and development of centre-specific programmes).

In the context of a comprehensive ESF project *Systemic Promotion of Inclusive Education in the Czech Republic* between 2013 and 2015 (Registration number CZ.1.07/1.2.00/ 43.0003) considerable emphasis was placed on the initial studies, continuing professional development and ongoing support of the Educational Support Workers: a Standard for the work of Educational Support Workers was developed, alongside guidance for the work with children with different kinds of special educational needs and further guidance on specific issues in the work of pedagogical staff. Several drafts were produced relating to IPS and CPD which focused on further systemic development.

Current reforms/trends/debates related to CPD

In 2015, the Ministry of Education issued a draft for the new Career System which was the result of a research and development project which includes partial changes in the CPD system: the mandatory accreditation of all programmes that lead to a higher qualification; specifying standards for continuing professional development; raising the significance of the accreditation committee in the process of accrediting CPD courses, etc.

Top priority in the current reforms and debates is the issue of how the recognition of CPD should take place within the new Career System (so-called occupational regulation). This includes the following aspects: raising the quality of CPD courses; systemic planning of CPD (specification of the government priorities in the CPD of educational staff); new and more intensive forms of in-house CPD in the educational institutions.

Current trends in the CPD field include a stronger orientation towards contemporary problems and issues in the settings such as: supporting and educating children with special educational needs (above all language enhancement; fostering learning in children from socially disadvantaged families, children with ADHS, etc.); inclusion; centre management; socialisation and education of 2-year olds in kindergartens; CPD for Educational Support Workers.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Partial changes are currently underway, but complex changes in the CPD system for educational staff in kindergartens and schools are being pursued.

²¹ Every student is entitled to fee-free participation in **one** Bachelor, Master or Doctoral study programme. Additional studies followed have to be paid for by the student, whereby the level of fees depends on whether an earlier study programme was successfully completed.

Professionalisation and staffing issues in the education system, including Kindergarten Teachers and staff in preparatory classes

New Career System for educational staff

The most important ongoing reform is the development and implementation of a new Career System for staff in the education system. The Career System is intended to support professionalisation and improved remuneration. The *Educational Policy in the Czech Republic up to 2020* (MŠMT 2014b), the *Long-term Educational Plan* and the *Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for the period 2015–2020* (MŠMT 2014a) have already focused on this.

From 2012 to 2015, a new Career System and a Teacher Standard also applicable for Kindergarten Teachers were outlined in the context of a comprehensive ESF national project. In 2015, the Ministry of Education decided to further modify the draft. Subsequently, a revised version was prepared by a small Ministry working group – unlike with the original version, this time without debate in broad specialist circles and among educational staff. This has been an issue for criticism. In February 2016, amended legislation was put forward which includes the implementation of the new Career System and in 2017 it came into force. The current version includes three qualification levels (QS1: Beginner Teacher; QS2: Independent Teacher; and QS3: Expert Teacher). The Career System also defines the conditions for career progression which are linked to a salary increase, to the transition to QS2 and to the acquisition of a permanent post. The Beginner Teachers are supported during a two-year induction period by mentoring staff in the educational institution and by additional actors (higher education institutions, faculties of education, QS3 teachers).

The planned, three-level Teacher Standard is supposed to provide guidance for the planning and evaluation of professional development and to be based on occupation-related competencies and their gradual progression. The legislation determines three areas for the evaluation of teaching staff: (1) individual professional development, (2) individual educational work and (3) cooperation and participation in organisational development.

The transition to the next higher career level is also to be linked to an assessment procedure. The move from QS1 to QS2 will take place at the kindergarten or school and two further assessments will be organised by the Ministry of Education through the National Institute for Professional Development.

The new Career System will also introduce two new posts of responsibility within QS3, one post of ‘mentor’ and one post of ‘coordinator’ related to organisational development. Undertaking these posts will require completing a new professional development course of at least 250 hours and will be linked to higher pay and a reduction of direct teaching hours/contact hours.

The reform seeks to provide a continuum within the professionalisation pathway: recruiting candidates with good entry requirements; initial professional studies; the induction of newly qualified staff; and promoting professional development.

Reform of salaries and qualification conditions for educational staff

During the last five years the salaries for core practitioners in kindergartens have been gradually raised (approximately half as much again as the previous salary level) – firstly for Kindergarten Teachers with a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, subsequently for those with an upper secondary or tertiary professional school qualification.

Since 01.01.2015, only persons with a relevant qualification may work as pedagogical staff in kindergartens. There are a few exceptions: for example, for persons who have at least 20 years of work experience and are 55 years old. Non-qualified staff may only be employed in cases where the Centre Head can prove that there is no qualified applicant for the post. However, this person may not be given a permanent contract.

The reforms had a direct effect on early childhood staff’s interest in the Bachelor and Master programmes in combined form and for distance learning options offered by the vocational

schools and tertiary professional schools: In recent years the number of vocational schools providing qualification routes in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy has doubled (currently 33 vocational schools).

Professionalisation and staffing issues – Staff in other ECEC settings

Alongside the introduction of new forms of ECEC settings, a new qualification was also introduced, that of the **Childminder for Children up to School Entry Age** (*chůva pro děti do zahájení povinné školní docházky*). Persons with this qualification may work in social care settings for children up to 3 years of age, in children's groups and, since September 2016, also as assistants in kindergartens which admit 2-year olds. This qualification has established itself over the last three years and the number of qualified persons is growing year by year (see also *Section 3.2.3*).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

ESF National Project 'Career System'

Source: National Institute for Professional Development [NIDV]. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Background and aims: The project was prepared in 2009 and implemented between 2012 and 2015 by the National Institute for Professional Development (NIDV) (with a budget of 30 million korunas, approx. 1,110,151€).

Procedure: A range of specialist stakeholders participated – Centre Heads, the Czech Schools Inspectorate, Ministry of Education employees and several university faculties of education. The drafts of the Career System and the Teacher Standard were presented widely to specialist audiences.

Findings and implications: Outputs from the project were commented by a further 60 experts and debated in all regions of the country with Centre Heads/School Heads and more than 2,000 teachers. Overall, the final version was positively rated. However, it was pointed out that the Career System needs to bring a long-term perspective for the profession, including evaluation procedures which take into account everyday pedagogy and are not just linked to the acquisition of CPD course credit points.

Research projects at the University Faculties of Education

From 2007 to 2013, the Faculty of Education at the Charles University in Prague conducted a comprehensive research project entitled *The Teaching Profession in the Context of Changing Educational Demands*. The project focused on current trends in theory and research related to the teaching profession and initial education/training for the profession in the Czech and European context and their practical implementation in the system of initial and continuing professional development of educational staff.

Kindergarten Teachers were included in the project as teachers in the first stage of the Czech education system. A follow-up project (PRVOUK up to 2016 and PROGRESS since 2017) focused and are still focusing not only on the teaching profession at different stages in the education system and the related initial and continuing professional studies, but also include research on additional current issues and topics such as inclusion, a system of pedagogical coaching, development of standards for teachers and heads of kindergartens and schools.

A further example is a research project at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen entitled *Study Programme for Kindergarten Teachers – Theory and Practice in*

Dialogue which was conducted between 2011 and 2014. The project focused on the further development of the study programme for early childhood education at the Faculty and on strengthening the cooperation with kindergartens in the context of the field-based component of the study programme. One of the outputs of this project was the development and piloting of a set of guidelines for assessing and recognising former qualification routes (formal and non-formal education) and previously acquired experiences of students. It is an interesting contribution to the discussion about the assessment of prior qualifications and experience of students in the Czech Republic.

A number of other Faculties of Education also carry out projects aiming to evaluate and develop their study programmes in the field of early childhood education. However, these are not national projects.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The remuneration of staff working in ECEC provision depends on the specific setting.

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers are paid as pedagogical staff in the education system according to the tariff system (14 salary grades altogether). They are allocated to the lowest salary grades (8-10) in the tariff system. Each grade is sub-divided into 5 levels. Kindergarten staff are allocated by the Centre Head to a specific grade according to their function (core practitioner, core practitioner with post of responsibility, length of work experience, etc.). If the staff acquire an additional qualification (e.g. through professional development courses) this does not usually influence the salary grade allocation. The post of Centre Head is an exception to this rule, where a supplementary qualification is required and therefore also linked to a promotion in the tariff system. Kindergarten staff have a general entitlement to pay for additional work and overtime in the context of the direct work with children. They may also receive further non-tariff allowances (e.g. for taking on a mentoring role, for specialist work such as producing a centre-specific CPD programme, for long-term high-quality work or for taking on exceptionally demanding tasks).

Table 12

Czech Republic: Tariff allocation and gross salary of Kindergarten Teachers and other educational staff in the education system (valid since September 2016)

Profile	Salary grade	Gross annual minimum salary	Gross annual maximum salary
Kindergarten Teachers Leisure-time Pedagogues	8–10	207,120 CZK 7,966 €	306,720 CZK 11,797€
Primary School Teachers Teachers in Lower and Upper Secondary Grades Special Needs Pedagogues, Psychologists	11–13	365,680 CZK 14,065€	382,920 CZK 14,728€

Source: Eurypedia 2016.

Kindergarten Teachers are paid less than Primary School Teachers (see *Table 12*). To exist on this pay, e.g. as a single parent in a large city, can be a challenge, even though the tariffs for kindergarten staff across the country were raised considerably in recent years. The average gross monthly salary of a Kindergarten Teacher is 21,797 CZK (838€); if Centre Heads are included in

the calculation 23,720 CZK (roughly 912€ in 2017). Kindergarten Teachers working in public kindergartens earn slightly more (883€) than their colleagues in private (743€) and church-affiliated settings (764€ in 2014; MŠMT 2015).

Posts of responsibility (Centre Head, deputy Centre Head, staff with mentoring role) receive an additional staff supplement. The supplements range between 5% and 50% of the tariff pay on the highest level in the specific salary grade; for Centre Heads the allowance may be between 15% and 60%. Within the tariff system, Centre Heads are paid the same as other educational staff (salary grade 10). The specific conditions for pay in public settings are determined by the authority which appointed the Centre Head.

Staff salaries comprise: (1) basic tariff pay and (2) non-tariff pay. Non-tariff pay can be allocated as follows:

- **Allowance:** Teachers are legally entitled to an allowance if they are assigned a task (e.g. leadership role, work in settings for children with special educational needs) which is anchored in legislation.
- **Staff supplement:** For these, there is no legal entitlement; it is up to the Centre Head to decide whether a staff member is granted a supplement or not, e.g. for long-term high-quality work or for additional assignments (supporting other teachers, children with special educational needs, etc.). This is then a permanent supplement which cannot be withdrawn as long as the conditions permit. The staff supplement may comprise up to 50% of the basic tariff pay (in some cases even up to 100%).
- **Award or so-called reward:** This is a one-off allowance for exceptional work for which there is no legal entitlement.

In 2011, for example, the staff supplements and awards accounted for roughly 10% of the total salaries of teachers (at all school levels).

Staff in other ECEC settings (children's groups; social care settings for under 3-year olds)

The pay for regular staff and leading staff is the same in these settings and is regulated according to the Labour Code.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

A full-time member of staff in a public kindergarten works a 40-hour week (31 hours of which are dedicated to the direct work with children). The hours of work are the same for all core practitioners in kindergartens. For Centre Heads, the proportion of direct work with children is reduced according to the size of the kindergarten. Full-time staff members in other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care settings for under 3-year olds) also work a 40-hour week. The employer determines the work assignments of each employee; there are no centralised regulations.

Full-time employment is typical for educational staff in kindergartens (95% of all Kindergarten Teachers). In church-affiliated (82%) and private settings (89%), the proportion of part-time staff is more frequent, but also not particularly high (2015/2016, MŠMT 2016c, 2016d).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Specific induction measures for newly qualified staff in early childhood settings do not exist and are also not anchored in legislation. The general conditions for career beginners are embodied in the Labour Code (entitlement to adequate introductory measures during the first two years in employment).

Support measures in kindergartens

There is no uniformly organised system of mentoring in the workplace in the Czech Republic. However, procedures in this respect exist in most kindergartens: the Centre Head decides on the specific length of the introductory phase. She/he may, for example, assign this role to an experi-

enced member of staff, a so-called induction teacher. However, staff with a mentoring role are neither granted reduced working hours (also no reduction in the direct work with children), nor a supplement entitlement. However, they can be granted an allowance for the additional work; allocation and amount are also decided by the Centre Head. According to the national inspectorate report for 2014/2015 (CSI 2016), a position of responsibility for induction measures was in place in 82.4% of the kindergartens inspected. Further introductory measures included consultations between the newly qualified staff member and the Centre Head (76.6%), courses and seminars (64.4%), observation visits among staff (62.2%) and a formal kindergarten-specific induction programme (64.3%). However, only 53.5% of the surveyed staff considered the reflection measures provided by the Centre Head as fully adequate.

Staff and Centre Heads may direct any questions they may have to the Czech Schools Inspectorate, which has both a controlling and advisory function. However, conditions for the advisory framework are not legally anchored.

Network for promoting professional quality

There is no national network focusing on the improvement of quality in education institutions. In the early childhood field, it is the professional organisations which bring experts and teachers together. Centre Heads and staff can turn to state-run advisory services (psychological-pedagogical advisory centres and special education centres) or to the Czech Schools Inspectorate. Non-profit, non-governmental organisations may provide specialist advice on certain issues (e.g. inclusion, supporting specific target groups). Such services are often provided within a project framework. Some of these organisations also arrange theme-specific networks for teachers and parents, providing advice and help for the daily work with children. Some of these organisations are also accredited CPD providers and play an important role in CPD provision for ECEC in the Czech Republic.

8.4 Non-contact time

The working hours of **Kindergarten Teachers** in full-time employment are split into so-called direct and indirect pedagogical work. Nine hours per week are allocated for indirect pedagogical work. This includes, for example, working with parents, team discussions, networking, preparing materials, planning, follow-up, evaluation and documentation. For Centre Heads, the direct pedagogical work may be reduced by 13 to 24 hours per week (5 to 16 hours per week in boarding kindergartens), depending on the size of the kindergarten. Although in publicly-run kindergartens the number of reduced hours for the Centre Head is regulated at the national level, in practice they often 'step in' in cases of staff shortages.

In the case of full-time **Educational Support Staff** the Centre Head decides as to how many hours should be allocated for indirect pedagogical work. Up to 20 hours from a total of 40 may be allocated for the indirect work.

The non-contact hours of a full-time **Caregiver** in other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care provision for under 3-year olds) are not regulated by law (only the 40-hour working week). Since the service providers determine the work assignments of each member of staff, a certain contingent may also be allocated for indirect pedagogical work.

8.5 Staff shortages and staff recruitment

For years now there have been country-wide shortages in the staffing of kindergartens in the Czech Republic. Centre Heads in the larger towns often receive several applications for one post, some also with a Bachelor's degree. The staff shortages are mostly to be found in the smaller towns, where often less well-qualified Kindergarten Teachers and persons with a secondary-level qualification apply for jobs (CSI 2016).

The considerable pay rises made in recent years (first for those with a Bachelor's or Master's degree, subsequently for all Kindergarten Teachers) were part of a comprehensive staff recruitment strategy which also included opening up new qualification routes and options for career changers/lateral entrants. These latter strategies apply mostly to ECEC settings other than kindergartens, where staff by law may have a wide range of pedagogical, social and healthcare qualifications.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The following issues can be described as **short-term challenges** in terms of the qualification, recruitment and support of the early childhood workforce.

- **New Career System: a complex qualification and career advancement system** (so-called *Qualification Regulation*) for teachers in the education system (beginners, mentors, experienced teachers with guidance tasks, etc.) is to be developed and implemented in the coming years. Promotion in the Career System will in future be linked to professional development, higher pay and competence development. The Career System will be applicable for all teachers in the education system, including Kindergarten Teachers. The funding of coaching/mentoring and CPD is to be part of this system.
- **Innovations in the varying IPS programmes** which place more emphasis on current issues. Particularly important are: inclusion; working with diversity; alternative and innovative approaches to practice; individualisation and differentiation; second language learning/learning a foreign language in kindergarten; effective cooperation with parents; work with under 3-year olds; transitions; social-pedagogical work in cooperation with families, etc. These topics are still rarely included in the current IPS programmes compared with the situation in west European and Nordic countries.
- **Lack of Educational Support Workers and assistants in kindergartens:** As a rule, two core practitioners are responsible for a group/class of 24 (sometimes up to 28) children but their working hours only overlap for 2½ hours a day. This makes for stressful working conditions and means that it is difficult to work individually with children needing special support. Since September 2016, additional Educational Support Workers can be employed in groups in which children with special needs are enrolled²².

Early childhood professionals are seen as the key to quality (CSI 2016). The number of those studying in a Bachelor or Master programme has increased in recent years. The number of teachers and students in vocational schools and higher education programmes is more or less balanced. This is a reflection of the European trend in the direction of tertiary level IPS programmes for early childhood core practitioners (see Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010). However, in the overall structure of the workforce in the Czech Republic, it is still the staff with a secondary-level qualification who form the majority (76.5 %).

Long-term challenges in terms of the qualification, recruitment and support of the early childhood workforce include the following:

²² Up until the amendment of the Education Act (September 2016), the Centre Head had to apply for Educational Support Workers each year anew, which required a considerable amount of time and also led to staffing insecurity. If a child with special educational needs has a recommendation from the schools advisory service that he/she requires additional support, the Centre Head can now make appointments on the basis of this recommendation and apply for the resources to pay for an Educational Support Worker, and is no longer dependent on a decision from the regional authorities.

- **Introduction of obligatory higher education qualification for core practitioners in kindergartens:** A higher education requirement was planned in 2008, but has still not been introduced. The situation in the larger towns shows that Centre Heads now often demand a Bachelor qualification when advertising for a post in their kindergarten. This is not yet the case in rural areas.
- **New profiling in the qualification routes for staff in children's groups and social care settings for under 3-year olds:** The current qualification requirements are too diverse. Most of the routes followed do not specialise in early childhood education and care, but tend to be broader social care and healthcare qualifications. The broad spectrum of options means that staff from other fields can be employed. While this is a solution in terms of staff recruitment, it does not guarantee quality. The challenges include raising the formal qualification requirement and ensuring an in-depth specialisation in early childhood education and care for those who work as core practitioners in children's groups and social care settings for under 3-year olds. In general, it is problematic that these practitioners undertake very similar work to that of Kindergarten Teachers, that their initial professional studies are often at a much lower level and that they are not specialised for early childhood work.
- **New profiling in the qualification routes for Educational Support Workers:** The qualifications of those working in this role are very diverse and the required qualification level very low. Expert discussions in recent years have underlined the fact that the Educational Support Workers should be educated and trained at a higher formal level.
- **Diverse quality in the university study programmes in early childhood education:** The difference between the good quality university Bachelor and the high competence level of degree holders and the often questionable qualification programmes offered as a distance learning option by some of the private vocational schools are nowadays assessed as problematic. These differences in qualification routes and the efforts required to complete them contrast negatively with the pay, which is more or less the same for all Kindergarten Teachers, regardless of their qualification route.
- Recent debates in specialist circles have been asking whether the vocational schools should focus more on preparing staff for home-based family day care with lower qualification requirements and that Kindergarten Teachers should be educated and trained exclusively through a Bachelor level study programme.
The position of the tertiary professional schools and their IPS programmes are also linked to this problem, since in most cases there is no possibility of recognition when starting a university degree course.
- **Raising the pay level** for early childhood staff and for staff in the education system in general.
- **Recruitment of male ECEC staff** (combined with status and pay rise).
- The **negative attitude in kindergarten teams regarding inclusive approaches and pro-inclusive measures** is a challenge connected to the political and social developments in the second half of the 20th century. These attitudinal tendencies have currently increased since the amended Education Act (2016) introduced new framework conditions for integration. The negative attitude is a general trend in the Czech Republic which is also impacting on the education system. Czech society and teachers appear to be little prepared for an inclusive approach. An important goal is therefore to positively influence the attitudes of pedagogues in terms of working in teams towards a child-oriented approach, reflecting on their own attitudes (stereotypes, prejudice) and promoting the individual potential of all children in the best way possible. This can be supported, for example, through continuing professional development for kindergarten teams. Such CPD provision is currently offered in the larger towns by non-governmental organisations and is funded through EU projects in the context of municipal integration strategies.

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CZECH REPUBLIC

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Barbora Loudová Stralczynská for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Czech Republic – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 246-261.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic organised as a split-sector system. Kindergartens (*mateřské školy*), which since the amended Education Act (178/2016) admit children from 2 years up to school entry, come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (*Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy*), known locally as the Schools Ministry. Regional and municipal authorities are responsible for the local organisation and administration.

The ECEC sector for children under 3 years of age is currently undergoing multiple reforms. Since 2013, the Ministry of Health is no longer responsible for day nurseries for the under-threes (*jesle*). Instead, existing nurseries have been transformed into a variety of settings under the auspices of different ministries. Some now come under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (*Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu*) and are continuing in a new form (*zařízení pro péči o děti do 3 let*), for example, as social or health facilities. These settings have to fulfil the legislative requirements of the Small Trading Act. A further change came about at the end of 2014, when legislative provision was made for setting up age-integrated (1-6 years) facilities called Children's Groups (*dětské skupině*) which fall under the auspices of the Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs (*Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí*).

Beyond this new legislation, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs is funding a pilot project which is providing 'micro-crèches' for children aged 6 months up to 4 years guided by the family day care approach in Germany.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
MŠMT 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

The ECEC system in the Czech Republic is embedded in overall objectives of the government aiming to improve the life-work-balance of young families and women's labour market chances through more flexible parental leave arrangements and working hours models. Among other initiatives, these goals are currently being pursued through a government gender equality strategy (2014-2020). Other relevant documents are the "Education Policy Strategy 2020" and the "Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System 2015-2020".

Overall objectives for kindergartens for 2-/3- to 6-year olds are laid down in the Education Act (*Zákon o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání, 2004 with amendments 2015*), which foregrounds the learning process and lifelong learning. The work in educational settings is seen as complementary to family upbringing practices.

Since 2014, major goals of the newly founded Children's Groups (1-6 years) are: taking into account children's discernible needs, developing age-appropriate skills, and educating for health and hygiene. Since November 2014, the legislative framework for these and other settings for children under age 3 are the Children's Groups Act (*Zákon o poskytování služby péče o dítě v dětské skupině a o změně souvisejících zákonů, 2014*) and the Small Business Act (*Zákon o živnostenském podnikání, 1991*).

Sources: EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, und Eurostat 2014.
MŠMT 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

From the age of 5, children have a legal entitlement to a place for 40 hours per week* in kindergarten for the year preceding school entry. Since 1st September 2017, this entitlement has been extended to 4-year olds and as from September 2018 it will also apply to 3-year olds (Education Act 178/2016, §34,3). There are government plans to further extend this entitlement to 2-year olds by 2020.

Kindergarten attendance has not traditionally been compulsory. However, an amendment to the Education Act approved by the Czech parliament in May 2016 has changed this. Since September 2017, the final year before school entry is obligatory. This year does not necessarily have to be spent in a kindergarten, it can also be spent in the family or in non-registered early childhood provision. In such cases, the child's progress is assessed regularly in a designated kindergarten near the family's home.

Primary school begins at 6 years of age.

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice.2016, 9f.
Eurydice 2015.
Loudova 2017.
MŠMT 2016.

Main types of provision

ECEC settings for under-3-year olds: Day nurseries (*jesle*) for children under 3 years of age, which previously came under the General Health Act and were primarily located in the larger towns, have been phased out. They are now being continued in different forms (*zařízení pro péči o děti do 3 let*)**, and many new kinds of provision are emerging. These are mostly open throughout the year and often are provided by employers of companies for their staff or by non-profit organisations. They are financed through parents' fees. Up to 20.11.2015, 61 such settings had been registered. The hours of attendance for each child are generally set out in a contract made with the parents.

Children's Groups (*dětská skupina*) were first established in November 2014 for children aged 1-6 years. In May 2016, 100 such groups were registered, attended by 1,465 children.

Like the settings for under-threes above, this type of provision is run by employers or non-profit agencies and come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. However, this means that process quality and staff qualifications are not monitored in the same way as they would be in publicly run and state subsidised provision. These settings are currently generally attended by younger children, since lack of capacity makes it difficult for 2-year olds to be allocated a place in a publicly run kindergarten. The Children's Groups are therefore seen as an emergency solution by experts. However, these settings are expanding fast. Statistical data are available for the number of places provided (capacity), not, however, for the number of places used and the number of children enrolled. The work in the Children's Groups is similar to that in kindergartens. However, the requirements regarding building, hygiene and the conditions regarding process-oriented educational work are lower. Currently (June 2017) there are 300 groups providing 3,899 places.

Privately run childcare businesses for children under age 3 (*zařízení péče o děti do 3 let*) have been available since 2000 under the Small Trading Act for the care of under 3-year olds. By April 2015, 662 persons had registered a business termed “Day care for children under age 3”. However, older children may also attend these facilities. There is no legislative framework regarding staff/child ratios and group size (Eurypedia 2016). There are also no data available regarding participation rates. This kind of setting can be compared with family day care/group provision (in this case inspired by Germany). Since family day care and family day care staffing are not a specific focus of this report, they will not be referred to further.

A further new form of provision being developed as a pilot project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are the so-called **mini-crèches** for children aged 6 months up to 4 years. By October 2017, 68 such settings had been established, in which four children are cared for by a child minder**.

Kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) for 3- to 6-year olds are mostly run by local authorities but legally, they belong to the school system. Kindergartens are either full-day (6.5 to 12 hours daily) or half-day settings (up to 6.5 hours daily). There are also a number of kindergartens where children can stay overnight. Kindergartens are organised in both same-age groups and mixed-age groups. Children over the age of 6 whose school start has been deferred may also attend a kindergarten and, if capacity is sufficient, also children under age 3. In 2015/16, the under-threes accounted for 11.5% of children attending kindergartens. The year preceding school entry has been free of charge for parents since 2012. Since 2017 this also applies to children whose parents wish them to delay starting school and who spend a further year in kindergarten, whereas fees have to be paid for the other years.

Although kindergartens officially belong to the school system, annual opening times are organised so as to ensure that parents are guaranteed provision during the school holidays. Unlike schools, kindergartens do not close for two months in the summer. Instead, the municipalities draw up a co-ordinated plan of the opening times of local kindergartens, and children are then transported to the available kindergarten. For reasons of capacity, often only the children of working parents are admitted during the summer holidays.

In 2016/17, a total of 362,653 children were enrolled in 5,209 kindergartens (including 112 kindergartens for children with special educational needs), in which 31,002 ECEC practitioners were employed (99.4% of them women)* (MŠMT 2017, Table B2.1.1 and B2.2.1).

Preparatory classes (*přípravné třídy*) exist for children in the year before school entry. Whereas these classes were previously only for socially disadvantaged children, since September 2017 they are only for children whose parents wish them to delay school entry by a year. Depending on the region, they are often attended by children from Roma families. In 2014, 246 of these classes were located in primary schools, attended by 3,819 children and with 295 members of staff. 55 preparatory classes were part of a special school, where 46 staff members work with 268 children* (MŠMT 2017, Table B2.1.1 and B2.2.1).

Leisure time centres (*Dům dětí a mládeže*) provide various activities for children and young people (art, music, sport, language, activities for parents and their very young children, etc.). Some of these centres also run their own Children’s Groups for 1- to 6/7-year olds, which are mostly attended by younger children who have not been able to secure a place in a regular kindergarten because of capacity problems. These Children’s Groups often provide only a half-day place (8:00-13:00) and generally without provision of meals. The programme of activities is similar to that in regular kindergartens.

Sources: *MŠMT 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
Eurypedia 2016.
**Infoportal Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs 2017.
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2015.

Provider structures

The greater majority of kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds are public institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and run by municipalities and school authorities. In 2016/17, non-public kindergartens accounted for only 8.4% (0.9% church-affiliated, 7.5% private) of all kindergartens and only 3.6% of the age group were enrolled in such provision* (MŠMT 2017, Table B2.1.1, own calculations).

The providers of the Children's Groups (*dětská skupina*) for 1- to 6-year olds introduced in 2014 are either private companies, public and state organisations (municipalities, regional authorities), or non-profit agencies (church and/or philanthropical associations).

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal 2016
*MŠMT 2017.
Eurydice 2015.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The very low participation rate of under 3-year olds has risen only slightly to just under 3% since 2005 (*Table 1*). The majority of 3- to 6-year olds attend a kindergarten, although this proportion also increased only slightly between 2005 and 2015 (from 70% to 77.5%). Comparing the Eurostat data with national statistical data (*Table 2*), it seems that the participation rates for the under-threes represent only those children in *kindergartens*. There are no available data on participation rates in other forms of provision, only on the maximum capacity in terms of places.

Table 1

Czech Republic: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %**	3 to compulsory school age in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	0	40
	No attendance	98	30
2010	1 to 29 hours	2	32
	Over 30 hours	0	39
	No attendance	97	29
2015	1 to 29 hours	1.2	22.6
	Over 30 hours	1.7	54.9
	No attendance	97.1	22.5

Table 2

Czech Republic: Participation rates in kindergartens according to age, 2015/16**

Age	Proportion in relevant age-group
2-year olds	38.9
3-year olds	82.5
4-year olds	94.4
5-year olds	91.8
6-year olds	17.0
Over 6-year olds	0.2

According to assessments by the Czech Schools Inspectorate, the participation rate in kindergartens in 2014/15 was approximately 70%.

Sources: ČŠI 2016.
 *Eurostat 2015d, 2017f.
 **Eurydice 2016 (MŠMT).

Financing and costs for parents

ECEC settings for under-3-year olds are primarily funded through parental fees. Parents can apply for tax returns to offset part of their costs (in 2016 this amounted to 9,900 CZK (367€) per tax year, approximately the same as a basic wage). However, there is a huge difference between the costs incurred for attending a public kindergarten and those for using other forms of childcare provision. These settings are therefore mostly attended by younger children who, because of their age and the lack of public kindergarten places, have no other alternative.

Former day nurseries are funded partly by local authorities, but all other forms of provision are not granted state subsidies. Parents whose children attend a **Children's Group** or a setting regulated by the Small Business Act pay between 300 and 18,500 CZK monthly (between approx. 11€ and 685€, 06.06.2016). Private settings demand higher fees.

All other forms of childcare provision do not receive state subsidies and are funded through parental fees – the providers receive only tax benefits. This means that the fees for parents with children in state funded kindergartens are generally much lower than in other forms of ECEC provision.

In order to guarantee provision of additional places, financial resources have been made available since May 2016 through European Social Fund projects for Children's Groups and Small Business Act settings. 92 of the current total of 100 Children's Groups are receiving this kind of support. Altogether, 413 ECEC settings are being subsidised through EU projects, increasing capacity to 8,754 places.

The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs conducted a survey in May 2016 on the level of parental fees in these 413 settings. The results indicate large disparities, and fees in the capital city are considerably higher than in other regions of the Czech Republic.

Table 3

Czech Republic: Parental fees for ESF-funded Children's Groups (0-6) and settings regulated by the Small Business Act (0-3), 2016*

	Children's Groups (0-6)		Settings regulated by the Small Business Act (0-3)	
<i>Prague:</i>				
Average monthly fees	6,466 CZK	240€	10,855 CZK	400€
Minimum and maximum	800-9,000 CZK	29-333€	3,000-18,500 CZK	111-684€
<i>Other regions:</i>				
Average monthly fees	3,114 CZK	115€	5,366 CZK	198€
Minimum and maximum	900-7,000 CZK	33-259€	300-16,000 CZK	11-592€

* B. Loudova, 06.06.2016, data from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs

Kindergartens and **Preparatory classes** are the only state-maintained forms of ECEC, provided they are listed in the so-called Schools Register (*Rejstřík škol a školských zařízení*) and fulfil all the legal requirements (space, hygiene, staffing, etc.).

In publicly-run settings the centre head decides on the level of parental fees, which amount to approximately 33€ (plus roughly 1.16€ for meals), although the latter may vary according to the kind of food preferred (organic, vegetarian, etc.). Fees for private settings are considerably higher, on average 155€ (plus 1.81€ for meals). Service providers are granted tax concessions.

This is why the parental fees in kindergartens are overall considerably lower than in other forms of provision. The final year in kindergarten is free of charge, and parents only have to cover subsistence. Since January 2012, parents of a child who stays on for a year because of deferred school entry are obliged to pay the full fees for this additional year. Many kindergartens adjust the level of fees according to the children's age, with parents paying more for 5- and 6-year olds.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Ratio requirements vary according to the type of provision and group size.

Children's Groups (*dětská skupina*):

In the Children's Groups for 1- to 6-year olds, one member of staff is allocated to a maximum of six children, and at least two members of staff are present in groups between seven and 24 children. If a 2-year old is included in a group of between 13 and 24 children, then at least three staff members are in charge.

Kindergartens (*mateřské školy*):

Neither group size nor staff-child ratios are legally binding.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports recommends a minimum group size of 13 and a maximum of 24 children. Under exceptional circumstances, an additional 4 children may be included. Group size is related to the overall size of the setting and the specific situation in the municipality. One-group kindergartens can be established with a minimum of 15 children (and if there is only one kindergarten in a municipality, this requirement is reduced to 13 children). The group size requirement in kindergartens comprising two or more groups is 18.

In the kindergarten year 2015/2016, the average staff-child ratio was 13 children per staff member. Two core practitioners work in a regular group comprising 24 (28) children. However, they must not necessarily be in the group together all the time. The younger the children, the longer the period of overlap between the two staff members, although since 2017 this is usually at least 2½ hours daily. When undertaking visits outside the kindergarten, the maximum staff-child ratio is 1:20. In the kindergarten year 2014/15, the average group size was 23.4 children.

There is no requirement for a member of staff with a tertiary-level qualification to be present in a group of children.

Sources: ČŠI 2016.
EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016, 12.
Eurydice 2015.
MŠMT 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

There is no official curriculum guidance for work with children under age 3. The Small Business Act which regulates much of the **ECEC provision for under-3-year olds** refers to cognitive and language competencies, physical, art-related and cultural competencies, as well as health and safety. Service providers are required to develop an age-appropriate centre-specific programme.

Since 2007, **kindergartens** are required to follow the framework curriculum published by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (*Rámcový vzdělávací program pro předškolní vzdělávání*, 2004) and are expected to use this as the basis for developing a centre-specific programme. Some

kindergartens develop their own group-specific educational programmes, but this is not compulsory.

The national curriculum describes main objectives, didactic approaches and five learning areas, as well as staff responsibilities and evaluation criteria. The key competencies foregrounded are: learning and problem-solving competencies, communication and social/personal competencies, engagement and citizenship competencies. The five learning areas cover the following dimensions: (1) biological (the child and his/her body); (2) psychological (the child and his/her psyche: language, cognition, imagination, creativity, thinking, self-image, emotions, self-determination); (3) interpersonal (the child and others); (4) socio-cultural (the child and society); (5) ecological (the child and his/her world/environment).

Since 2012, a number of goals which children are expected to achieve by the end of their time in kindergarten have been outlined in more detail. These learning goals, which are in part controversial among experts, were published as an addendum to the national curriculum framework. However, they are not mandatory, but rather intended as a guide for pedagogical staff and parents.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal 2016.
EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Inclusion and integrative education for all children is currently a much-discussed topic in the Czech Republic. If their parents so wish, children with a disability can attend a mainstream kindergarten which is listed in the Schools Register, where they receive the necessary pedagogical and psychological support.

There are also a number of special kindergartens (*speciální mateřské školy*) for children with disabilities, or special groups in mainstream kindergartens, mostly organised according to the specific disability. Some special kindergartens also have integrative groups attended by children with and without disabilities and which enable transition to a mainstream kindergarten and further individual integration procedures. In 2012/13, 110 kindergartens provided exclusively for children with special educational needs, attended by 3,383 children (approximately 1% of the kindergarten population). A further 4,499 children (1.3%) attended special groups in a mainstream kindergarten. 2,156 children with physical disabilities were included in a mainstream group setting.*

The Education Act uses the term *Children with special educational needs* as an umbrella category for different groups of children with a disability or disorder. A more specific categorisation is deliberately avoided, foregrounding the individual support provided for each child.

A variety of programmes and projects adopt an inclusive approach towards the integration of ethnic minorities and children from disadvantaged milieus, such as the *Step by Step* programme, which has been running since 1994. Roughly 150 kindergartens and primary schools work according to this innovative approach. Many kindergartens now include inclusive measures in their centre-specific educational programmes. A number of continuing professional development activities for kindergarten staff which support an inclusive approach are provided by non-governmental organisations.

The government provides kindergartens with a variety of options for supporting disadvantaged children. These include developing a special needs plan or an individual educational plan for the child, or employing an additional member of staff. However, the latter procedure still faces a number of organisational hurdles. Up to 2016, employing such support staff was an organisational feat. However, since the new Education Act came into force in 2016, measures have been intro-

duced not only to legally secure an individualised educational approach for each child, but also to provide support in terms of organisation and funding.

All ECEC settings can apply for participation in projects, for which they receive additional funding. For example, the organisation 'People in need' (*Člověk v tísni*) funds international projects with groups of socially disadvantaged persons such as Roma children and their families.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 4.5% of the population in the Czech Republic were classified as having a non-Czech background, whereby persons from Ukraine (2.16%), Slovakia (27.7%), Vietnam (11.8%) and the Russian Federation (7.2%) accounted for the largest groups***. Persons with a Roma background are categorised as belonging to an ethnic minority. However, there are no official figures. According to the most recent Census in 2011, 5,135 persons described themselves as persons with a Roma background, whereas qualified estimates claim that there are around 180,000 Roma people living in the Czech Republic.

The proportion of children under 6 years of age with a background of migration (3.1% in 2016**) is relatively low compared with that in other European countries. Almost three-quarters of these children come from non-EU28 countries***.

Sources: ***Czech Statistical Office 2016b.
*EFA 2015.
**Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2015.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Monitoring and evaluating early childhood education and care in kindergartens is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the local authorities and the regional school authorities. There is no legislative framework or regulatory requirement regarding the evaluation of work in settings for children under age 3.

Child-related monitoring in **kindergartens** does not take place against fixed standards of achievement or by comparing one child with another. However, staff are expected to observe the children regularly, to note emerging problems at an early stage and to estimate the kind of support needed. The Education Act requires each kindergarten to keep a 'group/class book' which documents the various educational activities. Entries into this book are confidential and only made available to other members of staff and parents.

At the national level, the Czech Schools Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*) is responsible for approving kindergartens registered in the School Register and their inspection. Assessments focus on staff-child ratios, spatial conditions, hygiene and safety aspects, equipment, working conditions and staff qualifications, curriculum enactment and the kindergarten budget. Reports of the inspectorate are published online.

Each kindergarten is expected to develop its own evaluation system. Basic requirements for this are set out in the national curriculum (2004). The chosen evaluation system has to be described in the kindergarten's own educational programme.

Evaluation strategies usually comprise a number of dimensions (e.g. structural quality, process quality) which are assessed by key stakeholders (centre head, staff, parents). Self-evaluation measures are also carried out in public kindergartens. They are usually conducted by the centre head in order to assess the strengths and weakness of the setting and of the staff. Items reviewed include, e.g., the level of staff satisfaction, co-operation with the centre head and with parents, compliance with regulations, and working conditions. The most common methods, which can be freely chosen, include questionnaires, checklists and interviews.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*mateřská dovolená*) is granted for six to eight weeks before the expected birth date and for 20 to 22 weeks afterwards. Payment for this period is 70% of daily earnings, up to a monthly maximum of 34.620 CZK (1.331€, 30.6.2017), under the condition that the mother has paid into a health insurance for at least 270 days over the previous two years. After the seventh week following the child's birth, fathers may also take leave, but have to take at least seven days. Mothers (or fathers) may continue to work during maternity leave, but not at the place of employment granting maternity leave.

Paternity leave is not a legal entitlement. Legislation drafted by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs includes a week-long paternity leave entitlement during the first six weeks following birth and could come into force in 2018.

Both parents are able to take **parental leave** (*rodičovská dovolená*) up to the child's third birthday and may take turns during this period. However, only one parent can receive a parental benefit up to the child's fourth birthday. Parents may work while taking leave, also at their previous place of employment, as long as appropriate childcare arrangements are guaranteed.

Up to 2012, parents were able to choose between a 2-, 3- or 4-year parental leave. Since 2012, the overall length can be determined more flexibly. Parents decide how many months they wish to draw the parental benefit. The shortest option is up to the child's second birthday (24 months) and payment for this period is 70% of previous earnings (max. 11,500 CZK, 437€ per month). The longest option is up to the child's fourth birthday (48 months), but parental leave can only be taken up to the child's 3rd birthday. A maximum of 220,000 CZK (8.368€) is paid out for the whole period. Parents can decide to take the shortest option and then extend the length of leave if they so wish.

Only those mothers who are unable to fulfil the conditions for maternity leave (270 days health insurance) and where the father also has no health insurance, have no choice. They are automatically granted the 4-year option.

It is still rare (2015: 1.8%) for men to apply for parental leave allowance. No statistical data are available about the take up of parental leave. However, it can be assumed that most employed mothers return to work following the child's third birthday so that they do not lose their job. An increasing number of women choose the 2-year parental leave and then return to work, particularly in the cities. This is one of the reasons why the demand for ECEC provision for under-threes is growing, why so many new ECEC facilities have been opened in recent years, and why the number of 2-year olds in kindergartens is on the increase.

Source: Kocourková, J. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1832	The first early childhood institutions are established in Prague
1869	Education units in schools are established, focusing on reading, writing and arithmetic. However, these are abolished following the ministerial decree of 1872 (see below).
1872	Kindergartens are included in an amendment of the 1868 Act and for the first time a distinction is made between educational institutions (<i>mateřské školy</i>) and care facilities (day

	nurseries and children's homes).
1948	Kindergartens are recognised as the first stage of the education system.
1955	The first compulsory curriculum for kindergartens is issued.
1960	Provision for under-threes comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.
1978	A unitary and compulsory curricular framework is issued both for day nurseries and kindergartens (a document which will later be expanded and elaborated).
Post-1989	The compulsory framework is no longer applicable; ECEC settings start developing their own curricular approaches, ones that respect humanist and democratic values and principles. Both classical concepts (Montessori, Waldorf) and contemporary programmes (Step by Step; health-promoting kindergartens, forest kindergartens) find their way into kindergartens. Massive cuts lead to the closing of almost all day nurseries and the dismantling or merging of many kindergartens.
2001	A National Curriculum is issued (the so-called White Book) which defines reforms for all stages of the education system, including kindergartens. A new national curricular framework for kindergartens is published (amended in 2004, 2016, 2017). Preparatory Classes are introduced in primary schools for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
2007	All state-maintained kindergartens are required to develop their own 'educational plan' in alignment with the national curricular framework.
2014	Age-integrated Children's Groups (<i>dětské skupině</i>) are established for 1- to under 7-year olds.
2015	Preparatory Classes are opened up for all children with special support needs.
2017	Enrolment in Preparatory Classes is restricted to children whose school start has been delayed. Since September 2017, kindergarten enrolment is obligatory for all children who turn five at the end of August for four hours per day. A further option is individual tutoring, mostly in the child's home.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Loudova, B. 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Czech Republic

Country expert assessment by Barbora Loudová Stralczynská

Translating the inclusion agenda into practice

In September 2016, new regulations were issued for all schools and kindergartens. All educational institutions now receive government funding for support measures for children with special educational needs. This is the first time this has been systemically regulated. Currently, inclusion is a controversial and prejudice-laden topic in the general public, and sometimes differing and contradictory messages are given by politicians and the media. Early childhood educators are also not wholly free from prejudice, although inclusion has been practised for several years now in many schools and kindergartens. The 2016 amendment to the Education Act provides a framework for improving the process of individual support and inclusion in all educational institutions.

Expansion of places in kindergartens (or other appropriate forms of provision) for 2-year olds in particular and under 3-year olds in general

In order to achieve this goal, a systemic and multi-dimensional approach is needed. The two-year parental leave and related allowance are taken up by many parents, but there continues to be a lack of affordable childcare places for under 3-year olds.

Moreover, the government is planning to extend legal entitlement to a kindergarten place to 4-, 3- and 2-year olds (currently only for 5-year olds), which would lead to an even higher demand for places. However, it is expected that the child population will sink during the next few years, meaning that the lack of kindergarten places could become less severe. In the context of current social, family, economic and education policies, early childhood education and care for children up to age 6 presents a challenge for politicians which can no longer be ignored. It is not just a case of expanding provision, but also of ensuring quality and continuity in the children's educational biography. This is currently problematic owing to the lack of early childhood settings, particularly for the under-threes, and to the former lack of co-ordination in the overall system of early childhood education and care. However, this has improved over the past year and, particularly in the larger cities, there is a new focus on the quality of the settings for under-threes, although the Children's Groups, mini-crèches and other childcare settings still have a predominantly custodial function.

Introduction of compulsory attendance for the final kindergarten year

As from 2017 it will become compulsory for all children to attend a kindergarten in the year preceding school entry. Home-based education remains an option, but parents must apply for approval and agree to send their child to regular tests at a prescribed kindergarten (specific conditions are still to be agreed). It is assumed that this compulsory year will help to increase the attendance of children from socially disadvantaged families. However, experts have pointed out the likely low effects of this reform step and also the additional burden that it could bring on the one hand for kindergartens and staff, on the other hand for those families who would prefer to be able to take advantage of the usual freedoms possible in kindergarten, such as excusing children from attendance during a family holiday.

Demographic data

Population

In 2016, the population in the Czech Republic totalled over 10½ million (10,553,843). Following a decrease between 1995 (10,333,161) and 2005 (10,198,855), this represents an increase over the past decade.

Children under age 6

In 2016, 3.1% of the total population in the Czech Republic were children under 3 years of age. Children under 6 years of age accounted for 6.3% of the total population.

Table 4

Czech Republic: Proportion of children under age 6 in the total population, 2016*

Age group	Number
Total population	10,553,843
Under 1-year olds	110,777
1-year olds	111,185

Age group	Number
2-year olds	108,700
Total under 3-year olds	330,662
3-year olds	109,868
4-year olds	109,664
5-year olds	119,845
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	339,377
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	670,039

In 1995, the proportion of both under 3-year olds and of 3- to 6-year olds was above the EU average. By 2005 both had sunk below the EU average, whereas by 2016 they are slightly above the level of the EU28.

Table 5

Czech Republic: Children under 6 years of age – relative share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3,4	3,3	2,8	3,1	3.1	3.0
3 to under 6 years	3,7	3,5	2,6	3,1	3.2	3.1
0 to under 7 years	7,0	6,8	5,4	6,2	6.3	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

The greater majority (around 82%) of all households with children under age 6 were couple households. In 2015, single parent households accounted for 6.2% of all households in the Czech Republic, most being single mother households (6%).

Table 6

Czech Republic: Households with children under 6 years of age, 2015

Household type	Number	Proportion of all households, in %
All households	1,183,600	
Couple households	969,000	81.9
Other household type	141,600	12.0
Single households, total	72,900	6.2
Single households, women	71,400	6.0
Single households, men	1,600	0.1

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rates of men and women (15-64) in the Czech Republic were 77.9% and 62.4% respectively.

In the same year, 43% of all women with a child under 6 years of age participated in the labour market, whereas nearly all fathers (93%) were employed. The proportion of working mothers is thus the lowest among the EU28, whereas the proportion of working fathers is the highest.

Table 7

Czech Republic: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

		Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Czech Republic	2005	35.7	91.1
	2010	36.3	93.1
	2015	43.0	93.0
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Czech Republic/Malta – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 17.1% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is significantly lower than the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The proportion of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 14.0%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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DENMARK

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

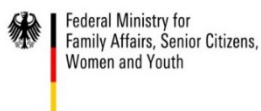
Jytte Juul Jensen

Formerly: VIA University College Paedagoguddannelsen, Aarhus

Citation suggestion:

Jensen, J.J. 2018. "Denmark – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 262-285.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

Denmark has a unitary system of early childhood education and care for children up to age 6 which includes family day care. ECEC provision at the national level, since the end of 2016, comes under the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs (*Børne- og Socialministeriet*). This decision followed two brief periods under the Ministry of Education, whereas traditionally, ECEC services have been consistently located within the social welfare system rather than within the education system. The Ministry of Children and Social Affairs provides the overall curricular requirements and general regulations. The funding and organisation of ECEC provision as well as details of regulatory practices are the responsibility of the 98 local municipal authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Pedagogues (*pædagoger*) are the core practitioners in Danish centre-based ECEC provision and account for almost 60% of the staff. The remaining staff are mainly Pedagogue Co-helpers, for which no formal qualification is required. Most of these co-workers are young people between 19 to 25 years with an upper secondary leaving certificate who want to spend a year or two in a workplace before they begin to study. The job is quite popular and it is not unusual to have between 200 to 300 applicants for one Co-helper job, even in small cities and rural areas (EPOS and EVA 2013, 28). The reasons among other things for the popularity of the job are that it is a well-paid and responsible job which offers the opportunity to work with children. Some of the Pedagogue Co-helpers go on to take the Pedagogue education/study route.

Table 1 shows ECEC staff working in direct contact with children in centre-based settings and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1
Denmark: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>Pædagog</i> Pedagogue (Social Educator)	<i>Aldersintegrerede institutioner</i> Age-integrated centres 0 to 6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0 to 6 years	Bachelor's degree 3½ years university college, specialising in Social Education
<i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Børnehaver</i> Kindergartens 3 to 6 years	Pedagogical leader	Age-group specialisation takes place after first year of studies	ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 1102 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Up to 2014:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vuggestuer</i> Infant-toddler centres 0 to 3 years	Centre leader		

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>PAU – pædagogisk assistent uddannelse</i> Pedagogical Assistant/ Education	see above	Qualified co-worker	Broad-based pedagogical approach 0 to 10 years and beyond including family day care	2 years post-secondary vocational education ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Pædagog-medhjælper</i> Pedagogue Co-helper	see above	Non-qualified co-worker	n/a	n/a

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

As *Table 2* shows, Pedagogues are the main staff category in ECEC in Denmark, making up nearly 60% of the workforce. The proportion varies according to the type of provision. In infant-toddler centres (*vuggestuer*), Pedagogues represent only 55% of the total number of staff, whereas in kindergartens and age-integrated centres, the proportion is nearer the average for the whole workforce (58%). The majority of the remaining staff are non-qualified Pedagogue Co-helpers (40%) and only 2% of all staff are the Pedagogical Assistants with an upper secondary vocational qualification.

Table 2 also shows the percentage of male staff in different types of centres, proportions that compare favourably with the situation in other countries. The lowest percentage (9%) is in infant-toddler centres (*vuggestuer*), whereas in kindergartens and age-integrated centres, 13% of all staff are male workers. Most male workers in infant-toddler centres are unqualified staff; only 2.3% are qualified Pedagogues. In kindergartens and age-integrated centres, half of the male staff are Pedagogues and half are unqualified.

² n/a = not applicable

Table 2

Denmark: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in Denmark: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree (Pedagogues)	2013 All centres:* • <i>Vuggestuer</i> (0–3 years): 52% • <i>Børnehaver</i> (3–6 years): 59% • <i>Aldersintegrerede institutioner</i> (0–6 years): 58% 58%
Staff with specialist post-secondary vocational qualification (Pedagogical Assistants)	2013** 2%
Staff with no formal IPS (Pedagogue Co-helpers)	2013* 40%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Pedagogical Consultants, Speech Therapists, Psychologists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff	2013 Proportion among all staff in * • <i>Vuggestuer</i> (0–3 years): 9% • <i>Børnehaver</i> (3–6 years): 13% • <i>Aldersintegrerede institutioner</i> (0–6 years): 13% Proportion of all pedagogues in ECEC who are members of BUPL *** • <i>Vuggestuer</i> (0–3 years): 2.3% • <i>Børnehaver</i> (3–6 years): 6.3% • <i>Aldersintegrerede institutioner</i> (0–6 years): 6.9%
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

* Danmarks Statistik 2014

** EPOS and EVA 2013; Danmarks Statistik 2014

*** BUPL³ 2014a

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

Pedagogue/Social Educator (*Pædagog*)

Applicants for this study route are admitted to a specialist university college according to a quota system. Quota 1 comprises candidates with the highest grades in the upper secondary examination; Quota 2 comprises those admitted following an assessment of competences and qualifications. There is a third possibility for applicants who do not fulfil the demands of either Quota 1 or 2. They can undergo a competence assessment related to prior experiences and competencies. This competence assessment of the applicants' suitability, merits and prior experience may include: general personal qualifications and experience, e.g. work experience, vocational training, work abroad; special qualifications and experiences relevant to the pedagogue training, e.g. work in social services for children, young people and adults, work in leisure time facilities, in civil society organisations etc.; relevant professional qualifications, e.g. single subject at a higher level exam; local authority, trade union or evening courses.

Furthermore, each university college may weight other qualifications if there are too many applicants for the number of study places available, which is currently the case.

The Pedagogue study courses are free of charge. During study time at the colleges as well as during their first and fourth practicum the students received in 2017 a national student grant of 6,019 DDK (808€) per month and can take out a loan of 3,078 DDK (414€) per month. Most

³ BUPL is the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators

students also work some hours per week, for example as substitute staff in pedagogical settings, in order to have a reasonable standard of living. During the second and third practicum, each lasting six months, the students receive a practicum salary of around 10,500 DDK (1,410€) per month.

Table 3

Denmark: Pedagogue / Social Educator

<p>Job title in Danish: <i>Pædagog</i></p> <p>Profile:</p> <p><i>1992-2014: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i></p> <p><i>Currently: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i></p>
<p>Entry requirements:</p> <p><i>Quota 1</i></p> <p>Minimum age of entry: 18 years; one of the following upper secondary leaving certificates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Studerereksamen (STX)</i> (12 years of upper secondary school) - <i>Højere forberedelseksamen (HF)</i> (examination award of equivalent institution) - <i>Højere handelseksamen (HHX)</i> (higher vocational) - <i>Højere teknisk eksamen (HTX)</i> (higher technical) - <i>Særligt hf-forløb for fremmedsprogede (GIF)</i> (special course for foreign language people) - <i>Gymnasial eksamen fra Duborg skolen i Flensburg</i> (upper secondary from Duborg school in Flensburg, Germany) - <i>Gymnasial erhvervsuddannelse (EUX)</i> (upper secondary vocational) <p><i>Quota 2</i></p> <p>A variety of entry routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for those with one of the above upper secondary leaving certificates but do not have the entry grade in Quota 1 - Social and Health Assistant with specific levels in some upper secondary subjects - Pedagogical Assistant with specific levels in some upper secondary subjects - examination award in four upper secondary subjects (Danish, English, social studies and an optional subject) with specific levels - leaving certificate from a preparing course for immigrants and refugees (FIF) based at some university colleges - an approved upper secondary examination of another country and adequate language skills - an IB-Diploma (International Baccalaureate) and adequate language skills <p>Professional studies: Higher education, 3½ years at a specialist university college</p> <p>Award: (since 2001) Bachelor's degree in Social Education</p> <p>ECTS points: 210</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Age-integrated centres (<i>Aldersintegrerede institutioner</i>), 0 to 6 years; Kindergartens (<i>Børnehaver</i>), 3 to 6 years; Infant/toddler centres (<i>Vuggestuer</i>), 0 to 3 years; other pedagogical fields of work</p>

Pedagogical Assistant (*Pædagogisk Assistent*)

The qualifying courses take place either at a vocational school or a university college. Candidates can either be school leavers, or may take the course as an adult if they are over 25. Before starting the qualifying course, an applicant must have a training agreement with their employer, which may be a local authority, a region or a private pedagogical centre. For the duration of the course, the students receive a monthly salary from their employer of 8,000-10,000 DDK (1,100– 1,300€); the relevant salary as an adult learner is around 20,000 DDK (2,700€) per month. The studies are free of charge.

Table 4

Denmark: Pedagogical Assistant

<p>Job title in Danish: <i>Pædagogisk Assistent</i></p>
<p>Entry requirements: 10 years of compulsory schooling; also available as adult education for persons over 25 years</p> <p>Professional studies: Post-secondary/vocational; <i>Foundation course:</i> ½ to 1 year dependent on if the applicant has</p>

Job title in Danish: *Pædagogisk Assistent*

more schooling or/and relevant employment; *Main course*: usually 2 years and 1½ months full time, but if the applicant has 2 years of relevant employment and is over 25 years of age, s/he can omit the foundation course and the practicum periods in the main course.

Award: Education Certificate

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 3

Main ECEC workplace: age-integrated centres (*Aldersintegrerede institutioner*), 0 to 6 years; kindergartens (*Børnehaver*), 3 to 6 years; infant-toddler centres (*Vuggestuer*), 0 to 3 years; other pedagogical fields of work

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Pedagogue/Social Educator (*Pædagog*)

Course structure, competence specifications and didactic approaches

The 2014 ministerial decree (Bekendtgørelse 2014) on the study programme for the award of the Bachelor's degree in Social Education regulates the qualification of Pedagogues in Denmark and is supplemented by each university college's specific course syllabus. The decree specifies the purpose, duration, exams, syllabus, the merit education as Pedagogue⁴ and the competence goals for the different areas of the programme.

The study programme consists of two parts: a common part focusing on basic professional competences (70 ECTS points, including one practicum period) and a specialisation part (140 ECTS points). There are three specialisations: (1) early childhood pedagogy, (2) school and leisure pedagogy, (3) social and special pedagogy.

The specialisation course also consists of an inter-professional course, an optional subject area, a bachelor project and three practicum periods.

The generic competences of all three specialisation areas are linked to the Danish welfare state institutions, the aims of which are laid down in different acts. As in §1 in the ministerial decree of the Pedagogue study programme it addresses the whole pedagogical field of work and not only early childhood:

The purpose of the education is that the student acquires relevant professional competences, knowledge and skills, to be able to manage, develop and convey development, learning and care assignments in a social perspective, both independently and in collaboration with others (Bekendtgørelse 2014).

The Bachelor's degree is on a par with other professional Bachelor programmes, such as those for school teachers, social workers and nurses.

The decree states for all education elements the areas and the competence goals, as well as the knowledge and skills goals. The 2014 decree, for the first time, formulates competence goals which describe what the students must know and be able to do. The decree does not prescribe curricular areas. Pedagogues specialised in early childhood pedagogy:

...have particular competences to create and develop pedagogical environments and activities, in which optimal conditions are created on the basis of a professional, pedagogical foundation for a stimulating and safe life for children (Bekendtgørelse 2014, Appendix 2).

The designated areas of competence are:

1. Childhood, culture and learning

⁴ The Merit Education/qualification route is a specific study route for experienced Pedagogue Co-helpers and Pedagogical Assistants wishing to work towards gaining a full qualification as Pedagogue, i.e. a Bachelor's degree.

2. Profession and organisation
3. Professional relations and communications – 2nd practicum period
4. Cooperation and development – 3rd practicum period

However, beyond specific academic knowledge, learning to be a ‘competent Pedagogue’ is also based on personal qualities. “These include own life experiences, engagement and corporeality, feelings and own values and morals” (Jensen 2016, 24). Personal education formation (*Dannelse* in Danish, *Bildung* in German) takes place throughout the whole study programme; for example, through aesthetic expressions and participating in pedagogical practice (not only through observing) where the students “must dare to invest their own personality” (Jensen 2016, 24).

Understanding pedagogical practice is built on learning to make judgements in a specific situation by drawing simultaneously on multiple sources of knowledge and skills. This needs to be reflected in the didactic approaches used in the Pedagogue education: class teaching, lectures for larger groups of students combined with discussions with students and group work, teaching themes, project work based on students’ own selection of subjects and themes with supervision, and so on. Since pedagogical practice is relational, it is important that this is reflected in the didactics.

The alternation between practicum periods and university college periods as two learning places is used didactically. Here it is important to underline that the practicum is not only ‘practice’ but also ‘theory’. Likewise, learning in the college environment also comprises both elements. For example: Students need to practise skills in aesthetical forms of expression in pedagogical activities and this happens not only during the practicum periods but also at the university colleges.

“This is a different type of learning process than the cognitive one. The student must achieve skills in, for example, playing an instrument, telling a story, balancing a ball, playing in a sandbox, lighting a bonfire, climbing a tree and so on” (Jensen 2016, 23).

Pedagogical Assistants (*Pædagogisk Assistent*)

Competency specifications

The ministerial decree (Bekendtgørelse 2015) which specifies details about the Pedagogical Assistant Education (*Pædagogisk assistentuddannelse* - PAU) states the objectives, duration, as well as competency specifications for different stages of the study programme. The course award is a Certificate as Pedagogical Assistant.

During the study programme students gradually acquire the skills required of a Pedagogical Assistant, such as initiating and moderating activities. Through teaching at the IPS institution and work placement periods, students acquire knowledge, skills and competencies to carry out pedagogical care and relational work at an Assistant level. They acquire knowledge about the pedagogical sector and learn about the context for the practical pedagogical work.

Curricular areas/pedagogic didactic approaches

The study programme lasts for 2 years and 1½ months full time, with 47 weeks spent in the IPS institution and 52 weeks in different workplace settings.

Practicum periods: Students experience at least two different working places. At the practicum centre, students are allocated a practicum supervisor who ensures that he/she works according to the required goals and tasks stated in the training programme.

School periods: The main course comprises both basic subjects such as Danish, community, English (optional) and specific subjects such as pedagogy, nature and out-door life, digital culture, movement and sport, health in the pedagogical practice, cultural and aesthetic expres-

sions and activities, pedagogical psychology, communication in the group, work environment and ergonomics. The study programme also has different optional studies.

A mix of pedagogic-didactic approaches are utilised, such as lectures, group work, teaching themes, projects, role play, practical subjects. The course alternates between practicum and schools periods.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Below three types of inclusive approaches for becoming a Pedagogue or Pedagogical Assistant are presented: (1) the Merit qualification route as Pedagogue, (2) the Pedagogical Assistant training (PAU), and (3) the preparatory course for immigrants and refugees (FIF).

Merit qualification route for experienced Pedagogue Co-helpers

The Merit qualification route as Pedagogue is a special study programme for experienced Pedagogue Co-helpers and Pedagogical Assistants, leading to the award of the Bachelor's degree in Social Education. The Merit route is described in chapter 6 of the 2014 ministerial decree (Bekendtgørelse 2014) and follows the same course regulation as the ordinary study route.

The entry requirements are twofold: first, applicants must fulfil the same admissions criteria as for the regular Pedagogue IPS programme; second, they must have worked for at least five years full time as Co-helpers in the pedagogic field, including ECEC centres. If they do not meet these requirements, they can ask for a 'real competence assessment' to see if a dispensation can be given.

The Merit qualification route takes into account the students' previous practical experience in pedagogical settings in the form of credits. They do not have to participate in the two six-month placements which are required for the regular study route. This means that they study for 2½ years at a university college, but only one year needs to be full time. In general, the study route takes three years to complete, including part-time and full-time studies. This IPS programme is organised under the Open Education Act (Lov om åben uddannelse 2016). Students pay a fee of around 45,000 DDK (6,000€) for the full course, which can also be covered by the employer. During the first year of full-time study the student may receive a student adult grant (SVU) which may be supplemented by a loan. During the remaining time needed to complete their studies, they often work and may be given (some) time off for studies by their employer.

Pedagogical Assistant Education (PAU) route for school leavers and adults

Most students starting the Pedagogue study programme have been Pedagogue Co-helpers. The job is in this way an important recruitment base for future pedagogue students.

The Pedagogical Assistant Education (PAU) is a *direct admission criterion* for the Pedagogue study route. As a study route for young people, it is mostly attended by school leavers. As an adult further education course for people over 25 years, it comprises three different groups: former Pedagogue Co-helpers, Family Day Carers (the largest group) and people not in regular employment.

The foremost rationale behind this study programme was to attract non-qualified people and in this way raise the general educational level in society. Another aim set forward by FOA, the trade union for Pedagogical Assistants and Pedagogue Co-helpers, is that it is a way of raising the qualification level of the Pedagogue Co-helpers. There is a political interest in the field against the background of the government's aim that 95% of a youth cohort must have a qualifying education.

The demand in ECEC centres for people with a Pedagogical Assistant qualification has not been high so they constitute overall only a small percentage of staff (see *Table 2*). The employment of staff is devolved to the individual ECEC centres, and the current pedagogical culture priori-

tises young male persons with an upper secondary examination (they are around 19 years or older). On the whole, ECEC centres tend to prefer a short-term contract for Pedagogue Co-helpers of one or two years.

The salary of a Pedagogical Assistant is higher than that of the untrained Pedagogue Co-helpers and their terminal salary is the same as the starting salary of a Pedagogue. This means that the ECEC centres prefer either a qualified Pedagogue or a young, cheaper, non-qualified (male) Pedagogue Co-helper.

Preparatory course for immigrants and refugees (FIF)

The preparatory course for immigrants and refugees, called FIF, is available for a wide range of qualification routes. The first course addressing the Pedagogue study programme started in 1991 and was called the 'building bridges course'.

The entry requirement is an upper secondary leaving certificate. The course runs for 12 months at a university college. For the duration of the course, the students receive a national student grant which may be supplemented by a loan. The aim of the course is to qualify the participants for admittance to the initial professional study route for Pedagogues. Around 80% of the students go on to take further studies, with a majority choosing the Pedagogue route. To be admitted to the Pedagogue study programme they have to complete a 'real competence assessment'. If they are accepted, the graduation rate is just as high among bilingual students as among other Pedagogue students.

The course is for people with a minority ethnic background, "... who because of their language, culture and so on are not qualified or ready to seek entrance to the pedagogue education by way of the formal route" (Jørgensen 2010, 203). The course is based on preparing this diverse group of students for learning about Danish educational culture and introducing them to Danish pedagogy.

Students come from a variety of countries across the world and thus have different cultural backgrounds, nationalities and native languages. Some are refugees with a professional qualification. Some families are reunited and plan to settle in Denmark. Others are children of immigrants who dropped out of school. Some are women who have lived isolated lives in Denmark and want to explore the society in which they must bring up their children so that they can manage better. And some are men who have acknowledged the necessity of getting involved in pedagogical work with, for example, young people from their own culture. Jørgensen (2010, 204) points out that many ethnic minority students do not have the same notion of the pedagogue occupation as a female occupation, which could be explained on the one hand through the fact that pedagogy generally speaking is not seen as an occupation in many of their countries of origin, and on the other hand through the fact that many students see an obvious need for male pedagogues with an ethnic background.

Right from the start, the course has been constantly redesigned both in form and content and in terms of its positioning in the context of current integration efforts and debate. The course has two main objectives. One relates to personal and social aspects, helping the students to become aware of and describe their own identity and integration process and to view themselves as active participants in the current Danish environment. The second objective is to learn about the educational culture at a Danish Pedagogue university college. Thus, the individual students need to be introduced to methods and study techniques that are applied in these colleges. Moreover, students should have an understanding of the past and current views of children and childhood that characterise Danish pedagogy.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Regulations for the practicum (*praktik*) during the Pedagogue study programme are stipulated in the relevant ministerial decree (Bekendtgørelse 2014) and implemented by the university colleges and individual ECEC centres.

According to the decree, the practicum consists of four periods totalling 75 ECTS points, meaning that it takes up more than one third of the total course duration. The first practicum takes place in the second semester during the common course attended by all students and comprises 32 working days of six hours per day on average (10 ECTS points). The second and third placements take place during the third and sixth semesters, each for six months (30 ECTS points each). The students work on average 32½ hours per week. The fourth practicum takes place in the seventh semester in connection with the student's bachelor thesis and consists of 16 working days of six hours (5 ECTS points). The decree also stipulates three study days during the first practicum and ten study days during each of the second and third practica. Study days are organised by the university colleges. The decree says that the "purpose of the study days at the university college is to support the student's acquisition of the competence goals" (Bekendtgørelse 2014, § 8). The decree also states the possibility for students to take their second or third practicum abroad.

The ministerial decree has two detailed paragraphs (one on the role of the hosting ECEC centre and another on the role of university colleges) quoted in full below.

Role of the ECEC centre:

The practicum centre devises a practicum description, which must contain the following elements:

- 1) Description of the centre, incl. purpose, user group description and standard methods*
- 2) Education plan for the practicum periods. The plan must comply with the competence goals for the relevant practicum period, incl. suggestions for relevant literature, organisation of practicum guidance and collaboration with the university college. The education plan is devised in joint cooperation with the university college.*

Sec.2. The practicum centre is responsible for the student receiving supervision during the practicum in accordance with the competence goals for the practicum period.

Sec.3. No later than upon 2/3 completion of the first, second and third practicum periods, the practicum centre must conduct a meeting with the university college and the student, after which the centre must make a statement declaring how the student may fulfil the competence goals for the practicum period in question (Bekendtgørelse 2014, § 9).

Role of the university colleges:

Prior to each practicum period, the university college must prepare the students for the upcoming practicum period, including methods of study and relevant competence goals.

Sec. 2. During the study days of the practicum period, the student receives formal training and supervision at the university college...

Sec.3. After completing the practicum period, the university college must continually include the students' practicum experiences in the education. Furthermore, the university college must include the statement from the practicum centre in the student's further supervision process (Bekendtgørelse 2014, § 10).

The university colleges appoint a supervisor who provides information for the student about the choice of practicum, the competence goals, the relevant literature, etc.

The students' skills and competencies

The decree states the competence goals of each practicum as well as the knowledge and skills specifications. For example, the following are the competence goals for the 2nd and 3rd practicum within the specialisation in early childhood studies (see also *section 3.2*):

Competence Area 3: Professional relations and communication – 2nd practicum period

This area focuses on relational work, interaction and communication in pedagogical practice with 0- to 5-year old children, including the significance of children's diverse life conditions with respect to well-being, relations and communication.

Competence goals: The student knows how to create relations with individual children and with the whole group, can support the children when they interact with each other, can support the development of children's communicative competences, master professional communication and reflect on their own abilities to communicate and to initiate and sustain relations.

Competence Area 4: Cooperation and development – 3rd practicum period

Here the focus is on systematic and knowledge-based reflection and contributing towards development and innovation within pedagogical practice.

Competence goals: The student is able to plan, implement, document and evaluate activities and learning processes in a focused way that supports the child's well-being, learning, intellectual growth and development. In the context, the student must be able to challenge existing practice in professional terms, to look for and assess alternative options and to contribute to the development of pedagogical practice (Bekendtgørelse 2014).

Forms of students' self-evaluation and external evaluation

The forms of students' self-evaluation vary. Unlike the 2007 decree, the 2014 decree does not specify details of the students' self-evaluation during their practicum. Each university college includes practicum regulations in their syllabus and in a written practicum booklet which describes in detail the decree, regulations, practicalities and so on.

Before the practicum, the students write down their own competence goals and the knowledge and skills they wish to achieve during the practicum period. The goals are discussed with and approved by both the supervisor teacher at college and the practicum supervisor/mentor. During the practicum period the student keeps a daily diary or portfolio, and uses this at the practicum supervisor meetings during the study days and also later on in their studies.

The aim of the fourth practicum, added in the 2014 reform, is to do fieldwork research and produce data from their work in the ECEC centres for use in their bachelor thesis. Here students are encouraged to use different research methods.

The three other practicum periods end with an examination. For the first and second, the examination is conducted internally by the practicum supervisor and the practicum supervisor from the university college; at the third practicum an external examiner is also required (Bekendtgørelse 2014).

The **supervising staff at the ECEC centres** are qualified Pedagogues. The competencies required for this position are not nationally regulated. The supervisors receive a practicum bonus based on collective agreements between trade unions and local municipalities: in 2014 this amounted to roughly 550€ for a six-month practicum. It is possible, but not mandatory, to attend relevant short-term courses, a higher education diploma course or a Master's degree course in Pedagogical Supervision. Field experts estimate that many attend the short courses but few take a diploma and even fewer a Master's degree (Jensen 2015a).

A practicum supervisor who works directly with the children, i.e. is a regular member of staff, is appointed by the Centre Head. It is estimated that planned meetings between the supervisor and the student take place (during regular working hours) for an average of one hour per week. Supervision is also part of the daily work and other Pedagogues can give supervision in a more situated and informal way than in a planned meeting (Jensen 2015a).

Reforms, trends and debates

There is an ongoing debate about the specific roles of learning in the workplace (practicum) and learning at the university college and about the cooperation strategies between the two learning places. There are two prevailing major discourses: a learning discourse (focusing on

learning in the workplace) and an academic discourse (focusing on the learning at the university college) and there is an ongoing effort to integrate the two (see Jensen 2015a for different understandings of practicum).

The 2014 decree reform places more responsibility on the practicum centres regarding student evaluation, which can be seen as a strengthening of the learning discourse. The ECEC practicum centres play an important role as a learning space and there is an ongoing debate about whether they have enough resources and competencies to fulfil that role - not only concerning student evaluation but in general.

The decree added a fourth practicum where the students are required to produce data during their work in the centre and analyse and integrate these into their bachelor thesis. This can be seen as a step towards integrating the tasks of practicum centres and university colleges and as a strengthening of the academic discourse.

An earlier recurrent theme of debate was about whether students should receive payment during their practicum. Currently, students receive a practicum salary paid by the employer during the two six-month practicum periods (i.e. the second and third). The paid practicum was introduced following the generalist reform in 1992. "For the students this means a double role: on the one hand being a student, on the other hand an employee and a regular member of staff" (Jensen 2015a, 160). Some argue that the students are not allowed to be students; fewer argue that they really learn the conditions of work. For the first and fourth practicum periods, students receive student grants.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

A national framework exists in terms of recognised courses and awards relating to the continuing professional development of ECEC staff, but not in terms of a general CPD entitlement or of an annual allocation in terms of the number of days to be spent on CPD activities. Nevertheless, some CPD activities may be obligatory, e.g. those for the centre team as a whole or some courses provided by municipalities regarding current reform initiatives.

In terms of career development, a profession is dependent on both vertical and horizontal possibilities of mobility. Formal strategies of further training/professional development for Pedagogues have a relatively short history. This has something to do with the traditional 'flat structure' (non-hierarchical) in the ECEC centres and the presence of a large number of non-qualified staff. An informal estimate from a BUPL expert interviewed in 2010 was that around 25% of Pedagogues participate in formal CPD activities, whereas the remaining 75% get through their career with only a few days of competence development per year.

One of the reforms initiating more further training from the early 1990s onwards was the Open Education Act (*Lov om åben uddannelse* 2016). The Merit qualification route to become a Pedagogue as well as the Diploma studies and Master's degrees (see below) are provided for under this Act. The Act aims to help adults combine work with further related studies. Students are granted a degree or an education certificate and have to pay a fee for the study programme.

Before the early 1990s, CPD tended to be initiated by the ECEC Centre Leader or staff. Today, many initiatives come from central and local authorities and - as budgets are low - do not leave much space for centres' or individual staff's needs or wishes for CPD. Field experts talk about a centralisation and standardisation of CPD and not all Pedagogues find that they benefit from some of the courses on offer (Ahrenkiel et al. 2012).

Overall the leader of a centre is responsible for the staff's professional development. CPD can be discussed during the obligatory annual appraisal reviews (*MUS-samtaler*). The Centre Leader, in collaboration with the team in the setting, may also compile a competence plan for all

staff. Furthermore, local authorities sometimes provide professional development courses for the complete staff team in an ECEC centre, for part of the team, or for individual staff members who need to strengthen competencies in specific areas, e.g. language or inclusion.

CPD for Pedagogues/Social Educators

The main providers of CPD are university colleges (*professionshøjskoler*) and the municipalities, but may also be vocational schools and private firms/organisations (Hjorth-Weber 2012).

A distinction can be made between (1) short-term courses of between one to seven weeks' duration and (2) a long-term study route over a period of two or three years. They include various diploma studies as well as Master's degrees.

Short-term courses

Short term courses primarily serve as an improvement strategy for the work in pedagogical settings. The competencies in focus are linked to everyday work routines. BUPL, the trade union for early childhood staff, argues that both the course fee and the time needed to attend the course must be covered by the employer. The trade union recommends two weeks of CPD per year for all Pedagogues.

Course topics are diverse: outdoor life, music, storytelling, movement and language, environmental assessment by children, etc. The main providers of such short-term courses are university colleges, local authorities, and private organisations. No formal academic credits are given for short-term courses. If a Pedagogue participates in more than six weeks of full-time studies over a period of two years, s/he has the possibility of having a 'real competence assessment' in order to apply for Merit points for enrolment in a diploma study course (see the following paragraph for details of Diploma studies).

Long-term further studies

Long-term further studies have a double purpose: both to enhance the pedagogical work in general and to give the Pedagogue in question new career opportunities.

Diploma study programmes

Diploma studies are for adults with a short-cycle or further higher education degree and are primarily an additional qualification for a specialised area of work in pedagogical settings (e.g. Diploma in Public Management) (Hjorth-Weber 2012). Typically, Pedagogues choose one of the available pedagogical diploma (PD) qualifying courses which have in common:

- a duration of one year full-time study (60 ECTS points) which can also be taken part time;
- admission criteria is a relevant qualification and at least two years of work experience;
- a course fee ranging between 42,000–65,000 DDK (5,600–8,700€) in 2015.

Diploma students often combine their studies with employment. The fee may be covered by the employer and they may get (some) time off from work to study.

Around 30 different pedagogical diploma study courses exist in different subjects or subject areas relevant to the pedagogical working field. Diploma studies are also followed by other Bachelor-level professionals such as school teachers and social workers. The providers of these professional development courses are university colleges and universities.

Centre Leaders

A trend, also pushed forward by a tendency to have one leader for several centres, is that Centre Leaders are more likely to study for a diploma or take courses for other types of competence development. There are no national/general requirements for leaders of ECEC centres. Most leaders are experienced Pedagogues. During recent years, however, national initiatives including the national government, municipal authorities and trade unions, have funded di-

ploma study programmes in leadership for the whole public sector in order to raise the quality of the welfare institutions.

Two diploma courses exist for leaders in welfare institutions: Diploma in leadership (DIL) and the public diploma in leadership education (DOL). The difference between these two is that the first is provided by university colleges; the second by both university colleges and private providers. Both diplomas are awarded with 60 ECTS points and consist of different modules.

Master's degree/PhD

In Denmark there are two types of Master degrees: Continuing Higher Education and Ordinary Higher Education (EQF Level 7).

Most pedagogues take a Master degree as Continuing Higher Education. Entry requirements are a Bachelor's degree and at least two years of relevant job experience. A Master's degree is one year full-time study (60 ECTS points) and is followed on a part-time basis, since the students are working at the same time. The students have to pay a fee. The Master's study programme has to be completed within six years. Studies are research-based but also include the students' experiences from their daily work. Fees are sometimes covered by the employer, either partly or fully, and students may be given time off for studying. The main provider is DPU – the Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, which offers a range of Master's degrees in the field of pedagogy and education. DPU is also a research centre in education and pedagogy in Denmark. Other universities also provide relevant Master's courses for pedagogues.

The other type of a Master's Degree, a Candidate degree in Ordinary Higher Education (120 ECTS points), takes two years and is often taken just after the Bachelor's degree. DPU and other universities provide a range of Master's degrees relevant for Pedagogues. The admission criteria are a Bachelor's degree and very good grades. Many Pedagogues apply for a candidate degree course, but there are few places.

Master's studies can be followed by a PhD course.

CPD for Pedagogue Co-helpers (*Pædagogmedhjælper*)

The non-qualified Pedagogue Co-helpers have various CPD possibilities. The initiative to participate may come from the Pedagogue Co-helper, the Centre Leader or from the local authority as part of a competence drive among all non-qualified employees. They can apply for the following options:

- The IPS for prospective Pedagogues;
- If they have more than five years of work experience: the Merit qualification as Pedagogue;
- Pedagogical Assistant qualification;
- Short-term AMU-courses. AMU (Danish Adult Vocational Training Programmes) is the vocational education system that provides many different courses: a pedagogical basic course (three weeks), children and nature (five days), play and learning with digital media in early year's centres (five days), parent cooperation (five days) and so on. Here the non-qualified can acquire skills to be used directly in pedagogical work. A certificate is provided. The providers of the courses are vocational schools and university colleges. The studies are free of charge. The leader must approve participation. The Pedagogue Co-helpers take the course during their working time and often continue to draw their regular salary. The centre may apply for economic compensation to be used for a substitute worker (FOA and KL 2014).

Research projects on CPD

Two large-scale research projects on CDP have been carried out recently, one focusing on Pedagogues (presented in *section 7*), and the other on the Pedagogue Co-helpers (EPOS and EVA 2013).

The latter project was commissioned by EPOS, the Standing Committee for the pedagogical/social and health field, and carried out by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). The analyses reveal the development in job functions and changing competence demands for Pedagogue Co-helpers, Pedagogical Assistants and Family Day Carers, among others.

The aim of the research was to find out if the existing courses on offer meet the need for CPD; if there is a need for new structures; and to see where there is a need for revision or new development of existing qualification pathways. The report mentions the following changes in ECEC, leading to increased competency demands for Pedagogue Co-helpers and Pedagogical Assistants:

- Increased focus on pedagogic work especially with the pedagogic learning plans introduced in 2004;
- Inclusion of all;
- Parents' increasing demands;
- IT and digital media;
- Language assessment and stimulation;
- Organisational changes;
- Increase in ECEC centres with a special content profile, for example, nature, body and movement or music.

Research findings indicate that the Pedagogue Co-helpers interviewed did not express an immediate need for competence development; on the other hand they would like to have more skills for activities with children and more competence in relation to parents and other members of staff. Many Pedagogue Co-helpers are employed because of their personal qualities and their skills in music, sports, etc. The Co-helpers who have participated in CPD or study courses find them exciting and relevant and feel that it gives them something extra in their work.

Some local authorities can see a need for competence development in this area. In one example given, all the Pedagogue Co-helpers and all Pedagogical Assistants in the municipality attend a two-month course.

The Co-helpers also learn informally from the Pedagogues they work with. Some also participate in local authority CPD activities (theme days, lectures and so on) together with the Pedagogues. Results show a difference between experienced and non-experienced Co-helpers; experienced ones do almost the same tasks as the Pedagogues.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Significant reforms took place in 2001 (introduction of the Bachelor's degree), in 2004 (national pedagogical learning plans), in 2007 (Pedagogue IPS reform) and more recently the 2014 reform which will be described in more detail below. A revision of the pedagogic learning plans is on the agenda in 2017. A challenge at all levels and for all stakeholders in the ECEC field has been to implement the learning plans and develop the areas and tasks demanded. Additional steering initiatives at the national, but mostly at the local level have also been changing the tasks and ways of working for the staff in ECEC.

2014 reform of Pedagogue Education/IPS

The history of the Danish Pedagogue education reaches back over more than 130 years (see Jensen 2016 for a short description) and many reforms have been carried out during this period, the most recent being in 2014. Over the years, the initial professional studies of Pedagogues have been transformed from several specialist routes for work in a broad spectrum of pedagogical settings to a generalist education as from 1992, and now, as from 2014, to a mixed concept comprising a common part of basic professional competencies (70 ECTS points) and a specialisation part (140 ECTS points). The specialisation areas are:

1. *Early childhood pedagogy*, aimed at pedagogical work with children between 0 and 6 years.
2. *School and leisure time pedagogy*, aimed at pedagogical work with school children and young people aged between 6 and 18 years.
3. *Social and special pedagogy*, aimed at pedagogical work with children and young people with special needs and people with physical and mental disabilities or social problems (Bekendtgørelse 2014).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

An increase in research in ECEC has taken place during the last 20 years or so. Research takes place at universities, at university colleges, or in various research centres. ECEC stakeholders commission research.

A new Centre for ECEC Research (*Center for Daginstitutionsforskning*) based at Roskilde University opened in 2015. It collaborates with the Institute for Psychology and Education Research (Roskilde University), DPU (Aarhus University) and six university colleges. The centre is supported financially by BUPL's research fund.

Many research projects relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues have been conducted over the past five years and the three presented are selected examples.

Pedagogues' participation in further education

Source: Ahrenkiel, A., J.T. Frederiksen, S. Helms, and J. Krab. 2012 (see *References*).

Background: The research was funded by Roskilde University and BUPL's research fund. A large part of the Pedagogue workforce does not participate in competence-related courses (defined as those awarding ECTS points and held by approved providers) throughout their working life.

Aims: The aim of the study was to explain why this is so (especially in the case of Diploma studies), and what types of further training are experienced as contributing to the development of their pedagogical work. The project analyses the possibilities for further education by examining the structural, cultural and subjective interest in Pedagogues' participation and also the barriers preventing it.

Procedure: Following an exploratory pilot study, a survey was conducted among 20 local authorities and qualitative interviews were held with Centre Leaders and Pedagogues (one half had followed a Diploma course and the other half had not).

Findings: The main barriers to participation are a busy everyday life, economic constraints in the ECEC centres, and a lack of solid and reliable frameworks and resources for substituting staff attending CPD courses. The Pedagogues' participation in further education is mostly bound to local municipalities' priorities and not to their centres' and their own needs in terms of competence development. The Pedagogues are loyal to the centre and their colleagues, and they think in a collective perspective rather than about their own career. Consequently, some

Pedagogues do not participate in CPD courses because they do not want to leave their colleagues behind with a poor staff/child ratio. The Centre Leaders play a central role in creating an 'education/learning culture' at the individual centre, to promote coherence between education and practice (before and after such course attendance), to make sure that all staff are offered further education and to motivate them to participate.

Furthermore, the supply of CPD courses varies greatly across regions and municipalities.

Pedagogical quality in large and small centres

Source: Kragh-Møller, G. and C. Ringsmose. 2015 (see *References*).

Background: The research was funded by DPU and BUPL's research fund. Currently the tendency is to build larger early childhood centres, and a number of small centres are being closed or joined up into larger units, especially in the cities.

Aims: The study investigated the influence of the size of centres on the pedagogical quality and consequently on children's learning and development.

Procedure: Qualitative studies in 12 ECEC settings, both large (over 100 children enrolled) and small (under 50 children enrolled), including interviews with leaders, focus group interviews with two to seven Pedagogues; 60 children were also either interviewed in focus groups or individually. Also, an assessment of the quality in the centres was carried out using a systematic observation method. Questionnaires were sent to almost 500 Centre Leaders and almost 400 Pedagogues working directly with children.

Findings: The main conclusion is that there are a range of challenges for the ECEC staff in larger centres regarding quality issues and in giving the children good opportunities for wellbeing, learning and development. The authors conclude that the provision of large early childhood centres with more than 100 children cannot be recommended.

Pedagogues' understandings of Danish ECEC practice

Sources: Jensen, J.J. 2015b, 2015c (see *References*).

Aims: The research was funded through BUPL's research fund and VIA University College. The author wanted to find out about Pedagogues' understandings of core values in their daily work through the lens of observing films of practice from other countries and to make visible the special Danish contribution to the ECEC field, the pedagogical work and professional understanding viewed in an international perspective.

Procedure: One part is a qualitative study where focus groups of Pedagogues and others involved in pedagogical work are shown half-hour films of everyday life and practice in early childhood centres in England, Hungary and Denmark. Another part comprises an analysis of the context of ECEC in the three countries, using relevant literature studies.

Findings: When viewing the videos of daily practice in England, Hungary and Denmark, Danish Pedagogues see three different images of the child – described as the 'head body', the 'china doll' and the 'mud child'. In the English film's practice they see the view of the child as a learning child (the head is in focus) and in the Hungarian film they see images of the 'fragile child' (the china doll). By way of contrast, they have an ideal of the Danish ECEC child as an active co-participant, freely moving and as a 'natural child' who can best unfold in outdoor environments (the mud-child).

The three films reflect different approaches to ECEC. The neo-liberal welfare model is dominant in England, built on a private childcare market. An eastern European welfare model prevails in Hungary within a divided system for children under and over three years of age. Places for children under three years are rare. Classical family values exist, supported by three years of maternity leave, under the assumption that it is best for the child to be with his/her mother. The Nordic welfare model is the dominant model in Denmark with its coherent and universal

ECEC system for the whole range of early childhood ages (0 to 6 years) with much public involvement and a high level of professionalised staff.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Nearly all Pedagogues are members of BUPL, the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators, and many Pedagogical Assistants and Pedagogue Co-helpers are members of FOA. Benefits include six weeks of annual holiday leave, one year paid maternity and parental leave, and all staff groups pay for an obligatory occupational pension.

Average monthly salaries for full-time staff in different job positions in early childhood centres are as follows (BUPL 2014b):

- non-qualified staff: 24,000 DDK (3,200€);
- pedagogues: 28,000 DDK (3,800€);
- department leader / deputy leader: 31,000 DDK (4,200€); and
- leaders: 37,000 DDK (5,000€).

Posts of responsibility such as the Centre Leader, Deputy Leader, or Pedagogical Leader of a smaller unit receive a higher salary based on the collective agreements. The practicum supervisor receives a bonus.

A qualified Pedagogue earns only minimally less than a school teacher. The salary increases with seniority. It is possible to live on this salary without additional support, e.g. living as a single parent with one child in a major city, but the living standard very much depends on the cost of housing.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

According to collective agreements, full-time staff work 37 hours per week. In 2013, the average weekly working hours of staff in *vuggestue* (0-3 years) were 30.7 hours, in *børnehave* (3-6 years) 29.7 hours and in *aldersintegreret institution* (0-6 years) 30.2 hours (Danmarks Statistik 2014).

In 2012, the majority of local municipalities (85%) employed 50% more part-time Pedagogues than full-time; but the majority of part-time jobs are for 30 hours or more per week, so the difference between a full-time and part-time job is not so big. The reasons for working part-time can be private (personal choice) or institutional (staffing situation in the centre) (Deloitte et al. 2012).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The 98 local municipalities, the funders and providers of ECEC have an organised system that supports the staff to improve and monitor the quality of their work. This may take place through on-site mentoring, meetings, and consultancy as well as through off-site experts, for example speech therapists, language experts and psychologists. Municipalities employ Pedagogic Consultants who are mostly experienced Pedagogues with additional training. They are used by the centres when staff conflicts arise, to support children with special needs and other difficulties, and much more.

8.4 Non-contact time

Staff working directly with children were asked to estimate how much time they spent on tasks other than being together with the children, in Denmark often called 'other work'. The results are found in *Table 5*.

Table 5

Denmark: Staff reports on average weekly time spent on 'other work' in ECEC centres

Activities	Pedagogues	Pedagogical Assistants	Pedagogue Co-helpers
Documentation, learning plans, internal meetings, contact to municipality etc.	2 hours 40 min.	1 hour 30 min.	1 hour 29 min.
Random interruptions, 'wardrobe talk' with parents	1 hour 43 min.	1 hour 15 min.	1 hour 25 min.
Cleaning up/cleaning without children	1 hour 48 min.	1 hour 14 min.	1 hour 37 min.
Other tasks where staff are not with the children	11 min.	6 min.	17 min.
In total	6 hours 22 min.	4 hours 5 min.	4 hours 48 min.

Source: FOA and Bureau 2000, 2015, 62

The table does not include the lunch break, typically ½ hour per day or 2½ hours per week. An estimate is that the Pedagogue typically will use around nine hours per week on 'other work', including the lunch break, where the Pedagogical Assistants and Pedagogue Co-helpers use between 6½-7 hours per week (FOA and Bureau 2000, 2015, 62).

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

The Pedagogue study route is the most popular study programme in Denmark: With 7,200 applicants in 2016, it is far ahead in terms of numbers of those for prospective school teachers, nurses or social workers. 5,300 students are fully enrolled (2016), making it the study programme with the largest number of students in Denmark. The full coverage in early childhood services has resulted in a steady intake of Pedagogues and Pedagogue Co-helpers when staff leave. Reductions in the number of staff over many years led to a smaller workforce overall, and there is an unemployment rate for Pedagogues of around 5%. The birth rate has been relatively stable but in 2016 it increased, which may mean that more staff have to be employed in ECEC.

The Pedagogue study programme has been able to attract a relatively large number of male students, 22% of the total intake currently (in 2016), declining from 29% in 2015. In 2000, the relative share was 17%. However, as shown in *Table 2*, the share of them working in early childhood centres is not that high; mostly they prefer to work in other kinds of pedagogical settings.

The recruitment of male Pedagogues for ECEC centres has been on the agenda for many years and related strategies have been carried out. Currently, the 2014 Pedagogue education reform has put gender on the agenda and all students must learn about gender issues.

A recent recruitment initiative has been taking place in five local municipalities, each of which has been engaged in different ways in attracting male Pedagogues to the early childhood field and also retaining them. The experiences are gathered in a handbook for inspiration for other municipalities (Wohlgemuth and Hviid 2016). The five projects and the handbook were commissioned and funded by the former Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality. In 2016 the ministry launched a campaign for recruiting more male Pedagogues into early childhood centres. One part was a video named *Pedagogues for the youngest make a difference in life* (Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling 2016) that was widely shared on Facebook, and another initiative was the provision of conferences (free of charge) at several university colleges on the theme: *More Men in ECEC*.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Increasing challenges for ECEC personnel

Over recent years, staff in early childhood centres have been required to take on more and more tasks, arising from the realisation of the national government's policies, such as learning plans, and the resulting implementation policies in the municipalities. According to ECEC staff, parents also tend to demand more. A paradox is that the child/staff ratio has declined as well as the proportion of qualified Pedagogues among staff. Both are key factors for quality in early childhood centres and key factors to be able to live up to the required policies.

Many of the new tasks demand highly educated staff. One example (from the 2004 Act) is the expectation that a goal of early years services is to address the social problems of children with a difficult family background. Experts in the field document that this demands many and highly qualified staff.

The pedagogical learning plan requires among others much documentation. Language assessment and stimulation are high on the agenda. Collaboration with parents has always had a high priority, and parents demand it even more. New organisational changes and the required assessment of the physical, intellectual and aesthetic environment by children (a requirement in the learning plans), listening to children, etc. - all these require time and a high professionalism among the staff.

Staff-child ratios

Between 2009 and 2014, the staff/child ratio in early childhood centres declined by approximately 10%. Whereas in 2009 there were 3.2 children (0 to 3 years) per full-time staff member working directly with children, in 2014 the ratio was 3.5 children. For children aged 3 to 6 years there were 6.2 children in 2009 per full-time member of staff compared to 6.8 children in 2014.

BUPL calculated that if the numbers would be the same as they were in 2009 (1,600 for 0- to 2-year olds, 2,800 for 3- to 6-year olds), a total of 4,400 additional staff members would be needed (BUPL 2014c).

Dalsgaard, Jordan, and Petersen (2016) analysed the 2014 staff/child ratios in the 98 local municipalities. Their study shows huge differences between municipalities: in one municipality among those with the highest ratios, the ratio was 1:3 for children under 3 years of age and 1:5.2 for children aged 3 to 6 years; in another among those with the lowest ratios, the ratios were 1:5.4 (0-3 years) and 1:9.4 (3-6 years).

Another example can be found in a recent survey based on a representative sample on everyday life in early childhood centres. Nearly 30% of almost 800 Centre Leaders report that only three adults are present at the same time for 3 to 3½ hours per day either in a *vuggestue* (0 to 3 years) group of ten, or in a *børnehave* (3 to 6 years) group of 20 children. Staff are also alone with the group during certain times of the day (FOA and Bureau 2000, 2015). The same report states that the Centre Leaders estimate that, since 2011, the ECEC centres have lost on average 6.6 staff hours per week (no change in the number of children); leadership and administrative tasks have increased by 4.5 hours per centre; and documentation tasks have increased by 1.5 hour per staff member. This means that a centre with ten staff members has then lost around 26 hours per week that must be deducted from being together with the children.

The declining staff/child ratio has raised a discussion on national minimum standards. BUPL recommends at the most 2.5 children per staff member for 0- to 3-year olds and 6 children per staff member for 3- to 6-year olds. Some political parties have also suggested national minimum standards.

A further paradox can be seen in *Table 6*. Over a period of ten years, the proportion of Pedagogues has declined in *børnehaver* and mixed-age centres. Research shows that highly quali-

fied staff are of uttermost importance for the quality in early childhood centres. Reduced numbers of staff means more tasks per person and less time for the individual child.

Table 6

Denmark: Development in the proportion of Pedagogues in different forms of ECEC centre, 2004-2014

	Vuggestuer, 0 to 3 years	Børnehaver, 3 to 6 years	Aldersintegrerede institutioner, 0 to 6 years
2004	55%	65%	61%
2014	55%	59%	58%

Source: BUPL 2016.

University colleges are also experiencing economic constraints. This has resulted in first year students only having on average ten hours' lessons per week (supplemented by project work and independent studies) declining to fewer hours' lessons later on in their study period (Omfanget 2016). The Pedagogue study programme is one of the professional Bachelor programmes which receives the least money per student from central government; for example, twice as much is invested in the study programme for those wishing to become a medical nurse.

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DENMARK

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Jytte Juul Jensen
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Denmark – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 286-299.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Denmark has a unitary system of early childhood education and care for children aged 6 months (26 weeks) up to 6 years. The responsible authority at the national level is currently the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs (*Børne- og Socialministeriet*). The funding, organisation and regulation of early childhood provision falls under the responsibility of the local municipal authorities. Early childhood services include both age-integrated (0-5 years) and age-separated (0-2 years, 3-5 years) ECEC centres, as well as regulated home-based provision.

Sources: Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality 2016.
Jensen, J.J. 2017

General objectives and legislative framework

The Day-Care Facilities Act (*Dagtilbudsloven*), last amended in 2014, regulates early childhood services, including family day care, and also after-school centres and other forms of socio-pedagogic provision for young people. It specifies that the local municipal authorities are responsible for formulating the targets and creating an administrative framework for services for young children, including children with disabilities or with other support needs. The general purposes of early childhood services are to create - in cooperation with the parents - a setting that favours the development, wellbeing and independence of children; to provide families with flexibility and choice of provision; to integrate preventive and supportive activities for children requiring special support; and to create coherence and continuity in transitioning between one form of provision and another. One of the required goals for service providers is that ECEC settings are expected to provide children with possibilities for participation in decision-making and for taking joint responsibilities, thus foregrounding foundational skills of democracy.

Sources: Consolidation Act on Day-Care 2014.
Eurydice 2014.
Moss, P. and J. Bennett 2010.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Denmark has a system of universal entitlement to a fee-paying, full-time place in publicly subsidised early childhood provision, starting when the children are 26 weeks old. Municipalities have to ensure ECEC provision for all children between the ages of six months and six years. Attendance is not compulsory.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
IEA 2016.

Types of provision

ECEC settings (*daginstitutioner* – ‘day institutions’) may be age-integrated, from 26 weeks up to compulsory school age (6), or age-separated for the younger (0-2) and older (3-5) children.

Age-integrated centres (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) for children just over 6 months up to school entry are the most common type of provision. Some also provide out-of-school care for school-age children. They account for just over 63% of all centre-based settings, while kindergartens account for approximately 31% and day nurseries for nearly 6% (see Table 1).

Day nurseries (*vuggestuer* – ‘cradle room’) provide places for the younger children up to age 3.

Kindergartens (*børnehaver* – ‘children’s garden’) are settings for the older children, i.e. 3- to under 6-year olds.

Family day care (*dagpleje*) provision is mostly organised, funded and regulated by the local authority. In general it is for children up to age 3, but can also include children up to age 6. Up to five children are allocated to one family day carer. Private family day care operates according to an agreement with the local authority, which provides a per capita subsidy and also supervision.

Table 1:

Denmark: Number and relative share of three types of centre-based settings, 2014*

Type of setting	Number of institutions	Share of all centre-based settings in %**
Age-integrated centre (<i>aldersintegrerede institutioner</i>)	2 394	63.1
Kindergarten (<i>børnehaver</i>)	1 174	30.6
Day nursery (<i>vuggestuer</i>)	225	5.9
Total	3 793	

** Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings

Sources: Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality 2016.
*Statistics Denmark 2017a, own calculations.

Provider structures

The majority of ECEC settings are provided and run by the municipalities. However, a growing number of ECEC centres are now privately owned and are run by parents, associations, or businesses, with subsidies from the local authorities. In 2014*, approximately 70% of providers of centre-based settings were public/municipal, 17% publicly subsidised private non-profit, and over 13% private for-profit. By way of comparison, the respective distributions in 2011, just three years before, were 81% public, 16% private non-profit, and 3% private for-profit.**

Table 2

Denmark: Number of centre-based settings according to provider type, 2014-15*

Type of setting	Municipal	Independent non-profit	Private for-profit
Age-integrated centre (<i>aldersintegrerede institutioner</i>)	1 784	346	264
Kindergarten (<i>børnehaver</i>)	737	233	204
Day nursery (<i>vuggestuer</i>)	124	57	44
Total	2 645	636	512
Share of provider type in ECEC market in %***	69.7	16.8	13.5

*** own calculations

Three-quarters of all children in centre-based settings are placed in public/municipal provision (see *Table 3*). Private for-profit provision accounts for just under 7% of all children in ECEC settings, whereas nearly 18% of children are in private non-profit provision.

Table 3

Denmark: Number of children in centre-based settings according to provider type, 2014-15*

Type of setting	Municipal	Independent non-profit	Private for-profit
Age-integrated centre (<i>aldersintegrerede institutioner</i>)	159 889	35 728	11 525
Kindergarten (<i>børnehaver</i>)	37 359	10 416	6 167
Day nursery (<i>vuggestuer</i>)	5 675	2 248	769
Total	202 923	48 392	18 461
Share of children according to provider type in %**	75.2	17.9	6.8

Sources: **Jensen, J.J. 2014.
*Statistics Denmark 2017a, 2017b.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The participation rate of children under 3 years of age in early childhood provision including family day care increased only slightly between 2005 (73%) and 2015 (77.3%). The same applied to the age-group of the 3- to 6-year olds: in 2015 nearly all children (97.7%) attended an ECEC setting, including family day care.

Table 4

Denmark: Participation rates in ECEC provision according to age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %**	3 years to school entry age, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	13	15
	Over 30 hours	60	79
	No attendance	27	5
2010	1 to 29 hours	10	15
	Over 30 hours	68	75
	No attendance	23	10
2015	1 to 29 hours	7.7	9.7
	Over 30 hours	69.6	88.0
	No attendance	22.7	2.7

** Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

Across Europe, Denmark has the highest participation rates of under-threes in publicly subsidised ECEC provision. *Table 5* shows that in 2014, one- and 2-year olds were mostly placed in age-integrated centres or in family day care settings, whereas the number of children in home-based care dropped dramatically as soon as the children reach the age of 3.

Table 5

Denmark: Number of children in ECEC settings according to age and type of provision, and proportion of each age-group in per cent, 2014**

Age group	Family day care		Day nurseries		Kindergartens		Age-integrated Centres		Total
		%		%		%		%	
Under 1-year olds	4 559	%	787	%	6	%	4 666	%	10 018
Share of all under 1-year olds in ECEC		45.5		7.9		0.1		46.6	
1-year olds	19 162		4 172		29		26 797		50 160
Share of all 1-year olds in ECEC		38.2		8.3		0.1		53.4	
2-year olds	16 889		3 511		2 362		31 376		54 138
Share of all 2-year olds in ECEC		31.2		6.5		4.4		58.0	
3-year olds	244		171		16 744		42 768		59 927
Share of all 3-year olds in ECEC		0.4		0.3		27.9		71.4	
4-year olds	119		48		18 530		44 260		62 957
Share of all 4-year olds in ECEC		0.2		0.1		29.4		70.3	
5-year olds	111		3		15 571		35 447		51 132
Share of all 5-year olds in ECEC		0.2		0.01		30.5		69.3	
Total	41 084		8 692		53 938		185 314		288 332
Share of all 0- to under 6-year olds		14.2		3.0		18.5		64.3	

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.

**Statistics Denmark 2017b.

Financing and costs for parents

A place in a municipal ECEC setting is funded through a local authority, tax-funded subsidy (per capita funding), and the parents pay the remainder. However, the parental fee is not allowed to exceed 25% of the gross operating costs. The subsidies are paid directly to the ECEC centre and are reviewed annually.

Fees in ECEC settings (*daginstitutioner and family day care*) are income-related and also vary according to the child's age. The parents pay lower fees or no fees if their income is below a certain limit – and the local authority pays an additional aided place subsidy in such cases. Two other reasons for reduced fees are if the child already has siblings in an ECEC centre and/or after school centre or if the child is deemed to have special educational and support needs. In 2017*, the aver-

age monthly fee charged for children aged 0 to 2 years was 398€ in *daginstitutioner*, 336€ in family day care, and for children aged 3 to 6 years 229€. ¹

Private ECEC centres can fix the charges made to parents, and consequently these may be higher than the fees for a place in a local authority centre. The subsidy granted by the local council for a place in a private ECEC centre consists of an operating subsidy, a building subsidy and an administration contribution. The total subsidy is paid to the centre and not to the parents.

Sources: *Danmarks Statistik 2017a.
EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality 2016.

Staff-child ratios

Denmark is one of the few European countries which have no national regulations on either the number of children per staff member or on the maximum group size. Even so, staff-child ratios on average compare favourably with many other European countries. Local authorities and ECEC centres decide on staff deployment and group size according to the local situation. The Day Care Facilities Act, amended in 2014, explicitly states that when preparing the pedagogical curriculum “... the composition of the group of children shall be taken into consideration”.

In 2014, the staff-child ratio was on average 3.5 children (0 to 3 years) per full-time staff member and for children aged 3 to 6 years 6.8 children. Staff reductions during the last ten years led to a decrease in staff-child ratios. Moreover, there are huge differences in staff-child ratios among the 98 municipalities in Denmark.*

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal 2016.
*BUPL 2014; Dalsgaard, Jordan, and Petersen 2016.
Consolidation Act on Day-Care 2014.
OECD 2015.

Curricular frameworks

As in many European countries, the underlying principles of Danish kindergarten philosophy can be traced back to the ideas and theories of Froebel and also Montessori, with adaptations to Scandinavian culture. A major educational goal is to help children become aware that they can actively influence what happens in their immediate surroundings. However, Denmark was the last of the Nordic countries to take the step of introducing a formal curricular framework, called pedagogical learning plans. Since August 2004, all ECEC settings are required to prepare a centre-specific educational programme and to document the learning and development of 0- to 6-year olds. Furthermore, staff are required to relate their pedagogy to six main themes: (1) comprehensive personal development; (2) social competencies; (3) language; (4) body and movement; (5) nature and natural phenomena; (6) cultural expressions and values. It is interesting to note that neither mathematics nor science and technology are explicitly included in this framework. New national learning plans will be in force in 2017.

The ECEC centre head is responsible for preparing the centre-specific pedagogical programme, which has to be approved by the local council. It is also the centre head's responsibility to make the curricular framework known publicly, e.g. on the centre's website, and for evaluating it annu-

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

ally. At the centre management level, a review every two years is required which includes the parent board in the evaluation and includes their suggestions for follow-up.

Sources: Jensen, J.J. and O. Langsted 2004.
Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The guiding principle in Denmark for young children with disabilities and additional educational and support is to make it possible for them to attend mainstream ECEC settings. The local authorities are responsible for ensuring that ECEC centres provide the supports necessary for enhancing the children's integration. Sometimes children with disabilities are placed in a separate group, in which the staff-child ratios are high and the pedagogues have access to specialised support staff. Across the education system, special needs education includes additional staffing for individualised support and personal assistance, counselling and technical aid.

Children with a background of migration

According to Eurostat data, 8.1% of the population in 2016 had a non-Danish background and 40.9% of this group came from another EU country. In the under-fives age-group, these shares were 7.8% and 35.9% respectively.**

According to national data, 15% of all children under 6 years of age in 2016 came from a non-Danish background*. *Table 6* shows the most highly represented countries of origin.

Table 6

Denmark: Children under age 6 with a background of migration, 2016*

Country of origin	Number of children under age 6	Share of total population under 6 with a non-Danish background in %
Syria	3 878	8.3
Turkey	3 282	7.0
Poland	3 168	6.6
Iraq	2 576	5.5
Somalia	2 421	5.2
Afghanistan	1 907	4.1
Lebanon	1 857	3.9
Romania	1 839	3.9
Pakistan	1 797	3.8
Other	24 154	51.5
Total	46 879	

For children with a background of migration the local authorities are obliged to offer language stimulation training for children from the age of 3 upwards. Since August 2004, this language support is compulsory. For children who do not attend some kind of ECEC provision, 15 hours per week of Danish language contact may be provided to families in their own home. Children attending an ECEC centre receive additional language support determined by a local evaluation.

Sources: **Eurostat 2017g.
Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality 2016.
*Statistics Denmark 2017c.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Denmark does not have a long tradition of formal child-related assessment.

The head of the ECEC centre is responsible for the evaluation of the pedagogical learning plans at least every second year including documentation for the chosen methods and activities as well as the children's environment, and to see if they fulfil the specified aims of the six themes in the learning plans.

The learning plans include a mandatory assessment of the physical, intellectual and aesthetic environment made by the children in accordance with their age and maturity.

Overall, the 98 municipalities have different methods, programmes and traditions in terms of monitoring and evaluation. However, since 2007, they are required to conduct language assessments of 3-year old children in ECEC to assess whether a child needs additional language stimulation. Assessments are also required for children not attending an ECEC service and the municipalities are obliged to provide language support if this is considered necessary.

Denmark has a central educational evaluation institute called the Danish Evaluation Institute (*Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut - EVA*). Their work currently includes advising the local authorities on the compulsory language screening assessments of 3-year olds.

Research takes place at universities, university colleges and various research centres and also ECEC stakeholders commission research projects. Since the 1990s, an increase in the number of research projects can be observed. In 2015, a new Centre for ECEC Research (*Center for Daginstitutionsforskning*) opened at Roskilde University. The Centre collaborates with the Institute for Psychology and Education Research (Roskilde University), the Danish School of Education at Aarhus University (DPU - *Danmarks institut for Pædagogik og Uddannelse*) and six other university colleges. The Centre is supported financially by BUPL's research fund (BUPL is the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators).

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
[EVA] Danish Evaluation Institute 2016.
Jensen, J.J. 2017

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave is provided for 4 weeks before birth (*Graviditets*) and 14 weeks after the child's birth (*Barselsorlov*). The first 2 weeks following birth are compulsory. 100% of previous earnings are paid, capped at 4.245 DKK per week (570€, 21.6.2017). Eligibility is dependent on having worked for at least 120 hours in the 13 weeks before starting maternity leave.

Fathers are entitled to 2 weeks' fully paid **paternity leave** (*Fædreorlov*) under the same conditions during the first 14 weeks after birth.

Each parent is entitled to **parental leave** (*Forældreorlov*), which can be taken by both parents also at the same time and lasts 32 weeks until the child is 48 weeks old. The payment is the same as during maternity leave, but only per *family*. Between 8 and 13 weeks can also be taken at a later date. The 32 weeks can also be extended for reduced payment. During this period it is possible to work part-time; in such a case the length of leave is extended and the payment reduced.

During maternal, paternity and parental leave parents are protected against dismissal.

In 2014, nearly all mothers took leave, whereas 14% of fathers did not make use of their entitlement. 60% of the fathers with children born in 2011 made use of paternity leave. In cases where both parents took leave, 37% of fathers did take parental leave, but whereas mothers took 292 days fathers took 36-37 days, and this situation has not changed over the last five years.* Far fewer fathers in Denmark take leave than in other Nordic countries.

No current data are available for the take-up of parental leave. An overlap between the end of the leave period and the ECEC entitlement when the child is 26 weeks old provides parents with flexi-

bility in deciding when to return to work. Parents have almost one year of leave and parents also take holiday leave (on average children spent 312 days with the parent/s before starting in an ECEC service at around one year of age. Only under 20% of under one-year olds are in ECEC).

Sources: Bloksgaard, I. and T. Rostgaard 2017.
 *Danmarks Statistik 2017b.
 OECD 2107.
 EPIC 2016.

Historical shifts and junctures

1820s	First private initiatives for providing out-of-home care for children with working parents
1850-1900	Establishment of part-time institutions with a more educational orientation, largely based on the ideas of Froebel – generally for more privileged families
1920s	Merging of the two strands of provision (care/education) into an integrated institution open to children of all social groups
1919	Allocation of first state subsidy to institutions with a social purpose
1933	These institutions to receive up to 50% of their operational expenditure from the state
1949	State subsidy extended to include institutions for non-disadvantaged children
1964	Introduction of legal obligation for the municipalities to ensure universal access to all public services
1987	Full delegation of financial administration of ECEC provision to the municipalities
2004	Day Care Facilities Act, updating the responsibilities and the overall goals of the day care system Responsibility for ECEC shifts from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry for Family and Consumers' Affairs
2007	Re-Transfer of ECEC to the Ministry of Social Affairs, now called Ministry for Welfare (including health)
2009	Compulsory school entry age lowered to age 6 instead of previous age 7
2010/11	Transfer of responsibility for ECEC back to Ministry of Social and Domestic Affairs and subsequently to the Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration
2011-2013	First transfer of national responsibility for ECEC to the <i>Education</i> Ministry (Ministry of Children and Education), followed by re-transfer to the Social Affairs domain two years later under the Ministry for Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs.
2015	Second transfer of national responsibility for ECEC to the Education sector, now under the Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality.
2016	Re-transfer to the Social Affairs domain in late 2016; ECEC now under the auspices of the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs.

Sources: Moss, P. and J. Bennett 2010.
 Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall, and E. Lloyd 2013.
 Jensen, J.J. forthcoming.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Denmark

Country expert assessment by Jytte Juul Jensen

Historically, there has long been a holistic approach towards ECEC for children under 6 years of age in Denmark. Today this is reflected in the fact that all ECEC services come under the auspices of one ministry, are regulated by the same law, have the same pedagogical philosophy and the same professional staff. The Danish welfare state views ECEC as a public task and commitment. The practice is child-centred, believing that the best way to develop and learn is through the child's right to play and explore. Children shall be able to live their childhood here and now, combined with a broad approach to learning for their future (school) life. However, this model is in danger of being eroded because of an increasing lack of appropriate resources and a tendency to implement pre-defined programmes.

Challenges over the past ten years or so included the increasing expectations placed on ECEC staff combined with declining staff-child ratios and a decreasing overall proportion of professionals (*pædagoger*) qualified at Bachelor level. Staff are supposed to implement learning plans and other policies required by municipalities; to use documentation and language assessments and stimulation; to increase the focus on inclusion; to collaborate with parents; to adapt to organisational changes; to perform assessments from the children's point of view, and so on. Paradoxically, these challenging tasks have been accompanied, as mentioned above, by a less beneficial staff-child ratio as well as a reduced proportion of qualified staff. Moreover, university colleges where professional pedagogues are educated are experiencing reduced funding.

Another challenge to the Danish child-oriented position is the increasing use of pre-structured programmes, implying that the best way to help children in their learning is by relying on manuals and formal instructions.

Source: Jensen, J.J. forthcoming.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Denmark totalled well over 5½ million (5,707,251), representing a gradual increase since 2005 (5.411.405) and 1995 (5.215.718).

Children under age 6

In 2016, 3% of the total population were children under age 3 and 6.3% children under age 6 (Table 7), somewhat higher than the respective EU averages since 1995 (Table 8).

Table 7

Denmark: Number of children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
under 1-year olds	58,605
1-year olds	57,894
2-year olds	57,484

Age	Number of children
Total under 3-year olds	173,983
3-year olds	59,803
4-year olds	60,962
5-year olds	65,616
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	186,381
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	360,364

Table 8

Denmark: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3.9	3.3	3.6	3.1	3.0	3.0
3 to under 6 years	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.1	3.3	3.1
0 to under 6 years	7.6	6.8	7.3	6.2	6.3	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

84% of households with children under 6 years of age are couple households. 12.9% of all households are single households, whereby the proportion of single mother households (9.3%) is significantly higher than of single father households (3.6%).

Table 9

Denmark: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	548,400	
Couple households	460,500	84.0
Other household type	17,000	3.1
Single households, total	70,900	12.9
Single households, women	51,100	9.3
Single households, men	19,800	3.6

* own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, just over three-quarters (76.6%) of men and 73.5% of women aged 15-64 were in the labour market. During the same year, more than three-quarters (77.9%) of mothers and over 90%

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

(92.8%) of fathers with a child under 6 years of age were employed outside the home. Both are among the highest rates in the EU28 (see Table 10).

Table 10

Denmark: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Denmark	2005	n.d.	n.d.
	2010	82.7	90.2
	2015	77.9	92.8
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32,7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 14.2% of the total population of children under age 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a considerably lower proportion compared with the EU28 average of 24.7%. Overall, 17.7% of the total population in Denmark are categorised as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROE))

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ESTONIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

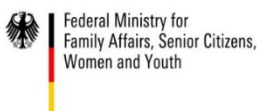
Marika Veisson

Professor, Early Childhood Education, Tallinn University

Citation suggestion:

Veisson, M. 2018. "Estonia – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 300-318.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

Estonia has a partially unified system of early childhood education and care under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. Governance and system management are distributed between the national and regional levels, reflecting a multi-level governance model with responsibility shared between the Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) for the integrated early childhood education and care institutions for children aged 1 year 6 months to 7 years (*Koolieelne lasteasutus*)¹ and the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Eesti Sotsiaalministeerium*) for childcare centres for under 4-year olds (*lastesõim*). Local education and social affairs authorities are responsible for ECEC provision and management. As from 2018, all ECEC institutions will come under the Ministry of Education and Research.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff qualifications, professional education/training and remuneration are regulated. There are three main categories of staff (Teacher, Assistant and Nurse) and two categories of setting leaders (Director and Lead Teacher). Assistants and Nurses are required to have an ISCED Level 4 qualification, and Teachers, Directors and Lead Teachers an ISCED Level 6, 7 (Senior Teacher, Master's degree) or Level 8 qualification (Master Teacher).

Table 1 provides a summary of key information; core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 below).

Table 1
Estonia: Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points /EQF level/ISCED ² level
<i>Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja</i> Early Childhood Teacher	<i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i> Integrated ECEC centre 1½– 7-year olds	Core practitioner or teacher with group responsibility	1½–7 years	<i>Since 2015:</i> Three-year Bachelor's degree programme
<i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Koolieelikute ettevalmistusrühm</i> Preparatory class 6- to 7-year olds who have not attended kindergarten (voluntary)	Centre director Head teacher Master teacher		ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 (also 7 and 8, depending on final qualification) ISCED 2013: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
	<i>Lastesõim</i> Infant-toddler centre 1½– 3-year olds			

¹ In official documents these are variously translated into English as 'Preschool child care institutions' or 'Preschool institutions' or 'Kindergartens'. In this report the term 'ECEC' will be used as a descriptor for settings (ECEC settings) and 'early childhood' as a prefix for core practitioners (Early Childhood Teachers).

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points /EQF level/ISCED ² level
<i>Õpetaja abi</i> Teacher's Assistant	<i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i> Integrated ECEC centre 1½– 7-year olds <i>Koolieelikute ettevalmistusrühm</i> Preparatory class 6- to 7-year olds who have not attended kindergarten (voluntary) <i>Lastesõim</i> Infant-toddler centre 0– under 3-year olds	Qualified co-worker	1½–7 years	Compulsory school leaving certificate and 1 year of studies at a Health Care College ECTS points: n/a ³ EQF: Level 4 or Level 5 for work in Preparatory classes ISCED 2013: 0913 ISCED 2011: 4
<i>Lapsehoidja</i> Childcare Worker (Nurse; Childminder)	<i>Lastesõim</i> Infant-toddler centre 1½– 3-year olds <i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i> Integrated ECEC centre 1½– 7-year olds	Qualified co-worker	0–7 years	Compulsory school leaving certificate and 1 year of studies at a Health Care College ECTS points: n/a EQF: Level 4 or Level 5 for work with children with special needs and parents ISCED 2013: 0913 ISCED 2011: 4

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2

Estonia: Structural composition of ECEC workforce, 2015/16

Staff categories	Number, Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	5,359 (66.1%)*
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2,197 (27.1%)
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	231 (2.9%)
Staff with non-specialist qualification	1,288 (15%)

³ n/a: not applicable

Staff categories	Number, Proportion of workforce
Unqualified staff	316 (3.9%)
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	108 (1.3%)
Male staff	51 (0.6%)
Staff with a background of migration	No national data available

* Ministry of Education and Science 2016, own calculations.

In 2015/2016, there were 8,292 teachers working in Estonian early childhood centres (*koolieelse lasteasutuse*). Among these were 7,004 Early Childhood Teachers, 585 Music Teachers, 463 Physical Education Teachers, 108 Special Education Teachers who work with children with special needs, 97 Estonian Language Teachers, and 35 Swimming Teachers.

In terms of age, 1,065 were below 30 years of age, 1,514 between 30 and 39 years, 2,136 between 40 and 49 years, 2,364 between 50 and 59 and 1,036 over 60 years of age. Most teachers are women. Only 51 men work in ECEC institutions. 5,359 teachers have a higher education degree, 2,197 teachers applied vocational education (1,536 post-secondary level and 852 upper secondary level), 231 have vocational education and 316 have secondary education and 12 did not specify (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium 2016).

Since 2015, the minimum requirement for work as an Early Childhood Teacher is a higher education degree from a university or university college. Higher education in early childhood education has been available at Tallinn University since 1967, at Tallinn University Rakvere College since 2000, and at Tartu University and its affiliated Narva College since 2004. The proportion of Early Childhood Teachers with a higher education degree has risen considerably over the past two decades. Whereas in 1995, the share of Early Childhood Teachers with higher education was 20.9%, and in 2001 25.6% (Torm 2002, 465), by 2016 this proportion had reached 66% (The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2016).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Early Childhood Teacher (*Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja*)

Since 2015, Early Childhood Teachers in Estonia are required to have at least a BA level qualification from a university or university college/university of applied sciences. One third of the early childhood teaching workforce are EC Teachers with long years of experience and a tertiary-level qualification who are permitted to remain working in the field.

The study programme of early childhood education at Tallinn University gives a contemporary research-based preparation at either Bachelor's (180 ECTS points) or Master's degree level (additional 120 ECTS points). These degree qualifications guarantee students' professional competencies and skills of self-reflection as Early Childhood Teachers. The courses also prepare students to become early childhood education specialists with an understanding of educational policy-making processes. They equip students with the qualifications to support children's development, to create a favourable learning environment, and to cooperate with other adults including parents, other teachers, and specialists in the ECEC network. The Bachelor's degree also supports each learner's personal development and provides them with the option of continuing their studies at Master's level.

Bachelor studies

The ECE study programme at BA level includes mainly in-depth courses in key disciplines (educational sciences, psychology, and field-based studies). According to the logics of the programme structure, the role of in-depth studies supports the future Early Childhood Teachers to acquire a general, cultural, social, communicative, ethical and professional set of skills for pedagogical work with children aged birth to 7 years in diverse ECEC institutions.

The university bases its activities on the needs of Estonian society, drawing on historical experience and educational research, and cooperates with other universities and educational institutions in Estonia and in other countries. Since 1967, Tallinn University has educated over 2,500 specialists in early childhood education, who have either followed the four-year, the five-year or the 3+2 years study route, depending on the preferred model at the time. All of these study routes have in the meantime been equalised with the currently valid Master's curriculum by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

Master studies

The first students were admitted in the academic year 2002/2003. The first specialists with a Master's degree for work as an Early Childhood Teacher-Counsellor graduated from Tallinn Pedagogical University in 2003. Since 2015, the MA study programme is called 'Early Childhood Teacher' (*Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja*).

Former Master's students from Tallinn Pedagogical University have applied successfully for posts and work in managerial positions in the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, in the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre, in university colleges/universities of applied sciences, as trainers of teachers in further education, in education departments, as directors or head teachers of infant/toddler centres and as class teachers. The curriculum enables students to acquire a research-based education qualification at Master's level, to deepen Early Childhood Teachers' competencies, to complement scientific knowledge in the area of early childhood education, to acquire additional knowledge in pedagogical counselling and the management of children's settings, and to learn how to support children's transition from kindergarten to school. The Master's thesis enables students to continue in-depth scientific studies towards the level of Doctoral studies. Studies take place in the form of lectures, seminars, independent work, practical work, and field-based studies.

A **Lead Teacher** is a pedagogical leader and deputy Centre Head and part of the leading and administration team of the ECEC setting. Qualification requirements for the post of Lead Teacher are a higher education degree and a professional qualification in Early Childhood Pedagogy and Management.

Three levels of the Estonian Qualifications Framework (EstQF which corresponds to the EQF) apply for staff in the teaching profession: levels 6, 7 and 8 (Kutsekoda, n.d.). Early Childhood Teachers are located at level 6, Primary and Secondary Education Teachers at level 7, and teachers at level 8 are Master Teachers who guide the learning processes of other teachers and additionally participate in leadership activities both within the ECEC setting/school and in collaboration with higher education institutions.

Table 3

Estonia: Early Childhood Teacher

<p style="text-align: center;">Job title in Estonian: <i>Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years compulsory schooling with school leaving certificate; oral examination</p>
<p>Professional studies: 3 year study route at university, including at least 18 weeks' work placement</p>
<p>Award: Bachelor's degree/Early childhood education (<i>Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja</i>)</p>
<p>ECTS points: 180</p>
<p>EQF level: 6</p>

Job title in Estonian: <i>Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
ISCED 2013: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Integrated ECEC centre (<i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i>), 0-7; Preparatory class (<i>Koolieelikute ettevalmistusrühm</i>), 6-7; Infant/toddler centre (<i>Lastesõim</i>), 0-3.

Childcare Workers (Nurses/Childminders) and Teachers' Assistants (*Lapsehoidja and Õpetaja abi*)

Childcare Workers (Nurses, Childminders) and Teachers' Assistants are required to follow a one-year vocational education/training course, organised by the Health Care Colleges in Tallinn and Tartu. Complying with a decree of the Minister of Social Affairs, applicants are expected to acquire competences in health promotion activities in ECEC settings and in the implementation of the National Curriculum. The qualification is pegged at EQF level 4 or level 5, ISCED 4. Graduates can work in ECEC centres or infant-toddler centres.

Table 4

Estonia: Childcare Worker (Nurse/Childminder)

Job title in Estonian: <i>Lapsehoidja</i>
Entry requirements: School leaving certificate Professional studies: 1 year of studies at a Health Care College Award: Diploma in Child Care ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 (or Level 5 for work with children with special needs and with parents). ISCED 2013: 0913 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplaces: Infant-toddler centre (<i>Lastesõim</i>), 0-3; Integrated ECEC centre (<i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i>), 0-7

Table 5

Estonia: Teacher's Assistant

Job title in Estonian: <i>Õpetaja abi</i>
Entry requirements: School leaving certificate Professional studies: 1 year of studies at a Health Care College Award: Diploma in Child Care ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 (or Level 5 for work in Preparatory classes) ISCED 2013: 0913 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplaces: Integrated ECEC centre (<i>Koolieelne lasteasutus</i>), 0-7; Preparatory class (<i>Koolieelikute ettevalmistusrühm</i>), 6-7; Infant-toddler centre (<i>Lastesõim</i>), 0-3.

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

An important document which regulates work in ECEC institutions is the Teachers' Professional Standard, EQF level 6, issued on 27.11.2013 (Kutsekoda n.d.). The Professional Standard sets

out the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes or competency requirements needed for the successful enactment of professional activities. The profession of teacher (in general, not just for early childhood) includes the following tasks and duties:

- planning of learning and teaching activities;
- development of the learning environment;
- supporting learning and development;
- reflection and professional self-development;
- counselling of learners and parents.

Personal qualities needed for the work are described as: self-management, cooperativeness, initiative, responsibility, self-confidence, creativity, tolerance, empathy, integrity and a positive attitude.

Universities are free to put together curricula according to the National Curriculum for Pre-school Child Care Institutions (Government of the Republic 2008) and the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (Riigi Teataja 1999). Teachers are required to provide advice on issues of learning and teaching to the parents of children who attend the ECEC centre and to parents whose children do not attend the centre but who reside in the catchment area if the parents so request.

Box 2 provides an annotated version of the Early Childhood Education Teacher curriculum at Tallinn University (2016-2017) (Tallinn University 2016a).

Box 2

Estonia: Early Childhood Education Teacher curriculum (BA-level) at Tallinn University, 2016-2017

Aims of the curriculum: To create opportunities for the acquisition of a broad education in the Educational Sciences in the area of early childhood education; to support the formation of skills for work as a teacher in early childhood education; to create opportunities for continuing studies in early childhood education at Master's level.

Competence specifications: An early childhood education graduate ...

- has foundational knowledge in the educational sciences, systematic knowledge of pre-school education, knows the principles of child development, subject didactics and methods of scientific research;
- knows how to integrate theoretical knowledge into practical work with children and adults;
- knows how to create a favourable intellectual and physical environment for child development;
- knows how to plan, integrate, analyse critically and evaluate pedagogical processes;
- knows how to search information by using various information sources in the area of pre-school education and to engage with specific questions and problems of the field;
- knows how to conduct empirical research, write and formalise a Bachelor thesis;
- knows how to reflect upon own activities, evaluate needs for self-education and further training and possibilities to continue at a post-graduate (Master's) level.

Course structure

University-wide courses (18 ECTS points), e.g. general and social psychology

Basics of research (12 ECTS points)

Child development, learning and teaching (36 ECTS points)

Core courses (24 ECTS points)

Electives (6 ECTS points)

Language Specialisation (6 ECTS points)

Pedagogical professional placements (18 ECTS points)

Professional didactics (30 ECTS points)

Additional elective module(s) (18 ECTS points)

Final thesis (12 ECTS points)

TOTAL: 180 ECTS points

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Currently the only route to becoming an Early Childhood Teacher/Pedagogue is to study full-time or part-time either at Tartu or Tallinn universities and their affiliated colleges.

It is possible to combine studying and working by enrolling for part-time studies or at the Open University. Part-time studies alongside employment as a teacher are free of charge, but Open University BA and MA courses are not, and teachers must pay for them.

Notes on the history of IPS/Early Childhood Education in Estonia

The institution traditionally responsible for the professional education/training of core practitioners working in ECEC settings was the Tallinn Pedagogical School (Tallinna Pedagoogikakool 1994, 60). In 1995, the school was renamed **Tallinn Pedagogical Seminar (TPS)**. This institution has been educating Early Childhood Educators/Teachers since 1937. In 1991, an adult education and early childhood education methodology unit was opened at TPS, staffed by employees of the previous National Preschool Education Methodology Centre.

Some years later, Tallinn Pedagogical Seminar gained the status of a university of applied sciences. After Estonia regained its independence, the first state-wide early childhood education conferences took place at TPS. Since 2015, Tallinn Pedagogical Seminar has been affiliated to Tallinn University.

The **Rakvere Pedagogical School (RPS)** was founded in 1972 as a result of the rapid expansion of the ECEC institutions network at that time, and the need for early childhood education increased considerably during the 1970s. The predecessor of RPS was the Rakvere Economic Technical School which operated from 1958. As a result of the reorganisation, a new specialist course was introduced aimed at providing early childhood education teacher education for graduates of the 8th grade, and later for graduates of secondary schools. As in all earlier establishments, theoretical studies were complemented with practice in an early childhood setting. In 1992, RPS started training early childhood caregivers and social workers for schools. After later joining the Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU), Rakvere Pedagogical School now provides a Bachelor's degree for prospective Early Childhood Teachers. An initial professional studies course specialising in early childhood education at higher education level has now also been founded at **Tartu University**.

On 1 September 1967, the **Tallinn Pedagogical Institute** (renamed Tallinn University in 2005) opened the specialist degree course for early childhood education and psychology; students were admitted for both full-time and part-time learning. Between 1993 and 1997, a four-year common degree was introduced for Pre-Primary and Primary School Teachers. Between 1994 and 1998 this was extended to include a child psychology specialisation (a four-year Bachelor's degree course).

Between 1995 and 2002 the Pre-primary and Primary School Teacher combined degree course lasted five years. Between 1998 and 2005 it was possible to follow a four-year degree in Educational Sciences, with a specialisation as a Pre-primary and Primary School Teacher. The education of students who graduated in those years has currently been equalised with a Master's degree.

The new 3+2 curricula for Early Childhood Teachers were compiled in 2001 and the first students both for Bachelor's and Master's levels were admitted in the academic year 2002/2003. Since 2002, the Teacher in Early Childhood Education Bachelor study route takes three years to complete. The following Master's programmes have been available:

- 2002 – 2004: Teacher-Counsellor of Preschool Education (one year, 40 ECTS points). The first Master's students in the field of early childhood education teacher-counselling graduated in 2003.

- 2003 – 2010: Teacher-Counsellor of Early Childhood Education (two years, according to the new curriculum, 120 ECTS points).
- Starting in 2010 and up to the current time, the MA studies have been called ‘Early childhood education’; the nominal study period is two years, 120 ECTS points (Veisson et al. 2011).

Since 2015, early childhood education BA and MA study programmes are located at the teacher education and educational science faculty at Tallinn University School of Educational Sciences. The faculty comprises early childhood education, general education, vocational education and adult education.

The activities in the field of teacher education and educational sciences are also supported by the Centre of Excellence in Educational Innovation. Focus fields are areas of activity that connect different research fields and work with the key issues in the society rather than studies or academic research (Tallinn University 2016). The aim of the Centre is to support the development and application of a 21st century learning culture in the Estonian education sphere.

The University chose educational innovation as an area of focus since the difference between the needs of education institutions and society has increased considerably in the past decade. Learning is gradually moving outside formal education and does not end with a diploma, but continues throughout life.

Fortunately, the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 is planning great changes in education. The School of Educational Sciences, which is responsible for developing this area of focus, also highlights non-formal and informal education, as well as support services for education, since formal education needs to become more individualised and supportive of differences (Tallinn University 2016).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based practica in ECEC settings during the **Bachelor study route** are organised in five parts and are allocated a total of 18 ECTS points. This means that they comprise 10% of the overall study programme (Tallinn University 2016a).

Practicum I in ECEC Institutions: 3 ECTS points, first year, autumn semester

The first part of field-based studies takes place over a period of 10 days/2 weeks. The students reflect on what it means to be a teacher; they familiarise themselves with work in different ECEC institutions and with the curriculum; they observe and analyse educational activities and learning environments and cooperate with colleagues and children in the group.

Practicum II in ECEC Institutions: 3 ECTS points, second year, autumn semester

The second part also takes place over a period of 10 days/2 weeks. The students familiarise themselves with the kindergarten group's documentation (daily and weekly schedule, planned educational activities, educational work diary, etc.); they observe and analyse educational activities carried out by the group teacher and activities they conduct in cooperation with the teacher; they plan for children's play and integrated educational activities for children aged 3-6; they choose and analyse teaching methods and materials, including ICT; they organise and conduct children's games and outdoor activities, analysing them in terms of the children's development.

Practicum III in ECEC Institutions: 3 ECTS points, second year, spring semester.

During the third practicum, again lasting 10 days/2 weeks, students become acquainted with a kindergarten group's programme; they observe, analyse, plan and carry out educational activi-

ties and guide children's free activity within the group; they take into account children's individual characteristics and specific developmental needs when planning activities; they are able to carry out the main activities of the daily schedule; to guide children's play; to organise games and outdoor activities; to communicate with parents; to participate in the meetings and events of the ECEC setting; and to seek out appropriate ICT materials to support children's learning and to evaluate their own activities.

Teaching Practice IV (3 ECTS points, two weeks, third year autumn semester) and **Teaching Practice V** (6 ECTS points, four weeks, third year, spring semester)

The specific focus of these two elements of field-based studies is currently under revision. However, the overall aim is for the students to carry out as many assignments as possible independently, both in terms of teaching and of evaluating observed and self-conducted activities in the ECEC centre. Starting in the second week, students make a daily plan for their own activities according to the group schedule. They are expected to draw up Concept Cards for five projects which integrate a range of educational activities (movement, music, outdoor learning, inquiry-based learning, activities in small groups) and to analyse and reflect on the learning processes which take place. This includes assessing individual children's play activities according to a specified evaluation instrument. Beyond this, students are expected to organise a group party in their children's group, to prepare a presentation for the ECEC centre's pedagogical council and to present it at a meeting. They are also expected to observe and analyse the teaching activities of other students and to cooperate with the Teacher's Assistant. During these two practicum periods students learn to communicate with parents and to examine the centre's strategies for partnership with parents, and participate in all centre meetings and events, including music and movement activities with the children at such events. Students learn about the work of the ECEC Centre Head and summarise the main tasks. They also participate in assessing the children's school readiness. The practicum periods end with an oral examination conducted by all supervising teachers who have given written feedback on the student, and takes into account their practicum portfolio and self-evaluation measures. It is planned to formalise the practicum portfolio electronically.

Practicum abroad: 15 ECTS points

A practicum can also take place in another country, but this is optional and additional to the required practica. If students choose to spend a practicum period abroad (for at least ten weeks), they are required to spend at least three months in the country. During this time they are able to participate in the daily activities of an ECEC setting and learn about other ECEC systems, approaches and methodologies. They are expected to fill in observation sheets and complete a practicum portfolio. Students are supported financially through a European programme such as Erasmus+.

Optional courses: 6 ECTS points each

To acquire additional practical knowledge supporting children's learning or physical skills or children with special educational needs, there are several optional practice-oriented courses available which are allocated 6 ECTS points each.

Workplace-based practica in ECEC settings during the **Master study route** are organised into two optional courses (6 ECTS points each). The aim of the MA practicum is to create opportunities for the students to become familiar with a leading role in educational activities, guiding teamwork and learn about different forms of work organisation, applying different methods and appropriate ICT tools to assess their own work and that of their colleagues.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

New strategic focal points in policies for the teaching profession have been specified in the document 'Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020'. The implementation of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy and the professional development of academic staff take place under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research. The 'Teacher and Leadership Programme' (2015-2020) is a comprehensive professional development system for Early Childhood Teachers and Centre Heads (see also *section 6*).

For the implementation of the goals specified in the strategy, measures have been provided for making the teaching profession more attractive. These include the re-organisation of the continuing professional education of Early Childhood Teachers and Centre Heads in early childhood settings, providing feedback on teaching performance, and improving the digital competence of learners and teachers. Professional standards and competence models form a conceptual basis for the continuing education of Early Childhood Teachers and Centre Heads. A central in-service training system supports the development of the specified competencies.

According to the Preschool Child Care Institution Act (1999), teachers are required to participate in continuing education. Nowadays, however, with professional standards as an orientation, the identification of development needs is largely driven by the teachers themselves. Annual national teacher training priorities are set together with universities and other stakeholders. For the year 2016/2017, the priorities for Early Childhood Teachers are: implementation of the national preschool curriculum; child-initiated approaches to learning; supporting children with special needs; Estonian as an additional language for children with a different home language.

Professional development is optional for teachers and assistants and required for centre directors and head teachers. In the past, all teachers were entitled to take further education courses every five years (160 hours). Currently they are expected to attend courses that focus on the competencies mentioned in the Professional Standard for Teachers (see *section 3.2*). According to the Estonian Education Information System, preschool teachers attend on average 35 hours per year of CPD. All costs are covered by the state and the employers.

The main providers of CPD activities for Early Childhood Teachers and Centre Heads are Tallinn University and Tartu University. Additional providers are private or third sector organisations, such as *Innove*, a non-profit organisation which aims to coordinate lifelong learning development activities and to implement the EU structural aid in a targeted manner. Central in-service trainings are free of charge, funded by the state and employers. Alongside training courses, an increasing number of alternative development methods are becoming available, such as mentorship, supervision, coaching, network learning.

Continuing Professional Development for Early Childhood Teachers is provided by Tallinn University and Tartu University, some private organisations, and also by *Innove* (Tallinn University 2016). In 2003, *Innove* took over the activities of the former foundation 'Vocational Education and Training Reform in Estonia'. Among other things it organises trainings and the development and implementation of qualifications and curricula in the area of general and vocational education (Innove 2016).

The Open University at Tallinn University (Tallinn University 2016b) coordinates the continuing education programme and is open to anyone who is interested in developing themselves or their organisation, advancing their specialist field or their vocational or professional qualifications, using credit points in degree studies or acquiring a second study major or a study minor.

CPD activities are organised either by the local government or by the ECEC settings themselves. In the case of the latter, the centre heads of ECEC institutions are responsible for organising courses for teachers and assistants. Every ECEC institution organises 'development conversations' (*arenguvestlused*). Centre Heads can also send teachers to further education

courses at universities (Centres for Educational Innovation) or to events organised by *InnoVe* (see above).

Specific forms of CPD are formally recognised in terms of career advancement (e.g. credit endorsements for specialist posts such as Senior Teacher or Master Teacher).

Centre Heads must have a higher education qualification and a professional qualification in early childhood pedagogy and management. The main modules of such courses are: innovation, result oriented leadership and management; teamwork, personnel management, cooperation with interest groups and stakeholders including children and parents; resource management; the education process and support of children's development; presenting 'success stories' to colleagues.

In terms of current reforms, the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 provides for the development of competence centres at Tallinn University and the University of Tartu which are responsible for the development of teacher training and educational sciences. The competence centres are targeted at collecting and developing knowledge about learning and teaching, and passing on such knowledge to ECEC institutions.

There have been no recent large-scale research projects on CPD activities in the early childhood workforce, but relevant research is planned for 2018.

Key challenges in developing and implementing CPD policies are: stronger cooperation with the social and health care fields; providing an effective training system for the ECEC workforce; supporting children with special needs; and supporting teachers' competence in developing Estonian language learning among children with a different home language.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

System-related reforms

Recent policy reforms and initiatives have been mostly of a general, system-related nature rather than specifically related to ECEC staffing. These general policy goals include the preparation of children for school and for citizenship, supporting children with special needs, safeguarding vulnerable children, reducing inequality and social disadvantage and supporting children when home and national language differ. Initiatives introduced within the context of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 include, for example, raising staff awareness for values oriented learning. In 2015, this programme was piloted in 439 (67%) kindergartens (in more than 1,000 groups) and in 81 schools (ca 350 classes) around Estonia. Further programmes have focused on bullying prevention and health promotion. Since 2010, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has been supporting a joint venture between the Danish branch of "Save the Children" and the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, entitled "Bully-Free Kindergarten". The majority of Estonian pre-school child care institutions have joined the initiative.

During the first half of 2015, the European Commission's Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (European Commission 2014) was translated into Estonian and made accessible for ECEC institutions. Information days for reflecting on the quality framework, as well as on the quality of the early childhood curriculum, took place in all Estonian counties and in Tallinn from February-May 2015. Altogether, 653 teachers, head teachers and specialists from local and county governments participated in these information days. Further information days specifically on the implementation of the national curriculum took place later in the year, attended by centre heads and deputy heads from all Estonian ECEC institutions, around 1,000 teachers, and also local and county government specialists.

During 2014-2015, Estonia participated in an international ECEC study funded by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which enabled a comparison of the Estonian ECEC system, including the staffing system, with that of other countries and provided a basis for discussions on system reform (Bertram and Pascal 2016).

Teacher and Leadership Programme

For the period 2015-2020, the programme 'Competent and motivated teachers and leaders' has been initiated with the aims of developing a comprehensive CPD system for teachers and heads of early childhood institutions, of boosting the status of ECEC and of making the ECEC teaching profession more attractive. (Budget: 24.6 million euros, including 20.9 million euros from the European Social Fund).

Focal points of the programme are:

- Introduction of an educational leader competence model for self-evaluation and receiving feedback;
- Digital competences of teachers;
- The educational institution's developmental projects for creating a more supportive organisational culture for the new learning approach;
- Supporting networks for joint learning both within and outside the institutions;
- Learning events for sharing best practices in early childhood education;
- Leadership training courses for centre heads and deputy heads;
- Teacher further education, include that offered by universities and the training of centre-specific trainers;
- Development and implementation of a teacher competence model for self-evaluation and receiving feedback.

Regional Teachers' Centres

In every county and in every city district of Tallinn there are kindergartens and schools which function as methodology/consultation centres for teachers, 49 in all. Also, regional (county) teacher support centres have been set up, as well as regional counselling centres such as the *Pathfinder* centres organised by the *InnoVe* Foundation.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Values and values education

Source: Ülavere, P. and M. Veisson. 2015. "Values and Values Education in Estonian Preschool Childcare Institutions." *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 17 (2): 108–124. doi: 10.1515/jtes-2015-0014

Background: Research on *Values and Values Education in Estonian Preschool Child Care Institutions* was initiated by the Estonian National Values Education Programme (2009-2013) (P.I. Professor Margit Sutrop, University of Tartu).

Aims: The objective of the study was to provide an analysis of the values that principals, teachers and parents in ECEC institutions consider important to be taught to children, as well as to find out which activities should be used to implement values education.

Procedure: This was a country-wide questionnaire survey (convenience sampling). 978 respondents from all 15 Estonian counties included 163 centre heads, 425 teachers and 390 parents in ECEC institutions.

Findings: The most important values according to the centre heads were a sense of humour as well as pride (respect towards self and apprehension of one's own values) and inventiveness, whereas teachers valued patience to a significantly higher degree. Compared to centre heads, parents viewed confidence and commitment as more important, while compared to teachers, parents thought it more important that kindergartens teach the importance of good education. In summary: Values education in ECEC institutions takes place primarily in adherence to the specific group's rules during the course of everyday communication and activities. Personal role models are considered to be very important in values education.

Professionalism of early childhood education teachers

Source: Peterson, T. and M. Veisson, E. Hujala, U. Härkönen, A. Sandberg, I. Johansson, and E. Kovacsne Bakosi. 2016, "Professionalism of Preschool Teachers in Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Hungary." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 24 (1): 136-156.

Background: According to reports commissioned by the European Commission (2011) and OECD (2012), the professionalism of early childhood teachers is a key factor in ensuring the quality of early childhood education.

Aims: The aim of a study on *Teacher's professional development* was to investigate the views of Estonian, Finnish, Swedish and Hungarian early childhood teachers and principals regarding professionalism within a cross-cultural context.

Procedure: The sample consisted of teachers and principals from Estonian (174; 118), Finnish (82; 84), Swedish (117; 96) and Hungarian (111; 99) ECEC institutions. A rating scale was implemented.

Findings: Similarities could be found between the views of Finnish and Swedish teachers and principals and between those of Estonian and Hungarian teachers and principals. However, differences between the countries were significant and depended on the country context. The highest mean ratings were given by Estonian and Hungarian principals and Estonian teachers to creating a learning environment. The development of values was evaluated highest by Finnish principals and teachers. Swedish teachers evaluated teaching strategies highly. The statements with the lowest evaluations by all interest groups were family involvement and professional development.

Cooperation between parents, teachers and centre heads

Source: Suur, S. and M. Veisson. 2012. "Teacher-Principal-Parent Understandings of Partnership in Early Childhood Education: A Comparative Study," In *Lifelong Learning and Teacher Development. Estonian Studies in Education*, edited by Jaan Mikk, Marika Veisson & Piret Luik: 58-77. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Aim: Supported by the city of Tallinn, the aim of this study was to find out how cooperation between parents, teachers and centre heads can support children's learning and how the communication between these groups is organised.

Procedure: 465 teachers, 396 parents and 167 leaders responded to a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Questionnaires were anonymous and data protected.

Findings: Cooperation with parents supports children's development and a smooth transition to school if parents are involved in the organisation of learning process, developmental conversations and supporting the child's individual development at home. Similarities and differences between evaluations of parents, teachers and leaders are discussed. All parties value parents' meetings highly, as well as specific events and everyday communication with each other. Communication via a group list of parents and letters are not popular forms of communication.

Additional research activities

Since 2014, Tallinn University has participated in the project *Professionalism and professionalism of teachers in changing society* (P.I. Professor I. Goodson 2013) funded by the Estonian Science Agency. This project aims to scrutinise how global changes and policy transformations and teachers' life histories have affected teachers' professionalism and professionalism in Estonia. As such the project has great potential for producing knowledge that has important practical implications, allowing increasing policy take-up and maximisation of teacher motivation and commitment, but also considerable international interest since relevant data from former communist countries is not available from previous studies.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Teachers' salaries are related to the level of education and work experience.

During the transfer of ECEC institutions to municipal ownership, early childhood education teachers were the first in the educational system to feel the inequity in salaries. Article 27 of the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (1999) stipulates: the remuneration of early childhood education teachers is defined by the local authorities and so far it has not been regulated by the State. Although the remuneration level of ECE teachers has been raised substantially, the differences between counties have remained. This is an indicator of society's attitudes and the low status attributed to the work in ECEC; such attitudes can influence the education of the next generation of citizens.

In the two largest cities, Tallinn and Tartu, and in a few smaller municipalities, early childhood education teachers' salaries are equal to those of primary school teachers. It is a decision made by the municipality governments. The aim is to pay equal salaries in all local governments, but the current reality is that ECE teachers' salaries are lower than those of primary school teachers. The new government in Estonia promised to enhance the salaries of all early childhood education teachers to equal those of primary teachers.

It is possible to live on this salary, but remuneration is not much more than a minimum wage (September 2017: 840€ in Estonia).

Directors' and head teachers' salaries are higher according to the posts of responsibility.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

According to official statistics (Statistical Yearbook of Estonia 2015), most early childhood education teachers (95% in 2014) work full time (35 hours per week); only 5% work part time (up to 35 hours per week).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Staff members are supported by the director and head teacher of the ECEC setting and by the local municipality, which organises courses for teachers and assistants. There are also seminars organised by the municipalities and counties. Many institutions participate in different projects. Novice teachers are guided by a mentor – an experienced member of staff in the ECEC centre - for one year.

The system of educational advisers and consultants is currently under development.

Evaluation is conducted in order to decide on the professional skills and professional competence of teachers and their level of qualification. The evaluation conditions and procedure are approved by a regulation of the Minister of Education and Research. Regular developmental assessments are held with teachers and assistants by the director or head teacher.

All teachers belong to the Teachers' Council of Preschool Institutions which has the task of analysing and assessing the learning and teaching provided in the ECEC setting and which submits proposals to the director, the board of trustees and the rural municipality or city government in order to improve the learning and teaching.

8.4 Non-contact time

There is no non-contact time in the ECEC institutions in Estonia. Working hours are 35 hours per week and during this time, teachers work directly with the children. Children sleep after lunch and teachers can use this time for documentation.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In smaller municipalities there are sometimes shortages of teachers. Usually the teacher is required to have at least a Bachelor's degree. In case of shortages, however, an exception is sometimes made and students are hired. This decision is usually made by the director of the ECEC institution, and a work contract is usually signed for one year only.

In order to fill vacant teaching positions, the head teacher or other persons employed in the field of learning and teaching, or the director of the ECEC institution is required to organise a competition, the procedure for which needs to be approved by the board of trustees on the proposal of the director.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

- A major challenge is **to guarantee a place in an ECEC institution** for all children who need it, which will have repercussions for the staffing of ECEC. As from 2018, the Ministry of Education and Research will take on responsibility for settings previously under the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- **Extending research on early childhood education** issues is another challenge in Estonia. Researchers need more research grants from the Estonian Science Agency and Ministry of Education and Research, which have decided to give more responsibility to the universities to make decisions on how to use the research money and which studies will be granted.
- A further challenge is **to raise the status of early childhood education teachers** and find the funding to pay them on the same level as all other teachers. The status of ECE teachers in society demands a concerted effort at the levels of the profession, legislative policies and legal acts. Although all political parties declare the importance of early childhood education, their understanding of the content of early childhood education is quite different. Over the years, the prevailing majority of ECE teachers have done their professional job in the best possible way. They have been keen to learn and have valued education and learning. ECEC has a more meaningful role to fulfil in society today than we have thought so far. Estonian ECEC settings and teachers are dedicated promoters of a culture of education in our society (Torm, 2011). The Preschool Teachers' Union and Preschool Leaders' Association in Tartu and Tallinn have been successful.

- A final challenge is **to establish child-centred and play-based learning and teaching** in ECEC institutions. All universities and specialists who organise continuing education need to be aware of this. At present, younger teachers tend to be more open to these approaches than the more experienced teachers who received their education during the Soviet period, when early childhood education was much more teacher-centred.

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ESTONIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Marika Veisson
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Estonia – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 319-331.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Overall, the system of early childhood education and care institutions in Estonia falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*). This includes responsibility for the integrated ECEC centres (*koolieelne lasteasutus*)¹ for children aged 1½ to 7 years, day nurseries (*lastesõim*) for children under age 4, and kindergartens-in-schools (*lasteaiad-algkool*) in rural areas. Additional childcare/playgroups (*lapsehoiu*) and the relatively new system of family day care (*päevehoid*) come under the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Eesti Sotsiaalministeerium*), meaning that the ECEC system as a whole is partially split. However, it is planned to transfer responsibility for the childcare/playgroups and family day care to the Ministry of Education by 2018, making the ECEC system in Estonia fully unitary.

The Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*) makes decisions on the organisation and development of the education system, the Government attends to the implementation of education reforms and the Ministry of Education is responsible for research and management, including quality assurance, funding plans, national curricula and the professional education/training of teachers at all levels of the education system. At the local level, the regional administration (county governor) is responsible for the monitoring of teaching and learning activities and the municipalities for providing and organising places in ECEC provision.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
IEA 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer and M. J. Neuman 2010.

General objectives and legislative framework

The general objectives of early childhood education and care are based on three main principles: ensuring every child's right to education, developing individual potentials and reducing social inequalities. ECEC in Estonia represents an integrated approach to education and care, both aiming to help parents to balance family and workplace duties and to promote children's capabilities in preparation for school and life in general. The latter includes enhancing their emotional, moral, social, intellectual and physical development and taking into account their individual needs.

The organisational principles of the education system and its continually evolving decentralised structures are set down in the Estonian Education Act (*Eesti Vabariigi haridusseadus*, 1992 with amendments up to 2004), the Child Protection Act (*Eesti Vabariigi lastekaitse seadus*, 1993 with amendments from 2016), the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (*Koolieelse lasteasutuse seadus*, 1999 with amendments up to 2015) and the Estonian Constitution (*Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus*, 1992).

In 2014, the Estonian Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2020 (*Eesti elukestva õppe strateegia 2020*) was introduced, providing the current basis for government decisions regarding changes in the

¹ In official documents these are variously translated into English as 'Preschool child care institutions' or 'Preschool institutions' or 'Kindergartens'.

education system. Five general objectives are foregrounded: (1) respecting the individuality of the learner; (2) improving the competence and motivation of educators/teachers; (3) combining life-long learning with the needs of the employment market; (4) utilising digital technologies and creating a supportive infrastructure for this; (5) providing equal chances for all. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of these goals.

In 2015, the Estonian Minister of Education and Research approved an integrated ECEC concept (decree no. 1.1-2/15/455) that aims to provide high quality education and care, to ensure access for all children aged 1½ years up to statutory school age, to provide a safe and supportive learning environment and to enhance school readiness. Relevant legislation is expected in 2017.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Veisson, M. 2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Since 2014, all children aged between 1½ and 7 years are entitled to a free place in an ECEC setting. However, it is not always possible for the municipalities to fully meet this requirement.

Attending an ECEC institution is not obligatory. However, the local authorities have a duty to provide a place for all children between 1½ and 7 years of age whose parents wish them to attend, regardless of their possible special educational needs.

Primary schooling begins at age 7.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
European Commission, EACEA and Eurydice 2015.

Main types of provision

In 2015, the number of ECEC settings² totalled 634, providing places for 68,331 children. In national statistics, 505 of these are described as ‘kindergartens’ (here: integrated ECEC centres), 118 as ‘kindergarten schools’ (here: kindergartens-in-school), 7 as ‘nursery schools’ (here: day nurseries), and 4 as ‘special kindergartens’ (here: special ECEC centre) for children with disabilities.*

Table 1

Estonia: ECEC settings according to type, number and children attending, 2015*

Type of setting	Number of ECEC settings	Number of children enrolled
Integrated ECEC centre (<i>koolieelne lasteasutus</i>)	505	62,802
Kindergarten-in-school (<i>lasteaiad-alkkool</i>)	118	4,658
Day nursery (<i>lastesõim</i>)	7	554
Special ECEC centre	4	317
Total	634	68,331

² Again, the English translations of the names of different forms of provision vary from document to document.

Integrated ECEC Centres for children aged 1½ to 7 years (*koolieelne lasteasutus*) are the most common form of provision and local authorities are responsible for their management. ‘Integrated’ in this sense means both age-integrated across the early childhood years (1-7) as well as in terms of providing a combination of nursery and kindergarten facilities and also pre-primary education for 6- to 7-year olds under one roof. The centre head is responsible for leadership, together with the staff board and a management committee. Integrative groups comprising children with disabilities and children without can be set up in the centres, as can mixed-age groups. The Integrated ECEC Centres are open all the year round. The municipalities decide on the specific opening times in consultation with parents. If the demand for places exceeds the number available, the municipalities offer half-day places.

A relatively small number of free-standing **day nurseries** (*lastesõim*) offer places for 1- to under 5-year olds.

Kindergartens-in-schools (*lasteaiad-alkkool*) are a form of provision to be found in rural areas. ECEC centres are located in the same buildings as schools because the number of children in the region is not large enough to justify establishing two separate institutions.

Pre-primary groups (*koolieelikute ettevalmistusrühm*) for 6- to 7-year olds are to be found in all Integrated ECEC centres. They focus primarily on supporting children in their year preceding school entry. Although they are not obligatory, all children are expected to attend. In some cases, **preparatory classes** (*eelõpetust*) may be set up. These are a specific, non-official form of pre-primary group paid for by parents who wish their children to experience a specific focus on school readiness activities. It is planned to establish a ‘school readiness certificate’ as a mandatory document for school admittance.

A system of **family day care** (*päevehoid*) was introduced in Estonia in 2006/07. By 2013, roughly 10% of children under 3 years of age (4,543 Kinder) were being cared for by family day care personnel. A qualifying course has been developed and currently a system of online registration is being set up. The organisation of family day care is regulated by the Social Welfare Act and comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Municipal or privately-run **childcare/playgroups** have been set up for children under 3 years of age who could not be offered a place in a regular ECEC centre. The core practitioner is a child carer (*lapsehoidja*) who has undergone a one-year qualifying course. These groups charge considerably higher fees than mainstream provision. They are not required to work according to the national curriculum and are supervised by the local authorities. They also come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In recent years, so-called **hobby groups** as well as **Estonian language** groups have become increasingly popular. These groups are open both for children who attend ECEC settings as well as those who do not. Some are subsidised by the municipalities, others are fee-paying. In some municipal and private ECEC settings, so-called ‘**baby schools**’ have been set up for children aged 2 to 8 months which generally have to be financed by the parents. The aim of these groups is to provide a framework for parents and children to learn together.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
IEA 2015.
*Statistics Estonia 2017a
Veisson, M. 2016 (personal communication, 20.08.2016)

Provider structures

The majority of ECEC provision in Estonia is public/municipal. From a total of 634 early childhood settings in 2015, only 9% (57) were run by private agencies.*

Municipalities have a duty to provide ECEC places for children aged 1½ to 7 years. In order to address the current insufficient supply of places, the “Government Action Plan 2011-2015” made it possible for municipalities to receive additional funding support in order to create new places. In this way, a home-based place may be offered instead of a place in a centre-based setting, particularly in the case of children under 3 years of age, or private ECEC settings may be offered a subsidy for providing additional places.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The proportion of children under 3 years of age attending centre-based settings in Estonia increased from 12% in 2005 to 21.4% in 2015. The proportion of children up to 6 years of age also increased and by 2015, over 90% of this age-group was enrolled in an ECEC centre.

Table 2

Estonia: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %**	3 years to school entry in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	3	9
	Over 30 hours	9	69
	No attendance	89	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	2	6
	Over 30 hours	19	86
	No attendance	79	8
2015	1 to 29 hours	3.6	6.8
	Over 30 hours	17.8	86.1
	No attendance	78.5	7.1

According to national statistics (2015) and own calculations, the participation rates for the various age-groups were as follows (Table 3):

Table 3

Estonia: Children in centre-based settings according to age-group – participation rates and absolute figures, 2015**

Age-group	Participation rates, in % [†]	Children enrolled
0- to 1-year olds	0.2	25
1- to 2-year olds	28.5	3,884
2- to 3-year olds	73.7	10,358
Under 3-year olds	34.5	14,267
3- to 4-year olds	87.5	12,816
4- to 5-year olds	87.7	13,836
5- to 6-year olds	94.0	14,613
6- to 7-year olds	79.5	12,491
3- to 7-year olds	87.2	53,756
Under 7-year olds	66.1	68,023

[†] own calculations on the basis of national population statistics

Since the late 1980s – as a result of demographic changes and sinking birthrates – there was a considerable drop in the number of settings and the number of children attending them (Table 4). Over the years, these numbers were consistently lower in rural areas than in the cities. Participation rates in general started increasing again after the turn of the century: between 1995 and 2003/04 those of 1-year olds increased from 6% to 14%, and those of 2-year olds from 38% to 56%. Overall it is estimated that the child population will continue to decrease in the coming years.

Table 4

Estonia: Number of ECEC centres and children attending and participation rates across time, 1987–2015/16***

Year	Number of ECEC centres	Number of children	Participation rates of 1- to 6-year olds, in %
1987	747	91,300	70
End of 1990s	767	81,100	56
2000	646	50,600	64
2004	600	52,900	70
2009	637	62,100	74
2014	653	68,812	76
2015/16	634	68,331	77

The provision of places especially for children aged 18 months to 3 years (when parental leave ends) is still insufficient. With the help of European Structural Funds 2014-2020, additional places are to be provided. To create around 3,200 new places, 47 Mill. Euro will be invested****.

Sources: ****EPIC 2016

European Commission, EACEA and Eurydice. 2016.

*Eurostat 2017f.

**Statistics Estonia 2017a; 2017b.

***Veisson 2016 (mit Bezug auf Eesti NSV Rahvamajandus 1987; Eesti Statistika Aastaraamat, 2005, 2009)

Financing and costs for parents

Public/municipal ECEC centres, which comprise the majority of settings, are financed through municipal budgets. Staff salaries, teaching/learning materials and the professional development activities of ECEC staff, as well as language courses for children with Estonian as an additional language are subsidised by the government. Privately-run settings also receive these subsidies. The four special ECEC centres for children with multiple disabilities are fully state-funded.

Parents always have to pay for meals. Sometimes, however, their fees may contribute both towards staff salaries and materials/equipment. This varies from municipality to municipality. What is regulated by law is the maximum fee, which may not exceed more than 20% of the minimum wage. On average, parents pay approximately 2.30€ per month, including meals.³ Disadvantaged families may be exempt from fees.

In the case of privately-run ECEC settings, it is mostly the provider who is responsible for the running costs. However, in certain circumstances they may be supported through state and municipal budgets, particularly regarding salaries and staff professional development. Parental fees are determined by the service provider.

Sources: EFA 2015.

*European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.

Eurydice 2016.

IEA 2016.

³ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

Staff-child ratios

In the Integrated ECEC Centres there are groups for children from age 3 up to school entry and also pre-primary groups for 6- and 7-year olds and/or groups for children who have been deferred from school entry. Mixed-age groups for children under age 3 can be established if the parents so wish. The centre head decides whether children with special educational needs are included in a mainstream group or whether a separate group should be set up.

Maximum group sizes are regulated. These are 14-16 for children under 3 years of age, 20-24 for pre-primary groups and 18 for mixed-age groups. Groups for children with special educational needs are smaller.*

A qualified member of staff *or* an auxiliary member of staff is responsible for up to 7 children under 3 years of age, up to 9 children in a mixed-age group, up to 10 children in a pre-primary group, and up to 8 children in an integrative group or for 2 to 6 children in a separate group for children with special educational needs.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
*IEA 2016.

Curricular frameworks

The centre-specific educational programmes are required to follow the national early childhood curricular framework (*Koolieelse lasteasutuse riiklik õppekava*, 2008). A particular emphasis is placed on the co-operation between families and the ECEC setting. Early childhood education is understood as supporting the children's emotional, moral, social, intellectual and physical development as well as respecting their individual needs. Through learning, play and social activities they are encouraged to develop a positive self-image and ethical attitudes. The national curricular framework also sets out learning goals assumed to be appropriate for 6- and 7-year olds and includes principles for the evaluation of children's progress. A smooth transition to school is also foregrounded.

Specifically, the aim is to support the acquisition of competencies through play, learning, social and reflective activities. The curricular framework is organised around the following learning areas: Self and environment; language and talking; Estonian as an additional language; mathematics; the arts; music; movement. The curriculum is essential play-based. Staff are expected to actively support children's play activities, their creativity, their respect for group rules, and their problem-solving abilities. Moreover, children start learning a foreign language between the ages of 3 and 7 years.

The daily programme of activities is flexible and the lead practitioner in the group can adapt it according to the children's current needs. Group activities relating to the national curricular framework do not have to be followed in detail. Some ECEC centres may prefer to work e.g. according to the Step-by-Step approach, the Reggio Emilia approach or Waldorf pedagogy.

Staff are free to choose the methods and materials they consider appropriate. Since 2014, guidelines for all curricular areas have been developed in order to support implementation.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Veisson, M. 2017.

Inclusion agenda

A number of intervention and integration programmes exist in Estonia for children from disadvantaged families, minority ethnic groups and for children with special educational needs.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

If children with special educational needs cannot be included in a regular, integrative group in an ECEC setting, then the municipalities have a duty to ensure that a separate group is set up. The work with them also follows the national curricular framework; where necessary, an individual development plan is drawn up. 11% of the child population up to compulsory school age in 2013/14 were classified as having special educational needs. In 2013/14, all these children attended an ECEC setting.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 31.2% of the total population had a non-Estonian background. Persons from Russia comprised the largest group (25.1%), followed by persons from Ukraine (1.8%), from Belarus (0.9%) and from Finland (0.6%). Children with a background of migration accounted for 8.1% of the total child population under 4 years of age*.

17% of children up to compulsory school age had a non-Estonian background. Likewise, 17% of all children under compulsory school age had a family language other than Estonian. All these children attend an ECEC setting and are supported in acquiring the Estonian language. Mostly they are grouped together with children whose native language is Estonian**.

In 2015, 2,684 children participated in language immersion programmes in kindergartens. This corresponded to 18% of all kindergarten children with a first language other than Estonian. Five methodological centres offer support for kindergarten teachers who work with minority language children.

.Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
**IEA 2016.
*Statistics Estonia 2017b.
Veisson, M. 2017

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Evaluating children's progress is one of the daily tasks of early childhood staff. Children are observed during a variety of activities according to a predefined plan. Observations are documented under consideration of data protection issues, and a discussion with the parents takes place at least once a year in order to give them feedback about their child's development. The child-related assessments are known only to the centre staff and the parents and are not passed on to others – they are used only for the optimal support of the children. Parents are asked about their satisfaction with the ECEC centre. For children below 3 years of age, these observations are the only form of assessment, whereas for the older preschool children standardised tests may also be used. Before the child starts school, parents are given a 'school readiness' certificate that they pass on to the primary school in question. Usually the assessment is conducted in kindergartens, but sometimes externally. The document includes information on the child's cognitive, physical and social competencies related to the national curricular framework and also notes the child's particular strengths and the areas in which he/she needs further support. Pilot studies conducted at Tallinn and Tartu universities have confirmed the effectiveness of the school readiness certificate.

At the level of the municipal providers, efficiency is assessed by the local authority. Assessment of state-maintained provision is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. An annual account of external evaluations in the education system is published on the Ministry's home page. Items assessed include the spatial resources, materials and equipment, compliance with safety and hygiene requirements, adherence to regulations and the curricular framework, leadership qualities of the centre head and finance management.

The evaluation findings are made accessible to all those involved (ECEC centres, providers, parents, local authorities) and form the basis for further planning.

Early childhood centres are also required to conduct internal self-assessments.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016, 2017.
Ministry of Education and Research 2016.
Veisson, M. 2017.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*rasedus-ja sünnituspuhkus*) is granted for 140 calendar days; between 30 and 70 of these may be taken before the expected birth date. During this time mothers receive 100% of their average earnings based on the previous calendar year. Mothers who have not worked receive the basic minimum wage of 390€ per month.

Paternity leave (*isapuhkus*) is granted for 10 fully paid working days which can be taken during the two months before or after the child's birth. Between 2009 and 2013 the payment regulations were suspended and no payments were made.

Parental leave (*lapsehoolduspuhkus*) is a family entitlement and can be taken up to the child's third birthday and can also be taken in several parts, but not by both parents at the same time. Two kinds of parental leave allowance are available, independent of the specific use made of parental leave: (1) the parental benefit (*vanemahüvitis*) is a full payment of average earnings (up to 2,724€ per month) for 435 days after the end of maternity leave; and (2) a lump sum payment (*lapsehooldustasu*) of 38€ monthly which follows on from the parental leave period taken up to the child's third birthday. The allowance is reduced if a parent takes up employment during this time, but not by more than half. Parental leave can be taken in one or several periods of time.

Since 2015 the child allowance for the first and second child has been raised to 45€ per month.

In 2015, approximately 46% of fathers made use of paternity leave. There are no data available for the take up of maternity leave. In 2016, 9.3% of the parental leave allowance recipients were men. Based on preliminary data of birth registrations in 2016, around half of fathers made use of the parental leave entitlement.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Pall, K. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1839	First kindergarten established based on Froebel's principles of pedagogy
1921	First curricular programme developed by C.H. Niggol on the basis of Froebel's principles
Until 1940	Kindergartens the responsibility either of municipalities or private founders – no state legislation
1968	First state curricular framework based on Communist principles

1987	Second state curricular framework based on Soviet education programmes and organised according to separate age-groups
1989	747 kindergartens providing for approx. 83,000 children
1991	State-maintained provision comes under the responsibility of the municipalities; compulsory schooling age raised from 6 to 7 years
Post-1991	Economic crises and sinking birthrates lead to the closing of many kindergartens (100 between 1990 and 1994)
1999	Preschool Child Care Institutions Act
2008	Estonian National Curriculum for Pre-school Child Care Institutions.
2014	Introduction of legal entitlement to a place in ECEC provision for children aged 1½ to 7 years
2015/16	634 ECEC centres providing for 68,331 children

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Veisson, M. 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Estonia

Country expert assessment by Marika Veisson

The foremost challenge for the ECEC system in Estonia is the imminent integration of all ECEC institutions under the Ministry of Education and Research as from 2018. Related staffing challenges include ensuring that all teachers in ECEC institutions have a higher education qualification, as stipulated by law, and raising the salaries and status of ECEC teachers.

To continue improving the quality of ECEC both at the structural and process level, providing the framework for collaborations with researchers in Europe and beyond is essential, and at the same time a challenge. In order to participate actively in a knowledge based society, Estonian researchers need partners in other countries to conduct cross-cultural research studies. Tallinn University, for example, already cooperates with a number of universities in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Malta, the UK, and the USA on ECEC issues. Such international collaborations need to be extended and supported.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Estonia totalled 1,315,944. Over the past 20 years the population has been showing a slight but steady decrease (1995: 1,448,075, 2005: 1,358,850).

Children under age 7

Since compulsory schooling in Estonia starts at age 7, data in this section include children up to age 7 from available sources, whereas otherwise the demographic data refer to children up to age 6.

In 2016, children under age 3 comprised 3.2% of the total population, and children under 7 years of age 7.7%. The proportion of under 7-year olds was significantly higher than the average for the countries belonging to the EU in 1995 (though Estonia was not a member at that time), but had

dropped below this average by 2005, reaching by 2016 a level above the EU28 average. For almost 20 years, the share of under-threes in the total population has been higher than the respective EU-average.

Table 5

Estonia: Proportion of children under age 7 in the total population, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under 1 year	14,047
1-year olds	13,795
2-year olds	13,879
Total under 3-year olds	41,721
3-year olds	14,158
4-year olds	14,724
5-year olds	15,752
6-year olds	15,474
Total 3- to under 7-year olds	60,108
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	101,829

Table 6

Estonia: Children under 7 years of age – relative share in total population compared with respective EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ⁴	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3.8	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.0
3 to under 6 years	5.7	4.7	3.6	4.2	4.6	4.2
0 to under 7 years	8.9	8.0	6.6	7.3	7.7	7.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

The majority of all households (78.6%) in 2015 with children under age 6 were couple households. Single households in Estonia comprise only 5.7% - almost all of them single mother households.

Table 7

Estonia: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	157,400	
Couple households	123,700	78.6
Other household type	24,900	15.8
Single households, total	8,900	5.7
Single households, women	8,500	5.4
Single households, men	400**	0.3

* own calculations, ** number calculated

⁴ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017b.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the total employment rate for men in Estonia aged 15 to 65 years was 75.3%, for women 68.5%. In the same year, over half of all women with children under age 6 were employed (55.7%), and the larger majority of men (91.6%). The employment rate for mothers is thus below the EU28 average, whereas that for fathers is somewhat above the average level in the EU.

Table 8

Estonia: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Estonia	2005	45.9	90.0
	2010	51.5	80.7
	2014	55.7	91.6
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁵

In 2015, 22.8% of children under 6 years of age in Estonia were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion is below the EU28 average (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of people in the total population at risk of poverty or social inclusion was 24.2%.

National statistics refer to 4.5% of the population living under severe material deprivation in 2015. For example, they cannot afford their rent, heating or to deal with unexpected expenses*.

Sources: Eurostat 2017d.
*Statistics Estonia 2016, 112.

⁵ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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FINLAND

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Eeva-Leena Onnismaa

University Lecturer, University of Helsinki,
Faculty of Education

Citation suggestion:

Onnismaa, E.-L. 2018. "Finland – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 332-356.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

Finland has a unitary system of early childhood education and care, organised in two stages. Following a long tradition as part of the social welfare system, during which early education was included in a predominantly care framework, responsibility for ECEC provision for children up to age 6 was transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*) in 2013. Before this time, only pre-primary transition classes for 6- to 7-year olds were part of the education system.

The Finnish ECEC system is currently undergoing fundamental changes in legislation and in the governance and steering of ECEC services (see *Key Contextual Data*). The qualification requirements of ECEC staff were not included in the first phase of the law reform (*Varhaiskasvatustaki* 19.1.1973/36 -8.5.2015/580). They are still defined by the Law on Qualification Requirements for Social Welfare Personnel (*Laki sosiaalihuollon ammatillisen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksesta* 272/2005). Preparations for the second phase of the law reform (including the competence requirements for ECEC staff) are under way. New National Curriculum guidelines for early childhood education and care (National Board of Education¹ 2016b) were published in October 2016 and they are – for first time in the history of the Finnish ECEC system – legally binding.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of staff working directly with children in ECEC provision. These may have a specialist university qualification (Kindergarten Teacher; Special Needs Teacher), a generalist higher education social welfare/social work qualification (Social Welfare Worker²), an upper secondary health care qualification (Practical Nurse/Childcare Worker) or an upper secondary qualification focusing on young children and families (Children's Instructor). Kindergarten Teachers, Special Needs Teachers or the Social Welfare Workers act as core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility). Primary School Teachers with a Master's degree may also work as teachers in pre-primary transition classes. Special Needs Assistants (personal or group assistants) may also work in ECEC/daycare centres. They are not required to complete a formal qualification³. Assistants work as team members without group responsibility and the need for employing an assistant is weighed up every year in relation to current need.

Core practitioners are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at end of this section).

Table 1

¹ The Finnish National Board of Education and the Centre for International Mobility CIMO merged in 2017. Together they now form the Finnish National Agency for Education.

² We have chosen Social Welfare Worker as the most appropriate translation of the occupational title *Sosionomi*. We have done this in order to distinguish between Social Workers (who in Finland are required to have a Master's degree in social sciences) and Social Pedagogues (*Sosiaalikasvattaja*), the occupational title in currency before the introduction of the polytechnic system of higher education. The current initial professional studies of Social Welfare Workers (*Sosionomi*) focuses predominantly on social services, but the study programmes for those who intend to apply for a Kindergarten Teacher's post also include some pedagogical subjects.

³ The majority of the 200 assistants working in ECEC settings in the city of Helsinki have completed an apprenticeship training. In 2010, the former school assistant's vocational qualification was replaced by special needs assistants' and after school club instructors' vocational qualifications (National Board of Education 2010; Hasari 2016).

Finland: Regular contact staff in ECEC centre-based provision

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ⁴
<p><i>Lastentarhanopettaja</i> Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Päiväkoti</i> (‘day home’) ECEC centre 0–6 years</p> <p><i>Esiopetus</i> Pre-primary transition class 6–7 years</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head</p>	0–7 years	<p>Bachelor’s degree 3 years university Specialism in early childhood education</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Sosionomi</i> Social Welfare Worker</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Welfare Professional</p>	<p><i>Päiväkoti</i> ECEC centre 0–6 years</p> <p>Complete range of social services, including ECEC centres, but also family guidance, work with senior citizens, rehabilitation for drug users, etc.</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility (but not in pre-primary transition class)</p> <p>Centre head</p>	All ages	<p>Bachelor’s degree 3½ years higher education institution (polytechnic) Specialism in social services</p> <p>ECTS points: 210 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Lähihoitaja</i> Practical Nurse/ Nursery Nurse</p>	<p><i>Päiväkoti</i> ECEC centre 0–6 years</p> <p>Complete range of social and health care services, e.g. children’s homes, hospital units, youth centres, services for senior citizens etc.</p>	Qualified co-worker	All ages	<p>Approximately 3 years upper secondary vocational qualification in social welfare and health care</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a⁵ EQF: Level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3</p>
<p><i>Lastenhojaaja</i> Children’s Instructor/ Childcare Worker</p>	<p><i>Päiväkoti</i> ECEC centre 0–6 years</p> <p>Also work in: playgroups run by the Lutheran church parishes, open ECEC services and family services, out-of-school provision</p>	Qualified co-worker	0–7 years	<p>Approximately 3 years upper secondary vocational qualification in childcare, education and family welfare at The Church Training College or corresponding training institution.</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF: Level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3</p>

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

⁵ n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ⁴
<i>Eryislastentä-</i> <i>hanopettaja</i> or <i>Var-</i> <i>haiskasvatuksen er-</i> <i>ityisopettaja</i> (both titles are in use) Special Education Teacher (early child- hood) <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Peda- gogy Professional (Special Needs)	<i>Päiväkoti</i> ECEC centres 0–6 years and other set- tings/groups for young children with special needs	Core practition- er with group responsibility or focus on chil- dren with spe- cial needs if working in a multi- professional team. Centre head	0–7 years	1-year postgraduate university study route in special needs education following a qualification as Kindergarten Teacher (university route) and 2 years' work experience as Kindergarten Teacher ECTS points: 180 + 60 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0114 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Avustaja</i> Special Needs Assistant	Personal or group assistant for children with special needs in various settings	(Non-qualified) co-worker (although quali- fication rec- ommended)		No IPS required; recommended: 1–2 years vocational training ECTS points: n/a EQF: Level 4 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2 provides an overview of selected aspects of the structural composition of the ECEC workforce in Finland. Statistics in the table are taken from a report published by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Alila et al. 2014), which draws on several statistical sources. There have been no significant changes in the number and distribution of ECEC employees since 2012. Figures here apply to all ECEC services – including family day care, which is now part of the ECEC system following the introduction of the new curriculum guidelines in autumn 2016. The figures referring to centre-based ECEC have been estimated so that if approximately 30% of all employees have tertiary level education (either as Kindergarten Teacher, Special Education Teacher or Social Welfare Worker), one can conclude that the rest of the staff (70%) comprises Practical Nurses or the equivalent. According to current legislation, every third staff member (working

directly with children) must have tertiary-level professional education, while the requirement for co-workers is an upper secondary level vocational qualification. Assistants do not belong to these categories⁶.

In 2012, the proportion of women in the ECEC workforce varied according to the occupational group between 93.7%–99.9%.

Table 2
Finland: Structural composition of workforce in ECEC provision*

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2012: approx. 30% - 18% with Kindergarten Teacher qualification - 10% with Social Welfare Worker qualification - 1.9% with Special Needs Teacher qualification
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	2012: approx. 70%
Staff with non-specialist qualification	Only small numbers, mainly as substitute staff
Staff without formal initial professional studies	2012: 6%
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff (all ECEC services)	2012: 2.1% 6.3% of male employees work in ECEC administration, e.g. as Centre Heads.
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data .

*Alila et al. 2014.

In 2012, the average age of personnel in all ECEC services (including family day care) was 47.5 years. The average age of Centre Heads was 52.7 years and of Kindergarten Teachers, 41.8 years.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Study programmes for prospective Kindergarten Teachers are provided by seven universities in Finland. Åbo Akademi and the University of Helsinki also offer classes in Swedish (Swedish is the second official language in Finland). Finnish universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy regarding the statutes regulating the teacher education programmes. For example, the University of Tampere applies a problem-based learning approach as the basis for its curriculum whereas at the University of Helsinki, EC teacher education applies a multidisciplinary and research-based approach, emphasising the importance of child development, learning and active interaction as the basis for early childhood pedagogy.

⁶ Personal or group assistants for children with special needs work in ECEC/daycare centres. Usually a child must have a diagnostic statement in order to be granted a personal assistant.

Table 3

Finland: Kindergarten Teacher

Job title in Finnish: <i>Lastentarhanopettaja</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: 12 years schooling + matriculation Professional studies: 3 years university, degree course in (early) education Award: Bachelor's degree, Early Childhood Education ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: ECEC centre, 0-6 years; pre-primary transition class, 6-7 years; ECEC planning and administration

In Finland, there are approximately 20 Universities of Applied Sciences (polytechnics) with study programmes for the Social Welfare Worker's degree (Bachelor in social services) and both the quantity and the content of ECEC studies vary considerably.

Table 4

Finland: Social Welfare Worker

Job title in Finnish: <i>Sosionomi (AMK)</i> Profile: Social Care/Welfare Professional
Entry requirements: 12 years schooling + matriculation Professional studies: 3½ years higher education institution (polytechnic), degree course in social services Award: Bachelor's degree (polytechnic), Social Services ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: ECEC centre, 0–6 years ⁷ ,

Special Needs Teachers' (early childhood) education is available at five universities as a one-year postgraduate course of study.

Table 5

Finland: Special Needs Teacher (early childhood)

Job title in Finnish: <i>Erityislastentarhanopettaja</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (Special Needs)
Entry requirements: 3 years undergraduate studies (Bachelor's degree in early childhood education) and 2 years work experience as a Kindergarten Teacher Professional studies: 1 year postgraduate university study route in special needs education in early childhood Award: Postgraduate award in special education ECTS points: 180+60 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 012/0114 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Segregated (exclusively for children with special needs) and integrated (children with special needs integrated in mainstream ECEC settings) ⁸ groups in ECEC centres or posts in mainstream groups in ECEC centres, consultative work in ECEC services; ECEC administration and planning.

⁷ If a person with a Social Worker qualification wishes to work as a Kindergarten Teacher, the awarded degree should include 60 ECTS points of educational studies or social pedagogy.

⁸ Early education for children with special needs is mainly provided in mainstream settings (inclusive education)

The employees who work as Nursery Nurses in ECEC or daycare centres are required to complete either a Practical Nurse's or Children's Instructor's vocational training. The IPS of Practical Nurses and Children's Instructors (and Special Needs Assistants) can also be organised as an apprenticeship and in some cases, the first year of studies e.g. in the IPS of Practical Nurses, training may consist entirely of workplace-based learning. Children's Instructor's training is regulated by legislation on basic vocational training; the curricular goals and content are approved by the National Board of Education⁹. 12 vocational training institutions, of which The Church Training College has the longest experience of training Children's Instructors, offer this qualifying route. The Church Training College is a private educational learning institution with an affiliation to the Lutheran Church. It specialises in social and health care education as well as in various church-related occupations.

Apprenticeship is nowadays the main form of training (The Church Training College 2016b; Act on Amendments of Act on Basic Vocational Training (1998, amended 2014); National Board of Education 2014). Competence-based qualifications will strengthen the ongoing reforms of the upper secondary level vocational qualification system; the new qualification system will be effective in 2018.

Table 6

Finland: Nursery Nurse/Childcare Worker

Job title in Finnish: <i>Lastenhoitaja / Lastenhojaaja</i>
<p>Route 1 - Practical Nurse/Nursery Nurse (when working in ECEC centre)</p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years comprehensive school</p> <p>Professional studies: Approximately 3 years upper secondary vocational training in social welfare and health care (Practical Nurse)</p> <p>Award: Vocational qualification in social and health care</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: ECEC centre (0 to 6/7 years)</p> <p>Route 2 - Children's Instructor (<i>Lastenhojaaja</i>)</p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years comprehensive school</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary vocational training at The Church Training College or corresponding training institution in Childcare and Education and Family Welfare.</p> <p>Award: Vocational qualification in childcare and family services</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: ECEC centres (0-6 years)</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in the IPS programmes of core practitioners

Kindergarten Teacher (*Lastentarhanopettaja*)

Competency specifications (Bachelor's degree programme in early childhood education at the University of Helsinki):

⁹ Since 2017 The Finnish National Agency for Education.

At the end of the study programme students are expected to:

- understand early childhood and pre-primary pedagogy;
- have a knowledge base about learning, interaction and play;
- understand cultural diversity in childhood;
- view children’s development as a holistic, socio-cultural process;
- understand the significance of the children’s learning environment;
- be able to use new technologies;
- be familiar with the goals, contents and methods of early childhood education (including pre-primary transition classes);
- be able to analyse early childhood education as a social phenomenon;
- understand how to use appropriate techniques to stimulate children’s learning.

Curricular areas: (1) Language and communication studies (19 ECTS points); (2) Basic studies in education (25 ECTS points); (3) Intermediate studies in education (51 ECTS points); (4) Content/subject areas in early childhood education (60 ECTS points); (5) Minor subjects (25 ECTS points) (see Box 2 for details). Through bilateral contracts, students can study for part of the degree at a university in another country, e.g. through the ERASMUS programme with 50 partner universities or the NORDPLUS student exchange programmes (University of Helsinki 2016).

For the preparation of the Kindergarten Teacher study programme at the University of Helsinki (see Box 2), representatives of municipalities, as the largest employers in the ECEC sector, were consulted.

Box 2

Finland: Curricular areas, Kindergarten Teacher study programme, University of Helsinki

<p>(1) Language and Communication Studies (19 ECTS points) Orientation to university studies and Kindergarten Teacher’s profession (4) Academic writing (2) Communication and interpersonal competence (2) Second national language (3) Foreign language (3) ICT (digital technologies) ‘Driving licence’ (3) Further ICT studies (2)</p> <p>Basic Studies in Education (25 ECTS points) <i>Cultural basis of education</i> Social, historical and philosophical foundations of education (5) PST* Changing childhood (5) <i>Psychological basis of education</i> Psychology of development and learning (5) PST* <i>Pedagogical basis of education</i> Didactics (5) PST* <i>Research methods</i> Academic thinking in the context of education (5)</p> <p>(3) Intermediate Studies in Education (51 ECTS points) <i>Cultural basis of education</i> Education for diversities (5) PST* <i>Psychological basis of education</i> Advanced course in educational and developmental psychology (5) Pedagogical leadership and multi-professional cooperation (5) <i>Pedagogical basis of education</i> Observation, planning and evaluation in early childhood education (7) Pedagogical activities in early childhood education (5) Preschool and early primary years education (3) Toddler pedagogy (3) Special education and multicultural education in early years (5) Research methods I (5) Bachelor’s thesis (8)</p> <p>(4) Content Areas in Early Childhood Education (60 ECTS points)</p>
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Basis of content areas in early childhood education

Language and interaction (communication) (5)

Mathematics (4)

Environmental education and natural sciences (4)

Religious and moral education (4)

Skills and arts education

Arts education (5)

Music education (5)

Crafts education (5)

Didactics of physical education (5)

Children's literature and drama (5)

Skills and arts education, well-being, culturally sustainable development (3)

Practice

Integrated practice (8) PST*

Advanced practice (7) PST*

(5) **Minor Subject (25 ECTS points)** (e.g. special education or pre-primary and early primary years education)

*PST = Pedagogical Studies for Teachers (35 ECTS points)¹⁰

Social Welfare Worker (*Sosionomi (AMK)*)

Competency specifications (Bachelor's degree programme in social services at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (polytechnic)):

The study programme is based on the following principles:

- empowering citizens;
- preventing marginalisation and promoting inclusion and social pluralism;
- promoting social participation, equality and wellbeing in society.

Curricular areas: The following study units at the Metropolia form the early childhood education track the in Social Welfare Worker's training programme:

- Childhood growth and development (5 ECTS points);
- Everyday life of families and children in Finnish society (5 ECTS points);
- Individual and community counselling (5 ECTS points);
- Supporting daily life through socio-pedagogical work plus first internship (15 ECTS points);
- Child protection (5 ECTS points);
- Special needs support in early education (5 ECTS points);
- Early education (20 ECTS points);
- Work placement in ECEC setting (20 ECTS points) = third internship;
- Thesis (15 ECTS points).

Special Needs Teacher (early childhood) (*Erityislastentarhanopettaja*)

Competency specifications (University of Helsinki study programme):

Psycho-social factors such as learning how to use play, how to support peer interaction and how to recognise children's needs and respond to them as well as pedagogical sensitivity are abilities that are achieved in the Special Needs Teacher's education programme at the University of Helsinki. Studies are based on an ecological framework of early interventions which are considered to be not only individual support for the child with special needs, but also impact on every child's action and behaviour by boosting children's strengths and finding new courses of action in unfamiliar or challenging situations. Furthermore, after graduating, the students are expected

¹⁰ Teachers working in comprehensive (primary/secondary) schools, as well as in other educational institutions, are required to have 60 ECTS points in *Pedagogical Studies for Teachers* of which 35 ECTS points can be taken in the Bachelor's degree course for Kindergarten Teachers.

to understand the considerable impact of physical environmental factors in ECEC (play materials, schedules, daily structuring of the programme) on children's development and learning.

Curricular areas: The postgraduate course in Special education (early childhood) at the University of Helsinki focuses on basic studies in special education (25 ECTS points), Children's behaviour, well-being and interaction (10 ECTS points), Learning Support (20 ECTS points), and Professional growth (10 ECTS points) (see Box 3 for details; Suhonen 2016).

Box 3

Finland: Curricular areas, Special Needs Teacher Education, University of Helsinki

<p>Basic studies in special education (25 ECTS points)¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduction to Finnish special educationMarginalisation and mental healthSpecial educational needsLearning disabilitiesScientific thinking in the context of education <p>Theme 1. Behaviour, well-being and interaction (10 ECTS points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication and perceptionChallenges in behaviour <p>Theme 2. Learning support (20 ECTS points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Brain and learningIn-depth special educationReading skills and reading difficultiesMathematical learning difficulties <p>Theme 3. Professional growth (10 ECTS points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Special Needs Teacher as a researcher

Practical Nurse/Nursery Nurse (*Lähihoitaja*¹²)

Competency specifications: After completing the Practical Nurse's vocational qualification focusing on children and young people, graduates are expected to be able to:

- plan, carry out and evaluate tasks relating to children's basic care and upbringing, including children with special needs;
- follow the legal regulations of social welfare and healthcare, official guidelines and ethical principles and rules in her/his work;
- apply child- and family-centred working principles (National Board of Education 2010).

Curricular areas: Initial professional studies comprise compulsory and optional modules. Since 2015, students are awarded 'competence points' instead of credits, and for the Practical Nurse IPS, these now amount to 180 competence points (instead of the previous 120 credits).

Compulsory modules are: (1) Support and guidance of growth; (2) Nursing and care; (3) Rehabilitation support. In addition to these modules part of the study programme specialises in Children's and Youth Care and Education and those planning to work with children and young people choose this specialisation route.

The curricular areas have remained the same since the 2015 reform (Rajamäki 2016).

¹¹ Basic studies in special education (25 ECTS points) must be completed before entering the special education teacher's study programme. However, only 20 ECTS points are compensated. Thus, the sum total of ECTS points of whole study programme is 60 ECTS points.

¹² When a practical nurse (*lähihoitaja*) works in an ECEC centre her/his job title is nursery nurse (*lastenhoitaja*).

Children's Instructor (*Lastenohjaaja*)

Competency specifications: After completing the Children's Instructor's vocational qualification, graduates are expected to be able to:

- work in child- and family-oriented services in various contexts;
- act according to the underlying principles of early childhood education and care;
- take care of a child's holistic upbringing and well-being;
- support the child's physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development.

Curricular areas: The vocational qualification in Child Care and Education and Family Welfare consists of 180 competence points and takes place at The Church Training College. The curriculum comprises compulsory and optional elements. Compulsory units are: (1) Guiding children's growth and care-giving; (2) Family-focused and community-based educational work; (3) Morning and afternoon activity instruction for schoolchildren. Optional units are: instruction in expression skills; guiding children and families in need of support; working in a multicultural environment; Christian education; service provision. The Church Training College also organises apprenticeship training, which is the most common form of Children's Instructor's training nowadays. Ongoing reforms of vocational training legislation also apply to the Children's Instructor vocational qualification (The Church Training College 2016a; Ahteensuu 2016; National Board of Education 2016a; Rajamäki 2016).

When working in church affiliated services Children's Instructors can implement religious education based on Christian values (National Board of Education 2016a).

Special Needs Assistant (*Avustaja*)

Special Needs Assistants work as personal or group/class assistants in various educational and social welfare institutions, typically in primary schools or ECEC centres. Persons who have completed the training programme may also work in after-school activities run by municipalities, parishes or NGOs. Assistants in daycare/ECEC centres are not required to have a formal qualification but it is recommended.

The curriculum of the training for the vocational qualification for Special Needs Assistants (and After-school Club Instructors) consists of the following compulsory units: (1) Occupational work as an Assistant; (2) Supporting and directing growth and development; (3) Supporting and directing learning and activities; (4) Supporting persons with special needs. An optional unit focuses on Entrepreneurship.

Municipalities have some influence on the approaches in the training programme (especially when carried out as apprenticeship training or as competence based qualification) and the curricular areas emphasize early childhood if students are planning to work in ECEC settings. Ongoing reforms of vocational qualifications also apply to those for Special Needs Assistants and After-school Club Instructors (Hasari 2016; Rajamäki 2016).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

In Finland, competence requirements are based on formal qualifications. Both employees who work as Kindergarten Teachers (Kindergarten Teachers or Social Welfare Workers) and those who work as Childcare Workers/Nursery Nurses require a regulated qualification award defined by statutes.

However, in upper secondary level vocational training (here referring to Practical Nurses, Children's Instructors and Special Needs Assistants), there is an alternative qualification route, i.e. a competence-based qualification system. This offers the possibility of completing a vocational



qualification partially or wholly through a demonstration of vocational skills which are then considered equal to the regular qualification.

In Finland, there are no formal barriers between vocational training and tertiary level education. For example, after completing the qualification route for Practical Nurse it is possible to apply for a place in tertiary-level education. However, the degree programmes at higher education institutions (universities of applied sciences), such as that for the registered general nurse or the Social Welfare Worker, are more common than university degree programmes. Those who have completed the Practical Nurse's qualification can seek a job in different areas of the social welfare and health care sector. It is the employer's responsibility to assess whether the applicant fulfils the competency requirements of the workplace in question (National Board of Education 2014; Rajamäki 2016.)

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Kindergarten Teacher (*Lastentarhanopettaja*)

Time allocated to field-based studies: Field-based studies refer to practical placement periods which take place in ECEC settings, including pre-primary classes. The term refers to structured and supervised studies and is preferred to the term 'workplace-based learning', which could be interpreted as just being in an authentic workplace setting and assisting centre staff. The time allocated to field-based studies in the Kindergarten Teacher degree programmes at Finnish universities varies between 7% and 11%, which amounts to between 12 and 20 ECTS points out of a total of 180 ECTS points. Most commonly, the field-based element accounts for 15 ECTS points (Onnismaa et al. 2015).

Content focus in field-based studies: At the University of Helsinki¹³, each field-based period has its own character and goals. *Integrative practice* (8 ECTS points) focuses on the planning, implementing and evaluation of early childhood education, in particular on developing skills and reflective competencies in the core content areas of early childhood education (e.g. drama and physical education, music, nature and mathematics). *Final practice* (7 ECTS points) aims to develop the holistic responsibility of the student with respect to planning, implementing and evaluating work in the ECEC centre, including working with parents. In addition, the student becomes acquainted with administration and working as a member of multi-professional teams and networks.

Alongside the field-based periods in ECEC settings, students plan, carry out and observe different kinds of pedagogical sessions with children in a campus-based classroom that has been constructed especially for visiting groups of children at the University of Helsinki. Students also visit ECEC centres beyond the placement periods, e.g. during physical education courses, and organise various activities for children. Students also receive supervision from university lecturers when carrying out these activities. The professional identity of the Kindergarten Teacher (including eight hours observation in daycare centres) is treated as a part of *Pedagogical bases of education* course during the first academic year. The students spend two mornings (three hours each) and one whole day (six hours) in ECEC settings observing the pedagogical activities carried out by the Kindergarten Teacher and his/her professional role. The observation is reported and discussed with other students and the university lecturer.

¹³ The Department of Teacher Education (since 2017 Faculty of Education) at the University of Helsinki has been used here as an example because it has the largest Teacher Education Department in Finland, taking in 120 (140 as from 2017) Kindergarten Teacher students each academic year.

Structure of field-based studies and mentoring support: The Kindergarten Teacher supervisor has a key position in helping students to develop their skills and construct their theory-in-use. It is also considered important that the university lecturer be very familiar with the field of ECEC. Consequently, in ideal cases, the educational background of the university lecturer who supervises student teachers should include Kindergarten Teacher's education (Onnismaa et al. 2015).

Close cooperation with municipalities (ECEC administration) is exercised, particularly in the case of the field-based study periods. At the University of Helsinki a network of placement centres was established in 1996 based on officially ratified contracts between municipalities in the metropolitan area. The consistent and goal-oriented education of field supervisors (5 ECTS points), conducted by the University of Helsinki, has been an essential part of strengthening the coherence of the network.

Furthermore, Kindergarten Teacher supervisors/mentors are invited to the university at the beginning of each field-based period. Once a year, a symposium on field-based studies brings together participants from the entire teacher education department (i.e., including the study programme for school teachers), the cooperating schools and ECEC/daycare centres, to reflect on current developments.

The 'double supervision model' – where the student receives feedback and guidance from both an experienced Kindergarten Teacher in the field and from a university lecturer – depends on there being a sufficient number of motivated supervisors. The aim of collaboration between ECEC centres and the university has been to create a new learning community (Onnismaa et al. 2015).

Recent reforms, trends and debates: Field-based studies have traditionally been considered to form an essential part of teacher education. One issue under debate in Finland is the relation between the length of field-based periods and the overall quality of this component of initial professional studies. To a certain extent, quantity can be compensated with quality. If relatively short field-based periods offer well-constructed practicum experiences linked with on-campus-courses, it can be argued that they are better than long periods where the student is more or less working without systematic supervision. Yet this is only partly true: the reduction of the quantity of field-based studies can pose a risk for quality. Increasing the share of practice in Kindergarten Teacher education is, however, not a durable solution as long as the IPS for Kindergarten Teachers is a Bachelor's degree. Being capable of reflecting on one's own practice and developing practical theories, i.e. having a teacher-as-researcher approach, is the result of a long and arduous process, which requires support and input from supervisors and needs to be closely connected with real-life situations.

Social Welfare Worker (*Sosionomi* (AMK))

Workplace-based learning (*internship*) within the IPS of Social Welfare Workers is allocated at least 45 ECTS points. At the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, students who have decided that they want to work as Kindergarten Teachers conduct their third internship (20 ECTS points) in an ECEC setting. Quality is enhanced by developing the guidelines and support for theory-based professional reflection which is conducted by tutors and Kindergarten Teachers supervising students during their internships. There is an ECEC centre internship network in the metropolitan area of Helsinki for the students of Metropolia and the supervisors are trained twice a year. One challenge is that many of the students choose to do the internship working as supply staff, without a supervising teacher in the same team. That limits the possibilities of peer learning and pedagogical reflection. Tutors at Metropolia are working to solve this challenge and recommend internship as a student, not as a staff member. Since there are approximately 20 institutions offering study programmes for Social Welfare Workers, duration and content of the workplace-based learning element of IPS vary a lot (Tast 2016).

Practical Nurse (*Lähihoitaja*)

According to the national curriculum guidelines for the IPS of Practical Nurses, workplace-based learning in various social welfare and health care institutions and also in ECEC centres must account for at least 30 credits out of a total of 120 credits (now 180 competence points). There has been no change in the proportion since the move to awarding competence points. Thus, workplace based learning plays an important role in the IPS of Practical Nurses and in some cases, the first year of studies may consist entirely of workplace-based learning (National Board of Education 2010; Koistinen 2016).

Children's Instructor (*Lastenohjaaja*)

In the curriculum of the upper secondary level vocational qualification in childhood and family services, workplace-based learning accounts for 32–38 credits. There is some variation in the duration and content of workplace-based learning periods according to the provider of the training (The Church Training College 2016a; Ahteensuu 2016).

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

There is no binding national framework for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel. However, Finnish legislation encourages employers in all lines of activity to improve continuing professional development for their employees. The Law on subsidised CPD (*Laki taloudellisesti tuetusta ammatillisen osaamisen kehittämisestä* 1136/2013) articulates the principles of CPD policy for both the public and private sector. The aim of the law is to promote systematic training for employees in order to maintain and further develop professional skills to meet the demands of and changes in the workplace. The employers are required to produce a CDP plan for their personnel in order to be entitled to tax relief or other financial incentives. Nevertheless, there are no legally binding norms for CPD or in-service training.

The CPD of ECEC personnel is mentioned in the new ECEC legislation (Varhaiskasvatustalaki 2015). According to the law (2015), the municipalities are required to ensure the participation of their ECEC personnel in professional learning activities specific to their respective qualifications. When, in January 2013, ECEC administration was transferred to the education sector, the issue of CPD as a requirement was raised, but so far this has not taken place. It remains to be seen whether CPD is taken into consideration when the Finnish National Agency for Education provides guidance and supervision of the national implementation of the new ECEC legislation.

In terms of participation in CPD, a survey conducted by the Union of Kindergarten Teachers in 2015 showed that 20% of the respondents had not participated in-service training during the previous 12 months, whereas 76% of respondents who worked in municipal ECEC services had participated in employer-organised CPD activities. Only 7% had participated in CPD activities not organised by the employer (municipality) (Union of Kindergarten Teachers 2016).

Employees can attend CPD courses organised by the municipalities free of charge. Costs of CPD organised by other entities or companies can be very high. A popular course for Kindergarten Teachers organised by the University of Helsinki Centre for Continuing Education focusing on the teaching skills needed in pre-primary and primary education (25 ECTS points) costs 2,100€ (University of Helsinki Centre for Continuing Education 2016). Usually employers do not compensate these costs.



According to the above-mentioned survey of the Union of Kindergarten Teachers, popular CPD-themes among kindergarten teachers are: special needs education, multicultural issues, interaction skills and pre-primary and elementary teaching (Union of Kindergarten Teachers 2016).

There are no regulations regarding leave entitlement, payment or time spent on CPD. Usually these decisions depend on the employer who covers the costs when participation is required. On average, an employee in social welfare services spends three to ten days per year on CPD activities (Kallio and Sarvimäki 2006). Data collected in 2015 by Local Government employers indicated that employees with a tertiary education (ISCED 6) spent 3.5 days annually on CPD, whereas employees with an upper secondary level education attended for 2.5 days and centre heads for 4.8 days per year. In 2015, the costs of CPD activities were on average 341€ per employee (1,501€ per Centre Head) in the social welfare and health services. In 2015, overall CPD costs in social welfare and health services amounted to 48 million Euros, and to 78 million Euros if the salaries of the replacement staff were included in the calculation (Local Government Employers 2016d).

Costs of CPD appear to be a great challenge both from the employers' and employees' perspective. Moreover, even if an employee covers the costs of a CPD activity it could be difficult to be granted leave.

Sometimes CPD courses organised by employers do not respond adequately to the needs of the various types of staff working in the ECEC field (Setälä 2017).

The spectrum of CPD providers is broad, reaching from university centres for continuing education to private entrepreneurs, and there are no 'main providers' of CPD across the country (Local Government Employers 2016d).

Participation in CPD activities does not automatically lead to recognition in terms of career advancement but certain courses in leadership or in language support, for example, are valued when a Kindergarten Teacher applies for the post of a centre head or a post of responsibility as coordinator for services for immigrant children. Centre heads are not yet required to hold a Master's degree in early education, which is so far only a requirement for higher posts in ECEC administration. However, they must be able to prove that they have completed a certain number of years of working experience. Although not a requirement, the proportion of Centre Heads who have completed a Master's degree has doubled over the past ten years.

Availability and themes of courses for student mentors in ECEC settings or for language support coaches vary. Universities are in charge of organising training courses for student mentors and for recruiting participants. These training programmes are free of charge and employers are expected to grant leave for participants.

In terms of formal advanced courses for Kindergarten Teachers, there is a Master's level study programme in early education available at nearly all universities. At the University of Helsinki, approximately 40 students start this course of study per year, half of them continuing directly after completing their BA studies to become a Kindergarten Teacher.

There have been no large-scale research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel over the past five years. However, the importance of creating a continuum from IPS to working life and developing both induction support and continuing professional development has been emphasised in public speeches and in working groups.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

The ECEC law reform (2015) is expected to be completed in the near future and its second phase will define the competence requirements for various professional groups working in ECEC services. ECEC staffing will continue to be regulated by the Act on Qualifications for Social Welfare

Staff (*Laki sosiaalihuollon ammatillisen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksista 2005/272*) until the ECEC law reform has been completed. The Ministry of Education and Culture has reacted to the reduced proportion of Kindergarten Teachers (Bachelor's degree in early education) in ECEC personnel by assigning extra funding to the universities (a 30% increase in all universities as from 2017).

Since the second phase of law reform is still unaccomplished, it is unclear which occupations will be considered as relevant ECEC professions in future. Tensions between the trade unions of various occupational groups in the ECEC sector became apparent during the first phase of law reform. In the context of reduced financial resources universities and universities of applied sciences have been encouraged to cooperate more closely. This has aroused fears in the poly-technic sector of being 'swallowed up' by the universities and of losing their independence. Fears from the university side have centred on a possible loss of funding for high quality research. This is a complicated issue.

There are also tensions around the planned reforms for the upper-secondary level vocational training. Tensions between the social welfare sector and the education sector were already apparent even before the law reform and administration change. It would appear that the habitus of occupational groups with education/training in the social welfare and health sector (Practical Nurses and Social Welfare Workers) has been more favoured by the social welfare administration than the occupation of Kindergarten Teachers (Onnismaa and Kalliala 2010.) It remains to be seen whether the changes in administration and legislation will be reflected within the training and qualification requirements for the occupational groups in the ECEC workforce. Currently, the proportion of Kindergarten Teachers in the workforce has declined dramatically, adding a further dimension of competition with Social Welfare Workers, who are also employed in posts for Kindergarten Teachers.

The training of Practical Nurses has also been under discussion. The vocational qualification in social and health care provides competencies for various fields of work in the social welfare and health sector. Only a part of the training programme focuses on a field of specialisation, such as work with children and young people, or work with senior citizens. The IPS of Children's Instructors also qualifies for Childcare Worker/Nursery Nurse posts in ECEC settings and their training programme is more focused on children and families compared with that of Practical Nurses. Consequently, a need for a more specialised vocational training for co-workers in ECEC centres has been discussed. A large scale reform of the entire upper secondary level vocational training system will be completed by 2018.

According to an independent evaluation report compiled by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (Karila et al. 2013), the content of Kindergarten Teacher university study programmes is more relevant for the demands of early childhood education than the training provided for the other occupational groups working in the ECEC field. Further, the evaluation report states that in all curriculum reforms, content relating to changes in society and culture, to changes in the conditions of childhood and growing up, child development and learning, early childhood pedagogy and the organisation of childhood education settings should be taken into account. The report also states that documented curricula should be more transparent and clearly show pedagogical processes, key contents, objectives for professional competencies and assessment criteria for learning and competencies (Karila et. al. 2013).

The evaluation report stresses that providers of education and training should collaborate at the national level when formulating and developing core curricula. In terms of student selection, the report emphasises the importance of creating a reliable system for evaluating the suitability of prospective students. The report also highlights that in connection with the ECEC law reform competencies for different tasks in early childhood education should be defined more precisely. The establishment of a national cooperation network for initial professional studies in early childhood education is recommended, as is closer monitoring of developments in training in ECEC. Providers of ECEC services and providers of qualification routes should work in closer col-



laboration in organising continuing education in such a way that basic training and continuing education form a coherent continuum (Karila et al. 2013).

According to a press release of the Ministry of Education and Culture in April 2017, more Kindergarten Teachers will be trained and 28 million euros will be allocated for 2018–2021 for the development of the staffing structure for early childhood education. Additionally, 15 million euros will be allocated for supporting the implementation of the vocational education reform in 2018 and 2019 (Finnish Government 2017).

In February 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture commissioned a group of three experts to draw up a ‘roadmap’ of the Finnish ECEC system 2017-2030, giving insights into consequences for staffing structures and qualification programmes (both IPS and CPD). The experts investigated children’s participation rates in ECEC in comparison to other Nordic countries; the effectiveness of ECEC; and the knowledge and skills required of ECEC staff (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017).

The expert group’s findings consisted of short-term and long-term proposals. Short-term proposals were: increasing the intake of students in universities and polytechnic institutions; reviewing the occupational competence requirements, taking into account the needs of ECEC staff; reforming the curriculum for IPS. Long term proposals were: requirement of a Master’s degree for Kindergarten Teachers; specialisation in ECEC for upper secondary vocational programmes; and a career-long approach to CPD within a regulated system for ECEC staff.

For each ECEC centre, the assessed proportions of the different occupational groups are: at least 40% Kindergarten Teachers, and at most 60% Special Needs Teachers, Social Welfare Workers (20–25%) and Nursery Nurses (25–40%) (Karila et al. 2017, 86–87).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

During the past five years, no substantial research projects relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues have been conducted in Finland except the evaluation report drawn by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (Karila et al. 2013).

A research project titled *“The formation of occupational identities in encounters between different generations and occupational groups”* was funded by The Finnish Work Environment Fund (Karila and Kupila 2010). The aim of the study was to increase understanding about the cultural and social formation of occupational identities of ECEC professionals at the beginning of working life. Individual, social and cultural processes in encounters between experienced ECEC personnel and “newcomers” were examined and forms of induction training for multi-professional ECEC environments were developed (Karila and Kupila 2010).

Findings of the study indicate that the professional identities of ECEC personnel are shaped in a work environment with high participation and stress levels, changing duties and unclear job descriptions and responsibilities. Under these circumstances, it is a challenge to develop a professional identity as Kindergarten Teacher or Nursery Nurse. Many of the participants mentioned difficulties in fulfilling personal qualitative standards at work. Job commitment appears to be at risk when there are constant changes in the work environment. The findings of the study refer to a “everyone does everything”-working culture which is perceived as confusing and results in fragile professional identities. Additionally, mentoring models suitable in the ECEC context were discussed and recommended as a form of induction training (Karila and Kupila 2010).

Responding to the recent law reform, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) started a national evaluation of the Finnish ECEC system in 2016 that will be completed in 2019. On FINEEC’s website (FINEEC 2017) it is stated:

“The purpose of the evaluation is to promote the preconditions for children’s well-being, development, and learning, ensure the implementation of the law intention and produce information for developing early childhood education locally. In addition, the evaluation is expected to serve as a basis of political decision-making. FINEEC will draw up a long-term evaluation plan as a part of the national early childhood education steering system and implement evaluations in accordance with it. In addition to the national evaluations, FINEEC is tasked with supporting early childhood education providers on issues related to quality management and developing the evaluation of early childhood education together with the providers. FINEEC will draw up an evaluation plan for early education providers and create appropriate models and procedures for quality management and evaluation. In addition to the long-term plan, the project includes drawing up a quality assessment model as well as constructing an audit system and a model for evaluating pedagogic and leadership practices. Various actors on many different levels will produce evaluation information together to support the work on developing early childhood education and the results of the evaluation will be implemented in early childhood education units, at the provider level.”

“The evaluation will focus on the processes related to the implementation of the national core curriculum for early childhood education and the realisation of the early childhood education curricula. Evaluation targets include a) processes related to the implementation of the national core curriculum for early childhood education, b) processes related to drawing up and implementing the local early childhood education plan, c) processes related to drawing up and implementing a child’s individual early childhood education plan, d) contents of the early childhood education plans and e) realisation of the plans in early childhood education” (FINEEC 2017a).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Kindergarten Teachers (tertiary level qualification) are not paid the same as primary school teachers (who earn on average 3,523€/month). Compared to this, a Kindergarten Teacher’s salary is rather low (2,576–2,589€/month). However, in spite of the relatively low salary, the Kindergarten Teacher study programme is very popular.

Practical Nurses and Children’s Instructors (upper secondary vocational training) working in ECEC centres earn 2,223–2,280€/month. Salaries for the *Special Needs Assistants* are lower (2,020€/month).

It is challenging to live on these salaries independently, especially in the capital area where the cost of living – especially rent level – is high.

Centre Heads’ salaries vary between 2,842 and 3,180€/month on average, depending on the size of the centre. *Deputy leaders* may get 2,546 €/month but the remuneration depends on their responsibilities and varies locally.

Student mentors/supervisors may receive a fee for supervision: e.g. University of Helsinki compensates the supervising Kindergarten Teacher with 120€/student for a four-week practicum period. Polytechnics and vocational institutions in the capital area transfer the fee for supervision to the ECEC/day care centre instead of paying a nominated supervisor. Procedures vary locally.

The salaries of *Special Education Teachers (early years)* vary between 2,668 and 2,779 €/month depending on the responsibilities (Local Government Employers 2016a, 2016c; Union of Kindergarten Teachers 2016).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Table 7

Finland: Staff working in ECEC centres full- and part-time, 2012*

Staff	Proportion
Staff working full-time (38 hours 15 minutes – 38 hours and 45 minutes since February 2017) - all occupational groups	82.2%
Kindergarten Teachers working full-time	96.4%
Staff working part-time -all occupational groups	7.8%
Kindergarten teachers working part-time	3.6%
Staff on leave	9.4%

* Local Government Employers 2016b; Alila et al. 2014

According to the current collective agreement between government and central trade unions, full-time staff in ECEC/day-care centres work 38 hours 45 minutes per week. (It used to be 38 hours 15 minutes/week, but since 01.02.2017 there has been an increase of 24 hours/year according to this agreement. In ECEC centres this amounts to 30 minutes/week). In all municipalities, only 3.6 % of Kindergarten Teachers were working in a part-time post in 2012, whereas the majority was working full time (see Table 7). The situation may change as a consequence of cost cuts which have led to amendments in the new ECEC legislation (2015). Since the entitlement to a full-time place in an ECEC setting is now granted only for children whose parents/guardians are working or are full-time students, some municipalities (for economic reasons) have established various types of “play-group activities” for those children who are only entitled to 20 hours ECEC/week. These “20 hours-children” may also be offered a place as an extra child in an ordinary full-time group. These measures could reduce the need for a full-time workforce.

Parents who are not in active employment are often encouraged to enrol their child in a play-group instead of using the 20 hours in an ECEC centre. Most playgroups are only open for less than 20 hours per week. Only in some cases (e.g. in the City of Helsinki) are they free of charge. Requirements for staff and adult-child-ratios are not legally regulated.

Law amendments also included changes in the adult-child ratio, which is now 1:8 instead of 1:7 (3- to 6-year olds). This may cause changes in the workforce demands in the municipalities that decide to make use of these law amendments and change the adult-child ratio accordingly. Consequently, organising ECEC activities according to the new regulations may lead to an increase in part-time work for both Kindergarten Teachers and Practical Nurses/Childrens’ Instructors (Local Government Employers 2016b; Alila et al. 2014).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Various forms of induction support in the field of education have been discussed and induction training for Kindergarten Teachers was recommended in the evaluation report drawn by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (Karila et. al. 2013; see also Karila and Kupila 2010). Consequently, a peer-group mentoring project for recently graduated Kindergarten Teachers started in collaboration between the City of Helsinki and the University of Helsinki in 2014. In the first phase of the project, university lecturers trained 25 peer mentors and the first mentoring groups started in Autumn 2014. Overall, 159 recently graduated Kindergarten Teachers and Social Welfare Workers working as Kindergarten Teachers have participated in peer-mentoring groups, which have been adopted as a regular working method in ECEC services in the city of Helsinki. Kindergarten Teachers’ peer group mentoring draws on the ideas developed in the



Finnish Network for Teacher Induction (2016)¹⁴ (Onnismaa et al. 2016) and is described here as an example. There are various forms of induction support and orientation to work in municipalities but no common policy so far.

Collegial support has proved to be vital for Kindergarten Teachers who have full teaching responsibility from the very beginning of their career (Onnismaa et al. 2016). In addition, other municipalities in the capital area have shown interest in developing induction measures for recently qualified Kindergarten Teachers as a measure to increase job commitment and improve occupational health.

Creating a collegial induction support system for new Centre Heads has also been discussed in the city of Helsinki. A mentor training programme for Centre Heads, integrating experiences from the peer group mentoring, started in spring 2017. Since many Centre Heads will retire in the near future, peer group mentoring is expected to be an efficient way to support young Centre Heads when they start working in their new post.

The City of Helsinki started planning support measures (arranged e.g. by occupational health services) for Nursery Nurses working in ECEC centres even though collegial support is usually available on a daily basis for new Practical Nurses/Childrens' Instructors, since there are others within their occupational group in the centre. Consequently, Nursery Nurses do not suffer from the same 'professional isolation' as Kindergarten Teachers often do.

8.4 Non-contact time

According to the nationwide collective agreement, approximately 8% (about three hours/week) of a Kindergarten Teacher's working time should be allocated for planning and preparation work, evaluation, etc. Practices vary from municipality to municipality and a sufficient amount of non-contact time is not always granted. This appears to be another reason – beside the low salary – that increases Kindergarten Teachers' willingness to leave the profession (Onnismaa et al. 2013). According to the new legislation, all children in ECEC centres (as well as 6-year olds in pre-primary classes) must have a 'personal curriculum' which is based on observations conducted by the staff as well as on conversations with each child's parents/guardians. Drawing up the 'child's personal curriculum' is by law defined to be a Kindergarten Teacher's responsibility. All these duties require non-contact time, which is not always granted even though it has been regulated by the collective agreement and the new legislation emphasizes the role of the Kindergarten Teacher as pedagogical team leader. Team discussions and staff meetings require some non-contact time for all team members, including Nursery Nurses and Assistants.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

The personnel in Finnish ECEC centres is ageing, with many approaching retirement, and staff shortages can be anticipated in the near future to some extent.¹⁵ In addition to the large num-

¹⁴ *Osaava Verme* is a collaborative network between the Finnish teacher education institutions, including the vocational teacher education institutions and teacher education departments of universities. The main goal is to develop and disseminate the peer-group mentoring model (PGM) to support new teachers. Peer-group mentoring (PGM), known in Finland by the acronym *verme*, is a Finnish approach to supporting new teachers in their early career. PGM brings new teachers together to share and reflect on their experiences and to discuss the day-to-day problems and challenges they face. The method has been piloted by the funding of the Finnish Work Environmental Fund in 2008–10 and is being continuously developed by The Finnish Network for Teacher Induction '*Osaava Verme*'. PGM groups usually meet once a month to discuss work-related issues. The PGM approach draws on the constructivist view of learning, which maintains constructing knowledge based on prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. Peer discussion is therefore an essential element in creating shared understanding of the work of teachers (Finnish Network for Teacher Induction '*Osaava Verme*' 2016).

¹⁵ According to the 2014 statistics on the personnel in municipal health and social services (personnel of ECEC services was included), 28.5 per cent will reach the age of 65 by 2025, and it is likely that most of them will retire. By 2030, 43.1 per cent of the 2014 personnel will reach the age of 65. In 2015, ECEC personnel was on average 44.2 years old. The proportion of employees under 30 was 15% and the proportion of employees over 50 was a little more one third (Local Government Employers 2016d; National Institute for Health and Welfare 2015).

ber of all employees who will soon retire, there is a more specific concern about a shortage of Kindergarten Teachers. This has been developing gradually due to the lack of monitoring the need nationally and, consequently, the numbers of students in universities have not been proportional to the demand. In the capital area there is a shortage of approximately 500 Kindergarten Teachers and there is also a demand for Special Education Teachers for the early years. Another distinctive feature relates to the increase of the proportion of Social Welfare Workers in the ECEC field which has developed in tandem with the growing teacher shortage. One reason for this situation originates from the education policy of the last few decades and the structure of tertiary level education in Finland. In a so-called dual model, universities and polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) should not provide study programmes for occupations which already have a university-based qualification route. Due to certain historical and political reasons, the Social Welfare Worker qualification has remained in the qualification requirement statutes for Kindergarten Teacher posts. Polytechnic degree programmes for social services annually train a considerable number of Social Welfare Workers who can apply for a Kindergarten Teacher post while the number of new students in universities has been more strictly regulated nationally (e.g. in 2014, 390 Kindergarten Teachers and 710 Social Welfare Workers eligible for work as a Kindergarten Teacher graduated across the country).

The shortage of university trained Kindergarten Teachers appears to apply mostly to ECEC settings for 0- to 6-year olds, not to the pre-primary classes for 6- to 7-year olds), where Primary Teachers may also work. The fact that all teacher categories graduate from the same university departments can be an enhancing factor in terms of creating a continuum from ECEC to primary school (Karila et al. 2013).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

While the new Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (*Varhaiskasvatuslaki* 19.1.1973/36 - 8.5.2015/580) emphasises pedagogy in ECEC, it can be considered somewhat alarming that the majority of ECEC staff has a professional training for the social welfare and health services (Practical Nurses and Social Welfare Workers). This imbalance is likely to worsen in the near future when many practitioners with the Kindergarten Teacher qualification will retire. The proportion of Social Welfare Workers is larger among younger employees.

The Minister of Education and Culture has recently reacted to this imbalance with the measures for strengthening the Kindergarten Teacher study route at universities already mentioned (30% increase in student intake as from 2017). There is a long-term objective to improve the relative proportions of Kindergarten Teachers and Social Welfare Workers but the effects of the prospective changes in education policy demand time. It also remains to be seen whether the changes in adult-child ratio in ECEC settings following the latest law amendments will cause changes in the demand for both Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery Nurses. The law now guarantees 20 hours ECEC a week for all children instead of the former full-time place. Only children whose parents/guardians are working or studying are now eligible for a full-time place ECEC.¹⁶ Not all municipalities have implemented this reduction as yet, but if they do, the demand for staff is likely to decrease.

If the proposals introduced in June 2017 in the project of developing a ‘roadmap’ for the Finnish ECEC system (see *Section 6*; Karila et al. 2017) are put into practice, major changes regarding

¹⁶ “20-hours-ECEC” is not necessarily organised every weekday for four hours/day but the parents may choose e.g. two ten hours’ days. Some municipalities have also started to organise e.g. seven hours’ days three times a week for these children. In the ten hours/day model children can be placed in groups as “extra children” (part time adult-child ratio is 1:13). In three days/week-models Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery Nurses work with these children three days and the rest of the week they work e.g. as replacement staff in other groups.

ECEC staffing in Finland can be anticipated. The expert group's proposals indicate that there is likely to be a growing demand for Kindergarten Teachers and a decreasing demand for Social Workers and Nursery Nurses (Karila et al. 2017, 86–87). It remains to be seen how the trade unions and political parties receive the proposals.

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FINLAND

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Eeva-Leena Onnismaa
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Finland – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 357-368.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Finland has a unitary system of early childhood education and care, organised in two stages. In January 2013, national responsibility for centre-based and home-based ECEC provision for children up to age 6 was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö*) to the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö - OKM*). Finnish ECEC is therefore no longer part of the social welfare system. Since its introduction in the 1990s, pre-primary education for 6-year olds in the year preceding school entry at age 7 has been under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

Together with the Finnish National Agency for Education (formerly: Finnish National Board of Education), the Ministry of Education and Culture determines goals, content and approaches for the early childhood sector. The organisation and management of ECEC is the responsibility of the municipalities or of private service owners/providers.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Ministry of Education and Culture 2016.
OECD 2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

Equality of opportunity is the main overarching objective of education policy in Finland. Education is seen as a basic right for all citizens regardless of their age, place of residence, financial situation, gender, home language or religion.

The legal foundations of ECEC are the Early Childhood Education and Care Act (*Varhaiskasvatustaki*, 2015), which replaced the Act on Children's Day Care (1973) (*Päivähoitolaki*, 1973) and the Basic Education Act (*Perusopetuslaki*, 1998). The term 'early education' (*varhaiskasvatus*) replaced the term 'day care' (*päivähoito*).

Further goals and principles were set down in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (*Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet*, 2003, amended 2005) as a recommendation for the providers of ECEC services. As from 1st August 2017, new National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, issued by the Finnish National Board of Education in 2016, came into effect. They are legally binding, and not – as previously – just a recommendation. A revised National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education (*Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* 2014) came into effect in 2016.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Finnish National Board of Education 2016.
Onnismaa, E.-L. 2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Since 1996, all children under compulsory school age have been entitled to a place in ECEC provision. The municipalities are obliged to provide the places needed. Government cuts have led to a change in policy and places are now granted to parents who are working or full-time students. Since August 2016, children with parent(s) at home (e.g. workless) are entitled to 20 hours a week in ECEC provision which can be arranged in various ways. This does not necessarily mean regular provision of pedagogical activities four hours per day: the parents may choose how they use the statutory hours (which could mean, for example, two ten-hour days weekly), and these hours can also be arranged in family day care or in a play group, and must not necessarily be in a centre-based setting.

In August 2015, enrolment in the pre-primary year became compulsory. Pre-primary classes had been well attended up till then, with 98% of 6-year olds participating. Basic school begins at age 7.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2017.
Finnish National Board of Education 2016.
Onnismaa, E.-L. 2017.
Salmi, M., J. Närvi and J. Lammi-Taskula 2017.

Main types of provision

At the end of paid parental leave, usually when the child is 9 or 10 months old, parents can choose whether they wish to enrol their child in a municipal or private ECEC centre, or in municipal or private family day care provision, or whether one parent stays at home with the child. For the latter two options, a care allowance is granted up to the child's third birthday.

Early childhood centres (*päiväkoti*) provide full-day (max. ten hours) or part-day (max. five hours) care for children up to age 7. Children whose family language is Swedish or Sami are able to attend ECEC centres where their home language is the main language.

Family day care (*perhepäivähoito*) is regulated home-based provision for children from 10 months up to school entry age. It is organised (a) by the municipalities, also as group family day care, and (b) by private providers, with parents using the care allowance.

Pre-primary classes (*esiopetus*) for 6-year olds are free of charge and since August 2015 the child's parents/guardians are expected to enrol their child, but it is not a legal obligation. Children who live more than 5 kilometres away from the nearest pre-primary class are transported there free of charge. Pre-primary classes are organised either in early childhood centres or in schools and provided for 700 hours/year. In the municipal pre-primary groups the opening hours are generally aligned to school opening hours, i.e. four or up to a maximum of five hours a day.

Parents whose children attend a pre-primary group are entitled to access other forms of provision. Most children also attend an early childhood centre in order to guarantee full-day provision. When pre-primary classes are organised in ECEC centres, the children can stay under the same roof (with the same staff) for the rest of the day after the pre-primary class hours. In other cases, after school provision may be organised e.g. in a playgroup, particularly if the pre-primary class is located in a school building.

Playgroups: Beyond the classical forms of provision, the Lutheran church parishes and other non-profit organisations organise sessional groups (*päiväkerho*/playgroups) for children and parents. Many municipalities have started to organise playgroup activities for children who do not fulfil the requirements for full-time day care. However, the pedagogical standards (e.g. staff education and training requirements) in playgroups are not equivalent to the standards for mainstream ECEC centres. In many municipalities, playgroup activities are offered only on some weekdays and, for example, for only three hours per day.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Onnismaa, E.-L. 2017.

Provider structures

Early childhood education and care is provided by public and private agencies. The municipalities are required to guarantee parents access to ECEC services. If the number of places in publicly-run services is not sufficient, the municipal authorities are entitled to inform parents about places in private provision. Slightly more than one half of 1- to 5-year olds attend public provision. In 2016, 14.2% of all children attending ECEC services were enrolled in a publicly subsidised privately run setting. In 2015, this proportion was lower (13%), i.e. the proportion of private ECEC providers in Finland is growing.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Education and Culture 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Table 1 shows the development of participation rates over time. In 2015, around two thirds of children under age 3 were not enrolled in early childhood provision. This can be at least partly explained by the comprehensive parental leave system. By way of contrast, 82.8% of children aged 3 to school entry attended a centre-based setting.

Table 1

Finland: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years, in %**	3 years to school entry, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	8	25
	Over 30 hours	19	51
	No attendance	74	24
2010	1 to 29 hours	8	21
	Over 30 hours	20	56
	No attendance	72	23
2015	1 to 29 hours	7.9	23.2
	Over 30 hours	24.6	59.6
	No attendance	67.4	17.2

Table 2 shows the enrolment ratios of children according to age groups.

Table 2

Finland: Number of children in ECEC settings and enrolment ratios according to age, 2015**

Age-groups	Number	Share in %
Under 2 years	17,184	14.8
2-year olds	31,780	52.6
3-year olds	41,696	68.4
4-year olds	46,366	74.5
5-year olds	48,769	78.8
6-year olds	59,429	97.0
3- to under 7-year olds	196,260	79.7⁺
2- to under 7-year olds	48,964	27.7⁺

* own calculations based on Eurostat data of 2015

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.
**Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.

Financing and costs for parents

In 2013, 3.4% of the Finnish GDP was allocated to financial benefits for children and families, representing a high share of government spending compared to the EU average of 2.4%

700 hours of pre-primary education for 6-year olds is free of charge for parents, whereas fees for additional hours and for younger children in ECEC provision are based on the family's size and income and depend on the requested hours of day care. Charges in private day-care are determined by the service provider, but it is possible to receive a private care allowance for these expenses.

Fees are generally higher in the privately run ECEC centres than in municipal provision. In 2015, the highest fee (including food) for a full-day place in a municipal ECEC centre was 283€ per month. As from August 2016, fees are expected to rise in general to 354€, although they will be reduced for low-income families. Parental fees cover around 14% of the centre's running costs. In order to mitigate inequalities between municipalities, all municipalities receive government transfers since 2010, whereby the number of children under age 6 living in a specific municipality is taken into account. In 2015, 25% of the total expenditure on ECEC was covered by government transfers.

Sources: EPIC 2017.
Eurydice 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Kela 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Children are usually grouped in three age bands: children under 3 years of age, 3- to 6-year olds and 6- to 7-year olds in the pre-primary classes. The number of children in a group may not exceed the number of children allowed for three adults.

The required staff-child ratios are laid down by law: 1 qualified member of staff for 4 children under age 3 and for 8 children over age 3 (up to 2016 the ratio was 1:7 for children over age 3). However, not all municipalities, particularly the larger cities, have changed the former ratio requirement.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Onnismaa, E.-L. 2017.

Curricular frameworks

ECEC settings and pre-primary education are guided by two national curricular documents. For ECEC settings, the former National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care (2003, amended 2005), have been replaced since Autumn 2017 by the *National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2016**. Five key areas of learning are formulated: (1) the world of languages, (2) artistic expression, (3) myself and my community, (4) exploring my environment, (5) growing up and developing in motion.

A revised version of the *National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014 (Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014)* was introduced in 2016. In the newest edition it is stated

that the underlying principles emphasise the child's individuality, the significance of active learning and the importance of acting as a group member. The focus is on play-based and child-initiated learning and a positive outlook on life.

Although the curricular frameworks define certain areas of content, these are seen more as an orientation for the educational staff in order to guarantee a balance in activities for supporting the children's development. Centre-specific education programmes are expected to include the main curricular areas, including forms of co-operation between staff and parents.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
EFA 2015.
*Finnish National Board of Education 2016.
Finnish National Agency of Education 2017.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs are integrated wherever possible into ECEC settings close to their home. According to the Education Act, each child should receive the support that he or she needs. Either the children with special educational needs are placed in integrated special groups (five children with special needs and seven children without special needs) or in special classes (six to eight children with special educational needs). Both of these groups are located in mainstream ECEC centres. A special needs teacher is responsible for these groups together with a team that may consist of a kindergarten teacher and a nursery nurse.

Children with a background of migration

In Finland, both Finnish and Swedish are the two main official languages. In some ECEC centres, generally either the one or the other language is the main language of communication. Municipalities in areas in which the Sami language is spoken are expected to provide ECEC settings in this language, too.

According to national statistics*, 4.4% of people living in Finland in 2016 came from a non-Finnish background; among these, 39.9% came from other EU28 countries. The shares in the age-group of children under age 4 are 4.9% and 35.7% respectively. The language support for children whose home language is not Finnish or Swedish is provided in ECEC centres according to the demand. The quantity and quality of language support vary.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
*Statistics Finland 2017.
Ministry of Education and Culture & Finnish National Board of Education 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Monitoring and evaluation procedures in Finland related to the ECEC settings, staff, curriculum implementation and children's progress are regulated at the local level and financed through the municipal budgets. Following the law reform of 2015, responsibility for the monitoring of ECEC provision was transferred from the National Institute for Health and Welfare to the Finnish National Agency for Education (up to 2017: National Board of Education).

For each child, an individual educational plan is drawn up in co-operation with the parents. According to the new ECEC law, this is now obligatory and it is the Kindergarten Teacher's responsibility to interview each child's parents/guardians and draw up the plan. The plan includes areas related to the child's experiences, well-being, interests and strengths, and also documents specific

needs for support and guidance. The staff are expected to observe and document the children's behaviour regularly and adjust planning accordingly. Portfolios are frequently used as a form of documentation. This child-related information forms an important basis for discussions with parents. Parental surveys are also used to gauge opinions on the work of the centre.

It is not unusual for each child to receive a kind of confirmation certificate of participation at the end of his or her time in an early childhood centre. This may also describe the specific programme of the centre attended.

External inspections (staff-child ratios, hygiene and safety aspects, staff qualifications) are rare, and usually only carried out in the case of a complaint. Decisions about self-evaluation and preferred assessment instruments are a matter for the local authorities. The frequency of evaluations also varies from municipality to municipality*.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2017.
*OECD 2015.
Onnismaa, E.-L. 2017.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*äitiysvapaa/moderskapsledighet*) is guaranteed for 105 working days (about four months); between 30 and 50 of these can be taken before the expected birth-date. Two weeks before and two weeks after the birth are compulsory. Pay is income-related; during the first 56 days 90% of the annual income is guaranteed. Payments are reduced when the annual income exceeds 57,110€; below 1,426€ a monthly lump sum of 593€ is paid. After 56 days, the payment comprises 70% of the annual income. Requirements are the possession of a Finnish passport and a 180-day compulsory insurance in Finland or another EU country, or in Switzerland or Israel. Excluding the four compulsory weeks, mothers are allowed to work during maternity leave.

Fathers are entitled to 54 working days of **paternity leave** (*isyysvapaa/faderskapsledighet*) until the child turns two years. 18 of these can be taken while the mother is on maternity leave or parental leave. Payment is 70% of the annual income with a ceiling of 37,113€. It is not possible to work during paternity leave.

Parental leave (*vanhempainvapaa/föräldraledighet*) is guaranteed for 158 working days, starting at the end of maternity leave. These days can be shared between the parents, but cannot be taken at the same time. Payment is 70% of the annual income with a ceiling of 37,113€. Parents with an annual income below 1,425€ or parents working during parental leave receive a minimum payment. Parental leave can be taken in part-time (at least for two months at a time and but only if both parents take part-time leave) with reduced payments.

In 2015, 80% of fathers took up to 18 days paternity leave (on average 15 days). This uptake has been on the rise again since 2014, after sinking somewhat in the years before 2014. The 158 parental leave days are mostly taken by mothers; less than 4% of mothers work during the parental leave period. In 2015, almost 5% of fathers also made use of parental leave entitlements.

At the end of parental leave, parents can decide whether to make use of an ECEC setting or to receive a home care allowance (342€ monthly for the first child until the third birthday) and look after their child at home. According to the national statistics, 102,414 women and 7,626 men made use of the home care benefit in 2015*.

Parents can also decide whether to reduce their working hours following parental leave until the end of the child's second year at school. Parents with children under age 3 who work less than 80% of their regular working hours receive a monthly benefit of approximately 162€, if they work only 60% the benefit amounts to 244€.

After the parental leave period, parents are entitled to place their child in public daycare until the child starts school, usually at the age of seven. Since August 2016 this entitlement is reduced to 20 hours per week, unless both parents work or study full-time.

Sources: EPIC 2017
Salmi, M., J. Närvi and J. Lammi-Taskula 2017.
*Statistics Finland 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1888	First kindergarten established based on Froebel's educational philosophy
1927	First framework issued for the public funding of day care facilities for children
1973	Act on Children's Day Care
1983	Child Law: "All children are equal before the law."
1985	Legal entitlement to a place in early childhood provision for all under 3-year olds, implemented gradually up to 1990.
1996	Legal entitlement to a place in early childhood provision from the age of one up to school starting age
2000	Pre-primary education reform implemented (law approved in Parliament in 1998): the year preceding school entry free of charge for all 6-year olds; first <i>National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education</i> announced
2005	Revision of the 2003 <i>National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland</i>
2013	Transfer of responsibility for ECEC up to school entry at age 7 from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture
2015	Early Childhood Education and Care Act; parents/guardians are expected to enrol their child to pre-primary education; despite this obligation, there is no system of sanctions if they do not.
2017	Revised curricular framework for early childhood education and care comes into effect

Sources: Ministry of Education and Culture & Finnish National Board of Education 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland

Country expert assessment by Eeva-Leena Onnismaa

Since the transfer from the social welfare system to the education sector in 2013, the Finnish ECEC system is in quest of a new direction. Moreover, the law reform of 2015 and the curriculum reform of 2016 have paved the way for future developmental tasks. According to the *Roadmap on the development of early childhood education for 2017–2030**, the main initial challenge is to increase the level of participation in early childhood education. The participation rate in ECEC in Finland has remained low compared with other Nordic countries and the next step will be to provide ECEC free of charge for 5-year olds, which will be piloted in cooperation with municipalities.

The second challenge relates to developing the staffing structures in ECEC centres as well as improving the skills of the personnel as whole. The main bulk of ECEC staff in Finland (80%) has a background in social welfare and health care. According to the proposal introduced in the *Roadmap*, at least 40% (minimum) of centre staff should be fully qualified ECEC teachers (Kindergarten Teachers) while the remaining 60% (maximum) would comprise Social Welfare Workers and Nursery Nurses. The proposal will not lead to a sudden change in the staffing structures be-

cause all employees in ECEC centres have job security. However, the proposal shows the desired direction, even if changes are likely to be moderate in the short run. Despite this, the trade unions representing the social welfare and the health care sectors have been resisting the proposal, and it remains to be seen whether policy makers and politicians will have the courage to transform it into practice.

Source: *Ministry of Education and Culture 2017.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population of Finland totalled 5,487,308, marking a steady rise over the past 20 (5,098,754 in 1995, 5,236,611 in 2005).

Children under age 7

Since compulsory schooling begins at age 7 in Finland, data in the following section will refer to children up to age 7 (and not only up to age 6, as in the other sections).

In 2016, 3.1% of the total population in Finland were children under 3 years of age, and 7.2% were children under age 7. Since the national statistics and the Eurostat totals differ somewhat, both are included in *Table 3*. The discrepancies can perhaps be explained by different cut-off dates during 2016.

Table 3
Finland: Proportion of children under age 7 in the total population, 2016

Age	No. of children (Eurostat)	No. of children (Statistics Finland)
Under 1 year	55,560	53,155
1-year olds	58,008	55,856
2-year olds	59,050	58,331
Total under 3-year olds	172,618	167,342
3-year olds	60,615	59,315
4-year olds	61,145	60,880
5-year olds	62,436	61,373
6-year olds	62,095	62,645
Total 3- to under 7-year olds	246,291	244,213
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	418,909	411,555

The relative share of children under the age of 3 and under 7 years of age have been consistently slightly higher than the EU average over the past 20 years.

Table 4

Finland: Children under 7 years of age – relative share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3.8	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.0
3 to under 6 years	5.1	4.7	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.2
0 to under 7 years	8.9	8.0	7.6	7.3	7.6	7.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Sources: Eurostat 2017a

*Statistics Finland 2016.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, almost all households (92.6%) in Finland with children under 6 years of age were couple households. Single parent households accounted for less than 2%, and these were almost without exception single mother households.

Table 5

Finland: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	502,000	
Couple households	464,800	92.6
Other household type	28,100	5.6
Single households, total	9,200	1.8
Single households, women	8,400	1.7
Single households, men	800**	0.2

* own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the labour market participation of men in Finland (aged 15 to 64 years) was 69.3%, and the employment rate of women was only slightly lower at 67.7%. In the same year, 60.1% of all women and nearly 90% of all men with children under 6 years of age were in employment. The relative share of mothers in the labour market is slightly below the EU average, whereas the proportion of working fathers is slightly above the EU average (see Table 6).

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Table 6

Finland: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2016

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Finland	2005	61.0	91.0
	2010	61.2	91.9
	2015	60.1	89.3
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 15.4% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. This positions Finland well under the EU average of 24.7% for this age-group. In terms of the total population in Finland, 16.8% were at risk of poverty or social inclusion.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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FRANCE

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

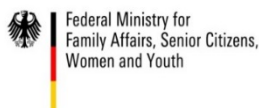
Sylvie Rayna

EXPERICE – University of Paris 13 Sorbonne, Paris City

Citation suggestion:

Rayna, S. 2018. "France – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 369-403.

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1. ECEC governance

In France, the system of early childhood education and care is split between a childcare sector and an education sector. Provision for the under-threes (both centre-based and family day care) comes under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Families, Childhood and Women's Rights (*Ministère des familles, de l'enfance et des droits des femmes*) and local authorities.

Centre-based settings for children up to 3 or 4 years of age include both full-time provision, mostly *crèches collectives* and *mini-crèches* for the under-threes, and in some cities *jardins d'enfants* for 2- to 4-year olds, and part-time sessional care (*haltes-garderies*) for the under threes. Some centres combine various options and are known as *établissements multi-accueils*. They can be publicly run, associative and parent-run. During Sarkozy's presidency (2007-2012), private *crèches* were authorised and these are currently increasing in number.

Pre-primary¹ education settings (*écoles maternelles*) for 2- to 6-year olds fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche*) and, although not compulsory, are part of the primary school system. *École primaire* is an umbrella term for both pre-primary (*école maternelle*) and primary school (*école élémentaire*) for children aged 2 to 11 years.

Out-of-school and leisure-time facilities come under the auspices of the Ministry of City, Youth and Sports and are organised by local authorities. They provide for children aged 2 to 11 years during the substantial lunch-break and during out-of-school hours in both pre-primary and primary school settings.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In both the childcare and pre-primary education sectors the ECEC workforce is characterised by hierarchical structures. The childcare sector, where the majority of staff has a paramedical background, is also characterised by diversity in staffing requirements for core practitioners. In both sectors there is currently a shortage of professional staff.

2.1.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

The initial professional study requirements for all staff in the childcare sector are currently undergoing a series of reforms.

The main categories of staff working in centre-based settings for under-threes, mostly *crèches collectives* and *mini-crèches*, are:

Paediatric Nurses (*puéricultrices/puériculteurs*)

The 1983 initial professional studies curriculum for *puéricultrices* (consolidated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration in 2017), prepares them for medical consultations with mothers (prenatal to 16 months), as well as working as a centre leader in a *crèche* or open door

¹ To establish a degree of comparability between the country reports, the term 'pre-primary' is used in this report when describing the institutions that precede compulsory schooling, i.e. the *écoles maternelles*. In France, however, the *école maternelle* is termed 'pre-elementary school' since – together with the *école élémentaire* – it forms the primary school (*école primaire*) for 2- to 11-year olds.

centre for family day carers (*relais assistantes maternelles – RAM*) (Bosse-Platière 2008; Albérola and Olm 2011; Onyszko 2013). Currently there are debates under way as to whether the requirement for this paramedical profession should be changed from a four-year (3+1) qualification route to a Master’s degree (3+2).

Early Childhood Educators (*éducatrices/éducateurs de jeunes enfants*)

Curricular requirements for the professional preparation of early childhood educators for working in the childcare sector and, sometimes, in bridge classes with 2-year olds in *écoles maternelles* (Dupraz 1995; Villain and Gossot 2000), were updated in 2005. According to an inter-ministerial circular (2011), the minimum requirement was changed from a post-secondary qualification to a Bachelor’s degree (implementation still in progress). Currently, as for paediatric nurses, a Master’s degree as a requirement for entry into the profession is under discussion.

Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses (*auxiliaires de puériculture*)

The 2006 curricular requirements for this qualification were recently consolidated (Ministry of Health and Solidarities 2017). However, there are ongoing discussions regarding both level and content, and reforms have been proposed in a report commissioned by the Minister of Families, Childhood and Women’s Rights (Giampino 2016), which was the product of a broad consultation process with stakeholders in the childcare sector.

Early Childhood Care Assistants (*CAP petite enfance*²)

Created in 1991 for the education system, e.g. for the municipal workers who support teachers (*ATSEM - agent territorial spécialisé des écoles maternelles*), holders of this certificate are now also allowed to work in *crèches*. Although this qualification is on the same level as the qualification of the *auxiliaires de puériculture*, the *CAP petite enfance* certificate has not the same social recognition: some municipalities refuse to employ these workers, who do not as yet have an official name, in their *crèches*. Following the recommendations of the above-mentioned report (Giampino 2016), they have recently been termed as *accompagnants éducatifs petite enfance* (roughly translated: early childhood educational co-workers or accompanying persons). A reform of this qualification route is in progress (Ministry of National Education 2017a).

Table 1 gives a brief overview of key features related to the childcare staff categories. Core practitioners (responsible for a group of children or for the centre as a whole) are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 below).

Table 1

France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – childcare sector

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF Level/ISCED ³ level
<i>Puériculteur/ puéricultrice</i> Paediatric Nurse <i>Profile:</i> Health Care Professional	All kinds of <i>crèches (collectives, parentales, familiales)</i> Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years They also can work in: <i>Relais assistantes maternelles - RAM</i> Open door centres for family day carers and the	Centre head Early childhood co-ordinator	Intra utero - 16 years	3-year post-secondary qualification National diploma/Nurse (<i>Diplôme d’État d’infirmière</i>) PLUS 1 year course at private or public <i>école de puériculture</i> National diploma

² CAP = *certificat d’aptitude professionnelle* (Certificate of professional competence)

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF Level/ISCED ³ level
	<p>children in their care 0-3 years</p> <p>Medical consultations <i>Protection maternelle et Infantile - PMI</i> Mother and child protection centres for babies and older children 0 - 16 years</p> <p>Maternity and paediatric hospitals 0 - 16 years</p>			<p>Paediatric Nurse (<i>Diplôme d'État de puériculture</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: not (yet) applicable EQF level: 6 ISCEC 2013-F: 0913/0922 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Éducateur/éducatrices de jeunes enfants</i> Early Childhood Educator</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p>All kinds of <i>crèches (collectives, parentales, familiales)</i> Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years</p> <p>Mobile services in rural areas</p> <p><i>Jardins d'enfants</i> Kindergartens 2-4/6 years (very few kindergartens altogether)</p> <p><i>Relais assistantes maternelles - RAM</i> Open door centres for family day carers and the children in their care 0-3 years</p> <p>Other services: <i>PMI</i> and remedial centres 0-16 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children's wards in hospitals and mother-child clinics - centres for psychosocial care - <i>Classes passerelles</i> in <i>écoles maternelles</i> Bridge classes in pre-primary settings 2-year olds 	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility, centre specialist in early childhood education</p> <p>Centre head</p> <p>Early childhood co-ordinator</p>	0-6 years	<p>3-year post-secondary qualification at a private or public specialist training centre (<i>école d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i>), which can be part of a broader School of Social Work.</p> <p>National diploma as Early Childhood Educator (<i>Diplôme d'État d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCEC 2013-F: 0112/0922 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Auxiliaire de puériculture</i> Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Health/Social Care Professional</p>	<p><i>Crèches</i> Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years</p> <p>They can also work in <i>PMI</i> (0-16 years) or maternity and paediatric hospitals (0-16 years)</p>	<p>Core practitioner in <i>crèches</i></p> <p>Co-worker in <i>crèches</i></p>	0-16 years	<p>Minimum entry age 17 years; entrance examination for enrolment at a private or public specialist training centre (<i>école d'auxiliaires de puériculture</i>), followed by a 10-month professional training.</p> <p>National Diplo-</p>

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF Level/ISCED ³ level
				ma/Assistant Paediatric Nurse (<i>Diplôme d'État d'auxiliaire de puériculture</i>) ECTS points: n/a ⁴ EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0913/0922 ISCED 2011: 3
<i>"CAP petite enfance"</i> Early Childhood Educational Co-Worker Pre-primary Educational Co-Worker (ATSEM)	<i>Crèches (collectives, parentales)</i> Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years <i>Écoles maternelles</i> Pre-primary education settings 2-6 years	Co-worker, in <i>crèches</i> Teacher's co-worker in <i>écoles maternelles</i>	0-6 years	2-year vocational secondary school course (<i>lycées professionnels</i>) Award: CAP-Certificate (early childhood) ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0913/0922 ISCED 2011: 3

2.1.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

Pre-primary Teacher (*professeur des écoles*)

The qualification route for Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers (*professeurs des écoles*) takes place, after the completion of a Bachelor's degree in a chosen discipline, at a University College for Teaching and Education (*ESPE - Ecole supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation*). Successful candidates are awarded a Master's degree in 'Professions of teaching, education and training' (*MEEF - métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation*).

During the first year of the two-year Master's degree course, students have to complete a specific academic recruitment examination (*CRPE - concours de recrutement des professeurs des écoles*). Those who fail the *CRPE* are permitted to follow other qualification routes for occupations other than teaching in schools, for example in a different area of education such as adult education.

At the beginning of the Master's degree course, students choose between a range of different options which can be proposed by the universities associated with the *ESPE*, where they then attend courses in these key areas and receive mentoring support throughout the two years of study and during the preparation of their Master's thesis.

During the second year of the Master's degree course students are paid (1,700€ per month) to work half-time as a teacher while they continue studying. This recent measure of paying a salary aims to attract more students in order to solve the current problem of staff shortages (there is a current lack of teachers).

Since 2013 (Law 2013-595), Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers follow their initial professional studies in an *ESPE*, which have replaced the former university institutes responsible for the preparation of teachers (*instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres - IUFM*). In 2016, there were 32 university colleges (*ESPE*) in the 30 school districts (*académies*) in France.

⁴ n/a not applicable

The district rector organises the recruitment examination (*CRPE*) for the area and the students' workplace-based learning.

The ESPE university colleges are also open to parents with three children and high level athletes without a Bachelor's degree. Instead, the personal and professional skills of the applicants are evaluated through a specific validation process (*VAPP - Validation des Acquis Professionnels et Personnels*).

Qualified teachers are national civil servants. They can work with children (2-12) both in *écoles maternelles* and *écoles élémentaires*.

Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM*)

In *écoles maternelles*, Pre-primary Teachers are supported by auxiliary staff (*ATSEM, agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles*). These are local municipal civil servants specialised in working with pre-primary age children.

Each class for 2- to 3-year olds (*toute petite section, TPS*) and for 3- to 4-year olds (*petite section, PS*) generally has its own *ATSEM*, who helps the teacher, cleans the room, cares for the children (Garnier 2010) and is in charge of them during out-of-school hours. The *ATSEM* mediate between the pre-primary institutions and families (Garnier 2008). According to a report by the General Inspection of National Education (Bouysse 2011), there are significant disparities between municipalities, with some providing support for greater educational involvement and others continuing to regard *ATSEM* as the former *dames de service* whose only tasks were cleaning the classroom and helping children in the bathroom. Some cities have one *ATSEM* in each pre-primary class. In some settings, teachers and *ATSEM* can cooperate as complementary members of a team (Vasse 2008).

Table 2

France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*)

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF Level/ISCED level
<i>Professeur des écoles</i> (Primary and) Pre-primary Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Écoles maternelles</i> Pre-primary education settings 2-6 years <i>Écoles élémentaires</i> Primary schools 6-11 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head	2-11 years	2-year Master's degree (<i>MEEF</i>) at a university college (<i>ESPE</i>), including passing the <i>CRPE</i> examination (Entry requirement for <i>ESPE</i> = Bachelor's degree (3-year <i>licence</i> in any subject) or Parents with three children and high level athletes, relevant and accredited professional and personal skills) ECTS points: 120 (total including Bachelor requirement = 300) EQF level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 7
<i>ATSEM - agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles</i> Municipal auxiliary staff	<i>Écoles maternelles</i> Pre-primary education settings 2-6 years working alongside the teacher or during	Co-worker with specialist qualification	2-6 years	2 years vocational secondary school (<i>lycées professionnels</i>) <i>CAP</i> /early childhood certificate plus an additional <i>ATSEM</i> training/examination

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF Level/ISCED level
	lunchtime and out-of-school hours			ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0119 ISCED 2011: 3

2.1.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Staff employed by the local authorities/municipalities complement the work of the *écoles maternelles* in out-of-school hours, i.e. before 8:30 and after 16:30, during the two-hour lunch break, on Wednesday afternoons and during the school holidays. On some days, schools close at 15:00, following a School Rhythm Reform laid down in the 2013 Orientation Law, but under debate following the new Macron government.

Leisure-time activities usually take place in the building and grounds of the *école maternelle*. The municipal staff in this sector comprise a leading playworker/leisure-time worker, playworkers assisted by *ATSEM* staff and, following the School Rhythm Reform, various external specialists (e.g. professionals for reading with young children, artists, sport educators). Little research has been carried out on the work in this sector. However, whereas at a macroscopic level the daily routines of school-time periods in *écoles maternelles* may appear to be relatively homogeneous (Brougère *et al.* 2008), these leisure-time periods are characterised by considerable disparities in quality from one city to another.

The qualification requirements for this sector are similar to those for work with pre-primary and primary school children. The most frequent award in this sector is the ‘Skills for the animator occupation’ certificate (*BAFA - brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions d’animateur*), and the requirement for lead animators is the ‘Skills for the function of directors of leisure-time centres’ certificate (*BAFD - brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions de directeur de centres de vacances et de loisirs*) (Ministry of City, Youth and Sports 2017).

These certificates are awarded by adult education centres recognised by the Ministry of City, Youth and Sports (*Ministre de la Ville, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*). They are not professional diplomas. Students often choose them because the qualification route is less expensive and the award easier to obtain. About 2,000 *BAFD* are awarded each year, and about 55,000 *BAFA*.

Working conditions are highly variable, depending on the particular city. Staff may work full-time or part-time, and have varied status and also varied (usually low) salaries.

Following the School Rhythm Reform, which introduced an increase in the number of out-of-school hours, official guidelines were provided to help municipalities with the organisation.

Table 3

France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – out-of-school leisure time sector

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECT/EQF Level/ISCED level
<i>Animateur (BAFA)</i> Playworker/ Leisure Time Worker	<i>Accueil périscolaire</i> Out-of-school care provision 2-11 years <i>Centres de loisirs</i> Leisure-time centres 2-17 years	Core practitioner	2–12/17 years	<i>BAFA</i> Several weeks of training in three sessions at a training centre recognised by the Ministry of City, Youth and Sports, including work placements – within a maximum period of 30 months

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECT/EQF Level/ISCED level
				ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/1015 ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Animateur (BAFD)</i> Lead Playworker	<i>Accueil périscolaire</i> Out-of-school care provision 2-11 years <i>Centres de loisirs</i> Leisure-time centres 2-17 years	Lead member of staff in leisure time facilities	2-12/17 years	<i>BAFD</i> 3-4 years of work experience required and consolidating a final presentation – within a maximum of 4 years ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/1015 ISCED 2011: 4

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Qualifications

Following the Decree on care services for children under age 6 (Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Public Function 2010), the proportion of qualified staff in the childcare sector decreased from 60% to 50% (*CAP petite enfance* not included). This Decree provoked strong protests in the field (Ben Soussan 2010). In 2011, a collective childcare setting (*crèche collective*) employed on average 11 staff: eight to ten of them were civil servants or had a secure job; one to three worked on a part-time basis with a non-permanent contract. Most were low-qualified staff, and turnover was frequent (Albérola and Jaumier 2012). 90% of the infant/toddler settings employed at least one educator; 87% at least one assistant paediatric nurse, and 71% employed someone with the *CAP petite enfance* qualification. 50% of centre heads were qualified educators.

In the *écoles maternelles*, all teachers must be fully qualified, apart from those working part-time during the second year of their Master's study course (*MEEF*). The new generation of "*professeurs des écoles*" (with a Master's degree) replaced the previous "*institutrices*" (Ministry of National Education 2017b).

There are no national statistical data for the municipal auxiliary workers (*ATSEM*). However there are disparities, and thus inequalities between municipalities (Garnier 2008, 2016a). The

CAP petite enfance certificate is now a requirement for working as *ATSEM*, and older workers have the option of studying for this while working.

Centre heads in the leisure time sector are supposed to recruit qualified playworkers. Some playworkers have a full-time job, but most work part-time and in a precarious employment position. However, within the framework of the School Rhythm Reform and funding constraints in certain municipalities, a variety of additional external persons such as professionals from the cultural and sports sectors can be employed, and also unqualified persons.

Gender

In France, occupations which employ an equal number of men and women are few. Between 2009 and 2011, gender balance existed only in three sectors (law, administration, medicine). Moreover, 49.8% of the jobs occupied by women are concentrated in only 12 of the total 87 professional categories (Ministry of Women’s Rights 2016). However, in some regions, projects are carried out with the aim of changing attitudes towards an increasing balance: for example the project *Les métiers n’ont pas de sexe* (‘Jobs have no sex’), conducted in Alsace by the Information Centre on Women’s and Families’ Rights (Secrétariat d’État 2017) also includes projects located in the under-threes childcare sector (Dhorain and Stefan 2014).

Up until 1974, men were not permitted to work in *écoles maternelles*. While they remain a minority among teachers, they hold the majority of positions at higher hierarchy levels – such as the inspectorate (Ferrier 1997). In the *école maternelle* and *école élémentaire* together, there are 80% women in public schools and 98% in private schools. Gender stereotypes, fear of paedophile accusations and the relatively low status of this job may explain the lack of men (Fillod 2001; Jaboin 2010). Among the students preparing for the *CRPE*, 16% were men in 2007 (Paola 2007).

In the childcare sector, according to Jakoubovitch (2010) and Grenat and Nahon (2011), men represent only 1% of the *auxiliaires de puériculture*, 1.5% of the *puéricultures/puéricultrices* and 2.7% of the *éducateurs/éducatrices de jeunes enfants* (confirmed by Albérola and Olm 2011). Men themselves tend to avoid working directly with children and generally seek jobs with greater responsibilities (Grenat and Marquier 2009). Although in the education system as a whole, about 70% of the jobs are held by women, 70% of men occupy the administrative and management posts. There is also a tendency for women holding higher qualifications not to seek work directly with children (Cresson 1998).

Ethnicity

Statistics regarding the ethnicity of staff are not authorised in France. However, auxiliary staff in both the *écoles maternelles* (*ATSEM*) and the childcare sector (*auxiliaires de puériculture*, *CAP petite enfance*) often have a background of migration, particularly among the unqualified staff in *crèches*.

Table 4

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – childcare sector (0-3 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	2011* : <i>Puéricultrices/puériculteurs</i> : 4% <i>Éducatrices/éducateurs</i> (centre heads only): 16% Only 1 or 2 <i>éducatrices</i> work directly with children, depending on the size of the <i>crèche</i> . An increasing number are taking on the position of Centre Head.
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	Not applicable

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	2011**: <i>Auxiliaires de puériculture</i> : 36% <i>CAP petite enfance</i> : unknown, depends on the location
Non-qualified or minimally qualified staff	Approx. 50% (estimated, and including <i>CAP petite enfance</i> workers) Variations among municipalities, public and private sectors
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	Paediatrician (one half day/week, compulsory) who examines the babies on entry and follows them up. Psychologist and/or Psychomotor therapist (one half day/week, non-compulsory, but frequently requested)
Male practitioners	2011: <i>Puériculteurs</i> : 1.5% <i>Éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i> : 2.7% <i>Auxiliaires de puériculture</i> : 1.0%
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a 'background of migration'	No national statistical data available. Estimated share of staff from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa relatively high**.

Sources: *Gresy and Georges 2012; **Ulmann et al. 2015.

Table 5

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – pre-primary education sector (2-6 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a pre-primary and primary education higher education teaching degree	2014/15: 97%* with a Master's degree (<i>Professeurs des écoles</i>)
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	<i>ATSEM</i> (paid by municipalities): from one per class to none (big variations between cities); no national statistics available.
Unqualified staff	None
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	School paediatricians (1,200 nationwide) and school nurses (7,000 nationwide) work in several <i>écoles maternelles</i> and <i>écoles élémentaires</i> at the same time (health promotion, early detection of developmental difficulties, promoting inclusive work). They visit settings regularly. Further specialists (psychologists, speech therapists) are requested if necessary through the <i>RASED</i> ⁵ .
Male practitioners	In pre-primary settings and elementary schools* Public sector: 20% Private sector: 2% 2007: 16% of students preparing for the CRPE exam**
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a 'background of migration'	No national statistics available – staff with a background of migration tend to work in areas with a high minority language population.

Source: * Ministry of National Education 2017b. ** Paola 2007.

Table 6

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – leisure-time sector (2-6 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	None
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	No national statistics available
Unqualified staff	No national statistics available
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	None

⁵ *RASED (Réseaux d'aides spécialisées pour enfants en difficulté* = networks of teachers and school psychologists to support children in need. If necessary, the psychologist can inform the parents about external speech therapists, clinical psychologists, etc.

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Male practitioners	No national statistics available, but it is estimated that more male staff work in the leisure-time sector than in the childcare and pre-primary education sectors.
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a 'background of migration'	No national statistics available, but it is estimated that more staff with a BME/migration background work in the leisure-time sector than in the childcare and pre-primary education sector

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

Diversity is the main characteristic of the different job categories in care and education sectors, both regarding the duration of IPS (from some months to a Master's degree) and the content (from a paramedical to an educational orientation).

3.1.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

The care sector comprises a majority of workers with low-level IPS. The medical past of this sector remains visible through the predominance of *auxiliaires de puériculture* (as well as the *puéricultrices* who are heads of *crèches*). Educators (*éducatrices*) are still in the minority, but in recent years it has become more common for them to direct an infant-toddler centre/*crèche*.

Table 7

France: Paediatric Nurse

Job title in French: <i>Puéricultrice/puériculteur</i> Profile: Health/Social Care Professional
<p>Entry requirements: University entrance requirement (<i>baccalauréat</i>); <i>Diplôme d'État d'infirmière</i> (state-registered nurse, 3 years) or <i>Diplôme d'État de sage-femme</i> (state-registered midwife, 4 years); qualifying examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 1 year at a specialised vocational college (<i>école de puériculture</i>)</p> <p>Award: National diploma/paediatric nursing (<i>Diplôme d'État de puériculture</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0913/0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centres (<i>crèches collectives, parentales, familiales</i>); registered family day care networks; mother and child protection centres (<i>PMI - Protection maternelle et infantile, 0- 15/16 years</i>); maternity and paediatric hospitals (0- 15/16 years)</p>

Table 8

France: Early Childhood Educator

Job title in French: <i>Éducatrice/Éducateur de jeunes enfants</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: University entrance requirement (<i>baccalauréat</i>) or equivalent + entrance examination or qualification as <i>auxiliaire de puériculture</i>, <i>CAP petite enfance</i> and 3 years' work experience plus entrance examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at a specialist training centre (<i>école d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i>), which may be private or public and can be part of a more general School of Social Work.</p> <p>Award: National diploma/early childhood educator (<i>Diplôme d'État d'éducateur de jeunes enfants</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p>

Job title in French: <i>Éducatrice/Éducateur de jeunes enfants</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0922 ISCED 2011: 6 Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centres (<i>crèches collectives, parentales, familiales; haltes garderie</i>); Kindergartens (<i>jardins d'enfants, 2-4/6 years</i>); family day care networks (<i>RAM - relais assistantes maternelles</i>); mother and child protection centres (<i>PMI - Protection maternelle et infantile, 0-15/16 years</i>); bridge classes in pre-primary institutions (<i>classes passerelles, 2-3 years</i>)

Table 9

France: Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse

Job title in French: <i>Auxiliaire de puériculture</i> Profile: Health/Social Care Professional
Entry requirements: Minimum age 17 years; having completed the first 4 years of secondary school; successful completion of an entrance exam; followed by a 10-month professional training in a private or public specialist training centre (<i>école d'auxiliaires de puériculture</i>) Professional studies: 10 months at an <i>école d'auxiliaires de puériculture</i> Award: National certificate (<i>Diplôme d'État d'auxiliaire de puériculture</i>) ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0913/0922 ISCED 2011: 3 Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centres (<i>crèches collectives, parentales, familiales</i>), registered family day care networks; mother and child protection centres (<i>PMI - Protection maternelle et infantile, 0- 15/16 years</i>); maternity and paediatric hospitals (0- 15/16 years)

Table 10

France: Early Childhood Educational Co-worker

Job title in French: <i>CAP petite enfance/accompagnants éducatifs petite enfance</i>
Entry requirements: Minimum age 17 years, having completed the first 4 years of secondary school Professional studies: 2 years at a vocational secondary school (<i>lycée professionnel</i>) Award: Certificate in Early Childhood (<i>CAP petite enfance</i>) ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplaces: Infant-toddler centres (<i>crèches collectives/parentales</i>) 0-3 years

3.1.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles, 2-6 years*)

Since the inclusion of *écoles maternelles* into primary school education, Pre-primary Teachers no longer have a specialist qualification for working with children under 6 years of age. The curriculum for the Master's study programme applies both to pre-primary and primary education, whereby the orientation is strongly didactic and instructional. Pre-primary Education Assistants (*ATSEM*) have a much lower level of qualification (see *Table 12*).

Table 11

France: Pre-primary Education Teacher

Job title in French: <i>Professeur des écoles</i>
Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: 3-year university degree course award in any subject area (<i>licence</i>)
Professional studies: 2-year course of studies, including a recruitment examination (CRPE), at a higher education college for teachers with university status (<i>ESPE - École supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation</i>)
Award: Master's degree <i>MEEF (Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation)</i> and Qualified Teacher Status diploma
ECTS points: 300 (including 180 for the BA level degree as entry requirement)
EQF level: 7
ISCED 2013-F: 0113
ISCED 2011: 7
Main ECEC workplace: Pre-primary education (<i>école maternelle</i> , 2 to 6 years); Elementary school (<i>école élémentaire</i> , 6 to 11 years)

Table 12

France: Pre-primary Education Co-Worker – ATSEM

Job title in French: <i>ATSEM - agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles</i>
Entry requirements: Minimum age 17 years, having completed the first 4 years of secondary school
Professional studies: 2 years vocational secondary school (<i>lycées professionnels</i>) or equivalent with CAP certificate and ATSEM examination
Award: Early childhood certificate (<i>CAP petite enfance</i>) and qualified ATSEM status
ECTS points: n/a
EQF level: 3
ISCED 2013-F: 0011
ISCED 2011: 3
Main ECEC workplace: Pre-primary education (<i>écoles maternelles, centres de loisirs</i> , 2 to 6 years)

3.1.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

In this sector, only limited professional preparation is required. Playworkers are mostly students.

Table 13

France: Playworker/leisure time sector

Job title in French: <i>Animateur/animateur</i>
Entry requirements: Minimum age 17 years (lead playworkers: 21 years).
Professional studies: Several weeks, including work placements, at a training centre recognised by the Ministry of City, Youth and Sports; (lead playworkers: 2 theoretical sessions and 2 work placements within a maximum of 4 years) and a general training session (9-10 days)
Award: Playworker certificate (<i>BAFA -brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions d'animateur</i>); Lead playworker certificate (<i>BAFD - brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions de directeur de centres de vacances et de loisirs</i>)
ECTS points: n/a
EQF level: 3
ISCED 2013-F: 0922
ISCED 2011: 3
Main ECEC workplace: Out-of-school provision (3 to 11 years); leisure-time centres (2 to 11 years), holiday centres

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Diverse competencies are required for each profession, linked to the specificities of the diverse curricula (care or teaching/instruction or animation) in IPS programmes. The complementarity of these different occupations and professions is confirmed in Giampino's report (2016), which recommends maintaining the different job categories but increasing the quality of the lowest IPS levels and working towards a more coherent and holistic system with a common core.

3.2.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

Table 14

France: Competencies and curricular areas in the childcare sector

Job title	Competency specifications	Curricular areas
<i>Puéricultrices/ puériculteurs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To know how to care for children and guarantee conditions for their health and safety in a variety of settings - To promote children's health through preventative approaches - To support parents and care professionals - To lead crèches with an multi-professional staff team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child from intra utero to 15 years (150 h) - Illness and medico-socio-educational prevention (150 h) - Social and familial environment (150 h) - Professional expertise, regulations, management (90 h) - Workplace-based training (hospital, <i>crèches</i>, <i>PMI</i>) (710 h) - Pedagogical reflection about workplace training (100 h) - Individual studies (150 h) <p>A mixture of course work, practical placement, analyses of placement experiences</p> <p>Total = 1,500 hours</p>
<i>Éducateurs/ éducatrices de jeunes enfants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To know how to care for children in an holistic way - To act as an agent of the child's socialisation, requiring ethics, knowledge, techniques and articulation within the social and cultural context of the families - To assume a specific position as a specialist of early childhood in the area of the social work: to fight risks of exclusion, prevent difficulties, facilitate construction of social links and parental support - To assume an educational and social expertise function for early childhood as a participant in local policies: to formulate families' needs, develop partnerships <p>These actions require skills to work in a team, to elaborate, implement and evaluate educational and social plans, to develop partnerships with actors in the social and health sectors as well as with schools.</p> <p><i>Year 1:</i> Identity construction in progress (observe, understand, adapt)</p> <p><i>Year 2:</i> Appropriation and responsibility (analysis and planning of educational strategies)</p> <p><i>Year 3:</i> Affirmation and confirmation</p>	<p>The State prescribed a curriculum in 2005 (focused on the child), but each training centre interprets it in different ways. Some focus more on psychoanalytic approaches, some on parents and diversity, etc., whereas others also begin to include new issues, such as gender issues.</p> <p>The course is structured in four main curricular areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming and accompanying the young children and their families (400 h) - Educational activities with young children (600 h) - Professional expertise and ways of communicating (250 h) - Institutional and inter-institutional dynamics and partnerships <p>Total = 3,600 hours (3 years), comprising 1,500 hours of coursework and 2,100 hours of workplace based training</p>

Job title	Competency specifications	Curricular areas
	(professionalism as a complex construct)	
Auxiliaires de puéricultures	8 competencies corresponding to 8 modules (see next column). Their training is shared with <i>aides soignantes</i> (nursing assistants): half of the training is focused on the social care of young children and half on nursing duties.	<p>Module 1: Daily activities with a young child (175 h)</p> <p>Module 2: Clinical life of a young person (70 h)</p> <p>Module 3: Child nursing (140h)</p> <p>Module 4: Ergonomics (35 h)</p> <p>Module 5: Relationships and communication (70 h)</p> <p>Module 6: Room hygiene (hours not mentioned)</p> <p>Module 7: Transmission of information (35 h)</p> <p>Module 8: Organisation and management (35 h)</p> <p>Plus: 6 placements (140 h each) in maternity hospitals, paediatric hospitals, <i>crèches</i>, services with children with special needs and disabilities</p> <p>Total = approx. 1,400 hours/10 months</p>
CAP petite enfance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being able to ensure young children's wellbeing, care, body hygiene, nutrition, safety - Contributing to their education and socialisation - Being responsible for the cleaning of the premises 	<p>General education courses in a vocational secondary school (2 years) such as French, maths, etc. and also specialised courses (biotechnology, health and medico-social topics, nutrition, techniques of play work, cleaning, first aid, etc.</p> <p>plus 420 hours of workplace-based training in <i>crèches</i>, kindergartens/preschools, leisure centres</p>

3.2.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

Table 15

France: Competencies and curricular areas in the pre-primary education sector

Job title	Competency specifications	Curricular areas
Professeurs des écoles	<p>For teaching in both <i>écoles maternelles</i> and primary schools</p> <p>The competencies are defined in official documents (Ministry of National Education 2013a).</p> <p>Common competence specifications for all teachers throughout the education system are (being able to...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - share republican values (liberty, equality, fraternity, secularity, rejection of all discriminations) and to act according to the main principles of the French education system and rules of the school; - know each child and his/her learning processes; - take into account children's diversity; - accompany children in their learning; - act as a responsible educator according to ethical principles; - master the French language; - use another language; 	<p>In general, the focus of the two-year preparation is on didactics, with only limited time allocated to early childhood education, relationships with parents, etc.</p> <p>Master MEEF:</p> <p>Year 1 (489 hours) (60 ECTS points) The main focal points during the first year are the examination (<i>CRPE</i>) and familiarisation with the work of a teacher (courses on didactics and practices):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subjects/learning areas and didactics in the primary school (291 h) - Work context (88 h) - Foreign language (20 h) - Placement (observed and accompanied teaching procedures) (30 h) <p>plus 4 weeks placement in a school (observation and accompanied practices)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to research procedures (optional) (60 h) <p>Year 2 (270 hours) (60 ECTS points) If they have passed the <i>CRPE</i>, students receive a</p>

Job title	Competency specifications	Curricular areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use elements of the digital culture; - contribute to the activities of the educational community; - cooperate with pupils' parents; - cooperate with the school's partners; - involve oneself in an individual and collective process of professional development; <p>plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - master the various subject contents and their didactics; - assess pupils' learning processes and outcomes. 	<p>salary of 1,700€/month in order to be able to continue their studies and work part-time in a school.</p> <p>Subjects/learning areas and didactics in the primary school (80 h)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign language (15 h) - Articulation of knowledge for working in <i>école maternelle</i> and <i>élémentaire</i> (45 h) - Placement (responsibility for a group of children) (70 h) <p>plus working part-time (50%) in a school with responsibility for a group of children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to research procedures, master's thesis (60 h) <p>During the two years, students have to choose between a number of options for in-depth study such as the inclusion of children with disabilities, literature for children, etc. which comprise 120 hours, including the Master thesis. A dissertation concludes the <i>MEEF</i>.</p> <p>A mixture of lecturers teach in <i>ESPE</i>. These include experienced teachers, heads, teacher educators, inspectors, university professors. The overall approach includes course work, placements with accompaniment and supervision, research, coaching.</p> <p>The <i>MEEF</i> also includes common courses for teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary) and educational counsellors (secondary schools): secularism and Republican values, professionalism, combating discrimination, child psychology, public laws, inclusive schools, sociology of the audience, management of diversity, orientation, difficulties at school, cognitive styles, management of conflicts and violence, combating gender stereotypes, etc.</p>
ATSEM - agent-territorial – spécialisé des écoles maternelles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying children needs (from 2 years of age upwards) - supporting children's autonomy - applying rules of safety and hygiene - preparing pedagogical support following the teacher's instructions - participating in class activities under the guidance of the teachers - ensuring that cleaning rules are followed 	<p><i>CAP petite enfance</i>:</p> <p>Both general education courses in a vocational secondary school (2 years) such as French, maths, etc. and specialised courses such as biotechnology, health and medico-social topics, nutrition, techniques of animation, cleaning, first aid, etc.</p> <p>plus</p> <p>420 hours of workplace-based training in <i>crèches</i>, kindergartens/preschools, leisure centres.</p>

3.2.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Table 16

France: Competencies and curricular areas in the leisure-time sector

Job title	Competency specifications	Curricular areas
Animateur Play-worker/ Leisure time worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring physical and moral safety - Participating in the implementation of the pedagogical plan organised by the lead <i>animateur</i> - Establishing trusting relationships with the children - Developing welcoming relationships among children, families and staff 	<p>Course with 3 sessions (during school holidays):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic training (8-9 days) - Work based learning (14 days) - Reflexion session (minimum 6 days)
Lead	- Developing the skills needed to lead a	Depends on the specific programme of the

Play-worker	centre and to prepare a pedagogical plan - Learning to assume responsibility for a centre (staff motivation, organisational and management tasks)	training institution. <i>Examples:</i> administrative and financial management; recruitment; preparing pedagogical plans; preparing reports based on statistics and on qualitative data; motivation of staff; leading staff meetings; animators' training, establishing partnerships, etc.)
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3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Despite a prevailing discourse of lifelong learning, possibilities for horizontal or vertical movement are limited, particularly between the three sectors, which are seen as separate universes (Galtier 2013). Possibilities of system permeability for the lowest qualified staff are particularly limited. In the childcare sector, any procedures aimed to support movement within the sectors depend mostly on the municipality's training policy and demand high individual motivation and perseverance. Private sector staff have even fewer opportunities.

However, in terms of IPS, several possibilities are provided for facilitating access.

Giampino's report (2016) recommended a certain common core in the IPS of the diverse professionals working in the care sector.

3.3.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

Non-qualified workers can follow a *CAP petite enfance* course by using either the professional in-service training provided by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research for the network of public-sector institutions (*GRETA - groupement d'établissements publics d'enseignement* or a kind of distance learning course provided by the national centre for distance education (*CNED - centre national d'enseignement à distance*), or through an assessment of prior learning experiences (*VAE - validation des acquis de l'expérience*). On completion of the *CAP petite enfance* the student is eligible to register for the qualification routes as Assistant Child Nurse (*école d'auxiliaires de puériculture*) or Pre-primary Assistant in *écoles maternelles* (*ATSEM*).

Some training centres offer alternative qualification routes for salaried students (educators) or students in apprenticeship (*auxiliaires de puériculture*) which are reasonably priced and open up possibilities for career advancement, for instance from *auxiliaire de puériculture* to *éducatrice de jeunes enfants* in a sector where possibilities for vertical job mobility are limited. For instance, a training centre in Lyon (*ESSSE*) has developed partnerships with the *Collège Coopératif Rhône-Alpes* (specialised in the inclusion of workers with limited initial education) and takes in 85 regular students per year and an additional 30 salaried students wishing to become *éducateurs de jeunes enfants* (Thollon Behar and Mony 2016).

The curriculum for the IPS of *éducateurs de jeunes enfants* includes some areas which are comparable to other social work, which facilitates a change between occupations.

Moreover, educators and paediatric nurses with several years of experience as centre heads can apply to become municipal coordinators of *crèches* or municipal early childhood coordinators. Upon successful completion of a public exam at local level, they also can assume responsibility for a municipality's early childhood services.

3.3.2 Pre-primary education sector (écoles maternelles, 2-6 years)

The university-affiliated colleges for teaching and education (*ESPE*), where the initial professional studies of teachers take place, are also open to parents with three children and high level athletes. This was introduced as a measure of recognition, and also of enhancing the attractiveness of the profession in a context of staff shortages.

Some ESPE may offer students the chance during the first year of the Master MEEF course of study to alternate between *ESPE* and workplace, receiving a salary for 13 weeks and spending 268/270 hours in the ESPE. Students who already hold a Master's degree in a different discipline and have successfully passed the *CRPE* exam only need to spend half of the above-mentioned time working in a school and attend only 170 hours of courses.

Depending on their experience and evaluation by inspectors, pre-primary and primary school teachers (*professeurs des écoles*) can choose where they want to teach and also switch to adult education within a network of public institutions (*GRETA - groupement d'établissements publics d'enseignement*).

With additional qualifications teachers can become a centre head, a teacher educator, a pedagogical counsellor, a special needs teacher, a school psychologist, an inspector of national education, or teacher at a secondary school.

Few possibilities for career advancement are offered for auxiliary staff (*ATSEM*).

3.3.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Working as a playworker/ animator is often a student job. Some, after having obtained a first degree, enrol at an *ESPE* to study for the teaching profession. For career advancement in the sector, additional qualifications in the field of youth and sport are necessary (e.g. *BPJTEP : Brevet professionnel de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport*, or *DEJEPS : Diplôme d'État de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport*).

With additional qualifications, playworkers can become a lead animator, a municipal childhood/youth co-ordinator, the director of a municipal childhood/youth service office, or act as a project co-ordinator in certain organisations.

4. Workplace-based learning in the initial professional studies (IPS) of core practitioners

All initial professional study courses in early childhood care, education and social work include workplace-based learning experiences.

4.1 Childcare sector (0-3)

Paediatric Nurses: During the one-year course at a specialised vocational college (*école de puériculture*), about 30 of which are recognised by the Ministry of Health, clinical workplace learning (in hospitals, *crèches*, etc.) accounts for 700/710 hours. 100 hours of reflection on the work placement experience are included in the 660 hours dedicated to theoretical and practical courses; 140 hours are spent in the IPS institution and are specifically related to their workplace experiences (Thollon-Behar and Mony 2011).

Early Childhood Educators: About 40 specialist IPS centres (*écoles d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants*) offer 2,100 hours of workplace-based training for early childhood educators in addition to 1,500 hours of regular courses as well as pedagogical support and reflection of the practicum (Thollon-Behar and Mony 2011).

Assistant Paediatric Nurses: Practical placements take place during the ten months of qualifying at a specialist IPS centre (*école d'auxiliaires de puériculture*). The practicum is divided into six periods of 140 hours each, of which 130 hours are spent in hospitals, Red Cross institutes, public centres like *GRETA (groupement d'établissements publics d'enseignement)* and centres for apprenticeship learning. The specific organisation depends on the individual school and the staff involved in IPS (Thollon-Behar and Mony 2011).

Research has highlighted the rather technical approach of these IPS programmes (e.g. Ulmann *et al.* 2015). However, the links between course work and field work and the pedagogical accompaniment through tutors and mentors appear to be more successful if students study alongside their job or are engaged in a “dual system” of alternating between vocational education and training. Moreover, research conducted by Thollon-Behar and Mony (2011, 2016) has illustrated reciprocal benefits both at the workplace and in the study course. They emphasise the special attention devoted to analyses of daily practices as a method of constructing the relation between theory and practice, while arguing that three decades of experience with this approach show that the four dimensions of the ‘competent system’ described in the CoRe research report (Urban *et al.* 2011) are addressed: individual level, institutional and team level, inter-institutional level and political level.

Auxiliary staff: During their two years at a vocational secondary school (*lycée professionnel*), auxiliary staff in crèches spend 420 hours of workplace-based training in *crèches*, kindergartens/preschools or leisure centres.

4.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

Pre-primary Education Teachers: During the two-year Master’s course of study (*MEEF*), regular students divide their time (489 hours) between courses in a university-affiliated *ESPE* and working in schools. During the first year they spend 30 hours per week over four weeks in pre-primary and elementary schools. During the placement periods, students observe the teachers’ practices and participate in supervised teaching. As previously stated, during the second year they work half-time (paid) in an *école maternelle* or an *école élémentaire* that the school district (*académie*) chooses for them and have to complete 268/270 hours of training in an *ESPE* or university. This might prove problematic for some students, since not all topics students choose for their Master’s thesis can be followed up in every school district.

During their work in schools, students are supported by teachers, teacher educators and a tutor, who work according to specific guidelines. A coach from the affiliated university supports the students in the research necessary for the Master’s thesis.

Auxiliary staff in *écoles maternelles* (ATSEM): As with the auxiliary staff in crèches, the *CAP petite enfance* needed to become an auxiliary worker in a pre-primary setting (*ATSEM*) requires spending 420 hours of workplace-based training in *crèches*, pre-primary settings or leisure centres during their two years in a vocational secondary school (*lycée professionnel*).

4.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector

To complete the *BAFA (brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions d’animateur)* qualification for playworkers/animators, 14 days of workplace-based learning are required. Prospective lead playworkers spend 14 days in a work placement in a pre-primary setting, followed by a six-day follow-up session and a second work placement of 14 days, followed by two theoretical sessions.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

There is no specific national framework regarding the continuing professional development of staff working in ECEC. According to the French labour code, CDP is an individual right of all employees, although it is not compulsory. In the latest version (2016) the labour code states that all full-time employees are entitled to 24 hours per year during the first five years of work-

ing, followed by 12 hours per year during the next three years. Provided the employer agrees, the CPD activities can take place during working hours.

Access to CDP is provided through diverse kinds of contracts, for instance through apprenticeship contracts or through the validation of prior learning experience, in early childhood centres or through distance learning.

For municipal staff, CPD is usually provided by a national training centre for local authority employees and varies in terms of duration and location (some in the training centres, some in ECEC facilities). Training generally addresses a particular category of practitioner who can choose among a range of themes (observation; parental support; cultural activities, etc.). Training propositions from other training centres or associations or single consultants are also sent to the local authorities. Within this CPD market the quality is variable. Course leaders may be psychologists, childcare or social work professionals.

More research is needed on the quality of such CPD provision and how municipalities proceed in their choices. However, a general lack of budgets for substituting staff during the CPD activities of core practitioners and assistants can be noted, alongside low motivation for CPD among childcare staff, the distance from ECEC settings to relevant CPD institutions, as is the case in the Loire region (Rautureau *et al.* 2013), and the lack of CPD opportunities for those working in the private *crèches* (Valentim 2015).

Since the creation of *IUFM* then *ESPE*, CPD opportunities have become limited for teachers, and are provided within the *IPS* institution only.

5.1 Childcare (0-3 years) and leisure time (2-12/17) sectors

The public sector offers more opportunities for CPD than the private sector. One example is the national centre *CNFPT (Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale)*. This organisation has significant financial and human resources. However, CPD policies vary considerably from municipality to municipality. Some have a coherent professional development plan, whereas other leave access up to the individual initiative of the professionals.

The roles of the municipal early childhood coordinators and the centre heads are pivotal. Settings with rich programmes also provide a rich informal learning context for the low qualified workers and contribute towards motivating staff to progress in their career in terms of within-sector possibilities (Galtier 2013).

5.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

After having worked for one year, all public sector teachers can claim the entitlement for CPD as laid down in the labour code by submitting a professional plan to the school district (*académie*), which has to agree with the proposal. After working for three years it is possible to take 'professional leave' for 12 months, with job security and 85% of the current salary (a total of 36 months of leave are possible throughout a teacher's career). The employee has to prepare monthly reports and agree to continue his or her work in the public sector for three times as long as the duration of the compensation (Ministry of National Education 2012).

Each *académie* adapts the national training plan (*PNF – Plan national de formation*) to its specific needs. For the year 2015/16, the *écoles maternelles* were placed at the top of the list of priorities (Ministry of National Education 2015).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

6.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

Numerous reforms of the initial professional studies of the various professions within the childcare sector are currently under way or under debate. In the case of the *puéricultrices*, the discussion is about adding another year to the length of studies (which will mean five years in total). In the case of the *éducatrices*, the focus is on closer links between the IPS institutions and universities. In the case of the *auxiliaires de puériculture* and *CAP petite enfance*, both the content and the organisation of IPS are under revision.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Family Affairs, Childhood and Women's Rights, Giampino (2016) prepared a comprehensive report on child development within the childcare sector (0-3) from the perspective of a psychologist/psychoanalyst and made a series of recommendations: about the learning environment in infant/toddler centres, about the professional education/training of the staff working in the sector and about relationships with families. The report emphasises the necessity for a national framework which defines key objectives, values and principles in order to develop a common culture in the childcare sector and a common professional identity. Among other things, the report highlights the importance of providing a stimulating learning environment with a broad range of activities, of enhancing professional reflexivity through CPD, of linking research and practice more closely, of including children with special needs, of developing a transcultural/intercultural and welcoming approach towards children with a migrant background, of paying attention to gender issues both among children and staff (Bienaimé et al. 2014) and of moving on from a 'culture of safety' to a 'culture of measured risk-taking'.

Regarding the initial professional studies of staff across the sector, the report highlights the need for a common framework to provide a sense of belonging, without disregarding the specificities of the different occupational groups. It also recommends increased options for professional mobility. Access to IPS programmes, particularly in the case of the *auxiliaires de puériculture* needs improving through more public information about working with young children; through courses alternating between workplace and training institutions; through drives to recruit more men; and through improving opportunities for unemployed persons to enter work in the early childhood care sector. Continuing professional development should include a variety of approaches, such as seminars, on-site learning and private study. The report also suggests a modularisation of the IPS of *CAP petite enfance* and *auxiliaires de puériculture*. The *auxiliaires de puériculture* should remain the basic profession for working with the under-threes, but with more emphasis on education, socialisation and child development. A new job title is proposed for the *CAP petite enfance* which defines their assistant role: *assistant d'accueil de la petite enfance*. The training of centre heads should focus on participative leadership, teamwork, collaboration with external partners, comprehensive knowledge of child development, administrative management and financial management. More coordination between the different ministries in charge of the diverse diplomas is proposed.

Overall, although formulated from a distinctive child development perspective, the report highlights significant disparities and shortcomings in the staffing of the sector and makes policy recommendations to improve these. However, it remains within the confines of the childcare sector and does not address the significant gap between the childcare and education sectors, nor the issue of 2-year olds attending *écoles maternelles* (large classes, teachers not prepared for work with this age-group). Concerning the latter, in her foreword to the report, the last Minister of Family Affairs, Childhood and Women's Rights highlights the establishment of 200 bridge-classes (*classes passerelles*) in which pre-primary teachers, *ATSEM* and early childhood educators work together as a team (see also Estienne 2012).

6.2 Pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 3-6 years)

Within the broader framework of educational reform in France, *écoles maternelles* come under the reform proposals laid down in the Orientation Law (2013-595). These include the establishment of university-affiliated teacher education colleges (*ESPE - Écoles Supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation*) to replace the previous university institutes responsible for the IPS of pre-primary teachers (*IUFM - Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres*). In 2013, an *ESPE* was set up in every school district. 54,000 new posts were established, two thirds of them for 'creating an effective teacher education system' (replacement of retired teachers, creating posts for salaried students), 1,000 for teacher educators in *ESPE* and 7,000 for the initiative 'more teachers than classes', special needs teachers and school psychologists.

The main goals of the reform were: closer links to universities; more focus on the practicalities of teaching; sandwich courses during the second year of the two-year Master's studies; increased attention for children with special needs; curricular integration of digital technologies; enhanced focus on citizenship values.

Each *ESPE* is affiliated to one of the universities situated in the school district (*académie*). However, several universities may contribute to the *ESPE*'s research programme, sometimes causing co-ordination problems; also the requirements for participation in research projects may vary from one *ESPE* to another. Unfortunately the *CRPE* exams at the end of the first year of the Master's studies focus only on subject disciplines and not on other important aspects of early childhood education. Another issue is the lack of continuity between the first and second year of the Master's studies, particularly if the students have taken the *CRPE* in another school district. The offer of optional themes varies from one *ESPE* to another, thus students may have to change the preferred subject of their master's thesis.

3,000 new posts have been dedicated to the support of 2-year olds in the *écoles maternelles*. According to the ministerial decree, in 2012, the attendance rate of 2-year olds should be increased particularly in disadvantaged areas. The municipalities are expected to provide appropriate materials, space and staff both for groups of under 2-year olds (*tout petite section*) and for older children (*petite section*). However, in 2013-2014, the number of 2-year olds in the *écoles maternelles* increased by only 10% (Abdouni 2014). New ways of providing for children with special needs are to be discussed at the local level, including new co-operation strategies with special childcare centres in the vicinity.

A similarly important issue is the involvement of parents and creating relationships with schools and childcare settings in order to guarantee a smooth transition between them. Exchanges with families, local authorities, centre heads, staff and social services support such strategies.

Following the law, a superior Council of Curriculum, led by the director of the French Institute of Education (IFE), was established to create new curricula both for *écoles maternelles* and primary schools. The *école maternelle*, as the "first cycle of learning" should prepare children for the foundations of learning in primary schools. It is proposed that teachers of *GS (grande section, 5-year olds)* exchange with teachers of the first class in primary school.

The new preschool curriculum has reintroduced the term 'play' and other concepts which had been successively disappearing from the previous curricula over the past years. This recent law includes also the Reform of School Rhythm, comparing the daily routine with that in other countries. It is proposed that children should attend the *école maternelle* on nine half days, including Wednesday mornings. On two days, school finishes at 15:00 instead of 16:30. There have been protests from parents who have to reorganise their daily lives, from teachers whose free Wednesday will disappear, and from municipalities because of the increasing costs for out-of-school activities. Under the new Macron Presidency, municipalities are free to decide whether they wish to implement the Reform of School Rhythm or not. However, a number of municipalities will continue with it because of the interesting partnerships and innovations

which have developed, offering rich sport, artistic or cultural options to the children (both in Paris and in small villages).

6.3 Leisure time sector

There are no significant reforms in this sector despite some minor changes relating to the various qualification certificates. However, school reforms (and particularly the School Rhythm reform) are having an impact, creating new demands for out-of-school activities.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Training early childhood professionals between health and education: what place for emotions?

Source: Ulmann A.-L., D. Rodriguez, and M. Guyon. 2015 (see *References* for further details).

This study was conducted by researchers working in the national centre of arts and occupations (CNAM - *Centre National des Arts et Métiers*) which focuses on studies of professional activities and learning at work. It is one of the three studies selected by the CNAF⁶ following its most recent national call for research.

Aims: Based on an ethnographic study (observations and interviews were carried out over a period of 18 months), within a theoretical framework of the sociology of work, A.-L. Ulmann and collaborators explored the links between the work with young children and the IPS of two staff categories rated at the same EQF level but with different qualifications: *auxiliaire de puériculture*, the majority of staff in *crèches*, and *CAP petite enfance*.

Procedure: The authors examined in detail the IPS offered in three training centres and six workplaces (three *crèches* and three *écoles maternelles*). This dual perspective aimed to illustrate ongoing work seen both from the training side (to characterise the learning settings that prepare for work with young children) and the actual work with these children (to give the trainees an understanding of ECEC practices during site visits and practica).

Findings: Major findings show a disqualification of the *CAP Petite enfance* award. Persons with this qualification are frequently categorised as “non-qualified staff” and are therefore, in some municipalities such as Paris, not accepted for employment in *crèches*. Despite the evolution towards a recognition of *crèches* as educational settings, IPS continues to shape the professional practices of the *auxiliaire de puériculture*, since this is still heavily influenced by the medical profession in terms of procedures (e.g. hand washing) and vocabulary (e.g. “protocols”, “transmissions”). The attempts by staff in the IPS institutions to raise the status of these core but subordinate professionals may pose some difficulties in the real-life work situation, where professional activities tend to be reduced to an approach emphasising the application and prescription of technicist medical practices. The authors link this approach with the trends to limit and control emotions in relationships with young children, which have been well documented by one of them (Ulmann 2012). The authors also noticed that some dimensions linked to the body (sex, nudity), omnipresent in the workplace setting, are not sufficiently covered during IPS. They conclude that all this constitutes considerable obstacles in the construction of a professionalism based on “making sense” and underline the role of work-teams for

⁶ CNAF (*Caisse Nationale d’Allocations Familiales* = National Family Allowance Funds), is the national organisation in charge of the development of funding in the childcare (early years) sector alongside the local authorities and the parents’ contributions. It regularly launches calls for research and subsidises subsequent projects.

enhancing the reflexivity of these professionals. More generally the study questions the training of trainers.

A training approach for *éducatrices de jeunes enfants* in full-time employment and *auxiliaires de puériculture* in apprenticeship

Source: Thollon Behar M.P. and M. Mony. 2016 (see *References* for further details).

Background: The above publication draws on M.P. Thollon Behar's and M. Mony's French case study contribution to the CoRe Project (commissioned by the European Commission), which focused on professional competences required for work in ECEC settings and demonstrated the importance of a systemic approach to professionalisation across all levels of early childhood.

Aims: The aims were to analyse innovative pathways of IPS provided for two categories of staff in the childcare sector (*éducatrices de jeunes enfants* and *auxiliaires de puériculture*): a qualification route while in employment (*formation en cours d'emploi*) and a qualification route in apprenticeship (*apprentissage*).

Procedure: The two experienced researchers used interviews and questionnaires to gain data from students attending a training centre in Lyon as well as from trainers and centre heads of crèches. After providing a historical review of each form of IPS, the study focused mainly on the students' motivation.

Findings: Results show that these approaches to IPS facilitate an effective link between theory and practice. Moreover, both *éducatrices de jeunes enfants* and *auxiliaires de puériculture* were equally successful in the completion of their diplomas despite their different work experiences. Both appreciated the support provided by workshops and exchanges with trainers and mentors and report the construction of a professional identity. Despite some difficulties and limits (the amount of work; the reduced perspective of one 'model' of practice for the educators; the quality of the work experience provision), benefits could be noted in terms of more reflexivity; the acquisition of new knowledge and methods of reflection and documentation, providing that the employer is supportive and the staff well accompanied by competent mentors. From a trainer perspective, closer links to everyday practice were highlighted, alongside the establishment of new partnerships.

Overall, the findings indicate that even practitioners who are qualified at a rather low level can profit from a high quality IPS experience if they are given the opportunity to develop their reflective skills.

Which settings, cultures and professionals for the 2-year olds?

Sources: Brougère, G. 2016; Garnier P. 2016b; Garnier P., G. Brougère, S. Rayna, and R. Rupin. 2016. (see *References*)

Background: G. Brougère's study is part of a larger research project conducted by P. Garnier and other researchers of *EXPERICE*, University Paris 13 Sorbonne Paris Cité and funded by *CNAF*.

Aims: The study aimed to investigate the views of parents, professionals and children on processes of socialisation and quality of daily life experiences of 2-year olds in four settings.

Procedure: Using a multi-theoretical framework, a dialogical perspective and video-elicited feedback, this research study focused on 2-year olds in various settings: (1) *écoles maternelles* (TPS - *Toute Petite Section*) which are regulated by the education sector; (2) traditional *crèches* (*section des grands* - the oldest group) which are regulated by the childcare sector; (3) age-specific but not widespread settings such as a *jardin maternel*; or (4) bridge groups in *écoles maternelles* (*classes passerelle*). Data were obtained through continuous observations of eight children during a day in each of the four settings (videos plus field notes); through individual, video-stimulated interviews with parents focused on their own child; through interviews with

all parents of the 32 children observed; through focus groups with staff in charge of the children, stimulated by edited videos including the eight children of their own setting, followed by edited videos of other settings.

The professional values of the staff, both those expressed in the focus groups and those observed in each of the four settings, were key research themes.

Findings: G. Brougère's study illustrated different setting-specific values. These corresponded with different images of a 2-year-old child, with different concepts of learning, and with different ideas about appropriate learning activities for children of this age. Contrasting emphases in daily practices could be noted, such as child-initiated play versus teacher-directed activities, or a focus on adult-child interactions versus peer interactions, which reflected the different emphases in the staff's initial professional studies.

Results also showed that 'intermediate' settings such as the bridge classes can develop a kind of 'third way' between the two contrasting professional cultures to be found in the divided system of ECEC in France, thus providing a more appropriate alternative to the more traditional settings. While sharing the culture of the *crèches*, the *jardin maternel* tends to start preparing children for the *école maternelle*, whereas the *classe passerelle* promotes an integrative approach through the daily cooperation, within a school context, of a teacher and an educator. This exchange initiates fruitful professional learning and transformation processes. The study thus concludes by arguing for these informal learning processes which can lead to enhanced and integrative understandings.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The ECEC childcare workforce in France is not only a feminised but also a low paid workforce (Daune-Richard 1998). This lack of financial attractiveness, plus low social recognition and the high physical and emotional demands of the job, explain the difficulties of recruitment. Staff in the childcare sector – unlike the teachers in the education sector - do not enjoy long holidays and have only a few opportunities for career advancement (Odena 2009; Ulmann *et al.* 2011, 2015).

8.1.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

Puéricultrices can earn between 1,540 and 2,560€ per month. If they are centre heads (after five years as assistant head), they can earn between 1,700€ and 3,200€⁷. Some *crèches* provide living accommodation within the building, which is a big bonus in the large cities and Paris, where flats are expensive.

Educatrices de jeunes enfants earn between 1,300 and 2,400€ per month; centre heads between 1,500€ and 3,100€⁸.

The other staff working with children have a lower salary throughout their working life, which partly explains the significant staff turnover in *crèches*. *Auxiliaires de puériculture* earn between 1,050€ and 1,700€⁹ and "CAP petite enfance" around 1,500€ per month¹⁰.

⁷ Les métiers: http://www.lesmetiers.net/orientation/p1_193982/puericultrice

⁸ Les métiers: http://www.lesmetiers.net/orientation/p1_194127/educateur-de-jeunes-enfants.

⁹ Les métiers: http://www.lesmetiers.net/orientation/p1_194133/auxiliaire-de-puericulture

¹⁰ Les métiers: <http://emploi-public.publidia.fr/actualites/salaires-metiers-sante#.V50ej64qgzY>

8.1.2 Education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

Despite the economic crisis, the salaries of teachers increased somewhat in 2016. Teachers in *écoles maternelles* and in primary schools receive the same payment. They start at 2,000€ per month; after 20 years, they earn 2,625€, after 30 years 3,431€. They receive a bonus of 1,500€ when they enter the profession. To augment their salary, they can work additional hours with the *ATSEM* and animators during the two hours of the children's lunch break, if they so choose. Centre heads earn a bonus that depends on the size of the school and may possibly benefit from the provision of accommodation. Schools recognised as *écoles d'application* (vocational colleges) may include teacher trainers (*maîtres formateurs*) who receive a small amount of money for this additional work (1,250€ per year)¹¹.

ATSEM's salaries are lower: they start with a monthly sum of 1,472.43€ and finish with a maximum of 2,116€¹².

8.1.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Animateurs and centre heads in the leisure-time sector have low salaries. Disparities can be observed depending on the city and on the type of contract (short-term or permanent, part-time or full-time). Whereas remuneration varies, it may not be less than 2.2 times of the minimum hourly wage (currently 10€ in France). Centre heads receive a little more money for their leadership tasks.

Generally considered as a student occupation, this sector is only just beginning its professionalisation journey.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

In France, 35 hours is considered a full-time working week. Part-time employment is not common, but some mothers with young children work an 80% working week, staying at home on Wednesdays, when *écoles maternelles* used to close (although just recently Wednesday morning attendance has been introduced). This employment pattern also applies to teachers who are also mothers and to most mothers who are professionals in the childcare sector.

8.2.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

According to the French labour law, the workforce in this sector has five weeks' holiday per year, the dates of which they can mostly choose.

The centres are opened the whole year round. In August (when the majority of parents are on holiday), some centres can be closed - the remaining children are grouped together and attend another centre (for instance in Paris and large cities).

The auxiliary staff working with the children ensure the opening and closing hours of the centres, i.e. from 7:00 or 7:30 to 18:00 or 18:30, while the *éducatrices* (there are generally two in a *crèche*) usually work from 9:00 to 16:00. The hours of presence of the centre heads in *crèches* vary according to the educational plan of the setting and the amount of work conducted outside the centre (meetings, community partnerships, etc.).

8.2.2 Education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

A regular teaching day is generally from 8:30 to 11:30 and from 13:30 to 16:30. Until the reform of the school rhythm there was no attendance on Wednesdays; now two days finish at 15:00 and the teachers work with children on Wednesday mornings.

¹¹ Ministry of National Education: <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid101179/la-remuneration-des-enseignants.html>

¹² Ministry of Public Function: <http://fonction-publique.bankexam.fr/fiches/5-atsem-le-metier-d-atsem-le-concours-et-les-dates>

Teachers in France have long school holidays: two weeks at the end of October; two weeks for Christmas; two weeks in February/March; two weeks in April/May and two months in the summer (July/August.) 12% work part time.

Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM*) work seven hours a day, five days a week. They have five weeks' annual holiday.

8.2.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Some of the *animateurs*, mainly students, work part-time. However, due to the School Rhythm reform, full-time work is increasing among *animateurs* and centre heads.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

8.3.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

The induction of newly qualified staff is organised according to each *crèche* plan or local authority plan - some have an organised induction phase, sometimes called *protocole d'accueil*. The importance given to field-based learning during initial IPS programmes (Galtier 2013) facilitates the integration of newly qualified workers and their professionalisation.

Staff support can be linked to the presence of a psychologist once a week. This dates back to the 1960s and the work of Lézine who argued for the presence of such professionals to increase the quality in *crèches* – through play activities for the children and support for both staff and parents (who were not officially authorised to enter the rooms until 1975 by the Ministry of Health) (Baudelot and Bréauté 1979). Nowadays clinical psychologists are employed, mostly to support staff (by means of observing children, individual meetings and team meetings) in the case of difficulties in their work with children, parents and colleagues. Some are involved in developing the centre-specific educational plan. In some *crèches*, psychomotor specialists may be employed who support staff in organising the play settings and developing educational plans.

In France, the early childhood coordinator (*coordinatrice de la petite enfance*), a post created in 1981, cannot be compared to the *pedagogista* in Italy, who works in both the childcare and education sectors, thus contributing to a culture of early childhood (Baudelot and Rayna 2000; Baudelot *et al.* 2003). French coordinators work only within the childcare sector, are paid by the municipality, are mostly previous centre heads of *crèches*, and do not have a specific qualification for the co-ordinating role. They can support the realisation of the educational plans of *crèches*, particularly when local artists and parents are involved (Rayna 2016), and help to create and co-ordinate networks of *crèches*.

Puéricultrices and early childhood educators are supported by their own professional associations, which organise local and national conferences.

8.3.2 Education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

Courses alternating between workplace and training institution during the second year of the Master's study facilitate the integration of newly qualified teachers. *ATSEM* contribute to their integration in *écoles maternelles*, particularly if they have been salaried students in a primary school and consequently have little experience of work in an *école maternelle*.

Teachers tend to receive more support from pedagogical counsellors than from school inspectors, since the latter do not have a specialised qualification for teaching young children in the *école maternelle*. They also can find support from a professional association of preschool teachers, created in 1921 and maintained despite the integration of the *école maternelle* into primary school. Individual teachers can also join organisations of teachers focusing on specific pedagogical approaches, such as the French Group of New Education (*GFEN – Groupe Français d'éducation nouvelle*).

8.3.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Workplace-based learning, as an important part of their IPS, facilitates the integration of newly employed animators. However, there are few support measures for these workers, although some municipalities may provide them.

8.4 Non-contact time

8.4.1 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

Staff in *crèches* can use three days per year for planning and reflective activities during which time the centre is closed. Some *crèches* have weekly team meetings, generally during the children's nap time. They use these meetings for planning, analysing practices, or discussing various problems with the psychologist. However, there are considerable differences from city to city and between settings. Overall, paid non-contact time is rare, particularly in the private sector (Valentim 2016). Meetings with parents usually take place within working hours, both the more formal meetings (both collective and individual) and more informal meetings through a *café des parents* or shared activities with the children (Rayna 2016). In *crèches*, staff are allowed a short morning or afternoon break (additional to their lunch break) to compensate for the strenuous demands of the work (Meuret-Camfort 2014).

8.4.2 Education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

According to the ministerial circular on "Teachers' obligations" (Ministry of National Education 2013), teachers work with the children 24 hours per week. 108 hours per year are dedicated to other activities: Individual tuition (60 hours), teamwork and meetings with parents (24 hours), pedagogical play work (18 hours), participation in school council meetings (6 hours). At the same time, this distribution varies from one setting to another.

Staff in the education sector work according to school hours. During the lunch break they may join the municipal workers and be in charge of out-of-school hours, for which they receive additional payment from the municipalities. However, this is not a popular option. In the middle of the morning and the afternoon, some are in charge of the rest periods, others have a break or use this time for preparing materials or activities for the children.

8.4.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

No information available.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

There are significant staff shortages in both the childcare and education sectors. Some recruitment strategies do exist but they are not sufficient.

8.5.1 Education sector (*écoles maternelles*, 2-6 years)

The birth rate in France started to rise from 2000 onwards. During Sarkozy's presidency only every second retired civil servant was replaced. This had consequences for the staffing in the *écoles maternelles* and led to a significant decrease in the participation of 2-year olds and an increase in group size, since numerous teachers on sick leave could not be replaced. Under Hollande's presidency, these money-saving measures were abandoned and all retiring teachers in pre-primary and primary school were again replaced. Consequently, the attendance rate of 2-year olds has been increasing again and is currently just under 12%, but the 1990s level (around 33%) has not yet been reached.

Several strategies have been initiated in order to cope with staff shortages and to make the job more attractive. Among them was a modest increase in salary, and the payment of students during the second year of their Master's studies (MEEF).

8.5.2 Childcare sector (0-3 years)

As previously mentioned, staff shortages are high in the childcare sector, as well as turn-over. For this reason, reforms are in progress and apprenticeship or learning-on-the-job strategies have been introduced in order to broaden the field of recruitment.

8.5.3 Pre-primary leisure time sector (2-6 years)

Shortages exist in some municipalities following the need for an increasing number of full-time animators as a result of the School Rhythm reform.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The division in France between care and education remains a significant problem, as well as issues of the diversity of professional staff, of a hierarchical workforce, and of insufficient co-ordination, particularly in the childcare sector where numerous professional workers are from the lowest categories (Odena 2012). Social and cultural tensions are observed within *crèches*. Whereas the group of *auxiliaires de puériculture* shares a common professional culture, the educators (*éducatrices*), despite their greater empowerment, feel isolated and “have to impose a socio-educational point of view in a context still strongly marked by medical power” (Verba 2006, 175). Until now there have been few efforts to address these issues. Management requirements both in the private and public sector put further strains on the daily work in the centres.

In terms of the initial professional studies, teachers in the *écoles maternelles* need more knowledge of early childhood and appropriate practices for working with young children, their parents, professionals of the care sectors and coping with diversity (Garnier 2016) towards more equality (Joigneaux 2009). In terms of the childcare staff, there is a need to transcend the paramedical paradigm. Other issues are the training of the trainers and a lack of international perspectives. Although in some cases (e.g. in the IPS of early childhood educators) internships sometimes take place in other countries, they do not appear to have a significant lasting impact on the field in terms of innovative practices and changes.

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FRANCE

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Sylvie Rayna
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "France – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 404-418.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in France for children up to school entry at the age of 6 years is a so-called 'split' system, regulated by different jurisdictions. The centralised French education system, of which pre-primary education (*écoles maternelles*) for 2/3- to under 6-year olds is a part, comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche*). Educational institutions, both pre-primary¹ and primary, are state-maintained, i.e. publicly funded and organised. State responsibilities include provision for the continuing professional development of ECEC staff, curriculum content and inspections regarding quality and administration.

ECEC provision for children under 3 years of age is not part of the education system and comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*Ministère des affaires sociales et de la santé*). Decentralisation moves in the early 1980s led to the *communes* (municipalities) taking over local responsibility for the provision for under-threes, in cooperation with the State through the CAFs (*Caisses des allocations familiales*). This was followed by a diversification of the traditional centre-based day nurseries (see section on *Main types of provision*).

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
MNEESR 2016.
Rayna, S. 2017

General objectives and legislative framework

The overall system of early childhood education and care has been strongly influenced by two divergent philosophies: that of child protection and paramedical care in the provision for under-threes, and school dominance in the pre-primary education for 3- to 6-year olds. These traditions still permeate the system, although more educational and family-related approaches have been finding their way into the various forms of provision for under-threes.

The main aim of pre-primary education in the *écoles maternelles* is to support children in realising their full potential and to prepare them for school. A strong emphasis is placed on language acquisition and development and early writing and mathematical experiences and on learning how to live with others.

Each child's entitlement to early childhood education and the duties of pre-primary institutions are to be found in the Education Act (*Loi d'orientation sur l'éducation, 1989, with amendments*) and in the Law on the Restructuring of the School System (*Loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République, 2013*).

Nurseries or infant-toddler centres (*crèches collectives*) are legally bound by the 2010 Decree on Facilities and Care Services for Children under 6 years of age, which focuses primarily on health and safety standards.

¹ To establish a degree of comparability between the key data reports, the term 'pre-primary education' is used when referring to the *écoles maternelles*. In France, however, the *école maternelle* is part of the primary school for 2- to 11-year olds (*école maternelle + école élémentaire = école primaire*).

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
MNEESR 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Entitlement to a place in early childhood education provision begins at age 3. Since 2013/2014 it has been extended to include 2-year olds living in socially disadvantaged milieus.

Attending an ECEC setting is not compulsory in France. However, for around two decades now, nearly all children over the age of 3 have been attending an *école maternelle*.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2012.

Main types of provision

Nurseries/crèches in both public and private ownership accept children from the age of 2-3 months old up to the age of 3. In order to open a facility for under-threes, approval is needed from the district authorities (*département*) based on meeting the required standards regarding health and safety.

Alongside the traditional day nurseries (*crèches collectives*), other facilities and settings include neighbourhood crèches in the immediate vicinity of the child's home, taking up to 60 children; *mini-crèches* based in private homes; and company nurseries organised by employers. Also included are the non-profit nurseries founded by parents' initiatives (*crèches parentales*) where parents take it in turn to care for up to 20 children under the age of 3. These various forms of provision for under-threes are generally open from the beginning of September till the beginning of July. Daily opening hours are decided by the provider and services are usually available from 8:00 till 19:00.

Multi-functional centres (*structures/établissements multi-accueil*) have arisen in recent years to provide alternative and more flexible care arrangements compared with the fixed organisational framework of traditional nursery settings (*structures/établissements mono-accueil*). These multi-functional facilities respond to occasional, part-time, and regular care needs within the same setting. They may be any one of the forms of provision mentioned above and aim to accommodate the diverse needs of families, and to meet more specifically the needs of single parents, of parents looking for a job, and of parents working atypical hours.

Sessional care facilities (*haltes garderies*) for children up to age 6 are organised by local authorities or non-profit service providers. They are mostly used on an hourly basis by parents who are not working in the labour market. They are often linked with the *multi-accueil* settings.

Kindergartens (*jardins enfants*) are a kind of complementary facility to the *écoles maternelles*. They take up to 80 children aged 2 to 6 years. These are mostly private, for-profit centres which offer long opening hours similar to those of the nurseries/infant-toddler centres. They are staffed by qualified *éducatrices/éducateurs*, who introduce the children to educational activities.

In some sparsely populated areas there are **mobile services** (*services itinérants*) which provide materials for smaller settings.

Open-door services (*Lieux d'accueil enfants parents – LAEP*) for parents, children, family day carers are regional networks for persons involved in home-based care facilities, whether parents, registered and independent family day carers, or other persons (*assistants familiaux, nannies*) employed by parents in the home.

Family day care networks (*crèches familiales*) comprise several family day carers trained by an organisation founded by the Ministry of Health in 1945, Mother and Child Protection (PMI - *Protection maternelle et infantile*). These can take up to a maximum of 150 children.

Family day care on an individual basis is provided by approved family day carers (*assistant(e)s maternel(le)s agréé(e)s*) who are registered with the district authorities. In 2013, 32.9% of all services on offer for children under age 3 were provided by 326,000 family day carers.

Pre-primary education settings (*écoles maternelles*) are attended by nearly all children between 3 and 6 years of age, despite the fact that there is no statutory obligation to attend. Classes are normally same-age groups divided into *la petite section* (2- and 3-year olds), *la moyenne section* (4-year olds) and *la grande section* (5-year olds).

The school curriculum is organised around three overlapping cycles that bridge children's learning from preschool to primary school. The first 'cycle of early learning' (*cycle des apprentissages premiers*) covers the first two years of *école maternelle* and the second 'cycle of foundation learning' (*cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux*) bridges the last year (*grande section*) and the first two years of primary school.

In 2015, the number of pre-primary settings in France totalled 14,922**.

The school year starts at the beginning of September and ends at the beginning of July. The *écoles maternelles* are open for 24 hours a week: either 6 hours a day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays or for nine half-days (including Wednesday mornings).

Bridge classes in pre-primary settings (*classes passerelles in écoles maternelles*) for 2-year olds.

Children's groups in primary schools are available for 5-year olds in rural areas. If there are enough places, 4-year olds may also attend. Sometimes these children's groups cooperate to enable the founding of an *école maternelle* and the children are transported there.

Sources: DREES 2012.
EPIC 2016.
Eurydice 2012, 2013.
**RERS 2016b, 29.
MNEESR 2016.
Oberhuemer, P. , I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Provider structures

The greater majority of ECEC provision in France for children aged 0-6 years is state maintained or subsidised. In terms of provision for the over-threes, a total of 14,784 *écoles maternelles* were publicly run in 2015, whereas only 138 were private.

Source: RERS 2016b, 29.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The share of children under age 3 attending a centre-based setting increased considerably between 2005 and 2015 – from 32% to approximately 42%. The high participation rate of children aged 3 up to school entry fell insignificantly from 95% in 2005 to 93.6% in 2015.

National statistics report that children under 3 years of age who live with a single mother are more likely to spend more than 35 hours per week in a centre-based setting than children of couple households (57% vs. 52%, CNAF 2016b, 11).

Table 1

France: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years, in %**	3 years to school entry, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	16	56
	Over 30 hours	16	39
	No attendance	68	5
2010	1 to 29 hours	17	47
	Over 30 hours	26	47
	No attendance	58	6
2015	1 to 29 hours	16.0	36.9
	Over 30 hours	25.7	56.7
	No attendance	58.2	6.4

In 2015, well over 2 million (2,235,899) children aged 3 to under 6 years attended a publicly-run pre-primary education setting, whereas only 317,239 children attended a private *école maternelle* (total: 2,553,138). According to national statistics, only 11.7% of 2-year olds attended a centre-based setting, whereas nearly all 3- to under 6-year olds did (see Table 2).

Table 2

France: Number of children attending *écoles maternelles* according to age and provider type, 2015***

Age groups	Public	Private	Total	Eurostat 2015	Attendance rate, in % [†]
2-year olds	73,239	20,345	93,584	798,645	11.7
3-year olds	703,071	96,730	799,801	809,654	98.8
4-year olds	723,924	99,281	823,205	832,456	98.9
5-year olds	735,665	100,883	836,548	830,299	100.0
Total	2,235,899	317,239	2,553,138	3,271,054	78.1

[†] own calculations; the fact that the total number of children attending *écoles maternelles* sometimes exceeds the total number of the population perhaps depends on different dates of data collection.

In 2014, there were on average 56.1 places in regulated provision for 100 children under age 3. Home-based family day care accounted for a significant part (59%). However, there were considerable regional differences: e.g. 89 places for 100 children in Haute-Loire or 30 places in Seine Saint-Denis.

Table 3

France: Places for children under 3 years of age in regulated ECEC provision, 2014***

Setting	Number of places	Places per 100 children
Home-based family day care	803,200	33.1
Home-based in child's family home	41,400	1.7
Day nursery (<i>crèche collectif/familial/parental, micro-crèche</i>)	419,200	17.3
Pre-Primary Education (<i>école maternelle</i>)	96,100	4.0
Total	1.359,900	56.1

Sources: ***CNAF 2016a, 26.
CNAF 2016b, 11.
*Eurostat 2017a, 2017f.
MNEESR 2016.
OECD 2015, 24.
**RERS 2016a, 71

Financing and costs for parents

Day nurseries generally receive subsidies from the Family Allowance Fund (*Caisse d'Allocations Familiales*) which partly cover running costs. Additionally, parents pay income-related monthly fees which vary between 100€ and 380€.

The running costs of the *écoles maternelles* are generally covered by the municipalities, which are primarily responsible for buildings and equipment. Attendance is free of charge, parents just pay for any meals the children might have.

Parents who choose family day care as their preferred form of provision receive a monthly child care allowance which varies according to the status of the family day carer, the child's age and the parents' disposable income.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat. 2014
Eurydice 2014.

Staff-child ratios

The number of children in a day nursery group is influenced by the specific circumstances in the setting and the children's physical development.

Day nurseries and other centre-based settings for under 3-year olds:

5 children per staff member for children who cannot walk independently

8 children per staff member for children who can walk

Family day care:

1 family day carer for 6 children

Pre-primary settings for 3-, 4- and 5-year olds:

12.5 children per staff member

According to national statistics, there were on average 25.7 children in a group/class in the publicly run pre-primary centres and 27 children per group in the private pre-primary centres in 2014. If children with a disability were attending, the group size was accordingly lower.

In settings for under-threes with less than 24 children, no qualified staff are required. In settings with 25 to 49 children at least a 50% post must be held by a member of staff with a tertiary qualification (ISCED 6); in settings catering for more than 50 children, a full-time post with a tertiary qualification is required. In settings for children from 3 to 6 years, at least one full-time post in each group must be held by a staff member with a tertiary qualification*.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
*European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2012; 2013.

Curricular frameworks

The current national curriculum for the *écoles maternelles* is set out in an official bulletin (*Horaires et programmes d'enseignement de l'école primaire, 2008*) and includes the following goals and areas of learning: communicating in a comprehensible way; maintaining relationships with other children and with adults; practising motor, sensory, affective and intellectual skills. In the revised version of the bulletin (*Programme d'enseignement de l'école maternelle, 2015*), preparation for school is mentioned as a further goal, together with addressing the individual learning pace of each child and reducing inequalities between children, particularly with regard to language competence.

The ‘Cycle of Early Learning’ includes five specific areas of learning: (1) oral and written language; (2) acting, expressing and understanding through bodily activity; (3) acting, expressing and understanding through art-related activities; (4) learning to think in a structured way; (5) discovering the world through exploration of the immediate environment. For each of these learning areas the curriculum provides a general definition and educational objectives in order to support effective progress in learning.

In settings for the under-threes, an activity plan is drawn up by the owner of the provision as part of the service plan. The plan or schedule has to be approved by the regional authorities and includes both educational and social aspects. Educational goals (such as becoming independent, developing personality and creativity, entering into relationships with others) and the ways in which these are to be achieved are laid down in detail. Moreover, the geographical location of the setting, the local population, the needs of families and the available resources are all taken into account.

Sources: Eurydice 2013.
MNEESR 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children under 6 years of age with special educational needs are mostly included in mainstream settings, or may have a place in an ‘inclusion class’ (*Unité localisée pour l’inclusion scolaire, ULIS*). An individual educational plan is prepared for each child. In 2015 in the early years sector, a total of 31,299 children with disabilities attended a mainstream provision and 6,914 an inclusion class.

The number of children in the inclusion classes increases significantly according to the age of the children. The majority of ULIS-groups (94%) are located in publicly run *écoles maternelles* and schools*.

Table 4

France: Number of children with special educational needs and disabilities according to age and type of ECEC setting, 2015/2016*

	Mainstream ECEC provision	Inclusion class (ULIS)
Under 3-year olds	2,740	33
4-year olds	7,665	74
5-year olds	11,991	134
6-year olds	15,884	908

Regional centres for persons with disabilities (*Maisons départementales des personnes handicapées, MDPH*) were founded in 2005. A multi-disciplinary team (medical doctors, therapists, etc.) assesses the specific needs of the child in question and proposes an individual educational plan in close collaboration with the parents.

Since 1981 there has been a policy of ‘educational priority’ which aims to improve educational provision for children from socially disadvantaged areas. A project with a focus on promoting equality of opportunity (*Éclair - Écoles, collèges, lycées pour l’ambition, l’innovation et la réussite*) has been running in various ECEC centres since 2011. In 2013, 147,365 children in *écoles maternelles* were participating in this project*.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, over 6% (6.6%) of the total population in France were of non-French origin of whom two thirds (65.3%) came from countries outside the EU28. In the age-group of the under-fives there

were 7% children with a non-French background of whom over three quarters (77.4%) came from countries outside the EU28.**

Children who are new arrivals to France are included in mainstream classes in *écoles maternelles* and schools. No special language tuition is provided for preschool children.

Sources: **Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2012, 2014.
*RERS 2016a, 84f.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Monitoring and evaluation through inspections

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the inspection of the *écoles maternelles* and the Ministry of Social Affairs for nursery/infant-toddler provision. Assessments relate to indoor and outdoor space and equipment and also health, hygiene and safety requirements. In the settings for under-threes, staff qualifications are also checked as well as the specific working conditions. In the pre-primary settings work with the national curriculum and the development and progress of the children is also a focus of inspections. Evaluations are conducted primarily through questionnaires and checklists.

School evaluations – including pre-primary schooling – are compulsory in France. The heads of the *écoles maternelles* are responsible for producing an annual report which is submitted to the local authorities. The frequency of inspections is not generally regulated, but they usually take place every two or three years. The results are rarely publicised.

Self-evaluations in day nurseries focus on topics such as teamwork, the quality of leadership and the staff satisfaction with the working conditions. Parent questionnaires are sent out about every two years.

School inspections (including inspections of the *écoles maternelles*) fall under the responsibility of two inspectorates: the General Inspectorate of National Education (*Inspection Générale de l'Éducation Nationale*, IGEN) and the General Inspectorate of Educational Administration and Research (IGAENR). The Directorate of Evaluation, Prospective Planning and Performance (*Direction de l'Évaluation, de la Prospective et de la Performance*, DEPP) is responsible for educational statistics, conducting evaluations of school achievements and developing criteria for staff self-assessment.

Inspections focus on curriculum content, teaching methods and learning processes. Management and staff are also assessed.

Children attending an *école maternelle* are regularly assessed in terms of the required curricular goals. How the assessment is carried out is up to the teachers, who receive a guidance document (2010) from the Ministry of Education. A report for each child has to be produced annually, accompanied by a kind of school report (*livret scolaire*) which follows the child through to the end of primary school. When the child starts compulsory schooling both the first grade teacher and the parents are informed about the child's abilities and skills at the end of pre-primary education.

No standards or criteria exist for the assessment of children under the age of 3, apart from those who for some reason attend an *école maternelle*.

Research

In France there are three institutes which conduct commissioned research by the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research: (1) The French Institute of Education (*Institut Français de l'Éducation*, IFE), focusing on management and evaluation issues. (2) The Educational Research Institute: Sociology and the Economics of Education (*Institut de Recherche sur l'Éducation: Sociologie et Économie de l'Éducation*, IREDU), focusing on quantitative research, economical aspects of edu-

cation, schools evaluation and steering measures in the education system; (3) The Centre of Studies and Research on Qualifications (*Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications*, CE-REQ), focusing primarily on vocational education and training.

Sources: Eurydice 2012; 2013; 2014.
MNEESR 2016.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*congé de maternité*) is fully paid for 16 weeks up to a monthly limit of 3,218€. At least two weeks must be taken before the expected date of birth.

Paternity leave (*congé d'accueil à l'enfant*) is granted for 11 paid working days which must be taken during the first four months following the child's birth.

Parental leave (*congé parental*) can be taken up by both parents up to the child's third birthday. In January 2015 a new kind of monthly allowance (roughly 391€) known as *PreParE* was introduced which is income-related and also related to the parent's working hours. Families with children born before the 1st January 2015 continue to receive the previous allowance. *PreParE* is paid up to a maximum of 12 months following maternity leave. When taking parental leave, parents may work for 16 to 32 hours per week. If they work for longer, then the allowance is reduced accordingly. Parental leave can be taken by both parents simultaneously; however, only one parent receives the allowance.

In 2013, 62% of fathers made use of their paternity leave entitlement. There are no national statistical data about the uptake of parental leave. However, research studies suggest that approximately 98% of those taking parental leave are mothers.

Source: Boyer, D. and J. Fagnani 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1770	Founding of the first centres for young children: the <i>écoles à tricoter</i> by Pastor Oberlin in Ban-de-la-Roche (Vosges)
1844	Establishment of the first <i>crèche</i> (day care centre) in Paris by Firmin Marbeau
1826	Establishment of the first <i>salles d'asiles</i> , the previous name of <i>écoles maternelles</i> , in Paris for poor children. Ten years later there were 34 in Paris, and by 1935, 102 in the whole of France.
1848	Marie Pape Carpentier who introduces a first separation from primary learning, was director of a <i>salle d'asile</i> (in La Flèche, then Le Mans), becomes the first director of a specific training centre for the directors of the <i>salles d'asiles</i> .
1881	<i>Salles d'asiles</i> , renamed <i>écoles maternelles</i> , are integrated into the education system. Jules Ferry (Minister of Public Instruction) defines them as free of charge, secular and non- compulsory institutions. Primary school teachers (trained in <i>Écoles normales d'institutrices</i>) replace the previous personnel in the <i>salles d'asile</i> . <i>Écoles maternelles</i> continue to welcome children from low social classes. Pauline Kergomard, a general inspector of <i>école maternelles</i> , strongly defends play and the specificities of early learning.
1887	The training centres for teachers (<i>Écoles normales d'institutrices</i>) also include teachers for the <i>écoles maternelles</i>
1908	First curriculum introduced specifically for the <i>écoles maternelles</i>

1910	Creation of the first specialist inspectors for the <i>écoles maternelles</i> , in each <i>Département</i>
1921	Staff in <i>écoles maternelles</i> are given the same professional status as primary school teachers Creation of AGIEM (<i>Association Générale des Instituteurs d'Ecole Maternelle</i>), the professional association of preschool teachers. Revision of the preschool curriculum (the last until 1977)
Post 1945	<i>Crèches</i> , previously run by charitable organisations, are included in the state health system
1975	Entitlement to a place in pre-primary provision for 5-year olds Elected parents' committees are created in each <i>école maternelle</i> Parents, who were not authorised to enter <i>crèches</i> ' rooms for hygienic reasons are now admitted (thanks to Minister of Health Simone Veil)
1977	New objectives and methods are issued for the <i>école maternelle</i> and its three roles (education, early learning and care)
1980-83	Decentralisation moves – municipalities (<i>communes</i>) take over responsibility for <i>crèche</i> settings in cooperation with the State through the CAFs (<i>Caisse des allocations familiales</i>).
1986	<i>Contrat enfance</i> – State funding to provide diversification of <i>crèche</i> settings to meet family needs
1986	Orientations for the <i>école maternelle</i> : socialisation and early learning
1989	Inclusion of the <i>écoles maternelle</i> in the 'primary school' (<i>école maternelle + école élémentaire</i>) Definition of 3 cycles of learning from 2 to 12 (early learning cycle for preschool) Same training in university institutes for pre-primary and primary teachers, who are now called <i>professeurs des écoles</i> Entitlement to a place in pre-primary provision extended to cover 3- and 4-year olds Inclusion of 2-year olds in disadvantaged zones
1995	Curriculum for 'primary school' (<i>école maternelle + école élémentaire</i>). <i>Ecole maternelle</i> is presented as the basis of the education system and as preparing for school.
2000	A Decree recognizes the educational role of <i>crèches</i> and parents participation.
2002	New curriculum for <i>ecole maternelle</i> (within primary school). Focus on language acquisition
2008	Revised national curriculum for <i>écoles maternelles</i> .
2010	A new decree introduces flexibility in the care sector.
2013	Revised version of the 2008 curriculum for <i>écoles maternelles</i> . Play reappears as well as parents' participation and a specific attention to 2-year olds
2016	Sylviane Giampino's report (<i>Développement du jeune enfant, modes d'accueil, formation des professionnels</i>) (Child development, care services, professionals' training) proposes 108 recommendations for the care sector

Sources: Bennett, J. and P. Moss 2010.
Bouve, C. 2010.
Garnier, P. 2016.
Luc, J.N. 1994.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in France

Country expert assessment by Sylvie Rayna

Among the central issues and challenges facing the ECEC system in France remains the strong division between the care and education systems. Will the light attempts of the previous government (introduction of *classes passerelles* for 2-year olds; a more play-based approach in the *école maternelle*) be further developed in the coming years? Another challenge continues to be the ab-

sence of early years specialisation in the initial professional studies of the pre-primary teachers. There is currently no sign of a change to amend this. Some progress is being made regarding the IPS of the diverse practitioners in the care sector, but it still remains limited. There are no signs regarding a specialist training for the early childhood coordinators.

Equality issues concerning access to care provision remains a significant challenge and in some cities has led to privatisation tendencies.

The discourse of 'social investment' in early childhood and 'evidenced based' rhetoric have begun to penetrate recent policies (CNAF: *Caisses Nationales d'Allocations Familiales*), linked to the aim of developing parental support, social cohesion, and the fight against poverty. Current debates are highlighting the tensions underlying such trends.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in France totalled 66,759,950. This represents a steady rise over the past 20 years (1995: 59,315,139, 2005: 62,772,870).

Children under age 6

In 2016, 3.5% of the total population were children under the age of 3, and 7.2% were children under 6 years of age. The share of young children in the total population has been significantly above the EU average for more than 20 years.

Table 5

France: Proportion of children under age 6 in the total population, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under 1-year olds	761,114
1-year olds	785,524
2-year olds	786,684
Total under 3-year olds	2,333,322
3-year olds	805,096
4-year olds	817,416
5-year olds	839,035
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	2,461,547
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	4,794,869

Table 6

France: Children under 6 years of age - relative share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3.7	3.3	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.0
3 to under 6 years	3.9	3.5	3.8	3.1	3.7	3.1
0 to under 7 years	7.7	6.9	7.5	6.2	7.2	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, the greater majority of households in France (86.4%) with children under 6 years of age were couple households. Households headed by a single parent accounted for 6.8% of all households, the larger majority being single mother households (5.9%).

Table 7

France: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	7,015,400	
Couple households	6,058,300	86.4
Other household type	483,000	6.9
Single households, total	474,200	6.8
Single households, women	417,100	5.9
Single households, men	57,100	0.8

* own calculations

National statistics confirm that in 2015 86% of all children under 6 years of age live together with both parents. Nine out of ten children living with only one parent, live with their mothers.*

Source: *CNAF 2016a, 8.
Eurostat 2017e

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, 67.1% of men and 60.6% of women aged 15 to 64 years participated in the labour market. Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 63.1% were employed, compared with 85.3% of fathers with children of the same age. The employment rates of fathers with young children are slightly below the EU average, whereas those of mothers are above the EU average.

Table 8

France: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
France	2005	62,3	89,9
	2010	65,2	88,4
	2015	63.1	85.5
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 20.4% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is slightly below the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The proportion of persons in the total population who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion is 17.7%. According to national statistics, particularly children under the age of 6 living with only one parent are vulnerable: in 2013, half of these families (50.5%) were affected*.

Sources: *CNAF 2016b, 12
Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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GERMANY

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Pamela Oberhuemer and Inge Schreyer

The authors would like to thank
Sigrid Ebert for reviewing the report and providing an assessment of workforce challenges and
Stephanie Kern for carrying out preparatory work during her internship at the IFP.

Citation suggestion:

Oberhuemer, P. and I. Schreyer. 2018. "Germany – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 419-461.

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1. ECEC governance

In the Federal Republic of Germany, early childhood education and care settings for children up to compulsory school age are located in the child and youth welfare system and are not part of the public education system. Childhood care and education provision (*Kindertagesbetreuung*) comprises not only centre-based *early childhood* settings (infant-toddler centres, kindergartens) and home-based family day care, but also outside-school-hours facilities for school children up to the age of 12 or 14.

In the context of federal and decentralised administrative structures, responsibilities for the (early) childhood care and education system are shared between the federal government (*Bund*), the regional parliaments of the 16 states (*Länder*) and local government bodies. This means that there can be considerable regional differences in specific features of ECEC. Federalism and subsidiarity are core political and organisational concepts underpinning the structures, legislation, regulation, and funding of early childhood education and care in Germany. The subsidiarity principle evolved over time from the traditional provider structures in the social sector. According to this principle, public authorities are only obliged to provide social services if non-governmental agencies are not in a position to do so. Historically, child and youth welfare services were provided exclusively by non-governmental organisations, and even today, around two thirds of centre-based childcare provision across the country is run by voluntary child and youth welfare providers (*Freie Träger der Jugendhilfe*), who receive state subsidies to support independent functioning.

At the **federal level** the main responsibility lies with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Young People (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*), which by law has a 'stimulatory competence'. At the **regional level**, youth authorities (*Landesjugendbehörden*) in the 16 *Länder*, which are usually located within the Ministry of Social Affairs or Ministry of Education, implement federal legislative requirements and regulate issues not included in the federal law. At the **local level** the municipalities (districts, towns, boroughs) are responsible for the organisation, provision and funding of childhood care and education services, together with church affiliated and non-church affiliated provider organisations.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Four main categories of staff work in direct contact with children in ECEC settings in Germany, the largest group being those with a vocational technical college¹ training: 70% altogether, 66% in the western *Länder* and 85% in the eastern *Länder* including Berlin (FKB 2017, 30).

Educators: In 2017, state-recognised Educators (*Erzieherinnen*) comprised over two-thirds of staff in ECEC settings and 67.3% of the total workforce in (E)CEC centres (*Kindertageseinrichtungen*), not including administrative staff (Destatis 2017a, own calculations). *Erzieherinnen* are core practitioners in early childhood education and care and may work as a Group Leader or Centre Head. Entry requirements for their initial professional studies are an intermediate secondary school leaving certificate, or an educational qualification recognised as equivalent, or the completion of a relevant vocational qualification. The course of studies generally lasts three years and takes place at a specialised technical college/academy for social pedagogy (*Fachschule*

¹ Strictly speaking, the term in German is 'school'. However, in the international context this can be misleading and we have therefore chosen the terms 'technical college' or 'vocational college' for *Fachschulen/Fachakademien*.

or *Fachakademie* in Bavaria). The *Fachschulen* are classified as tertiary-level institutions if the school-based component of IPS amounts to at least 2,400 hours, but they are not part of the higher education system.

Childcare Assistants/Social Assistants: Childcare Assistants and Social Assistants work as supplementary staff in ECEC settings. Together with other personnel with a social care training (1.9%) they constitute 13% of the total workforce in (E)CEC centres (excluding administrative staff) (Destatis 2017a, own calculations). In recent years, the traditional qualification route to become a Childcare Assistant has been replaced in most *Länder* by a broader social care qualification as Social Assistant. Entry requirements are generally a secondary school leaving certificate and – depending on the specific regulations in the 16 *Länder* – may take one to three years to complete (see FKB 2017; WIFF 2017c).

Childhood Pedagogues: Childhood Pedagogy study programmes leading to an award at Bachelor level are a relatively recent development in Germany – as is the ongoing construction of a professional self-image in this newly forming academic occupational group in ECEC (Schneider 2016). Since 2004, study programmes have been offered by Universities of Applied Sciences and, less frequently, by traditional Universities. The degree courses generally take three or three and a half years to complete. Entry requirements, curricular areas and also the name of the award may vary from state to state (see von Balluseck 2017; WIFF 2017a, 2017b).

Social Pedagogues: The study programmes for prospective Social Pedagogues at Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities vary from *Land* to *Land* in terms of the entry requirements, duration and content, and sometimes from one higher education institution to the next. Studies generally take three and a half to four years to complete.

Beyond the two core groups (Educators and Childcare/Social Assistants) and – in terms of numbers – the two peripheral groups of staff (Childhood Pedagogues and Social Pedagogues), additional staff with a *Fachschule* qualification like the Educators have but with a different specialisation may be found working in ECEC centres, such as state-recognised Remedial Therapists. Depending on the size of the setting, administrative staff, technical personnel or staff responsible for preparing meals may also be employed. Considerable differences are to be found from setting to setting and among providers. Support staff such as Speech Therapists may be employed on site, but usually they are external professionals who are invited to provide their services in certain circumstances.

Table 1 provides an overview of the staff working in (E)CEC centres and categorises the core practitioners (those with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five professional profiles adapted from the initial SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1 c

Germany: Staff in centre-based ECEC/CCE settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
Educator <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years Kindergartens 2/3-6 years Age-integrated centres 0-6 or 3-10 or 0-12/14 years Outside-school-hours provision/Hort 6-14 years	Core practitioner/ group leader Core practitioner/ centre head	0-12/14 up to 27 years	Usually 3 years at a tertiary-level vocational technical college (<i>Fachschule</i>) (or technical academy (<i>Fachakademie</i>) – specific length varies from <i>Land</i> to <i>Land</i> <i>Or:</i>

² UNESCO 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
				A newly introduced qualifying route, integrating work in settings with theoretical courses (PIA or OptiPrax, see <i>Section 3.1</i>) 3-4 years at <i>Fachschule</i> and in ECEC setting ECTS points: n/a ³ EQF/GQF ⁴ level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655
Childcare Assistant/ Social Assistant	Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years Kindergartens 2/3-6 years Age-integrated centres 0-6 or 3-10 or 0-12/14 years Outside-school-hours provision/Hort 6-14 years	Supplementary staff	0-10 years and beyond (Social Assistants)	2 or 3 years at vocational school, length varies in different <i>Länder</i> ECTS points: n/a EQF/GQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 354
Childhood Pedagogue <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years Kindergartens 2/3-6 years Age-integrated centres 0-6 or 3-10 or 0-12/14 years Outside-school-hours provision/Hort 6-14 years	Core practitioner/ group leader Core practitioner/ centre head	0-12/14 years	3 to 3½ years at a University of Applied Sciences or University Award: Bachelor ECTS points: 180 or 210 EQF/GQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0111/0922 ISCED 2011: 6
Social Pedagogue <i>Profile:</i> Social (and Childhood) Pedagogy Professional	Infant-toddler centres 0-3 years Kindergartens 2/3-6 years Age-integrated centres 0-6 or 3-10 or 0-12/14 years Outside-school-hours provision/Hort 6-14 years	Core practitioner/ group leader Core practitioner/ centre head	Broad age focus	3½ to 4 years at a University of Applied Sciences or University Award: <i>Diplom</i> /Bachelor ECTS points: 180 EQF/GQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0923 ISCED 2011: 6

³ n/a = not applicable

⁴ German Qualifications Framework

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of the ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Persons with a vocational award from a *Fachschule* (or *Fachakademie*) comprise more than two thirds of staff working in childcare and education settings and are thus by far the largest group of specialist staff. Even after the introduction of the new Bachelor study programmes, staff with a relevant higher education degree comprise just over 5% and thus only a small proportion of the total workforce

In one third of (E)CEC centres (33.7%) in 2016, at least one of the staff members employed had a relevant higher education degree (awarded by Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities – *Diplom* and Bachelor study programmes). The distribution varies considerably between the *Länder* and ranged in 2016 from 20.5% of the (E)CEC centres in Brandenburg to 59.2% of those in Hamburg. During the same year, 23.5% of Centre Heads had a higher education degree: 31.7% in the eastern *Länder*; 21.1% in the western *Länder* (Bock-Famulla et al. 2017).

The proportion of male staff in the workforce in (E)CEC centres remains low at just over 5% - a higher proportion (15%) work in outside-school-hours services for school-age children than in early childhood settings.

Data on the proportion of persons with a background of migration are not systematically compiled. According to the Early Education Staffing Barometer (see *Section 6*), 11% of the early childhood workforce were persons with a migration background (FKB 2017, 328). The 2016 micro census data (Destatis 2017b) indicated that 20.2% of all persons in the employment market had a migration background - compared with 22.5% in the total population.

Table 2

Germany: Structural composition of the workforce in (E)CEC centres, 2016

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce overall
Staff with a relevant higher education degree	
• Social Pedagogues	2.9%
• Special Needs Teachers	0.4%
• Pedagogues	1.2%
• Childhood Pedagogues (no disaggregated data on proportion of Bachelor's and Master's degrees)	0.8%
<i>Total</i>	5.3%
Staff with a relevant upper secondary qualification (vocational school)	
• Childcare Assistants	11.3%
• Social Assistants (including social/medical support professions)	1.7%
Staff with a relevant post-secondary qualification (vocational technical school/academy)	
• Educators	67.5%
• Remedial Therapists, Special Needs Pedagogue, etc.	1.4%
<i>Total</i>	68.9%
Staff with other, non-specialist qualification (including short qualification routes in the social and health services)	4.2%

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce overall
Staff with no formal IPS or trainees	7.4%
Specialist support staff (e.g. language therapist or special needs educators)	Mostly off-site, no systematically compiled data
Proportion of male staff in (E)CEC centres	5.4%
Proportion of male staff as Centre Heads	6%
In infant-toddler centres (0-3)	3%
In kindergartens (3- 6)	5%
In out-of-school settings (school-age children)	15%
Among those with a higher education degree	8.5%
Among those with a <i>Fachschule</i> qualification	4.4%
Educators	4.2%
Among those with a vocational school qualification	3.1%
Childcare Assistants	2.2%
Social Assistants	9.1%
Staff in <i>early childhood</i> settings with a migration background*	11.1% (2014)

Source: FKB 2017, 31, 151ff, 319 own calculations

*Micro census definition (Destatis 2017b, 4): 'A person has a background of migration if he/she or at least one parent does not possess German nationality at birth'. In the early childhood field in 2014, only every third employee with a background of migration was not in possession of a German passport (FKB 2017, 328f).

In general, the rapid expansion in the childcare and education field, particularly in ECEC, has been accompanied by a steady growth in the workforce. In 2017, 599,722 persons were employed in (E)CEC centres. Since 2015, 44,748 employees have joined the workforce. Despite expansion and despite staff shortages (see *Section 8.5*), no noticeable tendency can be observed in terms of employing non-qualified staff (with no formal IPS or with a non-relevant vocational qualification) (Böwing-Schmalenbrock and Meiner-Teubner 2017).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

Educator (*Erzieherin*)

The initial qualifying route leading to the award of state-recognised Educator is not a specialist qualification focussing on early childhood (0-6 years), but a generalist preparation for work in a broad range of child and youth welfare services (e.g. residential children's homes, temporary accommodation for young people, settings for persons with special needs, youth work provision, care facilities in full-day schools). The qualification route is classified in Germany as 'vocational further education' leading to a state-recognised post-secondary vocational award according to the relevant legislation in the individual *Länder* (BöfAE 2012). It is based on a Framework Agreement on *Fachschulen* in a resolution adopted in November 2002 by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* and amended in March 2012. In terms of content, it is based on the competence-oriented Qualification Profile for the education/training of Educators which is part of the Framework Agreement (BöfAE 2012).

In 2011, a controversial decision was made by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research and confirmed in 2013: In the German Qualifications Framework (GQF), this traditional, post-secondary vocational award was placed at the same level as the higher education award of Bachelor – at Level 6. According to experts in the field, this can only be seen as a backward step in the overall professionalisation of the early childhood education field in Germany (see e.g. Stieve and Kägi 2012); moreover, it has been argued that an academic study programme pro-

vides a framework for developing the systematic and critical thinking needed in all education professions, including early childhood education (Rauschenbach 2013).

State-recognised Educators are by far the largest professional group in the field, comprising nearly 70% of the childhood education and care workforce. Roughly half (49.9%) of all Educators work as group leaders; 5.8% hold a post as Centre Head (Destatis 2017a, own calculations).

The institutions which provide initial professional studies for prospective Educators – *Fachschulen/Fachakademien* specialising in social pedagogy – officially belong to the tertiary-level education system, but not to the higher education system. This complicates any comparisons made in the European context. In 2014/2015 there were 593 *Fachschulen* specialising in social pedagogy in Germany; roughly half (49%) of which were public education institutions (FKB 2017, 123).

In Germany, responsibility for the education system as a whole, including the vocational and higher education institutions, lies with the 16 *Länder*, and the entry criteria for the initial professional studies for prospective Educators differ considerably. However, common entry requirements for all *Fachschule* applicants are always an intermediate school leaving certificate or a completed relevant vocational training; the length of the course of studies is calculated accordingly. In the case of applicants with an intermediate school leaving certificate, it usually lasts three years (include one year as a trainee Educator in a childcare and education setting).

Since 2012, it is also possible to follow a qualification route leading to the award of state-recognised Educator which integrates paid periods at the workplace with theoretical studies (*praxisintegrierte Ausbildung, PIA*). Initiated in Baden-Württemberg, the aim is to combine practice and theory more effectively (FKB 2017, 125). Entry requirements are usually an intermediate school leaving certificate (*Realschulabschluss*) or equivalent and one year of work experience in a social welfare setting. The trainee Educators sign a three-year training contract with the provider of the service and receive a monthly payment (1.600€ in Baden-Württemberg; KM BW 2015). In the meantime, this qualification option is also provided in North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse.

In Bavaria, a similar initiative was started in the school year 2016/2017 called ‘Educator qualifying programme with optimised practical components’ (OptiPrax; Bayerische Staatsregierung 2017). The pilot programme aims to raise the attractiveness of the Educator profession through the integration of theory into practice and through remuneration during the training period. The trainee Educators sign a contract with the provider of a childcare and education setting, who then pays them. The minimum entry requirement is an intermediate school leaving certificate. Through three different training models (of at least 2,400 hours’ duration), trainees can gain the title of ‘state-recognised Educator’ in three to four years, depending on their previous education and experience.

Table 3

Germany: Educator

<p>Title in German: <i>Staatlich anerkannte Erzieherin/staatlich anerkannter Erzieher</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Intermediate school-leaving certificate or a completed and relevant vocational training (considerable differences between the <i>Länder</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: As a rule, 3 years at a <i>Fachschule/Fachakademie</i>, mostly including a one-year field-based placement; 2 years including 12-16 weeks of field-based placements are also possible.</p> <p>Award: State-recognised Educator (usually also a general university entrance certificate or specialist university entrance certificate)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF/DQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655</p> <p>Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centre (0-3), kindergarten (2/3-6), age-integrated centre (0-6, 3-10, 10-</p>

Title in German: <i>Staatlich anerkannte Erzieherin/staatlich anerkannter Erzieher</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
12/14), outside-school-hours care and education setting (Hort, 6-14) <i>New 'integrated' qualification routes:</i> Since 2012 in Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen (PIA) Since 2016 in Bavaria: Educator qualifying programme with optimised practical components (OptiPrax) Entry requirements: As a rule, intermediate school-leaving certificate Professional education/training: 3 to 4 years (depending on <i>Land</i> and previous experience) at a <i>Fachschule/Fachakademie</i> and simultaneously in an early childhood setting Award: State-recognised Educator (<i>staatlich anerkannte Erzieherin/staatlich anerkannter Erzieher</i>) ECTS-Punkte: n/z EQR/DQR-Stufe: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655 Main (ECEC) workplaces: see above

Childcare Assistant (Kinderpflegerin)/Social Assistant (Social Assistant)

In 2016, Childcare Assistants and Social Assistants comprised 13% of the workforce in (E)CEC centres. The mostly two-year or sometimes three-year training leading to the award of state-certified Childcare Assistant takes place at a vocational school (*Berufsfachschule*), for which the entry requirement is usually a basic secondary school-leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*). The vocational schools vary both in terms of the length of training offered (one to three years) and also the entry requirements (sometimes an intermediate school-leaving certificate). In some *Länder* the courses are organised so that the Educator qualifying programme can follow on directly. It is also possible in some cases to complete the course with an intermediate or a higher school certificate.

In 2014/2015 in Germany, 219 *Berufsfachschulen* offered a specialisation in childcare and 328 in social care. The childcare qualification route is currently on offer in Baden Württemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saarland. In Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, Rhineland Palatinate, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein it is possible to attend a course of studies leading to the award of Social Assistant. In Mecklenburg Pomerania, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia it is possible to follow both routes (FKB 2017, 120).

Table 4

Germany: Childcare Assistant/Social Assistant

Title in German: <i>Staatlich geprüfte⁵ Kinderpflegerin</i> <i>Staatlich geprüfte Sozialassistentin</i>
Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling with secondary school leaving certificate or intermediate school certificate; some <i>Länder</i> also require an interview and/or a written entry examination. Professional studies: 1 - 3 years vocational school (depending on <i>Land</i> and previous experience) Award: State-certified (or state-recognised) Childcare Assistant/Social Assistant. In some <i>Länder</i> it is possible to complete the course with an intermediate school certificate (Childcare Assistant) or secondary school certificate (Social Assistant). ECTS points: n/a EQF/DQF level: 4

⁵ In Baden-Württemberg und Saarland the occupational title is *Staatlich anerkannte Kinderpflegerin* (state-recognised Childcare Assistant)

<p>Title in German: <i>Staatlich geprüfte⁵ Kinderpflegerin</i> <i>Staatlich geprüfte Sozialassistentin</i></p>
<p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0923 ISCED 2011: 354 Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centre (0-3), kindergarten (2/3-6), age-integrated centre (0-6, 3-10, 10-12/14), outside-school-hours care and education setting (Hort, 6-14). Social Assistants also work in social care institutions with persons of all ages, e.g. in hospitals or in mobile care services.</p>

Childhood Pedagogue (*Kindheitspädagogin*)

Two major triggers leading to a demand for more early childhood pedagogues with an academic degree were on the one hand Germany's mediocre rankings in international comparisons of educational achievement and on the other hand the fact that the required initial professional studies in the majority of European countries, at least for staff working in pre-primary education (3-6) and increasingly for those in early childhood education (0-6/7), is in the greater majority of cases a Bachelor-level degree or above (von Balluseck 2017). The first Bachelor study programmes in Childhood Pedagogy were therefore launched in 2003/2004, followed in some cases by complementary Master programmes. Currently there are 69 of these study programmes in 51 different locations across Germany, most of them specialising either in childhood pedagogy (0-12 years) or more specifically in early childhood education (0-6 years). The majority (80%) are provided by Universities of Applied Sciences (*(Fach)Hochschulen*), but also Universities of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) and are in the public sector (61%); almost one quarter (24%) are church-affiliated. In 2015, only three traditional Universities offered such a study programme. Master's degrees are not yet very widespread, currently there are ten on offer across the country (FKB 2017, 127).

Entry requirements, curricular priorities and the length of the study programmes vary from *Land* to *Land*. Most of the higher education institutions require a general university entrance qualification; acceptance may also be granted in the case of a secondary school leaving certificate combined with four- to five-years' of work experience in a relevant field, or through the successful completion of an eligibility exam (see WIFF 2017b). Only six of the 69 study programmes specifically address persons with a completed Educator qualification route; 14 permit comparable awards; in most cases (49), no relevant work experience is expected (FKB 2017). The regular length of studies for the Bachelor award amounts to six or seven semesters.

For Childhood Pedagogues, the Bachelor's or Master's degree opens up a broad field of work. Graduates are often employed in various areas of child and youth welfare, family counselling, integration initiatives and immigration authorities, adult education and in science and research. In 2016, only about 1% of fully qualified Early Childhood/Childhood Pedagogues were employed in (E)CEC centres (Destatis 2016a; own calculations).

Table 5

Germany: Childhood Pedagogue

<p>Title in German: <i>Kindheitspädagogin/Kindheitspädagoge</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification or specialist university entrance qualification, in some cases also a successfully completed Educator training programme Professional studies: 3 to 3½ years at a University of Applied Sciences/University of Education or in some case at a University Award: Childhood Pedagogue (Bachelor, title varies according to <i>Land</i> and higher education institution) – a subsequent 2-year Master's study programme can be followed.</p>

Title in German: Kindheitspädagogin/Kindheitspädagoge
Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional

ECTS points: 180 / 210 (120 ECTS for a Master's degree)

EQF/DQF level: 6 (or 7 - Master)

ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0922

ISCED 2011: 6 (or 7 - Master)

Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centre (0-3), kindergarten (2/3-6), age-integrated centre (0-6, 3-10, 10-12/14), outside-school-hours care and education setting (Hort, 6-14)

Additional fields of work: Child and youth welfare, family counselling, integration initiatives, immigrant authority, adult education, science and research

Social Pedagogue (*Sozialpädagogin*)

Degree-level studies in the fields of Social Pedagogy/Social Work usually take place at higher education institutions, mostly universities of applied sciences but also professional academies (*Berufsakademien*), and only occasionally at universities. The traditional degree award (*Diplom*) is increasingly being replaced by a Bachelor's degree. Entry requirements, duration and curricula vary from *Land* to *Land* and between higher education institutions. The average length of study programmes is usually seven or eight semesters. A three- to four-semester foundation course is mostly followed by a four-semester advanced course (see Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010, 186). A one-year internship may follow (Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung 2017). Follow-up Master's study programmes of one or two years' duration are on the increase. Some higher education institutions offer part-time courses for those wishing to combine studying with work.

Graduates can work in a broad spectrum of fields related to social pedagogy and social work. Alongside early childhood settings, these include adult education, educational counselling, supervision and leisure-time pedagogy. In 2016, Social Pedagogues with a degree from a university of applied sciences (or equivalent) comprised 2.9% of the childcare and education workforce, compared with 1.2% with a university degree (FKB 2017, 202).

Table 6

Germany: Social Pedagogue

Title in German: Sozialpädagogin/Sozialpädagoge
Profile: Social (and Childhood) Pedagogy Professional

Entry requirements: General or specialist university entrance qualification

Professional studies: 3 or 4 years at a higher education institution – including a traineeship, mostly at Universities of Applied Sciences, occasionally at Universities

Award: Degree (*Diplom*) in Social Pedagogy – now mostly a Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: 180 / 210

EQF/DQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0923

ISCED 2011: 6

Main (ECEC) workplaces: Infant-toddler centre (0-3), kindergarten (2/3-6), age-integrated centre (0-6, 3-10, 10-12/14), outside-school-hours care and education setting (Hort, 6-14)

Additional fields of work: Adult education, educational counselling, family support, leisure time pedagogy, curative/special needs education, general social services, etc.

3.2 Competencies und curricula in IPS programmes

Educator (*Erzieherin*)

Since 2011, the qualifying route for Educators at *Fachschulen/Fachakademien* specialising in social pedagogy is based on a Competence-oriented Qualification Profile which specifies the professional standards, fields of activity in social-pedagogical settings, areas of knowledge and professional skills needed to enter the profession (KMK 2017). The Qualification Profile integrates previous relevant resolutions of the Education Ministers and Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs as well as the competence categories of the German Qualification Framework (social competence, independence, knowledge, skills; DQR 2014).

Table 7

Germany: Competence-oriented Qualification Profile - state-recognised Educator (see KMK 2017, 15-28, adapted)

Knowledge areas (selection)	Competencies/Skills (selection)
1. Understanding children, adolescents and young adults in their life worlds and forming pedagogical relationships with them	
<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad and integrated knowledge about different methods of observation; • in-depth specialist knowledge about the influence of socio-economic circumstances on the life worlds of children, adolescents and young adults; • thorough knowledge about the mandate of the complementary and compensatory role of settings in relation to the family. 	<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysing and assessing developmental trajectories and socialisation processes in children, adolescents and young adults and – taking into consideration the key determining factors of behaviour, experiences and learning – to independently plan and organise developmental and educational stimulation; • identifying one’s own role as Educator in the developmental and educational processes of children, adolescents and young adults, reflecting on this role and drawing consequences for pedagogical procedures; • conceptualising, planning and organising pedagogical programmes independently which are linked to the life worlds of children, adolescents and young adults.
2. Stimulating, supporting and guiding developmental and educational processes	
<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an in-depth understanding of education and development as part of an individual, lifelong process within the framework of their social-pedagogical mandate of ‘education, upbringing and care’; • broad and integrated knowledge which provides them with a complex understanding of developmental, learning, educational and socialisation processes; • in-depth knowledge about didactic approaches for the competent guidance of children, adolescents and young adults in specific learning areas. 	<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting on and developing further their own educational experiences and competencies in different areas of education and learning; • organising the inside and outdoor spaces in socio-pedagogical settings with the aim of creating a stimulating learning environment; • using a wide range of tools and approaches from the various educational and learning areas in a targeted way and evaluating their effectiveness.
3. Guiding pedagogical work in groups	
<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad and integrated knowledge about group psychology and about group work as a classical approach in social pedagogy; • in-depth specialist knowledge in selected areas about didactic and conceptual approaches to education, upbringing and care in small groups in the classical fields of work in child and youth welfare; • thorough knowledge of the legislation frameworks relevant for social-pedagogical work. 	<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systematically observing, analysing and assessing group behaviours, group processes, group relations and their own professional action; • conceptually embedding participation strategies for children, adolescents and young adults; • recognising conflicts and supporting children, adolescents and young people in solving them in an independent way.
4. Forming educational partnerships with parents and caregivers	
<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad and integrated professional knowledge 	<p><i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the individually different needs and re-

Knowledge areas (selection)	Competencies/Skills (selection)
about various models, approaches and forms of partnership in education and upbringing; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist knowledge about community support and counselling systems for families and caregivers; relevant knowledge about forms and methods of public relations work in social services. 	sources of families and caregivers, assessing them in a systematic way and reviewing framework structures and provision accordingly; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning and organising needs-based parental education and counselling activities together with other field specialists; developing, carrying out and evaluating public relations strategies for social service settings.
5. Developing organisations and teams	
<i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> broad and integrated professional knowledge about structures and forms of team work and about other elements of organisation development; integrated specialist knowledge about relevant legislation and the funding and provider structures of settings in the field of social pedagogy as well as about current developments; thorough knowledge about the links between employment, tariff and contract legislation in the field of social-pedagogical work. 	<i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participating in needs and status analyses for the socio-pedagogical institution in order to include these in programme planning; analysing their own team situation according to specific criteria in order to develop this further and, if necessary, to organise support; reflecting on the sustainability of processes in team and organisation development.
6. Cooperating in networks and organising transitions	
<i>Leaving certificate holders possess</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> broad and integrated professional knowledge about child and youth welfare institutions and other specialist services and educational institutions; broad and integrated professional knowledge about support systems and networks; research-based knowledge about attachment patterns and their meaning for transition procedures. 	<i>Leaving certificate holders possess skills related to</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating relevant resources in the community for the target group; coordinating goals for cooperation with network partners and integrating them into their own workplace procedures; organising transitions systematically on the basis of research evidence and conceptual frameworks.

The following basic principles are considered to be defining for all social-pedagogical work: *participation* (including children in decision-making according to their age-related competencies), *inclusion* (as a multidimensional concept of heterogeneity and diversity and also as a basis for planning educational activities), *prevention* (supporting children, adolescents and young adults to cope with different life phases), *language enhancement* (ongoing support of language development), and *values transmission* (guidance in the development of personal values based on the Basic Law/Constitution and the constitutions of the *Länder*).

Each federal state implements the Qualification Profile through its own legislation. An orientation document for this purpose is a cross-*Länder* curricular framework (see *Table 8*). The competencies specified in the curriculum of each federal state are mandatory for the work of the vocational colleges and academies in the field of social pedagogy.

The curricular framework is also organised in *six fields of learning* based on the competence-oriented Qualification Profile and combine complex tasks (see also: Autorengruppe Fachschulwesen 2011).

Table 8

Germany: Cross-Länder curricular framework for initial professional studies leading to the award of *staatlich anerkannte Erzieherin/staatlich anerkannter Erzieher* (see BöfAE 2012, 17, 24ff)

Fields of learning and content	Number of teaching hours
General education/non-specialist subjects	minimum 360
Occupation-related areas of learning	

Fields of learning and content	Number of teaching hours
<p>1. Ongoing development of professional identity and professional perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biographical work, motive for occupational choice, methods of self-assessment - Professionalisation history of the <i>Erzieherin</i> profession - Fields of work and provider system in child and youth welfare - Education, upbringing and care as mandates of child and youth welfare in a changing society - Societal and legislative context of expectations and requirements regarding the professional role, cross-curricular tasks of social pedagogy work - Requirements, organisation and places of learning in IPS - Learning and working strategies in self-organised learning - Self-management and health prevention in professional work - Employment and tariff framework legislation - Professional organisations and trade unions - Professional prospects, continuing professional development 	160-200
<p>2. The pedagogy of relationships and working with groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Image of human being, image of the child, pedagogical values - Explanatory models for educational guidance - Attachment theory - Pedagogy of building relationships - Foundations of group pedagogy - Observation and documentation of group processes - Didactic principles and approaches of working in groups in the field of child and youth welfare, e.g. Froebel, Montessori, Reggio, contextual approach (<i>Situation-sansatz</i>), Social Group Work - Chances for shaping the life worlds and everyday lives of groups in child and youth welfare fields of work - Models and approaches towards a participatory pedagogy - Communication and leading discussions - Conflicts and conflict solutions in everyday pedagogy - Legislative framework for social pedagogical group work such as supervision, child and youth protection, health protection, data protection 	240-280
<p>3. Life worlds and diversity – awareness, understanding, inclusive approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing conditions and influences on socialisation - Diversity of life worlds and living conditions and their significance for pedagogical work - Explanatory theoretical models for human experiences and behaviours, such as behavioural and learning theories, psychoanalytical models, systemic approaches, resilience concept - Special developmental needs in children, adolescents and young adults, such as physical and intellectual impairments, giftedness - Basic ethical principles of human life - Basic issues in educational anthropology, such as educational goals, consent and emancipation, normality and abnormality - Pedagogical approaches towards promoting and managing inclusion in selected child and youth welfare settings, such as diversity pedagogy, anti-bias education - Resource-oriented support and guidance of children, adolescents and young adults who are in need of special education, support and opportunities - Observation and documentation strategies in resource-oriented processes of guidance and educational support - Legal frameworks relating to inclusion, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, German Social Code Book VIII, German Social Code Book X - Planning support according to German Social Code Book IX 	240-280
<p>4. Professional organisation of a social pedagogical approach to education in different learning areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanatory models for (self-) education, development and learning - Developmental domains and developmental tasks in different life phases (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood) - Aspects of diversity in developmental and educational processes - Education mandate of the German Social Code Book VIII - Curricular frameworks for childhood education and care in the <i>Länder</i> 	600-680



Fields of learning and content	Number of teaching hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Instruments for the observation and recording of developmental and educational processes – The role of Educators in the areas of education – Domain-specific and didactical knowledge of the areas of learning – Meaning of the areas of learning for the development of children, adolescents and young adults – Organising learning environments and identifying educational chances for different target audiences – Planning, implementation and evaluation of resilience-oriented and resources-based educational activities in different fields of work 	
<p>5. Organising educational partnerships with parents and caregivers and supporting transitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social transformation of the family – Diversity in family life worlds and living conditions – Rights and duties of parents – Models, approaches and forms of educational and childrearing partnerships – Forms of work with families – Methods of leading discussions and consultations with parents and caregivers – Presentation and moderating techniques – Supporting family upbringing – Support in upbringing – Endangerment of children’s welfare and protection mandate – Support and consultancy systems in the neighbourhood – Family education provision – Concept and organisation of the family centre – Life course transitions/ transitions theory – Models and approaches towards organising transitions in the child and youth welfare field 	160-200
<p>6. Developing institution and team, networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provider structures, funding and legislative frameworks of social pedagogical institutions – Organisational models and development – Quality development – Programme development – Conceptual frameworks for organising everyday life in child and youth welfare settings – Teamwork and team development – Role and functions in teams/ leadership tasks – Multi-professional teams – Conflict solutions and support models for teams – Public relations work – Networking in the neighbourhood – Networks in child and youth welfare fields of work and with other educational institutions 	160-200
Elective modules	240-360
Total: Occupation-related areas of learning	1,800-2,200
Total hours/areas of learning	minimum 2.400
Placements (practica) in child and youth welfare settings	minimum 1.200

Childcare Assistant/Social Assistant

Competence specifications

Generally speaking, the qualification route leading to the award of Childcare Assistant tends to place more emphasis on competencies relating to interactions with children and on guiding educational processes, whereas that for prospective Social Assistants tends to foreground general

aspects of care. How the specifications are formulated can vary from *Land* to *Land* and between vocational schools. The following is a selection of skills and competences provided for EuroPass purposes for both the Childcare Assistants and the Social Assistants (KMK 2015).

Profile of skills and competences – Childcare Assistant

- Observe the behaviour, abilities and knowledge of individual children and small groups; recognise requirements and identify situations
- Support social learning processes in the group of children whilst taking account of cooperation within the staff team and with parents or legal guardians
- Initiate and support educational processes
- Plan, implement and reflect upon guided activities
- Support children's play and create scope for play
- Create opportunities to practise speech for the purpose of further development of understanding of language, powers of expression and language skills
- Familiarise children with various cultures, customs and practices and take account of these in pedagogical work
- Foster healthy physical development; comply with and apply hygiene measures
- Communicate with parents and education professionals within the scope of the education and teaching partnership and during team consultations
- Carry out housekeeping activities
- Accord due consideration to health and safety at work and to the rules of hygiene

Profile of skills and competences – Social Assistant

- Apply basic socio-pedagogical, social care, housekeeping and organisational management skills
- Assist with the development, education, supervision, care and support of people with and without disabilities on the basis of observations and documentation
- Work in close conjunction with the relevant professionals to support the care process
- Apply basic subject and methodological knowledge in the fields of art, design, creativity sport and play
- Apply communication skills in a way that is adequate to the situation when dealing with clients and their family members
- Work autonomously to formulate, realise, reflect upon and take responsibility for objectives and sub-tasks whilst cooperating closely with the relevant professionals.

Both vocational programmes place importance on ensuring that regulations regarding workplace safety, protection and hygiene as well as behaviour in the case of accidents and initiating first aid measures are effectively transmitted, as well as environmental protection regulations and making efficient use of energy sources at work.

Curricular areas

The curricula of the two vocational programmes vary from *Land* to *Land* and among vocational schools. Three examples are presented below.

Bavaria

The Bavarian state curriculum leading to the award of Childcare Assistant (*Lehrplan für die Berufsfachschule für Kinderpflege*, 2010) is organised into six broad fields of learning: (1) observing persons and situations, observing and explaining behaviour; (2) recognising daily needs and acting appropriately; (3) planning, carrying out and reflecting on educational activities; (4) initiating and guiding educational processes; (5) guiding relationships and communication; (6) cooperating with all those involved in the educational process (StMUK 2010). In a specific vocational school (Berufsbildungszentrum Augsburg und Schwaben 2013) the fields of learning are organ-

ised into the following subjects: religion and religious education/ethics and ethics education, German language and communication* (*= final exam subject) , English, social studies and professional ethics, pedagogy and psychology*, ecology and healthcare, law, mathematics and science education, information technology, didactics and media education, handicraft and design, housekeeping education, music and music education, sport, caring for babies, practicum*.

Mecklenburg-Pomerania

The relevant state Framework Plan for the upper vocational schools programme in Social Assistance (*Rahmenplan der Höheren Berufsfachschule Sozialassistenten*, 2014) distinguishes between general subjects (German/English; mathematics/science; social studies/Protestant religion or philosophy; sport) and occupation-related learning areas (developing professional identity and perspectives; children’s and young people’s development and education; foundations for managing relationships; supporting learning in specific educational areas; body and health; institutional and societal framework conditions; social encounters and learning – project module) (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur 2014).

Rhineland-Palatinate

Project management forms the basis of the Social Assistance branch of the upper vocational school curriculum (*Lehrplan für die höhere Berufsfachschule - Fachrichtung Sozialassistenten*, 2010); this is organised in three areas of learning: (1) defining and planning projects, (2) carrying out projects and (3) assessing and steering projects. The occupation-related syllabus is structured in nine learning areas: (1) professional orientation, (2) organising communicative and educational processes, (3) observing and stimulating developmental processes, (4) supporting persons with impairments, (5) organising play situations and physical activities, (6) supporting artistic and creative forms of expression, (7) promoting healthy eating habits and carrying out housekeeping tasks, (8) implementing health support and caring activities, (9) presenting a final project (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Jugend und Kultur 2010).

Childhood Pedagogue (*Kindheitspädagogin*)

Both competence specifications and curricula for the study programmes leading to the award of Childhood Pedagogue vary from one higher education institution to another. In this section we therefore first present an ideal-typical catalogue of competence dimensions for work in the field of early childhood/childhood pedagogy, followed by three examples of how the study programmes in three higher education institutions are structured and which curricular areas they prioritise.

Ideal-typical catalogue of basic competencies for work in the field of early childhood/childhood pedagogy

Regarding the competencies needed for work in the field of early childhood/childhood pedagogy, an ideal-typical catalogue developed by a research team in Freiburg on the basis of IPS curricula, research on normative requirements, secondary analyses and individual case studies is presented in *Table 9* (Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al. 2014).

Table 9

Germany: Competence dimensions in the IPS of early childhood/childhood pedagogy professionals (Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al. 2014, 24f)

General personal competencies	Occupation-specific competencies			
	Working with child/ren	Cooperating with parents/ families	Working in and with the institution	Networking and cooperation
0.1 Examining one’s own	Work with individual children	2.1 Examining one’s own	3.1 Examining one’s own	4.1 Examining one’s own

General personal competencies	Occupation-specific competencies			
	Working with child/ren	Cooperating with parents/ families	Working in and with the institution	Networking and cooperation
personality / self-reflexivity in the context of societal conditions	1.1 Examining one's own systems of values and norms / guiding orientations relating to the child	system of values and norms / guiding orientations relating to parenthood	systems of values and norms / guiding orientations relating to team work	systems of values and norms / guiding orientations relating to networking and forms of cooperation
0.2 Examining one's own professional biography and guiding orientations and attitudes	1.2 Relationship and interaction	2.2 Developing relationships with parents	3.2 Ability to work in a team	4.2 Ability to enter into appropriate forms of communication with (potential) networking and cooperation partners
0.3 Developing a professional pedagogical disposition	1.3 Observing and documenting children's developmental and educational processes	2.3 Developing a setting-specific programme for working with parents	3.3 Coping with organisational (and budgetary) demands	4.3 Cooperating and networking with external specialist services (social welfare organisations, educational counselling, youth office, therapists, etc.)
0.4 Ability to form relationships; basic ability to build relationships with others based on mutual exchange and reflection	1.4 Organising developmental and educational processes	2.4 Organising activities for groups of parents	3.4 Managing essential administrative procedures	4.4 Building networks in the neighbourhood
0.5 Motivational, volitional and emotional aspects in pedagogical situations	1.5 Organising everyday pedagogical activities	2.5 Providing specific activities from the perspective of diversity and inclusion	3.5 Programme development and quality management	4.5 Organising transitions according to agreed goals and procedures
0.6 Self-regulatory abilities	Working with groups 1.6 Moderating group processes	2.6 Involving parents and families	3.6 Active organisation of the relationship between provider and setting	4.6 Ensuring protection against endangerment of the child's well-being both outside the setting and within the setting
0.7 Own readiness to learn and to develop professionally / research-oriented attitude	1.7 Guiding and moderating dialogues with and between children and promoting communicative interactions between children	2.7 Organising centre-related information for the parents	3.7 Public relations work	
0.8 Reflecting on one's own profession / ability to contribute towards the further development of the profession	1.8 Guiding and moderating conflicts	2.8 Organising and conducting complaints management	3.8 Implementing educational programmes in the context of policy frameworks	

General personal competencies	Occupation-specific competencies			
	Working with child/ren	Cooperating with parents/ families	Working in and with the institution	Networking and cooperation
0.9 Dealing with borderline cases, conflicts and being able to enlist support	1.9 Organising cooperative educational processes	2.9 Participating in a family-oriented development of the setting / Developing the childcare setting into a family centre	3.9 Economic management / acquiring project funding / sponsoring	
	1.10 Organising and enabling participation		3.10 Staff development	
	Specific areas of development			
	1.11 Transition processes			
	1.12 Diversity and inclusion			
	1.13 Inclusion – cultural heterogeneity			
	1.14 Inclusion – children with disabilities			
	1.15 Diversity and inclusion – children of different sexes			
	1.16 Language education			
	1.17 Additional areas of learning			

Course structure and curricular areas in three universities of applied sciences in Berlin, Dresden and Munich

1. Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin

Award: Bachelor of Arts and (on application) state recognition as a Childhood Pedagogue; 7 semesters; full-time studies or a work-integrated course for pedagogues in employment; modular system; 210 ECTS points.

The IPS programme is structured according to nine areas of study which are organised in modules.

Table 10

Germany: Study programme Childhood Pedagogy, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin: Overview of curricular areas and modules (ASH 2010, 20)

	Hours per semester	ECTS points
Study area I: Pedagogical and psychological foundations	8	10
Module I/1: Children's upbringing, education and development	8	10

	Hours per semester	ECTS points
Sub-module I/1/1: Educational theories		
Sub-module I/1/2: Developmental psychology and neurobiology		
Study area II: Occupation-oriented practice and research methods	28	50
Module II/1: Foundations of a scientific approach to working and researching	7	10
Module II/2: Organising everyday pedagogy	4	10
Module II/3: Theories of play and pedagogy of play	4	5
Module II/4: Methods of practice	4	10
Module II/5: Conflict mediation and prevention of violence	3	5
Module II/6: Research methods	6	10
Study area III: Societal and political contexts of education and upbringing	16	20
Module III/1: Law	5	5
Module III/2: Diversity	4	5
Module III/3: Education systems – national and international aspects	7	10
Sub-module III/3/1: Specialist English		
Sub-module III/3/2: Education systems in a comparative perspective and study visit		
Study area IV: Education and teaching in childhood settings	39	45
Module IV/1: Aesthetic education I	6	5
Module IV/2: Aesthetic education II	6	5
Module IV/3: Natural sciences	7	10
Module IV/4: World and environment	4	5
Module IV/5: Mathematics	4	5
Module IV/6: Communication and languages	7	10
Module IV/7: Media pedagogy	5	5
Study area V: Body, movement and health	11	15
Module V/1: Health, illness and disability	7	10
Sub-module V/1/1: Health and illness		
Sub-module V/1/2: Integrative pedagogy		
Module V/2: Physical activity	4	5
Study area VI: Childhood education and care institutions	15	20
Module VI/1: Fields of work and professional identity	7	10
Module VI/2: Leadership, organisation and management	8	10
Study area VII: Practicum	10	30
Module VII/1: 1. Practicum	5	15
Module VII/2: 2. Practicum	5	15
Study area VIII: Bachelor thesis	2	12
Module VIII/1: Bachelor thesis and colloquium		
Study area IX: Optional studies	8	8
Total	137	210

Dealing with diversity and difference is a cross-curricular topic which is included in all modules.

2. Protestant University of Applied Sciences, Dresden

Award: Bachelor of Arts; state recognition as Childhood Pedagogue; 6 semesters; full-time IPS; modular system; 180 ECTS points.

Students complete 23 modules in four broad areas of study:

- Study area 1: Field-based studies (practica) (51 ECTS points)
 Study area 2: Foundations in educational science (43 ECTS points)
 Study area 3: Development, learning and communication (24 ECTS points)
 Study area 4: Foundations in social sciences (35 ECTS points).

Beyond these four study areas, 15 ECTS points are allocated for the Bachelor thesis and 12 ECTS points for extracurricular studies (*Studium Generale*), totalling 180 ECTS points altogether.

Table 11

Germany: Study programme Childhood Education and Upbringing, Protestant University of Applied Sciences, Dresden – Overview of modules and study programme, 2016 (EHS 2016, adapted)

Semester	Modules					Studium Generale	Workload/ECTS points
1	Fields of work in childhood education and upbringing: institutional contexts 5 ECTS	Development, play and learning in childhood and a research-based approach to work 9 ECTS	Foundations in educational science; images of childhood 5 ECTS	Anthropology, ethical value judgements, human rights and civil rights 5 ECTS	Social policy and legislation frameworks of childhood education and upbringing 6 ECTS		810 h* 30 ECTS
2	Fields of work in childhood education and upbringing: pedagogical approaches 5 ECTS	Field-based studies (practicum) 7 ECTS	Theories of education and upbringing 5 ECTS	Cooperating with families 6 ECTS	Foundations of communication and intervention with children and adults 5 ECTS	2 ECTS	810 h 30 ECTS
3	Theory and practice of teaching 5 ECTS	Field-based studies (practicum) 6 ECTS	Pedagogical diagnostics 6 ECTS	Communication and intervention in groups 5 ECTS	Social conditions of growing up in childhood 6 ECTS	2 ECTS	810 h 30 ECTS
4	Practical studies 16 ECTS			Inclusion and diversity 6 ECTS	Introduction to empirical action research 5 ECTS	3 ECTS	810 h 30 ECTS
5	Pedagogical research and development project 6 ECTS	Areas of learning in centre-based settings of childhood education and upbringing and teaching approaches 6 ECTS	Developing and evaluating pedagogical quality in centre-based settings for children 6 ECTS	Religious education, understanding the world and oneself 5 ECTS	Transitions 5 ECTS	2 ECTS	810 h 30 ECTS
6	Pedagogical research and development project 6 ECTS	Community orientation 6 ECTS	Bachelor thesis and colloquium 15 ECTS			3 ECTS	810 h 30 ECTS
Total workload						4,860 hours	
Total ECTS points						180 ECTS	

*1 ECTS point = 27 hours

3. Catholic University of Applied Sciences, Munich

Award: Bachelor Education and Upbringing in Childhood; state recognised Childhood Pedagogue; 6 semesters part-time for state recognised Educators (4 semesters for applicants with relevant non-German higher education degree); modular system; 210 ECTS points.

The study programme is organised in a modular system of six areas of study. Each study area comprises a different number of modules (KSH 2017).

Table 12

Germany: Study programme Childhood Education and Upbringing, Catholic University of Applied Sciences, Munich – Course structure and curricular areas (KSH 2017, adapted)

	Semester	ECTS points
Study area 1: Scientific foundations		
1.1 Foundations of scientific work and research	3	5
1.2 Development and learning from psychological and neurobiological perspectives	1	8
1.3 Health, illness and disability in childhood	1	5
1.4 Early childhood education in a historical and systematic perspective	3	7
1.5 Promoting children's development: attachment, relationships, basic competencies	4	5
1.6 Socialisation of girls and boys	6	5
1.7 Scientific theories and research methods	4/5	10
1.8 Education and upbringing in an international context	8	5
Study area 2: Areas of education and learning		
2.1 Language, communication, literacy – Introduction	1	5
2.2 Music and movement	1	5
2.3 Nature, environmental education, mathematics	2	
2.4 Religious education and upbringing - Foundations	2	
2.5 Family religion, belief, inter-religious dialogue in childhood education	5	5
2.6 Language, communication, literacy – Consolidation	6	5
2.7 Natural sciences and technology	7	5
2.8 Culture, aesthetics, media	8	5
Study area 3: Pedagogy		
3.1 Pedagogical activities I: Theories of play, supporting play and aesthetic education	2	10
3.2 Pedagogical activities II: Teaching approaches and curricular frameworks	3	5
3.3 Inclusion: scientific-normative foundations and dimensions of practice	3	8
3.4 Practice I: Guiding and stimulating children's learning and cooperating with parents	2	20
3.5 Practice II: Reflexive practice and professional ethics	4	10
3.6 Practice III: Action research and developing practice	6/7	30
3.7 Pedagogical activities III: Current theories and methods discourses	7	5
Study area 4: Organisation, management and legislation		
4.1 Legislative and organisational frameworks of education, upbringing and care	1	7
4.2 Organisation and management, employment law and laws governing the profession	4	5
4.3 Social and quality management	5	5
4.4 Children's rights to education and care, migration and service provision laws	7	5
Study area 5: In-depth studies		
5.1 Inclusive pedagogy and cooperating with parents, school, community	5	10
5.2 Planning and management of childhood education and care provision	6	5
Study area 6: Final module – scientific work		
Completing a Bachelor thesis	8	15

Social Pedagogue (*Sozialpädagogin*)

In the winter semester 2017/2018, 91.4 % of all study programmes in Germany awarded Bachelor's and Master's degrees (HRK 2017). It seems that the traditional *Diplom-* and *Magister-*programmes in Social Pedagogy/Social Work at universities of applied sciences have mostly been replaced by Bachelor's or Master's study programmes – in Social Work or Educational Sciences or Childhood Pedagogy. Although it is in principle possible to study Social Pedagogy at 32 higher education institutions, few are specialised only in this area (<https://www.studierenstudium.com/studium/Sozialpaedagogik>). Moreover, the early childhood field is only one of a broad spectrum of fields of work for which students are prepared; these include the health and rehabilitation field, work with senior citizens, work with prisoners, and diverse consultancy activities. Both competence specification and curricular areas are therefore very wide-ranging.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeabilities

External applicant examinations – IPS for Educators

According to Dudek and Gebrande (2012), all 16 *Länder* offer the chance to study for the award of state-recognised Educator by successfully completing an examination for external applicants (the terms used to describe this examination vary).

Entry requirements in terms of completed schooling and vocational training vary across the federal states; overall, however, they are generally the same as those for the vocational technical colleges. Beyond these, applicants may have to fulfil other state-specific requirements such as language proficiency and age. Applications for admission to this examination often come from persons with an occupation-related vocational training, such as Childcare Assistants or Remedial Therapists, or from persons who have completed a degree in the social sciences, also from mothers, „who are seeking re-entry into the employment market after a family phase and who wish to build on the competencies they have acquired during this time” (Dudek and Gebrande 2012, 28). Preparation and the examination itself are supervised by providers (sometimes commercial) who often focus on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, or through preparatory courses at *Fachschulen*, or also through self-study. However, all forms of preparation are criticised for their lack of practical preparation.

Part-time options – IPS for Educators

Another alternative route to become a *staatlich anerkannte Erzieherin/staatlich anerkannter Erzieher* is to study part time. This is possible in all federal states except Saarland. The course of studies likewise takes place at a *Fachschule/Fachakademie* for the same amount of hours as the full-time option, but takes longer to complete: the college-based component takes between three and four years and the final practicum between one and two years. A special form of part-time IPS is mandatory in only four *Länder* (Berlin, Brandenburg, Sachsen und Thüringen). In these federal states the trainees are required to work in a children's centre during their initial professional studies, whereas in other *Länder* they can make this decision on a voluntary basis. According to its proponents, the advantages of combining studying part time and working are that it gives the trainees the chance to earn a living, it promotes a stronger interconnection between theory-based and practice-based phases and it also contributes towards balancing family duties with studying for a professional qualification. Entry requirements for part-time options are the same as those for a full-time initial professional education/training.

Upskilling courses – Pedagogical Specialist in (E)CEC centres

The target groups for a new upskilling course in Bavaria (StMAS 2017) are Childcare Assistants, Remedial Therapists, certified Primary School Teachers, persons seeking career changes and

applicants from other countries with a relevant academic degree. Entry requirements are an award as state-certified Childcare Assistant or support worker, a minimum age of 25 years and, depending on the previous qualification, three years of work experience (in a post at least 50% of a full-time post). Primary School Teachers who have successfully completed the First State Examination or lateral entrants with a relevant academic degree only need to have had two years of work experience; for Primary School Teachers with the Second State Examination, no teaching experience is required.

The course comprises a nine-month extra-occupational module phase ending in a theoretical examination and a six-month supervised internship in a children's centre. Those who pass the Certificate are awarded the title of "Pedagogical Specialist in (E)CEC centres", which is included in the "Professions Register for (E)CEC centres" (*Kita Berufeliste*) administered by the Bavarian State Youth Office.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

The workplace as a 'site of learning' (*Lernort Praxis*) has not traditionally had a clear profile in the IPS of core practitioners, most notably that of *Erzieherinnen*. In the early 1980s attention was drawn to a decade-long process of dissociation between professional praxis and the college-based component of IPS, coupled with an increasingly school-like approach towards initial professional education/training (Ebert 2014). Although the Conference of Ministers for Youth Affairs drew attention in 1998 to the role of the child and youth welfare system in the workplace-based component of IPS (JMK 1998) and three years later potentially strengthened the status of this learning site (JMK 2001), a visible upgrading of field-based studies across the country to a level of parity with the *Fachschulen* has even today still to be achieved (Leu 2014). One indication of this is that there is no agreed job title and no agreed profile for the qualification requirements, assignments or remuneration of these staff in the (E)CEC centres who take on a mentoring role for students spending time in the setting during their practicum periods (Oberhuemer et al. 2014). In the context of the more recent IPS programmes in childhood pedagogy in Germany, the interrelationship between theory and practice is considered to be one of the key problematic issues (Pasternack and Keil 2013, 60).

In the higher education IPS routes for the awards of **Childhood Pedagogue** or **Social Pedagogue**, each individual higher education institution (HEI) decides on what priority this part of the study programme should be given. For the childhood pedagogy higher education routes, both the Conference of Education Ministers and the Conference of Youth Affairs Ministers have declared that the workplace-based learning component of IPS should be allocated at least 30 ECTS points (100 days) within a total of 180 ECTS points (KMK/JFMK 2010, 2); this corresponds to roughly 17% of the overall study programme (Oberhuemer et al. 2014). For the state recognition of the occupational title "Childhood Pedagogue" (which has now been introduced in most *Länder*), there is usually a minimum recommendation regarding the required length of a supervised and guided placement (Stieve et al. 2014, 81). For example, at the University of Applied Sciences in Emden (Hochschule Emden-Leer 2016), two practica are completed alongside the HEI-based studies on at the most two days: (1) 180 hours/23 full days; (2) 240 hours/30 full days. During a field-based project, students work independently on selected topics – usually during a block period (240 hours/30 full days). The same amount of time is spent on a practicum abroad, which aims to expand basic profession-related competencies and to strengthen knowledge about the international context. During the practicum periods students are guided and supported by a tutor from the higher education institution.

In this Section the focus will be placed on the practical element of the IPS for prospective **Educators**, since they are the largest occupational group working in early childhood education and

care. Despite the framework agreements reached by the Conference of Education Ministers, the fact that the individual *Länder* have sovereignty in education and training issues still results in diverging organisational structures, meaning that it is here that arguably the greatest need for future debate lies.

Educator (*Erzieherin*)

Despite the varying conditions in the 16 *Länder*, there are two basic forms of field-based learning in the IPS programmes for Educators (see Janssen 2010). Roughly half the *Länder* favour an additive model, i.e. following a two-year predominantly theory-based element at the vocational college/academy, students then spend a one-year work placement in a children's centre. The other *Länder* favour an integrated model of IPS, during which phases of field-based learning are built into the three-year course of studies. The number of hours spent in the placement setting varies – up to a maximum of 1,400 hours. Overall, the field-based component comprises roughly one third of the total length of initial professional studies.

The work placement takes place in a setting which the students choose themselves. They work full time in the setting and sign a contract with the service provider which specifies working times, payment, etc. The placement institution generally signs a contract with the supervisory vocational college/academy. As a rule, the placement period lasts for one year but in some *Länder* it can be shortened to six months if the prospective Educators have already gained appropriate work experience. Some *Länder* may require no work placement at all if, for example, the person has already completed the vocational route leading to the award of Childcare Assistant.

The work placement is remunerated and the amount is decided by the employer, i.e. the service provider. In 2015, prospective Educators in public sector childcare and education settings received a gross payment of 1,433€ per month (Infoportal Öffentlicher Dienst 2017c).

The candidate Educators are supervised by a staff member in the setting and also receive support from the technical college/academy. Further theory-based knowledge is mostly provided on one day a week or in block seminars.

The prospective Educators undertake diverse pedagogical assignments in the setting such as projects or guided activities with the children. Together with the supervisory and supportive member of staff, students reflect on their pedagogical activities and their own role. Tutors from the technical college/academy visit the trainees and observe and assess their work. These field-based grades form part of the decision as to whether the trainee should be admitted to the final examination.

5. Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) may be theme-based or competency-based, may provide specialist training for a specific occupational role, or may focus on a specific target group. This section will foreground general aspects relating to the framework conditions for CPD for those working in (E)CEC centres rather than referring to specific occupational groups.

National, regional and provider-specific frameworks

In accordance with the federal structures in Germany, there is no nation-wide framework setting out specifications for the continuing professional development of staff working in early childhood settings, but there are recommendations issued by the Conference of Ministers for Family and Youth Affairs (see, e.g., JFMK 2010). Continuing professional development is anchored in

relevant legislation of the *Länder* as a funding-worthy instrument of quality improvement, although views regarding the scope and intensity of steering procedures vary considerably (Diller and Leu 2010). Beyond this, the non-governmental provider organisations in the not-for-profit sector, who in Germany have a dual role as employer and CPD provider, have their own provider-specific requirements and conditions regarding the CPD of early childhood personnel.

Main forms

A comparative study on the continuing professional development systems in six European countries (Oberhuemer et al. 2012) differentiates between non-formal and formal professional development.

Two empirical studies conducted in the framework of the Early Years Professional Development Initiative WiFF (Behr and Walter 2010; Baumeister and Grieser 2011) identified **non-formal** professional development activities as the main form of CPD in Germany. These mainly aim at strengthening competencies within the workplace and the field in general; they are not conceptualised as cumulative and certified qualification measures leading to a formal award for the purpose of career advancement.

The survey by Behr and Walter (2010, 25), in which almost 500 CPD providers participated, analysed the relevant proportions of various CPD formats within the overall total provided by the organisations (multiple responses):

- Short courses up to a maximum of three days (91%);
- Team-specific CPD (69%);
- Long-term offers with individual units lasting more than a week (55%);
- Three- to five-day seminars (49%);
- Team supervision and steering (33%);
- Quality circles (20%);
- Study trips (14%);
- Online-courses via distant learning (10%);
- Other (4%).

The above survey was complemented by a document analysis conducted by Baumeister and Grieser (2011). The researchers examined 96 programmes of large CPD provider organisations in Germany, also in terms of the format of the courses and activities offered (see Baumeister and Grieser 2011, 21):

- Seminars with an average length of one to three days accounted for almost 85% of the total number of CPD programmes;
- On-site (in-house) seminars, e-learning or blended learning approaches as well as excursions, study trips, professional conferences and similar provision represented approximately 8% of the total programme offers;
- Series of inter-connected CPD units stretching over 12 days or more, sometimes offered on a module basis, account for 7% of the total CPD provision.

Forms of **formal CPD** include courses for which a provider-specific certificate is awarded (e.g. for leadership competence) which can be important for career progression within the practitioner's employer structures; in some cases a state-recognised certificate may be awarded. In Rhineland-Palatinate, for example, in the context of the introduction of official curricular guidance in early childhood education, a cooperation initiative established by the ministry for employers/providers, municipal umbrella organisations, the state-wide parent committee and the trade unions led to a mutually agreed professional development series (of at least 15 days). A series of qualifying modules for service providers is also currently on offer. Participants who have completed eight seminar units are awarded a certificate: 'Recognising provider responsibility: managing and supporting quality development in childcare and education settings' (Kommunal Akademie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. 2017).

Extra-occupational advanced studies with an early childhood specialisation or Master study programmes also belong to the formal forms of CPD. However, a nation-wide framework system of modules for which agreed credits are awarded and lead to career progression or an accredited system of cross-provider modules which are recognised as an entry point to advanced studies has not as yet been established – at least not as a visible system (Oberhuemer et al. 2012, 77).

Leave entitlement

Leave entitlement for participation in professional development activities is regulated in different ways in each *Land* – both for core practitioners and assistant staff. In most *Länder* it is possible for employees to apply for educational leave. Employees mostly are entitled to five days of fully paid leave per year. According to a link posted on the German Education Portal (Deutscher Bildungsserver), these entitlements do not apply in Bavaria and Saxony (vgl. InfoWebWeiterbildung 2017).

Duties and rights

In general, early childhood personnel are not obliged to participate in professional development activities in Germany. However, some *Länder* do have a regulation which requires participation (e.g. in Mecklenburg-Pomerania staff are required by law to attend five days of CPD annually and in Thuringia two days per year).

Employers are neither obliged to offer CPD nor to prescribe it - unless a specific agreement has been set out in the employment contract (Schumann 2016).

Participation and coverage of costs

According to the assessments made by CPD providers in the nation-wide WiFF survey (Beher and Walter 2010, 30) almost half (46 %) shared the view ‘completely’ that work pressures are a considerable barrier to participation in CPD. Between 43% and 47% of respondents agreed that paid leave was not a frequent occurrence and that attendance fees are not met adequately by the employers of early childhood staff.

Regulations regarding the coverage of costs for CPD depend on the agreements made between employer and employee. The employer is not automatically obliged to cover the costs. Modalities concerning CPD are often specified in the employment contract. If an employer specifically requires an employee to attend a CPD activity, then the employer must bear the costs (Schumann 2016).

CPD providers

According to the nation-wide survey by Beher and Walter (2010), the diverse group of non-governmental service providers are by far the largest group organising CPD for (early) childhood staff in Germany. They represent 45% of all CPD providers, offer 63% of overall CPD provision and 57% of the total number of programme hours. Commercial providers represent 34% of all CPD providers and public sector providers 19% (Beher and Walter 2010, 8). Baumeister and Grieser (2011, 16) came to a similar conclusion on the basis of their analysis of the CPD programmes: approx. 20% of CPD activities are organised by public sector bodies and approx. 82% by private organisations (e.g. welfare associations, church associations, academies and research institutes).

The CPD provider types are particularly diverse in Germany. They include one-person enterprises, welfare associations, education institutes/academies, religious associations, vocational schools, companies, higher education institutions, professional associations and well as commercial CPD providers (Beher and Walter, 9). In some *Länder* (e.g. Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia), the vocational technical colleges are also recognised as official CPD providers (Diller und Leu 2010). Looking at the proportion of programme hours organised by the individual



provider types, almost a quarter of CPD programmes are organised by welfare associations (23%), 18% by research institutes/education academies, 14% by adult education centres and 8% by public sector authorities. The other provider types mentioned above do not cover more than 6% of the total CPD programmes on offer. The higher education institutions account for only 6%.

Cooperative initiatives

In some *Länder* cooperation initiatives exist between diverse stakeholders in continuing professional development. In 2016, a long-standing example of this kind in Bavaria – *Forum Fortbildung* at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) – celebrated its 25th anniversary as a consortium of CPD providers and representatives from IPS and research – a unique example of sustained and state-wide cooperation on conceptual and structural issues regarding the further development of CPD. Since 2010, all the programmes of the participating associations and organisations can be viewed on the homepage of the IFP (www.ifp.bayern.de). This is a significant step in terms of providing state-wide and cross-provider transparency for early childhood practitioners.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads

Requirements for taking on a position as Centre Head in an ECEC setting vary from *Land* to *Land* and from provider to provider and in general are not explicitly regulated. A qualification beyond initial professional education/training is rarely expected. Often a position of leadership requires no more than being a 'suitable person', but criteria in this respect are rarely described in detail, leaving the decision up to the ECEC setting provider (Strehmel 2017). It is often the case that certain tasks are only indirectly attributed to the provider or the Centre Head, which can lead to decision-making difficulties in the everyday running of the centre. The AQUA study (Schreyer et al. 2014) revealed that Centre Heads are more satisfied with their work and feel less stressed if the assignment of tasks between provider and Centre Head is clarified in a binding way.

Research projects on the topic of CPD

As part of a drive to increase the number of empirical studies on professionalisation issues in the early childhood field, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research – within the framework of the Early Years Professional Development Initiative WiFF (AWiFF) – funded 30 research projects, four of which also focussed on the continuing professional development of early childhood practitioners (DLR 2014):

- Competence-based monitoring and feedback procedures in different early childhood IPS and CPD structures
- Review of recruitment, deployment and competence profiles of the teaching staff in CPD programmes for early childhood personnel
- Kindergarten and child protection – the effects of professional training for Educators to become specialists in child protection
- Doing – supporting – educating? (TUF) – a multi-perspective study of activities of ECEC staff in the context of CPD needs

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Early Years Professional Development Initiative (*Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte - WiFF*)

In 2009, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research and the Robert Bosch Foundation, together with the German Youth Institute, launched an Early Years Professional Development Initiative - the *Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte* (WiFF 2017a), which is currently in its third phase of funding (up to the end of 2018). This initiative is one of the most far-reaching – if not *the* most far-reaching – professionalisation initiatives for early childhood personnel in Europe (Oberhuemer 2014, 22).

Aims of the initiative are: to strengthen early childhood pedagogy as the basis of the education system in Germany; to establish more transparency in the early childhood CPD system, to guarantee the quality of CPD activities and to strengthen compatibility and permeability in the system of continuing professional development.

WiFF provides a framework for strengthening the knowledge base in the ECEC field – through commissioning topical expert reports, field evaluations and studies which are then made available free of charge as a print and/or online publication. Beyond these publications, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research funded a special series of empirical studies which also examine professionalisation and personnel issues (see e.g. Schreyer et al. 2014). WiFF also acts as a professional network for the growing number of stakeholders in early childhood education – persons involved in IPS, CPD and policy development as well as service provider organisations and researchers. In the context of conferences and workshops, current challenges in the system of early childhood education and care can be discussed from different stakeholder perspectives (Flämig, König, and Spiekermann 2015).

Staff monitoring – The Early Education Staffing Barometer

A sub-project of the Early Years Professional Development Initiative (WiFF) is The Early Education Staffing Barometer (FKB 2017). The first edition of this comprehensive compilation of data was published in 2014; in June 2017 the second edition became available.

The Barometer presents detailed information about staff in ECEC settings and their qualification structures, about the settings teams, the employment situation, the qualification routes into the early childhood education professions, the diversity in staff composition and future personnel needs. A comprehensive appendix of tables presents statistical data which are partly disaggregated according to the situation in individual *Länder*.

The data sources include employment, earnings and higher education statistics, also child and youth welfare and school statistics. The WiFF Barometer also monitors developments in the early childhood and childhood pedagogy higher education study programmes.

Staff recruitment – recommendations from an expert group

From 2012 to 2014, the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth constituted an expert working group comprising representatives of the federal and regional ministries and of key organisations in the field, e.g. public and private provider agencies, professional organisations and trade unions, employer and technical school associations and other stakeholders (BMFSFJ 2014). The aim was to develop recommendations to cope with the drastic staff shortages in the ECEC system by working out strategies for staff recruitment and retention. A special focus was placed on groups who had been given little attention up till then, such as career changers (lateral entrants), men, persons with a migration background or persons with qualifications gained in other countries.

The following key steps and procedures were agreed on (BMFSFJ 2014).

At the level of service providers and provider associations:

- to encourage those who have dropped out of the profession to return;
- to stock up the number of part-time posts;

At the Länder level:

- to explore the possibilities of employing support staff who are in the process of acquiring a further education qualification;
- to provide for the speedy and uniform recognition of qualifications acquired in other countries;
- to explore ways of employing equivalent professional groups;
- to examine the funding options for re-qualification courses;
- to seek a possible broadening of the capacities needed for the examination of external applicants (also for lateral entrants).

State by state monitoring – A Bertelsmann Foundation initiative

A monitoring initiative was started in 2008 with a particular focus on childcare and education settings which publishes a state by state report biannually. The report describes the status quo of the ECEC systems in the 16 *Länder* according to three main criteria: guaranteeing participation; implementing investments effectively; promoting education – guaranteeing quality (see Bock-Famulla et al. 2017 for the most recent edition). Possibilities are provided online to compile comparisons between *Länder*. The accounts are based on data from the official child and youth welfare statistics and also from questionnaires addressed to the responsible ministries at the *Länder* level. Within this framework, data on personnel are also presented. The 2015 *Ländermonitor*, for example, includes data on staffing allocation within (E)CEC centres, on lead staff, on the volume of employment and on temporary/short-term appointments.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Working conditions and work satisfaction in (E)CEC centres

Source: Schreyer I. et al. 2014 (see *References* for full details).

Background: The following study on Educators' working conditions and work satisfaction was one of the projects sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in the framework of the AWiFF empirical research funding (see *Section 5*).

Aims: This nation-wide, representative study (conducted from August 2011 up to May 2014 at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research in Munich aimed to describe in detail the conditions under which staff in (E)CEC centres in Germany work and to relate these to factors such as the subjective work satisfaction of staff. The pressures which staff experience during their everyday work were also the focus of the detailed examination.

Procedure: Both the staff in childcare and education settings and the corresponding service providers were asked to respond to a questionnaire (either in paper form or online). A pilot study was carried out in the spring of 2012 in order to scrutinise the questionnaire, which was composed of items constructed by the project team as well as established items and rating scales from other authors. The responses led to a revision of certain questionnaire items. The main study was conducted during autumn 2012. Roughly 10% randomly selected childcare and education settings from all settings in Germany were chosen and asked in writing whether they would participate in the study. A total of 5,414 questionnaires were sent to childcare settings and 4,278 to service providers. The sample was stratified according to *Länder* and provider affiliation. Three groups were asked to respond: (1) Educators and other staff in different setting

types, (2) Centre Heads in different setting types and (3) the legally responsible service providers of these settings.

The response rate was 35.8% for the service providers and 32.8% for the childcare centres contacted. After cleansing redundant data, the data base comprised responses from 1,455 Centre Heads, 5,152 practitioners without a leading function and 1,542 service providers.

Alongside person-related information, the questionnaire asked staff to assess the importance and existence of over 40 working conditions, and also to give their views on work satisfaction, commitment to profession and employer (in this case the service provider), dedication, team climate, relationship to staff in a leading function and perceived stress factors.

The so-called AQUA Index was constructed on the basis of the responses. The Index categorises working conditions as 'good', 'mediocre' and 'poor' and makes it possible to correlate the emotional aspects of working life with the quality of working conditions.

Selected findings: Overall, it could be shown that the working conditions in (E)CEC centres in Germany vary considerably. Not surprisingly, good working conditions have consistently positive effects on different aspects of the work: the better the working conditions, the more pronounced in positive terms were all the variables examined (work satisfaction, commitment, dedication, etc.).

Staff are particularly satisfied if they consider their work to be interesting, if they can work in an independent and autonomous way and if they are supported by superiors and colleagues. An understanding of the profession as 'vocation' seems to be particularly applicable to pedagogical staff. Moreover, commitment to their specific employer is very strong – particularly in the case of Centre Heads. Many Centre Heads emphasise the importance of a supportive stance by the service provider. If this is the case and they also feel that the division of responsibility between them and the provider is clarified in a binding way, they are more satisfied and feel less stressed.

The findings also show that the greater majority of staff (approx. 72%) feel stressed by their work and find themselves in a so-called gratification crisis (Siegrist et al. 2014): they think their work efforts far exceed the recognition and rewards they receive for them. As in the STEGE study (Viernickel und Voss 2013) and various other studies, Centre Heads are particularly affected - 87% find themselves in a gratification crisis. This strong occupational stress is linked to less satisfaction and dedication, a poor assessment of superiors and the team climate and less commitment. Stress factors include growing external expectations and an increasing work load, overtime resulting from staff shortages, lack of substitute staff, and so on. The Centre Heads in particular often have to complete assignments outside regular working hours which are not remunerated, or attend meetings in their free time.

Pay, working conditions and career development possibilities are the aspects of work with which the staff in ECEC and other settings are least satisfied. In the AQUA study approx. 10% of the respondents indicated that they were working alongside their main job because they need the additional earnings. It is not only the service providers who should be expected to improve this situation, since they often do not have the capacity to provide higher wages. The providers also stated that they see the area of financing as that needing the most attention, both within their own provider frameworks and in terms of policy making.

Closely linked to this is the lack of societal recognition of the work of pedagogical staff. Only 2% of the respondents indicated that their work was 'completely' valued in society.

Pay and recognition are important for the staff, but they do not stand at the top of the list of priorities. Instead, aspects such as having enough time for pedagogical work, experiencing a good working climate, being able to work independently, and being able to identify personally with their job were ranked more highly. Staff who indicated that they have sufficient time for their pedagogical work showed a considerably higher level of work satisfaction and a lower perception of stress factors.

Implications: Overall, the AQUA study suggests a strong ambivalence: on the one hand pedagogical staff are satisfied with their job and the work it involves; on the other hand they experience



considerable stress. It seems that under the present working conditions, pedagogical workers experience too little respect for their work, and that the level of pay and lack of promotion prospects are significant contributory factors.

Sustaining and raising the attractiveness of the work in ECEC and other childcare and education settings therefore remains a challenge. Changes can only be successful if both the conditions under which pedagogical staff work and their specific needs are taken into account. In future both the providers of childhood education and care services and policy makers will need to consider not only economic aspects and the interests of parents and children, but also to focus more strongly on the needs of (early) childhood practitioners.

Educational tasks and working conditions in ECEC: the views of early childhood staff

Source: Viernickel, S., I. Nentwig-Gesemann, K. Nicolai, S. Schwarz, and L. Zenker. 2013 (see *References* for full details).

Procedure: The study is organised in a qualitative and quantitative part. The latter examined the structural and organisational conditions under which pedagogical staff work. In a random sample (stratified according to provider and location), 8,058 questionnaires were sent to 2,686 settings in 2011. Following post-clearance of data, the responses of 704 settings provided the basis for the computations.

In the qualitative part, the experiences, views and orientations of the staff were examined – with a focus on observation and documentation, language enhancement, cooperation with families, transition from kindergarten to school and quality assurance and quality development. For this purpose, 21 focus group discussions were conducted: 15 with centre teams, five each in three large towns in three different *Länder*. One focus group was held additionally in each town with the Centre Heads of the participating settings and one with the local provider representatives. The evaluations and interpretations of the discussions were conducted according to the Documentary Method (Bohnsack, Nentwig-Gesemann, and Nohl 2013), by means of which both explicit knowledge and implicit and tacit experiential knowledge can be reconstructed. A whole-team approach was utilised. Moreover, ‘typical’ structural patterns and links were presented in detail.

Findings: Although the official early childhood curricular frameworks have been accepted in general, in terms of their implementation, the teams find themselves in an ‘implementation dilemma’ in terms of the everyday realities of their working situation and the theories behind the curricular programmes. Three approaches could be observed: (1) teams which work according to pedagogical values and the needs of children/families and actively explore new approaches (‘core values orientation’), (2) teams which view the curricular framework as a binding orientation (‘implementation orientation’), and (3) teams which explicitly distance themselves from the curricular framework (‘distancing orientation’).

Implications: Two basic conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data: the demands and expectations which curricular programmes place on staff need to be adapted to the specific structural framework conditions, the available resources, the competence profile and the professional attitudes of the staff. Approaches to quality assurance and quality improvement also need to be directed towards the concrete needs of the setting. Implications can be drawn for steering and development strategies in the following areas, among others: staff can only realise the high expectations placed on them through *improved staffing allocations*. These should be calculated and presented in a way that they can be compared across the country. *Time allocated for indirect pedagogical work* is mostly insufficient, leading to increased feelings of stress among staff. *Reflecting on professional attitudes and dispositions* needs to have a firm place in continuing professional development. CPD courses designed to strengthen the *qualifications of Centre Heads* need to be systematically expanded. The implementation phase of the curricular frameworks needs to be followed by a *phase of critical reflection* so that sustainable developments can be initiated. Not least, *more public recognition* of the field of work is

needed to strengthen the professional self-image of the staff, including attractive career development options and appropriate remuneration.

The study concludes with policy implications resulting from findings: sustained improvement of staff-child ratios; freeing Centre Heads of direct work with children; promoting and supporting the societal status of pedagogical staff; adapting and securing the necessary funding for childcare and education settings; as well as a systematic expansion of continuing professional development opportunities.

Job profile of Centre Heads in (E)CEC centres

Source: Strehmel, P. and D. Ulber 2014 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The occupational profile of Centre Heads in ECEC centres has received little previous attention in research studies in the German-speaking countries. The aim of the current study was to develop a profile of job requirements based on theoretical foundations, compiled as a criteria matrix which could be used to examine the extent to which these can be found in educational programmes, textbooks and manuals, and in conceptual frameworks for initial and continuing professional development. In this way it should be possible to show what exists in terms of well-founded approaches and empirical findings and where there are identifiable gaps.

Procedure: The diverse tasks of a Centre Head were organised according to the seven dimensions of a leadership kaleidoscope developed by Simsa and Patak (2008): (1) mandate/task, (2) self-management, (3) staff leadership, (4) organising cooperation, (5) developing the organisation, (6) assessing relevant conditions and trends, and 7) developing a strategic framework for leadership.

A systematisation of selected material was made, based on qualitative content analyses of texts from curricular frameworks, textbooks and manuals, relevant professional journals and professional development programmes. Materials from different *Länder* were included in the further (non-representative) analyses and the various descriptions of the leadership role and tasks were viewed in terms of the seven dimensions.

Selected findings: A broad range of qualifying courses with a focus on leadership tasks, self-management, staff guidance and team work are available. The programmes themselves focus mostly on leadership competencies; topics such as reflecting on one's own leadership role, ensuring compliance with legislative and structural frameworks, team development and community networking are included in almost all course offers. However, the topics that tend to be missing relate to health aspects (concerning the Centre Heads themselves and the centre team), organisational development (including programme and mission development and needs analyses) and an assessment of the contextual framing and trends.

Implications: Summarising these findings it can be maintained that an abundance of material is available regarding the tasks of heads of childcare and education settings; however, the job profile is rarely clearly defined. 'A research-based discourse on formulating and clarifying the requirements and work processes of heads of childcare and education settings as well as the corresponding competence specifications is only just beginning in Germany' (Strehmel and Ulber 2014, 84). Continuing professional development for lead practitioners needs to include all the dimensions of the leadership kaleidoscope and to be firmly inserted into the time budget. It is primarily the responsibility of the settings providers as employers to provide for such programmes which are also directed towards current needs. Those working on the ground show great interest in relevant CPD course offers; currently they very often do not provide an effective framework for professional discourse between research, practice and policy makers.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The pay of staff in (E)CEC centres varies according to the provider they are employed by. Whereas in the private, mostly non-profit sector it is generally the providers who decide on the level of earnings, in the public sector pay as a rule is linked to collective agreements.

The system of grouping into different pay categories is made according to the job characteristics, such as 'Educator with demanding tasks' (e.g. Educators who work with children with special educational needs), 'Group Leader' or 'Centre Head in a centre with more than 100 places'. Depending on the length of service, increments are added to the basic salary. In most cases, employees also receive a 'Christmas bonus' and staff may be paid extra for living in some cities/locations.

Following the collective bargaining talks in Spring 2017, the gross basic starting salary of a Child-care Assistant 'without demanding tasks' is 2,106.31€ per month, that of an Educator 'with demanding tasks' 2,599.20€. In the highest salary scale for each occupation the gross basic salaries amount to 2,579.59€ and 4,014.09€ respectively. A Centre Head in a centre with more than 180 places starts with a salary of 3,610.85€ per month; in the highest salary scale the respective amount is 5,446.34€ (Infoportal Öffentlicher Dienst 2017a).

Since there are as yet no job characteristics for the comparatively new Bachelor study programmes in Childhood Pedagogy, the pay category used for these degree holders is that of 'other employees' who 'carry out appropriate tasks on the basis of equivalent skills and experience'. This means that the specific salary group applied is usually a matter for negotiation and often takes place according to the specifications for those with (particularly) demanding tasks (Infoportal Öffentlicher Dienst 2017d).

The salaries of (Social) Pedagogues with a *Diplom* qualification are roughly the same as those for Educators with demanding tasks. They range between 2,570€ and 4,091€ per month (PMSG 2017). In general, having a higher education qualification does not have much influence on the salary level of persons working in (E)CEC centres. Persons with degree-level qualifications earn considerably more if working in business or research.

Although the most recent collective bargaining round did result in pay rises, it is not easy to meet the costs of living in one of the larger cities, for example as a single mother, on these basic salaries.

Staff working in the childcare and education field are paid at a significantly lower rate than Primary School Teachers who - in the western *Länder* - are mostly civil servants (Infoportal Öffentlicher Dienst 2017b).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

In 2017, according to the Federal Statistical Office there were 692,643 persons working in (E)CEC centres (*Kindertageseinrichtungen*), including outside-school-hours services. Full-time employees work 38.5 hours/week or more, part-time employees less than 38.5 hours. There are hardly any differences between the public sector and private sector providers. The decision about whether to work full time or part time is made between the provider/employer and employee.

In 2017, a total of 40% of pedagogical staff in (E)CEC centres worked on a full-time basis (Destatis 2017a). Very considerable regional differences were observed in 2016: in the western *Länder* 43.3% worked full time and in the eastern *Länder* (including Berlin) 29.9%, which again ranged from 19% in Berlin to 54.1% in North Rhine-Westphalia (Bock-Famulla et al. 2017).

If all staff are included (not only pedagogical staff but also administrative, housekeeping and technical personnel), then 32.9% of staff in the western *Länder* and 24.0% in the eastern *Länder* were employed on a full-time basis in 2017 (Destatis 2017a).

Table 13

Germany: Pedagogical staff – full-time and part-time employment in (E)CEC centres, 2017*

Number of working hours	Number of employees (excluding administrative personnel)	Proportion in %
38.5 and more	238,552	40.0
32 to under 38.5	113,068	19.0
21 to under 31	150,574	25.2
10 to under 21	73,657	12.3
under 10	20,566	3.4
Total	596,417	100.0

*Destatis 2017a; own calculations

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

In principle, Pedagogical Counsellors (*Fachberatungskräfte*) employed by the individual service providers are available to support staff in the workplace in the broadest sense. On the one hand, Pedagogical Counsellors are part and parcel of the ECEC system in Germany, on the other hand, there are no legal protection measures for these posts, no cross-provider agreements on the task profile and no binding qualification requirements for this coordinating role. However, in professional circles the support role of Pedagogical Counsellors in the mentoring of staff practices, in advising Centre Heads and service providers, in quality development and steering of the field is undisputed (see e.g. Deutscher Verein 2012; Preissing et al 2017). According to the findings of a survey commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, with responses from 367 Pedagogical Counsellors in the field of childcare and education services, the five most frequent work assignments are: quality assurance and development (84%); pedagogical consulting (82%); organisation of professional development activities (57%); advising centre providers (57%); knowledge transfer between research and practice (51%) (BMFSFJ 2017). From their own point of view, Pedagogical Counsellors are themselves currently in need of support, such as: having better chances for collegial exchange, having less childcare and education centres to supervise, having more time for and finding more appropriate task-related CPD courses for their own professional development (BMFSFJ 2017).

8.4 Non-contact time

Non-contact time varies considerably across the *Länder* and may also be regulated by the individual service providers. In Saxony Anhalt and Bavaria, for example, there is no related legislation, in Berlin and Brandenburg non-contact time is calculated as a proportion of hours per child, in Lower Saxony 7.5 non-contact hours are awarded per group per week which the staff have to allocate amongst themselves (Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Brandenburg 2013).

8.5 Staff shortages and staff recruitment

For many years now there have been substantial staff shortages in the German (E)CEC system. The reasons for this are manifold: a major one is the expansion of provision following the introduction of entitlement to a place in a centre-based or home-based setting for 1-year olds in 2013 which has led to an increased demand for staff. Another reason is that a large number of staff – particularly in the eastern *Länder* – are due to retire, for whom there is no adequate replacement available. Dissatisfaction with the working conditions, particularly with the level of pay in the case of the more recent graduates with a Bachelor's degree, means that many only remain in the field for a short time and then go on to seek a job in teaching at the higher education level or research.

In a context of – among other things – an increasing birth rate, immigration, departing employees and the need for improved staffing ratios, a study conducted by the Research Consortium German Youth Institute/Technical University Dortmund (Rauschenbach et al. 2017, 27) came to the conclusion that – depending on a forecasted future scenario – in the years up to 2025, up to

313,000 additional core practitioners will be needed in infant-toddler centres, kindergartens and in outside-school hours settings, 15,000 for posts in family day care and 5,000 posts for full-day schools.

Apart from this, not all staff decide to remain in the field for a longer period of time; however, there is no exact information available on this. It is assumed that roughly 1% of staff working in early childhood settings leave the field for good (FKB 2017, 179).

Staff shortages are particularly marked in the metropolitan areas, whereas in rural areas groups may even have to be closed because of a lack of enrolments.

Responding to the staff shortages was one of the concerns of the grand coalition government. The Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs therefore set up a working group between 2012 and 2014 comprising key stakeholders in the field to engage in developing alternatives to the traditionally recognised qualifications and professionalisation pathways (BMFSFJ 2014) and to develop recommendations for the individual providers, provider organisations *and Länder* (see Section 6). A number of *Länder* are currently instigating innovative ways of recruiting staff for the (E)CEC field. In Bavaria, for example, Primary School Teachers may work as support staff in kindergartens, infant-toddler centres and outside-school-hours provision without an additional qualification. However, in order to gain the status of specialist staff they have to successfully complete an examination for external applicants. As set out in the childcare legislation in Baden-Württemberg (Baden-Württemberg 2017, §7.2), Primary School and Special Needs Teachers can be employed as core practitioners if they have either completed a one-year supervised practicum or a part-time 25-day CPD course. Furthermore, ‘other suitable persons’ may be allowed to join the workforce on an individual basis.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Subjective assessment by Sigrid Ebert⁶

New strategic concepts are required both in terms of education policies and employment policies in order to instigate the necessary thrust to the long overdue process of modernisation in the ECEC field.

The problem of **staff recruitment** is the top item on the agenda of workforce challenges in Germany. The vocational technical colleges/academies for social pedagogy which traditionally provide initial professional studies for Educators have not only been able to maintain their position as a vocational education/training institution but also to expand it. And with a view to the estimated demand for specialist staff (FKB 2017) in (E)CEC centres, the need in future for high level quality in the qualifying routes for the profession – both in terms of breadth and depth – will continue. However, the enormous surge in technical college places is already impeding the policy-related and conceptual implementation of the ‘Competence-oriented Qualification Profile’ for prospective Educators at *Fachschulen/Fachakademien* (resolution adopted at the Conference of Education Ministers in 2011), not least because only a small number of the teaching staff at *Fachschulen/Fachakademien* possess a teaching qualification for the social pedagogy professions.

In order to cope with the staff shortages on a short-term basis at the *Länder* level, so-called Practice-Integrated Qualification Routes are being offered at the *Fachschulen/Fachakademien*, in cooperation with the providers of (E)CEC centres. This is in effect a dual vocational training/education approach which in formal terms cannot be considered equivalent to the qualification route for prospective Educators which is now placed at Level 6 of the German Qualifications

⁶ Formerly: *Fachschulstudiendirektorin*, Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus, Berlin

Framework (DQF). In some *Länder* a shortening of the length of initial professional studies can be observed, and also a drop in standards. Depending on *Länder*-specific legislation, the regulations for admitting so-called ‘career changers’ to the profession and for recognising previous qualifications and/or experience varies considerably. In the case of applicants from abroad, permeability and recognition of relevant professional experience tends to be lacking in transparency and impeded by bureaucratic procedures.

One consequence of the expansion of childcare and education services is that the average number of pedagogical staff in (E)CEC centres has risen to 10.4%. However, depending on the federal state and the provider, there are considerable regional variations in the size of teams and the **qualifications mix** within the teams. Despite the rising demands and expectations in the field, 43% of staff teams overall are mono-professionally organised. The overall (too) low proportion of employees with a higher education qualification (5.3%) is not least a result of the varying *Länder*-specific regulations regarding the staffing of (E)CEC centres (FKB 2017).

It is undisputed in the field that the growing range of tasks in (E)CEC centres demands a more **differentiated qualification profile**. One of the cornerstones of a Quality Development Act, which was agreed in May 2017 by the federal government and the Youth and Family Ministers of the *Länder*, is a federal-level regulation regarding the qualification profile of staff in (E)CEC centres.

Within the framework of such a Quality Development Act it would be desirable to align the certification quality seal ‘State-Recognised’, which regulates entry into the profession for both award-holders of a technical college qualification and degree-holders of study programmes in childhood pedagogy, to a nationally agreed examination format. However, whether these urgently required regulations at the national level will be part of legislative procedures in the new parliamentary term will depend on how viable the agreement between the federal and *Länder* levels is in reality.

The immense personnel requirements in the field of early education underline the growing societal significance that this branch of the person-related services has reached in Germany, not only from an educational perspective but also from a social and child policy point of view (BJK 2008). And although an agreed ‘Common Framework for Childhood Education and Care’ at the ministerial level includes cornerstones for the further development of initial and continuing professional development at *Fachschulen* and higher education institutions, there is still today **no unified, occupation-specific job profile or studies profile** that is open for interconnections between vocational and academic education and which sufficiently acknowledges the ‘utmost importance of workplace-based learning as an integral component of initial professional studies at technical colleges, technical academies and higher education institutions’ (JFMK/KMK 2010). This is because in Germany – at least in the ‘household-related’ service professions – the vocational education system and the higher education system are situated alongside one another in a more or less unconnected way, follow different goals and are based on different frameworks of regulations and responsibilities. The recognition of the early childhood education job profile as an ‘education profession’ (FKB 2017, 19) does not implicate a trend-setting decision for the one or the other ‘learning site’. What is needed is the organisation of (E)CEC centres as ‘educational institutions with an independent profile’ (Ebert 2015; JMK/KMK 2004).

‘Education, upbringing and care’ seen as a holistic mandate of (E)CEC centres comprises a complex, person-related service in the ‘interactive work’ category (Baethge and Baethge-Kinsky 2017). From a sociology of work perspective, meeting the requirements of such work demands comprehensive key competencies which can only then lead to the necessary professional knowledge if they are acquired through a longer-term learning and development process at the performance level of the stakeholders in the context of specific work situations in which other persons, and different time and organisational structures of the workfield are involved (Baethge and Baethge-Kinsky 2017).



Bearing in mind the knowledge-intensive service mandate of the (E)CEC centres and their responsibility for ensuring quality in early childhood education, an upgrading of the workplace-based components of initial professional studies – whether they take place at a *Fachschule/Fachakademie* or at a higher education institution – can in my view only succeed if ‘the workplace as learning site’ (*Lernort Praxis*) is further developed into an ‘education site with an independent profile’ considered to be of equal value to the ‘college as learning site’ (*Lernort Schule*).

In the longer term, this represents a challenge for both systems in terms of rethinking anew the professional careers of early childhood pedagogy specialists.

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GERMANY

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Detlef Diskowski
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Germany – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 462-479.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

In Germany, early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from birth up to school entry age is not part of the education system. Instead, as part of the child and youth welfare system, it comprises not only ECEC settings for 0- to 6-year olds, but also home-based family day care and out-of-school provision. Federalism and subsidiarity are key political and organisational concepts underpinning the legislation, regulation and funding of these different types of setting.

In a system of multi-level governance, responsibility is shared between the federal government, the 16 state-level parliaments and local government bodies. These local authorities work in partnership with a wide range of non-governmental agencies and service providers. In other words, Germany has a strongly decentralised system of early education and childcare. This can lead to considerable variance in funding, provision and regulatory procedures at the local level.

At the **federal level** (*Bund*), the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is the main public body with responsibility and 'stimulatory competence' (*Anregungskompetenz*) for ECEC. At the **regional level** (*Länder*), the 16 Ministries of Youth Affairs (usually located as a unit within the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Ministry of Education) provide a framework for ECEC service provision and financing based on the main principles of the federal-level legislation and regulate certain issues not specified by federal law. At the **local level**, the *Kommunen* (municipalities - districts, towns, boroughs) are in charge of organising and securing funding for early education and childcare provision in co-operation with church affiliated and non-church affiliated provider organisations.

Sources: Diskowski, D. 2006.
Oberhuemer, P. 2014.

General objectives and legislative framework

Book Eight of the Social Code – Services for Children and Young People (*Sozialgesetzbuch, SGB VIII – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe*), commonly referred to as the Child and Youth Services Act 1990 (with amendments), sets out the general objectives. These include supporting children to become responsible members of the community; complementing family upbringing practices; and assisting parents to combine employment and raising children. The overall approach integrates three dimensions: education (*Bildung*), socialisation/enculturation (*Erziehung*) and care (*Betreuung*). According to the law, early childhood provision, which in Germany includes centre-based settings (*Kindertageseinrichtungen*) and home-based settings (*Kindertagespflege*), is to be adapted to the needs of children and their families, both from a pedagogical and an organisational point of view. Parents are to be included in key decision-making processes in the early childhood setting.

The 1990 Child and Youth Services Act and subsequent amendments provide the federal-level, mandatory framework of general principles and requirements. These are adapted by the parliaments in the 16 *Bundesländer* (federal states, or *Länder*) into state-level legislation and implemented by the *Länder* ministries and authorities. A significant amendment was the 1996 federal level legal entitlement to a place in ECEC provision for children from age three up to school entry. A number of *Länder* had already introduced entitlement by that time, sometimes for a wider age-

range. Further amendments to the 1990 Act include the 2005 Day Care Expansion Act (TAG), the 2005 Children and Young People Development Act (KICK), and the 2009 Childcare Funding Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetz*).

Sources: BMFSFJ 2014.
ICEC 2017.
Oberhuemer, P. 2014.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

All children in Germany from age one up to compulsory schooling (1–6) are legally entitled to a place in either a centre-based or a home-based setting. When children from 3 years up to compulsory schooling age were first granted this right through federal-level legislation in 1996, the guaranteed ‘place’ was not defined in terms of the number of hours of daily attendance. In the meantime, ten of the 16 *Länder* have specifications which range from a guaranteed four hours of daily attendance up to 10 hours, the higher levels being in the eastern *Länder**. Six *Länder* still have no specifications, five of them in the western part of the country. Legal entitlement was extended to 1- and 2-year olds in August 2013.

There is no statutory requirement for attending ECEC provision. However, some *Länder* have introduced compulsory language screening tests and in some cases require attendance before starting school (s. *Monitoring*).

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: BMFSFJ 2015.
*Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017, 302.
Oberhuemer, P. 2014.

Types of provision

ECEC centres (*Kindertageseinrichtungen*, commonly abbreviated to *Kitas* – literally ‘day centres for children’) is an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of institutions, *mostly* for children before entry into school (but *also* for school-age children). Alongside the classical types – kindergartens and day nurseries (see below) or *Kinderhorte* for school-age children – many other kinds of provision exist. Some examples are age-integrated centres for 0- to 6-year olds or 0- to 12-year olds, parent-child-groups in varying forms, employer-based childcare, co-operative models between ECEC centres and other neighbourhood services, or foreign-language kindergartens. Many *Kitas* also offer out-of-school provision for school-age children, either integrated with other age-groups or as a separate unit (*Kinderhort*) which may be located in or closely affiliated to a specific school.

Kindergartens (*Kindergärten*) were traditionally the classical and predominant form of centre-based settings admitting children from age 3 up to school entry. In the western federal states, 2-year olds have been increasingly included, and in the former German Democratic Republic kindergartens and day nurseries were integrated into so-called *Kinderkombinationen*. Some kindergartens also provide after-school services for young school-age children, and some have a multi-age grouping format for children from 0-6 years. In 2015, opening and closing times varied between 7:00-7:30 and 16:30-18:00.*

Day nurseries (*Kinderkrippen*), or **infant/toddler centres**, generally admit children from a few months old up to age 3. Differences in levels of provision between the western and eastern parts of Germany are still distinct in this section of early childhood services, although a heavy expansion drive in the western regions has led to an evening out of disparities (see *Participation rates in regulated provision*).

Centres for children and families (known mostly as *Kinder- und Familienzentren* or *Eltern-Kind-Zentren*) providing both education/care services for children and family support for parents are a fairly new form of provision in Germany – one which has been expanding over recent years, particularly in North-Rhine Westphalia. Profiles vary considerably, depending on the area in which the centres are located. However, a key aim across centres is to provide easily accessible services for families and to network with relevant agencies and organisations in the community.

Delayed school-entry provision known as *Schulkindergarten* or *Vorklasse* is available in some *Länder* as a specific type of institutional setting provided for 6 year old children considered not yet ready for school. In some federal states these come under the auspices of the education sector, in others under the child and youth welfare sector.

Home-based ECEC provision (*Kindertagespflege*) is an integral part of the child and youth welfare services for young children and has the same legal status at the federal level as centre-based ECEC provision. Four main forms are available: (1) as a service in the parents' own home; the parents are the employers, and no operational license is required; (2) as a service in the family child carer's house: up to five children are allowed to participate at the same time (regulations differ in some *Bundesländer*); the Childcare Funding Act 2009 (*Kinderförderungsgesetz*) stipulates that if more than five children are enrolled, a pedagogical qualification is necessary. For this type of family day care a local authority license is required which has to be renewed every five years; (3) a service located in third-party rooms: local authorities decide on the room suitability; (4) as a family child care network: In some regions several family child carers may join up to provide a service for more than five children. In some cases there are specific regulations for this kind of service.

Sources: BMFSFJ 2015a.
 *Destatis 2016a.
 Eurydice 2016.
 Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
 Rauschenbach, T. 2008.

Provider structures

Traditionally, provision for children and young people, including early childhood services, were provided by non-governmental organisations (mainly social welfare and church-affiliated organisations). Today they still play a predominant role in the provision of services, particularly in the western *Länder*. This structural responsibility is based on the subsidiarity principle, through which the public sector has the task of supporting the non-governmental agencies and only providing social services if the NGOs are not in a position to do so. In former East Germany, public and employer-based ECEC settings were the norm. However, this situation has changed in the meantime and the number of settings run by NGOs is increasing.

Federal-level statistics for 2016 indicate that roughly two thirds (36,763 of 54,871) of centre-based services (mostly ECEC provision, but also some centres for school-age children) are run by voluntary, non-profit child and youth welfare agencies (*Freie Träger der Jugendhilfe*). These include church-affiliated (32.9%) and non-church affiliated services (31.1%). Approximately 33% of services are currently managed by public local authorities. 2016 federal statistics (see *Table 1*) show that private, for-profit providers continue to have only a very small share of the market (3%).

Table 1

Germany: ECEC provider distribution, centre-based provision, 2016**

Provider type		Distribution in per cent	
Public			33.0
Church affiliated non-profit	Protestant (<i>Diakonie</i>)	15.9	32.9
	Catholic (<i>Caritas</i>)	17.0	

Provider type		Distribution in per cent	
Non-church affiliated non-profit	The <i>Paritätische</i> (non-governmental welfare association)	9.1	31.1
	Worker's Welfare Association	4.5	
	German Red Cross	2.7	
	Other non-profit	14.8	
For-profit			3.0

In 2016, 31% (190,263) of under 3-year olds and 34,7% (803,069) of children aged 3 up to school entry as well as 50% (240,124) of school children under age 14 were enrolled in public sector *Kitas*. By comparison, 69% (424,331) of under 3-year olds and 65,3% (1,509,145) of children aged 3 up to school entry, along with 50% (2240,259) of school children under age 14 were attending private, mainly publicly subsidised ECEC centres.

Sources: *Destatis 2016a; own calculations.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Participation rates in regulated provision

In 2016, a total of 614,600 children under age 3 and 2,312,214 children between age 3 and school entry were enrolled in ECEC centres.

Table 2 shows the overall participation rates across the country broken down into single age-groups for 2015, whereas *Table 3* indicates the distribution patterns across the western and eastern *Länder*. There are still considerable differences in enrolment levels in centre-based settings in the western and eastern *Länder* for children up to age 3, participation rates even out for children aged 3 up to school entry.

Participation rates have risen steadily over the past few years, particularly in the case of children under age 3 where participation rates doubled between 2007 and 2016.

Table 2

Germany: Participation rates in regulated ECEC provision according to age, 2016*

Age group	Centre-based settings in per cent	Home-based settings in per cent
Under 1-year olds	1.8	0.7
1-year olds	28.9	7.2
2-year olds	54.1	6.5
3-year olds	87.8	1.3
4-year olds	95.3	0.4
5-year olds	97.0	0.2

In 2016, more than a third of children up to school entry age (38.6%) attended an ECEC centre for 25 to 35 hours per week. Almost half (48.2%) attended for more than 35 hours and 13.6% for less than 25 hours.*

Table 3

Germany: Participation rates in centre-based and home-based settings in per cent, 2007 - 2016**

Year	Regional distribution	Under 3 years	3 to under 6 years
2007	West	9.8	88.1
	East, including Berlin	40.7	93.6

Year	Regional distribution	Under 3 years	3 to under 6 years
	Germany	15.5	89.0
2010	West	17.3	91.6
	East, including Berlin	46.6	94.9
	Germany	23.0	92.2
2016	West	28.1	93.2
	East, including Berlin	51.8	95.2
	Germany	32.7	93.6

In 2016, more than one third of children from age 3 up to 6 years (37.8%) spent between 25 to 35 hours weekly in ECEC provision, nearly half (49%) spent more than 35 hours and 13.1% less than 25 hours. In the same year, 17.5% of under 3-year olds spent up to 24 hours, 28.4% between 25 and 35 hours and 54.2% more than 35 hours per week in an ECEC setting. For both age groups, the amount of time is markedly higher in the eastern federal states (including Berlin) than in the western part of the country: Of the children who spent over 45 hours in an ECEC centre, the respective proportions were 59.7% and 25.4% for the under 3-year olds and 61.3% and 26.4% for children from age 3 up to 6 years*.

Sources: * Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017, 286ff, 332f.
**Destatis 2016a.

Financing and costs for parents

The funding of ECEC provision is first and foremost a responsibility of the *Länder* and the municipalities and, in general parents pay towards costs. Since funding practices are regulated through regional-level legislation, these differ considerably across the country.

The amount of overall costs borne by parents also varies between the federal states. Whereas parental contributions account for 24.7% of the total financing of ECEC services in the eastern federal state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in 2012, in the city state of Berlin they account for only 7.3% of overall funding. Parental fees are mostly income-related. However, fees can be highly variable and range between no costs at all for parents (fee exemptions) to fees of more than 200€ monthly.

The Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs and to some extent the Federal Ministry of Education and Research – in their ‘stimulatory role’ – may provide incentives for reform initiatives of national priority. Up to 2014, federal level funding totalling 5.4 billion euros was made available for the investment in and running costs of provision for the under-threes.

The allocation of funding for ECEC services at the regional level (*Länder*) has risen steadily over recent years, although variations between the federal states are considerable. Whereas in 2011, Berlin net expenditure was 5,143€ for each child under six years of age, per capita funding in Schleswig-Holstein amounted to only 3,128€.

In recent years, 6 of the 16 *Länder* have abolished parental fees, either for the year before entering school (Hesse, Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia), or for at least three years (Berlin, Hamburg, Rheinland-Palatinate). In most cases the number of guaranteed hours of attendance is specified, ranging from 4 to 10 hours daily*.

Sources: *Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017, 303.
EPIC 2016.
Oberhuemer, P. 2014.

Staff-child ratios

On the basis of federal statistics, overall staffing ratios/formulas can be calculated by looking at the relationship between the total number of hours of employment of a full-time practitioner and the number of children in full-day provision¹. However, since working hours also include 'non-contact time', i.e. time spent on activities other than working directly with children, it is not possible to calculate an exact staff-child ratio or average group size in terms of everyday pedagogical work. An additional problem is the variety of centre-based formats (see *Types of provision*).

Variations in staffing formulas across the federal states are considerable. In 2016, in infant-toddler centres for the under-threes these ranged from a median of 3 children/educator in Baden Wuerttemberg up to 6.5 children/educator in Saxony – averaging at 4.3 for Germany overall. In kindergartens, the children/educator ratios ranged from 7.2 in Baden Wuerttemberg to 13.7 in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, averaging at 9.2 for Germany overall. These calculated averages regarding staff-child ratios are markedly higher in the eastern federal states (including Berlin) for both kinds of provision than in the western federal states. For infant-toddler centres the respective ratios were 6.0 (East) and 3.6 (West); for kindergartens 12.2 (East) and 8.5 (West).

Source: Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017, 308.

Curricular frameworks

In 2004, a *Common Framework for Early Education* was agreed upon and adopted by the 16 Ministers for Youth Affairs and the 16 Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. Although this framework is not mandatory, it reflects features of the curricular frameworks introduced by all 16 *Länder* between 2003 and 2008. Basic principles include a holistic approach towards learning; involving children in decision-making processes; intercultural pedagogy; gender-sensitive practices; specific support for at-risk children and children with (potential) disabilities; support for gifted children. Areas of learning include: language, literacy and communication; personal and social development, ethics and religion; mathematics, science and (information) technology; arts education/media: physical development, movement, health; nature and culture. These areas of learning are not understood as separate "subjects", but as part of a cross-disciplinary and integrated approach. A strong emphasis is placed on improving the transition from early childhood provision to school. A significant challenge for the future is to strengthen co-operative strategies at all levels: the steering level; the local and institutional level; and the curricular level.

Most of the state-level curricular documents are based on a view of children as agents of their own learning in a co-constructive process with adults and other children, and all are committed to the holistic approach of encompassing education, care and socialising processes. They do not set out 'learning goals to achieve', but are seen as a description of the main areas of early childhood education. The main differences are in the length, and whether or not the curriculum is mandatory. Whereas most are considered to be 'guidelines', in Bavaria, Berlin, Saxony and Thüringen early childhood centres are obliged by law to include the main principles, aims and areas of learning in their own centre-specific programmes, which are individually geared to local needs.

Whereas all curricular frameworks cover the age group 0-6, in some *Länder* (e.g. Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Hesse, Thuringia) they have been extended to cover the age group 0-10, and in some (e.g. Hamburg, Rheinland-Palatinate) the age group up to 14 years.

¹ In order to achieve comparability between the data in the 16 *Länder*, the 2015 State-by-State Report by the Bertelsmann Foundation (Bock-Famulla et al. 2017, 309) has calculated "Full-day place equivalents" and "Full-time employment equivalents". This so-called "staff resources formula" can be used to estimate the number of children in full-day attendance per full-time member of staff.

Sources: *Deutscher Bildungsserver 2016a.
Jugendminister- und Kultusministerkonferenz 2004.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
OECD 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The inclusion of children with special educational needs, developmental risks and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream ECEC settings has progressed steadily since the 1970s. In 2016, from an overall total of 54.871 *Kitas* in Germany, 19.209 (36%) were settings which worked with an integrative approach*, whereas the number of segregated *Kitas* specifically catering for children with SEND decreased from 691 in 1998 to 252 in 2016. In 2014, 76% of children up to school age with a disability or imminent disability attended so-called integrative ECEC centres, 7.5% a special *Kita*, and 16.5% a special unit attached to primary schools**. The distribution of these three institutional formats varies from federal state to federal state. According to the 2014 German Education Report, 3.6% of all 5-year old children with at least one specifically diagnosed disability are in receipt of a so-called 'integration allowance' (*Eingliederungshilfe*), aiming to improve their participation chances in society. The 16 regional (*Länder*) governments have all passed legislation regarding provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The UN (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified in Germany in 2009, has given the discussion about inclusive education fresh impetus at the policy level. Pedagogical approaches in early childhood provision are increasingly located within a paradigm which emphasises recognition of diversity of all kinds, heterogeneity and inclusion.

A number of federally funded and state funded projects are currently focusing on the support of children with special educational needs. As from 2016, for example, ECEC centres with a large number of children needing language support are being granted extra resources within the context of the 'Language *Kitas*' (*Sprach-Kitas*) programme. The *KitaPlus* initiative, started in 2016, aims to assist parents who have support needs outside the regular opening hours of ECEC provision.

Children with a background of migration

Table 4 shows the distribution of children with a migration background (defined as having at least one parent of foreign origin) and those without a background of migration in early childhood provision.

Table 4

Germany: Participation rates of children with and without a migration background in early childhood provision according to age-groups and region*, 2016**

Region	Under 3-year olds			3 years up to school entry		
	Total	Percentage of these		Total	Percentage of these	
		with migration background	without migration background		with migration background	without migration background
Western <i>Länder</i>	413,929	25.4	74.6	1.841,405	33.7	66.3
Eastern <i>Länder</i>	200,671	10.4	89.6	477,165	14.2	85.8
Germany	614,600	20.5	79.5	2,318,570	29.7	70.3

Another specific challenge for ECEC centres since 2014 is the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 745,545 new applications for asylum were lodged in 2016, and in January 2017, a further 17,964 followed. However, the number of asylum seekers is considerably higher. The largest groups of refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2016, almost one third (30.3%) of all asylum seekers were children under 16 years, 10.8% of whom were under 4 years old and 3.8% between 4 and 6 years, who are particularly likely to benefit from attendance at an ECEC centre.

Across the country there are considerable regional differences regarding the number of asylum seekers and also the procedures used to process applications. In principle, the entitlement to a place in ECEC provision also applies to the children of asylum seekers. According to the Benefits for Asylum Seekers Act, enrolment in ECEC provision is free of charge. However, the local authorities are faced with the problem of providing enough places and also support such as language courses or specific measures in early childhood settings, without knowing in advance how many children are likely to need these. There is also a growing need for specifically relevant professional development courses for early years educators.

In 2016, 10.5% of the population had a non-German background, of whom 43.9% came from other EU countries. In the age-group of the under-fives, these shares were 9.7% and 37.7% respectively ***.

Sources: Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2014; 2016.
BAMF 2016, 2017.
**Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017, 292f.
*Destatis 2016a.
DJI 2016.
EPIC 2016.
***Eurostat 2017g.
StMAS 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

In Germany, there is no national system of inspection for ECEC provision. Any kind of external monitoring is carried out at the regional and municipal level. In general, specific control measures in terms of compliance with state-level regulations are low key and based mainly on agreements with the provider organisations. It is unusual for external evaluations or written reports to be required on an annual basis. The main responsibility for monitoring quality lies with the providers, i.e. mainly with non-governmental organisations, which have developed their own systems of quality management and pedagogical counselling. At the regional/local level there are also a number of guidelines both for external and self-evaluation procedures. External evaluations focus e.g. on the overall quality of the centres, on safety and hygiene, the staff/child ratio and on equipment and materials. Check-lists, observations and questionnaires are all used as evaluation instruments. Self-evaluations tend to focus also on the overall quality, teamwork, co-operating with parents, or the interpretation of the regional-level curricular framework. Apart from the city-state of Berlin, there are no recommendations as to how often evaluations should take place. Service providers decide whether the results of external and internal evaluations are to be made public.

Berlin has taken the most far-reaching steps in terms of monitoring quality on the basis of the Berlin Early Childhood Curriculum, the implementation of which is combined with prescribed evaluation procedures. An agreement with the service providers requires specific self-assessment and (every five years) external assessment procedures. A specialist institute – the Berlin Institute for Quality Improvement in Early Childhood Provision (BEKI - <http://www.beki-qualitaet.de/>) – is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the overall assessment procedures. The evaluation findings contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of early childhood. ECEC providers

finance the evaluation, are informed about the results and agreed measures, and are required to adapt their continuing professional development programmes accordingly.

Since 2008, the Bertelsmann Foundation has conducted an independent and detailed annual review of major structural characteristics of all 16 *Länder* in the German ECEC system, with an additional focus on key quality-related conditions. Major sources are federal-level statistics and a structured report provided by each of the federal states.

Monitoring children's progress and achievements is a fairly recent development in Germany, the main motivation being concerns (against the background of OECD-PISA study findings) about early language development in general and the language acquisition of children with a home language other than German in particular. Observations, tests or portfolios are some of the instruments used. In some *Länder*, specific instruments for language assessment are not only recommended but made compulsory, such as the Seldak instrument for 4- and 5-year olds in Bavaria.

A number of contextual factors have led to increased funding for research on topics related to early childhood education and care. In terms of government funded research, major projects in recent years have focused on the transition to primary school, children's language development and the professional development of early childhood educators. The increasing number of Bachelor and Master-level courses specialising in (early) childhood pedagogy (see *Germany: ECEC workforce profile*) has also helped to strengthen the research profile.

In 2009, the first *National Study on Education, Care and Upbringing in Early Childhood (NUBBEK)* was initiated. Data was gathered from a sample of approximately 2000 2- and 4-year olds across the country in centre-based and home-based settings and also in the home learning environment. Approximately one quarter of the children came from families with a Turkish or Russian background. The NUBBEK study assessed the quality of 403 centre-based settings and 164 family day care settings with widely-used rating scales. According to the instruments used, it was found that more than 80% of settings were judged to be 'mediocre' in terms of educational process quality. However, more recent research* critiques the validity of one of these scales. The NUBBEK study concluded suggesting that a systematic and ongoing monitoring of quality is necessary in order to provide service agencies, local authorities and *Länder* ministries with the information necessary for effective steering.

Federally funded research has focused in recent years mostly on the transition to school, but also on children's language development. One example is the BiKS project at the University of Bamberg focusing on 'Learning processes, competency development and selection processes at pre- and primary school age'. A number of publicly funded research projects are also looking at the professional development of early years staff. One example is the AKIPÄD project on the 'Academic studies for early childhood staff – between workplace relevance and professionalisation' at the University of Duisburg-Essen, as well as several university-based research projects within a nationwide professional development initiative known as WiFF (see *Germany: ECEC Workforce Profile*).

Over the past decade or so, research in the early childhood field has thus been experiencing a distinct surge. Alongside long-established research institutes such as the German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut, DJI*) or the State Institute of Early Childhood Research in Munich (*Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik, IFP*), a number of new institutes have been founded with a strong research focus on early childhood, such as the 'Competence Centre for Early Childhood in Lower Saxony' (*Kompetenzzentrum Frühe Kindheit Niedersachsen*), established in 2007 at the University of Hildesheim.

Sources: Bock-Famulla, K., E. Strunz und A. Löhle 2017.
Deutscher Bildungsserver 2016b.
*Mayer, D. and K. Beckh 2016.
OECD 2015.
Prott, R. and C. Preissing 2006.
Tietze, W. et al. 2013.

Parental leave

Fully paid **maternity leave** (*Mutterschutz*) begins six weeks before the birth date and continues for up to eight weeks afterwards. These eight weeks are compulsory for all mothers.

There is no statutory entitlement to **paternity leave** (*Vaterschaftsurlaub*).

Parental leave (*Elternzeit*) is regulated through legislation at the federal level and can be taken up to the child's third birthday. This is an individual entitlement. 24 months can be taken up to the child's eighth birthday.

Parents who make use of parental leave either on a full-time or part-time basis can choose between two kinds of leave benefit, or they can combine both. These are (a) the Basic Parental Benefit (*Basiselterngeld*) and (b) the Bonus Parental Benefit (*ElterngeldPlus*). *Basiselterngeld* is paid for 12 months – since 2007 for 14 months if both parents take at least two months of leave. Parents with a child born after 1st July 2015 can choose between *Basiselterngeld* and *ElterngeldPlus*.

Basiselterngeld: Payment amounts to a minimum of 300€ per month and a maximum of 1.800€. Parents with previous monthly net earnings between 1,000€ and 1,240€ receive 67%, those with earnings over 1,240 receive 65% and those who earned less than 1,000€ receive a higher proportion. Parents may work up to 30 hours part time. *ElterngeldPlus* is paid for 24 (+four) months up to the child's second birthday as partial compensation for the loss of salary through working part time. Four additional months (*Partnerschaftsbonus*) are paid for at least four subsequent months if both parents work part time for between 25 and 30 hours per week. Payments are staggered according to income, as with the *Basiselterngeld* (65% or 67% of previous net earnings).

Both parents may take parental leave at the same time and both can take up to two leave intervals. During the fourth quarter of 2016, 77.3% of entitled parents made use of the *Basiselterngeld* whereas only 22.6% made use of the *ElterngeldPlus* benefit.

The parental leave reform introduced in 2007 aimed to increase the proportion of fathers taking leave. By 2014, 34.2% of entitled fathers were receiving leave payments (compared with 3.5% in 2006). However, on average fathers made use of only 3.1 months of leave compared with an average of 11.5 months in the case of mothers. This means that the reform initiated a rise in the number of fathers taking leave, but 78.9% failed to take more than the two individual months and only 6.1% made use of eleven to 12 months of leave.

In 2016, 24.9% of mothers with children aged 3 to 6 years made use of parental leave, but only 1.5% of fathers. Parents with children under 3 years of age make considerably more use of parental leave entitlements: 42.4% of mothers and 2.4% of fathers.*

Sources: *Destatis 2017.
EPIC 2016.
Reimer, T., D. Erler, and S. Blum 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1802	Establishment of the first charitable initiative for the custodial care of young children (<i>Kleinkindbewahranstalt</i>)
1840	Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) founds the first 'kindergarten' with a comprehensive approach towards early education and care.
1848	Public discussion of Froebel's proposal to integrate the kindergarten into the general education system
1851	Kindergartens are banned by the Prussian government until 1860
1922	Social welfare legislation coming into force following the 1920 conference of ministers (<i>Reichsschulkonferenz</i>) positions kindergartens within the child and youth welfare system and codifies the <i>subsidiarity principle</i> . This principle establishes the main rights and responsi-

	bilities of individuals, voluntary bodies and the State.
1933	With the onset of the Nazi regime, progressive education (<i>Reformpädagogik</i>) approaches in kindergartens come to an abrupt halt. Kindergartens are gradually appropriated by the National Socialist Welfare Organisation and come under the influence of Nazi ideology.
Post WWII – 1990	In the socialist and centralised <i>German Democratic Republic (GDR)</i> the participation of women in the labour market is a declared political goal, supported by the development of a system of full-day kindergartens and day nurseries, which both had an explicitly educational mission. The decentralised <i>Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)</i> follows a distinctly different policy agenda. Expansion is slow and remains so until the early 1970s. Provision levels are much lower than in the GDR and kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds are open on a predominantly part-time basis.
1990	Following the unification of the two German states, a new federal-level law, the Child and Youth Services Act, comes into force (1990 in the eastern and 1991 in the western <i>Länder</i>).
1996	Legal entitlement to a kindergarten place for 3- to 6-year olds is introduced, leading to a steady expansion of kindergartens. The level of services for the under-threes improves only minimally during this time. By 2002, the overall level of provision has risen to 9 per cent, but differences between the eastern <i>Länder</i> (37 per cent) and the western <i>Länder</i> (3 per cent) remain significant.
2002	Early childhood education starts to move up the policy agenda. Two strategies in particular mark a significant change of direction in the history of early education and care in Germany. One is the decision to introduce official curricular guidelines for the early childhood sector, which are successively issued between 2003 and 2008 in all 16 <i>Länder</i> ; the other is a government commitment to expand places for the under-threes to provide for 35 per cent of this age group by 2013 and guaranteeing entitlement to a place for children aged 1 and 2 years.
2004	Inter-ministerial (Youth Affairs/Education) agreement at federal level on a (non-mandatory) <i>Common Framework for Early Education</i> .
2008-2013	An unprecedented funding boost from the federal government enables the responsible regional governments and municipalities to initiate rapid expansion drives at the local level. As a result of these concerted efforts, the number of places, primarily for under-threes, in subsidised centre-based and home-based settings rises from 286,905 in 2006 to a total of 695,239 in 2015, representing an unparalleled increase within only nine years.
2013	Implementation (in August) of the entitlement to a place in centre-based or home-based ECEC provision for 1- and 2-year olds.
2013/14	In 2012 (before entitlement), 472,176 3-year olds were attending centre-based settings, whereas by 2015 (after entitlement) this number had increased to 593,639 – a rise of 25%. The number of under-threes in home-based settings rose from 87,982 in 2012 to 101,600 in 2015, an increase of around 15%.*

Sources: BMFSFJ 2013.
 * Destatis 2015.
 Ebert, S. 2006.
 Heiland, H. 1993.
 Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
 Rauschenbach, T. 2014.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Germany

Country expert assessment by Detlef Diskowski²

Policy debates in Germany in recent years have centred on the expansion of ECEC provision – that is, on providing *more* places. This focus has currently been changing to one of agreeing on common standards, with the aim of improving the quality of learning processes and environments, thus making them *better*. However, the system of ECEC in Germany is faced with a number of challenges, and if the attempts to meet these remain at the level of *more* and *better*, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient funding resources available to achieve this. Moreover, such an approach could actually fail to address the needs of children and families in an appropriate way. In order to build up a sustainable system of early childhood education and care it is necessary to foreground the development of *other* and more customised forms of provision. If we wish to develop a vision for the future which is not only based on an XXL* version of the present, the current quality debates need to focus more on the *how*, thus overcoming the structurally conservative way of thinking predominantly in terms of *more* and *better*. Analysing current challenges at different levels of the system in terms of three main principles could provide an alternative: differentiation, needs-based focus and flexibility. Three examples follow.

1. Differentiation: Rethinking existing time structures

Mainstream centre-based settings for young children are widespread in Germany, and all children up to school age have an entitlement to a place in such a setting or in regulated home-based provision. However, utilisation of these settings varies considerably between East and West, between metropolitan and rural areas, and also according to the (educational) resources of families. It seems that very real problems of access exist which may be related to the still insufficient level of provision, but which also could suggest that standard formats do not always meet the diverse living conditions and needs of families. Existing disparities between parental wishes and current options are not only a matter of extending the opening hours of mainstream provision. The issue is not one of longer but of needs-related opening times.** The often rigid time structures in centre-based provision often fail to take into account the actual working hours of parents and thus their lived reality. The attempts to try and bundle different sets of needs in centralised provision is at most a solution for metropolitan areas. The need for thinking beyond such centralised options in terms of an inner differentiation is likely to increase, so that complementary home-based provision and organised neighbourhood networks can support small ECEC centres in meeting the varying needs of families. This is not only valid for the time structures of provision.

2. Needs-based focus: Reconsidering options for families with very young or school-age children

It is time to reconsider the general validity of the current ECEC paradigm which tends to interpret its task of *complementing* family practices with a pattern of partially *replacing* the family timewise. Not all parents want to leave their child somewhere when they are looking for support and social contacts. Seeing the role of ECEC settings predominantly as a means of contributing towards balancing family life and employment can lead to a narrowing perspective which interprets the children's entitlement to ECEC as something which only takes place without their parents. A broadening of this perspective through the involvement of parents who do not work full-time or have available time, especially those with very young children (and particularly in the case of children/parents with problematic experiences of separation), can lead to a meaningful enhancement of the work in ECEC centres in the way of family education and family support. Moreover, this engagement by the centre staff can have a two-fold influence: both on the children and on the parents.

² Up to 2016, head of unit for childcare, family support measures and child and youth law in the Brandenburg Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport.

Through the recent policy focus on early childhood, provision for school-age children has tended to be neglected. Innovative options are also needed for these children, options which take into account their needs to develop rules and common values in the peer group, to experiment with self-efficacy, or to disengage from adults who were important in their earlier childhood. Neither the extension of school-like activities into the afternoon nor the continuation of a kindergarten pedagogy framework into later childhood can meet these needs effectively.

A needs-based focus for children and parents means taking perceived needs as a starting point and developing new approaches, and not merely relying on existing forms of provision.

3. Flexibility: Current challenges highlight new pressures

The fact that the children and families living in Germany are in many ways diverse has been recently further accentuated by the arrival in ECEC settings of refugee families with experiences of displacement. Differentiation, individualisation, inclusion... are not new topics, but they are increasing in visibility and urgency. The much-demonstrated ability of early childhood and school-age provision in Germany to signalise that new arrivals are welcome, to engage with the unknown, to cook and eat together instead of holding formal parents' evenings, has been remarkable and it demonstrates a readiness to question the familiar in the light of new circumstances. Strengthening this readiness and trust in one's own competences needs supporting if the challenges relating to the needs of children and families are to be met in appropriate ways.

Sources: **Bien, W., T. Rauschenbach und B. Riedel 2006.
*Diskowski, D. 2013.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Germany totalled over 82 million (82,175,684).

Between 1995 (81,538,603) and 2005 (82,500,849) there was a slight rise in the overall population, whereas up to 2011, numbers sank slightly (81,751,602) and have since then increased.

Children under age six

In 2016, 2.7% of the total population were children under 3 years of age, and 5.3% were children under age 6. These relative shares are significantly below the EU average (*Table 6*), as has been the case for the past 20 years.

Table 5

Germany: Children under 6 years of age, 2016*

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	741,721
1 year olds	740,078
2 year olds	715,608
Under age 3 total	2,200,407
3 year olds	713,757
4 year olds	699,382
5 year olds	716,863
3- to 6-year olds total	2,130,002
0- to 6-year olds total	4,330,409

Table 6

Germany: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ³	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	2.9	3.3	2.6	3.1	2.7	3.0
3 to under 6 years	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.1	2.6	3.1
0 to under 6 years	6.3	6.9	5.4	6.2	5.3	6.2

*Own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: *Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age six

In 2015, the greater majority of households with children under the age of 6 were couple households. Lone parent households accounted for 6.3% of the total. Most of these are single mother households; the relative share of single father households is very low at 0.3%.

Table 7

Germany: Households with children under age 6 in Germany, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
Single and couple households	6,390,200	
Couple households	5,454,600	85.3
Single households, total	530,800	8.3
Single households, women	404,800	6.3
Single households, men	385,600	6.0

*Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age six

In 2015, 78.0% of men in Germany (15 to 64 years) and 74.0% of women were employed. Almost all (91.4%) men with children under age 6 were employed whereas the portion of women with children under age 6 is considerably lower at 62.1%.

This positions Germany somewhat above the EU28 average both for mothers and fathers. Since 2005, maternal employment has increased significantly, no doubt partly due to the expansion of under-threes provision and possibly also because of the introduction of the parental benefit.

Table 8

Germany: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Germany	2005	46.7	86.9

³ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2010	54.6	90.0
	2015	62.1	91.4
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Source: Eurostat 2017b, 2017c.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁴

In 2015, 17.4% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. This positions Germany below the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The relative share of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 20.0%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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⁴ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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GREECE

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Elsie Doliopoulou

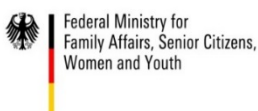
Professor, Early Childhood Education,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The author would like to thank Charitomeni Rizou and Vana Siouri
for their participation in this study.

Citation suggestion:

Doliopoulou, E. 2018. "Greece – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 480-505.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

A split-sector system

The Greek system of early childhood education and care for 0- to 6-year olds is a split-sector system with partly parallel responsibilities for children aged 4–6 years. Both public and private kindergartens (*nipiagogeia*) for 4- to 6-year olds are part of the education sector and come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (*Ypourgeío Paideías, Érevnaskai Thriskevμάτων*, MERR), whereas municipal and private day nurseries for 0- to 3-year olds (*vrefiki stathmi*) and childcare centres either for children aged 3 months to 6 years (*vrefonipiaki stathmi*) or for 2½- to 6-year olds (*pediki stathmi*), formerly under the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, now fall under the control of local government authorities. Indirectly, the Ministry of the Interior (*Ypourgeío Esoterikónkai Dioikitikís Anasynkrótisis*) is responsible for public childcare provision and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (*Ypourgeío Apaschólisis*) for private provision.

2. Who belongs to the ECEC workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The early childhood education and care system in Greece (kindergartens, day nurseries and childcare centres) employs three main staff categories: (1) Kindergarten Teacher (*nipiagogos*); (2) Nursery and Childcare Teacher (*vrefonipiagogos/vrefonipiokomos*); and (3) Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant (*voithos vrefonipiagogou*).

Table 1 gives an overview of the staff in regular daily contact with children in ECEC centre-based provision, both in the education sector and the childcare sector. It also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 following Table 1).

Table 1
Greece: Regular contact staff in ECEC centre-based settings

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>Nipiagogos</i> Kindergarten Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> Kindergarten (public, private) 4–6 years May also work in public and private childcare centres with 4- to 6-year olds.	Core practitioner with group responsibility Kindergarten principal <i>Proistamenos</i>	4–6 years	University degree Early Childhood Education (4 years) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6

¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Vrefonipiagogos/ Vrefonipiokomos Nursery and Childcare Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedag- ogy Professional	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Day nursery 6 months–2 years <i>Pedikos stathmos</i> Childcare centre 2½–6 years	Core practition- er with group responsibility Centre head <i>Diefthintis</i>	0–6 years	University of Applied Science degree (4 years) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
Voithos vrefonipiagogou Nurse- ry and Childcare Teach- ing Assistant	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> Day nursery 6 months–2 years <i>Pedikos stathmos</i> Childcare centre 2½–6 years May work as a self- employed family day carer (also in: mater- nity clinics, summer camps, family plan- ning centres)	Qualified co- worker	0–6 years	Certificate / Diploma as nursery / childcare teach- ing assistant (3 years) ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 4/5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3/4

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

In public and private kindergartens, the workforce comprises mainly fully qualified **Kindergarten Teachers** who are responsible for a group of children or who, based on certain criteria and subject to an evaluation process (Law 4327/2015), may be appointed to the post of kindergarten principal. It should be noted that principals have a dual role. They are not only teachers with full responsibility for a class, but also managers and supervisors of the kindergarten unit with considerable administrative duties. The qualifying route for a Kindergarten Teacher is eight semesters (four years) of study at one of the nine University Departments of Early Childhood Education in Greece, earning at least 240 credits (ECTS points). On completion of the degree, Kindergarten Teachers may work in public and private kindergartens and in municipal and private childcare centres with children aged 4 to 6 years old. They are also authorised to work in numerous other fields (see *section 3.3*).

The workforce in private and public day nurseries and childcare centres for children aged 2 months to 6 years comprises **Nursery and Childcare Teachers** as core practitioners and Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants in an auxiliary role. The nursery and childcare centres may also employ some or all of the following: a cook; an assistant cook; cleaning staff; a social worker who contributes to the prevention or addressing of specific child- and family-related

² n/a = not applicable

problems within the centre; a contracted paediatrician; a psychologist, if available, to offer counselling services in matters of psychological support of children and parents in close collaboration with the paediatrician, social worker and educational staff; a driver who undertakes the safe transport of the children to and from the centre; and an administrative employee responsible for the administrative and financial duties (Ministerial Decision 16065/2002). A few nursery and childcare centres may also employ childminders (*pedokomi*) or nurses (*nosokomes*), but this is unusual. The qualification requirement for a Nursery and Childcare Teacher is a four-year degree completed at a Technological Educational Institute (University of Applied Sciences). Their professional studies are structured according to the ECTS-points system and comprise course work corresponding to 240 credits.

The **Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants** work in municipal and private nursery and childcare centres as qualified auxiliary staff. They have to complete a course at either a public or private Vocational Training Institution (*Institouto Epagelmatikis Katartisis*) or Vocational High School (*Epagelmatiko Lykeio* - 10th, 11th and 12th grade), and are authorised to work with children aged 2 months to 6 years. Their qualification does not correspond to the ECTS-points credit system.

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

The Hellenic Statistical Authority publishes annual statistics regarding the workforce in public and private kindergartens in Greece. However, no data are published on the workforce in day nurseries and childcare centres.

The educational workforce of public kindergartens (which account for 89.5% of all kindergartens nationwide) comprises mainly women (98.6%). Of the entire kindergarten workforce, 55.7% are group/class teachers and 41.5% kindergarten principals. Only 1.4% of the total kindergarten workforce is male and only 1.7% of the kindergarten principals.

Table 2 gives details of the structural composition of the workforce in ECEC provision. In a number of cases, no national data are available.

Table 2

Greece: Structural composition of workforce in ECEC provision

Staff categories	Comments
Education sector (kindergartens)	
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2014: All core practitioners have a specialist degree in early childhood education. Nearly half also have either a degree in another field (23.5%), or a Master's (20.5%) or doctoral degree (1.8%) in early childhood education.
Staff with non-specialist higher education degree	2014: 23.5% hold an <i>additional</i> , non-specialist higher education degree
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification	No national data available
Staff with no formal initial professional studies	No national data available
Specialist support staff (contracted social workers, psychologists)	No national data available
Male staff	2014: 1.4% (teachers); 1.7% (principals)
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

Staff categories	Comments
Childcare sector (nursery and childcare centres)	
Staff with specialist higher education degree	All core practitioners have a specialist degree in early childhood education and care.
Staff with non-specialist higher education degree	No national data available
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	No national data available
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	No national data available
Staff with non-specialist qualification	2011: 12% (internal transfers of staff from municipal social services)
Staff without formal initial professional studies	No national data available
Specialist support staff (contracted social workers, paediatricians, psychologists)	No national data available
Male staff	No national data available
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data.

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority 2013 (Data from end of school year 2013/14)

Approximately half the Kindergarten Teachers (54.2%) employed in public kindergartens have followed some kind of additional studies in Greece or abroad, while the remainder (45.8%) have either a second University degree in some other field or a Master's or doctoral degree. Of those who have undergone further training, 49.6% completed this in Greece. Of those educators who hold an additional degree, near one quarter (23.5%) hold a Master's degree in some other field; 20.5% have a second University degree and 1.8% have a doctoral degree (*Table 3*).

Table 3

Greece: Kindergarten Teachers with additional graduate or other advanced studies, 2014

School Year 2013-2014 (Data from end of school year)	Total number of Kindergarten Teachers	Graduate studies			Degrees held		
		In Greece		Abroad	Degree from other higher education institutions	Master's Degree	Doctoral degree
		Marasleio Primary Education School	Primary Education Teachers' Training School				
General Total	3,708	1,839	82	89	761	872	65
		49.6%	2.2%	2.4%	20.5%	23.5%	1.8%

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority 2013

There are no auxiliary staff in public kindergartens who work in the group/class on a daily basis. However, there are cleaning staff and those who cook and serve food and these are mostly women (87.3%). Of these, 31% are employed full-time and 68.9% part-time. Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants are not employed in public kindergartens (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2013). No data are compiled at the national level on specialised auxiliary staff (e.g. social workers, psychologists), nor on educators who originate from minority groups.

According to a nationwide study on day nurseries and childcare centres conducted by the Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators, in 2002–2004 the permanent workforce of municipal childcare centres stands at 68%, and all types of contractual or temporary employees at 32%. According to the same study, 48% of childcare centres operate with shortages of educators and auxiliary staff and 12% of these with non-specialist staff transferred from centralised services of municipalities (Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators 2011).

3. Initial professional studies

3.1 Initial qualifying routes of main contact staff

Tables 4, 5 and 6 summarise the main features of the initial professional study routes for the three main ECEC staff categories working in kindergartens, day nurseries and childcare centres.

In 2014, the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance presented a Report on Correspondence of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). According to the report, the degrees obtained by Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers are classified at Level 6 EQF and those of nursery and childcare assistant teachers at Level 5 or Level 4, depending on whether they have a qualification from a Vocational Training Institution or a Vocational High School.

In terms of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED) (UNESCO 2011), both Kindergarten Teachers and Nursery and Childcare Teachers have a qualification placed at Level 6, whereas the education of the Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants is placed either at ISCED 4 (post-secondary qualification route in a Vocational Training Institution) or ISCED 3 (Vocational High School route).

Table 4

Greece: Kindergarten Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Nipiagogos</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p><i>Since 1984</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate (<i>lykeio</i>); national entry examination (<i>genikes exetaseis</i>) for university candidates (General Pan-Hellenic Exam)</p> <p>Professional studies: Four years University, Department of Early Childhood Education, specialising in pre-primary education</p> <p>Award: University degree in Early Childhood Education (there are no Bachelor awards in Greece)</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (4–6 years)</p>

Table 5

Greece: Nursery and Childcare Teacher

Job title in Greek: <i>Vrefonipiagogos/Vrefonipiokomos</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p><i>Since 2001:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: Higher school leaving certificate (<i>lykeio</i>) or vocational certificate; entry examination set by the individual Higher Technological Education Institute (University of Applied Sciences)</p> <p>Professional studies: Four years Technological Educational Institute (TEI) specialising in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Degree/University of Applied Sciences (there are no Bachelor awards in Greece)</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Day nursery (0–3 years) or Childcare centre (0–6 years or 2½–6 years)</p>

Table 6

Greece: Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant

Job title in Greek: Voithos Vrefonipiagogou
<p>Entry requirements: Completion of first year of Lyceum (high school)</p> <p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p>Professional studies: Three years Vocational High School, starting in second year of high school and specialising in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Certificate as Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 3</p> <p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years Vocational Training Institution, following successful completion of the Certificate course above. Specialisation in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Diploma as Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Day nursery (0–3 years) or Childcare centre (0–6 years or 2½–6 years)</p>

Kindergarten Teachers (*Nipiagogos*)

The qualification requirement for professional work in both public and private kindergartens is a degree from one of the nine University Departments of Early Childhood Education in Greece³. To be accepted for a degree course, students must have completed their high school diploma and have gained the required number of points in the General Pan-Hellenic Examinations (held annually in June). Each student is required to complete eight semesters (four years) of coursework and to accumulate 240 credits (ECTS points). A full academic year corresponds to 60 credits and a full semester to 30 credits. The number of ECTS points represents the workload required by the student for the completion of the course, laboratory, tutorials, practical training, etc. The University degree is placed at Level 6 of the EQF and Level 6 of ISCED.

Each university department develops its own curriculum. This includes mandatory, elective mandatory and elective courses. Course content is compiled by a committee of teaching and research staff, put forward for approval to the General Assembly of the Department and the Dean of Faculty, and finally for approval by the Dean of the University. Learning goals and competencies are defined for the overall curriculum and for each course unit (seminar, project, workplace-based learning etc.). The credits and level of skills correspond with those of the National Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning and the European Qualifications Framework of Higher Education (Eurydice 2015a).

³ Early Childhood Education Departments at: University of Ioannina (Ioannina), University of Western Macedonia (Florina), University of Thessaly (Volos), University of Crete (Rethymnon), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Athens), Aegean University (Rhodes), University of Patra (Patra), Democritus University of Thrace (Alexandroupoli).

Nursery and Childcare Teachers (*Vrefonipiagogos/Vrefonipiokomos*)

The qualification requirement for Nursery and Childcare Teachers is the completion of a degree from one of the three Departments of Early Childhood Education at a Technological Education Institute (TEI) in Greece. Entry requirements are a high school diploma and the required number of points in the General Pan-Hellenic Examination. The curricula of the Early Childhood Education Departments are compiled by a special committee of faculty set up by the head of the department. The content is approved by the General Assembly of each department and in turn by the President of the Institution (Eurydice 2015a).

The courses of study include mandatory and elective classes. Educational activities correspond to 30 credits per semester and 240 credits (ECTS points) overall. During the first seven semesters, students attend theoretical classes and learning workshops at the Departments. During the eighth semester, they perform their practical, workplace-based training and prepare a thesis (see the study guides for Technological Educational Institutes, Departments of Early Childhood Education). The Technological Educational Institute degree is placed at Level 6 of the EQF and Level 6 of ISCED.

Graduates are qualified to work either in municipal or private day nurseries and childcare centres or to be self-employed as home-based carers of children aged from a few months old up to their enrolment in primary school. Furthermore, they may set up and operate nursery or childcare centres, as well as practise any other professional activity associated with their educational qualifications, including the entire range of administrative posts related to their field of expertise (Government Gazette 203/1/23.12.1991).

Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants (*Voithos Vrefonipiagogou*)

Vocational High Schools (*Epagelmatiko Lykeio*) offer a specialisation to become a Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant which starts during the second year of high school. The duration of studies is three years (Law 3475/2006). The specialised qualification (certificate) awarded by Vocational High Schools corresponds to Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (National Qualifications Framework Registry 2015). The certificate also corresponds to a general school leaving certificate for admission to tertiary education through the process of the General Pan-Hellenic Examination. In addition, those with a Vocational High School award are authorised to enrol in a Vocational Training Institution (*Institouto Epagelmatikis Katartisis*) in a course related to the specialism of their leaving certificate. The diploma they receive falls under Level 5 of the EQF and Level 4 of ISCED (National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance 2014). The course of study is determined either at the central level by legislation for Vocational High Schools or by the Vocational Training Institution itself and is accredited by a central authority such as the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eurydice 2015a).

Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants are provided with knowledge and skills in:

- Advising expectant mothers regarding their pregnancy and the care of their newborn;
- Care of infants and toddlers;
- Providing appropriate nutrition and hygiene as well as helping infants and toddlers progress in their walking, movement and speech;
- Maintaining the daily programme of the nursery and childcare centre by contributing to the cognitive, physical and linguistic development of the children;
- Informing and counselling parents regarding the appropriate care of their children.

Students who complete this specialism are authorised to work as auxiliary staff in nursery and day care centres, maternity clinics, summer camps, family planning centres, and as self-employed family day carers in a home-based setting (Ministry of Education 2009; Educational Scale).

3.2 Competences and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Kindergarten Teachers (*Nipiagogos*)

Prospective Kindergarten Teachers experience a range of approaches during their initial professional studies. These include theory-based seminars, workplace-based learning, tutorials, practical assignments, written reports, and the use of university-based learning workshops. With respect to the skills and knowledge relating to the administration of a kindergarten unit, these are not offered as part of IPS but comprise a subject of graduate coursework for already practising educators. The award granted by the Departments of Early Childhood Education is uniform, i.e. a university degree. However, there is considerable divergence in course emphasis.

Examples of taught modules are listed in summary below and, as already stated, may vary from university to university. Some examples:

- a) *Pedagogy*: introduction to educational science; pedagogy of integration; introduction to environmental education; current teaching approaches; current trends in early childhood education;
- b) *Psychology*: social, developmental, educational psychology; child development and addressing preschool children's problems; developmental disorders; introduction to special education; education of children with sensory impairments;
- c) *Sociology*: introduction to sociology; introduction to the sociology of education; education and the state; educational policy;
- d) *Methodology*: research methodology in social sciences; methodology in human sciences (statistics, ethnographic research methods);
- e) *Education in the sciences*: information and communication technologies in education and learning; teaching of biology and bioethics; history and philosophy of mathematics; materials and activities in teaching mathematics; teaching of physics;
- f) *Theatre education applications and art-related learning*: museum education; creative musical teaching; psychomotor and rhythmic education; making musical instruments; creative musical activities; teaching of crafts; introduction to puppetry, theatre education;
- g) *Language, literature, social sciences*: modern Greek language, history of children's literature; modern Greek history; multiculturalism; bilingualism and education;
- h) *Foreign languages*: English, French, German, Turkish.

It is mandatory for all students of University Departments of Early Childhood Education to undergo workplace-based education/training (see *Section 4*). Writing a thesis is optional for all universities except for the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Crete where it is mandatory. In most Departments specialist learning centres provide experience in areas such as applied technologies; teaching of sciences and mathematics; crafts, theatre education and music (see University Study Guides 2015).

Nursery and Childcare Teachers (*Vrefonipiagogos/Vrefonipiokomos*)

The professional education/training of Nursery and Childcare Teacher candidates at the Technological Educational Institutes (Universities of Applied Sciences) includes one or more of the following formats: theory-based seminars, workshops, tutorials and laboratory assignments, as well as individual or group projects and educational fieldtrips.

The basic subjects of the Departments of Early Childhood Education of the Technological Educational Institutes have common foundations with the modules taught at the Universities. They comprise four different categories:

- *General foundation courses*, which offer general knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, sociology and medicine, e.g. education sciences, basic principles of psychology, research methodology in education sciences;
- *Special foundation courses*, which offer basic knowledge regarding various subjects, e.g. musical-psychomotor education; theatre education; ICT;
- *Specialised courses*, offering required knowledge for practical implementation, e.g. infant education; children and play; organisational principles of pedagogical practice; daily education and care;
- *Administration, management, legislation and human studies* courses required for the organisation and administration of the workplace related to the specific specialisation, e.g. economic data and management of childcare centres; legal data and legislation (see Technological Educational Institutes Study Guides 2015).

Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants (*Voithos Vrefonipiagogou*)

The education of Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant candidates at the Vocational High Schools includes the following areas of learning:

- Creative methods and technical teaching aids;
- Early childhood education;
- Musical and musical-psychomotor education;
- General and developmental psychology;
- Aesthetic education – theatre education;
- Early childhood literature;
- Organisation of nursery and childcare activities;
- Anatomy/physiological knowledge.

Beyond these basic course requirements, students are trained under the supervision of a qualified Nursery and Childcare Teacher:

- to offer holistic care to preschool aged children;
- to support their all-round development (physical, cognitive, linguistic and psychomotor) through appropriate pedagogical methods;
- to care for children with special needs;
- to take measures to prevent accidents in all physical spaces, to apply first aid where necessary, and to react appropriately in emergencies;
- to fill out the children’s personal cards and to keep records;
- to give advice to parents or guardians (Ministry of Education 2009).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

In Greece, there are no alternative pathways of entry into the ECEC occupations apart from the three previously mentioned formal professional education/training routes. There are also no predominantly workplace-based training routes. However, in terms of ‘system permeability’, all three main ECEC personnel types may work in a variety of additional fields.

Qualified **Kindergarten Teachers** are additionally authorised to work in a wide range of social institutions and foundations. These include:

- Special education kindergartens and assimilation centres for people with disabilities;
- Children’s hospitals;
- Summer camps;
- Children’s play areas in malls, airports, etc.;
- Museums;

- Educational book publishers;
- Radio and television stations for children’s programmes;
- Municipal and local government services and/or training programmes concerning education;
- Children’s shelters;
- Creativity centres;
- Child welfare institutions;
- Music and art learning workshops
- Foreign language learning centres;
- Athletic centres;
- Services, organisations and institutions concerned with education;
- Professional training institutions;
- Educational administrative and supervisory centres;
- Educational science research centres (University Study Guides 2015, University of Crete).

In addition, they may work as teacher educators in secondary or tertiary education, responsible for the theoretical and practical teaching of early childhood education classes.

Nursery and Childcare Teachers may also be employed as:

- Managers of research, organisation and operation of nursery and childcare centres;
- Supervisors/principals of operational units (directorates, departments, offices) in nursery and childcare centres of local government bodies;
- Teacher educators in secondary and tertiary education responsible for the theoretical and practical teaching in early childhood education course classes (Presidential Decree 523/24.12.91; TEI Study Guides 2015, Athens Technological Educational Institute).

For staff of municipal nursery and childcare centres, the posting of an employee of one Local Government Body (LGB) to another LGB is possible subsequent to a petition filed by the employee and subsequent to the approval of the originating body with a decision of the person responsible for appointments of the receiving LGB. The posting is for two years and may be extended for one extra year (Law 4257/2014).

The formal opportunities for moving up the system are available only at the vertical level (i.e. starting with a specialist first degree and moving on to take a master’s degree or a doctoral degree). There are no specifically horizontal qualifying options for side entries by career changers with non-specialist qualifications, i.e. no specifically defined career pathways with diverse entry points at different levels and a clear progression route.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Kindergarten Teachers (*Nipiagogos*)

Workplace-based learning constitutes an integral and mandatory part of the IPS of Kindergarten Teachers (Androusou and Avgitidou 2013). The organisation, structuring and focus given to workplace-based learning vary from university to university. This diversity includes the duration (from a few days to a few months in total, in some or all of the years of study); the location (public, private kindergartens and childcare centres; university locations; other locations where preschool aged children are taught, e.g. the Greek Children’s Museum); the way they are incorporated into the course of study (as part of one or some applied classes, as a separate course with additional lectures, graded or not graded; as a differentiated learning activity); and

the importance of this segment of IPS for gaining the degree (covering a large or small part of the credits required for graduation) (Doliopoulou 2005).

Despite these differences, the goal of practical training is similar across the nine University Departments of Early Childhood Education, that is, to create the greatest possible connection for students with the educational process and classroom management (Economides 2007). However, the goal of the practicum is not limited to acquiring practical experience in the work place but is associated with acquiring and using theoretical knowledge, research evidence and reflective abilities with a view to critically approaching not only their own personal work as an educator but also the way other educators work (Androusou and Avgitidou 2013).

In all universities, the work placement programme is established and enacted under the supervision of a committee comprising both members of the faculty and external experts:

- The participating **faculty members** who are responsible for theory-based seminars provide oral and written instructions for the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational activities in the kindergarten group/class and visit the classes in which the students are placed, in order to monitor their work and offer systematic support (supervision). Furthermore, they draft evaluation sheets for the students' work and discuss these in meetings attended by all those involved in the workplace-based element of the degree course. Also, they collaborate with all parties involved in the grading of students.
- Members of the **special research and teaching faculty** plan the organisational structure of the practical training and assign the students to kindergartens or other placement locations. In addition, they attend meetings with the participating teachers, monitor the theoretical courses related to the practical training programme, participate in these and organise support learning workshops for the candidates. They also collaborate with the members of the faculty throughout the duration of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the practical training and inform them (and the practical training committee) of all issues that arise. In general, they act as coordinators and counsellors and organise meetings with the students so as to enhance the processing of what they have observed or undertaken in the kindergartens. They also discuss and if necessary modify the proposed daily schedule of activities and/or programmes of each student. They visit the classrooms where the students undergo practical training, with a view to observing their teaching, discussing potential points for improvement with them and the Kindergarten Teachers and offering them systematic support (supervision). They draw up observation sheets of the students' teaching during their supervision and submit these to the collaborating faculty members and the practical training committee. Finally, they collaborate with the members of the faculty for the grading of the students' practical training.
- The **Kindergarten Teachers posted at the University** observe and participate in the theoretical classes regarding practical training, collaborate with the students, serve as coordinators and counsellors, visit classrooms where students are undergoing practical training and observe their teaching, discuss potential issues with them and with the Kindergarten Teachers and offer systematic support (supervision). They also draw up observation sheets of the students' activities during their supervision and inform the members of the faculty and members of the Special, Research and Teaching Faculty regarding any arising issues.
- **Kindergarten Teachers in the co-operating kindergartens** are present in their classes but do not intervene in the daily programme of the students except when their assistance is requested or a need arises. They assist the students in the organisation of scheduled visits or festivals as well as in the provision of teaching materials. They inform the parents of the children about the practical training of the students and inform the students about the children in the classroom and the preferred pedagogical approaches. Finally, they collaborate with the special research staff, the posted Kindergarten Teachers and faculty members in addressing potential problems (see study guides, University Departments of Early Childhood Education).

Since, as already pointed out, the practical component of IPS varies in many ways, this report will refer briefly and indicatively to the practicum procedures at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (see Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of Preschool Education Sciences and Training, University Study Guides 2015). At this university, the practical element is carried out in the sixth and seventh semesters on dedicated days and weeks. Each student has to earn 48 ECTS points through the practical component of IPS.

Each student receives a 'practical training booklet' at the beginning of the sixth and seventh semester which he or she must fill in during the placements according to guidance given by the responsible professors. The attendance of the students at discussion meetings, seminars, feedback sessions and in kindergarten classrooms, as defined by each semester's practical training, is mandatory. Practical training is conducted in public kindergartens, and its total duration, each semester, is 13 weeks, of which approximately eight include the presence of the student in a kindergarten classroom. The daily programme of the practical training is approved by the practical training committee and the General Assembly of the Department.

Within the placement framework, specialised meetings, seminars and feedback sessions with the responsible professors are provided, which supplement the students' knowledge. The specific practical training programme aims to enhance the research-based training of prospective Kindergarten Teachers according to the following eight focal points: 1. Diversity among children and families; 2. Learning environments; 3. Learning areas; 4. Teaching strategies; 5. Evaluation; 6. Collaboration and communication; 7. Reflection; 8. Professional development. It also includes familiarisation with the current institutional framework of the Greek kindergarten (operative features, curricula, etc.).

In the practical training of the sixth semester, students undertake a gradually more active role in the following: observation of classroom activities and the children; group management; planning and conducting activities; and creating trusting relationships with the children and their families, the class teacher and their colleagues. Emphasis is placed on pedagogical practices in which the diversity among children is foregrounded and the development and learning of all children promoted. In addition, in all phases, emphasis is placed on the professional development of the future educators. At the same time, students attend mandatory seminars and laboratories at the university, which relate to the knowledge topics of each phase and support the students' activities in the workplace.

In some cases, students may submit a petition for the financing of their practical training through a relevant Partnership Agreement, whereby they are insured and paid by the university (the amount received is dependent upon the total amount available) (Unknown, 2016a). In addition, prospective Kindergarten Teachers may submit a petition requesting that their practical training take place in another country through participation in the LLP/Erasmus programme. This programme provides a monthly stipend for students who have been chosen to be relocated with a view to covering discretionary expenses associated with their practical training abroad, including their travel expenses. The amount of this monthly stipend is determined by the national group of the LLP/Erasmus and depends upon the cost of living in the destination country (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of European Educational Programmes 2012).

Nursery and Childcare Teachers (*Vrefonipiagogos/Vrefonipiokomos*)

The practicum component for prospective Nursery and Childcare Teachers at the Technological Educational Institutes takes place in the form of learning workshops in various semesters (the duration of which varies from institution to institution). Like their Kindergarten Teacher counterparts, prospective Nursery and Childcare Teachers undertake a gradually increasing active role in observation of classroom activities and the children; group management; planning and

conducting activities; and creating trusting relationships with the children and their families, the class teacher and their colleagues.

During the final semester at the Technological Education Institutes, a practicum of 24 consecutive weeks takes place, which is supervised and evaluated by a special committee (Presidential Decree P.D. 174/85, Government Gazette 59/A'/29.03.1985).

The workplace sites where students are trained are obliged, within the framework of their social mission, to participate in the best possible way towards supporting the students. To this end, a graduate of either a Technological Educational Institute or a University or other tertiary school of related specialisation to that of the students and with sufficient experience in the workplace is appointed to: a) supervise the work and performance of the Nursery and Child-care Teacher candidates, b) offer proposals to the principal of the practical training site for the improvement of working conditions and student support, c) collaborate with the supervising educator at the Technological Educational Institute to ensure effective training procedures. The tutors to whom the training of the students has been assigned visit the sites, inform the students about their field of expertise, monitor their performance and collaborate in solving their problems, both with the students themselves and with the person in charge of the site.

The six month practicum is mandatory for the degree award and corresponds to 10 ECTS points. Students must have successfully completed all the specialised classes and learning workshops of the practical training.

The workplace-based component is carried out for three months in sites for infants and toddlers and for three months in sites for older preschool children. Workplace sites may include public day nurseries and childcare centres which, with a ministerial announcement in the Government Gazette, are classified as 'centres of professional practical training'; private nursery and day care centres; public services nursery centres; and workers' organisations nursery centres (see TEI Study Guides 2015).

The training comprises a simulation of the working conditions which the students will encounter later, since they follow the full time schedule of the educators at the respective sites and undertake the same responsibilities. Throughout the duration, students are supervised by a practical training officer who is appointed by the training site and must be a graduate of a Department of Early Childhood Education of a Technological Educational Institute, in conjunction with the practical training committee members of the Department (see TEI Study Guides 2015).

For example, at the Athens Technological Educational Institute, Department of Early Childhood Education, the students are counselled with respect to their choice of practical training site and are checked on the appropriateness of their choice. At this site, they carry out, on a daily basis, its educational programme, by following the planning, implementation and evaluation found in their practical training book, in which they must record their daily work.

Halfway through the six-month practical training, a meeting takes place between the students and the practical training committee members and supervisors, with a view to encouraging, evaluating and self-evaluating so that, if necessary, the goals of the practical training may be redefined. At the end of the training, each student presents his or her diary with two reports (one for the nursery/childcare site and one for the preschool/kindergarten site) to the members of the committee who evaluate his/her work (Athens Technological Educational Institute, Department of Early Childhood Education).

According to a Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministers of Education and Employment, practical training at the Technological Educational Institutes is conducted via a contract with the employer and the students are paid (Government Gazette 453/tB' 16.07.1986, E5 4825/16.06.1986). Public services and organisations, public legal entities as well as enterprises, are obliged to employ higher education students who wish to carry out the practical training of their profession. Aside from the right to compensation and insurance, they cannot acquire any other employment or pension right. It is worthwhile to mention that the students, during their

practical training, are insured by the Social Insurance Institution in the case of accident or illness.

Some students may apply through a Partnership Agreement programme for the financing and insurance of their practical training by the Technological Educational Institute. In addition, the Technological Educational Institutes, through the Erasmus program, compensate students of all departments who wish to carry out their practical training abroad (Athens Technological Educational Institute, Department of Early Childhood Education).

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Kindergarten Teachers (*Nipiagogos*)

In various university departments, there are a number of post-graduate and doctoral programmes related to current research trends and recent preschool education approaches. These programmes may be completed either in one department or in collaboration with other departments of universities, either in Greece or in another country.

Over the last few decades, the continuing professional development of teachers in Greece has comprised both compulsory and elective activities. The types of mandatory education, as defined by Presidential Decree 250/92, Article 1, are the following:

- Introductory training for newly qualified Early Childhood Education Teachers who are applying for a post;
- Each academic year Kindergarten Teachers with a permanent post have the opportunity to participate in periodic trainings in two educational cycles, lasting up to three months;
- Short special training programmes, lasting 10 to 100 hours, for all active Kindergarten Teachers and up to 200 hours for Kindergarten Teachers serving in special education units (Doukas et al. 2008).

The annual induction courses carried out by the Regional Education Centres in Greece are obligatory for all newly appointed early childhood, elementary and secondary education teachers and substitutes (P.D. 45/1999). This programme's main goal is to facilitate the teachers' smooth introduction into the educational system by offering the tools needed for the work they undertake.

The training programme includes 100 hours of lectures and is structured according to three phases – cognitive, practical and reflective (Teachers Training Organisation 2010). The body mainly responsible for implementing this programme is the Institute of Educational Policy and falls under the Service Programme "Training and Lifelong Learning". The specific programme aims at: sensitising educators to new educational needs and challenges; utilising information and communication technologies in education; cooperating with families and the local community; linking the educational institution to current social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions; and encouraging the active participation of the educators in the continuing improvement of education. Some of the approaches include: project work, tutorials, case studies, work plans, role play simulations, debates, and education through the arts. The training programme combines all methods (both face-to-face and distance learning) and includes consecutive seminars. Some programmes focus on a specific topic such as special educational needs or the utilisation and implementation of ICT in educational settings.

In addition, training seminars and workshops are run with a view to informing and qualifying Kindergarten Teachers for participation in the eTwinning platform, which is part of ERASMUS+, an EU-funded programme which offers staff working in public and private schools the oppor-

tunity to teach abroad. Participants are able to improve their knowledge, their professional and linguistic skills and abilities, as well as to come into contact with a new culture and develop a sense of European identity (State Scholarship Foundation n.d.).

Furthermore, a number of optional seminars, workshops and conferences (across Greece, in Europe, in international contexts) are offered to address identified needs of educators, such as environmental education; health education; traffic education; gender, multicultural and bilingual education; bullying. These types of training are carried out by the Institute of Educational Policy, the Universities, the Technological Educational Institutes, school groups, school counsellors, professional educator associations or local expert groups of international organisations such as the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) and others (Eurydice 2015b).

The Government has proceeded to legislative regulations which grant time off for participation in continuing professional development activities within a specific programme framework. According to a Ministry of Education circular (Employee Code article 59 of Law 3528/2007, Official Government Gazette 26A'/9-2-2007), short-term and longer-term leaves are granted for scientific or educational purposes. Thus, leave for taking part in conferences, meetings, seminars and all types of scientific gatherings in Greece or internationally is granted if participation is considered advantageous for the public education system. Leave is also granted to educators who participate in scholarship competitions or who wish to enrol in the National School of Public Administration and the National School of Local Government, or who wish to enrol in post-graduate studies. Leave for scientific or educational purposes is granted by the Director of Education.

In the past, longer term leave lasted for the duration of the post-graduate studies, plus one year, and those participating would receive earnings increased by 20-40%. However, due to the economic crisis in Greece, the granting and extension of long-term post-graduate study leave has been suspended (Law 4210/2013). Taking into consideration the difficulty in replacing educators in their teaching duties, due to the shortage of available staff, the granting or renewing of service leave with earnings is allowed only for fellows of the State Scholarships Foundation. Also, with the provisions of Law 4093/2013, the planned rise in earnings of those granted service leave for education abroad, was repealed. Furthermore, all types of educational expenses are now to be covered by the interested person, except for the introductory training expenses (see above) which are covered by the State. In the private sector, some employers grant leave for CPD activities if this is considered necessary.

However, despite the fact that educational leave opportunities are few, and the budgets of kindergartens are limited, Kindergarten Teachers – although earning less now - nevertheless seek training, both to remain informed and up-to-date regarding educational trends, and to enable them to be promoted to a post as kindergarten principal, school counsellor, etc.

Specifically, attendance of training and post-graduate study programmes, as stated earlier, results in qualifications which are awarded points and count toward the professional advancement of Kindergarten Teachers, kindergarten principals, school directors and school counsellors.

In the case of **Kindergarten Principals**, they have to have had eight years of work experience and points-awarded selection criteria which include: a) the scientific-educational background and training of the candidate (e.g. doctoral degree, post-graduate title, second University or TEI degree, verification or certification of training, certified training in ICT or knowledge of a foreign language); b) the service and administrative experience of the candidate, and c) their contribution to the field and their general personality and constitution (Ministry of Education Circular, F.361.22/27/80025/E3/19.05.2015). This final criterion is measured through a confidential vote of the school teachers' association of the candidate's choice. The confidential vote evaluates the candidate's abilities as well as personality traits exhibited during the school's daily routine, e.g. ethos, integrity, sense of justice, democratic behaviour, professional development and consistency. Required competencies include, indicatively, the ability to communi-

cate and collaborate; to undertake initiatives and to problem solve, especially with respect to teaching, administrative, organisational and operational issues and the ability to create an appropriate, inspiring environment for the kindergarten staff. Also taken into consideration are the points awarded from the relevant Regional Primary Education Service Council, as well as other supportive information such as: studies in a different field; training and retraining; organisation of educational conferences, seminars and training programmes, including participation as group rapporteur, member of the scientific team or as a trainer; published and research work; initiatives in education; carrying out educational programmes and implementing innovations; administrative or instructional experience; participation in councils, committees or work groups; social and union action; participation in administrative bodies of scientific and educational organizations or in local participation bodies and official awards.

The candidates are evaluated based on the points they are awarded according to the above criteria. The relevant Educational Directorate is then responsible for compiling a final list of candidates per school/kindergarten, based on the sum of the points awarded for scientific-pedagogical background, staff training and administrative experience, as well as the points awarded from the confidential ballot of the school teachers' association. The regional educational director proceeds to the appointment of kindergarten principals and school directors (Ministerial Decision Bulletin F.361.22/26/79840/E3/19.05.2015, Government Gazette 915/20.05.2015), whose term of office last two years.

It should be noted that for kindergarten principals there are no required training programmes either before or after taking up their appointment to this position and their continuing professional and educational development is not mandatory.

An introductory training (induction) for newly qualified **Nursery and Childcare Teachers** and their qualified co-workers employed in public childcare settings is mandatory. This is carried out during the first two years of their appointment and aims at familiarising them with their duties. The responsible authorities are obliged to budget for the necessary certifications for the specific training. An employee is not promoted if he or she has not successfully completed the basic introductory training (Law 3584/2007).

Continuing professional education is optional, but efforts are being made to offer incentives for participation. This training is offered in the form of Ministry-approved programmes carried out by various educational bodies (Eurydice 2015c).

CPD opportunities for Nursery and Childcare Teachers have been growing rapidly in recent years. The main bodies which undertake this training are the Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators, the Technological Educational Institutes, the Universities, scientific associations of educators, and country-specific units of international organisations such as OMEP. The Pan-Hellenic Association of Early Childhood Educators organises conferences (across Greece, across Europe, internationally), learning workshops, and focus groups in which educators are trained in small groups in various current ECEC topics on a regular basis.

With respect to leave for educational purposes, as well as respective CPD courses, the same legislative regulations and restrictions apply for the leave granted to Kindergarten Teachers.

Only a graduate of a Department of Early Childhood Education of a University or Technological Educational Institute may be appointed as director of a nursery or day care centre, upon the decision of the Service Council. In case the Service Council has not appointed someone, the directorship is undertaken by the most senior employee in terms of age/experience who is a graduate of a University Department of Early Childhood Education or of a Technological Educational Institute (Government Gazette 546/B/02.08.1988).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

There have not been any amendments or changes concerning the workforce of early childhood education in nursery and childcare centres during the last five years. With respect to teachers working in public kindergartens, a number of reform initiatives have been introduced which concern not just pre-primary teachers, but also primary and secondary school teachers. These include the following two reforms:

Recent CPD options

As already stated, significant changes have been made regarding the continuing education of teachers. Their intra-service training focuses on:

- Introductory training of newly appointed and substitute teachers;
- Introductory training in the use and implementation of ICT in teaching;
- New study programmes (e.g. teaching methods and evaluation);
- Ways of organising and implementing reforms and new programmes;
- Specialised training in information and communication technologies, theatre, music, the arts and multicultural education;

In addition, Kindergarten Teachers receive training in:

1. Implementation of the new curriculum;
2. Working in all-day kindergartens;
3. Use of new technologies;
4. Obtaining certification in administrative competence.

All ECEC school counsellors (see *Section 8.3*) are trained in instructional competence (Eurydice 2016).

Salary adjustments for Primary Education Teachers (Law 4354/2015)

Educators serving in primary education have been reclassified, effective 01.01.2016, according to a new salary scale, which will result in changes in their salary (Law 4354, 2015). A detailed breakdown of this reform is presented below (see *Section 8.1*).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

In recent years, no national surveys have been published relating to early childhood education professionalisation and staffing issues.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Kindergarten Teachers' salaries were adequate before the onset of the severe economic crisis in Greece. In 2011, there was a large-scale reduction in salaries, when the uniform pay scale for all public employees (including educators) was implemented (Law 4024, 2011). This large

reduction was mainly related to the former extra-curricular allowance (so-called non-contact time, see below).

In December 2015, Parliament voted on a new pay scale for public employees (including the salaries of kindergarten and school educators) (Law 4354, Government Gazette 176/16.12.2015). Specifically, educators, like all public employees, who hold a University or Technological Educational Institute degree, advance, regardless of their rank, along a pay scale ranging from 1 to 19. Employees belonging to the same category and the same pay scale are entitled to the corresponding basic salary, regardless of the field to which their position belongs. In order to advance from a lower pay level to a higher one, early childhood educators must first complete two years of service at the lower levels. Post-graduate and doctoral degree holders are awarded promotions to higher levels by 2 and 6 levels respectively. Allowances for the position as kindergarten principal or school director, including the family allowance given to eligible persons, have not changed. Despite the fact that the new pay scale has been in effect since 01.01.2016, salary increases will be paid within a four year horizon. In other words, one quarter of the increase in the basic salary will be paid each year for the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. For example, the basic salary of an employee who should receive an annual increase of 60€ will be increased by 15€ a year for the next four years (Eurydice 2016; Unknown 2016b).

This salaries reform does not result in significant changes for Kindergarten Teachers and teachers in primary schools, for which the starting salary for a newly appointed teacher is 1092€ per month (gross). On an incremental pay scale, educators move up to the next level and his or her salary is automatically increased by around 15-20€. Of course, the allowances paid in addition to the salary should be mentioned, e.g. for service in remote or frontier regions (approximately 100€); family allowance (50€ per child), and the allowance for a supervisory position (100€) (Bratis 2015).

Thus, a newly appointed educator in a large city like Athens or Thessaloniki, without any other income, finds it difficult to survive. Rents are expensive and the cost of living in these cities is high, resulting often in retired parents having to assist their children or in the young professionals living at home with their parents.

The salaries of Nursery and Childcare Teachers are currently subject to considerable fluctuation.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

All staff are employed full-time. The mandatory working hours for publicly employed educators, either with or without administrative duties (such as for principals), may not exceed six hours daily and 30 hours per week. Specifically, the teaching hours of Kindergarten Teachers are 25 hours a week and this decreases with years of service to 24 hours for up to 10 years of service, to 23 hours for 10-15 years of service, to 22 hours for 15-20 years of service and to 21 hours for more than 20 years of service (Law 4115/2013).

For the permanent staff of day nurseries and childcare centres of local government organisations, the working week is 30 hours throughout their employment. This is the case for Nursery and Childcare Teachers, Kindergarten Teachers who work in these settings, as well as related occupational roles such as social workers, Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistants, carers and nurses (Unknown, 2016c; Law 4368/2016).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Newly appointed **Kindergarten Teachers** serve as educators on a probationary basis for two years, in order to become familiarised with the educational environment as a follow up to their introductory training. After two years they automatically become permanent employees. A law

passed in 2010 (Law 3848) aimed to support newly appointed staff by providing for a mentor whose role was to assist and advise new Kindergarten Teachers. However, this decree has not been implemented.

Significant sources of support for Kindergarten Teachers are the Centres for Differential Diagnosis and Support. These centres fall under the Ministry of Education but operate locally in many municipalities. Parents may be referred to a centre by the educator, when significant learning or other difficulties relating to their child are observed. The centres assess and diagnose the problem and then collaborate both with the parents and the teachers, in order to help the children in addressing or resolving it. Thus, their responsibility is to investigate the type and degree of difficulties of children with special educational needs - ranging from serious health problems to special learning difficulties such as dyslexia or complex cognitive, emotional or social difficulties - as well as to offer counselling support and information to educators.

The main source of support comes from the early childhood education **School Counsellors**, who are responsible for the scientific and professional guidance and support of the Kindergarten Teachers in a region determined by the Ministry of Education. They encourage scientific research in the field of education and participate in the evaluation of educational work, including that of the Kindergarten Teachers in their region. They collaborate with kindergarten and school educators in their area, individually or in groups, to facilitate the smooth progression of the pedagogical and educational practice as well as the promotion of current teaching methods. They assist and encourage teachers to undertake initiatives and activities for addressing problems in their work, for enriching school life and for improving the quality of the education offered (Government Gazette 1340, 2002).

Similar support measures are not offered for **Nursery and Childcare Teachers**.

8.4 Non-contact time

As stated above, the extra-curricular allowance concerning time spent by the educator for preparation at home or after school was abolished a few years ago, with the implementation of uniform salaries for public employees. Thus, salaries were significantly reduced.

With respect to their collaboration with parents, Kindergarten Teachers seek contact on a daily basis, not only when the children are brought to school or picked up, but also through frequent exchanges outside school hours, mostly in the evenings. This contact and effort to communicate, however, depends upon the good will of the educator who does not receive any additional financial reward. The same applies to other activities of Kindergarten Teachers, e.g. their collaboration with local bodies, or the organisation of seminars for parents held by specialists.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In recent years, the problem of staff shortages in **kindergartens** has become visible at the start of each kindergarten year. There are not enough permanent Kindergarten Teachers to fill the positions available since many have reached retirement age and no new educators are being appointed because of the recession.

In 2010, an objective appointment process for educators was introduced (Law 3848, 2010). The permanent appointment of kindergarten (and school) teachers is conducted through: (a) ranking tables compiled after successful completion of the Supreme Council for Civil Service Personnel Selection exam; (b) academic qualifications and social criteria and (c) prior teaching experience in public (as substitutes) or private schools (Eurydice 2015d). Despite the existence of this law, permanent appointments are no longer made and for this reason, the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection exam has not taken place since 2008.

In order to fill vacancies in kindergartens, temporary substitute Kindergarten Teachers are hired under a limited-time, private employment contract.

Nursery and childcare centres also face staff shortages. In fact, some municipalities have resorted to volunteers in order to address shortages at the centres. For example, in Athens, the municipal authority requested in writing, from all employees of the municipality in administrative positions or others (security, catering, cleaning), to volunteer to work at the municipal childcare centres during their work day, for a specific time period, until new contracted teachers could be hired. Such a request is not only unacceptable for the children, who would lack benefitting from a specialised educational workforce, but also because the volunteers could, at any moment, decide to stop volunteering.

The Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece, instead of seeking funding from the state in order to meet its needs (especially now that funding has been greatly reduced from year to year due to the crisis), has adopted the government's position of searching for alternative means of funding. Thus, it adopted the creation of Social Cooperative Enterprises which are essentially urban cooperatives with a social purpose, although they have a commercial status by law. Their purpose is to provide 'care' and social welfare services to specific population groups including infants and children. Enterprises offering infant/child care are staffed by unemployed Nursery and Childcare Teachers, cleaners and other persons required for operating a childcare centre, and may include parents (Social Policy Committee, Federation of Greek Women n.d.).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Impact of the crisis

A significant challenge for early childhood educators in Greece is the large reduction in their salaries (European Commission 2014) and the multi-faceted difficulties that have arisen from the economic crisis which concern education. In the case of early childhood education, less money is available and the attendance rate of children aged 4–6 years remains relatively low (84.0% compared to 94.3% in EU28 countries in 2014), mainly because the existing facilities are insufficient to cover the increased needs. Also, participation in public nursery provision remains consistently lower in Greece than in other EU countries (UNICEF 2014). At the same time, group size is increasing both as a result of the hiring freeze and through the merging and closing of nursery and childcare units as well as the fact that new units are no longer being established. They are also facing reductions in school expenses for meals; hiring of specialists (e.g. psychologists); tutoring; assimilation classes; reception classes for children with a background of migration; school libraries, etc. (Unknown 2013; Papakonstantinou 2013; UNICEF 2014).

Support for parents

Another challenge faced by early childhood educators is the support they are called upon to offer parents of impoverished children in their classes who find themselves at a dead-end after losing their jobs, and consider themselves to be poor role models for their children, or who need to work many hours to cover their needs and feel that they are neglecting their children. The economic crisis has exhausted them psychologically and emotionally, since they are constantly trying to make ends meet, resulting in negative effects on the education of their children and their relationship with them (Barajas, Philipsen and Brooks-Gunn 2007). This support may take on various forms from listening to the problems they face to helping them through

special food programmes or suggesting activities that they can do with their children in order to spend quality time with them at no cost (Ridge 2009).

Additional challenges

Alongside the previously mentioned problems, early childhood educators in Greece face some of the same challenges experienced by their colleagues in other Western countries. For example, the prevention, intervention and timely addressing of domestic violence and bullying in preschool settings, two issues which have developed into serious social problems of our time (Ioannou 2008; Athanasiadou and Psalti 2012; Konstantinou and Psalti 2012), as their consequences are negative both in the short and long term.

Across Western societies, as in Greece, time and places for play are on the decline, despite the fact that both contribute to children's healthy, all-round development. Free time has been reduced due to children's multiple commitments and playgrounds, parks, athletic centres, etc., especially in large cities, are at risk of disappearing. Furthermore, computer games, tablets, mobile phones and television have noticeably reduced children's involvement in unstructured play (Rogers and Sawyers 1990; Papageorgiou-Tsikoudi 2004; Levin 1998, 2008; Pappa 2008). The above conditions may result in children not knowing how to play, despite the fact that it is the basic means of learning in the first years of life. Thus, their last chance for high quality play may be in kindergarten. Early childhood educators are obliged to offer it to them, something which comprises an extra challenge for them.

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GREECE

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Elsie Doliopoulou
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Greece – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 506-521.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in Greece is organised as a split-sector system with partly parallel responsibilities for children aged 4-6 years. Both public and private **kindergartens** (*nipiagogeia*) for 4- to 6-year old children are part of the education sector and come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (*Ypourgeío Paideías, Érevnas kai Thriskevμάτων, MERR*). The public and private **day nurseries** for 0- to 3-year olds (*vrefiki stathmi*) and **childcare centres** either for children aged 3 months to 6 years (*vrefonipiaki stathmi*) or for 2½- to 6-year olds (*paidiki stathmi*), formerly under the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, now fall under the management of local government authorities. The Ministry of the Interior (*Ypourgeío Esoterikón kai Dioikitikís Anasynkrótisis*) is responsible for issuing framework regulations for public childcare provision and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (*Ypourgeío Apaschólisis*) for private provision.

Sources: CARE 2015.
EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

The overall aim of **kindergartens** is to provide a balanced approach towards children's intellectual, psychological and physical development independent of their family origin or gender. Important principles are freedom of religion, respect for different cultures, living together peacefully and protection of the environment. Whereas the main goals of the kindergartens are to support the children in developing their physical, emotional, cognitive and social abilities, to prepare them for school and to support parents, the emphasis in **nursery settings** is more on providing a safe environment for children, aiming to offer evidence-based practices supporting children's holistic development, equality of opportunities, raising the awareness of parents for psychological and pedagogical issues, easing the transition from home to ECEC centre and offering daily nutrition and care.

Framework legislation* and law issued in 1985 regulate the licensing of **kindergartens** and the organisation of the professional education/training of ECEC staff. Private settings are required to follow the same framework as public settings**.

Both **nurseries** and **childcare centres** for children up to age 5 have to adhere to the standard regulations of the relevant ministries*** which set out the minimum requirements for provision. The local authorities and service providers are responsible for ensuring compliance.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2015.
*Law 1566/1985.
**Law 468/1977.
***Law 2289/2001, Ministerial Decree 16065/2002.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Up to the age of 5, enrolment in ECEC settings is voluntary. Since 2007/2008, attendance is compulsory for 5- to 6-year olds in the year preceding primary education.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Source: Eurydice 2015.

Main types of provision

Kindergarten (*Nipiagogeio*): both public and privately-run kindergarten settings comprise two age groups: (1) children who have turned 4 by 31st December in the year of their enrolment and whose attendance is voluntary; (2) children who are already 5 years old by 31st December and whose attendance is compulsory. 5-year olds are given priority of admission if there are fewer places than children, and since the provision of sufficient places for this age group remains a problem, under 5-year olds tend not to be admitted.

Kindergarten settings are open all the year round. However, the educational programme runs only between 11th September and 15th June (the minimum requirement is 170-172 days per year). Standard settings are usually open for 24 hours per week on a half-day (4 hours) basis, whereas full-day kindergartens are open for nearly double that time.

Since 2016/2017, the opening hours are regulated by law (Government Gazette 2670/2/26.8.2016). For half-day settings the required times are 8:30 to 13:00 (with potential extension in full-time settings up to 16:00) or between 14:00 and 18:00. A kindergarten may open at 7:00 if more than five children attending the full-time programme are in need of this provision. Children who live more than 1.2 km away from the kindergarten are transported free of charge.

In 2013, there were nearly 6.000 kindergartens in Greece (see *Table 1*). 2.4% of these were segregated kindergartens for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Table 1

Greece: Number of kindergarten settings, 2013/14*

Kindergarten type	Total
Half-day kindergartens	2.313
Full-day kindergartens	3.136
Special needs kindergartens for children with disabilities	131
Full-day special needs kindergartens for children with disabilities	14
Full-day model kindergartens for children with disabilities	4
European kindergarten	1
Private kindergartens	386
Total (ISCED 0)	5.985

The Hellenic Statistical Authority (2016)** reports slightly different data for the same year. The total number of kindergartens registered is 5,606, serving 160,994 children. Most are public kindergartens. Only 445 (7.9%), serving 9,975 children (6.3%) are privately run.

Day nurseries (*Vrefonipiakoi Stathmoi*) are for children aged between 6 months and 5 years, although in some private settings babies are admitted as young as 40 days old.

Childcare centres (*Paidikoi Stathmoi*) admit children aged 2½ up to 5 years. There are also special needs settings that cater for children in this age group.

The annual opening times for both nurseries and childcare centres are 1st September till 31st July, i.e. the settings are closed during August only. They are also closed for Christmas, Easter and on official public holidays. During the winter the usual opening time is 7:00, in the summer 6:45. In

general, they close at 16:00, but opening hours can be adapted to the needs of the parents. Children of employed parents, single parents or from a socially disadvantaged background are given priority of admission.

Sources: Doliopoulou, E. 2017.
*Eurydice 2015.
Government Gazette 2670/2/26.8.2016.
**Hellenic Statistical Authority 2016.

Provider structures

Most **kindergarten** settings in Greece are public. In 2013, only 5% were privately operated. Accordingly, only 7% of children aged 4-6 years were attending private kindergartens. Both **day nurseries** and **childcare centres** can be provided by municipalities or private agencies, or in partnership. The educational workforce of public kindergartens accounts for 89.5% of all kindergartens nationwide.

Source: CARE 2015.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data (2017), a large proportion of under-3-year olds (89%) in 2015 were not attending a centre-based setting, dropping by only 3% since 2005. By way of contrast, over the last ten years or so, two thirds of children between 3 years and compulsory school starting age were enrolled in centre-based provision.

Table 2

Greece: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings according to age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance rate	Under 3-year olds, in %	3 years to statutory school age, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	3	27
	Over 30 hours	4	34
	No attendance	92	38
2010	1 to 29 hours	3	46
	Over 30 hours	5	23
	No attendance	92	31
2015	1 to 29 hours	4.9	41.1
	Over 30 hours	6.5	26.0
	No attendance	88.6	32.9

Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

Source: *Eurostat 2017e.

Financing and costs for parents

In 2012, 1.6% of GDP expenditure was on children and families. For children the situation has deteriorated due to the recession: In 2014, 11.3% of children under 17 years were living in

workless households - nearly double the number compared with 2010. Various government programmes aim to make childcare facilities more affordable, particularly for families with few financial resources. In 2013/14, the number of subsidised places in childcare facilities was increased to 10,000 in order to meet demand. It is planned to continue this measure during the coming years.

In 2014, fees* for attendance in public day nurseries and childcare centres varied between 50€ and 120€ per month, including meals. The rates for private facilities were much higher, ranging from 208€ to 669€¹. If agreed with the municipality, rates can be adapted to the financial situation of the family. Kindergarten for 4-to 6-year olds is free of charge.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
*European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Kindergartens: Kindergarten settings where only one qualified member of staff is working generally have between 7 and 25 children on roll, the minimum required number being 5. With two qualified members of staff, the overall intake ranges between 26 and 50, the required minimum being 10. One qualified member of staff is at most responsible for 25 children* (Law 1507/2006 V.1). There are usually two qualified members of staff in full-day settings. Following the 2014 Ministerial Decision (72624/D4)*** kindergarten settings with three or four qualified members of staff were set up. The number of children per qualified member of staff is regulated by law, with a minimum of 14 children and a maximum of 25 children. In rural areas the minimum can be reduced to five.

Day nurseries are organised in two groups: (1) from 6 months to 1½ years and (2) from 1½ to 2½ years. Groups comprise 12 children and two qualified members of staff and one assistant. In **Childcare centres** children between 2½ and 3½ years comprise one group and those between 3½ and 4½ another. In some cases, 4½-year olds to 6-year olds are placed in one group together. The maximum number of children in a group is 25, with one qualified member of staff and one assistant**.

Sources: CARE 2015.
Doliopoulou, E. 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
***Government Gazette 2014.
*Law 1507/2006 V.1.
**Law 1519/B/2002.

Curricular Frameworks

The Institute for Educational Policy (*Instituto Ekpaideutikās Politikās, IEP*), formerly the Pedagogical Institute, compiled a curricular framework for **kindergartens**. This was revised in 2013 following a ministerial decree (21072b/Γ2/28-2-2003). Key pedagogical principles are:

- early childhood education is foundational for children's development and their attitude towards learning;
- personal development is a fundamental aim;

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

- knowledge develops through interaction with the environment;
- for development and learning in the kindergarten, play is the dominant activity;
- collaboration with families and the community is important for the facilitation of development;
- every child is unique and all children have the right to education which takes into account their personality, language skills, social and cultural identity and their needs;
- children are naturally curious; the aim is to utilise this curiosity for exploration and learning activities;
- children have different ways of learning and express their knowledge in different ways;
- qualified staff organise the learning environment and plan the learning process by offering a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities and by considering the children's needs;
- systematic monitoring is used to assess children's needs, interests and learning progress.

The development of communication skills, social skills, creative and critical thinking, personal identity, autonomy and a sense for citizenship is a central goal. The programmes constructed and used by the kindergarten are based on topics to spark children's interests. An interdisciplinary and holistic approach and the importance of supporting children in developing their own problem-solving strategies are also emphasised. The following areas of learning are outlined in detail: Personal and Social Development; Natural Sciences; Information and Communication Technologies; Environment and Education for Sustainable Development; Language; Physical Education; Arts; and Mathematics. The curricular framework is compulsory for half- and full-day kindergartens in general, not only for 5-year olds.

For **day nurseries** and **childcare centres** there is no nationally valid curricular framework. The programme of the setting is adapted to the standard regulatory framework and includes free play activities, group activities and rest periods. In a secure and safe environment children should be given the chance to develop their social, emotional, cognitive and physical abilities. Further objectives include reducing inequalities between children, alerting parents towards topics of pedagogical and psychological importance, and building a foundation for a smooth transition to compulsory primary school. Settings offer daily meals and mostly free transportation to the setting.

Sources: CARE 2015.
 Doliopoulou, E. 2017.
 EFA 2015.
 Eurydice 2015.
 Ministerial Decision No. 21072b/Γ2/28-2-2003.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Guidelines for the organisation of education and care of children with special needs are included in a statutory framework*. The state is obliged to offer appropriate educational support at all levels of the education system. Assistance is provided by regional Centres for Diagnosis, Differential Diagnosis and Support (*Kentra Diaforodiagnosis, Diagnosis kai Ypostirixis Eidikon Ekpaideftikon Anagkon, KEDDY*), who advise on suitable settings and support strategies for the child. As for mainstream kindergartens, the Institute for Education Policy is also responsible for the development of a curricular framework in settings for children with special educational needs. Besides a core curriculum there are programmes tailored to certain needs/disabilities. KEDDY develops an individual plan in which parents can participate if they so wish. The overall objective is to integrate children with special needs in regular facilities. In 2015, a "National Strategy for Inclusion" was presented to the EU Commission in order to fight poverty, exclusion and discrimination, with children as the main target.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 7.4% of the population were of non-Greek origin; for children under 5 years of age the proportion is more than double (16.9%). Approximately three quarters (74.1%) of the foreign-born population are from states outside the EU28; for children under 5 years of age the relevant proportion was 83.1%**.

In 2016, 170,586 refugees and asylum seekers came to Greece, 37% of them children***, and approximately 10% of these are unaccompanied minors. In order to offer them security, food, housing and stability and also the opportunity for education, reception groups are planned for children staying in Greece so they can learn the language and then attend regular settings. Because of staff shortages and a non-existent infrastructure this plan will be one of the biggest challenges in the coming years****.

Sources: ****Doliopoulou, E. 2017.
EPIC 2016.
***European Commission 2017.
**Eurostat 2017f.
Eurydice 2015.
*Law 3699/2008; additions: 4115/2013 and 4186/2013
UNICEF 2016a, 2016b.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The evaluation of the work in kindergartens (and schools) is regulated by law*. An independent agency “Quality assurance in primary and secondary schools” (*Archä Diasphalisās tās Poiotātās stān Protobathmiakai Deuterobathmia Ekpaideusā, ADIPPDE*) set up by the Ministry for Education, Research and Religious Affairs in 2013, has been assigned the following tasks: observation and evaluation of the implementation of curricular frameworks; evaluation of the quality of work in kindergarten settings and schools; supervision of the assessment of qualified staff; and a meta-evaluation of quality assurance measures. *ADIPPDE* defines criteria and indicators for evaluation. In collaboration with the Ministry for Education it develops an integrated information system and a database for educational evaluation. Additionally, it offers services to the settings and their managers, supporting self-evaluation. In parallel, it is involved in research and cooperation with international networks.

At the regional level the departments of education are responsible for the evaluation of education. For every department of education the *ADIPPDE* appoints an evaluation committee of five members. On the basis of specified criteria a report is compiled consisting of an analysis of documents and visits to the settings, which is then handed to the directorate of the *ADIPPDE*, who evaluate the reports. Both the reports and decisions are published on the website of the *ADIPPDE*. Since 2013/2014, a yearly self-evaluation at all levels of education is compulsory by law**. This ministerial decision contains detailed notes on self-evaluation, support structures and the meta-evaluation of self-evaluation processes. Self-evaluation, including curriculum implementation, is conducted annually by the settings. The objectives are to assess the educational programme, to make suggestions for improvement and to observe the implementation and the following outcomes. The 15 quality indicators include items on the building, staffing, financial resources, management, implementation of the curricular framework, and also on assessing the individual, social and skills-based achievements of the children.

The Evaluation of Education Institute (*Ā Axiologāsā tu Ekpaideutiku Ergu, AEE*), which is a background institute supporting the work of the Ministry of Education, offers support in the follow-up process of self-evaluation. The information network of the AEE approves the compilation of report data at the national, regional and local levels. Furthermore, it directly informs the Ministry of Education of further strategies for quality improvement. Regional

education groups conduct a meta-evaluation every four years and the assessment is passed on to the Ministry of Education.

Child-related assessment in kindergarten is implemented within the daily schedule. The qualified staff determines at the beginning the knowledge and experience which are expected of each child, and tries to tailor learning processes accordingly. At the end of the year the progress of each child is considered and compared with the setting's learning goals. Child portfolios are also included in the assessment. On the basis of their assessment the qualified staff advise parents about how to support the child's development at home. Children under 4 years are not formally assessed, but parents are informed on a monthly basis about their child's progress.

Sources: Eurydice. 2015, 2016.
*Law 4142/2013.
**Ministerial Decision 30972/C1/5-3-2013.

Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*Adeia Mätrotätas*) in the **private sector** is granted for 17 weeks. It is fully paid and eight weeks have to be taken before birth and nine weeks after birth. Eligibility depends on the applicant being employed for at least 200 days over the past two years. Afterwards a special Maternity leave can be taken (*Eidikä Adeia gia tñn Prostasia tās Mätrotätas*) for six months and paid according to the daily minimum wage, incorporating social insurance. Parents who are not able to reduce their working hours after maternity leave can make use of this. In the **public sector**, compulsory maternity leave is fully paid for five months, two months before birth and three months after birth. Since 2012, self-employed mothers are paid monthly 200€ for four months.

Fathers both in the private and public sector are granted two days of paid **paternity leave** (*Adeia Gennäsäs Teknu*) at the time of birth.

Parental leave (*Gonikä Adeia Anatrophäs*) (unpaid) is possible in the private sector for four months for each parent and may be taken up to the child's 6th birthday, either all at once or in separate periods. In the public sector, up to five years of unpaid parental leave can be taken until the child turns six years. Parents working for the same private employer cannot take their leave at the same time. In the public sector no such legislation exists. Additionally, each parent is entitled to reduce their working hours with a full salary for 30 months after maternity leave and in the private sector parents may work one hour per day less. In the public sector it is also possible, instead of reducing the weekly working hours, to take nine months fully paid time for care after the period of maternity leave.

There are no statistical data about the parental leave claims. However, drawing on statistical data for employment, it can be concluded that only a few women (0.6% in 2013, no data available for 2014 to 2016) and even fewer men claim unpaid parental leave. 2.2% of mothers and 0.08% of fathers took the paid parental leave.

In 2013, a subsistence allowance for one child (40€ monthly) was introduced to support low-income families. Families with more than three children additionally receive 500€ per child per year until the child is 18 or up to 24 if the child is in education.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Kazassi, E.H. and M. Karamessini 2017.
World Bank 2016.

Historical highlights and shifts

1830	Establishment of the first private school which included a kindergarten in Syros by a German named Hildner (ages 2-6 years).
1831	Establishment of another private school which included a kindergarten in Athens (ages 2-8 years) by an American named Hill and his wife. It is still operating
1836	Establishment of another well- known private school (Filekpedeftiki Eteria) which included a kindergarten in Athens for children 3-6 years old. It is still operating
1837	Establishment of the first training school for teachers with a major in preschool teaching in Syros by Hildner
1853	Same institution as the above was established in Athens by Hill and in Filekpedeftiki Eteria
1895	Statutory definition of kindergarten and preschool education
1896	First official program of lessons for kindergartens introduced
1897	Establishment of first kindergarten by E. Laskaridou in Athens. Also establishment of the first kindergarten teachers' training school in Athens by E. Laskaridou
1901	Establishment of the first child care centre in Athens
1926	Opening of first public day nursery
1929	Kindergartens come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education
1956-60	Establishment of kindergarten training departments in the pedagogical academies
1962	First official curriculum for kindergartens introduced
1966	Foundation and four-year function of one-year Kindergarten Schools in Pedagogical Academies
1971-74	Establishment of three other Kindergarten Training schools, besides the one in Athens, in Thessaloniki, Karditsa and Hania with two-year programs
1980	New Official curriculum for kindergartens
1982	Abolition of Kindergarten Schools and foundation of Early Childhood Education Departments in the Universities
1985	Independent function of kindergartens or child care centers. Foundation of experimental kindergartens in the Universities. Gradual and in certain areas mandatory kindergarten attendance. Introductory, annual and periodical CPD of kindergarten teachers at the Pedagogical Institute, the Regional Training Centers and the experimental kindergartens.
1989	New official curriculum for kindergartens
1997	Official mandate of all-day kindergartens issued
1998	Organisation and mandate of regular kindergartens
2002	New official curriculum for kindergartens. Standard operating rules for municipal and community legal entities of public day nurseries and child care centers
2006	Kindergarten attendance in the year before compulsory schooling becomes obligatory
2011	New official curriculum for kindergartens
2013	New evaluation system for pedagogical staff (not applied yet)
2016	Curriculum of uniform format for all- day kindergarten introduced
2017	Organisation and official mandate of kindergartens and primary schools (Ministerial Decision 79)

Sources: Doliopoulou 2000, 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Greece

Country expert assessment by Elsie Doliopoulou

Addressing childhood poverty issues

As is known, Greece is undergoing one of the deepest recessions in the industrialised world. In 2014, according to Eurostat's definition¹, 36% of the total population in Greece were at risk of poverty and social exclusion (Balourdos 2013), the third highest percentage among the EU28 (Eurostat 2014). According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2014), 40% of the poor in Greece lack even basic food products. In terms of childhood poverty, Eurostat data position Greece at the 5th highest level in the EU28 for children under age 6 (Eurostat 2014), whereas a UNICEF report notes that the level of severe material deprivation for families with children increased in 2015 for all types of families (26.8%), reaching 36.6% for single parent families and 31.3% for families with many children (UNICEF, 2016a). In fact, poverty among children coming from families with a low education level approached 60%, while social benefits which help in mitigating poverty in our country are almost non-existent (UNICEF 2016b; 2016c).

The effects of the crisis, such as the unemployment of parents, the reduction in family income and the increasing number of homeless have a significant impact on the physical and mental condition of the children. The family environment may no longer offer security to children who, at an age when their perceptions of the world are being formed, feel insecure and exposed to a variety of external dangers. They may be faced with malnutrition, receive limited medical and mental care, lack clothing and school items and in some cases end up victims of child labour (Carlsson-Paige and Levin 2009; Duffield and Lovell 2008; Patel 2009).

Furthermore, many children of families who are affected by the crisis may be obliged to move to smaller homes or even to child protection institutions or respective religious organisations, while some of them may end up homeless.

The differences between children affected by poverty compared to those who are not, with respect to language and behavioural development, begin to appear at the age of 2 years and increase up to the age of 5 years (see, e.g. Aber et al, 1997; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Barajas, Philipson and Brooks-Gunn 2007; Engle and Black 2008; Hilferty, Redmond, and Katz 2010). In general, there is a connection between poverty and young children's all-round development and their psychosomatic and mental health (see, e.g. Horgan 2007; Moore et al. 2009; Duncan and Magnuson 2011; Krashen 2011; Roseberry-McKibbin 2012).

Addressing the increased needs of these children presents a great challenge for early childhood educators in Greece. In this effort, educators, in many cases, request the enlistment of parents, the community or help out with their own out-of-pocket expenses and are role-models for their students as they urge them toward solidarity (e.g. through offering things they do not need to those who do).

Addressing the needs of refugee children and families

The greatest challenge faced by early childhood educators, however, is that of addressing the needs of refugees and migrants. In April 2016, 41% (over 22,000) of the total trapped in Greece (UNICEF 2016d) were children. Of these, approximately 10% are unaccompanied and separated from their families (Children's Advocate 2016; UNICEF 2016d), whose deportation or return is prohibited, resulting in their remaining in Greece permanently (Children's Advocate 2016). According to UNICEF data, children who have spent their entire lives in conflict zones (estimated to be one in eleven children aged 6 years or younger, worldwide), something which is true of many of the children reaching Greece, are at risk in terms of their brain development, on the one hand and on the other hand, are exposed to deep rooted mental trauma which has significant consequences on their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (UNICEF 2016e). These children risk their lives in their passage to non-conflict zones (UNICEF 2015) and are often obliged to abandon their home, family, friends, play, security and stability. In general, they lose

their right to childhood (UNICEF 2016f) and are exhausted, frightened and vulnerable to physical and mental illnesses (UNICEF 2016c).

In this sense, the greatest challenge over the coming years for ECEC educators in Greece is to offer, on the one hand, extensive social support and on the other hand, a stimulating educational programme. In other words, they will have to contribute, in every possible way, to decreasing and/or solving the multiple problems mentioned above which young children (Greek and foreign) encounter ever more frequently. In addition they will have to support and implement programmes incorporating developmentally appropriate teaching methods and activities based on the individual, age and socioeconomic differences of the specific children, in accordance with current scientific data.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Greece totalled 10,783,748, indicating there has been a slight decrease since 2005 (10,969,912). However, compared with the population in Greece about 20 years ago (1995: 10.535.973) the figures indicate a slight rise.

Children under age 6

In 2016, 2.6% of the total population were children under 3 years and 5.5% under 6 years. This represents a lower proportion of young children than the EU-28 average. About 20 years ago the proportion of young children was significantly higher than the average.

Table 3

Greece: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	91,603
1-year olds	91,460
2-year olds	93,427
Under age 3 total	276,490
3-year olds	99,013
4-year olds	104,446
5-year olds	108,836
Under age 6 total	312,295
0- to 6-year olds total	588,785

Table 4

Greece: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2015, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2015	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	4.1	3.3	2.9	3.1	2.6	3.0
3 to under 6 years	3.0	3.5	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.1
0 to under 6 years	5.9	6.9	5.8	6.2	5.5	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, the majority of households (83.2%) with children under age 6 in Greece were couple households. Households with single parents accounted for 1.3% of all households. These were almost exclusively single mother households (1.2%).

Table 5

Greece: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
Households – total	752,400	
Couple households	625,800	83.2
Other types of households	116,500	15.5
Single households, total	10,100	1.3
Single households, women	9,400	1.2
Single households, men	700**	0.1

*Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

The labour force participation rates of men and women (15-64 years) in Greece 2015 were 59.3% and 42.5% respectively, whereas in 2005 the respective rates were 73.4% (men) and 46% (women). Comparing the EU average employment rates (87.3) for fathers and those for Greece (85.3) in 2015, the gap was relatively small, whereas for mothers (61.0 % EU average compared with 52.9% in Greece) the gap was more significant.

Table 6

Greece: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Greece	2005	46.7	86.9
	2010	54.6	90.0
	2015	52.9	85.3
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary- 38.8	Bulgaria - 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 29.7% of children under the age of 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This was significantly higher than the EU28 average of 24.7%, placing Greece on the 23rd place in the list. Over 35.7% of the total population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Source: Eurostat 2017c.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.
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HUNGARY

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Marta Korintus

Former Director of Research,
Institute for Family, Youth and Population Policy, Budapest

Citation suggestion:

Korintus. M. 2018. "Hungary – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 522-541.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

The system of ECEC in Hungary is bi-sectoral. ECEC for children younger than 3 years of age (*bölcsőde*) is regulated by the legislation relevant to children's rights, child welfare and child protection, and is therefore part of the child welfare system, whereas ECEC for children between 3 years and compulsory school age (*óvoda*) is part of the education system. However, both sectors come under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Resources (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*), within which *bölcsőde* is the responsibility of the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs and *óvoda* is the responsibility of the State Minister for Schools. Provision and organisation of *bölcsőde* and *óvoda* are delegated to local authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The term *nevelés* has a central role in early childhood work in Hungary. It does not have an exact English equivalent, the closest translation being 'upbringing'. It is a holistic concept, including not just care and education (considered as very closely related, if not inseparable), but also health, behaviour, and social skills – everything needed in life. It has, therefore, much in common with the concept of 'social pedagogy' (as used, for example, in Denmark or Germany) or 'education in its broadest sense' (Kaga, Bennett, and Moss 2010, 104). When you provide care, you also teach children directly or indirectly and vice-versa. In other words, *nevelés* relates to the concept of 'pedagogy'.

The occupational title of core practitioners in ECEC centres for children under the age of 3 is *kisgyermeknevelő* ('Infant and Early Childhood Educator'). This name was first introduced in the relevant legislation in 2011 to replace the term *gondozónő* (Child Carer) and to acknowledge the work as pedagogical. The occupational title of core practitioners in ECEC centres for children between the ages of 3 and 6 is *óvodapedagógus* ('Pre-primary Pedagogue').

Both jobs and the content of the respective initial professional studies follow the pedagogical tradition, and both have the word 'pedagogue' (*kisgyermeknevelő* and *óvodapedagógus*) in the Hungarian names. It is important to note that the translation 'Pre-primary Pedagogue' does not indicate a school-type approach in kindergartens.

There are several types of qualification which are acceptable when wishing to work as a *kisgyermeknevelő*. Three of these in *Table 1* can be currently acquired during initial professional studies. However, five other, older qualifications are also still legally recognised (15/1998 NM *rendelet*). *Table 1* shows the details and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at end of this section).

Table 1

Hungary: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p><i>Kisgyermeknevelő</i> Infant and Early Childhood Educator</p> <p>Previous and still valid title: Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (Nursery specialist)</p>	<p><i>Bölcsőde</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head</p>	1–3 years	<p>Childcare Certificate (<i>kisgyermekgondozó,-nevelő</i>) ECTS points: n/a² EQF: Level 5 ISCED 2013F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>or</p> <p>Childcare Diploma (<i>csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő asszisztens</i>) Since 2017 the occupational title ECEC Assistant is used. ECTS points: 120 EQF: Level 5 ISCED 2013F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 5</p> <p>or</p> <p>(optional qualification route since 2009) Bachelor's degree, 3 years university (<i>csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő</i>) ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>or</p> <p>one of the older (up to 2002) Childcare Certificates listed in legislation ECTS points: n/a EQF: Level 3 ISCED 2013F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 and 3</p>
<p><i>Óvodapedagógus</i> Pre-primary Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Óvoda</i> Kindergarten 3–6 years</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head with group responsibility in small centres</p>	3–6 years	<p>Bachelor, 3 years university ECTS points: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Centre Heads: 5 years' work experience as pedagogue plus special exam</p>
<p><i>Dajka</i> Auxiliary Co-worker</p>	<p><i>Bölcsőde</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Óvoda</i> Kindergarten 3–6 years</p>	<p>Co-worker with no formal IPS or no specialist qualification</p>		<p>No requirements</p> <p>Available since 1990: Special training course leading to a vocational certificate for support staff in <i>óvoda</i>.</p>

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014.

² n/a = not applicable

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staffing qualifications are different for core practitioners in ECEC centres for children under the age of 3 and in those for children between the ages of 3 and 6.

The minimum qualification requirement for **Early Childhood Caregivers and Educators** has been at the upper secondary vocational level since 2001. However, many older workers still have earlier, lower level qualifications, which are accepted as equivalents with a specified number of years' experience.

No qualification is required for **Auxiliary Co-workers** (Assistants) who do the cleaning, bring the food to the children's room, prepare the room for after-lunch nap, etc.

The requirements for **Centre Heads** in settings for children under the age of 3 are:

- Master's degree specialised in early childhood pedagogy, *or*
- the same as for core practitioners:
 - (1) **Infant and Early Childhood Educator** Bachelor's degree, *or*
 - (2) one of the qualifications listed in legislation: *bölcsődei szakgondozó (OKJ)*, *csecsemő- és kisgyermekgondozó (OKJ)*, *csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő-gondozó (OKJ)*, *csecsemő- és gyermeknevelő-gondozó (OKJ)*, *kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő (OKJ)*, *csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő asszisztens (FOSZK)*, *csecsemő- és gyermekgondozó (OKJ)*, *or*
 - (3) a higher education degree in some other study areas listed in legislation (e.g. health visiting, health management, pedagogy, social pedagogy) in addition to one of the qualifications as for regular contact staff as specified in the 15/1998 NM *rendelet* (Ministerial regulation).

Employers usually issue calls for the job requiring one of the higher level qualifications.

In 2014, there were 7,126 core practitioners employed in *bölcsőde* (0-3), 98.1% of them qualified.³ There were approximately 7% with a BA qualification as **Infant and Early Childhood Educator**, 23.2% with a post-secondary specialist vocational qualification, 47.1% with an upper secondary specialist vocational qualification and 20% with an older specialist vocational qualification obtained before the year 2002. Out of the total number of core practitioners, 12% had a higher education degree in other study areas, and 15% had an additional specialist qualification (ten-month course) in addition to the minimum qualification.⁴

Tertiary level education has been available for **Pre-primary Pedagogues** since 1958/59, and this became obligatory in 1993. Since 2008, this is a BA level course. Only the BA level qualification (and its earlier tertiary equivalent) is accepted for *óvodapedagógus* as the minimum qualification, i.e. 100% of Pre-primary Pedagogues in kindergarten settings have a specialist higher education degree.

Auxiliary Co-workers/Assistants (*dajka*) work alongside Pre-primary Pedagogues. They basically perform care work and cleaning. No special qualification is required for this job. In 1990,

³ Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015

⁴ Own calculations based on Hungarian Central Statistical Office data 2015.

however, a special training course was set up for these workers who now can acquire a vocational certificate for support staff in *óvoda* (3-6).

Centre Heads in settings for children between the ages of 3 and 6 have to have:

- the *óvodapedagógus* qualification,
- a certificate of having passed a special exam for head of centres and
- five years of work experience as a Pre-primary Pedagogue.⁵

In 2014, there were 56,776 people employed in *óvoda* (3-6): 31,234 Pre-primary Pedagogues (55% of all workers); 215 contracted Pre-primary Pedagogues (0.3% of all workers); 21,018 educational support personnel (37% of all workers)⁶; and 4,309 other employees (7.5% of all workers)⁷.

Infant and Early Childhood Educators are exclusively female in *bölcsőde* (0-3), and there are only a handful of male Pre-primary Pedagogues in *óvoda* (3-6).

There are no systematically compiled data on the ethnic background of workers in *bölcsőde*. In 2014, approximately 9% of Pre-primary Pedagogues in *óvoda* had a minority ethnic background.

Table 2 shows the composition of the ECEC workforce in Hungary. There are no data available for auxiliary staff in *bölcsőde* and only general data, not separated according to staff categories, on 'educational support personnel' and 'other support personnel' (e.g. *dajka*) in *óvoda*.

Table 2

Hungary: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Bölcsőde (0–3 settings)	
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2014: approx. 7%*
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2014: 23.2%*
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	2014: 47.1%*
Staff with pre-2002 types of specialist qualification	2014: approx. 20%*
Staff with no formal IPS	2014: 1.9%*
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff	2014: 0%*
Staff with minority ethnic background	No systematically compiled national data
Óvoda (3–6 settings)	
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2014/2015: approx. 100%**
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2014/2015: 0%**
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	2014/2015: 0%**
Staff with non-specialist qualification	2014/2015: 0%**
Staff with no formal IPS	2014/2015: 0%**
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff	2014/2015: 1.7% **
Core workers with minority ethnic background	2014/2015: approx. 9% **

* Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015; **Ministry of Human Resources 2016.

⁵ 2011 évi CXCV. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről (Act no. CXCV on public education)

⁶ There is a list of 19 occupations in the legislation that come under the category of 'educational support personnel'. These include assistants (*dajka*), cleaners, librarians, special needs educator assistants, paediatricians, nurses working with the paediatricians but also, for instance, system administrators. These jobs are not necessarily full time and not all kindergartens employ such staff, except the assistants and cleaners.

⁷ Ministry of Human Resources 2016.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

The qualifying routes for core practitioners in the two types of ECEC centres are separate.

Infant and Early Childhood Educators (*kisgyermeknevelő*)

Since 1991, the entry requirement for all initial professional studies for the Infant and Early Childhood Educators has been the completion of the secondary school leaving exam. Before 2009, several types of qualification were awarded at the upper secondary and post-secondary level for those working in *bölcsőde* (0-3).⁸⁹ In 2009, a BA-level qualification was introduced. In 2012, structural changes were made to the National Qualification Register (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ*) in accordance with the government's intention to change the system of vocational training in order to meet the needs surfacing in the economy.¹⁰

The current system in 2017 includes three different pathways:

- higher education studies (BA level) for the award of *csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő* (Infant and Early Childhood Educator);
- an upper secondary vocational qualification for Infant and Early Childhood Caregivers and Educators (*kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő*); and
- a former post-secondary vocational qualification offered at accredited secondary schools in collaboration with teacher training colleges – now transformed into studies resulting in the *csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő asszisztens*¹¹ (Infant and Early Childhood Educator Assistant) qualification, offered by teacher training colleges. However, there are plans to phase out this form of IPS in the near future.

Therefore, there will be only two levels of initial professional studies for infant and toddler professionals working in *bölcsőde* (0-3): one at the upper secondary vocational education/training level and one at the BA level. All qualifications awarded earlier are still valid when applying for a job.

Table 3

Hungary: Infant and Early Childhood Educator

<p>Job title in Hungarian: <i>Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (nursery specialist)</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, specific entrance criteria</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years university – specialising in early childhood education and care</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: <i>Bölcsőde</i> (ECEC centre for children younger than 3 years of age)</p>

⁸ More details at: Eurydice 2016.

⁹ All state-recognised vocational qualifications awarded within or outside the school system are defined in the National Qualification Register (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ*).

¹⁰ See details in the article published on the Eurofound website (Eurofound 2016)

¹¹ Please note the misleading name 'assistant'; persons obtaining this qualification are fully qualified core professionals.

Table 4

Hungary: Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator

Job title in Hungarian: <i>Kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (nursery specialist)
Entry requirements: 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate Professional studies: 2 years (1,300-1,560 hours) upper secondary vocational course Award: Certificate in Childcare and Education ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplace: <i>Bölcsőde</i> (ECEC centre for children younger than 3 years of age), family day care home, children's residential home

Table 5

Hungary: Infant Early Childhood Educator Assistant*

Job title in Hungarian: <i>Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő asszisztens</i>
Entry requirements: 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate Professional studies: 2 years post-secondary studies at a higher education institute (teacher training college) Award: Diploma in Infant and Early Childhood studies ECTS points: 120 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013: 0922 ISCED 2011: 5 Main ECEC workplace: <i>Bölcsőde</i> (ECEC centre for children younger than 3 years of age), family day care home, children's residential home

* This qualification route is likely to be phased out soon.

Pre-primary Pedagogues (*óvodapedagógus*)

By way of contrast, there is only one required qualifying route for core practitioners in *óvoda* (3-6) – resulting in a BA qualification.

There is no entrance exam either for the *kisgyermeknevelő* or the *óvodapedagógus* BA study programmes. The entrance criteria for both consist of the number of points accumulated based on the grades (evaluation) received during the secondary school leaving exam and the singing and physical abilities of prospective *kisgyermeknevelő* and the singing and speech abilities of prospective *óvodapedagógus*.

Table 6

Hungary: Pre-primary Pedagogue

Job title in Hungarian: <i>Óvodapedagógus</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, specific entrance criteria (see above) Professional studies: 3 years university, specialising in pre-primary education Award: Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: <i>Óvoda</i> (ECEC centre for children between the ages of 3 and 6), children's residential home

The qualifying route for Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogues is the same as for Pre-primary education professionals, with a specialisation in one of the minority languages used in Hungary. By the end of their professional studies, these pedagogues have been prepared to educate children (according to the Hungarian Kindergarten Core Programme) both in Hungarian and in the chosen minority language. They are also expected to demonstrate a good knowledge of the minority language, history and culture.

Table 7

Hungary: (Minority Ethnic*) Pre-primary Pedagogue

<p>Job title in Hungarian: <i>Nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus</i></p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional (minority ethnic)</p>
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, specific entrance criteria (see above)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years university, specialising in pre-primary education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013: 0114</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: <i>Óvoda</i> (ECEC centre for children between the ages of 3 and 6), children's residential home</p>

* Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovene, Roma

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Infant and Early Childhood Educator (*Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő*)

In 2016, twelve universities and teacher training colleges offered BA courses in Infant and Early Childhood Pedagogy.

Competence specifications are grouped into four categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Ability, (3) Attitude, (4) Autonomy and responsibility. Some examples:

- (1) **Knowledge** is expected to cover the development, characteristics, care, education, and feeding of young children; the options and methods of forming good habits; the importance and effects of play, arts and singing; the legal framework of working with young children; administrative tasks; ethics, specifics of caring for children in ECEC services; the effects of family upbringing and the importance of early attachment; electronic information systems.
- (2) **Abilities** include applying a holistic view towards educating and caring for the children; to apply early childhood pedagogical methods; to recognise the processes of normal development and to interpret family contexts; to form good relationships with the children, their families and other professionals; to create conditions suitable for the education and care of young children; to organise the daily routine; to handle information and document children's development; to communicate well.
- (3) **Attitudes** include the recognition of professional competencies and their limitations; use reflections; having empathy.
- (4) In terms of **autonomy and responsibility**: to make decisions, to demonstrate responsibility; to cooperate with other professionals; to observe ethics; to be able to make compromises; to be able to work in teams.

Curricular areas: The overall emphases of the study programme are set out in Table 8 below. The ratio of theory to practice is 83% to 17%.

Table 8

Hungary: Curricular areas – IPS Infant and Early Childhood Educator

Curricular areas	ECTS points
Social sciences and information technology	15-20
Pedagogy, psychology	45-55
Health sciences	20-25
Methodology of early childhood education and care, supporting development and care	25-30
Practicum: at least 6 weeks (240 hours) in the final year, spent in a <i>bölcsőde</i> (0-3)	30
Optional subject	15-18
Thesis	10
Total ECTS points	180

ECEC Assistant (*Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő asszisztens*)

Competence specifications are grouped into two categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Ability.

Some examples:

- (1) **Knowledge** is expected to cover the pedagogical, psychological and lifestyle development of children between the ages of 0-5; the options and methods of supporting development; health and care issues; forms and methods of working with families; professional skills development; inclusive, integrated and alternative education and care.
- (2) **Abilities** include applying the above knowledge to the education and care for children; to recognise the needs of children and to provide professionally adequate solutions/answers; to apply knowledge in documentation, in organising the day for the children's groups and in communication; to recognise professional competencies and their limitations.

Curricular areas: The main curricular areas are set out below in *Table 9*. The ratio of theory to practice is 55% to 45%. The competency module is to be provided by all higher education vocational training programmes, the pedagogy module by all pedagogical programmes and the vocational module by the specific IPS¹².

Table 9

Hungary: Curricular areas – IPS ECEC Assistant

Curricular areas	ECTS points
Competency module	12
Pedagogy module	21
Vocational (infant and early childhood education) module	57
Practicum: at least 560 hours spent in a <i>bölcsőde</i> (0-3) in the 4 th semester	30
Total ECTS points	120

Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator (*Kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő*)

This form of vocational education is based on a national curriculum framework¹³, which contains modules of vocational requirements.

Competence requirements: There is no description of competencies in official documents. The ratio of theory to practice is 60% to 40%.

¹² 230/2012. (VIII. 28.) Korm. rendelet [Government Regulation 230/2012 (VIII. 28.)

¹³ All nationally recognised vocational education studies (listed in the National Register OKJ=*Országos Képzési Jegyzék*) are regulated by legislation and are required to follow the national curriculum framework for each specific vocation.

Curricular areas (modules):

- Employment, safety
- Social studies, pedagogy, psychology
- First aid
- Childcare
- Tasks related to early childhood education and care
- Family day care, part-time care

Pre-primary Pedagogue (óvodapedagógus)

Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogue (nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus)

In 2016, 15 universities and teacher training colleges offered this study programme.

Competence requirements are grouped into four categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Ability, (3) Attitude, (4) Autonomy and responsibility. Some examples:

- (1) **Knowledge** is expected to cover the links between societal changes, public education and pre-primary education; the documents, legislations and regulations related to their work; theory and practice of development and education of 3-6 years old children; the specifics of working with special needs and disadvantaged children and their families; the methods of organising activities; theoretical and practical issues of mental and physical health; and the theory and methods of assessment, evaluation and quality improvement.
- (2) **Abilities** will be to provide the necessary conditions for the personal development of children; to recognise and critically analyse problems and solve conflicts; to work together with families, other professionals and services; to learn new competencies, and to communicate in a foreign language.
- (3) Some of the professional **attitudes** and behaviours include a child centred approach and ability to play; good communication skills; social responsibility; respect for human values; ability to cooperate in a team; environmentally conscious behaviour.
- (4) In terms of **autonomy and responsibility**: to carry out pedagogical activities; to assess their professional options and tasks; to make pedagogical decisions.

Curricular areas: These are set out in *Table 10* below. The ratio of theory to practice is 80% to 20%.

Table 10

Hungary: Curricular areas – (Minority Ethnic) Pre-school Pedagogue

Curricular areas	ECTS points
Pedagogy, psychology, social sciences and information technology	32-45
Methodology of early childhood education and care in <i>óvoda</i> (related to play, native language, literature, mathematics, surrounding environment, music and singing, visual arts and physical education)	54-72
Additional special subjects (such as inclusion, family pedagogy, multi- and intercultural education and special needs) or ethnic minority subjects (such as ethnic language, ethnic minority culture and bilingualism)	32-40
Practicum: at least 8 weeks (at least 6 weeks of these in an ethnic minority setting for Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogue students)	26-34
Thesis	10
Total ECTS points	180

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There are no alternative forms of qualification accrument for either of the occupations. The BA level qualification is the highest level of initial professional studies both for Infant and Early Childhood Educators and Pre-primary Pedagogues. Core practitioners with a BA can study further for an MA in educational sciences.

Formal opportunities for moving up qualification frameworks are different for *bölcsőde* (0-3) and *óvoda* (3-6) core practitioners, and opportunities for moving across qualifications are limited for both. Only the specialised qualifications are accepted for work in each kind of setting. For example, Infant and Early Childhood Educators wishing to work as a Pre-primary Pedagogue have to complete the full study programme for Pre-primary Pedagogy. Some subjects which were part of the initial qualifying route (up to 75% of the curriculum content is similar) may be acknowledged. However, this does not mean that the student can finish the course in a shorter length of time.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners working in both infant-toddler centres and kindergartens takes the form of a practicum¹⁴. The general requirements for higher education programmes are stated in legislation¹⁵, as for all nationally recognised vocational education studies¹⁶ and are required to follow the national curriculum framework for each specific vocational occupation. Government Regulation 230/2012 states the requirement to draw up a contract for the cooperation between IPS institutions and ECEC centres for students' field-based studies, including the rights and obligations of higher education institutions and of the hosting ECEC centre.

The technical descriptions of the higher education study programmes for Infant and Early Childhood Educators and for Pre-primary Pedagogues and the qualification requirements and expected outcomes of the Infant and Early Childhood Caregiver and Education (VET) describe in detail the specific requirements in terms of content, length of time, number of credits, and so on. All include a longer, contiguous time period to be spent at an ECEC centre, usually during the last semester of the course of study.

Table 11

Hungary: Duration of practica during IPS in higher and vocational education institutions

Qualification	Length of time spent in the training place	ECTS points
Infant and Early Childhood Educator (Bachelor)	At least 6 weeks (240 hours) in the final year	30
Infant and Early Childhood Educator Assistant (Childcare Diploma)	At least 560 hours spent in a <i>bölcsőde</i> (0-3) in the 4th semester	30
Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator (Childcare Certificate)	315 hours altogether	n/a
Pre-primary Pedagogue (Bachelor)	8 weeks	26-34

¹⁴ Field practice: practice during which a group of students acquires and practices professional skills in a natural environment or in real working conditions under the supervision of an instructor.

¹⁵ Government Regulation 230/2012 (VIII. 28.) on certain aspects of higher education and vocational training within the framework of higher education (230/2012. (VIII. 28.) Korm. rendelet a felsőoktatási szakképzésről és a felsőoktatási képzéshez kapcsolódó szakmai gyakorlat egyes kérdéseiről)

¹⁶ 2011. évi CLXXXVII. törvény a szakképzésről (Act CLXXXVII on VET)

There are no criteria for the selection of ECEC centres where the students can spend their practicum. Usually, nearby centres or centres known to the university staff are the ones contracted. During the 1990s, one CPD course was designed for people mentoring/supporting the students in the ECEC centres for children under the age of 3. However, it was not adopted into legislation and has been discontinued since. Regardless, the ECEC centres are expected to nominate staff to help and supervise students while doing the observations and/or the work assigned to them. Individual student's work is evaluated at the end of the practicum period. Some remuneration for the mentoring staff in the ECEC centres is provided by the higher education institution.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

CPD is defined by legislation both for Infant and Early Childhood Educators and Pre-primary Pedagogues. Non-qualified co-workers are not required to attend CPD.

Qualified core practitioners both in the social and education sector can obtain a specialist professional diploma if they have worked at least five years in a relevant job, by passing a specialist exam related to their specific profession. The requirements both for the specialist exams and the CPD programmes are specified by the *Nemzeti Rehabilitációs és Szociális Hivatal*¹⁷ (National Office for Rehabilitation and Social Affairs). Passing the exams can result in a salary increase, depending on the employer's decision.

Infant and Early Childhood Educator (*kisgyermeknevelő*)

The Social Act of 1993¹⁸ lays down the obligation of core practitioners in social and child welfare services (including *kisgyermeknevelő*) to attend CPD programmes in order to maintain their job and to stay on the National Register of Care Workers. In case of not fulfilling the obligation, the core practitioner's employment can be terminated. The 9/2000 Ministerial Decree¹⁹ describes the regulatory framework and details the requirements, including the number of credit points to be collected, the type of formal CPD programmes that can be accepted for accreditation and for prospective CPD providers, the process of applying to have different programmes accredited.

One CPD period is six years, during which core practitioners with a higher education, post-secondary, or upper secondary qualification have to accumulate 80 credit points, whereas those with a lower level (older) qualification have to accumulate 60 credit points to stay on the National Register. If someone fails to achieve this, she/he can be taken off the register and could lose her/his job as a consequence. There are no specific requirements for heads of ECEC provision in terms of CPD.

All formal CPD programmes are accredited with a different number of credit points which are not linked to the ECTS-system and are not taken into account when participating in other higher education courses.

- a. *Courses of at least 30 hours* addressing different professional themes and ending with some form of report (30-50 credit points);

¹⁷ As a result of reshuffling by the Government, the National Office for Rehabilitation and Social Affairs has been closed down as from 1 September 2016 and its duties distributed to other government institutes.

¹⁸ 1993. évi törvény a szociális igazgatásról és szociális ellátásról

¹⁹ 9/2000 (VIII.4.) SzCsM rendelet a személyes gondoskodást végző személyek továbbképzéséről és a szociális szakvizsgáról

- b. *Group work of at least 25 hours* related to professional personal development and skills development, including case studies and supervision (25-35 credit points);
- c. *Meetings or conferences having at least five presentations* in social policy, child protection, child welfare, or social work (5-10 credit points);
- d. *Study trip* lasting at least three days *to learn about a certain topic or to gain experience* (10-20 credit points);
- e. *Professional workshops* with at least six meetings in a year addressing different themes each time (10-20 credit points).

In order to have all credit points recognised in a 6-year CPD period, the *kisgyermeknevelő* has to attend at least one 30-hour course directly related to work with children under the age of 3.

Core practitioners in *bölcsőde* (0-3) have 45-46 days of paid leave days a year (20-21 working days regular annual leave and 25 working days additional leave for pedagogues). 10-15 days of these can be used for professional development. The Centre Head has to design a yearly CPD plan that takes into account all staff with still unmet duties in order to make sure that everyone who needs to fulfil their CPD obligation has the opportunity to do so. The plan includes a schedule for attending programmes, the substitution of staff while they are away from work and a financial plan for support. Employers have to ensure remunerated time for the CPD and to pay the participation fee.

Any organisation or legal person can apply for CPD programmes to be accredited. The National Office for Rehabilitation and Social Affairs accredits and allocates credit points to all CPD programmes for staff working in social, child welfare and child protection services once a year, and maintains the National Register of Care Workers. The duty of CPD providers to document the programmes is also detailed in the Ministerial Decree 9/2000. Monitoring of accredited programmes is done by the National Office.

The qualification requirements for Centre Heads are listed in the legislation.²⁰ There are no additional requirements in terms of CPD.

Pre-primary Pedagogue (*óvodapedagógus*)

The Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education (*2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről*), which has replaced the former Education Act of 1993, lays down the obligation of all pedagogues (including kindergarten core practitioners) to attend CPD programmes. The Government Decree on Teacher Further Training (277/1997 (XII.22.) *Kormányrendelet*) details the conditions related to participation in and funding of CPD programmes, the rights and duties of both staff and centre leaders and the process of accrediting CPD programmes. Participating in CPD programmes is also a legislative right, not just a duty for pedagogues.

Kindergarten core practitioners have to attend 120 teaching hours (45 minutes/teaching hour) of pedagogue CPD courses within every seven years. Those who finish the courses successfully are mostly given a financial reward by their employer, although this is not binding. Those who do not meet this obligation or cannot finish the courses successfully can lose their job. Heads of *óvoda* (3-6) have to attend CPD courses that contribute to their knowledge advancement and skills as a manager of the centre.

As is the case with staff in infant-toddler centres, core practitioners in kindergartens have 45-46 days of leave days a year (20-21 working days regular leave and 25 working days additional leave for pedagogues). The head of the centre has to design a five-year CPD plan that takes into account all staff with still unmet duties in order to make sure that everyone who needs to fulfil their CPD obligation has the opportunity to do so. The plan includes a schedule for at-

²⁰ 15/1998 (IV. 30.) NM rendelet a személyes gondoskodást nyújtó gyermekjóléti, gyermekvédelmi intézmények, valamint személyek szakmai feladatairól és működésük feltételeiről.

tending programmes, the substitution of staff while they are away from work and a financial plan for support.

Being a public education duty, pedagogue CPD programmes are free of charge. The costs for the participants are covered by contributions from the state (central budget), the provider and the employer. If the CPD programme is not offered within the state educational duty, the contribution by the state cannot be more than 80 per cent unless the course is necessary for obtaining the next level (qualification) within the Promotion System of Teachers²¹.

Employers have to ensure remunerated time for CPD activities and to pay the participation fee.

Pedagogue CPD courses have to be approved by the Minister responsible for education. Applications for running such programmes are to be submitted to the Education Office (*Oktatási Hivatal*). The decisions of the Minister are based on the recommendations of the Pedagogue CPD Accreditation Council.

Prospective providers can submit programmes for accreditation all the year round. The Education Office keeps a register of approved programmes, makes it available on its website and is responsible for inspecting them. The duty of providers to document the programmes is also detailed in the decree.

Any organisations registered as providers of adult education can apply for accreditation with pedagogue CPD programmes within the higher education accreditation system.

Main providers of CPD

Most of the CPD programme providers – both for *kisgyermeknevelő* and *óvodapedagógus* – are public. The roles and responsibilities described by the legislation apply to public and private providers alike. They have to follow the same procedures and have to comply with the same national standards specified in the 9/2000 Ministerial Decree and the 277/1997 Government Decree. Their choice of teachers/trainers employed and programme content influence their chances of accreditation and the number of credit points the programme is awarded.

Research on CPD

There have been no large-scale research studies on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel over the past five years. Some EU funded projects mapped currently available CPD courses and needs but these were just one element of other, broader themes, and most often resulted in new CPD courses.

Challenges regarding CPD

In practice, there are several problems that limit rights for and choices of CPD programmes. Paying fees is one of these. CPD programmes for *kisgyermeknevelő* charge registration fees which are usually higher than the available financial subsidies, since the programmes are offered at market prices. Employers can provide additional funding but employees still have to cover part of the costs.

Finding replacements for practitioners attending CPD programmes is another problem both for *bölcsőde* (0-3) and *óvoda* (3-6). Other practitioners from the same centre usually substitute, but it can be difficult for the Centre Head to keep the balance between guaranteeing available leave days for staff members and absences due to CPD activities, especially for smaller centres with only a few staff.

The certificates of CPD programmes are only partially and selectively accepted across the two sectors (e.g. pedagogues working in children's homes or in a childcare centre can fulfil part of their professional development duties in pedagogue CPD programmes).

²¹ Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education (*2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről*)

There is no systematically collated data on the content of CPD programmes. The specific topics are not prioritised, they arise as the result of the accreditation process. Prospective CPD providers aim to submit topics of interest since there is a (market) competition for attracting participants.

In addition to compulsory CPD, most core professionals participate in non-formal professional development activities in the centre, such as regular consultations, organised visits to other centres, etc. The content and form of these activities depend on the perceived needs of children, parents and the staff themselves.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

There have been several educational reforms introduced by the government since 2011. Some of these affect the core staff both in *óvoda* (3-6) and *bölcsőde* (0-3).

Reform of vocational education and training (VET)

Major changes were introduced in 2013, modifying the structure of VET schools, the content and the qualification requirements of VET, as well as the organisation and implementation of practical trainings. All these changes have aimed at better serving the demands and needs of the labour market/economy and increasing the attractiveness of VET. In 2013, responsibility for VET schools changed from the local government level to central maintenance by the state (Eurofound 2016).

Career advancement model for pedagogues (Promotion System of Teachers)

The career advancement model for pedagogues²² (or Promotion System of Teachers) has been developed to link career advancement with evaluation. Before the introduction of the model in 2013, wages of pedagogues were determined solely according to qualification and years of work experience. Quality of work was not taken into consideration. The new system aims to redress this earlier situation.

Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education and the Government Decree 326/2013 legislates the new model and the different terms and conditions for promotion throughout the career. The conditions to reach the different grades are based on the qualification required to fulfil the position, qualifying examinations and qualifications granted within the framework of qualification procedures. The main elements determining the results of the qualification procedures are the portfolio prepared by the teacher and the observation of his/her practice/teaching. In case the trainee, or the teacher in grade Teacher I (see below) has been assessed through a qualifying examination as 'unsatisfactory', his/her public employee status or employment ceases. The guaranteed remuneration of the different grades and within that the payment categories are defined in Annex 7 of the Act in percentage to the remuneration basis.

The categories are:

a) Trainee

After finishing IPS, the graduates can be employed only as trainees in a pedagogical/teaching position for two years. At the end of that period, they have to take a qualifying exam. If successful, they are promoted to Teacher I level.

b) Teacher I

Pedagogues (teachers) with at least six years of work experience can take the next step in the qualification procedure. After nine years of experience it becomes compulsory. In the course

²² The Act names „teachers” but pedagogues working in *óvoda* and *bölcsőde* are also covered by the model.

of the qualification procedure and the exam a committee evaluates the pedagogue's activities and the teacher's portfolio according to 'pedagogue competency' indicators, which are defined in the 326/2013 Government Decree.

c) Teacher II

After working as a Teacher I for six years, pedagogues can take the next step in the qualification procedure. In order to reach the Master Teacher level, pedagogues have to have a preparation plan, an application and they have to present and defend their application.

d) Master Teacher

In order to reach the Teacher-Researcher level, the pedagogues have to prepare an application, present it and defend it.

e) Teacher-Researcher

Pedagogues who have reached Teacher II or Master Teacher level, have 14 years work experience, have obtained a scientific (doctoral) degree and publish regularly, can participate in the qualifying procedure to obtain the Teacher-Researcher level. The procedure requires the preparation of a Teacher-Researcher application, its presentation and defence, and the evaluation of the portfolio.

Extending the Promotion System of Teachers to *kisgyermeknevelő* with a higher education degree

Since 1 January 2016, all Infant and Early Childhood and Educators with a higher degree have been included in the Promotion System of Teachers, affecting about 14% of the core practitioners in *bölcsőde* (0-3). Entering the system means that higher wages can be achieved.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

There have been several projects funded with the use of EU funding both in the education sector and in the social welfare sector. Most of them aimed to provide a basis for and develop the professional aspects and/or training materials required by the reforms of the education system and the social services. Most of them included at least one research element but not specifically aimed at ECEC staffing issues.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Pre-primary Pedagogues earn less than Primary School Teachers and the salaries of Infant and Early Childhood Educators are lower still.

94% of *kisgyermeknevelő* and 90% of *óvodapedagógus* worked in a public ECEC centre in 2015 and they received salaries according to unified wage scales. The wages of *kisgyermeknevelő* are based on the wage table of public employees regulated jointly in the Act XXXIII of 1992 on public employees,²³ and the Government Decree 257/2000.²⁴ The table determines the mini-

²³ 1992. évi XXXIII. törvény a közalkalmazottak jogállásáról

²⁴ 257/2000. (XII. 26.) Korm. rendelet a közalkalmazottak jogállásáról szóló 1992. évi XXXIII. törvénynek a szociális, valamint a gyermekjóléti és gyermekvédelmi ágazatban történő végrehajtásáról.

mum wages based on the qualification and number of years worked. The Government Decree states the additional wage supplements.

The wages of *óvodapedagógus* are determined by a so-called pedagogue wage table, which takes into consideration the number of years worked and the level (qualification) within the Promotion System of Teachers. This table is the basis for all teachers/pedagogues in the entire education system.

The wages of core practitioners in *bölcsőde* (0-3) are low, partly because they are part of the social sector, where the wages are the lowest in Hungary, and partly because many of them do not have higher level qualifications. Core practitioners in *óvoda* (3-6), and pedagogues in general have higher wages, partly because they all have BA level qualifications and partly because of the government's reform of the evaluation of pedagogues and teachers working in public education (Promotion System of Teachers). However, the level of wages has just reached the level of the average wage in Hungary (247,800 HUF or 794€ in 2015).

The wages of *kisgyermeknevelő* are hardly enough to live on without additional support (such as the partner's income, etc.). Employers can pay higher salaries than specified in the wage tables but hardly ever do in spite of the fact that there is no ceiling. The reason is that additional amounts have to be covered by the employer, not the state contribution.

In both types of ECEC centres there is additional payment for posts of responsibility, which is also regulated in legislation.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Workers in *bölcsőde* (0-3) and *óvoda* (3-6) are almost exclusively employed full-time. The official weekly working time amounts to 40 hours. There are no national data regarding staff in *bölcsőde*, but the author's own estimate is that 99% of them work full-time. In 2014/15 the Ministry of Human Resources indicated that 99% of the staff in *óvoda* also worked full-time and only 1% part-time.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Newly qualified core practitioners are legally obliged to spend a certain period of time as a trainee (*gyakornok*) when they begin to work in their job. Act XXXIII of 1992 on public employees states the requirement for applying the trainee programme in the case of newly qualified staff and Government Decrees describe the varying details for the different sectors. A *kisgyermeknevelő* and also a *óvodapedagógus* who is new in the job has to work as a trainee for a period of two years. The Government Decree 257/2000 lists the requirements for the ECEC centre to develop the guidelines, to appoint a mentor and to set out the tasks and duties of both the mentor and the trainee. At the end of the trainee programme period, the trainee is evaluated. Failure results in job loss. In the absence of a central government contribution for the mentoring, the ECEC centre has to provide the mentoring remuneration from its own budget.

Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education introduced the Promotion System of Teachers, which applies to Pre-primary Pedagogues also. Its first level is the trainee programme, which lasts for two years. Government Decree 326/2013 lists the relevant detailed requirements, covering the need for mentoring, the tasks and duties of both the mentor and the trainee. The trainee is to be evaluated regularly every six months and at the end of the trainee period. If the trainee's certification/qualification exam is successful, she can be ranked into the Teacher I category.

8.4 Non-contact time

Legislation states that the contact time for core practitioners in *bölcsőde* (0-3) is seven hours per day²⁵. One hour per day can be used for anything else, such as preparation work, staff

meetings, administration, etc. Contact time for core practitioners in *óvoda* (3-6) is 32 hours a week²⁵, the rest can be used for preparation work, or anything else related to their work.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Since the introduction of the Bachelor level qualification for *kisgyermeknevelő* and the Promotion System of Teachers including *óvodapedagógus*, better pay and career advancement opportunities are available and therefore there is no severe shortage of staff in either *bölcsőde* (0-3) or *óvoda* (3-6) nationally. Shortages may be experienced in settlements where the population is aging and decreasing.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The workforce challenges Hungary is facing are mainly related to the level of wages and the requirements of the Promotion System of Teachers. Staff working in ECEC centres have always had lower wages compared with those of teachers working in schools. Staff working in *bölcsőde* (0-3) have even lower wages than those working in *óvoda* (3-6). ECEC staff have been unhappy with the recent reforms, especially with the central management of institutions and the low wages. The resulting demonstrations initiated some changes carried out by the government in terms of management structure and financing. However, the wages of core staff in *bölcsőde* are still lower than those of their counterparts in *óvoda*. Some wage supplements were introduced for them recently, but the average level of salaries was still only about 53% of the national average in 2013.

The introduction of the Promotion System of Teachers brought about a 40-50% raise in salaries for core practitioners in the education system. However, the requirement to prepare a portfolio documenting their work (activities and achievements) is a new concept for many and involves a lot of work. It is more readily accepted by newly qualified staff, but creates quite serious challenges and sometimes problems for those who have been working for decades.

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HUNGARY

Key Contextual Data

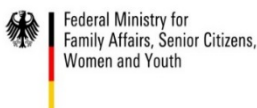
Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Marta Korintus
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Hungary – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 542-554.

Funded by:



Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Overall responsibility for the education system in Hungary lies with the Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*). Under this umbrella infant-toddler centres¹ for children under 3 years of age (*bölcsőde*) come under the auspices of the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs and are part of the child welfare system. Kindergartens for children from age 3 up to school entry age at 6 (*óvoda*) come under the jurisdiction of the State Minister for Schools and are part of the education system. The system in Hungary can therefore be described as bi-sectoral, despite being partially integrated within one ministry. Local authorities are responsible for the provision and organisation of both infant-toddler centres and kindergartens.

Source: Korintus, M. 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

The transmission of democratic and humanistic values and respect for the individual are considered to be key goals in educational and learning processes in Hungary. Emphasis is placed on the basic right to education and equality of opportunity. For the early childhood sector, the importance of cooperation between families, ECEC centres and the state is also emphasised.

Key legislation for kindergartens as well as infant-toddler centres and family day care services are: (1) the 1993 Education Act (Law CXC, *törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről*), amended in 2011, which among other things reversed the previous tendency to decentralisation regarding the running of ECEC provision and curricular regulations; and (2) the Child Protection Act (XXXI, 1997). Further key legislation is the Government Decree 229/2012 on the implementation of the Education Act and the Ministerial Decree 20/2012 on the management of educational institutions. Infant-toddler centres have to comply with the minimum requirements for education and care in nurseries (Ministerial Decree 15/1998, IV.30 about the Task and Operational Criteria of Child Protection Institutes and Personnel).

The legislation defines the minimum standards, the system of inspection, educational content and quality standards.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Korintus, M. 2008.

¹ The terms 'nursery' and 'infant-toddler centre' are both used to specify day care services (*bölcsőde*) for children under the age of 3 and are used interchangeably throughout this document.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

From the age of 3 upwards, children have a legal entitlement to a free place in a kindergarten. Since September 2015, enrolment is compulsory from age 3 and no longer just from age 5, as was previously the case. Attendance is not compulsory for under 3-year olds. Since 2017, municipalities have a duty to provide the appropriate number of nursery places if at least 40 children under age 3 live in the area or if parents with at least five children express a wish for a place.

Primary school starts at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015, 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Main types of provision

Nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*bölcsőde*) for children aged 20 weeks up to 3 years (in the case of children with disabilities up to 5 or 6 years) can either be run as independent, free-standing centres or be part of a kindergarten or similar provision. Besides day nurseries, there are also a few weekly boarding nurseries. Nearly all nurseries are provided and managed by the municipalities. In 2008, nursery provision was only available in 15 to 20% of the municipalities, mostly in urban areas.

In 2016, there were 755 infant-toddler centres in Hungary (94.1% run by municipalities) offering a total of 39,944 places for 38,123 children. 70.5% (26,870) of these had not yet reached their third birthday*.

Kindergartens (*óvoda*) are attended by children between 3 and 7 years of age. Before 2017, if places were available, 2½-year olds could also be accepted. However, due to the change in legislation related to nursery provision only 3 year olds can be admitted since January 2017. The kindergarten year starts on 1st September and finishes on 31st August. Decisions about opening hours and holiday times are made by the kindergarten provider/principal.

In 2016/17, there were 4,574 kindergartens in Hungary offering a total of 379,332 places attended by 317,487 children. 1,535 of these children were enrolled in a special education setting*.

The regular opening hours of both kindergartens and infant-toddler centres are from 6:00 to 18:00 daily, closing for six weeks during the summer. Since these holiday times vary, children are permitted to attend other settings in the vicinity during these times.

Family day care settings (*családi napközi*) for children up to age 14 are seen mostly as a way of coping with a lack of centre-based places in a specific area.

Since January 2017, a new form of provision for under-threes is replacing the family day care settings: **family nurseries** which can admit only children below the age of 3. Since 2016, mini-nurseries and workplace nurseries are further additional forms of infant-toddler centres. It is the size and the requirements for running them that distinguishes these from the regular infant-toddler centres.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
*Hungarian Statistical Office 2016.
Korintus, M. 2008.

Provider structures

Most kindergartens and infant-toddler centres are located in the public sector and are either state-maintained or run by the municipalities. In 2016*, only 10% of kindergarten-age children were enrolled in private (state subsidised) provision run by church organisations or other legal en-

tities. In total, only around 19% of kindergartens are run by private non-profit or private-for profit providers.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Korintus, M. 2008.
Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities 2017.
*Statistical Yearbook of Public Education 2015/2016, own calculations

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data, the proportion of under 3-year olds in centre-based settings more than doubled between 2005 (7%) and 2015 (15.4%). The participation rates of 3- to 6-year olds rose by just over 10% during the same period (from 79% in 2005 to 89.1% in 2015).

Table 1

Hungary: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % [†]
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	4,6	9.6
	Over 30 hours	10,8	79.5
	No attendance	84,7	10.9

Table 2

Hungary: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015**

Age groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	1,094	0.6
2 year olds	11,537	12.7
3-year olds	71,660	81.2
4-year olds	85,995	95.2
5-year olds	92,627	95.4
6-year olds	59,162	59.3
0- to under 3-year olds	12,631	4.6[†]
3- to under 6-year olds	250,282	90.7[†]
3- to under 7-year olds	309,444	82.4[†]

[†] Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

Sources: *Eurostat 2015d.
**Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.

Financing and costs for parents

In the context of financial constraints and cuts, the proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated to education sank from 5.3% in 2005 to 3.9% in 2013.

Municipalities are allocated a sum for maintaining and running kindergartens from the national budget, based on the number of core professionals and support personnel employed. The calculation is related to the average national salary of kindergarten pedagogues and the number of kindergarten children.

Kindergartens with children with language deficits or learning disabilities on roll receive twice the regular amount for each of these children. This is increased to three times the regular amount for children with physical or sensory impairments.

Parental fees are waived for most families due to the government programme for the provision of free meals, both in kindergartens and nurseries, for children coming from families below a certain income level, having three or more children, or children with disabilities.

In nurseries, the maximum fee is not allowed to exceed 25% of the net per capita income of the family. In public kindergartens parents pay only for subsistence. In state subsidised private settings parents could pay (without subsistence) roughly 223€ per month.²

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, und Eurostat 2014.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Korintus, M. 2008.

Staff-child ratios

In **infant-toddler centres** there are usually 12 children in a group, or 14 if all children are 2 years and above. One qualified member of staff is responsible for six children under age 2 or for seven 2-year olds. In family day care settings the maximum number of children up to age 14 per family day carer was five. Family nurseries, which replaced family day care settings in 2017, can admit a maximum of seven children, all under 3 years of age.

The regular group size in **kindergartens** comprises a maximum of 25 children. There are no specifications in terms of staff-child ratios other than at least one fully qualified member of staff must be present in the group.

In 2015/16, there were on average 21.6 children in a kindergarten group and one qualified member of staff was on average responsible for 10.2 children.

The group size is smaller if children with disabilities attend the setting – in general, one child with special needs counts the same as two or three typical children.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Hungarian Statistical Office 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

The national curricular framework for **kindergartens** (Ministerial Decree 363/2012, XII. 17) sets out pedagogical principles and goals such as the individual, needs-related development of emotional, social and cognitive abilities. This is the basis for staff to develop a centre-specific educational programme, or they may adopt an existing programme. 'School readiness' is one of the standard overarching goals, along with easing the transition into school. Further objectives are the

² The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156)

acquisition of key competencies such as communication in the home language, mathematical and natural science skills, and social and creative competencies. Play is regarded as the most important approach towards learning, alongside story-telling, singing, drawing, painting and physical activities. Staff are free in their choice of approach. The national curricular framework is updated every five years by the government and, if necessary, amended.

A national curricular framework also exists for **nurseries/infant-toddler centres** (Ministerial Decree 15/1998). Again, this forms the basis for the programmes of the individual centres. The following aspects are emphasised: the importance of the family, respect for the child's individuality, the unity of education and care, an individual approach, safety and stability, stimulating activity and self-reliance, the influence of education. Nurseries are expected to support these goals by promoting a healthy style of living and fostering the children's emotional, social and cognitive development. Nursery Educators are free to choose their own ways of working with the children. These include a play-based approach, story-telling, singing and creative activities.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
HIERD 2012.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Early childhood provision for children with special educational needs is regulated by law (Ministerial Decree 32/2012, X. 8). The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Committee for National Minorities in Hungary, issued guidelines in 1997 which kindergartens are required to follow when developing their centre-specific educational programmes. Beyond this, the national curricular framework is also applicable in special needs settings.

Children with disabilities can attend either a special needs setting or a regular kindergarten, depending on the kind of disability; they can also receive extra pedagogical assistance alongside their time in a regular setting.

Since the 2005 amendments to the Education Act, children with severe or multiple disabilities are now allowed to attend a special education setting on a daily basis, which previously was only possible on an hourly basis. Since 2012, special needs education can only be provided by educational institutions and no longer by welfare organisations. The last of these settings were closed in 2014.

Settings which take in children with special educational needs must ensure that they receive the appropriate support so that they can make progress alongside the other children. For each child an individual plan is compiled; the teaching approach is adapted to each child's individual needs. Staff receive pedagogical assistance from the Methodological Institutes for Integrative Special Education (*Integrált Gyógypedagógiai Módszertani Intézmény*). Kindergartens which provide an inclusive programme and comply with the Ministry regulations are eligible for funding subsidies. In 2014/15 the majority (81%) of children with special educational needs were enrolled in an integrative setting.

A number of programmes have been implemented with the aim of integrating children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly Roma children, into the education system as early as possible. One example is the 'Sure Start' programme for families with children under age 6, which cooperates with non-governmental organisations to this end.

Children with a background of migration and from historical minority ethnic groups

The number of children with non-Hungarian backgrounds in kindergartens is increasing. These settings have to comply with the 2007 amendments to the Education Act, which explicitly emphasises the rights of these persons.

In 2016, only 1.6% of the total population in Hungary was foreign-born or had a background of migration. The relevant share among children under 5 years of age was 1%. Just over half of these persons (54.4%) came from another EU country (in particular from Romania and Germany). The relevant share for under 5-year olds was 33.4%*. In 2017, 65.6% (99,194 out of a total of 151,132 persons) came from EU countries and 937 persons (26.4%) from Asia**.

In 2015, 177,135 persons sought asylum in Hungary. The greater majority came from Syria, Afghanistan and Kosovo. In 2016, there was a significant drop in numbers: of the 29,432 persons seeking asylum, more than a third (37.5%) came from Afghanistan, 16.9% from Syria, 13.2% from Pakistan and 11.7% from Iraq.**

There are also a significant number of historical minority ethnic groups in Hungary. In 1993, the Bulgarian, Roma, Greek, Croatian, Polish, German, Armenian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serb, Slovak, Slovene and Ukrainian ethnic groups were legally defined as national and ethnic minorities native to Hungary***. In order to cater better for the needs of the children from these minority ethnic groups, posts have been created for educators with a special training for this work (*nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus*).

Sources: *Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2016.
HIERD 2012.
**Hungarian Statistical Office 2016.
***Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000.
Korintus, M. 2017.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

A national inspection system evaluates all levels of the education system according to the same quality indicators. These inspections are conducted every five years. For kindergartens they are carried out by the Educational Authority (*Oktatási Hivatal*) and take place every five years. In the case of nurseries/infant-toddler centres (and earlier in family day care settings) a Government Agency's (*Kormányhivatal*) checks are carried out every second year, and maintainer (municipal) checks are carried out once a year. The State Secretariat for Education is responsible for the national inspection system, including **kindergartens**, which is implemented through the Education Authority. Core practitioners, Centre Heads and the centres themselves are the focus of these inspections. Assessment methods include documentary analysis, observations, questionnaires and interviews. In terms of the centre-based assessments, emphasis is placed on pedagogical processes and how the national curricular framework is implemented through the centre-specific programme. Inspection outcomes are summarised in a report which is presented to the Centre Head and the service provider and is published on the setting's website. The Centre head compiles a Five-Year Action Plan on the basis of the inspection report which details improvement goals and procedures.

Service providers are responsible for examining the effectiveness of the settings and the implementation of the educational programme. Each setting conducts self-evaluation measures, the results of which are taken into account in the external evaluations.

Government agencies are responsible for the inspection of all forms of nursery provision. Checks are carried out to assess compliance with the legislation, involving two national professional organisations that are to delegate experts to do the quality check on the work in the nurseries.

In the nurseries, the children's progress is documented by the core professionals in a kind of diary, but only if the parents agree to this. If the parents so wish, the documentation is handed over to them. Entries are made on a monthly basis up to the child's first birthday and subsequently every four months.

In **kindergartens** assessment is a legislative requirement (Government Decree 20/2012, VIII. 31). Staff use a preferred form of monitoring that can be adapted to the centre-specific programme.

Health data and the child's emotional, social, intellectual, language and physical development are documented (at least every six months), as well as additional observations made by the centre staff. Parents are informed regularly about their child's progress. At the end of the time in kindergarten an assessment is made regarding the child's 'school readiness'.

Staff also use the standardised DIFER instrument (*Diagnostic Instrument for the Assessment of Children, 4 to 8 years old, DIFER*). The instrument is considered to be useful for the assessment of basic competencies and skills needed for a successful start in primary education.

Projects and research studies in the educational field are conducted by the Education Authority (earlier conducted by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (*Ok-tatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet*), which also provides professional support for the educational institutions. The Education Authority also analyses educational processes and their impact.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
HIERD 2012.
Korintus, M. 2017.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*szülési szabadság*) is granted for 24 weeks. Up to four weeks can be taken prior to the expected birth date, two weeks of which are mandatory. Women who have worked for at least 365 days over the previous two years receive 70% of their average daily gross income.

Paternity leave comprises five fully-paid days, to be taken during the two months following the child's birth.

There are two basic kinds of **parental leave** and payments: (1) for parents who have not contributed to social insurance (*Gyermekgondozási segély - GYES*) and 2) for parents who satisfy the social insurance contribution conditions (*Gyermekgondozási díj - GYED*).

The GYES allowance in 2016 amounted to a monthly sum of HUF 28,500 (91€, 26.04.17), paid up to the child's third birthday. The GYED allowance in 2016 amounts to 70% of the average daily income, but may not exceed HUF 155,400 (497€) per month.

From the end of maternity leave up to the child's second birthday, insured parents receive the GYED allowance and up to the child's third birthday the GYES allowance. Non-insured parents receive the GYES lump sum up to the child's third birthday. Parents who receive the GYES allowance are not allowed to work up to the child's first birthday, but still receive the allowance up to the child's third birthday. GYED recipients can work as many hours as they wish once the child is 6 months old and receive the allowance up to the child's second birthday. Up to the child's first birthday, only the mother is allowed to receive GYED, after that the father can also claim the allowance.

In terms of statistics about the uptake of parental leave, data are only available on the utilisation of the allowances. Estimations for 2015 suggest that nearly all mothers of children under age one, and nearly 90% of mothers of 1- and 2-year olds and nearly half of mothers with 2- to 3-year olds make use of one of the two parental leave options.

A number of measures have been introduced to encourage mothers with young children to return to work. Private-sector employers are now required to offer part-time employment until the child's third birthday; in the public sector this requirement has been in place since 2010. Besides the possibility (since 2016) for GYED recipients to work once the child is 6 months old and still to claim the parental leave allowance, the compulsory requirement to attend kindergarten from the age of 3 onwards is also seen as a measure to support women's labour market participation. Additionally, fathers may now take two paid days of leave per child per year, which previously was only possible for mothers.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Gábos, A. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1828	First kindergarten established by Therese Brunswick
1891	The Kindergarten Act emphasises a holistic approach to children's development
1852	First nursery for children of working mothers opened in Budapest
1879	First state kindergarten is opened
1891	Attendance made compulsory for 3- to 6-year olds but without compliance procedures
1936	The mission of kindergartens changes from an educational to a health-oriented approach
1953	Legal entitlement to a place in early childhood provision established and state provision transferred to the municipalities
As from 1967	Steady expansion of ECEC provision
1984-2003	Drop in the birth rate and financial constraints lead to the closing of roughly 60% of the available provision
1993	Kindergartens recognised as part of the education system
1997	Nurseries recognised as part of the new child protection/child welfare system
2009	Introduction of Sure Start as a project
2013	Including Sure Start in legislation
2015	Kindergarten made compulsory as from age 3
2017	Integration of all types of ECEC services for children under 3 years of age under the name <i>bölcsőde</i> .

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Korintus, M. 2008, 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Hungary

Country expert assessment by Marta Korintus

1. Raising the level of initial professional education/studies to BA level for core practitioners working in ECEC provision for children under the age of 3 and increasing their salaries.
2. Setting up ECEC services for children under the age of 3 in all settlements to meet the needs of families, as specified by legislation³.
3. In the context of an ageing workforce, ensuring the supply of qualified kindergarten pedagogues, especially in rural areas.

³ Since 2017, municipalities have a duty to provide the appropriate number of places if at least 40 children under age 3 live in the area or if parents with at least five children express a wish for a place.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Hungary totalled 9,830,485. This is a further indication of a steady decline in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 10,336,700 and 2005 total: 10,097,549).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.8% and children under 6 years of age for 5.5% of the total population. Since 2005 these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above (Hungary was not an EU member state at that time).

Table 3

Hungary: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	91,741
1-year olds	93,268
2-year olds	89,987
Under age 3 total	274,996
3-year olds	91,335
4-year olds	88,537
5-year olds	90,632
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	270,504
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	545,500

Table 4

Hungary: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ⁴	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.2	5.5	6.2

[†] own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 71.9% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 3.2%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (3.1%).

⁴ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Table 5

Hungary: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	952.100	
Couple households	684.600	71,9
Other types of households	236.600	24,9
Single households, total	30.900	3,2
Single households, women	29.600	3,1
Single households, men	1.300**	0,1

⁺Own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Hungary was 70.3% and that of women 63.9%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, only 38.8% were employed in 2015, whereas 87.5 of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Although the employment rates of men in Hungary were the same as the EU28 average in 2015, the maternal employment rate was the lowest of all EU countries.

Table 5

Hungary: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Hungary	2005	33.2	80.3
	2010	32.7	78.5
	2015	38.8	87.5
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

⁺own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.

Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁵

In 2015, 31.5% of children under age 6 in Hungary were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is the highest poverty rate in the EU28 (average = 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 28.2%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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IRELAND

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

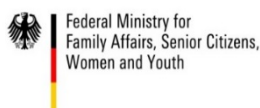
Maresa Duignan

Department of Education and Skills, Dublin

Citation suggestion:

Duignan, M. 2018. "Ireland – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 555-575.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

In Ireland, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services have a long tradition of multi-sectoral governance. This is primarily related to the source of state funding. ECEC provision is funded, in the main, by two government departments. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) provides for early education and primary education for children aged 3-6 years located in and under the governance of schools. ECEC for children under 3 years and for children aged 3-6 years in settings other than primary schools is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). There is some small level of provision for children with disabilities or at risk funded by the Department of Health and the Department of Social Protection, however these are small scale interventions and usually subject to regulation and policy generated by either of the two lead departments.

Children aged 0-6 are enrolled in centre-based ECEC settings on the basis of their parent's choice. There is low level of participation by 0- to 3-year olds in centre-based settings, with the majority of parents making informal childcare arrangements or using family day care (McGinnity *et al* 2013). A further complexity to the pattern of ECEC enrolment in Ireland is the traditional early enrolment in formal education. Despite the fact that the compulsory school starting age is 6 years, many 4-year olds and almost all 5-year olds attend primary school.

Governance and funding of ECEC is centralised, however there is a national support system at county level which assists ECEC services with funding application and improving the quality of provision.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The complex nature of provision of ECEC services and patterns of enrolment of children aged 0-6 years in a variety of state funded care and education provision makes the definition and description of the ECEC workforce in Ireland quite challenging. The following definition, taken from Irish national policy, clearly excludes the staff in primary schools from the ECEC workforce as it characterises ECEC provision to be:

"...daycare facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours. It includes services offering care, education and socialisation opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community. Thus, services such as pre-schools, naíonraí [Irish language: pre-schools], daycare services, crèches, play groups, childminding and after-school groups are included, but schools (primary, secondary and special) and residential centres for children are excluded" (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform [DJELR] 1999).

However for the purposes of this report, staff in primary schools working with children aged 3-6 years will be included in order to provide a full picture of workforce in Ireland engaged in the care and education of children aged 0-6 years.

Staff working directly with children aged 0-6 years (non-primary)

Since 2014, a series of national policy initiatives focused on the improvement of the quality of ECEC provision and practice have created a number of new roles within the ECEC sector pri-

marily for higher education graduates with practice experience. In January 2016, a report published by Early Childhood Ireland (ECI), the leading representative organisation for the ECEC workforce, estimated the total number of ECEC staff to be 25,000 (ECI 2016).

The data in this paper has been drawn from a Pobal¹ survey of ECEC settings which have an active contract with the state to deliver ECEC services for children. The survey data were collected in 2016 via an integrated IT system which manages the state ECEC funding programmes. While completion of the survey data was not a requirement for provision of funding, it was integrated on the same system and completion of this 'survey Profile' data was strongly encouraged by both Pobal and DCYA. It achieved a very high response rate with a total of 3,429² of a potential 4,323 services (79%) making a return (Pobal 2016).

The following represents the most commonly held roles and titles of staff working in direct contact with children in ECEC settings (0- to 5-year olds) in Ireland.

Table 1

Ireland: Staff in ECEC settings (non-primary) – Numbers and percentage according to job titles, 2016

Job Title	Number of Staff	Staff, in %
Student Placement	145	1
Deputy Manager	1,016	6
Centre Manager	2,436	14
Room Leader (non-ECCE settings) ³	2,486	14
Room Leader (ECCE funded settings)	3,373	19
Early Years Assistant (ECCE funded settings)	3,531	20
Early Years Assistant (non-ECCE settings)	4,854	27
Grand Total	17,841	100

Staff working directly with children aged 4-6 years (primary)

In the primary education sector, staff working directly with children include qualified Primary School Teachers and Special Needs or Classroom Assistants. All primary teachers are required to have an honours Bachelor's degree in primary teaching and be registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland (Teaching Council 2016). Special Needs Assistants (SNA) are required to have achieved a NFQI (*National Framework of Qualifications Ireland*) Level 3 (ISCED Level 2) major award or equivalent, but no specialist subject is specified (DES 2011). Anecdotal evidence would suggest that many SNAs have achieved a specialist qualification. However, as this is not a requirement for employment, no data are available on the extent of such qualifications.

Table 2 shows ECEC staff in centre-based settings (non-primary) and the main staff in primary classrooms and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

¹ Pobal is a not-for-profit company with charitable status. Pobal manages programmes on behalf of Government departments, other national agencies and the EU.

² This figure is services that were in contract and open, services that closed earlier in 2016 are not included.

³ ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) refers to the contract for the delivery of the universal free pre-school in early childhood care and education programme.

Table 2

Ireland: ECEC staff in centre-based settings (0-6 non-primary and 4-6 primary)

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ⁴ level
ECEC sector 0-6 (non-primary)				
Centre Manager <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Full- and part-time day care Sessional pre-school and after school services Drop-in services 0-6 years If after school provision is offered, the age range may extend to 14 years	Centre head	0 to 6 years	Post-secondary vocational qualification in early childhood care and education ECTS points: n/a NFQI: level 5 EQF: level 4 or 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4
Room Leader (ECCE) <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Full- and part-time day care Sessional pre-school and after school services Drop-in services 0-6 years If after school provision is offered, the age range may extend to 14 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0 to 6 years	Post-secondary vocational qualification in early childhood care and education ECTS points: n/a NFQI: level 6 EQF: level 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4/5
Room Leader (non-ECCE) <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Full- and part-time day care Sessional pre-school and after school services Drop-in services 0-6 years If after school provision is offered, the age range may extend to 14 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0 to 6 years	Post-secondary vocational qualification in early childhood care and education ECTS points: n/a NFQI: level 5 EQF: level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4
Early Years Assistant <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Full- and part-time day care Sessional pre-school and after school services Drop-in services 0-6 years If after school provision is offered, the age range may extend to 14 years	Qualified co-worker	0 to 6 years	Post-secondary vocational qualification in early childhood care and education ECTS points: n/a NFQI: level 5 EQF: level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4
(Pre-)Primary education sector (4-6)				
Primary Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education	Classes in primary schools 4- to 6-year olds Primary schools	Core practitioner with group responsibility	4-12 years	Bachelor's degree (honours) 4 years university ECTS points: 180

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ⁴ level
Professional	4-12 years			NFQI: level 8 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
Special Needs Assistant / Classroom Assistant	Classes in primary schools 4- to 6-year olds Primary schools 4-12 years	Co-worker without formal qualification	n/a	Junior certificate – Lower secondary or QQI Level 3 award ⁵ ECTS points: n/a NFQI: level 3 EQF: level 2 ISCED 2013-F: 0011 ISCED 2011: 2

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (both narrow focus, 0–3, or broad focus, sometimes including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce

0-6 ECEC non-primary sector

The Irish ECEC workforce is strongly female with less than 2% being male. Since the introduction of the universal free preschool education programme by the Irish Government in 2010, the qualification profile of the workforce has steadily improved due to the unprecedented introduction in 2010 of a contractual requirement for pre-school leaders to have achieved minimum qualification levels to practise. The qualification contractual requirement for pre-school leaders staff was raised to a minimum of a Level 6 major award⁶ in Early Childhood Education and Care in 2016, and a minimum of a Level 5 major award in ECEC is being introduced for all childcare staff under the 2016 Regulations from the end of 2016 (DCYA 2016a). The current qualification profile of staff in settings on contract to deliver state funded ECEC is represented in *Table 3* below.

⁵ Ireland has a 10 level national qualification framework (NFQ) through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way. The many different types and sizes of qualifications included in the NFQ are organised based on their level of knowledge, skill and competence. Level 5 and 6 awards broadly equate to ISCED level 4 (ISCED 2011). For further information see QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2017.

Table 3:

Ireland: ISCED levels of education, main programmes in Irish education/training, typical awards and National Framework of Qualifications Ireland (NFQI) levels

ISCED 2011 Level	Corresponds to:	Typical award	EQF Level	Award NFQI Level
0 Pre-primary education	Early Start and other pre- primary	QQI Certificate		Level 1/2
1 Primary education	Primary education		1	
2 Lower secondary	2nd level education – Junior Cycle	Junior Certificate	2	Level 3
3 Upper secondary	2nd level education – Senior Cycle	Leaving Certificate	3	Level 4
			4	Level 5
4 Post-secondary non-tertiary	Apprenticeship, Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses, other Further Education and Training courses	QQI Level 5 Certificate	4	
		QQI Advanced Certificate	5	
5 Short-cycle tertiary education	Third level: Higher certificate HEI diploma	Higher Certificate	5	Level 7
6 Bachelor's degree or equivalent	Third level: Ordinary (three-year) or honours (four-year) Bachelor's degree Higher diploma	Ordinary Bachelor's Degree	6	
		Honours Bachelor Degree	6	
		Higher Diploma	6	Level 8
7 Master's degree or equivalent	Third level – master's degree and postgraduate certs/diplomas	Postgraduate Diploma Master's degree	7	Level 9
8 Doctoral degree or equivalent	PhD	PhD	8	Level 10

Source: Adapted from ISCED 2011 (UNESCO 2012)

Table 4

Ireland: ECEC Staff (non-primary) - Numbers and percentage according to qualification levels and gender, 2016

Qualification Level	Number of female staff		Number of male staff		Total Staff	
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage
No Qualification	1,866	10.5	93	0.5	1,959	11
NFQI Level 4	173	1.0	7	0.04	180	1
NFQI Level 5	5,629	31.6	53	0.3	5,682	32
NFQI Level 6	6,792	38.1	45	0.3	6,837	38
NFQI Level 7	915	5.1	16	0.1	931	5
NFQI Level 8	2,032	11.4	26	0.1	2,058	12
NFQI Level 9/10	189	1.1	5	0.03	194	1
Total	17,596	98.6	245	1.4	17,841	100

The figure of 11% for unqualified staff in ECEC settings has been impacted upon by a policy decision in 2013 to allow for a 'grandfathering' rule to apply to staff who are approaching retirement from their employment in the ECEC sector and who do not wish to undertake courses leading to the required regulated qualification. In such cases staff can sign a declaration of their intention to retire from the sector and are then exempted from the minimum qualification requirement. This exemption expires in September 2021 and after this time there should be no unqualified staff in the ECEC sector.

The predominance of vocational qualifications at a lower level than a Bachelor's degree reflects the traditional absence of regulation for the ECEC workforce. Even with the introduction of regulation to practise in the ECEC sector, the required qualification will be set at a minimum level of 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQI). This is equivalent to ISCED 4 internationally (see Table 4 above). However, despite the lack of incentive and support for the workforce in relation to achieving higher level qualifications, it is also noteworthy that there

has been a steady increase since 2010 in the number of staff with a Bachelor's degree or higher working in the sector. In 2014, the percentage stood at 14.7% and was 18% in 2016 (Pobal 2016).

There are no data available regarding the ethnic breakdown of the ECEC workforce. However, processing of applications for contracts to deliver the Free Preschool in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme funding has led to the establishment of a qualification database which details qualifications currently accepted as fulfilling the contractual requirements for the DCYA funded free preschool education programme. This shows that there is a growing diversity in the qualification profile of the ECEC workforce albeit starting from a very homogeneous Irish national base (DCYA 2016b).

Table 5

Ireland: Structural composition of ECEC staff (non-primary)

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce, 2016
Staff with specialist higher education degree	18%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	71%
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Unqualified staff	11%
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	n/a
Male staff	1.4%
Staff with a background of migration	No national data available

4-6 ECE primary sector

The total number of primary teachers working with children aged 4 to 12 years on the payroll of the DES in 2016 was 34,576. There are no disaggregated figures for those working with 4- to 6-year olds in primary schools. All teachers are in full-time employment. Special Needs Assistants' (SNAs) employment is broken down into full time and part time as follows:

Table 6

Ireland: Special Needs Assistants according to gender and employment, 2016

	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent
Males	247	58	276
Females	6,816	2,616	8,127
Total	7,063	2,674	8,403

The combined workforce total is therefore 44,313.

Table 7

Ireland: Structural composition of primary sector (no disaggregated data for pre-primary section)

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce, 2016 n = 44,313
Staff with specialist higher education degree	78%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification (SNA)	22%
Unqualified staff	n/a
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	n/a
Male staff	Primary Teachers: 13% SNAs: 3%
Staff with a background of migration	No national data available

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Regulation of qualification to practise in the ECEC sector has just been introduced with the new childcare regulations which commenced on a phased basis from July 1st 2016. The Child-care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 require that

“...all staff members working directly with children in pre-school services must hold at least a major award in early childhood care and education at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. This requirement will come into effect for newly-registering services on 30th June 2016 and for existing services on 31st December 2016” (DCYA 2016).

The historical absence of regulation of staff qualification has resulted in a very diverse workforce whose members have undertaken a variety of initial professional studies (or in some cases none at all) before commencing work in ECEC settings. Into the future the likely range of IPS will comprise the following:

1. Completion of school leaving certificate (completed by the majority of pupils at the end of secondary education) as point of entry into a higher education programme in early childhood studies at Levels 6, 7 or 8 on the Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQI).
2. Completion of a further education programme in early childhood studies at Levels 4, 5 or 6 on the NFQI – this may also facilitate progression to awards in higher education as above.

For many in the ECEC sector in Ireland (outside of staff in primary schools), the latter route has been the most common. This is due to the fact that qualification requirements are a very recent specification to gain employment in the ECEC sector and also due to the low status with which work in this sector has traditionally been regarded (Duignan 2012; DES 2016).

Tables 8 to 10 give a brief overview of the main qualifying routes for core practitioners and other key contact staff (e.g. Early Years Assistants) in the 0-6 non primary ECEC sector. As all staff must now comply with regulatory requirements for a minimum qualification of a nationally accredited major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent as detailed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs list of recognised qualifications (DCYA 2016d), the qualification route to achieving this award is common for all staff.

Table 8

Ireland: Centre Manager, ECEC 0-6 sector non-primary

Job title in English: Centre Manager Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: School leaving certificate (secondary education) and/or completion of further education programme in early childhood studies. <i>Minimum requirement</i> = Level 5 (NFQI) major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent).</p> <p>Professional studies: The duration, place of study and whether full- or part-time varies according to individual choice of practitioner.</p> <p>Award: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education / <i>Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: The full range of ECCE settings for children 0-6 (non-primary)</p>

Table 9

Ireland: Room leader, ECEC 0-6 sector non-primary

Job title in English: <i>Room Manager</i>
Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: School leaving certificate (secondary education) and/or completion of further education programme in early childhood studies. <i>Minimum requirement</i> = Level 5 (NFQI) major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent).</p> <p>Professional studies: The duration, place of study and whether full- or part-time varies according to individual choice of practitioner.</p> <p>Award: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education / <i>Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: The full range of ECCE settings for children 0-6 (non-primary)</p>

Table 10

Ireland: Early Years Assistant, ECEC 0-6 sector non-primary

Job title in English: <i>Early Years Assistant</i>
<p>Entry requirements: School leaving certificate (secondary education) and/or completion of further education programme in early childhood studies. <i>Minimum requirement</i> = Level 5 (NFQI) major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent).</p> <p>Professional studies: The duration, place of study and whether full- or part-time varies according to individual choice of practitioner.</p> <p>Award: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education/ <i>Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: The full range of ECCE settings for children 0-6 (non-primary sector)</p>

Table 11 summarises the IPS characteristics for Primary Teachers.

Table 11

Ireland: Primary Teacher

Job title in English: <i>Primary Teacher</i>
Profile: (Pre-primary and) Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: National Leaving Certificate; Minimum points requirement. Restricted entry⁷</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years at university</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree (honours) in Education - Primary</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Primary schools, classes in primary schools attended by 4- to 6-year olds</p>

⁷ The number of places on initial primary teaching courses in Ireland is restricted annually by the Government. Each third level institution offering this programme has an allocation of places and sets the minimum points requirement for entry each year based upon demand. The average points requirement in 2016/7 was 465 (out of a possible 625). Alternative entry routes are available for mature students (Teaching Council 2015b).

3.2 Competency requirements and curricula in IPS programmes

Vocational/Further Education Awards (0-6 ECEC sector non-primary)

Since 2011, Common Award Standards have been prescribed for further education awards in Early Childhood Care and Education (QQI 2011). The CAS include a range of mandatory and elective component awards that can be selected by education and training providers who wish to deliver nationally accredited programmes of education and training for the early years sector in Ireland. This allows for some variety in the content of programmes of learning, e.g. a particular curricular philosophy can be prioritised by the education and training provider, but ensures that mandatory skills, knowledge and competences are included.

Level 5 award (NFQI)

The purpose of the award specification for the Level 5 award (NFQI) specified in the 2016 Early Years Services Regulations is described as follows: “The purpose of this award is to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skill and competence to work independently and under supervision in a range of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings and or to progress to higher education and training” (QQI 2016).

Competence requirements

Learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate a broad range of knowledge related to the learning, well-being and development of children and their identities in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).
- Demonstrate knowledge of some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking pertinent to ECCE practice to include child protection, with significant depth in certain areas;
- Demonstrate a broad range of practice, interpersonal, reflective and pedagogical skills in providing for the holistic needs of babies and young children at group and individual level;
- Exercise judgment in selecting appropriate procedural responses to routine, varied and unfamiliar situations and challenges within an ECCE setting;
- Demonstrate knowledge and skills within a range of varied and specific ECCE practice contexts and settings;
- Contribute to the planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum in support of the learning, wellbeing and development of all children recognising the importance of working in partnership with staff, parents/guardians/carers/families and the broader community;
- Reflect on personal values and practices to inform self-understanding and personal development.

To access programmes leading to this award the learner should have reached the standards of knowledge, skill and competence associated with the preceding level of the National Framework of Qualifications. This may have been achieved through a formal qualification or through relevant life and work experience. Achievement of this award will enable the learner to transfer to other appropriate programmes leading to awards at the same level of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The overall grade (Pass, Merit or Distinction) will be determined by the grades achieved on the components. The total credit value required for this certificate is 120 credits. This will be achieved by completing the following components:

Table 12

Ireland: Further Education and Training (FET) - Credit values, vocational professional studies

Award Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s) – 60 FET credits			
5N1764	Child Development	5	15

Award Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
5N1770	Early Care and Education Practice	5	15
5N1773	Early Childhood Education and Play	5	15
5N1765	Child Health and Well Being	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following components			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following components			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N1367	Team working	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following components			
5N1786	Special Needs Assisting	5	15
5N1769	Creative Arts for Early Childhood	5	15
5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1763	Approaches to Early Childhood Education	5	15
5N1766	Childminding Practice	5	15
5N1779	Infant and Toddler Years	5	15
5N1781	School Age Childcare	5	15
5N1775	Equality and Diversity in Childcare	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N2005	Irish for Preschool Services	5	15
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N2396	Children with Additional Needs	5	15
The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.			

Specific validation requirements

In order to be able to offer this award, the training provider must have sufficient facilities and opportunities to enable the learner to demonstrate a range of practical skills and competencies in an appropriate Early Childhood Care and Education setting.

Higher Education Awards

0-6 ECEC non-primary sector

There are no equivalent award standards for courses in higher education. However, Bachelor's degrees at level 7 or 8 on the NFQI have generally been informed by the following Occupational Role Profile for Advanced Practitioner. This was developed and published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2002 (lead government department for ECEC at the time) (DJELR 2002:22).

Table 13

Ireland: Advanced practitioner competence profile

It is understood that a practitioner at this stage of professional development may work with complete autonomy and will have full responsibility for the work of others.

Key tasks and responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage overall operation and maintenance of an ECCE service, e.g. Resources, Finance, Administration, Personnel; • Formulate, implement and evaluate philosophy, policies and procedures; • Develop and evaluate programmes and activities;

- Develop quality improvement strategies within a service to enhance the quality of experience for all children and staff;
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with all staff;
- Mentor and support practitioners engaged in professional development;
- Engage in learning opportunities to improve knowledge and skills at a personal and professional level;
- Establish and maintain relationship with parents, families and guardians;
- Liaise with outside agencies e.g. County Committees, Regulatory Organisations, and National Government Organisations;
- Facilitate pre-service and in-service education and training of ECCE practitioners;
- Recognise and deal with discriminatory policies, procedures, practices and incidents.

Skills and knowledge

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- In-depth knowledge and understanding of child development theories;
- Ability to describe in detail patterns in the holistic development of children;
- Ability to apply theory of an area of knowledge in a professional practice context;
- Ability to communicate and demonstrate the links between ECCE theory and practice;
- In-depth understanding of the role of adults in the holistic development of the child;
- Ability to use recorded observations and reflection on practice to develop long-term and short-term objectives and plans for the holistic development of individual children.

EDUCATION AND PLAY

- Ability to plan, implement, coordinate and evaluate a curriculum for babies and children (0-8);
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of a wide range of different models/systems in use in ECCE ;
- Critical awareness of the value of research in ECCE.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Ability to liaise and maintain relationships in the wider environment including other professionals, management committees, local community and voluntary organisations and statutory bodies;
- Knowledge of a range of methods available for improving adverse social environmental factors for babies and young children, including knowledge of the public services available locally and nationally and the ability to use these appropriately for the benefit of children;
- Ability to develop, implement and evaluate initiatives to support the inclusion of all children and families in ECCE services.

HEALTH, HYGIENE, NUTRITION, SAFETY

- Ability to ensure the safety of children and adults in an ECCE environment;
- Ability to take responsibility for the welfare and well-being of all children and adults in an ECCE service;
- Knowledge and skill in the process of development, implementation and evaluation of policies and procedures in an ECCE service.

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ability to reflect and critically evaluate self in relation to personal and professional development;
- Ability to promote and support professional development of ECCE practitioners;
- Critical awareness of the value of research in ECCE.

COMMUNICATION, MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION

- Knowledge and understanding of financial, administrative and personnel management theory and practice necessary for the effective operation of an ECCE service;
- Ability to plan for and resource flexible ECCE services for children and families ;
- Ability to implement organisational structures ensuring that lines of authority and accountability are understood by all staff members;
- Ability to supervise staff and support their development (including induction of new staff);
- Ability to put in place and maintain admission procedures and record-keeping systems relating to children, their families and the staff of the ECCE service;
- Ability to identify and solve problems related to the effective operation of an ECCE service.

SUPERVISED PRACTICE

Supervised practical experience as appropriate.

In 2016, the Department of Education and Skills announced a review of occupational role profiles for the Early Years sector as a precursor for a review of all initial professional education programmes in ECEC in 2018. This review has primarily been prompted by the development since 2014 of a range of job opportunities for experienced higher education graduates. These posts involve work in inspection and quality improvement initiatives in the ECEC sector. Recruitment for such posts highlighted the diversity in content and delivery of higher education

courses and the variability in the capacity of graduates to undertake the newly emerging graduate roles in the ECEC sector.

4-6 ECE Primary sector

Staff working in primary schools with children aged 4-6 years comprise qualified and registered primary school teachers and special needs or general classroom assistants. Primary Teachers are required to have a higher education Bachelor's degree that meets the requirements of registration with the Teaching Council of Ireland and must meet the required Irish language proficiency requirements.

Table 14

Ireland: Mandatory Elements of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The following are mandatory elements of all ITE programmes as stipulated by The Teaching Council of Ireland (2011).

Early Childhood Education (Primary)/Adolescent Learning (Post-primary)

- Inclusive Education (Special Education, Multiculturalism, Disadvantage, etc.);
- Numeracy;
- Literacy;
- Gaeilge (Irish) (Primary);
- The Teacher as Professional/Reflective Practitioner/Researcher;
- Developing a Professional Portfolio;
- Parents in Education - Co-operation and Collaboration;
- The School as a Learning Community;
- Preparation for School Placement;
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment including School and Classroom Planning;
- Differentiation;
- Behaviour Management;
- ICT in Teaching and Learning;
- Legislation Relevant to School and Classroom;
- The Teacher and External Agencies.

In all areas of study there should be provision for:

- the promotion of the love of learning, reflective practice and critical thinking;
- the development of student teachers' understanding of schools as organisations;
- the development of student teachers as researchers and lifelong learners;
- students' personal and social development, having regard to teachers' pastoral role;
- student teachers' literacy and numeracy and their competence in promoting and assessing literacy and numeracy as appropriate to their curricular/subject area.

The lack of specialised qualification requirements for the **Special Needs Assistants / Classroom Assistants** means that there are no specific competency or curricular requirements available for this role.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

The historically unregulated nature of the ECEC (non-primary) workforce in Ireland has resulted in an extremely diverse range of qualifications amongst practitioners. Since 2010 and the introduction of the state funded universal free preschool programme, practitioners have been required to demonstrate that they have achieved a minimum level of qualification equivalent to the Major award at level 5 (detailed above). As a pragmatic approach to ensuring that the infrastructural capacity to deliver the new free preschool initiative was not reduced, a system was established to individually assess the qualification profile of each practitioner in each setting and either allow them to meet the contract qualification requirements or recommend that the individual undertake a further course of study (to be subsidised by the State). Many practitioners took advantage of this initiative and the availability of a 'Learner Fund' to refresh or upskill their qualification profile. Education and Training providers delivering courses funded by the Learner Fund were required to facilitate Recognition of Prior Learning. This Learner

Fund initiative has resulted in the participation of in excess of 3,500 staff in ECEC settings undertaking courses to achieve either level 5 or 6 major awards in the past two years. The Learner Fund does not extend to subsidies for higher education courses and due to the low wage nature of employment in the ECEC sector it is very challenging for practitioners working in ECEC settings to progress their qualifications beyond the vocational level. An added disincentive is the fact that there is insufficient additional remuneration for those staff who make the investment in achieving higher level qualifications (ECI 2016). There have been policy recommendations calling for extension of the Learner Fund to subsidise degree level courses (Start Strong 2015; DCYA 2015).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

0-6 ECEC non-primary sector

A practicum in an ECEC setting is a requirement of all nationally accredited major awards in ECEC in Ireland. This is also included as a criterion for the recognition of international awards to be deemed equivalent to Irish awards in ECEC under the terms of the contract with the DCYA for the free preschool programme. Despite this, however, there are no nationally agreed guidelines in relation to this element of professional preparation. In 2015, a survey conducted by the DES to examine the satisfaction of ECEC practitioners with their initial professional preparation courses found that there were many who felt that there was a need for the application of standards in relation to the duration, content, supervision and assessment of the practicum. This finding will be addressed in a review of further and higher education courses in ECEC by DES (DES 2016). Until this review is completed, the duration, content, supervision and evaluation of workplace-based learning in the initial professional studies of staff in early years settings (non-primary sector) is decided upon by each education and training provider independently.

4-6 ECE primary sector

In the primary sector, supervised practicum for primary teachers is standardised and specified by the Teaching Council of Ireland. In general it is required that 40% of initial professional education should comprise a supervised practicum. Further it is a requirement of registration as a primary teacher that each student passes this element of the programme (The Teaching Council of Ireland 2011).

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

0-6 ECEC non-primary sector

Once again, the unregulated nature of practice in ECEC in Ireland has predicated against a coherent system for CPD. Since 2013, there have been two national CPD initiatives established to meet either regulatory requirements for practice (Child Protection training) or quality improvement in ECEC practice (Equality and Diversity training). Other CPD opportunities are delivered through organisations and agencies at regional or local level, which are either funded by the state or membership fees to support quality improvement in ECEC. The courses offered through these organisations are varied and rarely adhere to a standardised format. ECEC practitioners usually attend such CPD in their own time and at their own expense. In some instances employers may subsidise this activity for their staff but there is no national data available to establish the extent of this support.

The need for a coherent, coordinated strategy for the CPD of ECEC staff also emerged from the DES survey of practitioners in 2015. Issues highlighted for CPD included: working with children with additional needs, working with parents, and using the national curriculum and quality frameworks for ECEC. Some positive response to these issues is already evident and in September 2016 a new State funded initiative commenced to support staff in ECEC settings nationally to enrol in a programme of CPD to build capacity regarding the inclusion of children with disability in mainstream ECEC settings (DCYA 2016c).

4-6 ECE primary sector

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Primary School teachers falls under the remit of the Teaching Council of Ireland (for details see: The Teaching Council 2015a). Under the terms of rule 58 of the Rules for National Schools, primary teachers are incentivised, through the availability of extra personal vacation days (EPV), to avail of a wide range of CPD courses during the summer months when schools are closed (DES 2017). Some of these courses are particularly relevant to teachers of children in the infant classes of primary schools (4- to 6-year olds); however they are not mandatory and are offered by a wide range of private education providers.

In the instance of the introduction of new curricula/practice in primary education, teachers will be offered specific CPD by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The PDST was established in September 2010 as a generic, integrated and cross-sectoral support service for schools (PDST 2017a). The PDST offers professional learning opportunities to teachers and school leaders in a range of pedagogical, curricular and educational areas. The most recent initiative focused on infant education in primary schools relates to the introduction of a new primary language curriculum in 2015/2016 (PDST 2017b).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Regulation of qualifications for staff in ECEC settings in Ireland has just been introduced for the first time in the Child Care Regulations (*the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016*). The qualification requirements aspect of the new Regulations did not commence until 31st December 2016. This absence of regulation has previously meant that very limited data on the profile of the Irish ECEC workforce has been available at national level. However, in 2016, all ECEC settings in receipt of State funding to deliver ECEC services were invited by the DCYA to return a service profile including details of staffing numbers, qualifications, experience etc. This data has been included in this report.

In addition to a changing regulatory context, the period from 2014 has seen the introduction of a series of major policy developments impacting directly on the ECEC sector. These include:

- Introduction (2010) and extension (2015) of universal free preschool in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme (DCYA 2016c);
- Introduction of Education-focused inspection (2015/6; DES 2016a);
- Establishment of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) for children with a disability in the ECCE Programme (2016/17 (Access Inclusion Model 2016));
- Introduction of the Learner Fund to subsidise the cost of upskilling those working in the sector to gain a Level 5 or Level 6 qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education (DCYA 2014).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

In 2010, the Department for Education and Skills published a Workforce Development Plan for the ECCE sector in Ireland (DES 2010). This publication related the occupational role profiles of 2002 to national awards in ECEC effectively providing clarity, for the first time, to practitioners in the ECEC sector about the need for progressing their qualification profile in order to achieve knowledge and skills associated with these different roles in ECEC.

Very little further national research has been conducted outside annual sector surveys administered to ECEC settings in receipt of State funding. Reports of this survey have been published for 2010 –2014 (Pobal 2017). Data were gathered on staff qualifications, ratios and turnover rates. Whilst this data did provide some interesting insights into the profile of the ECEC workforce, e.g. the 2014 data showed that over 20% of ECEC services had a high level of dependency on volunteer staff or staff funded through social welfare related employment schemes (Pobal 2014), it was not until 2015 that the ECEC workforce was given the opportunity to participate in national research that included qualitative research. This research was carried out by the DES to establish the perspectives of ECEC staff and employers on the suitability and relevance of professional education and training programmes in ECEC programmes. Data gathered in relation to staff perspectives on initial professional education were published in April 2016. Of note was the general consensus that IPS did not adequately prepare staff for responding to the needs of the diverse population of children attending the free preschool programme - in particular children with English as a second language or children with disabilities (DES 2016).

Following on from this research a review of occupational role profiles in the ECEC sector has been commissioned as the basis for a comprehensive review of education and training programmes leading to professional practice in the ECEC sector, commencing in 2017.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

In January 2016, a survey of the pay rates across the Irish ECEC workforce (non-primary) was published by Early Childhood Ireland (ECI 2016), the largest membership organisation for the ECEC sector. The survey was based upon 3,016 responses from staff in ECEC settings and claimed an average hourly rate of 13.28€ for a manager and 10.27€ for other staff. When this is compared with the average industrial wage in Ireland of 21.46€ per hour, it is apparent that this is a low wage sector (ECI 2016). Almost half of staff are employed part-time (see below) and there is a further phenomenon of ‘term-time’ only contracts for staff who are employed to deliver the Free Preschool in ECCE Programme. The contract for the ECCE Programme is for 38 weeks and many staff are made redundant by their employers outside of these weeks and are forced to seek social welfare payments for the remaining weeks of the year.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Full-time work corresponds to 38 hours per week, part-time work may be anything below that. There is a strong tendency for part-time work in the ECEC sector (non-primary 0-6) in Ireland, as can be seen from the figures below.

Table 15

Ireland: ECEC Staff - Full-Time/Part-Time, ECEC sector 0-6 non-primary

Full-time/Part-time Employee	Number of Staff	Percentage
Full time employee	9,641	54
Part time employee	8,200	46
Total	17,841	100

Source: Pobal 2016.

Despite this, there is a relatively low turnover rate in ECEC with over 50% of staff employed for four or more years in their current employment.

Table 16

Ireland: ECEC Staff (0-6 non-primary) - Length of time in service (current workplace)

Length of Service	Number of Staff	Percentage
Under 1 Year	3,028	17
1 to 2 Years	2,429	14
2 to 4 Years	3,190	18
4 to 10 years+	5,024	28
More than 10 years+	4,170	23
Total	17,841	100

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

There is very little information available at national level regarding the terms and conditions of employment of the ECEC workforce. However, in 2016 a national consultation related to the introduction of education-focused inspection was carried out by the Department of Education and Skills to establish the challenges facing the ECEC sector in relation to improving the quality of educational provision and practice. The survey findings highlighted the lack of support for staff (DES unpublished).

8.4 Non-contact time

The above-mentioned survey also highlighted the lack of non-contact time for planning and reviewing practice, considering this to be a key factor in preventing engagement in quality improvement activity (DES unpublished).

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Historically, the supply of staff in ECEC services in Ireland has not been an issue due to the absence of qualification to practise requirements. The introduction, from December 2016, of regulation in this regard has the potential to significantly impact on this situation. Further, the expansion of the offer of free preschool provision to all children from age 3 years to the start of primary school will require an estimated 40% increase in the provision of places and will also increase the demand for Preschool Leaders with Level 6 awards in early childhood care and education. In this context, strategies to recruit and retain qualified staff will become more pertinent in the ECEC sector.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The ECEC workforce in Ireland has been on a challenging journey in the past two decades. From a largely invisible (in policy terms) sector, ECEC has become a priority national policy issue attracting increased public funding and concomitant accountability demands. The impact on the workforce has ultimately manifested in the introduction of regulation to practise for all staff in direct contact with children in ECEC settings. Since December 2016, it is no longer possible to be employed in the ECEC sector, in centre based settings⁸, without achieving a minimum level of qualification. On a positive note, this has the potential to promote the recognition of the specialised nature of work in this sector and raise the status of employment in ECEC.

New national policy investment and initiatives to improve the quality of practice in ECEC also have potential to raise the profile of the sector and its workforce. In particular, initiatives that have created professional career opportunities for graduates of higher education programmes with post-qualification practice experience in ECEC settings, e.g. mentors, inspectors, researchers and lecturers, augur well for the future of the sector by providing incentives for enrolment in higher education ECEC programmes and creating more attractive career pathways for graduates.

A rise in the qualification profile, particularly of staff with higher education qualifications, has the potential to raise the capacity of the ECEC sector in terms of provision, practice and research. However, there is likely to be a time lag between the immediate accountability demands associated with increased national funding for ECEC and realisation of tangible improvements in the status, terms and conditions of employment of the ECEC workforce. In the short term it could lead to retention difficulties for employers in the ECEC sector, especially as the recovery of Ireland's wider economy begins to provide attractive alternative employment opportunities. It could also present challenges for the workforce in responding to increasing demands for quality improvement across a range of aspects of practice including curriculum planning and implementation, inclusion of children with diverse additional needs and engaging in cross professional dialogue with other professionals in the wider health and education workforce.

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IRELAND

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Maresa Duignan
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Ireland – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 576-589.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Ireland differs from most European countries in that there has been no long tradition of providing ECEC services. This has been changing significantly over the past decade. Today, ECEC is primarily funded and regulated by two lead ministries¹. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) provides for early education and primary education for children aged 3 to 6 years located in and under the governance of schools. ECEC services for children under 6 years of age are funded and regulated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)². Governance and funding of ECEC is centralised. However, at the local county level there is a national support system which assists ECEC services with funding application and improving the quality of provision.

Sources: DES 2016.
Duignan, M. 2017.
OECD 2004.

General objectives and legislative framework

Children's welfare and education are a focal point of a major government initiative which was launched in 2014: *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020*. The framework placed increased focus on investing in the early years in terms of supporting children's development and facilitating women's labour market participation through affordable and accessible (full day) childcare facilities. On the basis of recommendations made in this policy document, an Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) proposed extending the Free Preschool Year initiative (Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme) introduced in 2010 and strengthening the quality of early years settings.

The Education Act (1998, amended in 2015) and the Child Care Act (1991, amended in 2016) provide the relevant legislative framework for early childhood education and care. The Education Act emphasises the parents' right to free choice of provision and sets out the framework for partnerships. General aims of the education system are to help individuals to develop their full potential and thus to contribute towards the social, cultural and economic development of society. Equal chances, inclusion, life-long learning and supporting individual needs are key goals. The Child Care Act sets out the basic regulatory requirements for ECEC provision such as health and safety requirements.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Government of Ireland 2016.
IDG 2015.

¹ There is some provision for children with disabilities or at risk funded by the Department of Health and the Department of Social Protection, however these are small scale interventions and usually subject to regulation and policy generated by either of the two lead ministries.

² For the purpose of this synopsis, we will refer to the early years services outside the education system as the **early years sector** and to provision for 4- and 5-year olds within schools as the **primary sector**.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Attendance at all forms of early childhood provision up to compulsory school age (6) is voluntary. In 2010, the Department for Children and Youth Affairs introduced an initiative called the 'Free Preschool Year' (*Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme*) for children aged 3 years 2 months up to 4 years 7 months. Since September 2016, this free entitlement has been extended to all children older than 3 years and not older than 5½ years, i.e. for up to two years before compulsory schooling, as long as the setting they attend is under contract to provide the ECCE scheme. In 2015/2016, well over 100,000 children (104,441) made use of this entitlement.

Statutory primary schooling begins at age 6. However, over one third of 4-year olds (36%) and nearly all 5-year olds attend infant classes in primary schools.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Duignan, M. 2017.
Public Service Information 2016.

Main types of provision

Early childhood settings in the **early years sector** are privately run – either on a private for-profit basis or as community/voluntary provision. They are variously called crèches, nurseries, pre-schools, *naíonraí* (Irish medium pre-schools), playgroups and day care services. State subsidies are provided primarily over the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

In 2016, 4,465 early childhood services were registered in Ireland*. 55% provided *Sessional Pre-school Services* for a maximum of 3½ hours per session. 34% were *Full Day Care Services*, providing more than five hours daily for children up to age 3 and older. 10% were *Childminding Services*, both on a full day (4%) and part time (6%) basis. The remaining 1% comprised short-term services providing care for up to two hours while parents attend to urgent matters.

Infant classes in the **primary sector** are funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and children may attend from the age of 4 upwards.

In addition to school-based provision in infant classes, the DES funds some other specifically pre-primary services in schools. These are: (a) the *Early Start* programme, an initiative in designated areas of urban disadvantage for children who are most at risk of not succeeding in education and (b) the *Rutland Street Project*, a programme in a Dublin inner city community which was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the *Early Start* initiative. Children must be over 3 years and 2 months and under 4 years and 7 months on 1st September of the year in which they are enrolled. In 2016, the *Early Start* programme was offered in 38 schools and attended by 1,261 children**. Opening hours are similar to those in mainstream schools, i.e. roughly 183 days per year on each weekday for 2½ to three hours daily.

Sources: **DES 2016.
Eurydice 2017.
Public Service Information 2016.
*Tusla 2016.

Provider structures

The majority of provision in the **early years sector** is private for-profit (2016: 70%); the remaining 30% of settings are run by community, non-profit voluntary organisations.

The 'Free Preschool' initiative (ECCE scheme) introduced in 2010 proved to be attractive for the private providers. If they are on contract with the Department for Children and Youth Affairs,

agreeing to comply with the criteria of the ECCE scheme, they receive state subsidies. One of these criteria is a commitment to employ only qualified staff.

In 2015/2016, 4,148 providers were under contract with the DCYA. 75% of these were private, 25% community service providers.

The infant classes for 4- and 5-year olds in the **primary sector** are largely located in community (public) schools (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

Ireland: Number of children in infant classes in primary schools according to school type, 2015/2016*

	Community schools	Special needs schools / special needs class in mainstream schools	Private schools	Total
4-year olds and younger	22,789	884	830	24,503
5-year olds	71,267	939	342	72,548
6-year olds	72,076	1,034	379	73,489

Sources: *DES 2016.
Duignan, M. 2017.
Eurydice 2017.
Tusla 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The introduction of a contract policy for the ECCE Free Preschool scheme has served to dramatically transform the profile of ECEC services in Ireland. From the start, the Free Preschool initiative attracted a very high proportion (95%) of eligible children, i.e. of children aged 3 and older.

However, according to Eurostat data (*Table 2*), less than one third of *under 3-year olds* (30.6%) attended an ECEC setting in 2015, representing only a small increase since 2005. The Eurostat data for 3- to 6-year olds reflect the national data, with a considerably higher proportion (92%) attending ECEC provision in 2015 compared to 2005 (79%).

Table 2

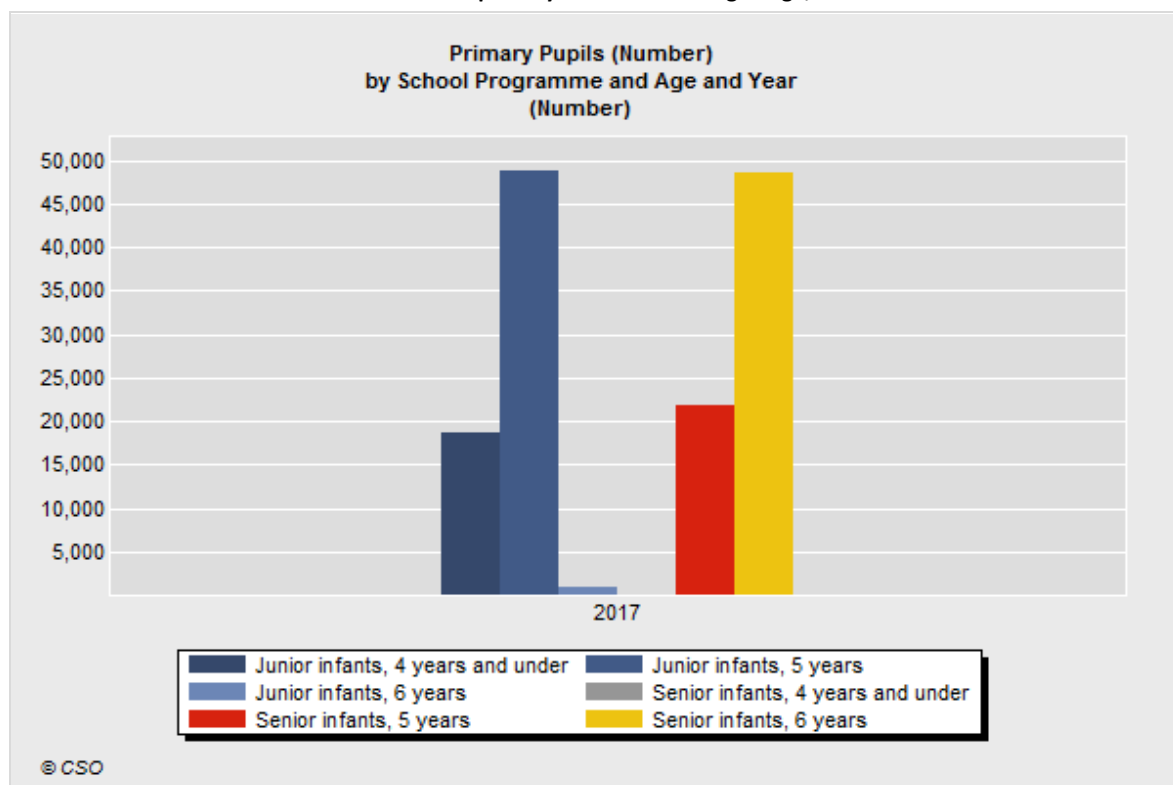
Ireland: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %*
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	21.7	73.4
	Over 30 hours	8.9	18.6
	No attendance	69.4	8.0

Figure 1 shows the number of 4- to 6-year olds attending infant classes in the **primary sector**.

Figure 1

Ireland: Number of children in infant classes in primary schools according to age, 2017**



In terms of enrolment in the **early years sector**, a breakdown of participation rates in recent years and numbers of children in different kinds of childcare and for different age groups is presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3

Ireland: Participation rates in the early years sector according to childcare type and age, 2012 – 2016***

	2012	2013	2014	2015/16
Babies (up to 1 year)	3% (3,144)	3% (2,619)	3% (2,760)	2% (2,717)
Toddlers (1 year + to 3 years)	14% (14,135)	14% (11,425)	13% (10,996)	20% (27,781)
Pre-schoolers (3 years+ to 6 years)	66% (65,854)	70% (59,131)	66% (54,481)	63% (87,975)
School age (6 years+ to 8+ years)	16% (16,087)	14% (11,702)	18% (14,719)	15% (20,495)
Totals overall	100% (99,220)	100% (84,877)	100% (82,956)	100% (138,968)

Sources: **CSO Central Statistics Office 2017.
*Eurostat 2015d.
***Pobal 2017, 45.

Financing and costs for parents

Contracts between the Department for Children and Youth Affairs and the providers of ECEC services in the **early years sector** also led to a change in the way services were funded. The focus

changed from subsidies for places offered (quantity) to subsidies for the educational programme offered (quality).

Monthly parental contributions for under 1-year olds in ECEC provision amount to approximately 750€³, for older children to approximately 720€. For children participating in the Free Preschool ECCE scheme, parents pay for meals only – or for additional hours of provision.

As part of the school system, the infant classes in the **primary sector** are free of charge.

Sources: Duignan, M. 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Current staff-child ratio requirements in the **early years sector** are:

- 1:3 for under 1-year olds;
- 1:5 for children aged 1 to 2½ years old;
- 1:11 for children aged 2½ to 6 years;
- 1:5 for children in home-based childminding/family day care.

Services participating in the Free Preschool scheme (3- to 5-year olds) are expected to have at least eight children enrolled who are in the year preceding compulsory schooling. The required staff-child ratios are as follows:

- Up to 11 children: 1 room leader + 1 early years assistant
- 12 - 22 children: 1 room leader + 1 early years assistant
- 23 - 33 children: 2 room leaders + 1 early years assistant
- 34 - 44 children: 2 room leaders + 2 early years assistants

In the **primary sector**, groups in the Early Start programme usually comprise 30 children, with 15 attending mornings only and 15 attending afternoons only. Each group is led by a qualified Primary School Teacher and a childcare practitioner.

In primary schools an agreed pupil teacher ratio of 1 primary school teacher to 26 children is in place. For 2016 a pupil teacher ratio of 15.7 is reported in first level schools*. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is calculated at each level by dividing the total number of pupils by the total number of allocated posts (classroom teachers and support teachers). This calculation differs from other such calculations (for example the staffing schedule at primary level which is the basis for allocating classroom teachers to each school based on their enrolments). The average class size in primary school in 2016/17 was 24.7 children.

Since December 2016, all staff who work in early childhood services are required to have a relevant qualification at level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework (EQF/ISCED level 4). Group leaders who work with children aged 3 years and older are required to have a qualification at level 6 of the Irish NQF (EQF/ISCED level 5).

Sources: *DES 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015, 2016.
Eurydice 2017.

³ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Curricular Frameworks

The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the curricular and quality frameworks which have been developed for children up to age 6 in the **early years sector** (but are not applicable to the infant classes in the primary sector).

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework was introduced in 2009 for non-mandatory use in the complete range of ECEC settings, including home-based care. It is structured according to four overarching themes: Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, Exploring and Thinking. For each of these four areas, relevant dispositions, skills, attitudes and values are identified. It was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) over an extensive period of time in close collaboration with the early years sector. The NCCA is responsible for monitoring the implementation of Aistear.

Services participating in the Free Preschool scheme are required to develop a programme of activities based on a quality framework called *Síolta*.

Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (2006) was commissioned by the DES and developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. It is a process-oriented framework and defines quality criteria based on 12 principles: the value of early childhood, children first, parents, relationships, equality, diversity, enriching environments, welfare, role of the adult, teamwork, pedagogy and play. 16 quality standards and relevant indicators are provided to help staff translate the vision into practice.

In the **primary sector**, curricular guidelines for the *Early Start* programme include structured play-based activities considered to be effective for enhancing the children's language and their cognitive and social development.

Infant classes in primary schools follow the Primary Curriculum (1999), which is organised according to six main learning areas: Language (English and Irish); Mathematics; Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (History, Geography and Science); Arts Education (Visual Arts, Music, Drama); Physical Education; Social, Personal and Health Education.

Sources: DES 2016.
Eurydice 2017.
NCCA 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In June 2016, a new *Access and Inclusion Model* (AIM) was introduced for children attending provision in the **early years sector**. The model is based on seven progressive levels of support, depending on the specific needs of the individual child. Levels 1 to 3 refer to a system of *universal supports* aimed at promoting an inclusive culture in ECEC settings. These include: service providers signing up to a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and publishing a setting-specific inclusion policy; the funding of a new higher education study programme "Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years" by the DCYA for practitioners wishing to take up a post as Inclusion Co-ordinator; the funding of a multi-annual programme of CPD courses and activities by the DCYA for early years staff. Levels 4 to 7 refer to a range of *targeted supports* to enhance the participation of children with special educational needs. These can include: making use of advice and support provided by an Early Years Specialist (Access and Inclusion); applying for specialised equipment or minor building alterations; making use of therapy services; applying for additional per capita funding for extra staffing support in the ECEC setting.

Children with disabilities can take advantage of the Free Preschool scheme over a period of two years.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides a screening test free of charge for children of pre-school age. Alongside an assessment of audio, visual and physical aspects, language development is also included.

In the **primary sector**, children with special educational needs attend mainstream schools wherever possible, sometimes in a special class or unit, sometimes on an integrated basis with supports. Special schools dedicated to particular disability groups are also available.

In terms of meeting the needs of disadvantaged children, an action plan has been set up for *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* which also applies to pre-primary settings. A standardised system with a multi-level approach has been set up for identifying different kinds of disadvantage and providing a *School Support Programme*. The plan emphasises the importance of involving parents and families.

Children with a background of migration

The broad range of private provision in Ireland makes it difficult to compile reliable data on children with a background of migration. In 2016, 12.4% of the population and approximately 10.5% of children under 5 years of age had a non-Irish background. In both cases, roughly two thirds came from countries in the EU28*.

There are no specific measures in place to support children with English as an additional language (EAL) in ECEC services. There are provisions for supports for EAL in the infant classes in primary schools**. This involves the deployment of a resource teacher with EAL specialist training to the primary school.

Sources: DCYA, DES, and DH 2016.
**DES 2009.
DES 2016.
EPIC 2016.
*Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2017.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

In Ireland, there is no formal evaluation system for the **early years sector**. However, the curricular framework *Aistear* provides guidance on assessing children’s developmental progress and on planning the next steps for learning.

The *Child and Family Agency, Tusla*, is responsible for the inspection of ECEC provision. Inspections take place on the basis of the 2016 amendments to the Child Care Act 1991. Observations and check lists are common assessment methods. The inspections take place every one to two years and the results are made public.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has responsibility for evaluating the quality of education provision in early years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. Early years education-focused inspection (EYEI) is carried out in accordance with the Education Act 1998 (section 13(3)(b)) and in line with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Minister for Education and Skills and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. A composite report of the insights into practice in Early Years services delivering the free state-funded early education programme is published on an annual basis.

The not-for-profit organisation *Pobal* has been commissioned to manage ECEC programmes by the government Departments, other national agencies and the EU. The organisation works closely with the Department for Children and Youth Affairs and is responsible, among other things, for distributing the government subsidies to the early childhood services. Through visits to the services, Pobal also checks whether they are working in compliance with the relevant programme.

An *Operational Systems Alignment Group* has been set up by the DCYA to coordinate the various monitoring and evaluation activities in the early years sector. Members include all the relevant early years agencies, Department representatives and the national manager of the *Better Start Early Years Support Service*.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds a national longitudinal study to provide insight into the lives of children in Ireland. The Growing Up in Ireland study* is being carried out jointly by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin. The study started in 2006 and follows the progress of two groups of children: 8,000 9-year-olds (Child Cohort) and 10,000 9-month-olds (Infant Cohort). The members of the Child Cohort are now aged 19 years and those of the Infant Cohort are 9 years old.

A number of third level institutions in Ireland have established educational research and evaluation institutes that include ECEC in their remit. These are usually dependent upon third-party funding such as that channelled through the Irish Research Council⁴.

Sources: Duignan, M. 2017.
*ESRI 2017.
Eurydice 2017.
NCCA 2016.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave entitlement is for 42 weeks, of which at least two must be taken before the birth date. A weekly benefit of 235€ is paid for a period of 26 weeks, provided the mother paid social insurance contributions for a minimum of 39 weeks during the 12 months before birth. The remaining 16 weeks are unpaid.

Since 1st September 2016, a two-week **paternity leave** is granted at the same weekly benefit rate as for maternity leave. Paternity leave has to be taken as a block period within the first 26 weeks following birth.

Unpaid **parental leave** is granted for 18 weeks per parent and child and is non-transferable. One exception is if both parents work for the same employer, and then, providing the employer agrees, 14 weeks can be transferred to the other parent. Parental leave can be taken up to the child's eighth birthday. Both parents are entitled to take this leave simultaneously as well as in different blocks of at least six consecutive weeks. All persons who have been working continuously for the same employer for at least a year are entitled to parental leave.

In a study conducted between 2007 and 2009 with 23,000 working mothers*, 92% made use of the paid maternity leave and 41% made additional use of the unpaid maternity leave. The uptake of parental leave was only 18%. However, since this can be taken up to the child's eighth birthday, it is possible that many mothers take parental leave at a later point in time. The study also showed that in 19% of cases where mothers applied for parental leave, this was not granted. Since parental leave is unpaid, the issue of not being able to afford to take it is also a possible reason for the low uptake.

Only 8,558 fathers applied for the newly introduced paternity leave between September 2016 and February 2017. Possible reasons for this low uptake may relate to the fact that the measure is not yet widely known or that employers are not prepared to provide the additional 235€ per week.

Sources: Daly, M. and M. Rush 2017.
*Russell, H. et al. 2011.

⁴ <http://research.ie/funding-category/principal-investigator-led/>

Historical highlights and shifts

End of the 1960s	The first playgroups are established
1991	Child Care Act
1994	The first Early Start programmes are set up
1998	Education Act White Paper in Early Childhood Education
1999	National Child Care Strategy
2000	National Children’s Strategy
2000-2006	Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme
2006 - 2008	National Childcare Investment Programme
2010	Commencement of the Universal Free Pre-school Education in Early Childhood Care and Education settings (ECCE) Programme
2013	National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Care and Education
2014	Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland. • Establishment of Better Start, the National Quality Support service for the Early Years sector • Access and Inclusion Model to support the participation of children with disabilities in the ECCE Programme
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commencement of Early Years Education-focused Inspection of services in the ECCE Programme • Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 – introduction of a national registration system for Early Years services and mandatory minimum qualification requirements for staff.
2017	Affordable Childcare Scheme

Sources: Duignan, M. 2017, personal communication.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland

Country expert assessment by Maresa Duignan

Ireland has made major progress in the development of the provision of ECEC services for children aged 0-6 years since 2000. Initially, State investment focused upon building infrastructural capacity for ECEC service delivery. Since 2014, the focus has widened to include issues relating to access to and the quality of ECEC provision and practice. Challenges for the ECEC system therefore prioritise:

1. **Improving access** - The establishment in 2017 of the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) to provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare realised a national commitment to supporting all families to access ECEC provision. This scheme aims to ‘...replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children’ (DCYA 2017). The full implementation of the ACS will continue in 2018/2019 and will provide the context for further national initiatives. Related to this issue is that of promoting the sustainability of ECEC services. The first step towards the establishment of a national initiative in this regard was the commissioning, in 2017, of an independent review of the cost of provision of ECEC to inform future national funding decisions.

2. **Improving quality** - Investment in the quality of ECEC provision has resulted in a range of initiatives including: the establishment of Better Start, a national quality support service for ECEC; introduction of revised regulations to allow for establishment of a registration system for ECEC services; commencement of Education-focused inspection in Early Years services delivering the national Free Preschool programme. The coordination of these initiatives and ensuring the insights on quality generated by them are used to inform the development of provision and practice in ECEC at all levels of the system will continue
3. **Developing the workforce** – The introduction of regulated minimum qualification requirements in 2017 represented a major challenge for workforce development in the ECEC sector. Investment in initial and continuing education and training for ECEC practitioners will continue to be a priority into the future.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Ireland totalled 4,724,720. This is an indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 3,597,617 and 2005 total: 4,111,672).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 4.3% and children under 6 years of age for nearly 10% of the total population. Since 2005 these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above.

Table 4

Ireland: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	66,227
1-year olds	65,918
2-year olds	70,073
Under age 3 total	202,218
3-year olds	74,981
4-year olds	77,228
5-year olds	78,421
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	230,630
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	432,848

Table 5

Ireland: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ⁵	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.1	4.3	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.9	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.2	9.2	6.2

[†] own calculations, deviations due to roundings

⁵ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 79.7% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 5.4%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (5.1%).

Table 6

Ireland: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent [†]
Households – total	641,000	
Couple households	510,900	79.7
Other types of households	95,500	14.9
Single households, total	34,500	5.4
Single households, women	32,500	5.1
Single households, men	2,000	0.3

[†]Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Ireland was 68.7% and that of women 63.3%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 61.8% were employed in 2015, whereas 84.8% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Although the employment rates of mothers in Ireland were about the same as the EU28 average in 2015, the employment rate of fathers was lower.

Table 7

Ireland: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015[†]

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Ireland	2005	No data	No data
	2010	54.6	77.2
	2015	61.8	84.8
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

⁷own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁶

In 2015, 24.4% of children under age 6 in Ireland were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This corresponds with the EU28 (average = 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 25.9%.

One of the aims of the National Policy Strategy for Children and Young People 2014-2020 is to bring at least 70,000 children out of poverty by 2020 through a comprehensive strategy of parental support, early interventions and multi-agency collaboration.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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⁶ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc100&plugin=1>)

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ITALY

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Chiara Bove and Silvia Cescato

University of Milan-Bicocca,
Department of Human Sciences and Education “R. Massa”

The country report authors would like to express their warm thanks to Professor Susanna Mantovani, who authored the original commissioned report for the first SEEPRO study at the State Institute of Early Childhood Education in 2006 and acted as a consultant for the report presented here.

Citation suggestion:

Bove, C. and S. Cescato. 2018. “Italy – ECEC Workforce Profile.” In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 590-628.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

A split system

In Italy, the system of early childhood education and care for children up to statutory school age (6 years) comprises: (1) a variety of provision for 0- to 3-year olds such as infant-toddler centres/nurseries (*Nidi d'infanzia*), integrative settings for children and families, bridge classes, and (2) pre-primary education settings (*Scuole dell'infanzia*) for 3- to 6-year olds. Services for the under-threes are highly decentralised and managed directly by the local municipal authorities according to general criteria defined at the regional province level. At the national level, 0-3 policies and legislation currently comes under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office, with links to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Nidi* are not part of the national education system. The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*) is responsible for the pre-primary settings, which are part of the national education system. Kindergartens/preschools may be state-run, municipal or private, whereas *Nidi* are managed by municipalities, cooperatives, companies or private agencies.

Towards a unified system

Italy is currently in the process of moving towards implementing an important reform of the ECEC system. With the approval of Law 107/2015 (see *Section 6* for details), also known as *La Buona Scuola* ["The Good School"], the Italian government has introduced a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the Italian school system at all levels (see *Section 6* for a detailed description of the law). Article 1 paragraph 181(e) is devoted to the integration of the ECEC system from birth to six years. This legislation is driving a process of integration between the two main sectors of ECEC (0-3, 3-6), both in terms of governance and educational continuity. In doing so, the reform envisages a process aimed at overcoming the split system between childcare (0-3) and early education (3-6) which has existed since the 1960s. With the recent approval of the Law implementation Decree no. 65/2017, Article 4 (e) – "Institution of the integrated system from birth to six years" (see *Section 6* for details), this transition is expected to take place during the coming years. The newly integrated 0–6 system will need to draw together the 0-3 and 3-6 sectors, while striking a balance between local flexibility and national regulations. From now on, vertical continuity will include the 0–3 sector and not just the pre-primary and primary stages. It is expected that additional government funding will be made available for sustaining the implementation of this integrated 0–6 system. The coming months will be crucial for understanding how the legislative guidelines will be implemented for the organisation of this new system (National Implementation Plan).

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The staff categories currently working directly with children in the Italian ECEC system are:

- **Educatori** (educators), who hold a professional qualification (secondary school diploma in an education/human sciences curriculum or, increasingly, a bachelor's degree in Educational Science), making them eligible to work in 0–3 settings;
- **Insegnanti** (teachers), who are qualified professionals working with 3- to 6-year olds in kindergartens/preschools. Their teaching qualification may be a secondary school diplo-

ma in education/human sciences awarded up to - and including - the academic year 2001/2002, or a five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-Primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) which makes them eligible to teach in both primary and pre-primary settings;

- **Insegnanti di sostegno** (special needs teachers), who hold a teaching qualification (secondary school diploma in education/human sciences awarded up to - and including - the academic year 2001/2002, or the five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education), plus an additional one year course (60 ECTS points = 1500-hour course) on inclusion and teaching methods and approaches for children with special needs and disabilities;
- **Ausiliari/operatori** (auxiliary staff) are responsible for cleaning, supporting educational or care staff, preparing lunch and providing practical backup for the teachers as necessary, for example, by clearing up materials and tidying the room. They are not ‘teaching assistants’ (there are no ‘assistant teachers’ in Italy) and therefore they do not assist teachers in delivering educational activities. Minimum qualification requirements for auxiliary staff are defined at the regional level, but usually include having successfully completed compulsory education (*diploma di scuola dell’obbligo*);
- **Dirigenti** and **coordinatori pedagogici** (setting heads or pedagogical coordinators) are trained professionals with educational and management responsibilities, whose role is to see that the quality of ECEC is maintained and improved. They are usually responsible for a number of different ECEC centres, according to regional regulations. They are key figures in the integrated 0–6 years approach to education that characterises many of the larger cities. At the national level, the professional training required by a ‘pedagogical coordinator of ECEC services’ has never been defined, while individual regions have generally required these persons to hold a university degree. In some cases, pedagogical coordinators or directors of preschools (or *istituti comprensivi* – groups of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools under one head) are recruited from among former infant/toddler educators/preschool teachers who are eligible for this role.

Two examples: In the Lombardy Region (e.g. in the city of Milan), a pedagogical coordinator (*posizioni organizzative*) may hold a bachelor’s or master’s degree in education, psychology, sociology or social work, or a degree in primary and pre-primary education. It is also possible to work in this position with a lower-level qualification (*operatore socio-educativo in servizio*) with five years of prior work experience in infant/toddler centres. By way of contrast, in Emilia Romagna, the requirement for the post of pedagogical coordinator is a master’s degree in education.

The functions of the pedagogical coordinators may have local/regional specifics. In Reggio Emilia, for example, municipal preschools and infant/toddler centres are coordinated by a group of *pedagogisti*, or education graduates. Each *pedagogista* coordinates a group of preschools and infant/toddler centres, thus ensuring a consistent and unitary 0-6 education programme. The coordinating team is responsible for research and innovation, and thus for constantly reviewing and revising the values underlying the overall educational programme, as well as directing and guiding everyday educational activities (Murphy, Ridgway, Cuneen and Horgan, 2016).

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of professionals working directly with children (professional study routes).

With regard to the previous edition of this country profile in the original SEEPRO publication (Mantovani in Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010), there are key changes to report in relation to the following categories: Pre-primary Teachers (*Insegnanti di scuola dell’infanzia*) and Special Needs Teachers (*Insegnanti di sostegno*). Since 2010, both are required to hold the five-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Pri-*

maria), and, in the case of Special Needs Teachers, an additional one-year postgraduate course in special education.

For 0-3 Educators working in infant-toddler centres/nurseries and other forms of provision for very young children, changes are expected to be introduced in the light of the recent approval of the Law Decree no. 65/2017. From 2019/2020 onwards, a relevant university degree (Bachelor's degree in Educational Science with a specific focus on "early childhood education", or a 5-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education, plus a 60 ECTS points additional module in early childhood education) will become the mandatory requirement for working in a 0-3 ECEC-service (art. 4, letter e).

Core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 below).

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010).

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus including adults)

Table 1

Italy: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p><i>Educatore/educatrice</i> Educator</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Nido d'infanzia</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Servizi integrativi</i> <i>(Centri per bambini e famiglie, spazi gioco)</i></p> <p>Additional 0–3 services: centres for children and families, etc.</p> <p><i>Sezioni Primavera</i> 'Bridge'² classes 2–3 years</p>	Core practitioner	All age groups, including 0–3 years	<p><i>Required:</i> Secondary school diploma in education/human sciences</p> <p>EQF: Level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 45</p> <p><i>Optional (for the moment) and required as from 2019/2020:</i></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (<i>Scienze dell'educazione</i>) (L-19), with a specific focus on early childhood education</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p>

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

² 'Bridge' classes are transition classes for 2- to 3-year olds before attending a pre-primary setting (*scuola dell'infanzia*)

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
				EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 64 or Five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i>) (LM-85 bis), plus a 60 ECTS points post-graduate University module in early childhood education ECTS points: 180/300 EQF: level 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 64 or 74
<i>Ausiliari/operatori</i> Auxiliary Staff	<i>Nido d'infanzia</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years <i>Sezioni Primavera</i> 'Bridge' classes 2–3 years	Co-workers without specialist qualification	Not applicable	Not applicable Compulsory school leaving certificate usually requirement for employment
<i>Coordinatori pedagogici</i> Pedagogical Coordinators <i>Profile:</i> Depends on specialisation	<i>Nido d'infanzia</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years	Centre Head Regional Coordinator of several centres	0–6 years	Bachelor's or Master's degree in education, psychology, sociology, social work, or five-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i>) ECTS points: 180/300 EQF: level 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 64 or 74 or recruited from among former Pre-primary Teachers working in an infant-toddler centre for at least 5 years
<i>Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia</i> Pre-primary Education Teacher <i>Profile:</i> (pre 2010)	<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> Kindergarten/preschool (‘Childhood school’) 3–6 years <i>Sezioni Primavera</i>	Core practitioner (class teacher)	3–11 years	Five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i>) ECTS points: 300

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Pre-primary Education Professional (post 2010) Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	'Bridge' classes 2–3 years			EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 7
<i>Insegnante di sostegno</i> Special Needs Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional (special needs)	<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> Kindergarten/preschool (‘Childhood school’) 3–6 years <i>Scuola primaria</i> Primary school 6–11 years	Core practitioner (teacher/educator with an additional qualification for working with special needs children)	(3-) 6–11 years	Five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i>) ECTS points: 300 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 7 plus an additional one-year course focused on inclusion and teaching methods for children with special needs and disabilities ECTS points: 60
<i>Dirigenti</i> Directors, Centre Heads, Principals <i>Profile</i> (before 2010) Pre-primary Education Professional (after 2010) Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> Kindergarten/preschool 3–6 years <i>Scuola primaria e secondaria di primo grado</i> Primary school and lower secondary school 6–11 and 11–13 years	Centre head, also of several centres in one region	3–13 years	Master's degree ECTS points: 300 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0111 ISCED 2011: 7 or recruited from among former preschool teachers with at least five years' teaching experience
<i>Ausiliari/operatori</i> Auxiliary Staff	<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> Kindergarten/preschool 3–6 years <i>Nido d'infanzia</i> Infant-toddler centre 0–3 years <i>Sezioni Primavera</i> 'Bridge' classes 2–3 years	Co-workers without specialist qualification	Not applicable	Not applicable Compulsory school leaving certificate usually requirement for employment

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

It is difficult to source data concerning the structural composition of the Italian ECEC workforce for a number of reasons. As stated above, at present the Italian ECEC system is not unitary in terms of its organisation (0-3 and 3-6 services) or governance (municipal, state, private). Furthermore, multiple institutions are involved in gathering data related to 0–3 and 3–6 services in the public (municipal and state) and private sectors. Data are thus fragmented and collected according to different criteria. The most reliable sources are the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the *Istituto degli Innocenti* (the first secular institution dedicated to taking in children, studying children’s living conditions and promoting their rights and culture), the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and city/town council websites.

Table 2

Italy: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in state-maintained ECEC provision - qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff category	Year/provision/proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2013: State kindergarten/pre-primary setting (3–6): 15.8% 2011: Bridge classes (2–3): 24.5% 2016: Municipal 0-6 provision in Milan: 25%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2011: Bridge classes (2–3): 20.7%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	2011: Bridge classes (2–3): 53% 2013: State kindergarten/pre-primary setting (3–6): 83.7%
Staff with non-specialist qualification (other qualification)	2011: Bridge classes (2–3): 1.8%
Unqualified staff	No data available
Specialist support staff (e.g. special needs teachers)	2013: State kindergarten/pre-primary setting (3-6): 11.4%
Male staff	2014: on average (taking into account all types of 0–6 services): approx.1% (data source OECD 2014 <i>Education at a glance</i>)
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

Data sources: Istituto degli Innocenti 2014; ISTAT 2014; MIUR 2011; MIUR 2013; IDI 2015; Municipal websites.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Educators (*educatori*)

Minimum entry requirements for educators working in the 0 to 3 sector are still established at the regional level only. To date, either a school-leaving qualification from a high school offering an education/human sciences curriculum (*Liceo socio-psicopedagogico*, *Liceo delle scienze umane*) or a bachelor’s degree in education have been the usual requirements. In some cases, a shorter vocational course of studies (e.g. the three-year vocational school programmes entitled *tecnico dei servizi sociali* or *assistente di comunità infantile*) is still accepted, but this is becoming less common.

In line with the rest of Europe, the national trend is to encourage higher qualifications and give priority to candidates with a bachelor’s degree in education (ISCED 64; EQF: Level 6;

ECTS points: 180) or a high school (five-year) diploma with a focus on education (ISCED 45, EQF: Level 4).

Law Decree no. 65/2017 states that, as from 2019/2020, either a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science with a focus on early childhood education or a five-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education, supplemented by a 60 ECTS points module in early childhood education, will become mandatory requirements for working in a 0-3 ECEC setting.

Pre-primary Education Teachers (*insegnanti*)

Entry requirements for teachers working in *scuole dell'infanzia* (kindergartens/pre-primary settings) are established at the national level. Since 2010 (DM 249/2010), teachers working in *scuola dell'infanzia* have been required to hold a five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*, L 85) that qualifies them for a post in both preschools (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years). This course of studies is not organised consecutively with a bachelor's and master's degree, but is one unified course (ISCED 7, EQF: Level 7; ECTS points: 300). It is therefore termed a 'continuous cycle' degree. The universities chosen to provide this five-year course (one per region and two each in Lombardy and Lazio), the syllabus and the entry criteria (number of students and tests), are decided on each year by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR).

Special Needs Teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*)

Candidates wishing to work as a Special Needs Teacher in pre-primary education settings have to complete the five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*, L 85; ISCED 7, EQF: Level 6, ECTS points: 300), plus a one-year postgraduate course (60 ECTS points) on 'inclusion and educational approaches' for work with children with special needs and disabilities (*diploma di specializzazione per l'attività di sostegno didattico agli alunni con disabilità*).

Auxiliary Staff (*personale ausiliario*)

Minimum entry requirements for auxiliary staff working in 0-3 ECEC services and 3-6 kindergartens/preschools are set down at the regional level. Typically, auxiliary staff are required to have successfully completed compulsory education (i.e., lower secondary school prior to 2003; currently at least the first two years of upper secondary school, given that compulsory schooling now ends at the age of 16).

Centre Heads (*coordinatori pedagogici e dirigenti*)

The profile and minimum qualification requirements for professionals with management-organisational responsibilities in ECEC settings (directors or pedagogical coordinators) are locally defined via regional legislation. Normally, a bachelor's or master's degree in education, psychology, sociology or social work, or the five-year degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della formazione primaria*; EQF: Level 6 or 7; ISCED 7) is required. Heads may also be recruited from among former infant/toddler educators or kindergarten/preschool teachers with at least five years' experience of working in ECEC.

State *scuole dell'infanzia* are often under the direction of the head teacher of the *istituto comprensivo* (group of preschools, primary and lower secondary schools) to which they belong. These heads are not required by regional laws to have specific ECEC training, but to

hold a relevant third level qualification (a five-year university degree/master's degree); in some cases, they are recruited from among former teachers with the relevant qualifications who have worked in a preschool or primary school for at least five years.

The following tables summarise the initial qualifying routes for ECEC staff.

Table 3

Italy: Educator

Job title in Italian: <i>Educatrice/educatore</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>The following qualification route is the current <i>requirement</i> for core practitioners (educators) in a 0-3 years ECEC service.</p> <p>Entry requirements: Completion of compulsory education (<i>Scuola media</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: 5-year upper secondary route with a focus on education (<i>Liceo delle scienze umane</i>) OR 3 years vocational secondary training for <i>Assistenti di comunità</i> OR any upper secondary diploma supplemented by specific education courses organised at the local or regional level.</p> <p>Award: Upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 45</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Infant-toddler centres 0–3 years; Bridge classes 2–3 years; Centres for children and families.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year university degree in education.</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree (<i>Laurea triennale</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 64</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Infant-toddler centres, 0–3 years; Bridge classes, 2–3 years.</p> <p><i>As from 2019/2020:</i></p> <p>The following requirements will become compulsory for core practitioners who wish to work in a 0-3 years ECEC service.</p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>Diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>).</p> <p>Professional studies: A Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (<i>Scienze dell'educazione</i>, L-19) with a specific focus on early childhood education or a 5-year university route in Primary and Pre-primary Education (<i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i>, LM-85 bis) plus a 60 ECTS points module in early childhood education.</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree in Educational Science (<i>Laurea triennale in scienze dell'educazione</i>, L-19), with a specific focus on early childhood education, or a five-year university degree (<i>Diploma di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico per insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia e primaria</i>, LM 85 bis) plus a University specialisation (60 ECTS) for working with children between 0 and 3 years.</p> <p>ECTS points: 300 (degree in LM-85 bis), or 180 (degree in L-19)</p> <p>EQF level: 7 (degree in LM-85 bis), or 6 (degree in L-19)</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74 (degree in LM-85 bis), or 64 (degree in L-19)</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Infant-toddler centres; Bridge classes, 2–3 years; Centres for families and children.</p>

Table 4

Italy: Pre-primary Education Teacher

Job title in Italian: <i>Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p><i>Since 2010:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>Diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures. Criteria for access (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR).</p> <p>Professional studies: Five-year university route in <i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i> (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p> <p>Award: 5-year university degree (<i>Diploma di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico per insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia e primaria</i>). This degree programme is defined as a 'continuous cycle', meaning that it is not split into a bachelor's and a master's degree, but is one unified degree course, ending with a master's degree.</p> <p>ECTS points: 300</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergartens, 3–6 years; Infant-toddler centres, 0–3 years; Bridge classes, 2–3 years; Centres for children and families.</p>

Table 5

Italy: Special Needs Teacher

Job title in Italian: <i>Insegnante di sostegno</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional (special needs)
<p><i>Since 2010:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 5-year university degree in <i>Scienze della Formazione Primaria</i> (degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p> <p>Professional studies: An additional 1-year post-graduate course in special education with a final examination.</p> <p>Award: <i>Postgraduate diploma</i> in special needs education for the early years, <i>Insegnante di sostegno</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 300</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergartens/preschools, 3- to 6-year old children with disabilities</p>

Table 6

Italy: Auxiliary Staff

Job title in Italian: <i>Ausiliari/operatori</i>
<p>The following qualification route is the usual <i>current</i> requirement for auxiliary staff in ECEC settings and may vary from municipality to municipality.</p> <p>Entry requirements: Completion of primary school</p> <p>Professional studies: Compulsory education: lower secondary school (before 2003), or (after 2003) at least the first 2 years of upper secondary school.</p> <p>Award: Compulsory school leaving certificate (<i>Diploma di scuola dell'obbligo</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>EQF level: not applicable</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: not applicable</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 2 or 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i>), 3 to 6 years; Infant-toddler centre (<i>Nido d'infanzia</i>), 0-3; Bridge classes (<i>Sezioni primavera</i>) 2-3 years</p>

Table 7

Italy: Centre Heads/Kindergarten (IPS)

Job title in Italian: <i>Dirigenti</i>
Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>The following qualification route is the usual current requirement for the role of kindergarten head. (They also can be recruited among former Pre-primary Teachers with at least five years' teaching experience.)</p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance examination (<i>diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures. Criteria for access (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR).</p> <p>Professional studies: Five-year university degree in <i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i> (Primary and Pre-primary Education) or master's degree in education, psychology, etc.</p> <p>Award: Master's level degree (<i>Diploma di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico per insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia e primaria</i>). Qualified Teacher Status for pre-primary and primary education.</p> <p>ECTS points: 300</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0111</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Primary and lower secondary school (<i>Scuola primaria e scuola secondaria di primo grado</i>), 6-13 years; Kindergarten (<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i>), 3-6 years; Infant-toddler centre (<i>Nido d'infanzia</i>), 0-3 years; Bridge classes (<i>Sezioni primavera</i>), 2-3 years</p>

Table 8

Italy: Pedagogical Coordinators 0-3 sector

Job title in Italian: <i>Coordinatori pedagogici</i>
Profile: Depends on specialisation
<p>The following qualification route is the usual current requirement for the pedagogical coordinators of infant/toddler centres and other social and education services for under 3-year olds. They can also be recruited among former Pre-Primary Teachers who have worked in an infant/toddler centre for at least five years.</p> <p>Entry requirements: General university entrance qualification (<i>diploma di istruzione secondaria superiore</i>); individual university selection procedures. Criteria for access (number of students and tests) are decided each year by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR).</p> <p>Professional studies: Five-year university degree in <i>Scienze della formazione primaria</i> (Primary and Pre-primary Education) or Bachelor's/Master's degree in education, psychology, sociology, social work.</p> <p>Award: Master's level university degree (<i>Diploma di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico per insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia e primaria</i>) or Bachelor's/Master's degree in education, psychology, sociology, social work</p> <p>ECTS points: 180/300</p> <p>EQF level: 6/7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 64/74</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Primary and secondary school (<i>Scuola primaria e scuola secondaria di primo grado</i>), 6-13 years; Kindergarten (<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i>), 3 to 6 years; Infant-toddler center (<i>Nido d'infanzia</i>), 0-3; Bridge classes (<i>Sezioni primavera</i>), 2-3 years</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Educators (*educatori*)

Five-year upper secondary education qualifying route

The core component of the programme offered by the *liceo delle scienze umane* – a secondary school specialising in the human sciences which, since 2010, has substituted the *liceo socio-psico-pedagogico/istituto magistrale* - is a range of human science disciplines (psychology, sociology, pedagogy and educational science, anthropology), with a focus on research in the areas of education, psychology and sociology/anthropology/history. Students with this

school-leaving qualification are eligible to work in early childhood settings or in general social and educational services (see Section 3.1).

Curricular areas: The curriculum also encompasses humanistic subjects (Italian, history, geography, philosophy, art history), science subjects (mathematics, physics, natural sciences) and languages (Latin and modern languages); one of the non-linguistic disciplines is taught through a modern language other than Italian (CLIL).

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: This course of studies is delivered via a combination of conventional classes, workshops and practical work/internship. The periods of internship/practical experience (in the third, fourth and fifth years) are designed to make students familiar with the educational and social services and institutions in the local area. Practical experience is viewed as a key component of the training of educators (see Section 4). Furthermore, the recently introduced Law 107/2015 (see Section 6 for a description of the law) mandates at least 200 hours of ‘alternating training’ (*alternanza scuola-lavoro*: periods of work experience in companies, other workplace settings, public services, etc. ...), to take place during the second two-year cycle (third and fourth years) and in the final year. Under this new law, internships have become compulsory for all students in the last three years of upper secondary education (at least 400 hours for students in vocational education and 200 hours for students in general education). These work placements may be carried out either in the private or in the public sector (internship is explained in depth in Section 4).

Three- to five-year vocational school route (*Assistente di Comunità Infantili o Tecnico dei servizi sociali*)

Curricular areas: The curriculum offers human science and artistic disciplines (education, sociology, psychology, art, music), alongside humanistic (Italian, history, geography), scientific (science, mathematics) and linguistic (foreign languages) subjects.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: Approximately half of the overall course time is allocated to the practical internship (practicum) component. However, there is variability among the different types of school (some offer three-year courses, others five-year courses...) and it is therefore difficult to define the average number of hours spent on internship. This course of studies is becoming rare and consequently there is a lack of information about common didactic approaches.

Three-year bachelor’s degree in educational science (*Laurea triennale in Scienze dell’Educazione*)

Curricular areas: This three-year course is mainly focused on the human sciences (education, psychology, sociology, philosophy, intercultural education, anthropology etc.), which are taught alongside the relevant curricular disciplines (languages, history, music, technology, etc.). Modules in special education and the psychology of disability and inclusion are also provided to specifically prepare educators for working with special needs children (0–3). A minimum level of competence in a foreign language (English, French, German, Spanish) is an obligatory entry requirement.

The course is aimed at developing students’ knowledge and competence in the areas of: education methods/didactic approaches, teaching and learning processes, educational and communication dynamics within an educational service. Interdisciplinary activities and practical workshops are key coursework components (the workshops are designed to help students translate theory into practice). The basic goal underpinning the pre-service university training of ECEC practitioners is to foster the development of a professional profile that is capable of transferring a multidisciplinary approach into teaching practice that can be adapted to different contexts (Mantovani 2007).

This degree course provides students with the training, expertise and competence required to carry out educational work in non-school educational settings with people of all ages and

life stages, whether in conditions of ‘normality’, disadvantage, marginalisation, vulnerability or cultural diversity.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: Coursework comprises lectures, workshops and practical training/internship aimed at integrating theory and practice. The practical work component (internship/*tirocinio*) is obligatory for all students and is carried out during the second and third year. The number of hours dedicated to practical work is established by the individual university (in general, around 9-10 ECTS points. 1 ECTS point=25 hours). For example, the degree course in Educational Science at the University of Milan-Bicocca has established a minimum of 250 hours for internship/practical work: 100 hours during the second year and 150 hours during the third year. The practical work may take place in a variety of ECEC settings, including day care, community centres and institutions. Each year an evaluation of the student’s placement is prepared by the supervisor which is based on the student’s reports and documentation. The aim of this coursework component is to give students direct experience of the type of organisation in which they may work in the future and the opportunity to bring a reflective approach to bear on this hands-on experience.

Pre-primary Education Teachers (*insegnanti*)

Five-year university degree in Primary and Pre-primary Education (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*)

Since 2010, teachers in *scuole dell’infanzia* are obliged to hold a five-year university degree (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*) (300 ECTS points) that makes them eligible to teach in either preschools (3–6 years) or primary schools (6–11 years). However, those who were awarded a high school diploma in education studies prior to and including 2001-2002 may still participate in national competitive exams to become preschool teachers.

Curricular areas: The curriculum balances the human sciences (education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, pedagogy) and relevant curricular disciplines (languages, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, art, music, etc.). It also requires participation in workshops and an internship/practicum. During the workshops (or lab work), students are split into small groups to share practical learning experiences and simulations of what they plan to do during their teaching practice internships. The internship begins in the second year, and lasts a total of 600 hours (equivalent to 24 ECTS points) divided between each year. The individual university decides how to distribute the hours over the years. For example, the University of Milan-Bicocca requires the following hours: 100 hours in the second year, 125 in the third, 175 in the fourth and 200 in the fifth.

As specified in the current legislation – see DM 249/2010 (pp. 24-25) – the following components are an integral part of teacher training:

- a) English language competence - at least Level B2 in the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” adopted in 1996 by the Council of Europe. In order to qualify as teachers, undergraduates must either sit an examination or present certificates to prove that they have attained the required level of proficiency;
- b) digital competence as outlined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 18 December 2006. It is particularly important that teachers possess the ability to use multimedia languages to represent and communicate knowledge and to create simulated environments and virtual laboratories;
- c) educational/didactic competence in fostering the inclusion of students with disabilities, in line with the provisions of Law 104, 5 February 1992 and its subsequent modifications and additions.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The professional study routes for student-teachers developed in recent decades are characterised by: a multidisciplinary approach; integration of theory and practice; partnerships with kindergartens/schools. Experienced practitioners

play an active part in the delivery of these studies. The overall goal is to promote the development of all-round knowledge of the curriculum for preschool and primary practitioners.

At the end of this university route, there is also a final exam, known as VIVA, which consists of a written dissertation and oral defence about a teaching project carried out in a host school. Successful completion of the VIVA exam means that candidates have earned Qualified Teacher Status for preschools and primary schools.

Special Needs Teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*)

Teachers wishing to acquire a specialisation in special needs are required to complete a one-year postgraduate course in special needs education (for graduates of the five-year degree programme in Primary and Pre-primary Education, *Scienze della Formazione Primaria*).

Curricular and pedagogic areas: To work as a special needs teacher in kindergarten, graduates of the five-year degree course in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria* [or teachers holding a secondary school diploma in social and educational studies awarded before year 2001/2002] are required to attend an additional one-year postgraduate course in special needs education. This course was officially launched in 2015. It may only be offered by a university, must account for at least 60 ECTS points and must include at least 300 hours of internship experience, for which 12 ECTS points are to be awarded. Course content is specific to either preschool or primary school education as relevant and is aimed at helping teachers to develop the educational competences required to foster the inclusion of students with disabilities. The course includes lectures (in, for example, the pedagogy of helping relationships; child neuropsychiatry; metacognitive and cooperative teaching methods), workshops/education laboratories (also focused on how to use new technologies in working with special needs children) and practical work/internship.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Alternative pathways

Until little over a decade ago, Italy was one of the few countries in the European Union that did not offer standard university-level pre-service training to teachers at all levels of the school system. Up to 2003, the basic training of preschool and primary school teachers was at upper secondary level, with a school-leaving diploma in an occupationally relevant area of study (diploma from a vocational secondary school specialising in primary teaching training – *Istituto Magistrale*; or in education/human sciences – *Liceo PsicoPedagogico*; *Liceo delle Scienze Umane*) was the only qualification required to teach at these levels.

With the introduction of Law 53/2003 *Delega del Governo per la definizione delle norme generali sull'istruzione e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni in materia di istruzione e formazione professionale* (Art. 5, Subsection 3), the Degree in Primary and Pre-primary became the entry-level qualification for teachers. This was offered as a four-year degree programme up to 2010, subsequently becoming a five-year programme. Teachers who already held permanent posts and had been teaching for several years prior to the change were offered alternative pathways to upgrade their knowledge and skills (predominantly workplace-based training routes).

A similar scenario will probably occur as a consequence of the recently approved Law Decree no. 65/2017 which will require those working in ECEC settings for 0–3 year olds to hold an occupationally relevant university degree for professional educators.

Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualification frameworks

The only type of progression in the career path of a Pre-primary Education Teacher or an Educator in an infant-toddler centre is that determined by length of service. The only possi-

ble promotion available to these teachers is to participate in further competitive exams (on managerial, organisation and administrative topics) to become service coordinators. In some kindergartens, the teacher with the highest level of seniority may be appointed coordinator at the discretion of the school head.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Internship (workplace-based learning) is viewed as a key component of the initial training of Italian practitioners and is meant to include observation, supervised practice, reflexivity, planning and documenting, assessment and experience in the sectors of education that are relevant to the given initial professional studies routes (educational settings, socio-educational contexts, kindergartens/preschools, ...).

Currently, this element of IPS is regulated at the national level. The number of hours devoted to internships is nationally defined for the five-year degree programme in *Scienze della Formazione primaria*, and varies locally for the Bachelor's Degree in Educational Science.

Since the introduction of Law 107/2015, it is a national requirement for students attending upper-secondary school (both general and vocational) to be actively involved in the *alternanza scuola-lavoro* (alternating training) project to help education and pre-service training better meet the needs of the labour market (universities also welcome secondary students on work placements). This traineeship is compulsory for students and starts in the third year. The law requires at least 400 hours of 'alternating' or 'dual' training for students in vocational education and 200 hours for students in general education. It may take place in either private or public sector settings.

The following describes the current situation concerning workplace-based learning in the IPS routes of ECEC core practitioners.

Educators (*educatori*)

Workplace-based learning within the five-year upper secondary qualifying route

Secondary students who choose an education-human sciences curriculum are obliged to complete 200 hours of internship experience (in Years 3–5), which must be workplace-based and must take place in social/educational services settings (residential care structures for minors, crèches, early childhood services, etc.) that students might potentially work in after completing their minimum initial training.

The internships are carried out under the supervision of (a) a teacher-tutor (usually the education and psychology tutor) who is responsible for monitoring the students' progress and development during the placement and (b) a representative of the host organisation (usually the coordinator), who is responsible for welcoming and supporting the student during his or her time in the field.

Workplace-based learning within the three- to five-year vocational school route (*Assistente di Comunità Infantili o Tecnico dei servizi sociali*)

The hours of internship work (which must be completed in a social or educational service setting) are approximately half the duration of the entire course of studies, although there is variability among schools (some offer three-year courses, others five-year courses and it is therefore difficult to define the average number of hours spent on internship). Law 107/2015 prescribes that for five-year vocational secondary school programmes, at least 400 hours must be spent in 'alternating' or 'dual' training between school and workplace (*alternanza*

scuola-lavoro) (in years 3-5). These internships are to be carried out under the supervision of a teacher from the student's own school and a representative of the host organisation (often the coordinator), who will act as the student's main point of contact during his or her time in alternating training.

Workplace-based learning within the three-year bachelor's degree in educational science – *Laurea triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione*

On the three-year degree course in educational sciences (L-19), practical work (usually referred to as *tirocinio*/internship) is obligatory for all students and carried out during the second and third year. It is the responsibility of individual universities to organise these work placements and the structure of the time blocks spent in the workplace can vary from one university to another.

The objectives of the internship are to: promote the integration of the theoretical knowledge that the student is gradually acquiring with hands-on experience of work-place settings; ensure a healthy balance between theory, practice and reflection on experience; train students in the use of observation instruments and documentation; provide students with a framework for reflecting about practice.

Length of time spent in the workplace: Each university establishes the number of hours that students must spend doing practical work. For example, the course in Educational Science at the University of Milan-Bicocca prescribes a minimum of 250 hours (10 ECTS points): 100 hours (4 ECTS points) during the second year and 150 hours (6 ECTS points) during the third year. The practical work takes place in a variety of ECEC settings, including day nurseries, community centres and settings. Each year, an evaluation of the practical work is prepared/produced by the supervisor, based on the students' reports and documentation.

Structure of time blocks: As stated above, the structure of time blocks varies across universities. The tendency is to combine direct and indirect activities. The indirect (or preparatory) activities include analysing the students' professional interests and aptitudes, identifying the setting in which they will carry out their internship, and setting up an agreement between the university and the host organisation. Direct activities are those actually carried out by the students in the workplace setting (under the guidance of their supervisor, who will meet them periodically to discuss how the work placement is proceeding and encourage them to analyse and reflect on the practical experience gained to date). During the internship, the students alternate observation, documentation and participation in the everyday functioning of the host organisation/service, with reflection and discussion with other students/interns and the supervisor. Each supervisor is responsible for a group of students whose number may vary from university to university (e.g., at the University of Milan-Bicocca each tutor is responsible for 20-25 students). Group sessions alternate with individual meetings between student and supervisor. Supervision focuses on the student's observations and documentation and on analysing the practices that he/she has implemented in the field.

Self-evaluation and external evaluation: The methods used to evaluate the internship are also at the discretion of the individual university. However, assessment is usually continuous and generally involves both 'external' evaluation provided by the supervisor and critical evaluation and analysis on the part of the student himself/herself (self-evaluation based on: analysis of learning outcomes, self-observation, own appraisal of practical teaching experience). This formative evaluation model (*valutazione formative*, Bondioli and Ferrari 2004) foregrounds the active involvement of the student.

Supervisors/mentors: Supervisors play a crucial role in the internship experience for all undergraduate students. For each degree programme, an internship board defines criteria for selecting and recruiting supervisors. No 'standard' criteria have been provided at the national or local levels, nor have any minimum requirements been established. These supervisors are recruited through a formal selection process. At Milan-Bicocca University, for example, su-

supervisors are selected on the basis of their prior experience in the field, as educators, coordinators, teacher trainers, etc.; of their prior experience of collaborating with the university; on their knowledge and skills in the area of education; and on their overall educational and professional profile. The number of supervisor contracts is decided annually depending on the intake of students on the degree programme in question. Supervisors do not receive a fixed salary. The post of supervisor is assigned annually on a contract basis via a public competitive selection procedure run by the university. The number of posts and relative compensation are decided on an annual basis.

Pre-primary Education Teachers (*insegnanti*)

Workplace-based learning within the five-year university degree course (*Laurea quinquennale a ciclo unico in Scienze della formazione primaria*)

Workplace-based learning and regulation: Since 2010 (Ministerial Decree 249/2010, Art. 3), in the context of the overall redefining of teacher training requirements, the government has made practical work placements an obligatory part of the five-year degree in *Scienze della Formazione Primaria*.

Duration: Internship experience begins in Year 2, and lasts a total of 600 hours (corresponding to 24 ECTS points) over Years 2-5. National legislation requires that the placements be designed to earn a progressively higher number of ECTS points in each successive year up to final year. Each university decides how to distribute these hours over the years. For example, the University of Milan-Bicocca requires the following hours: 100 hours (4 ECTS points) in the second year, 125 hours (5 ECTS points) in the third, 175 hours (7 ECTS points) in the fourth and 200 hours (8 ECTS points) in the fifth.

Structure: Workplace-based learning comprises direct and indirect activities. Direct activities are carried out in preschools and student teachers are supervised by experienced pre-primary or primary school teachers. There is an orientation phase, an observation phase in schools, a phase for the preparation of a specific project and a final phase for implementation of the project. The host teacher in the kindergarten/preschool cooperates with the university tutor in supervising and evaluating the teaching practice. Thus, the curriculum is implemented in collaboration with schools: each university given responsibility by the Ministry of Education for providing primary education training is required to work with schools in the surrounding area. Schoolteachers and principals therefore work directly with students; they are assigned part-time or full-time to universities to supervise students in planning and carrying out their teaching practice assignments.

Supervisors/mentors: Supervisors are recruited via a selection process to work at the university for a few years. There is approximately one supervisor per 20-25 students. The relevant Decree Law distinguishes between three different tutorial positions (DM 8 November 2011): 1) ordinary tutors - *tutor dei tirocinanti*, 2) coordinating tutors - *tutor coordinatori* (with fewer hours of actual supervision) and 3) organising tutors - *tutor organizzatori* (with no hours of actual supervision). Article 11 of DM-249 2010 specifies that those appointed as 'supervisor-tutors' must have worked for at least five years as teachers or head teachers within the Italian national school system. The appointment (role) must be either reconfirmed or terminated each year by the board of the university department employing the tutor. The posts of organising and coordinating tutor may only be assigned for a four-year period, may not be immediately reassigned to the same person and may be extended for a maximum of one additional year. The university department employing the tutors is responsible for selecting and recruiting them. In the course of their everyday duties, tutors/supervisors report to the degree programme board.

The function of the regular tutor (*tutor dei tirocinanti*) is to monitor the students' teaching activities during their periods of teaching practice and to help them manage their teaching

processes. Co-ordinating tutors (*tutor coordinatori*) are responsible for guiding and managing the regular tutors, assigning the students to classes and schools, formally drawing up a teaching practice plan for each student, catering for the training needs of the group of students under their supervision, monitoring and assessing the teaching practice placements and guiding the student teachers in writing their final reports. Organising tutors (*tutor organizzatori*) organize and manage relations between the university, schools and school heads, and supervise all administrative procedures involving the coordinating tutors and the regional education authorities. They also have responsibility for assigning a group of students to each coordinating tutor.

In general – independent of a supervisor’s specific role – his or her job is to make sure that student teachers receive an adequate amount of feedback and guidance for carrying out their specific teaching practice assignments. Supervisors also help students to reflect on and organise their own knowledge, to appreciate the relationship between theory and practice, to apply formal learning to occupational roles, and to become familiar with the running of schools and the different activities and practices implemented in the classroom.

With regard to remuneration, tutors are subject to the contractual conditions laid down by the relevant national wage agreement (CCNL - *Contratto Collettivo Nazionale Di Lavoro*).

Evaluation: Evaluation and monitoring throughout the internship are the basis for intermediate and final assessments. At the end of each year of the internship, students turn in project documents, including teaching materials, and a final report.

Special Needs Teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*)

The Decree Laws 249/2010 and DM 30 September 2011 define the *linee guida nazionali (Ministeriali)* [national Ministerial guidelines] for the teaching practice component of the one-year postgraduate course in special needs education (which may be completed by graduates in Primary and Pre-primary Education/*Scienze della Formazione Primaria* or by recognized primary teachers).

Aims and goals of the internship: The placement comprises both indirect and direct components. The indirect component involves critical analysis of the teaching practice experience by the student teachers themselves and the design of interactive teaching activities for implementation with pupils with disabilities. The practical activities include the application of digital technologies (ICT) to special needs education. The exact type of teaching experience provided can vary and is defined by the local university in collaboration with the host schools.

Duration and time blocks: Students must complete 300 hours of internship experience (for which they are awarded 12 ECTS). Individual universities are free to decide how these hours will be distributed, as long as they meet the national requirement for the teaching practice to take place in schools and over a period of no longer than five months.

During the direct activity phase of the placement, the student is supervised by an ordinary tutor (*tutor dei tirocinanti*), chosen from among the teaching staff of the host school, who must have at least seven years’ teaching experience.

Evaluation: Assessment of the teaching practice is both external and internal (self-evaluation). The former is based mainly on the tutor’s evaluation of the student’s performance/progress during the placement. This is followed by the student’s own critical assessment of his or her practical teaching experience at both the personal and professional levels.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Although there is a shared interpretation of the link between in-service professional development and the provision of good quality ECEC, the framework for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel varies both across the country and between the infant-toddler and pre-primary sector.

In brief:

0–3 sector: Until now, there has been no national framework regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel working in 0–3 settings in Italy. Some regional regulations existed, but varied for each region. With 21 different regional legislative frameworks (*sistemi legislativi regionali*), CPD opportunities for infant-toddler (0–3) Educators and Coordinators vary significantly across the country. With the approval of the Law Decree no. 65/2017, creating an integrated system will also be accompanied by changes on the ground regarding staff professionalisation. In relation to the mandatory Bachelor degree for Early Childhood Educators to be introduced in 2019, Article 5 of the Law Decree specifies that the State will provide specific measures for the continuing professional development of both Educators and Pre-primary Teachers and these will be set down in a National Plan for the 0-6 sector.

3–6 sector: A national framework and new national guidelines for the CPD of preschool and primary school teachers have recently been drawn up (Law 107/2015). In the National Curricular Guidelines (MIUR 2012), PD is mentioned in the following term: “collegiality, continuing professional development and reflection on practice are needed to enrich teachers’ professionalism” (MIUR 2012, 17).

Despite a lack of uniformity, the Italian early education system has built up its strength thanks to significant investment in continuing professional development (at both the local and the national levels).

Continuing professional development for ECEC practitioners is mainly funded at the local level, with significant variation across regions (there is a large gap between the Northern and Southern regions): a certain amount of professional development activities are usually planned on an annual basis, but there are no regulations requiring a minimum number of hours’ attendance. Local authorities fund PD, negotiating the contents and modes of organisation with local universities, research centres and private providers, or using internal resources. In recent years, the government has allocated very little funding to PD in state schools, apart from selected national or experimental projects. In the past years, no regular public funding was provided for continuing professional development by the Ministry of Education. Limited state funds were mainly assigned to special projects (e.g., *Sezioni Primavera* - a programme focussing on 2- and 3-year olds, Law 285/1997). Regions occasionally provided some funding and city/town councils struggle to find resources. For municipal schools or schools run by other providers, the situation is the same as for public infant/toddler centres.

By approving the new Law 107/2015 and its implementation Decree, the Italian government acknowledged – including in economic terms – its crucial role in promoting and sustaining CPD activities to ensure the full development of teaching staff across the 0-6 sector. The recently approved reform introduced an annual 500€ bonus for teachers, to be spent on accredited CPD activities.

Aims of CPD

For all ECEC personnel, being actively engaged in the above-mentioned forms of CPD is viewed as both a ‘duty’ and a ‘right’. Indeed, expectations concerning the professionalism (and professional training) of the Italian ECEC workforce are high and include in-service professional development and continuous improvement of skills and competences.

CPD is viewed as making a key contribution to the quality of ECEC. Its core aim is defined as promoting critical reflection, rather than transmitting theoretical knowledge with no connection to practice, and encouraging shared learning and ‘learning by doing’ within communities of practice and of learners (Lave and Wenger 1991). Continuing professional development is conceptualised as a collegial process of observing, planning, documenting, reflecting, preparing and planning work with children and families (Rinaldi 2001; 2006) that requires reflexive and flexible methods and procedures based on the analysis and observation of practice and on practices of sharing. Teachers’ competences and their capacity to enhance their practices via lifelong development and learning are taken as given. “The professionalism of teachers”, as stated in the National Curricular Guidelines (drafted by the Ministry of Education in 2012) “is acknowledged to be a key aspect of quality”. Planning and guaranteeing continuing professional development in the context of such an extensive, fragmented and varied system is a challenge in terms of organisation, quality of trainers, and finding resources.

Main forms of CPD for core practitioners and for qualified and non-qualified co-workers

The main forms of CPD for **core practitioners** (pedagogical coordinators, directors, teachers, educators) are: workshops, conferences, local seminars, documentation projects and research projects (action research, intervention research, participatory research, etc.). In general, CPD in the Italian ECEC system is aimed at fostering critical thinking and reflexive practices through teamwork, exchange programmes, documentation/observation, bottom-up experiences of evaluation, involving teachers in research projects, new digital technologies (video observation/video feedback, etc.). Collegiality is another defining feature of CPD in ECEC. In some cities (e.g. Reggio Emilia, Pistoia), professional development is based on the synergy between staff meetings at individual preschools and infant/toddler centres and broader training opportunities provided at the local, national, and international levels.

Official **co-workers** such as ‘teaching assistants’ or ‘pedagogical assistants’ do not exist in the Italian ECEC system, and therefore there are no CPD options available for them.

Despite the current lack of an overarching national framework, the Italian ECEC system has been investing in continuing professional development (*formazione permanente*) at the local level since the 1970/80s. Many city councils set up partnerships with universities or research institutes with a view to developing a consolidated set of professional development practices and action-research, or to conducting experiments characterized by teamwork, co-constructed project work, documentation, reflective work and a focus on working with families and community (*partecipazione*). In general, both bottom up/top down participatory processes and local university/research centre involvement have been key to fostering CPD. Some cities have developed a CPD system that involves pedagogical coordinators – viewed as key figures within integrated 0-6 ECEC systems –, links with universities or other research institutions and a bottom-up-participatory process involving multiple actors. Bottom-up networks have traditionally played a crucial role in the CPD of Italian ECEC staff (see Box 2).

Box 2

Italy: Example of an influential professional network

The *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi-Infanzia*, founded in 1980 as a bottom-up network including practitioners, researchers (academics), administrators and coordinators, and professional journals (*Bambini, Infanzia*, etc.), plus at a later stage, the National Documentation Centre unit, *Istituto degli Innocenti* and regional groups, has traditionally driven CPD programmes and disseminated the outcomes via conferences, local seminars, advocacy initiatives, publications and training institutes. Today this group is one of the most authoritative voices in the Italian ECEC sector.

In the municipal preschools of Reggio Emilia, one of the strategies implemented has been to give priority to professional development in the daily running of the service by encouraging reflective practices of observation and documentation, with the weekly staff meeting providing the main forum for in-depth reflection and sharing. In new centres, experienced staff mentor new staff on site during the start-up phase (for example, *Nido Bambini-Bicocca* <http://www.unimib.it/go/192950658/Home/Italiano/Vivere-luniversita/Vivere-IUniversita/Asilo-nido>)

This reflects the broader Italian discourse on in-service professional development (*formazione permanente*), which is particularly strong in municipal kindergartens/preschools. In Italy, the concept and the terms used for initial professional studies/teacher training are *formazione di base* (pre-service training) and *formazione in servizio* (continuing professional development). These terms convey a very different meaning from the English word ‘training’ (Nigris 2007, 1145). The concept *formazione* comes from *forma* (structure, shape) and means “taking rather than being given a form” (Nigris 2007, 1146). This requires investment at many levels, and a bottom-up/top-down participatory perspective on professional development as a dynamic, multimethod approach of reviewing practices within a community of learners.

Leave entitlement specifications

Traditionally, in municipal ECEC provision, both pre-primary education teachers and infant/toddler educators (0–3) have been guaranteed an average of 40 to 50 hours per year for professional development, with the upper limit including teamwork (supervised by coordinators).

In *state* preschools (3–6) regulations allow for 20 to 40 hours per annum for teamwork and planning, work with parents and professional development. Regional Ministry offices may be more or less stringent in terms of monitoring how these hours are actually invested, allowing a lesser or greater proportion to be used for *auto-aggiornamento* (self-organised professional development) which teachers are not expected to document and – similarly to teachers at other levels of schooling – may include personal reading. A rough estimate of the time annually devoted to PD is between 12 and 15 hours.

Contracts with *non-public* providers are many and varied. The two leading providers (PAN, a consortium of social entrepreneurship networks), in the 0–3 sector and FISM (*Federazione Italiana Scuole Materne*) in the 3–6 sector guarantee a minimum of 12 hours per year, and more for teachers taking part in special projects. In some locations, characterised by a strong tradition of investment in ECEC, cooperatives to which ECEC services have been outsourced by city/town councils (referred to as externalized municipal services) guarantee 2 to 5 hours per week for continuing professional development.

When professional development takes place in the context of special projects, evaluation is required. In cases in which professional learning tends to be shared among the educational staff of ECEC centres (e.g. Pistoia, Parma, Reggio Emilia etc.), **auxiliary staff** benefit from the same professional development initiatives as their colleagues with a qualification in education, and share a culture of reflection.

Main providers of CPD

0-3 sector: Local authorities (city/town councils) or external agencies are the main providers of CPD activities. In areas in which ECEC is strong, councils and training providers often engage in partnerships with universities or research centres, but funding is scarce. At the local level, some city/town councils (e.g., Reggio Emilia, San Miniato, Pistoia, Modena) have set up other types of institution (e.g., documentation centres, etc.) that provide professional development activities for educators.

3-6 sector: The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), (through funds allocated to state kindergartens and schools), local authorities and external training agencies are the main providers. However, the funding to schools is not earmarked for professional development and has been steadily decreasing in recent years. Prior to the approval of Law 107/2015, preschool teachers enjoyed an average of roughly 12-15 hours of paid professional development per year, including individual study.

Since 1998, with the progressive development of pre-service education and the economic crisis, investment in continuing professional development has declined in terms of dedicated time and resources (and this is particularly true of the state-run services, while municipal services and FISM continue to invest in PD). Some ‘creative’ solutions have been found at the

local level and in general there is a stimulus to find new, sustainable approaches that capitalise on the knowledge of experienced staff (see also CARE European Project <http://ecec-care.org/>, WP3: Jensen et al. 2015; Bove et al. 2016).

Under the terms of the Law 107/2015, new funds are to be allocated by the Ministry of Education and new guidelines provided for the CPD of all school staff including teachers, principals and co-workers. When the law is fully implemented, many things will change and new pathways for CPD will be introduced into schools of all levels. The development of a national system of continuing PD for all school staff will be viewed as a 'national/public responsibility', and all teachers will be required to participate in 'courses' to enhance their professional competence.

Formally recognised participation in specific forms of CPD

At present, participation in specific forms of CPD is not 'formally recognised' in terms of career advancement. However, over the next few years, this situation is likely to change, given the forthcoming approval of the new laws (see Section 6).

Specific qualification requirements for heads of ECEC provision

As already described under Section 2, a well-defined study route for the professional profile of pedagogical coordinator (*coordinatore pedagogico/pedagogista*) does not exist at the national level. The qualifications required by heads of ECEC services are set at the regional level and generally include a five/four-year university degree. In some cases, pedagogical coordinators or heads of preschools (or *istituti comprensivi*) are recruited from among suitably qualified former infant/toddler educators/preschool teachers.

Variations in qualification requirements exist at the regional level. However, the professional role of *heads/coordinators* is similar across regions and consists in orienting and monitoring educational practices, coordinating services in the same area (nursery schools and preschools), orienting and planning CPD for teachers and educators, and so on. State *scuole dell'infanzia* are often under the direction of the head of the primary school or *istituto comprensivo* (3-14) to which they are attached, who is likely to have no specific training in ECEC. Some regions (Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Umbria) have established a stable and official network of coordinators.

The current draft law 2443/2016 (still under discussion) specifies that to work as a *pedagogista* it will be obligatory to hold a master's degree. This can be one of the following:

- LM 85, Educational Sciences (*Laurea Magistrale in Scienze Pedagogiche*);
- LM 50, Planning and Management of Educational Services (*Laurea Magistrale in Programmazione e Gestione dei Servizi Educativi*);
- LM 57, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (*Laurea Magistrale in Scienze dell'Educazione degli Adulti e della Formazione Continua*) (see section 6 for further details on the new draft law 2443/2016).

Box 3

Italy: The role of the *pedagogista* in the ECEC system

To fully illustrate the variety of the Italian system, we provide two examples:

- In Milan, a large and cosmopolitan city with over 330 ECEC services directly under the management of the city council, pedagogical coordinators (called *posizioni organizzative*) play a crucial role as trained professionals with education and management responsibilities. They work to improve the quality of ECEC and are each responsible for three-four ECEC services in one of the city's nine zones. At present, 80 pedagogical coordinators are employed by the ECEC services of the City of Milan. They are key figures within the integrated 0-6 approach that characterises the city's early education system.
<https://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/en>
- In Reggio Emilia, *pedagogisti* also play a crucial role within the integrated system; they work together and learn from each other and through exchanges with teachers and among different services. The role of the *pedagogista* in Reggio Emilia is embedded in a system of relationships with teachers, other school staff,

parents, citizens, administrators, public officials, and external audiences. In 2016, there were 13 *pedagogisti* in the Pedagogical Coordinating Team who form their own collaborative working group and also interface with the teams (teachers, *atelieristi*, mentor teachers, auxiliaries, cooks, and other staff) at individual schools; as well as with administrators, officials, and public bodies who are stakeholders in the Reggio Emilia early childhood education system. Additionally, 10 'direct' *pedagogisti* coordinate the municipal infant/toddler centres and preschools. <http://www.reggiochildren.it/?lang=en>

Specialist courses/modules for other specified posts

Specialist courses exist, particularly for the role of *language support coach*, but we do not have exhaustive information regarding these figures due to the variability characterising the Italian ECEC system. In general, there are two professional posts for working as a language support coach for immigrant children: (a) linguistic mediators and (b) cultural mediators. At the preschool level, language support coaches are almost exclusively engaged in teaching Italian as an additional language to immigrant children (L2). Language support coaching for children with learning disorders usually becomes more systematic in primary school: learning disabilities are usually diagnosed at the end of the preschool or during the first year of primary school (at the age of 6). This reflects the holistic educational approach which has traditionally characterized the Italian early education system. Special needs teachers in pre-primary education act as 'support teachers' for all the children in a class.

Options for supplementary/additional study routes

Teachers (3-6) and educators (0-3) who decide to pursue supplementary study routes or courses are required to pay for these courses themselves. Paid study-leave (*diritto allo studio* - right to education) does exist, and the amount of paid-time available for further education and training depends on the contract of employment (public versus private, etc.). Despite differences, this option usually corresponds to an average of 150 paid hours per year. All employed teachers and educators have the right to benefit from this opportunity, pending formal approval by the school-head/coordinator. Recognised further study routes include PhD programmes, master's degree programmes, etc.

Research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel

At the national level, no large-scale research projects on the CPD of ECEC staff have received funding over the past five years.

However, there has been funding of local projects, such as the well-known case study conducted in Pistoia (Musatti, Picchio, and Mayer 2016) and presented in the context of the CoRe report (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari, and Van Laere 2011).

An interesting example of investment at the local level is a citywide CPD project for ECEC personnel conducted in Milan, the administrative capital and first city of the Lombardy Region. This project – entitled "*Milano Bambini* (MIBA project)" (2011-2013) – was designed in 2011 to respond to an official call from Milan City Council (under the terms of Law 285/1997) for a CPD project to enhance practitioners' competences and better equip them to face the challenges of working in increasingly diverse ECEC settings. It was developed in the context of a formal partnership between Milan City Council (Dr. Beatrice Arcari) and the Catholic University of Milan (P.I. Prof. Milena Santerini) in collaboration with the University of Milan-Bicocca (P.I. Prof. Susanna Mantovani). *Milano Bambini* was developed in continuity with an earlier PD project ("*Infanzia Insieme*", 2008-2009 – P.I. Prof. Pier Cesare Rivoltella, Catholic University) and had a subsequent extension in the current/ongoing project *Didattica Inclusiva e flessibilità* (2016-2017; P.I. Prof. Susanna Mantovani, University of Milano-Bicocca, in collaboration with the Catholic University of Milan). These projects represent a novel development in the allocation of resources for PD (the Catholic University of Milan was project leader). In particular, *Milano Bambini* – which is the specific focus of this paragraph – was financed via funds distributed yearly to cities by the Ministry of Social Affairs (as provided for by Law 285/1997), for the purposes of promoting children's wellbeing and innova-

tive/supplementary ECEC services. These funds cannot be used exclusively for PD and funds must be allocated via an official public selection process. This constraint means that the proposed PD projects must directly involve parents and children.

Box 4

Italy: Brief description of the Milano-Bambini project

The PD project *Milano-Bambini* (MIBA) was assigned via a public competitive process to two universities (Catholic University of Milan: P.I. Prof. Milena Santerini; Università Milan-Bicocca: P.I. Prof. Susanna Mantovani). A joint proposal was submitted which went beyond the traditional forms of ECEC PD in Milan to include laboratories/workshops that were piloted and implemented in schools and open to families, as well as other forms of innovation such as the production of materials and the activation of participatory processes with the involvement of parents and children. Five sub-projects were funded within the city's ECEC settings over the years of the programme (2011-2013). Each covered the need for CPD of a significant number of ECEC practitioners and produced a wide range of documentation, which is of ongoing value at a number of levels.

The programme involved 36 municipal ECEC services (*asili nido, scuole dell'infanzia, servizi integrativi*) spread across the city of Milan, 300 ECEC practitioners and 12 education coordinators, plus an additional 252 educators who took part in seminars conducted during the second year. The main actors in the project were Milano City Council (0-6 system), the Catholic University of Milan and Milan-Bicocca University and ECEC practitioners. Families and children were involved in the workshop phase of the project, based on experiential learning.

The innovative features of the MIBA programme included development of a PD model and documented workshop projects in selected schools which would later act as professional development hubs (*poli di sperimentazione*) for other schools, as well as the provision of opportunities for community involvement, both aspects of strong research interest. It is interesting to note that the project was evaluated at the city level and further developed under the leadership of Milan-Bicocca University in collaboration with the Catholic University of Milan in the context of a new project *Didattica inclusiva e flessibilità* (currently ongoing).

In-depth analysis of the MIBA project and its innovative features is provided in the Italian Case Study, which is part of the CARE European project (2016) and presented in the CARE Report (Bove, Mantovani, Jensen, Karwowska-Struczyk and Wysłowska 2016 – See Section 7 of this Report for more details).

Current reforms/trends/debates regarding the CPD of staff in ECEC provision

Current trends/debates regarding the continuing professional development of staff in ECEC provision include:

- (1) The need to identify new sources of funding and new resources in light of the ongoing economic crisis; only then can a good, consistent and sustainable standard of CPD opportunities for ECEC personnel in all regions/cities be guaranteed. This would be in keeping with the strong tradition of investment in CPD as a key component of ECEC quality that has characterised the Italian early education system since the 1970s;
- (2) The need to strike an optimum balance between pre-service and in-service training, seeking to reduce the gap between newly-recruited teachers or educators and senior teachers or educators and to smooth over the intergenerational gap by promoting a perspective of educational continuity.
- (3) The need for establishing educational continuity across the ECEC sector, integrating ECEC services both horizontally and vertically, reforming the pre-service training of core practitioners and redefining roles and responsibilities at the national (central) and local (regional and municipal) levels are all issues currently under strong debate in relation to the Draft Law 1260/2014, and have also been addressed under the now approved Law 107/2015 (see Section 6).
- (4) A new topic under discussion is therefore the need to address the current mode of training for 3-6 teachers (less focused on young children and more focused on curricular contents and didactics) and the need to upgrade training for 0-3 educators in line with Law 107/2015 and Law Decree no. 65/2017. Most of the large and medium-sized cities in Northern and Central Italy (Reggio Emilia, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Pistoia, Trento, Firenze, Bologna, Parma, Modena, etc.) well known both nationally and internationally for their ECEC services have a tradition of continuity of practice between 0-3 and 3-6 ECEC. How-

ever, the present training requirements for ECEC practitioners work against rather than fostering this continuity;

- (5) The need to introduce new contents/topics into the training of ECEC practitioners, both to provide them with a high level of professional competence and to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse, complex and intercultural society which requires inclusive practices, all within a perspective of educational continuity across the early childhood sector.

In sum, the challenges and discourses today are about finding ways to guarantee systematic and sustainable continuing education for ECEC personnel that is informed by research and innovation, and to strike a new balance between tradition and innovation (Lisbon Strategy 2000). The lack of resources is beginning to stimulate alternative forms of professional development (innovative approaches) and new ways of evaluating PD, at the municipal and regional levels. A key step in the development of a monitoring system is the setting up of a *network of coordinators*, which currently only exists in some regions: Tuscany, Emilia Romagna.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

We provide a brief description of three national policy reforms relating to ECEC staffing:

- Provisions for a new framework for the education and training system (Law 107/2015) and the implementation of an integrated system of education 0-6 years (Law Decree 65/2017)
- Regulating the professions of Educator and *Pedagogista* (Draft Law 2443/2016) – still under discussion in Parliament, and
- Redefining the requirements and approaches regarding the initial professional studies of education professionals at all levels of the education system (Ministerial Decree 249/2010).

(1) Law 107/2015 and Law Decree 65/2017

As anticipated in previous paragraphs of this report, the national Law 107/2015, approved by the Italian Parliament on July 13th 2015, introduces a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the Italian school education system at all levels (pre-primary, primary, middle, high school). The main points of the reform concern: *Introduction of merit-based components for teacher salaries; Teacher recruitment (on a permanent basis); School autonomy; Curriculum; Digital and language skills; Work-based learning; Continuing professional development; Integrated system of education and training from the birth to six years* (European Commission Document 2015, 5-6).

Among the above listed issues, two points are particularly relevant for the ECEC-sector: (a) the need to guarantee ‘compulsory, permanent and structural’ continuing professional development for teachers at all school levels, thus ensuring CPD opportunities for ECEC staff in the integrated 0-6 system, and (b) the development of an integrated system of education and training from birth to six years. Teacher’s professionalism is taken seriously, and new funds will be allocated to support the CPD of all teachers across the education system.

Moreover, the law foresees a new regulation concerning the integrated system of education and training from birth to six years (Law 107/2015, Article 1, para. 181), aimed at overcoming the split system between the childcare sector and the education sector. In relation to the recent approval of the Law Decree no. 65/2017, which legislates the “Institution of an inte-

grated system of education from birth to six years”, this process is expected to happen during the coming years. The main points of this decree are summarised in the following box:

Box 5

Italy: Law Decree no. 65/2017: “Institution of an integrated system of education from birth to six years”

- (1) Ensuring equal educational opportunities, overcoming economic and cultural barriers to access (Decree, Art.1, 3.b), encouraging inclusion (Art. 1, 1), and in general ensuring more accessible services for all families, especially the most vulnerable ones;
- (2) Encouraging educational continuity between 0-3 and 3-6 educational programmes (Art. 1, 3.a);
- (3) Enhancing the quality of educational services, by ensuring adequate initial professional training (specific university-level training will be a minimum entry requirement for ECEC teachers and educators) (Art. 1.g). [Either a bachelor’s degree in educational science (early childhood education curriculum), or a five-year degree in primary and pre-primary education, supplemented by a 60-ECTS points module in early childhood education, will become mandatory requirements for working in a 0-3 years ECEC service];
- (4) Ensuring continuing professional development opportunities for ECEC staff (Art. 1, 3.g) and delivering targeted training programmes for ECEC staff working within the integrated 0-6 years system (Art. 5, 1.b);
- (5) Defining criteria for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the educational programmes offered within the Integrated System (Art. 5, 1.d);
- (6) Ensuring “pedagogical coordination” of ECEC services at the local level (Art. 1, 3.g);
- (7) Developing high quality integrated centres for the education of children aged 0-6 years (*Poli per l’infanzia*), ensuring full access for all children and encouraging training programmes that involve both 0-3 educators and 3-6 teachers (Art. 3, 1);
- (8) Consolidating, expanding and improving access to ECEC services, with the objective of covering 75% of Italian Municipalities (Art. 4, 1.b) and introducing the integrated 0-6 years system in all parts of the country (Art. 5, 1.a);
- (9) Developing a national system for monitoring and evaluating quality in the integrated system (Art. 5, 1.d);
- (10) Defining National Guidelines for the 0-6 integrated system (that are in line with the existing national curricular guideline document for 3-6 years education: *Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo 2012*). The guidelines will be drawn up by an expert committee, appointed by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (Art. 5, 1.f);
- (11) Establishing a multiyear national action plan defining the distribution of the available financial resources for consolidating, expanding and enhancing the integrated ECEC system (Art. 8, 2);
- (12) Setting up a National Fund for the development of the integrated system, via investment in the construction, renovation, and maintenance of ECEC centres (Art. 12, 2.a), and investment in the CPD of ECEC staff across the integrated system (Art. 12, 2.c);
- (13) Delegating to the regional authorities responsibility for: programming and developing the integrated 0-6 years education system (Art. 6.a); defining regional professional development programmes for ECEC staff (Art. 6.b); setting up local pedagogical coordination structures (Art. 6.c); and defining structural, organisational and quality standards for ECEC services;
- (14) Defining an “upper limit” to the contribution that may be asked of families to cover the cost of running ECEC services (Art. 9.1) and providing for the local authorities to offer reduced fees, fee exemptions and economic incentives (“day care vouchers”) with a view to encouraging families to enroll children aged between 3 months and 3 years at ECEC centres (Art. 9, 2 and 3).

The goal is to set up an integrated system of education for children from birth to six years, which will involve integrating current early childhood education services (0–3) and kindergartens (3–6) (not only state-run, but also municipal and recognized private schools). This will not be a matter of insisting on identical management across the sector, which historically has seen the involvement of diverse actors and organisational models, but of bringing all these entities into an integrated system unified by shared standards of acceptability in terms of infrastructure, organisation and quality. The law provides for the redefinition of roles and responsibilities among the regional and local authorities, the setting up of ‘hubs for 0–6 year olds’ (*poli per l’infanzia 0–6*), and the setting up of a new financing system based on co-funding by State, regional and local authorities (Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia 2016, 18-19). Moreover, in line with most European countries, the Decree introduces – for the first time at the National level - the upgrading of pre-service education to a relevant University Degree for

0-3 Educators. Additionally, the legislative guidelines sustain the development of a more inclusive system of early childhood and education, thus providing a framework for more equal educational opportunities for all children and families, enhancing the quality of educational services by encouraging higher initial professional studies for teachers and educators, consolidating the ECEC service across the country and developing a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the ECEC system. The next months will be crucial to understanding how these legislative guidelines will be effectively implemented across the country.

(2) Draft Law 2443/2016 (DDL Law - under examination)

The proposed Draft Law 2443/2016, which has been approved by the lower house (*Camera*) of the Italian parliament and is currently being debated in the Senate, arises from the need to define, in line with European and international standards, the occupations of *educatore* (not only in ECEC services) and *pedagogista*. In the meantime, the profile and minimum requirements for educators working in the 0-3 sector have been regulated through Law Decree no. 65/2017. If definitively approved, the Draft Law would require a three-year degree qualification to become a Professional Educator, not only in the ECEC sector, but also in other social and care sectors.

The Draft Law bill clearly and unambiguously defines the professional identity, academic qualifications and lines of work of both *educatore* and *pedagogisti*.

The knowledge, skills and competences of the **Professional Educator** correspond to EQF Level 6. More specifically, the proposed law provides for two different types of Professional Educator: (1) Professional Educator - healthcare sector (*educatore professionale "socio-sanitario"*), who is eligible to work in healthcare contexts; and (2) Professional Educator – social services and education sector (*educatore professionale "socio-pedagogico"*), who is eligible to work in education and care services, residential care for minors and social services. The former must hold a bachelor's degree (three years' full-time study) in the area of health and healthcare (L/SNT 2); the latter a bachelor's degree (three years' full-time study) in education and socialisation (L19). Should the law be approved, these qualifications will become obligatory for those who wish to do social/educational work.

The proposed new legislation also specifies the qualification requirements for work as a **pedagogista** (see *Section 5* of this report). The knowledge, skills and competences of the *pedagogista* correspond to EQF Level 7. His or her role is to design, plan, organise and coordinate educational services, to manage, monitor, evaluate, and supervise the educational quality of public and private education and training systems and services. Within ECEC, the *pedagogista* generally has responsibility for coordinating and supervising the educational work. They are trained in educational theory and methods, as well as in the philosophical, sociological and psychological disciplines. Approval of this bill would make a master's degree in educational science the minimum entry-level qualification for this type of work.

Thus, the new legislation will provide a national framework of reference for the professional classification of educators and *pedagogisti* – occupational categories that are currently not officially defined. It will also be possible to classify the academic qualifications and competences of Italian educators and *pedagogisti* in terms of the EQF. Finally, in order to protect those who are already doing excellent educational work but do not hold a degree, time will be allowed and special pathways provided for them to obtain their qualification, in part by awarding credits for their previous work experience.

(3) [DM] Ministerial Decree 249/2010

Ministerial Decree [DM] 249/2010 laid down new requirements in terms of the qualifications required to enter the teaching profession at all levels of schooling. This law emphasized the fact that the teaching function is the same across all levels of education, invariably requiring sufficient disciplinary, educational, methodological, organisational and relational competence to help students to achieve the learning outcomes specified in the national curriculum.

For preschool and primary school teachers, the 2010 reform established the five-year degree course in Primary and Pre-primary Education. This course of studies differs from that prescribed by the previous 1998 reform, first because of the increase in length (from four years to five), and second because there are now no longer two different streams for pre-primary and primary teaching. The new course – the so called *laurea quinquennale a ciclo unico* in Primary and Pre-primary Education - in fact, makes it possible to obtain a qualification for both preschool and primary school teaching. The most recent reform also confirms the key role of the teaching practice internship, scheduled to begin in the second year and running until the end of the fifth year of the degree programme, and implemented in close collaboration with schools (see also Section 4). The aims of the teacher training provided are in line with those of previous educational pathways, with some subtle but significant changes. The first one is the common professional profile of teachers at all levels of schooling, as earlier discussed; second, there is a broader focus on *cross-skills*, especially, those related to information technology, English (ESL B2 Level) and the inclusion of pupils with disabilities.

Apart from defining the ‘prototypical framework’ of basic competences required by teachers at the different levels of school, the Decree Law identifies innovative ‘roles within schools’ (*profili istituzionali*) such as that of the special needs teacher. To qualify for this role, it is mandatory to have completed a one-year postgraduate course in special education (as already explained above, see Sections 3.1). Only those who are already qualified teachers are eligible to take this course, or those with a school-leaving diploma obtained before the 2001/2002 academic year from a school specialising in education/human science studies. The programme of the postgraduate course in special needs education, which lasts one year and is worth 60 ECTS points (of which 12 are awarded for teaching practice), varies in line with the level of school in which the teacher will work (preschool, primary, lower and upper secondary).

The course is delivered by academic staff with proven expertise in the field of special education. Course contents and format are defined in keeping with the university’s internal standards and with the criteria laid down by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Reconceptualising professionalism in ECEC

Source: Lazzari, A. 2012. “Reconceptualising professionalism in ECE: insights from a study carried out in Bologna”. *Early Years*, 32 (3): 1-14.

Aims: This study aimed to explore, from a ground-up and socio-cultural perspective, the issue of early childhood professionalism. The goal was twofold: (1) to explore how pre-school teachers conceptualize their professionalism, starting from the ways in which they define the work carried out every day in early childhood institutions; (2) to highlight what teachers’ views on their professionalism tell us in terms of needs that must be taken into account for supporting their professional development.

Procedure: The research - an empirical study, recently carried out within a concluded PhD project - adopted a phenomenographic approach (Marton 1988; Svensson 1997) to study in depth teachers’ perceptions on their professionalism. It involved 60 teachers (invited to take part in the study on a voluntary basis) working in state, municipal and private (mostly Catholic) pre-schools (for children aged from 3 to 6 years) located in Bologna province. The sample was composed as follows: 24 teachers working in centres run by Municipalities; 19 working in private centres (Catholic pre-school, FISM); 17 working in state pre-schools. Six focus groups

(two per each type of ECEC institution) were conducted, asking teachers to go through their professional history, highlighting specific episodes or situations in which their professionalism had been enhanced. The transcripts were analysed within the methodological framework of hermeneutic phenomenography and coded/categorized with the support of the qualitative data-analysis software N-Vivo, which facilitated a multidimensional analysis of empirical materials.

Findings: Findings – based on the analysis of the teachers’ statements - highlight a complex conceptualisation of professionalism, challenged by recent neo-liberal influences.

Sustaining ECEC quality through continuing professional development

Source: Lazzari, A., M. Picchio, and T. Musatti. 2013. “Sustaining ECEC quality through continuing professional development: systemic approaches to practitioners’ professionalisation in the Italian context”. *Early Years*, 33 (2): 2–13.

Aims: This study aims to illustrate and critically analyse – on the basis of documentary sources and interviews with local experts - relevant CPD initiatives that have been implemented within municipal early childhood services in the Italian context. Final (long-term) objectives of this analysis were: to enhance educational practices in Italian ECEC centres; to implement a coherent CPD system in large cities (as Rome); to improve and extend PD programs focused on peer-learning and among practitioners; to enhance and expand the role of documentation centres (such as one in Ferrara) in improving practitioners’ CPD at a local level.

Procedures: The authors carried out an analysis of good CPD practices in early childhood settings in Italy. They interwove documentary sources (coming from literature, documentation and previous research) and new data, represented by interviews with local experts. The process of data analysis combined key-elements/findings of the documentary sources and the analysis of some CPD initiatives, highlighting how the elements emerging from the literature and previous studies (i.e. collegiality, documentation, inter-agency etc.) can also inspire experiences that enhance the quality of ECEC services.

Findings: This study highlights how good practices of CPD are already active in some Italian ECEC settings (i.e. in Rome, Ferrara, Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, Palermo). Important projects for a qualified system of ECEC services, carried out in some Italian cities, deserve to be analysed in order to identifying quality elements and strenght points to be enhanced and expanded in a systematic way.

Summing up, this research highlights how municipal continuous investments in PD acted as a major driving force in enhancing the quality of education and care practices. The investments include both in-service professional initiatives and also the promotion of workplace conditions that support practitioners’ professional growth. The analysis of specific PD initiatives illustrates how the same qualifying elements can be implemented at different systemic levels, going beyond single ECEC settings, reaching a metropolitan area, or even a regional area.

Italian case study on Innovative PD practices in the ECEC services in Europe – European CARE project

Source: Bove, C., S. Mantovani, B. Jensen, M. Karwowska-Struczyk, and O. Wystowska. 2016. D 3.3 613318. CARE. Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC CARE. Instrument: Collaborative project. Call Identifier: FP7-SSH-2013-2. D3.3: Report on “good” practice case studies of professional development in three countries (Appendix B – Italy).

Aims: The Italian Case Study in ‘innovative practices in the in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners’ is part of the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Education and Care project (CARE), funded by the European Union under the Seventh Framework Programme. The Italian case study was part of the work package on

Professional Development: Impact and Innovation (Bove, Mantovani et al., 2016) and involved in-depth exploration and analysis of two innovative approaches to professional development at the city level, which could act as models for PD at the national level: these were the cases of “Reggio Emilia: a model of *diffused* pedagogy” (Giudici and Castagnetti 2016) and “Milano: fostering innovation in a big city. Continuity and change” (Mantovani, Bove, Cescato, and Braga 2016).

More specifically, the aims of the study were to: describe how innovative frameworks for the in-service professional development of ECEC practitioners at the macro (city) level, typical of both the selected case studies, are transferred and further implemented at the micro (school) level; explore which types of professional development are most effective in enhancing the quality of ECEC; analyse how practitioners perceive and interpret the impact of innovation on their educational practices and on ECEC quality; investigate teachers’ perceptions, views, ideas, and beliefs about developing their professional competence within a qualitative-ethnographic framework.

Procedures: The case study was designed as a ‘Holistic Case Study’ (Yin, 2009) with embedded subcases at both sites. After a preliminary narrative review of the concepts of ‘innovation’ and ‘innovative PD practices in Early Childhood Education and Care’ (Mantovani, Bove, and Cescato 2015), the case study was conducted by combining multiple and diverse sources of data. Existing/documentary data and new/empirical data were both viewed as key to contextualising and analysing in depth the two cases and their embedded subcases. In Milan, three subcases were involved: two infant/toddler centres and a preschool; in Reggio Emilia two subcases: an infant/toddler centre and a preschool.

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of informants (stakeholders, educators, teachers, education coordinators, researchers). In addition, three focus group discussions were conducted in Milan with educators from the ECEC services for under-threes involved in the study.

Interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and entirely transcribed. Data were analysed qualitatively using content analysis methodology (see Berg and Lune 2012), combining categories drawn from the literature with “bottom-up categories”. Documentary sources (PhD and Master’s theses, publications, documentation etc.) on the history of the ECEC settings and their staff’s in-service PD, were analysed and compared with the interview data.

Findings: The results suggested a high level of consistency between the macro- and micro-levels, represented by the existing/documentary sources and the interviews with participants, respectively. More specifically, continuous professional development was not conceptualized as an optional extra, but as “embedded in the services/in place”. Teachers’/educators’, coordinators’ and stakeholders’ accounts all reflected a shared perception of how innovation occurs in practice. Key themes concerning innovation and efficacy in PD are: a good balance between theory and practice; the connection between research and PD; impact (of PD) as ‘change in action’; the importance of workshops and opportunities for ‘learning by doing’; the need for reflexivity and opportunities for shared learning/teamwork; the key role of the education coordinator as a ‘driver of innovation’; use of the new technologies (ICT) as a component of innovation.

In addition, there was widespread interpretation of innovation in PD as a *participatory* process, which not only includes workshops, action-research, analysis of practice, and video observations, but also involves parents and children where possible. As a “catalyst for adults to meet” (New, Mallory, and Mantovani 2001), CPD is viewed as a key means of developing a shared vision of early years education.

The study contributes to developing insights/perspectives for the future: the need for a better balance between pre-service and in-service PD practices; the need to reduce both intergenerational differences among staff and the rigid use of human and financial resources that is typical of the Italian public administration system; the need to bridge multiple

perspectives within ECEC (by creating and combining real and virtual communities of learners); the need to invest in the training of key figures as *multipliers of innovation*; the need to promote collaboration between policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and parents in order to develop a common understanding of PD. In a word, the need to keep the rights of children in view, as the compass ultimately directing our action.

[The Final Draft of the Report was submitted to the EU Committee on 30 June 2016. Final submission to the EU was in October 2016.]

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration and working hours

Teachers working in public *scuole dell'infanzia* enjoy equal status with their colleagues in public primary schools, but there is no parity of pay (or working conditions) between – or among – core practitioners working in kindergartens/preschools and infant/toddler centres.

Pre-primary Education Teachers 3–6

Teachers in state preschools – who are in the direct employment of the Ministry of Education – earn more than educators in municipal infant/toddler centres and work with their pupils for a shorter number of hours per day. 0-3 educators work 35-40 hours a week, while state preschool teachers work 25 hours a week. The starting annual salary for preschool teachers working in public institutions is 25,099€ and for teachers at top of the scale is 36,900€ (OECD 2014, 467). Teachers working in private kindergartens are generally less well paid than their counterparts in public preschools (whether state-run or municipal) and work longer hours (31-38 hours/week).

Educators 0–3

The salary of educators working in infant/toddler centres is subject to wide variations. Salaries vary by provider type (municipal, public service outsourced to a cooperative, private...) and working hours (e.g., full-time work varies between 31 and 38 hours per week). Differences not only arise among different categories of provider, but also within the public sector itself: the remuneration of educators at publicly funded infant/toddler centres varies across cities/towns and across regions, as a function of 'local' wage agreements. In general, the infant/toddler educator falls under the C1 category of worker (under the terms of the National Wage Agreement/regional and local authorities division - *Contratto Collettivo Nazionale di Lavoro/comparto regioni e autonomie locali*), and is entitled to an annual salary of 19,454€.

Italian teachers' statutory salary levels are lower than the OECD average at every career stage (European Commission 2015). The maximum salary may only be reached after 35 years of service, while the OECD average is 25 years (OECD 2014).

Coordinators of infant/toddler centres receive higher salaries than ordinary educators/teachers. Infant/toddler centre coordinators earn between 20,000 and 25,000€ per annum, depending on the provider type, the contractual conditions applied, and the number of hours worked per week. Head teachers at state preschools earn about 43,000€ per annum.

It is difficult to say in 'absolute and general terms' whether it is possible to live on the salary of an educator/teacher in Italy today. The relationship between salary and standard of living is influenced by many factors (such as the average cost of living in one's city or region of residence, family circumstances, age, children, etc.). In general, the salary of an infant/toddler centre educator or a teacher is viewed as 'average/good' and as sufficient to live on without other sources of income. Educators/teachers employed in the public sector enjoy long-term economic security, and this contributes to these occupations being perceived as of a good

level compared to others. This is especially the case at the present time, in which the long-term jobs and permanent contracts previously aspired to by young people just out of college have become extremely difficult to attain. Most employment is fixed-term and discontinuous, providing little security. Indeed, educators working in private early childhood education centres not only face more variable conditions but also enjoy less job security over the long term.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Teachers 3–6

With regard to state preschools, the number of hours and the percentage of part-time posts is established at the national level, while for the other categories (municipal or state-approved private preschools, educators at private and public infant/toddler centres), both working hours and the proportion of part-time posts are extremely variable and there is not enough reliable data to estimate average figures. In state-run kindergartens in 2016, 25% of staff had a part-time post (12.5 hours/week).

Educators 0–3

The proportion of staff with part-time posts is highly variable. Working hours can range from a minimum of 15 hours to a maximum of 28/30 hours. The percentages vary from region to region, by type of service (public, private, etc.) and by the contract applied.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The induction of newly qualified teachers/educators is currently the subject of lively debate in Italy, in light of the recent introduction of ‘alternating training’ in upper secondary and third level education and in the wake of the new law on education (Law 107/2015). Induction measures were already in place for all early childhood education staff (both 0–3 and 3–6). These usually include a probationary period for the ‘newly qualified teacher’, the assigning of a teacher-tutor and a qualitative assessment at the end of probation.

During the current school year (2015-2016), teachers newly recruited to permanent posts in state preschools were offered a full year of induction (with 20 hours’ training, development of a professional portfolio, seminars, workshops, group work/peer-tutoring).

The situation to date has been that “after appointment to a permanent teaching position, teachers must go through a trial period. The trial period corresponds to one year of training. [...] It is actually an induction period, which foresees the guidance and support of a tutor selected by the Teachers’ Assembly and appointed by the school manager. It foresees formative activities to gain an in-depth knowledge of the typical aspects of teaching profession (methodological, psycho-pedagogical, relational etc.). [...] These activities should be carried out through specific and contextualized projects” (EACEA, 2009-2010).

The recent Ministerial Note 850/2015 has more clearly defined the figure of the teacher-tutor, who is asked to play an active and specific role in the induction process, not only at the end of the induction period by providing the final evaluation (which has to be submitted to the head teacher), but throughout the entire school year. The functions of the teacher-tutor are to: welcome, support, tutor and supervise the new teacher, as well as making an inventory of and evaluating his/her competences. Thus, the probation period continues to be viewed as part of the newly qualified teacher’s ongoing training and professional development.

In light of the introduction of Law 107/2015, there are likely to be changes to these induction measures – particularly in relation to preschool, primary and secondary teachers. It is probable, for example, that in the near future the induction period will be extended to three years. Induction programmes also exist for educators at public infant/toddler centres (0-3) but these measures vary from city to city. For example, in municipal infant/toddler centres in Milan, newly recruited educators must complete a six-month probation period before being definitively hired (as established by the National Wage Agreement). During these six months, the aspiring educator works alongside the existing educational staff and his/her work is ob-

served. At the end of the probation period, the centre coordinator is required to produce a full evaluation report.

As stated above (see Section 5), there is no single national framework regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel in Italy. A new national framework and guidelines for the CPD of primary and pre-primary teachers have been recently established (Law 107/2015), while – in the case of infant/toddler centres - regional regulations exist but vary in relation to provisions for educators' and coordinators' professional development (at both the pre-service and in-service levels). In Emilia Romagna, for example, a key contribution of the regional government, "has been to encourage networking among 0-6 ECECs' pedagogical coordinators at different levels (municipal, provincial and regional level): this has allowed a progressive shift of focus from the work carried out within each setting, toward a more systemic perspective" (Moss 2013).

Recent training programmes implemented in municipal infant/toddler centres and pre-schools (e.g., MIBA, in the case of Milan, described in the D3.3 CARE Report, and in particular in Mantovani, Bove, Cescato, and Braga 2016) are examples of innovative forms of *on-site training* that alternate in-service training with in-service supervision.

At the national level, for preschools – and probably over the coming years also for infant/toddler centres (with the introduction of the *Sistema Integrato / Integrated System*) – Law 107/2015 is leading to stimulating changes in terms of a greater emphasis on *on-site mentoring*. The decrees about 'training for trainers' (*formazione dei formatori*) specifically concern the new category of 'mentor-teachers' (chosen by the school's internal evaluation committee), who are required to conduct evaluations, coordinate training and peer tutoring, supervise the training of their colleagues and provide support to interns. In relation to the support measures in place for newly recruited staff (*misure di accompagnamento*), see the earlier paragraph on induction measures.

8.4 Non-contact time

Practitioners in *municipal* ECEC services, both nursery schools (0-3) and preschools (3-6) are paid for between 120 and 200 hours per annum of activities that do not involve direct contact with children, such as planning, documenting, staff meetings, meetings with parents and in-service professional development. Providers other than city/town councils usually offer far fewer hours for financial reasons.

In *state* preschools (3-6) regulations allow for 20 to 40 hours non-contact time per year. Different Regional Ministry offices have stricter or looser policies concerning how these paid hours, which are additional to the 25 hours per week contact time with the children, may be put to use.

For practitioners working in settings managed by *non-public* providers, contractual conditions vary greatly. The two most important providers (the PAN consortium of cooperatives in the 0-3 sector and FISM in the 3-6 segment) guarantee a minimum of 12 hours per year, an allowance that may be increased in the case of teachers participating in special projects.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

During the past decade, the Italian ECEC system has faced a major turnover in staff, and it will face a similar upheaval over the coming decade, due to the retirement of professionals who entered the 0-6 system during its years of maximum expansion. (This also poses a further challenge for professional development.)

The Ministry of the Interior statistics on the number of teachers/educators employed in municipal infant/toddler centres (0-3) and preschools (3-6), show that – between 2007 and 2011 – the percentage of children enrolled in early childhood education rose, and that there was a corresponding rise in teaching staff (Quaderno TFIEY 2013, 27). However, these estimates reflect the overall situation in Italy (i.e., they are an aggregate of the statistics for individual cities and regions), whereas at the local level, in some areas more than others (e.g., Rome),

there were significant decreases in spending on educational staff in the early childhood services over the same period. Conversely, even when the number of children enrolled at a given infant/toddler centre drops, arrangements are often made at the administrative level to merge different early childhood services and thereby protect the jobs of all the educators/teachers currently in service.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

In a context of increasingly constrained financial resources, several factors are currently driving a process of change and integration of the two main sectors of ECEC (0-3, 3-6) in terms of governance, educational continuity and workforce qualification. These include the newly introduced Law 107/2015; the proposed upgrade of the initial professional studies for 0-3 Educators to a relevant University degree (Law Decree no. 65/2017); and the development of new induction measures for the trial period of new teachers

Over the coming years, many things at the workforce level will probably change. Italian ECEC professionals are under great pressure regarding the high expectations of increasingly diverse parents and stakeholders and the increasing awareness of the link between professionalism and ECEC quality. Parents expect ECEC settings to promote their children's well-being and learning; policy makers have come to consider professionalism a key factor in ECECs and are looking for effective and sustainable ways to provide PD to promote quality and inclusion. Continuing professional development is increasingly becoming an essential component of the development of any good quality ECEC system.

Among the workforce challenges both in the near future and in a longer-term perspective are:

- Developing an **updated professional profile** which maps out the work of Educators and Teachers within a more flexible and **integrated 0-6 system**, qualified through a relevant University degree with a specific focus on early childhood education;
- reviewing the **University curricula for the Bachelor degree L-19** and the additional module (60 ECTS points) in early childhood education required after the five-year university degree in primary and pre-primary education, mandatory for entering the 0-3 profession;
- closing the traditional gap between the professional profiles of 0–3 educators and 3–6 teachers in order to **promote a more integrated 0–6 system**; at present, Italian educators and teachers have different professional profiles and identities, and sometimes they show feelings of ambivalence and reciprocal mistrust. The challenge today is to maintain the professional competencies developed in the tradition of Early Childhood Education and, at the same time, to promote/support the development of a professional profile capable of working within a more flexible and integrated 0–6 system. This implies the need to design new policies for the ECE workforce, new organisational paths and new – integrated – opportunities of professional development;
- developing **new tools for systematically monitoring ECE quality** within a qualitative and culturally sensitive framework and in consistency with the educational goals of the ECEC system;
- striking an **optimum balance between pre-service and in-service training** – as already anticipated in *Section 5* - in order to reduce the gap between newly-recruited teachers or educators and senior teachers or educators, and to smooth over the intergenerational gap by promoting a perspective of educational continuity;
- **updating teachers' basic competences** at the pre-service level and encouraging the development of soft skills within CPD practices; updating professional competences on de-

velopmental issues (children's needs at different stages of their development and the capacity to observe, recognise and address them), language issues, scientific and outdoor education, technological education, intercultural competence, inclusion, relational competence (in working with children and especially with families);

- **addressing strategic themes** around the core of the discussion on teachers' professionalism and ECEC quality in contemporary Italy: digital and language skills; linguistic competences; inclusion; disability; citizenship; basic competences; evaluation. In the next years, a system of monitoring quality and impact of these CPD initiatives will be developed at a national level and this will surely introduce challenges for the ECEC workforce and new issues;
- **reinforcing teachers' intercultural competences** to promote inclusion at all levels and to fill the gap in the basic-preparation of the majority of the educators working in the field as far as intercultural issues are concerned;
- promoting the use and abilities to use **digital technologies** to promote children's and teachers' learning;
- encouraging the **creation of real and virtual communities of learners**;
- connecting pre-service with in-service learning experiences also developing new innovative ways of *alternanza scuola-lavoro* (alternating training);
- reducing the large differences between regions: huge disparities exist between Northern and Southern Regions as far as professional support and teachers' CPD is concerned. Some professional support is usually planned on an annual basis, but there are no regulations requiring a minimum number of hours per attendance;
- encouraging a balance between knowledge-based and experiential-based PD to reduce the gap between generations and promote shared goals and meanings;
- investing in the professional development of key figures (such as pedagogical coordinators)
- linking research and CPD;
- designing new integrated opportunities of CPD (according to Law 107/2015) for the ECEC workforce through a strong commitment by Universities and local agencies.

On the one hand, the above-mentioned challenges are at the core of current debates both in Italy and in other European countries. On the other hand, the Italian early childhood education system arguably is in a position to sustain a high quality ECEC system if its tradition of strong links between ECEC services, universities and local communities can be improved and developed further. The participatory nature of the Italian ECE system is a 'cultural trait and a resource' to face the increasing complexity of the sectors and the connected challenges in the next years.

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ITALY

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank
Chiara Bove, Silvia Cescato and Susanna Mantovani
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Italy – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepr.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 629-643.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Italy is currently organised in two separate sectors, although a recent law reform (*La Buona Scuola*, approved on 13 July 2015) envisages establishing an integrated/unitary 0-6 system*.

Kindergartens (*scuole dell'infanzia*) for 3- to 6-year olds and also so-called 'bridge classes' for 2- to 3-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*, MIUR) and constitute the first stage of the national education system. Responsibility for the organisation and management of ECEC provision at the local level lies with the various providers (state or municipal or private).

Provision for the under-threes is highly decentralised. Currently, infant-toddler centres (*nidi d'infanzia*) are not part of the education system, although they were first seen as having an educational mandate in the 1970s. Local authority social policy departments are directly responsible for the regulation and organisation at the local level.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
*Law 107/2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

Key legislative frameworks and declarations regarding children's right to education and care in a kindergarten are the Italian Constitution (*Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*), which emphasises the principles of cultural and institutional pluralism; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and relevant European Union documents. Overarching goals of early childhood education are to support the children's identity building, autonomy and competence development, as well as laying the foundations for an understanding of citizenship.

Recent legislation (Law 107/2015: "Reform of the national education and training system and the mandate to reorganise existing legislation") and its implementation decree no. 65/2017: "Institution of an integrated system of education from birth to six years"; (see Italian ECEC Workforce Profile, *Section 6*, for a detailed description of the law) provide the framework for a fundamental reform of the Italian education system. As mentioned above, it is planned to integrate the two previously separated sectors of early childhood education and care into a unitary system.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
IEA 2016.
Law 107/2015.
Law Decree 65/2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Attendance in any kind of ECEC provision for 0- to 6-year olds is voluntary. There is no legal entitlement to a place in an ECEC setting.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
IEA 2016.

Main types of provision

Infant-toddler centres/nurseries (*nidi d'infanzia*) provide care and education for children under age 3. The Emilia Romagna region has the highest number of infant-toddler centres in Italy (619).

Integrated centres/services (*servizi integrativi*) are also available for this age-group. They were initiated in the 1980s within a family policy framework (*Tempo per le Famiglie*). In Milan, for example, there are currently nine such settings for children and families; across the country there are 423 centres for children and families**. They also provide part-time or home-based care arrangements.

'**Bridge classes**' (*sezioni primavera*) for 2- to 3-year olds are aimed to smooth the transition between infant-toddler centre and kindergarten. They are located in nursery settings as well as in kindergartens, depending on the local circumstances. Bridge classes were first established in 2007 as an experimental form to support parents in employment. So-called '**Pre-groups**' (*anticipi*) for 2½- to 3-year olds are also available, particularly in the southern part of the country and in disadvantaged areas. Attendance is usually free of charge.

Kindergartens/Pre-primary education settings (*scuole dell'infanzia*) are provided for 3- to 6-year olds. Particularly in the larger cities with well-developed municipal structures the children generally attend a municipal setting, otherwise mostly state-maintained kindergartens. Children must usually be at least 3 years old by the 31st December in any one year to attend. If places are available, younger children can in exceptional cases also be taken in. Kindergartens are open for eight hours daily. Municipal and private settings often offer longer opening hours if there is a need. Kindergartens are closed in July and August for the summer break.

According to national statistics (ISTAT)*, in 2014 there were 1,647,702 children attending 23,515 *scuole dell'infanzia* in Italy. Among them were 165,506 children (10%) with a background of migration.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Eurydice 2015, 2016.
IEA 2016.
*ISTAT 2017.
**Musatti, T. and S. Mantovani 2013.

Provider structures

Infant-toddler centres for the under-threes are usually run by municipal or private providers. Local authorities can also commission private agencies to provide nursery settings, or they may be provided by companies for their employees. Overall, approximately 70% of all services for under 3-year olds (*nidi*, integrated services, bridge classes) are publicly run. Regional variations are considerable and may range from 1% to 40%. Particularly in the larger cities, the proportion of publicly run settings is significantly higher, whereas in the southern parts of the country, some municipalities do not offer any kind of service. In 2014***, publicly run infant-toddler centres comprised

43.4% of the total number of *nidi*. Almost three quarters (73%) of the integrated services (*servizi integrativi*) for under 3-year olds were private; 27% are run by municipalities.

Kindergartens/Pre-primary education settings may be run by the state, the municipalities or private (mostly church-affiliated) providers. Regional disparities in the distribution of providers are considerable. In the northern parts of the country there are more state-run kindergartens than in the south. Overall, the majority of kindergartens are state run (roughly 60%), roughly 30% are private and 10% are run by municipalities. According to ISTAT data published in 2014* (see *Table 1*), participation rates show that nearly 57% of children attending a *scuola dell'infanzia* are enrolled in a state-run kindergarten and just over one quarter (26.4%) in a privately run kindergarten/infant school.

Table 1

Italy: Participation rates in *scuole dell'infanzia* according to provider type*

Provider	Participation rate in %
State	56.8
Municipal	8.3
Private	26.4
Bridge groups in <i>scuole dell'infanzia</i>	2.0

Table 2

Italy: Number of kindergartens/infant schools and children according to provider type, 2014**

Träger	Number of settings	Number of children
State	13,424	1,013,079
Municipal	1,954	153,772
Private	8,137	480,851
Total	23,515	1,647,702

Sources:: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
 CARE 2015.
 *ISTAT 2014.
 **ISTAT 2017.
 ***Istituto degli Innocenti, Dec. 2014.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Whereas 25% of under 3-year olds participated in centre-based provision in 2005, ten years later this proportion had changed only slightly (27.3%). The larger majority of children between 3 years of age and school entry attend some form of ECEC provision, although overall participation dropped from 91% in 2005 to 85.9% in 2015.

Table 3

Italy: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	9	21
	Over 30 hours	16	70
	No attendance	79	9
2010	1 to 29 hours	6	17
	Over 30 hours	16	70

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %
	No attendance	78	13
2015	1 to 29 hours	10.4	23.3
	Over 30 hours	16.9	62.6
	No attendance	72.7	14.1

In general, it can be noted (for 2012) that the participation rates of children below age 3 were much lower in the South (5%) than in Central Italy (18.8%) or the North (north-west: 16.4%; north-east: 19.1%)*.*.*.

National data for 2014*.*.*.* suggest that roughly 19 to 20% of under 3-year olds were enrolled in some form of provision (infant-toddler centres/nurseries, integrative services, bridge groups), whereas again, there were considerable regional differences: Emilia Romagna: 27%, Lombardy: 16.9%, Campania: 2.8%, Calabria: 2.1%. The proportions of children attending nurseries (*nidi*) in the North and the South varied significantly. 4-5% of under-threes were enrolled in an integrated setting.

The participation rates for 3- to 6-year olds are much higher, whereas statistical sources vary: 93.5% according to national statistics, 85.9% according to Eurostat data (see *Table 3*) and 97% according to own calculations on the basis of Eurostat data for 2015 (see *Table 4*). Again, regional differences can be noted, particularly with regard to the provider type. In Milan, for example, 70% of under-threes were enrolled in a municipal kindergarten and 22% in a state-run kindergarten, whereas in Turin the respective shares were 40% and 45%. Overall, around 57% attended a state-run *scuola dell'infanzia* (in the South only 10%), and approximately 35% a municipal or private kindergarten/infant school.

Tabelle 4

Italy: Number of children and enrolment rates in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015**

Age-groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	n.d.	
2-year olds	83,749	15.6
3-year olds	503,531	92.1
4-year olds	538,049	95.8
5-year olds	504,538	88.4
6-year olds	7,243	1.3
3- to under 6-year olds	1,629,867	97.0[†]

[†] Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
 ..*.*Jensen, B. R., L. Iannone, S. Mantovani, C. Bove, M. Karwowska-Struczyk and O. Wysłowska 2015.
 *Eurostat 2017f.
 **Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
 ..*Noi Italia 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

State-maintained kindergartens/infant schools are fully state-funded; municipal ECEC settings working according to the national guidelines receive part-funding. In general, the buildings are financed by the municipality and staff salaries by the State.

Infant-toddler centres are always fee-paying, but there are no available data on the level of parental fees. However, the recent Law Decree 65/2017 introduced an 'upper limit' to the contribution

of families for covering the costs of running ECEC services. Apart from a small sum for meals and transport, public kindergartens are free of charge. Low-income families do not have to pay for subsistence and transport. There are no available data regarding the fee levels of private kindergartens/infant schools.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Law Decree 65/2017, Article 9(1)

Staff-child ratios

In **infant-toddler centres/nurseries**, children are mostly allocated to same-age groups, sometimes to mixed-age groups. The municipality decides on the required group size and staff-child ratios.

In **kindergartens/pre-primary education settings**, groups are usually organised according to the children's age. However, for some activities children of different ages are brought together in order to strengthen relationships between the older and younger children. In state-run provision, group size varies between a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 26 (under some circumstances this may be 29). If children with special educational needs are enrolled, the group size is reduced accordingly.

Staff in kindergartens are nowadays required to have completed a five-year initial professional studies course at university at ISCED level 7 (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria* – Primary and pre-primary university degree). The minimum requirement for work with under 3-year olds is an upper secondary vocational qualification at ISCED level 3. However, the Law Decree 65/2017 states the need to enhance the quality of educational services by ensuring adequate initial professional training/education (specialist university-level training will be a minimum entry requirement both for ECEC Teachers and Educators). From 2019/2020 onwards, either a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science with a focus on early childhood education, or a five-year degree in primary and pre-primary education, supplemented by a 60-ECTS points module in early childhood education, will become mandatory requirements for working in 0-3 years ECEC-settings [see the *Italy – ECEC Workforce Profile Report, Table 1 and Table 3* for a detailed description].

In 2014, just one qualified member of staff was responsible for an average of 12.2 children* in kindergartens across the country.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
*ISTAT 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

There is no national curricular framework for children **under 3 years** of age. Only local guidelines currently exist. However, the recent Law Decree envisages the drafting of National Guidelines for the 0-6 years integrated system. These guidelines will be drawn up by a committee of experts appointed by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. At present, each municipality develops a general framework which infant-toddler centres adapt to their specific local needs. Centre programmes include various activities (e.g. times for play and rest, mealtimes, health care); sometimes families are involved in parts of the everyday programme. Activities aim to foster the children's socialisation and learning at the individual and group level.

Since 2013/14, **kindergartens** are required to work according to “National Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-primary Institutions and the First Cycle of Education” (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell’infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione 2012*) issued by the Ministry of Education in line with key competencies for lifelong learning adopted by the European Parliament. Competencies are formulated for five key areas of experience: (1) The self and others, (2) Body and movement, (3) Pictures, sounds and colours, (4) Language and words, (5) Knowledge of the world. Catholic kindergartens develop their own area of learning regarding religious education. The guidelines include competencies which children are expected to have acquired by the end of their time in kindergarten, e.g. to be able to express their feelings, to enter into relationships with others, to convey experiences through language, to think about different meanings, or to show an understanding of rules.

Although staff are free to choose their preferred didactic approaches, they are expected to ensure that the children experience a balanced curriculum between routine procedures and new learning; to be aware of the importance of active and discovery-oriented approaches; to organise the rooms in an aesthetically stimulating way; to feel responsible for the children’s overall spatial experiences; and to offer them support when needed.

Source: Eurydice 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In Italy, legislation (*Legge-quadro per l’assistenza, l’integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate*, 104/1992) requires that children with disabilities and other special educational needs are included as far as possible in mainstream provision, both in nurseries and in kindergartens. Relevant guidance was issued by the Ministry of Education in 2009. Individual educational plans are developed for these children and they receive special support measures which may include additional specialist staff. Segregated ECEC provision is unusual and is provided only for children with visual and auditory impairments. The proportion of children with special educational needs in ECEC settings has been estimated at roughly 2%.**

Children with a background of migration

The estimated proportion of children in ECEC settings with a background of migration is 10%.**

In 2016, 8.3% of the population in Italy were of non-Italian origin. More than two-thirds (69.8%) came from countries outside the EU-28. In the group of children under 5 years, 14.1% came from families with a background of migration and three-quarters (75.3%) were from non-EU countries*.

Sources: **Jensen, B., R.S. Iannone, S. Mantovani, C. Bove, M. Karwowska-Struczyk, and O. Wystowska 2015.
*Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2012.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

In Italy, there is still no nationally regulated or mandated system of evaluation of the ECEC sector, neither in terms of assessing provision nor of detailing children’s individual achievements. Inspections are not conducted according to a standardised instrument. However, relevant changes are expected during the coming years. In 2016/2017, the Ministry of Education, University and Re-

search MIUR) and the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) promoted a first draft of the Self-Evaluation Report (RAV), introduced through Law 107/2015 for ECEC provisions. The idea, for the future, is that each kindergarten/pre-primary setting, as well as each school, will be required to submit a Self-Evaluation Report following a set format developed by INVALSI**.

In the near future, a system for monitoring quality and the impact of CPD initiatives on self-evaluation will be developed at the national level. The underlying assumption is the need to promote 'process evaluation' and the development of a system for the self-evaluation of professional development (Rapporto di Auto-Valutazione, RAV).

In terms of external evaluation, this does currently take place in **kindergartens**, although not necessarily on a regular basis. The responsible authority is the "Regional Education Office" (*Ufficio scolastico regionale*) of the Ministry of Education. Beyond inspecting the rooms, equipment and compliance with safety regulations, staffing quality, curriculum implementation and the children's progress are also the focus of such evaluations.

Children's skills – language and literacy, numeracy, creative and physical competencies – are usually assessed at the beginning and end of their time in kindergarten, and parents receive a written report. The survey techniques and checklists used for this kind of evaluation are usually developed on a regional basis. Self-evaluation procedures consist of critical reflection on the daily work and over time and writing reports. However, such documents remain within the kindergarten and are not published in any way.

Regional and municipal (health) authorities are responsible for inspections in **infant-toddler centres**. These focus on the structural quality of provision and compliance with safety and hygiene regulations. Individual children are not assessed formally; however, the staff observe their development and always include the parents in any kind of informal assessment.

There are no substantial government or institutions-funded research projects on Early Childhood Education and Care in Italy. Generally, research funds come from autonomous calls. In addition, local authorities provide some funding for promoting the ECEC and school staff's CPD (and sometimes these funds are used for conducting action-research interventions or research-based professional development). In the past, the Italian government raised funds for special/'pilot' projects (e.g. A.S.C.A.N.I.O *Attività Sperimentale Coordinata Avvio Nuovi Indirizzi Organizzativi*, a project on innovative organisational models in pre-school*), but currently the only research projects funded by the government relate to the evaluation of schools.**

Sources: *Annali della Pubblica Istruzione 2000.
Eurydice 2015.
IEA 2016.
**INVALSI 2015.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*congedo di maternità*) lasts 20 weeks. At least four of these must be taken before the expected birth date. During this period, monthly payments are based on 80% of previous earnings.

Since 2013, fathers are eligible for two fully paid days of **paternity leave** (*congedo di paternità*). These have to be taken during the five months following the child's birth. If the mother agrees, the father may take a further two days which are then deducted from the mother's maternity leave. Under certain circumstances (e.g. if the mother is self-employed or for other compelling reasons) the maternity leave period can be transferred to the father.

Each (employed) parent can be granted up to six months of **parental leave** (*congedo parentale*) which may be taken in different time blocks and also simultaneously at any time up to the child's 12th birthday. A maximum of 10 months is the limit allowed per family; if the father takes at least three months, parental leave is extended to 11 months. While the children are still under 6 years of age, parents receive 30% of their earnings; once the child is older, leave is unpaid. An experimental measure is being piloted up to 2018: mothers can exchange their parental leave entitlement for a childcare voucher worth 300€ per month. However, it seems that only around one third of the funding reserved for this measure is being allocated.

In 2015, 85% of employees making use of parental leave were women and 15% men (data from the Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale - INPS).

Source: Addabbo, T., V. Cardinali, D. Giovannini, and S. Mazzucchelli 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1829	First pedagogically oriented childcare institution established
1869	First kindergarten working according to Froebelian principles
Early 20th C.	The Agazzi sisters establish institutions with a family-like atmosphere
1907	Opening of first Montessori kindergarten
1920s	Law 2277/1925: Establishment of ONMI [<i>National organisation for the protection of mother and Child</i>], public services for destitute families, located within the Ministry of Interior)
1928	Kindergartens recognised as educational institutions
1968	Integration of kindergartens into State education system (law 444/1968)
1969	Publication of the first National Guidelines for Educational Activities in the State Kindergarten/Infant School (<i>Orientamenti per l'attività educativa nella scuola materna statale – Decree n. 647, 10th September 1969</i>)
1970s	Law 1044/1971: Institution of nurseries, childcare services for infant and toddlers of working mothers. Nursery is defined not as a universal provision, but as an individual service on demand. Municipalities, and private organisations are responsible for this provision.
1980s	The project <i>Tempo per le Famiglie</i> is initiated in Milan by the city council and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation – a precursor to the later integrated services for under-threes and their families. [Data collected in 2011 in Italy and published in 2013** - show a significant expansion of “Centres for parents and young children”. Today, 423 such centres are in operation, the majority in central and northern Italy].
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1991: Publication of new pedagogical guidelines for preschool (<i>Nuovi Orientamenti dell'attività educativa per la scuola materna – Decree 3rd June 1991</i>). – Services for the under-threes start expanding and developments are characterised by an increasing collaboration between research agencies and ECEC services. A culture of Early Education begins and important educational organisations are established, such as the <i>Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia</i> (founded by Loris Malaguzzi). – A growing number of studies, most of them collaborative action research projects, are conducted by researchers, <i>educatrici</i> and <i>coordinatori</i> and are closely related to practice and methodological innovation.*
2004	Publication of National Guidelines for “Individualised Educational Activities” in kindergartens/infant schools (<i>Indicazioni per i piani personalizzati delle attività educative alla scuola dell'infanzia – Decree n. 59, 19th February 2004</i>).
2007	National Guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and the first cycle of learning (<i>Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione – Decree 31st July 2007</i>).
2012	National Guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and the first cycle of

	learning (<i>Indicazioni Nazionali per il curriculum della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione</i> - Decree n. 254, 16th November 2012).
2015	Approval of the Law 107/2015 <i>Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti</i> ("Reform of the national education and training system and mandate to reorganise the existing legislative provisions" GU n.162, July 15 th 2015, also known as <i>La Buona Scuola</i> – "The Good School"): a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the Italian school education system at all levels. Key points for the ECEC system are: a driving process of integration between the two main sectors of ECEC services; new national guidelines for the CPD of ECEC teachers (CPD is defined as "a duty and a right") and the allocation of new funding for CPD in all schools. [See <i>Italy ECEC Workforce Profile, Section 6</i> , for a detailed description]
2017	Approval of the Law Decree 65/2017, named <i>Istituzione del Sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione dalla nascita sino ai 6 anni</i> ("Establishing of the integrated system of education from birth to six years" published in the Government Gazette on 16th May 2017), which introduces a set of changes/implementation measures for the "Integrated system of education and training from birth to six years". [See <i>Italy ECEC Workforce Profile, Section 6</i> , for a detailed description];

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
*Musatti, T. and M. Picchio 2010.
**Musatti, T. and S. Mantovani 2013.
OECD 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Italy

Country expert assessment by Chiara Bove, Silvia Cescato and Susanna Mantovani

As already described in the Italian *ECEC Workforce Profile*, an important reform of the Early Childhood Education and Care system is in progress in Italy. In relation to the approval of the national law 107/2015 and, more importantly, as a consequence of the recent approval of the Law implementation Decree 65/2017 which legislates the "institution of the integrated system from birth to six years", a process of gradually establishing a new unified ECEC system is in progress - a process that will take some years to achieve full translation into practice.

Main challenges and changes both in the near future and in a longer-term perspective are:

- I. Redefining and implementing regular State financing or co-financing of ECEC services through one source, namely the Ministry of Education (MIUR);
- II. Earmarking State funding for local services according to minimal standards;
- III. Progressively redefining through a negotiation with the State-Region Standing Committee (*Conferenza Stato-Regioni*), ECEC governance to guarantee greater homogeneity and basic requirements;
- IV. Ensuring more accessible services for all families, especially for the most vulnerable ones; increasing provision for children up to the age of three (overcoming inequalities and cultural barriers – Decree 65/2017, Article 4 (h));
- V. Developing high quality integrated centres for the education of children aged 0-6 (*Polì per l'infanzia*); ensuring full access for all children and encouraging training programmes that involve 0-3 educators and 3-6 teachers. One to three *Polì* will be identified and supported in each region;
- VI. Progressively reconceptualising the 0-3 services as no longer being services provided according to individual demand. This process will include reduced fees for families;

- VII. Establishing educational continuity across the ECEC sector, integrating ECEC services both horizontally (among different providers, i.e. State, Municipalities, Associations, private providers) and vertically (0-3/3-6);
- VIII. Defining broad National Guidelines for the 0-6 integrated system (coherent with the 3-6 *Indicazioni per il curricolo, 2012*). A Committee will be appointed in 2017 to draw up the Guidelines and to monitor the first phase of the new process;
- IX. Clarifying the various possible professional profiles, qualifications, functions, roles and in-service training of the Pedagogical Coordinators to ensure that they can act as a *key figure* in the local integration of the 0-3 and 3-6 sectors, according to the specificities of the region;
- X. Developing a national system for monitoring ECE quality, for sustaining the expansion and the organisation of ECEC services within the integrated system, and for reducing disparities and differences between regions. (Up to date, quality in 0-3 education is locally defined and legal minimum quality requirements are in place in various regions);
- XI. Developing an *updated* professional profile for ECEC Educators and Teachers, capable to work within a more flexible and integrated 0–6 system.
- XII. Reviewing the University curricula required for working in a 0-3 service: Bachelor degree L19 and specific addresses, the additional course of 60 ECTS points following a five-year degree in primary and pre-primary education required for teachers of *Scuola dell'Infanzia* to enter the 0-3 profession;
- XIII. Designing new integrated opportunities for CPD (as envisaged in Law 107/2015 and Law Decree 65/2017), by encouraging a strong commitment through Universities and local agencies.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Italy totalled 60,665,551. This represents a steady growth over the past 20 years (1995: 56,844,408; 2005: 57,874,753).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.5% and children under 6 years of age for 5.2% of the total population. Since 2005, these percentage rates have been consistently lower than the EU average.

Table 3

Italy: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	4,796,11
1-year olds	5,006,79
2-year olds	5,117,60
Under age 3 total	14,920,50
3-year olds	5,348,90
4-year olds	5,460,08
5-year olds	5,609,84
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	16,418,82
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	31,339,32

Table 4

Italy: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	2.9	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.5	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	2.8	3.5	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	5.7	6.9	5.6	6.2	5.2	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 82.3% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 2.7%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.5%).

Table 5

Italy: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	5,487,500	
Couple households	4,515,900	82.3
Other types of households	822,300	15.0
Single households, total	149,300	2.7
Single households, women	137,000	2.5
Single households, men	12,300	0.2

+ Own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Italy was 65.5% and that of women 47.2%. Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 53.2% were employed, whereas 85.4% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. The employment rates in particular of the mothers with under 6-year olds are lower than the EU-28 average.

Table 5

Italy: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Italy	2005	50.9	91.8
	2010	51.8	88.8

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	53.2	85.4
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

* own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 29.65% of children under age 6 in Italy were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is above the average rate in the EU-28 (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 28.7%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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LATVIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Inese Šūpule, Iveta Bebriša, and Lelde Jansone

Researchers at the foundation “Baltic Institute of Social Sciences”

Citation suggestion:

Šūpule, I., I. Bebriša, and L. Jansone. 2018. “Latvia – ECEC Workforce Profile.” In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 644-664.

Funded by:

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Note from the editors: In official translations of government documents, ECEC settings in Latvia are invariably described as *Pre-school education institutions* and core practitioners as *Pre-school education teachers*. The preferred terms in the **seepr-o-r** reports for countries with an integrated ECEC system are *ECEC/ECE setting/institution* and *ECEC pedagogue/ECE teacher*. The distinction is made because the term ‘pre-school’ is often used internationally to mean ‘pre-primary’ education, referring to the two or three years prior to school entry only. Since there is an official trend in Latvia to move away from the term ‘pedagogue’ to the term ‘teacher’ (associated in Latvia with a higher level of IPS and higher societal status), the terms *Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher* or *ECEC Teacher* are used interchangeably throughout this report.

Introductory note

The methods used for preparing the report on the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce in Latvia are analyses of relevant statistical data, laws and regulations as well as interviews with field experts. The interviews were carried out with representatives of Riga City Council’s Education, Culture and Sports Department, with the Education and Information Services of Riga City – an education support institution established by Riga City Council –, with principals of ECEC settings (one in Riga, one in another city and one in a rural area), and with representatives of one higher education institution with study programmes for prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers (eight experts in total).

1. ECEC governance

Latvia has a partially unitary system of early childhood education and care for children up to statutory school age at 7 years. At the national level the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) has overall auspices of the age-integrated ECEC institutions for children aged 1½ - 7 years, including the development of regulatory and curricular guidance. At the local level the municipal authorities are responsible for providing public ECEC facilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs (*Labklājības ministrija*) is responsible for the inspection and monitoring of service providers in terms of compliance with national regulations. The small number of private ECEC centres is obliged to adhere to the same regulatory framework as the public institutions.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The main staff categories working directly with children in Latvian ECEC institutions are:

- Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers;
- Teacher Assistants;
- Early Childhood Music and Sports Teachers;
- Speech Therapy Teachers;
- Special Needs Pedagogues.

Minority ECEC institutions, where the language of instruction is not Latvian, may also employ a Latvian language teacher. Administrative staff categories are: centre heads (responsible for management tasks), deputy centre heads (responsible for the educational programme), and

early childhood education methodologists¹. Technical staff categories include: teacher assistant, cooks, cleaners. In some institutions a psychologist and/or a nurse may also be employed. Music, sports and special needs teachers/pedagogues may be employed as permanent staff members of an ECEC centre and work on a daily basis with the children, but in the case of small ECEC institutions they may work part time and move from centre to centre.

Table 1 gives a brief overview of the main staff categories and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Latvia: Staff in ECEC institutions

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Qualification requirements ² and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs</i> Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i> Early childhood education institution/kindergarten 1½–7 years</p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1½–7 years	<p>Tertiary-level qualification in pedagogy and professional award as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher <i>OR</i> Tertiary-level qualification in pedagogy and professional award as Primary School Teacher <i>PLUS</i> a 72-hour B-programme⁴ on early childhood pedagogy <i>OR</i> Second level professional higher education (Bachelor) in pedagogy <i>PLUS</i> a 72-hour B-programme on early childhood pedagogy <i>OR</i> Higher education degree (Bachelor's or Master's or Doctoral degree) in early childhood pedagogy ECTS points: 108–240 EQF Level: 5 and higher ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5 and higher</p>
<p><i>Skolotāja palīgs</i> Teacher Assistant</p>	<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i> Early childhood education institution/kindergarten 1½–7 years</p>	Responsible for children's care needs and supporting the teacher in educational and play activities	n/a ⁵	<p>There are no official minimum requirements for education and qualification. It is recommended that candidates have first aid training and attend courses on children's rights protection. Some municipalities may organise a preparatory course on child psychology and development.</p>

¹ 'Methodologists' in Latvia are senior Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers responsible for professional support in organising the educational work in ECEC institutions; one of his/her responsibilities is monitoring the staff needs for continuing professional development.

² Cabinet of Ministers 2014a.

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

⁴ See section 3 on IPS for a clarification of 'B-Programme'.

⁵ n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Qualification requirements ² and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības mūzikas/ sporta skolotājs</i> Early Childhood Music/Sports** Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile depends on qualification route:</i> <i>EITHER</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional with Additional Specialist Qualification <i>OR</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i> Early childhood education institution/kindergarten 1½–7 years</p>	Main responsible person for children's music/sports activities	1½–7 years	<p>Second level professional higher education degree in pedagogy with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional qualification as music teacher <p><i>OR</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional qualification as sports teacher <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Early Childhood Teacher qualification requirements (<i>see above</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 108–240 EQF Level: 5 and higher ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 5 and higher</p>
<p><i>Logopēds</i> Speech Therapy Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional with specialist qualification</p>	<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i> Early childhood education institution/kindergarten 1½–7 years</p>	Main responsible person who works with children with speech problems	1½–7 years	<p>Second level professional higher education degree in pedagogy <i>PLUS</i> a postgraduate qualification as Speech Therapy Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 108–240 EQF Level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 5 and higher</p>
<p><i>Speciālais pedagogs</i> Special Needs Pedagogue***</p>	<p><i>Pirmsskolas izglītības iestāde</i> Early childhood education institution/kindergarten 1½–7 years</p>	Main responsible person who works with children with special needs	1½–7 years	<p>Second level professional degree in special needs education (Bachelor's or Master's)</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>ECEC Teacher or Primary School Teacher professional qualification <i>PLUS</i> a 72-hour B-programme on special education approaches in ECEC.</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 and higher EQF Level: 6 and higher ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6 and higher</p>

* There are no available data on whether these specialists work with children under age 3.

** In some ECEC institutions there is not a designated post for a sports teacher. ECE teachers also prepare and lead sports activities for children.

*** Special Needs Pedagogues (sometimes called special needs teachers) work with children with complex needs both in regular ECEC institutions and in special kindergartens. This staff position is not common in all ECEC institutions.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

In 2014/2015, 9,940 teachers were employed in ECEC institutions. 93.9% of these worked in municipal institutions and 6.1% in ECEC centres established by legal entities or individuals. There are no data available on the technical staff (assistants, cleaners, cooks) who work in ECEC institutions.

According to the 2014/2015 data, 7,650 (77%) of the pedagogical staff in ECEC institutions work directly with the children as Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers, 11% are engaged in management duties, 6.2% employed as centre heads, and 4.8% as education methodologists or deputy centre heads. 6.2% of teachers are employed as early childhood music education teachers, 3% as early childhood sports education teachers and 4% of staff are either speech therapists or psychologists. 1.4% of teachers work as special education teachers or special pedagogues.

90.5% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have a tertiary-level professional qualification and the greater majority (88.6%) a specialisation in pedagogy (there are no available data on whether these teachers have a specialisation in *early childhood* pedagogy). 1.8% had a tertiary-level award in another field. 14.5% of the staff with a specialised higher education degree have a Master’s degree in pedagogy. 9.5% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have a qualification below tertiary level. Of these, 0.9% had a secondary pedagogical education, 2.1% a secondary vocational education and 6.6% a general secondary education. 63.5% of this group of teachers with a secondary-level education (either pedagogical or vocational or general) are studying for a tertiary-level degree in early childhood pedagogy.

The available data show that 10.5% of staff working in ECEC institutions do not have a relevant qualification, either at the higher or secondary level. In this group there are staff with a general secondary education, a secondary vocational education and with other (non-pedagogical) higher education.

Table 2

Latvia: Structural composition of ECEC* workforce in Latvia

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce/numbers - 2014
Total staff with higher education degree (or tertiary-level professional qualification) (ISCED 5 and above)	90.5% (8992)**
Staff with a higher education qualification in pedagogy	88.6% (8809)
<i>of whom the following have a master's degree in pedagogy</i>	14.5% (1281)
Staff with higher education qualification in another field	1.8% (183)
Staff with upper secondary or post-secondary IPS:	9.5% (948)**
– secondary pedagogical (ISCED 4)	0.9% (89)
– secondary vocational (ISCED 3)	2.1% (204)
– general secondary (ISCED 3)	6.6% (655)
<i>the majority of whom are currently studying for a higher educa-</i>	

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce/numbers - 2014
<i>tion degree in early childhood pedagogy</i>	63.5% (602)
Staff with non-specialist qualification (both higher and secondary)	10.5% (1042)**
Unqualified staff	No data available
Specialist support staff (speech therapists, educational psychologists)	4.0% (401)**
Male staff	0.4% (39)** No data available about male staff in different job positions
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

* The data include only the pedagogical staff in ECEC institutions

** Ministry of Education and Science 2015.

In Latvia, the personnel working in ECEC institutions are mainly women. Of all teachers working in ECEC institutions, only 0.4% or 39 persons are male. There are no available data on the main tasks performed by men in ECEC institutions.

5.7% of teachers are younger than 24 years, 18.7% are in the age group 25-34 years and 27.6% are in the age group 35-44 years. Almost half (48%) the teachers working in ECEC institutions are over 45 years of age. 29.1% are aged 45-54 years, and 18.9% are 55 years of age or older. In general, 5.1% of teachers working in ECEC institutions have reached retirement age, which means that they are 62 or older.

Data on ethnic background or nationality within the ECEC workforce are not collected in Latvia. In 2014/2015, of all ECEC institutions registered in Latvia 70.9% were with Latvian as the language of instruction, 12.5% with Russian, 16.3% with Latvian and Russian and 0.3% with Polish or Russian and Polish as the language of instruction. Teachers can work in any ECEC institution regardless of their ethnic background or nationality.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Latvia, tertiary education programmes are provided by different types of higher education institutions, of which there are three types: colleges, universities and non-university higher education institutions. Colleges provide first-level higher professional education considered as the first phase of the second-level professional higher education programmes offered by a higher education institution. The non-university institutions offer professional qualifications, and universities offer both academic and professional qualifications. The criteria for university status are: implementation of bachelor's, master's and doctoral study programmes; annual procedures for defending doctoral theses; at least half of persons in academic posts hold a doctoral degree; the institution issues research publications and establishes research institutions or units in the main scientific disciplines corresponding to the implemented study programmes.

The higher education programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' is offered by four higher education institutions in Latvia: Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy (*Rīgas Pedagoģijas un izglītības vadības akadēmija*; a non-university institution); University of Latvia (*Latvijas Universitāte*); University of Liepāja (*Liepājas Universitāte*) and Daugavpils University (*Daugavpils Universitāte*). First-level higher professional education in early childhood education is provided only at the Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy. A master's degree programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care

Teacher' (ISCED 7) is provided by two higher education institutions (Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy and University of Latvia).

Primary School Teachers (grades 1-4) wishing to work in an early childhood institution, or Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers wishing to work in a special ECEC institution are obliged to follow a requalification course known as a 'B-programme'. These programmes are 72 hours in length and they cover issues of early childhood pedagogy, particularly didactics. They are developed and conducted by the higher education institutions which offer study programmes in pedagogy.

Table 3

Latvia: Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher

Job title in Latvian: Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p><i>Route 1:</i> First level higher education IPS programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' (two-year degree)</p> <p>Entry requirements: Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education (ISCED 34 and 35)</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years (2 years and 3 months for external studies) of professional higher education (provided at Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy)</p> <p>Award: Professional status (diploma) as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 120 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 55</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: ECEC institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p>Holders of the professional qualification can study further to gain a Bachelor's/second level professional higher education degree.</p>
<p><i>Route 2:</i> Professional Bachelor programme 'Teacher' (four-year degree) – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher' or – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Primary School Teacher'</p> <p>Entry requirements: Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years (4 years and 3 months for external studies)</p> <p>Award: Professional Bachelor's degree in educational sciences/professional qualification as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 65</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p>N.B. Graduates with a Bachelor's degree can continue their studies in Master's programmes and professional education programmes. There are also professional Master's programmes specialising in pre-school pedagogy and Master's and Doctoral programmes specialising in pedagogy in general.</p>
<p><i>Route 3:</i> Second level (post-graduate) short professional higher education programme 'Teacher' – sub-programme 'Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher'</p> <p>Entry requirements: Higher education degree in pedagogy/Bachelor of educational sciences</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years of part-time studies affiliated to a higher education institution</p> <p>Award: Professional qualification as Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 108 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 65</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p>N.B. Holders of the professional post-graduate qualification can follow further studies to gain a Master's degree.</p>

Note: Since the required qualification routes of Early Childhood Music Education Teachers and sports teachers are similar to those of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers (2nd level professional higher pedagogic education plus additional qualification as music teacher/sports teacher) and since Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers are eligible to fulfil the duties of music and sports teachers, these IPS programmes are not described in more detail.

Table 4

Latvia: Speech Therapy Teacher

Job title in Latvian: <i>Logopēds</i>
<p><i>Route 1:</i> Professional Bachelor programme 'Special Education and Speech Therapy Teacher' or 'Speech Therapy Teacher'</p> <p>Entry requirements: Certificate of general secondary education or vocational secondary education (ISCED 3 and 4)</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 or 4½ years of professional higher education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's professional degree in Education/professional status as Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher.</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 65</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p><i>Additional workplaces include:</i> primary schools, special education institutions, art schools, school management institutions, study centres</p> <p>N.B. Graduates with a Bachelor's degree can continue studies in Master's programmes and 2nd level professional higher education programmes.</p>
<p><i>Route 2:</i> Second level (post-graduate) short professional higher education programme 'Teacher' – sub-programme 'Speech Therapy Teacher'</p> <p>Entry requirements: Higher pedagogic education or Bachelor of educational sciences</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years part-time studies affiliated to a higher education institution</p> <p>Award: Professional status as Speech Therapy Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 108</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 65</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)</p> <p><i>Additional workplace:</i> Primary schools</p> <p>Graduates with a Bachelor's degree can continue studies in Master's programmes.</p>

Table 5

Latvia: Special Needs Pedagogue

Job title in Latvian: <i>Speciālais pedagogs</i>
<p><i>Route 1:</i> Professional Bachelor programme 'Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher' or 'Special Education Teacher'</p> <p>Entry requirements: secondary education</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 or 4½ years of professional higher education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's professional degree in Education/professional status as Special Education Teacher and Speech Therapy Teacher</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114</p>

Job title in Latvian: *Speciālais pedagogs*

ISCED 2011: 65

Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood education institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)

Additional workplaces: schools, special education institutions, art schools, school management institutions, study centres,

N.B. Graduates with a Bachelor's degree may continue studies in Master's programmes and 2nd level professional higher education programmes

Route 2:

Second level professional higher education programme 'Teacher'

– sub-programme 'Special Education Teacher'

Entry requirements: Higher education depending on the length of programme

Professional studies: 1½, 2 or 2½ years studies of professional higher education

Award: Professional status as Special Education Teacher

ECTS points: 72, 90 or 120 (depending on previous initial professional studies)

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0114

ISCED 2011: 65

Main ECEC workplace: Pre-school institutions/kindergartens (1½ – 7 years)

Additional workplaces: primary schools and special education institutions

3.2 Competence specifications and curricula in IPS programmes

As there are different study programmes for different staff categories, the main focus here is on the IPS programmes for Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers⁶. For pedagogic-didactic approaches and a short assessment of the preparation of students see a comment at the end of the chapter.

Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher (*Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs*)

Route 1: First level professional higher education programme

Competency specifications:

- Implementing theoretical knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and early childhood education methods in ECEC settings
- Setting goals for pedagogic work
- Planning how to achieve the goals for pedagogic work
- Choosing appropriate educational methods
- Feeling responsible for his/her professional work
- Being motivated to follow the latest trends of early childhood pedagogy in Latvia and abroad.

Intellectual competencies

- Having skills to describe and define pedagogic problems
- Analysing problems through scientific methods.

Professional competencies

- Understanding theories and concepts of early childhood pedagogy
- Evaluating and choosing appropriate methods for his/her field of research.

⁶ The information is gathered from descriptions of study programmes of different higher education institutions.

Practical competencies

- Being able to analyse comprehensive practical issues in the context of early childhood pedagogy
- Making practical and reasonable decisions in areas of learning

Curricular areas:

- General education courses (for example, early childhood pedagogy)
- Specialisation courses (in pedagogy, psychology, physiology, study methods)
- Developing and presenting field work
- Preparing and presenting qualification thesis

Route 2: Second level short professional higher education programme

Competency specifications:

- Being able to practically use knowledge of early childhood pedagogy and study methods taking into account his/her previous pedagogic education and work experience
- Being able to plan and organise pedagogic processes with certain goals.

Curricular areas:

- theoretical courses of the field (for example, early childhood pedagogy, playing in theory and practice)
- courses of professional specialisation (for example, bilingual education in ECEC settings, sports in ECEC settings, music in early childhood pedagogy and others)
- freely chosen courses
- practical use of theory
- state examination

Route 3: Professional Bachelor's degree programme

Competency specifications:

- Being able to purposefully use knowledge of early childhood and family pedagogy, psychology and study methods in implementation of an integrated approach towards early childhood pedagogic processes
- Being able to successfully carry out individual activities with a child and his/her family by using knowledge of home tutor professional procedures⁷
- Having a tolerant, interested attitude towards children as individuals
- Understanding the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children, teens and youth
- Understanding the relation between different cognitive processes (conception, memory, attention, logical thinking) and the study process
- Being able to recognise possible delay in children's development and offer ways to prevent it
- Understanding and promoting children's curiosity, motivation, creativity, active involvement in the learning process
- Having communication skills and skills to include different children in group activities
- Being able to discuss new trends in education
- Being able to promote positive mutual communication, cooperation and tolerance between colleagues and parents
- Having knowledge of social skills and emotional intelligence
- Being able to evaluate his or her own professional work and improve his or her professional skills without assistance

⁷ If a child is not able to attend the compulsory classes of pre-primary education, for example, due to illness, pre-primary education institution provides the home tutor service or support family to prepare a child for school themselves.

- Being able to analyse concepts of education, theories, education policy
- Being able to work in multicultural environments.

Curricular areas:

- theoretical courses of pedagogy and psychology
- courses of specific psychological development features of young children, methods of promotion of children's creativity, specific tasks of home tutors;
- pedagogical field work in ECEC institutions
- preparation of thesis

The interviewed experts from higher education institutions who teach prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers state that their institutions train students according to a holistic and child oriented approach. However, in their view most ECEC institutions implement a subject oriented approach. In response to this, the interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions argue that they support the organisation of learning processes through play. However, they are obliged to follow the official curricular guidelines, and if they take into account the requirements of the education programme, then they are not able to implement a play-based approach to learning in all areas. The representatives of ECEC settings criticise higher education institutions for not taking the guidelines into account when developing study programmes for prospective Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers. Moreover, they critically evaluate the knowledge and skills of newly prepared teachers. In their opinion, newly-qualified teachers lack knowledge of different subject methods (including play) and understanding of age-appropriate skills. However, they also remark positively that newly-qualified teachers are competent in integrating different tasks and activities. It should also be noted that there are several higher education institutions, which prepare Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers, and this assessment does not refer to all of them.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

The minimum requirement for working as an **Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher** in an ECEC institution is a higher pedagogic education and a specific qualification. According to the relevant legislation, the only possibility for working without having these specific requirements is for students who are undertaking initial professional studies in pedagogy (Cabinet of Ministers 2014, Article 6). Experts admit that it is common practice for students to start working during their studies and it has become one of the options to solve staff shortage problems in ECEC institutions.

Almost anyone can work as an **Early Childhood Teacher Assistant** regardless of their education and qualification. For example, interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions report cases where unemployed shop assistants and accountants apply for vacant positions as a teacher's assistant. In these cases the ECEC institution or the municipality defines the necessary requirements for employees. However according to legislation, when hiring a person, the ECEC setting provider is obliged to request information from the Punishment Register to make sure that a person has not been convicted of criminal offences that are related to violence or threats of violence, of criminal offences against morals and sexual inviolability (Latvijas Republikas Seima 1998a, Section 72) or of other crimes that are not permitted for those working with children.

An Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher has both vertical and horizontal career opportunities in ECEC institutions. A teacher can participate in the application process for vacant positions and become the centre head of an ECEC institution, a deputy centre head for education work or a methodologist. An ECEC Teacher can also make horizontal career moves. He/she can gain a specialist qualification and work as a speech therapist or a Special Needs Pedagogue. Teacher Assistants can only become an ECEC Teacher by following the required education and qualification routes.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

According to those working in the field, *field practice* (workplace-based learning) during the IPS programmes is very important for the preparation of future Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers. It is an opportunity for students to test their theoretical knowledge and to improve their pedagogical skills. However, both representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs) and ECEC institutions state that at the moment opportunities for workplace-based learning during IPS are not sufficient to ensure that a student is able to become fully involved in the work of ECEC institution after graduation.

The relevant legislation states that during second level professional higher education studies there should be a field practice of at least 30 ECTS (Cabinet of Ministers 2014b, Article 6). Experts report that the length and distribution of the field practice component of IPS across semesters varies according to the higher education institution.

A field practice is implemented according to an agreement signed by both the higher education institution and the service provider/employer offering the work placement. The agreement includes the goals and tasks of the field practice, as well as its planning, evaluation procedures and the duties and responsibilities of both co-operating institutions (Cabinet of Ministers 2014c, Articles 15). However, in most cases students currently have to find a suitable placement themselves – frequently it is an ECEC institution close to the student's home or the ECEC institution where the student already works alongside his/her studies.

The relevant legislation states that the content of field practice has to correspond to the professional degree and qualification followed, and the standards of the profession (Cabinet of Ministers 2014h, Article 13). Field experts report that during their field practice students need to develop and improve their skills of observation, to note and evaluate the individual development of each child, to develop skills for the independent planning of learning processes (including goal-setting and tasks), and to learn to choose appropriate pedagogic-didactic and organisational approaches in order to promote the individual development of each child.

During field-based studies, students make regular notes of observations of daily practices in a field practice journal. The journal content is included in the overall evaluation of the practicum. The representative of the co-operating ECEC institution (centre head, deputy centre head for education work or methodologist) and the HEI supervisor of a field practice assess the student's performance together. Evaluation also includes a presentation by the student in his/her higher education institution.

In terms of a centre-based mentor or support person for the students, this role can be fulfilled by an ECEC Teacher as well as by a centre head, a deputy centre head for education work or a methodologist. Each ECEC institution makes this decision according to the tasks a student has to fulfil during the field practice.

According to field experts, a mentor or support person in the ECEC institution should be specially prepared in order to support students during the field practice. Several higher education institutions in Latvia offer relevant courses in their professional development programmes for teachers. As a preparatory course for this role has not been set as a requirement, some experts report that a centre head or deputy centre head for education work who has 20 or more years of work experience can perform the duties of mentors without special preparation.

Field experts report that in most cases, ECEC staff do not receive additional payment for fulfilling the tasks of a mentor or support person. In their opinion, this work can be considered as voluntary work. Experts state that not all higher education institutions make a contribution to ECEC institutions for providing the opportunity of a field practice for students.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

According to state legislation, professional development is mandatory for all teachers, including those working in ECEC institutions. Each teacher is responsible for his/her professional development of not less than 36 hours within a period of three years (Cabinet of Ministers 2014f, Article 7). The Education Law (1998) states that a teacher has the right to 30 days over three years for his/her professional development and that this can take place during his/her working hours, maintaining the salary (Latvijas Republikas Seima 1998b).

The professional development of technical staff (for example, Teacher Assistants) working in ECEC institutions is not regulated at the state level. It is up to the municipality or the specific ECEC institution to decide whether these employees need professional development. For example, Riga municipality has recommended that Teacher Assistants attend professional development training designed especially for this target group.

Professional development for Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers includes participation in workshops and conferences, and can include in-service training in another country. However, mainly it is conducted in the form of training programmes and study courses. Legislation states that teachers can improve their professional skills by attending an A-programme (further education) or a B- programme (requalification). The choice of programme depends on the teacher's previous form of IPS.

The target groups of A-programmes are ECE teachers, speech therapist teachers, education psychologists and special pedagogues who already work in ECEC institutions. These programmes are of up to 36 hours' duration. The courses are developed and offered by higher education institutions, state and municipal institutions, non-governmental organisations and private institutions. Some examples: the 'Latvian Language Agency', the 'Education and Information Services of Riga City (RIIMC)' which are education support institutions established by Riga municipality, the organisation 'Early Childhood Education Association', the 'Education Development Centre', the 'Latvian Early Childhood Music Education Association' and many more, as well as higher education institutions such as Daugavpils University, the Latvian Academy of Sports Education, the University of Latvia, Liepaja University, Rezekne Higher Education Institution and the Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy. The development and implementation of training courses has to be coordinated with the municipality in which they take place. Higher education institutions and subordinate institutions of ministries implement A-programmes without coordination, since their statutes define the implementation of educational activities.

The topics of further education or A-programmes are diverse and broad. For example, in 2015 the Education and Information Services of Riga City were authorised to hold 55 different professional development programmes (Riga City 2015) for the staff of ECEC institutions in Riga. Of these, three programmes are specifically developed for ECEC institution managers (centre heads) and vice managers (deputy centre heads for education). These include topics such as ECEC institution management, cooperation with parents, or the development and improvement of life skills in the ECEC setting. For ECEC Teachers there are courses for the development of professional skills to successfully implement the early childhood curricular framework in the fields of first language and additional language learning, maths, the arts, crafts, physical health and music. There are also courses for teachers on ways to improve pedagogical processes, on work with children from different target groups, on the protection of children's rights, on the processing of personal data and on the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

The relevant legislation states that teachers are responsible for planning their own professional development in cooperation with the manager of the ECEC institution in which they work (Cabinet of Ministers 2014f, Article 7). The experts interviewed report that it is usually a deputy centre head or a methodologist who supervises the centre personnel and gives information about courses to those teachers who need to improve their qualifications. At the same time,

ECEC Teachers can choose their preferred professional development options – the centre manager or deputy centre head or a methodologist do not have the right to sanction these choices.

There is not an agreed system of teacher professional development programmes in terms of covering the costs. For example, employees of Riga municipality ECEC institutions have an option to attend courses developed and implemented by the Riga municipality institution 'Education and Information Services of Riga City' without having to pay a fee. The ECEC institution or employee pays for courses developed and implemented by other institutions. Also in other places in Latvia, municipalities or education management boards attempt to ensure that professional development opportunities are available free of charge. The interviewed experts reported that if a teacher wishes to choose a specific course out of personal interest, then in most cases he/she also has to cover the costs. However, there are cases whereby the ECEC institution finds an opportunity to pay for such courses from the institution's budget – for example, if a teacher has previously made an agreement with the centre head to attend a certain course, or if a teacher has not already attended the required 36 hours of CPD.

In general, opportunities for professional development are relatively widely available to ECEC Teachers. However, there are specific problems in terms of access. Firstly, further education courses provided free of charge by the municipalities are not available to all interested teachers. For example, in Riga the groups for professional development courses organised by the Education and Information Services of Riga City are full up after one or two days of being advertised. Such courses are available for only 3 to 4 groups per year. In other words, the demand for courses far exceeds what the centre can offer. Limited financial resources prevent the organisation of more groups. At the same time the centre does not control who attends. The interviewed experts report on teachers who have become 'professional students' and appear to attend all available courses without assessing what is really necessary for their professional development. This prevents other interested teachers from being able to access the courses.

Secondly, the requalification courses (B-programmes) mostly cost money which, in the opinion of some experts, is not commensurable to teachers' salaries. Experts state that teachers cannot afford to pay 300€ or more for participation in such a course.

If a teacher wishes to continue his/her studies by working towards a Master's degree, there are enough opportunities, since higher education institutions offer both full-time, part-time and external study routes. However, in most cases the teachers have to meet the costs themselves. The interviewed experts affirm that in general teachers are motivated to acquire a Master's degree, seeing it as an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills.

According to experts, professional development tends to be rather formally evaluated in the context of career progression. Professional development is taken into account if qualification levels (Cabinet of Ministers 2014g)⁸ are assigned, although it is only one of many criteria which are taken into account. When qualification levels are assigned, the teacher's work with children, the achievements of children, the teacher's involvement in the development of the education institution, his or her education level and many more criteria are evaluated. Teachers can get one of five qualification levels – the last three correspond also to an increase of salary. An education institution assigns the first three levels, but the next are awarded by a municipality or the state administration. The assessment takes the form of filling in forms and collecting points.

In the opinion of some experts, a Master's degree is important only in cases when teachers want to do administrative duties in the ECEC institution – work as an institution leader, a deputy leader or a methodologist. One of the experts notes that teachers can grow professionally

⁸ The 2014 Regulations No 350 set up five qualification levels of teachers' professional activities assessment. Theoretically the five qualification levels of teachers' professional activities assessment are connected with the teachers' remuneration system and are also applied to ECEC Teachers. In practice this system is very much criticised, because there are no real differences in remuneration.

through additional qualifications – for example, by becoming a Speech Therapy Teacher or a special pedagogue. They give the teacher new work options, leading to opportunities to earn more money.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Since the end of 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia has been working to establish a new remuneration model for teachers. The goal of the reform is to gradually develop a system that would ensure that teachers are paid at least the average salary in the country for normal working hours (for detailed information about current remuneration in ECEC institutions see section 8.1). However, during the development and approbation of the model, the social partners have been critical, saying that for some general education (school) teachers the proposals will result not in an increase but in a decrease in remuneration. At the time of writing these debates are ongoing.

Several interviewed representatives of ECEC institutions report that Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers do not have a clear position on this reform since they do not have enough information about it. In their view, it is a matter of the political will of the government which will determine the results of the reform and its impact on teacher remuneration.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

During the last five years no research has been conducted in Latvia directly focusing on ECEC staffing issues. However, the professional education/training of personnel and their work has been analysed in research on other issues relating to ECEC institutions. For example, in 2013 the 'Baltic Institute of Social Sciences' foundation conducted a research study on „Ethnic Heterogeneity in Pre-primary Education Institutions in Latvia: A Study of Linguistic Situation and Readiness for the Implementation of Bilingual Education” (Kļave et al. 2013). During the research the motivation and ability of ECEC Teachers to implement a bilingual approach was analysed using the following methods: a survey of ECEC institution staff and expert interviews, and an analysis of observation journals filled in during ECEC institution self-investigation.

It was concluded in the research that the ECEC Teachers lack both relevant theoretical and practical knowledge, and also lack methodological support in implementing a bilingual approach in their work with young children. The other conclusion was that it is important to improve the content of professional development courses in the field of integrative studies and skills to work simultaneously with children who have different levels of language skills. Researchers concluded that the majority of ECEC Teachers in the sample had difficulties in organising their education work flexibly in order to react to the different levels of knowledge and needs of children, for example, through integrating language learning activities into the daily programme and everyday routines.

In order to successfully implement a bilingual approach, ECEC institutions also need the modern technical equipment (regular and interactive boards, video and audio centres, etc.) that current information technologies can offer. The study concluded that the technical/digital equipment in Latvian ECEC institutions is not satisfactory and that the municipalities lack the financial resources to provide it (Kļave et al. 2013).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Employees of early childhood education institutions - unlike teachers in schools – are not remunerated through the state budget. Relevant legislation states that this is the duty of municipalities.

According to the legislation, the lowest monthly gross rate is 405€ (Cabinet of Ministers 2009a, Article 6) for general education (school) teachers, and for ECEC Teachers with less than 5 years' work experience, but 420€ per month (minimum gross rate) if they have more than 10 years' work experience. The final salary of teachers is calculated according to their work load and the number of years they have worked in the profession. There are five different levels in the teaching profession, with levels 3-5 corresponding to an increase in pay (31.87€, 79.68€ or 99.60€ monthly respectively (Cabinet of Ministers 2009b, Article 28). A range of criteria are included in the assessment of teachers' qualification levels, such as their work with children, the children's achievements, their involvement in the development of the ECEC setting, or their formal level of IPS.

A wage survey carried out by the personnel recruitment company *CV-Online* shows that at the beginning of 2016 the average net pay for ECEC Teachers was 380€ per month (CV-Online 2016). By way of comparison, according to the data of Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, the average net pay in the country in 2015 was 603€ per month (CSB 2016). The interviewed experts stated that the remuneration of ECEC Teachers is low – and it is not possible to live on this salary without additional support.

In general ECEC Teachers get lower remuneration than primary school teachers. For posts of responsibility, ECEC employees receive a higher salary. However, as the interviewees noted, remuneration does not increase proportionally with the job requirements and responsibilities. For example, in one of the ECEC institutions, for the position of teacher assistant, which does not request a specific professional qualification or work experience, the gross salary was 400-450€ a month, whereas for an ECEC Teacher in the same institution, which requires a specific form of IPS and which involves far more responsibility, the gross salary was 500-600€ a month. Also, for holders of an administrative post in an ECEC institution there is no substantial increase in remuneration. For example, in one early childhood education institution the gross salary of the centre head was 700€ a month, whereas the gross salary of the deputy centre head in the field of education was 590€ a month.

The field experts stated that the remuneration of ECEC staff differs from municipality to municipality. For example, the municipal authorities in large cities frequently pay additional money to employees in ECEC institutions. Remuneration also differs between public and private ECEC institutions – one of the experts noted that in private ECEC institutions the remuneration of teachers can be twice as much as that in public institutions.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Relevant legislation states that a teacher's work load is 40 hours per week, not taking into account supply teachers who stand in for an absent colleague (Cabinet of Ministers 2009c, Article 36). There is no data available about the relative proportion of the full-time and part-time working patterns of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers and Teacher Assistants and other technical staff in ECEC settings.

According to the interviewed field experts, most ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants work full-time. If there is a post available for part-time employment, then ECEC centre heads sometimes make their own decisions on what to do – for example, they divide the work load be-

tween teachers, or involve an additional teacher or students of pedagogy who are able to work alongside their studies.

The experts observed that there are difficulties in ensuring full-time employment for early childhood music and sports teachers and speech therapists, as well as for Latvian language teachers in ECEC institutions where the language of instruction is, for example, Russian. The workload for these posts is directly related to the number of children in the setting; a small number of children means that there is less work available for these specialists. In order to work full-time and earn more, these teachers have to work in several ECEC institutions simultaneously, or fulfil duties associated with another post. For example, those with the necessary qualification can work both as an ECE teacher and a Speech Therapy Teacher.

Working in several ECEC institutions is more common in cities where there are several settings located in a specific part of the city. The experts reported cases in small towns or rural areas where it is difficult to permanently attract specific specialists. The job offer is not appealing to them because of the small work load and the travel expenses.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Induction measures for newly-qualified staff are the responsibility of each ECEC institution. Experts report that these inexperienced teachers almost always work together with a more experienced colleague, who fulfils the duties of a mentor. The work of a new teacher is also supervised by the deputy centre head or a methodologist, who observes the teacher at work and judges whether he/she can organise the learning environment and educational processes independently.

Support measures for improving the quality of the staff's professional work may also differ from setting to setting. One of the experts mentioned that teachers have opportunities to attend classes prepared by other colleagues. Cooperation between ECEC institutions in one municipality or across a broader region also leads to enhanced competence. This kind of cooperation is sometimes initiated informally through personal contacts between representatives of the administration of institutions or formally encouraged by the municipality. For example, Riga Municipality organises conferences for ECEC Teachers once every three years. In the period between conferences there are activities for creative target groups that involve 5-6 ECEC institutions – teachers work together on specific issues of concern. Conference materials are available to teachers electronically.

8.4 Non-contact time

According to legislation, teachers in ECEC institutions with a 30 hour remuneration rate have up to four hours a week for preparation of classes (Cabinet of Ministers 2009d, Article 40). Field experts reported that only teachers who work in the compulsory preschool groups for 5- and 6-year olds receive payment for these four hours of preparation; teachers working with younger children get paid for only one hour of preparation per week. When teachers do preparation work, they do not have to do this at the workplace.

In Latvia, there is no available data on the amount of time ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants are allocated for staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community and other activities.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

According to the field experts interviewed, there is a shortage of staff in early childhood education institutions – both of Early Childhood Education and Care Teachers and of specialist staff such as early childhood music and sports teachers and Speech Therapy Teachers. There is also

a shortage of technical staff (Teacher Assistants, cooks, secretaries and others). These shortages are similar in both urban and rural regions.

Experts attribute the main reason for staff shortages in ECEC centres to the low remuneration for the work, which has consequences for the societal prestige of the ECEC Teacher profession. Although higher education institutions prepare the specialists for this work, only a small proportion of them choose to work in ECEC institutions at the end of their studies. The interviewed experts have observed that young people prefer, for example, to choose a job in administrative work or a job in the field of human resources.

ECEC institutions go about solving staff shortages in a variety of ways. Firstly, the administrative-level staff in ECEC institutions offer those already in the setting the opportunity of taking on more than one work load (one work load is 30 contact hours per week; teachers are permitted to work 40 hours per week in one institution). This option is used when there is a shortage either of teachers or of technical staff. Secondly, administrative-level staff in ECEC institutions may encourage current teachers to acquire additional qualifications in order to occupy posts reserved for various specialists, such as a Speech Therapy Teacher. Thirdly, it can happen that ECEC Teachers take on the duties of the specialists who are lacking. For example, if there is no sports teacher, ECEC Teachers may organise sports classes for their group of children. The fourth option is that ECEC institutions may recruit students of pedagogy programmes to take on a post as an ECEC Teacher.

Solving issues of staff shortages is also a municipal responsibility. Since April 2011, the municipality of Riga has been implementing a pilot project focusing on the continued functioning of ECEC institutions in conditions of ECEC Teacher shortages. Within the framework of this project one ECEC Teacher and two Teacher Assistants work in a group instead of two teachers and one teacher assistant, which is regular practice. If Teacher Assistants are involved in the project, they are required to attend professional development courses paid for by the municipality. The courses take place in the municipal institution “Education and Information Services of Riga City”, where newly-qualified teachers are trained for the organisation of education processes. This involves both allocating certain tasks to Teacher Assistants as well as taking on a mentoring role. This model ensures full-time employment for ECEC Teachers and Teacher Assistants and also opportunities for additional payment. At the moment at least 70 groups in ECEC institutions are involved in this project.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

If no improvements are made to the remuneration level of ECEC staff, the shortages of both pedagogical and technical staff will continue. The interviewed experts drew attention to the overall ageing of the workforce and the low proportion of young employees. Even if young people are motivated to work in ECEC institutions, after a while, when they face difficulties to survive because of the low payment, they are likely to look for better paid jobs.

In the face of current staff shortages, the network of ECEC institutions will not be able to work at full capacity in the future. Even now the municipalities of large cities face the dual problem of staff shortages and long waiting lists of children whose parents wish to secure a place in an ECEC institution. For example, in Riga there are municipal ECEC institutions that do not work at full capacity. Although the premises and other resources for enrolling more children are available, the lack of teachers makes this impossible.

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LATVIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Inese Šūpule
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Latvia – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 665-676.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

At the national level in Latvia, the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) has overall responsibility for the development of regulatory and curricular frameworks for early childhood education and care. At the local level, and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, the municipalities are responsible for organising and running public ECEC centres for 1½- to 7-year olds. There are few private ECEC services, but these are also subject to the same regulatory frameworks as publicly run provision. The Ministry of Welfare/Social Affairs (*Labklājības ministrija*) is the regulatory body in terms of ensuring that the municipalities comply with national regulations.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Ministry of Education and Science 2016.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebrīša, and L. Jansone 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

General objectives of ECEC highlight each child's right to education and equality of opportunity. Key pedagogical goals include: promoting children's individuality, enhancing their physical, cognitive and social development, promoting initiative, curiosity, independence, communicative competence and creativity, strengthening their health and psychological preparedness for school, as well as mastering the basics of the Latvian language.

The settings which provide compulsory pre-primary education for 5- and 6-year olds are expected to make sure that their educational programmes help to prepare children for school.

Both the general Education Act (*Vispārējās Izglītības likums 1999*, with amendments in 2013) and the Council of Ministers' Guidelines and Model Programmes for Preschool Education (*Noteikumi par valsts pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijām 2012*) provide the regulatory framework for ECEC. Compliance with service provider regulations is also required.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Education and Science 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Children aged 1½ and older are legally entitled to a fee-free place in a publicly run ECEC institution. However, the municipalities sometimes find it difficult to provide the required places.

Kindergarten attendance is compulsory for 5- and 6-year olds. For younger children attendance is voluntary.

Statutory primary school begins at age 7.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebriša, and L. Jansone 2017.

Main types of provision

In 2015/16 there were 647 early childhood institutions in Latvia, with 92,045 children on roll*.

Kindergartens or 'early childhood education institutions' (*pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes - bērnodārzs*) are the main form of ECEC setting for 1½- to 7-year olds. For children aged 4 and younger, attendance is voluntary whereas 5- and 6-year olds attend a compulsory **pre-school programme** (*pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijas*) either in a kindergarten or a school. The ECEC settings are either free-standing or integrated into the school building.

Municipalities are required to ensure a sufficient number of places in ECEC settings for those parents who wish their child to attend. However, particularly in the capital city of Riga, where there is a shortage of places, it is sometimes difficult for the municipalities to fulfil this requirement. In rural areas the municipalities provide transport so that children can attend the nearest setting in their area.

ECEC settings are generally closed for one or two months during the summer. However, a more flexible approach may be taken if the parents are in need of support. Most ECEC settings open between 7:00 and 7:30 and stay open until 18:00 or 18:30. In some cases, overnight care is provided for children on a 24-hour basis.

Beyond these main forms of provision, there are also a number of nurseries, playgroups and free-time leisure centres for children of preschool age which provide short-term, sessional activities. These settings are expected to align their programme of activities to the requirements of the curricular framework provided by the Ministry of Education. No official statistics are available for these settings.

Sources: *Central Statistical Bureau 2017.
EFA 2015.
Europäische Kommission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Ministry of Education and Science 2016.

Provider structures

In 2011/12, 95.7% of ECEC settings were public and only 4.3% were run by private providers. In general, privately run services do not receive state subsidies. However, if the municipalities are unable to fulfil their duty of providing sufficient places, since 2013 it is possible for private providers (centre-based and home-based) to receive a state subsidy. Also, in cases where private settings provide the compulsory pre-primary programme for 5- and 6-year olds, they are co-financed by the municipality.

Moreover, regulations issued by the Ministry of Welfare/Social Affairs in 2013 state that persons who have completed a 40-hour training course and a first aid course, and who have not been previously convicted, can work as a family day carer/childminder, for which they are paid 142€ per month. It is hoped that this measure will help to reduce the lack of available places in ECEC provision.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebriša, and L. Jansone 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data, the proportion of under 3-year olds in centre-based settings has increased significantly over the past decade – from 7% in 2005 to nearly 23% in 2015. In terms of the 3- to 6-year olds, the overall increase is not so pronounced (2005: 79%; 2015: 82.3%), but the proportion attending for over 30 hours per week rose from 49% in 2005 to over 79% in 2015.

Table 1

Latvia: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % ⁺
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	0.9	3.1
	Over 30 hours	22.0	79.2
	No attendance	77.2	17.7

According to national statistical data, there are very few under 1-year olds in centre-based settings (0.1%). Over one quarter of 3-year olds (28.2%) were enrolled in a centre-based setting in 2015; the overall participation rate of 3- to 7-year olds was 89.8%.

Table 2

Latvia: Number of children in centre-based ECEC settings according to age and participation rates, 2015**

2015	Number	Share of the age group, in % ⁺
Under 1 year	19	0.1
1-year olds	3,221	15.5
2-year olds	14,427	71.9
under 3 years	17,667	28.2
3-year olds	17,808	94.6
4-year olds	17,371	91.3
5-year olds	18,317	88.6
6-year olds	19,149	85.5
7-year olds	1,765	8.1
Compulsory years, 5- and 6-year olds	37,466	87.0
3- to under 7-years	74,410	89.8
0- to under 7-years	90,312	62.9

⁺ own calculations based on the Eurostat child population data for 2015

Sources: **Central Statistical Bureau 2017.
*Eurostat 2017f.

Financing and costs for parents

The Education Act stipulates that public ECEC provision is to be funded through the state and municipal budgets respectively. The municipalities are responsible for staff salaries, for equipment and for building maintenance. The staff salaries of those working with 5- and 6-year olds are cov-

ered by the state. Private service providers receive state subsidies towards staff salaries and set their own parental fees. However, since 2013, attendance at a private ECEC setting may also be free of charge if the municipalities co-fund the provision in order to cover a local demand for places.

Parents only have to pay for meals in public ECEC provision (roughly 1.36€ daily)¹ and for additional services such as language or dancing tuition. The costs may be reduced for low-income parents. In private settings that are not state subsidised, parental fees amount on average to 300€ monthly. If parents are obliged to enrol their child in a private setting because of insufficient places in public provision, they may receive a state or municipal grant. In May 2016, the state grant amounted to 95.67€ per month; however, municipal grants vary. In Riga, for example, they may amount to 132.33€.

Sources: EFA 2015.
EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebrīša, and L. Jansone 2017.

Staff-child ratios

No mandatory regulations exist regarding staff-child ratios. Criteria for grouping children can be based on a number of options: same-age or mixed-age, or other criteria such as the languages of minority ethnic groups. It is sometimes the case that in one particular setting a variety of groupings can be found.

As a measure to reduce bureaucracy, regulations concerning group size were abolished in 2009. These are now determined by the municipality or by the individual ECEC setting.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

Early childhood education is considered to be the first stage in the education system. The regulatory enactment Model Programmes for Preschool Education (*Noteikumi par valsts pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijām* 2012) includes the curricular framework for ECEC settings and other relevant guidelines. The areas of learning to be included in a play-based activity approach are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. The number of activities per week is organised according to the children's age. The learning areas include: language development, mathematics, sensory development, experiencing nature, sport and music. Reading and writing skills are also practised during the educational activities. Periods of free play and outdoor play are also included. One of the main goals is to prepare children for school.

Settings are able to develop their own programme as long as it is aligned with the Model Programmes for Preschool Education. The staff have freedom of choice in terms of didactic approaches and learning resources. However, these are not provided free of charge.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Education and Science 2016.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebrīša, and L. Jansone 2017.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Inclusion is highlighted in the Latvian Development Plan 2014-2020. Overall, an inclusive educational policy is followed which emphasises taking into account the individual needs of all children. According to the Development Guidelines for Education 2014-2020 approved by the Council of Ministers, target groups are predominantly children at developmental or health risk, with a socially disadvantaged background or those from minority ethnic families such as Roma children.

The most recent amendments to the Education Act include educational guidelines for children with special needs. These children may be enrolled in regular ECEC provision if the setting works according to these guidelines and the spatial environment is suitable. However, both public and private segregated provision is also available for children who, despite additional supports, are not able to attend a mainstream setting and who have an official diagnosis from a national or municipal paediatric commission.

Children with a minority background

In Latvia, there are two classification systems for identifying persons with a minority background: (1) ethnic background according to ethnicity; (2) nationality according to citizenship.

Table 3 presents data on persons with a non-Latvian ethnic background. In 2016, these persons accounted for 38.2% of the total population. The largest group (25.6%) were Russian minority. Just under one third of the 0- to 4-year olds and the 5- to 9-year olds came from a family with a minority background.

Table 3

Latvia: Number and proportion of persons with a Latvian and non-Latvian ethnic background, 2016*

Ethnic background	Total		0 to 4 years		5 to 9 years	
	Number	%	Number	% ⁺	Number	% ⁺
Latvian	1.216.443	61.8	71.984	69.5	68.221	65.7
Russian	504.370	25.6	15.246	14.7	13.160	12.7
Belorussian	65.999	3.4	514	0.5	510	0.5
Ukrainian	44.639	2.3	496	0.5	475	0.5
Polish	41.528	2.1	723	0.7	553	0.5
Lithuanian	23.944	1.2	329	0.3	370	0.4
Other	72.034	3.7	14.332	13.8	20.554	19.8

*own calculations

In terms of nationality according to citizenship, in early 2016, 84% of the population had Latvian citizenship, 12% were non-citizens (having immigrated to Latvia during USSR times and not yet being naturalised), 3% had Russian citizenship, and 1% had another citizenship.

Some publicly-run kindergartens offer a language other than Latvian. In general, however, settings ensure that the curriculum is implemented bilingually so that the children from ethnic minority families can develop a feeling of belonging to Latvia. In the public school system, the curriculum is offered in seven languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Belorussian. In 2015/16, 26% of all pupils were enrolled in one of these programmes.

Sources: *Central Statistical Bureau 2017.
EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

ECEC staff make observations of individual children in their group and inform the parents orally about the child's progress. Since 2011, parents receive a written report about their child's achievements (knowledge, skills and attitudes) at the end of the compulsory preschool programme.

The state Educational Quality Agency is responsible for safeguarding quality in education. According to the Education Act, all educational institutions must be officially approved/ licensed. This certification (external evaluation) must take place during the first five years following the establishment of the setting. The setting's curriculum is reviewed during the two years following publication, after that at least once every six years. The professional activities of the staff are also evaluated externally.

The external evaluations are conducted by a specially trained team of experts. Besides examining the setting's documents, they also include observations of teaching and learning processes as well as interviews with children, parents and staff. The final report is structured according to 22 review criteria.

Settings also carry out self-evaluation procedures. Reports from these are included in the external evaluations.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave is granted for 112 calendar days (6 weeks), 56 of which are taken before birth. Mothers receive 80% of average earnings.

Fathers are granted 10 days **paternity leave** under the same conditions during the two months following birth.

Both parents are entitled to **parental leave**. It is granted for 18 months and can be taken in one piece or separately up to the child's eighth birthday. 70% of average earnings are paid up to the child's first birthday (at least 171€ per month). Up to the age of 18 months a monthly flat rate of 171€ is paid, and up to the child's second birthday a monthly flat rate of 42.69€.

In order to mitigate the effects of austerity for young families, in 2014 the allowance for care arrangements for children up to 1½ years old was raised. Moreover, besides receiving a parental allowance, it is now possible to receive additional benefits and/or to work. Since 2015, there are no limits to the payments for maternity leave and parental leave, and state family benefits have been reintroduced (11.38€ per month for the first child, 22.76€ for the second and 34.20€ for the third child).

Sources: EPIC 2016.
International Labour Organization 2017.
OECD 2015.

Historical highlights and shifts

1910	First childcare facilities established by unions, churches and the State
1950-1980	Expansion of ECEC provision
1991	Many settings are closed as a result of high costs, low birth-rate and low participation rates
Since the end of the 1990s	The number of available places in ECEC settings no longer matches local demands
Since 2004	Most pre-primary buildings have been included in renovation programmes financed by municipalities and EU structural funds
2013	Possibilities for becoming a family day carer are extended as a measure of dealing with the lack of available places

Source: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Country

Country expert assessment by Inese Šūpule

The main challenges confronting the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Latvia are connected with the remuneration system for pedagogical staff. Due to the low salaries, the work of teachers in ECEC institutions does not enjoy high societal prestige and also faces a gender imbalance with its almost all-female workforce (see the ECEC Workforce Report for Latvia).

As previous studies show*, there is also a problem of qualification and readiness of teachers to deal with ethnic heterogeneity in ECEC institutions. Since 1995, there has been general support regarding bilingual education in all pre-primary, primary and secondary education institutions. However, a significant obstacle in the implementation of a bilingual approach in the ECEC institutions with Russian as the language of instruction is the lack of knowledge of the Latvian language among pre-school teachers.

Experts in pre-school education suggest that in order to promote the acquisition of the Latvian language in pre-schools with Russian as the language of instruction, serious attention should be paid to the qualification of pre-school teachers. They need the knowledge and skills to be able to work flexibly with different language acquisition methods according to the child's age, abilities and learning content. It is necessary to improve the skills of pre-school teachers to integrate the acquisition of the Latvian language into a range of daily activities in the ECEC setting, and it is necessary to promote closer cooperation with the parents of children. At the level of pre-school educational institutions, efforts should be made to create mixed teams of teachers with both Latvian and Russian as their first language. This would ensure acquisition of the Latvian language, and would also provide the informal framework of a play-based pedagogy for paying attention to certain language issues and for providing the necessary social and psychological support for children in their home language.

Sources: *Kļave, E., I. Šūpule, and I. Bebrīša 2013.
Šūpule, I., I. Bebrīša, and L. Jansone 2017.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Latvia totalled 1,968,957. This is a further indication of a steady decline in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 2,500,580 and 2005 total: 2,249,724).

Children under 7 years of age

Since compulsory schooling in Latvia starts at age 7, data in this section include children up to age 7 from available sources, whereas otherwise the demographic data refer to children up to age 6.

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 3.3% and children under 7 years of age for 7.3% of the total population. The proportion of under 3-year olds was slightly above the EU average. The share of the 3- to 7-year olds, although significantly higher in 1995 than the EU-average (Latvia was not a member state at that time), dropped considerably below the average up to 2005; in 2016 the proportion corresponded approximately to the EU average.

Table 4

Latvia: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	218,84
1-year olds	219,97
2-year olds	208,88
Under age 3 total	647,69
3-year olds	200,90
4-year olds	187,65
5-year olds	189,25
6-year olds	206,07
Total 3- to under 7-year olds	783,87
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	1,431,56

Table 5

Latvia: Children under 7 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.2	3.3	2.7	3.1	3.3	3.0
3- to under 7-year olds	5.7	4.7	3.4	4.2	4.0	4.2
0- to under 7-year olds	8.9	8.0	6.1	7.3	7.3	7.2

[†] own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 57.1% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 5.6%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (4.9%).

Table 6

Latvia: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	240,600	
Couple households	137,500	57.1
Other types of households	89,800	37.3
Single households, total	13,400	5.6
Single households, women	11,700	4.9
Single households, men	1,700	0.7

⁺Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Latvia was 69.9% and that of women 66.1%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 68% were employed in 2015, whereas 88.6% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Both employment rates were slightly above the EU28 average in 2015.

Table 7

Latvia: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Latvia	2005	49.8	85.2
	2010	60.5	74.8
	2015	68.0	88.6
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b, 2017c..
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 27.7% of children under age 6 in Latvia were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is above the average rate in the EU28 (average = 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 30.9%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.
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LITHUANIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Hanna Siarova and Darius Buinauskas

Public Policy and Management Institute, Vilnius –
Hanna Siarova (Research Manager) and
Darius Buinauskas (Junior Researcher)

Citation suggestion:

Siarova, H. and D. Buinauskas. 2018. "Lithuania – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 677-698.

Funded by:

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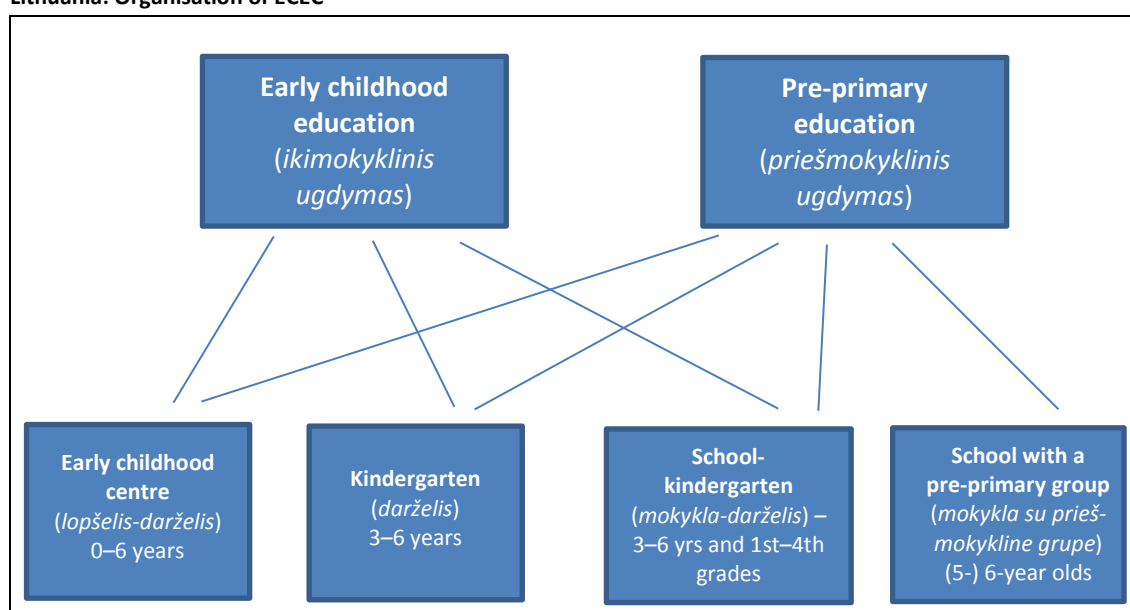


1. ECEC governance

In Lithuania, early childhood education and care for children up to statutory schooling at age 7 is organised as a unitary system in two stages. The Ministry of Education and Science (*Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija*) is responsible for both stages, i.e. for early childhood education (*ikimokyklinis ugdymas*) – literally translated as ‘pre-school education’ in Lithuania – for children from birth up to age 6, and for pre-primary education (*priešmokyklinis ugdymas*), organised as a preparatory class focusing on ‘school readiness’ for 6-year olds (and often 5-year olds). The education system in Lithuania is decentralised, with the state and local levels working closely together. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of educational policy, and for delegating certain aspects to the local level. All ECEC provision comes under the responsibility of the municipal authorities.

Figure 1

Lithuania: Organisation of ECEC



2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In Lithuania, there are two kinds of core practitioner in ECEC provision. One is an **Early Childhood Pedagogue** (*auklėtojas/auklėtoja*), working in early childhood centres, kindergartens and school-kindergartens, and the other is a **Pre-primary Pedagogue** (*priešmokyklinio ugdymo pedagogas*), working in schools with a pre-primary education group. The core practitioners are generally assisted by a non-qualified co-worker. Early Childhood Pedagogues are entitled to an assistant if there are more than 20 children in the group and there is no chance to create an additional group (MoES 2003). Pedagogue Assistants in Lithuania (*Auklėtojo(-s) padėjėja(-s)*) are considered to be technical workers, and no specific pedagogical background is required; they are in charge of cleaning, feeding the children, and other routine tasks (Ikimokyklinis.lt 2012b). The majority of staff hired in ECEC institutions has a pedagogical qualification which enables them to work either with groups of younger or older children (MoES 2015a). Pedagogue Assistants are required to have a secondary school leaving certificate and to be proficient in the national language. Even though these employees work with children, there is no description of

their duties and qualification requirements. Since the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania does not foresee additional vacations for non-pedagogical staff, Pedagogue Assistants are often forced to take unpaid leave. Moreover, there are no supplements relating to the length of work experience, nor are there professional development courses for this group of co-workers, and they do not enjoy the same privileges as the pedagogue profession (Ikimokyklinis.lt 2012b).

Table 1 gives a brief description of the staff working in centre-based settings in Lithuania, and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Lithuania: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/ EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p><i>Auklėtojas/auklėtoja</i> Early Childhood Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Lopšelis-darželis,</i> Early childhood centre 0-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis,</i> Kindergarten 3-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis-mokykla,</i> School-kindergarten 3-6 years</p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0-6 years	<p>Specialist Bachelor's degree</p> <p>ECTS points: 210 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Auklėtojos padėjėja</i> Pedagogue Assistant</p>	<p><i>Lopšelis-darželis,</i> Early childhood centre 0-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis,</i> Kindergarten 3-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis-mokykla,</i> School-kindergarten 3-6 years</p>	Co-worker (with no relevant qualifications or no formal IPS)	n/a ²	No specific qualification necessary
<p><i>Priešmokyklinio ugdymo pedagogas</i> Pre-primary Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Lopšelis-darželis,</i> Early childhood centre 0-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis,</i> Kindergarten 3-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis-mokykla,</i> School-kindergarten 3-6 years</p> <p><i>Mokykla su priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupe</i> School with a pre-primary education group 6-year olds</p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0-6 years	<p>Bachelor's degree with ECEC <i>or</i> primary education specialism (in the case of the latter, with an additional re-skilling qualification in ECEC)</p> <p>ECTS points: 210 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>
<p><i>Pedagogo padėjėjas</i> ECEC and Pre-primary Assistant</p>	<p><i>Lopšelis-darželis,</i> Early childhood centre 0-6 years</p> <p><i>Darželis,</i></p>	Co-worker (with no relevant qualifications)	n/a	No specific qualification necessary

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014

² n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/ EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
	Kindergarten 3-6 years <i>Darželis-mokykla,</i> School-kindergarten 3-6 years <i>Mokykla su priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupe</i> School with a pre-primary education group 6-year olds	or no formal IPS)		

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2c

Lithuania: Structural composition of ECEC workforce

Pedagogical staff categories	Percentage (Year)
Pedagogical staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree (<i>Aukštasis išsilavinimas</i>) in total / urban / rural areas	73,0% / 73,4% / 70,6% (2016)
Pedagogical staff with a specialist vocational qualification: post-secondary education (<i>Aukštesnysis išsilavinimas</i>) in total / urban / rural areas	25,7% / 25,4% / 27,7% (2016)
Pedagogical staff with a non-relevant qualification	n/a
Pedagogue Assistants (mostly unqualified) with only secondary education (<i>vidurinis išsilavinimas</i>) in total / urban / rural areas	1,3% / 1,2% / 1,7% (2016)
Specialist support staff who work on site on a regular basis in total / urban / rural areas	Art instructors: 4.5% / 4.6% / 3.6% (2014) Special teachers: 0.6% / 0.6% / 0.2% (2014) Speech therapists: 4.2% / 4.4% / 2.4% (2014) Psychologists: 0.3% / 0.3% / 0.07% (2014) Other pedagogical staff: 3.1% / 3.2%/2.0% (2014)
Leading staff in total / urban / rural areas	Principals: 5.5% / 5.2% / 7.9% (2014) Senior educators: 3.6% / 3.8% / 2.4% (2014)

Pedagogical staff categories	Percentage (Year)
Male practitioners in ECEC (0-2 years) / ECEC (2-6 years) / pre-primary education	Core practitioners: <0.5% / <0.5% / <0.5%*(2014) Centre leaders: 8%/16%/18% (2014)
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a 'background of migration' (definitions vary from country to country – please specify)	n/a

Sources: Statistics Lithuania 2014, 2015; *MoES 2014.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Since 2009, pedagogues employed in early childhood and pre-primary institutions are required to have a higher education degree at Bachelor level.³ Up to 2009, the requirement was a post-secondary specialist qualification; up to 1995 an upper secondary specialist qualification (MoES 2005b). Early Childhood Pedagogues have to have a qualification in ECEC, whereas Pre-primary Pedagogues are required to have an ECEC specialism or a primary school specialism complemented with a pre-primary education re-skilling module, or must have additionally participated in a pre-primary education course prepared according to the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES 2005a). There is a possibility to enter the profession without an official degree in pedagogy; in such cases the employee is required to obtain such a qualification within two years of having started working in an early childhood centre or pre-primary education institution.

In addition, Early Childhood Pedagogues and Pre-primary Pedagogues are required to complete courses in special pedagogy and special psychology (*specialiosios pedagogikos ir specialiosios psichologijos kursas mokytojams*; MoES 2007b). These courses have to be completed within one year after starting work as an Early Childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogue if comparable courses (of 2 ECTS points or 60 hours) have not been followed before or during their initial professional studies. Such requirements do not apply to teachers who completed special pedagogy or special psychology study programmes. Moreover, Early Childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogues have to complete a certificate of competences in computer literacy (*Reikalavimai mokytojų kompiuterinio raštingumo programoms*, MoES 2007c).

Initial professional studies (IPS) for future Early Childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogues are integrated into respective university or college study programmes at both Bachelor and Master levels (Eurydice 2014). Students enrolling to study in early childhood/pre-primary education usually have to provide the IPS institution with three university entrance examination results (*Brandos egzaminas*) and participate in a motivation assessment. In some of the institutions Matura exam results are sufficient to receive a state-funded scholarship for Bachelor studies. Master studies admissions are most often based on previous academic achievements and an admission exam.

The duration of Bachelor studies varies between three and four years: in most cases, full-time early childhood/pre-primary education studies (or childhood pedagogy) taking place at colleges are of three years' duration, whereas university courses usually take four years to complete.

³ Qualifications obtained abroad are also accepted upon request to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (*Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras*). <https://www.smm.lt/web/lt/smm-studijos/isilavinimo-pripazinimas-patvirtinimas/uzsienyje-igyto-issilavinimo-pripazinimas>

Part-time studies, which are based on individual learning, writing and exams (but include professional practice as well) can take up to 50% more time (MoES 2015b).

Most often, a Master's degree course in early childhood/pre-primary education provides students with knowledge on curriculum formation, education strategies and other higher level educational issues.

Also, there are additional pathways of entering the profession of Early Childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogue (see *Section 3.3*).

Table 3

Lithuania: Early Childhood Pedagogue

Job title in Lithuanian: <i>Auklėtojas/auklėtoja</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements since 2009: University entrance examination, sometimes motivation assessment Professional studies: 3 years at a higher education institution (college) or 4 years at a university plus courses in special pedagogy/psychology (these courses must be completed within 1 year of starting work) Award: Bachelor/Early childhood education – can also be followed by a Master's degree <i>Before 2009:</i> post-secondary level award; <i>before 1995:</i> vocational secondary level award. ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood centre (<i>Lopšelis-darželis</i>), 0-6 years; Kindergarten (<i>Darželis</i>), 3-6 years; School-kindergarten (<i>Darželis-mokykla</i>), 3-6 years

Table 4

Lithuania: Pre-primary Pedagogue

Job title in Lithuanian: <i>Priešmokyklinio ugdymo pedagogas</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Entry requirements since 2009: University entrance examination, sometimes motivation assessment Professional studies: 3 years at a higher education institution (college) or 4 years at a university plus courses in special pedagogy/psychology (these courses must be completed within 1 year of starting work) Award: Bachelor's degree in Early childhood education/Pre-primary education (in the case of the latter: an additional re-skilling module in ECEC) – can also be followed by a Master's degree <i>Before 2009:</i> post-secondary level award; <i>before 1995:</i> vocational secondary level award. ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood centre (<i>Lopšelis-darželis</i>), 0-6 years; Kindergarten (<i>Darželis</i>), 3-6 years; School-kindergarten (<i>Darželis-mokykla</i>), 3-6 years; school with a pre-primary education group (<i>Mokykla su priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupe</i>), 6-year olds

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Competence specifications for pre-school/pre-primary education studies in Lithuania are outlined in the *Standards Regulation for the Training of Pre-school and Pre-primary age Pedagogues (Ikimokyklinio ir priešmokyklinio amžiaus vaikų pedagogo rengimo standartas)*. Three main areas of competence are outlined in the document (see *Table 5*; QVETDC 2008).

Table 5

Lithuania: Competence specifications in early childhood/pre-primary education studies (IPS)

Areas of competence	Competencies
1. Getting to know the child and recognising his/her individuality	1.1. Recognising general and individual characteristics of child development 1.2. Combining general goals of early childhood/pre-primary education with the individual needs of children 1.3. Recognising symptoms of illness, providing first aid.
2. Designing the content of education	2.1. Individualising and integrating educational content 2.2. Planning, organising, evaluating, analysing and documenting children's behaviour in an interactive pedagogical process. 2.3. Creating an environment aimed to stimulate children's physical and intellectual abilities. 2.4. Actively including the children's families in pedagogical interactions
3. Continuing professional development	3.1. Adopting a reflective stance and participating in life-long learning 3.2. Using tools of information and communications technologies 3.3. Using the Lithuanian language correctly in real and virtual professional environments

In addition to the Standards Regulation for early childhood and pre-primary age pedagogues, key competences for ECEC staff are outlined in the Description of Competences for Pedagogues (*Pedagogo profesijos kompetencijų aprašas*). These include (1) personal improvement and learning; (2) cultural knowledge; (3) ability to use new technologies and work with information; (4) professional communication (MoES 2015a). Further competences include: (1) recognising children's differences and capabilities/giving support while learning/motivating children; (2) creating a learning environment with varieties in content and stimulation; (3) achieving goals and supporting development; (4) evaluating children's achievements and progress; (5) analysing professional activities in a methodical way. In addition to the mentioned list of competences, a general cultural (*bendrakultūrinės kompetencijos*) competence framework for teachers of all education levels is also offered by the Ministry of Education (MoES 2007a).

These competence requirements are aimed to help pedagogues in developing curricular content, applying different methods, ensuring that educational strategies match new developments in the respective area of learning and include the newest achievements of science or technology (MoES 2015a). As one example of the IPS for ECEC, the Lithuanian University of Applied Sciences in Vilnius offers a Childhood Pedagogy programme for early childhood and pre-primary education pedagogues⁴. It focuses on the pedagogues' ability to develop children's emotional intelligence, work in a multicultural environment, support early second language acquisition or children's sign language. The studies are module-based. All study programmes in Lithuania are shaped by autonomous higher education institutions and include a variety of courses such as child psychology, physical culture, language and communication, multicultural education, social development, etc.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

A number of alternative pathways exist to become an Early Childhood Pedagogue or a Pre-primary Pedagogue in Lithuania. Partly, the variety of pathways has been driven due to a need to re-orientate pedagogues from secondary education to early childhood/pre-primary education in the face of demographic issues. Policy reforms in the ECEC sector such as the introduction of compulsory pre-primary education and the expansion of early childhood provision are leading to increased ECEC participation levels and thus to a growing need for more pedagogues.

⁴See description of the study programme in Lithuanian: https://leu.lt/lt/studijos/leu_studiju_programos/leu_bakalauro_studiju_programos/leu_baksp2016/programs/100385.html

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science announced that pedagogues in ECEC and pre-primary education levels have to obtain the pedagogue qualification in two years if they did not have it before. In the following cases individuals are considered as having a pedagogue qualification if they:

- (1) Have a post-secondary award (pre-2009) or a specialist secondary award (pre-1995), have no less than eight years of pedagogical work experience, and have completed no less than 320 hours (or 12 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; *or*
- (2) Have a higher education degree, have no less than six years of pedagogical experience, and have completed no less than 240 hours (9 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; *or*
- (3) Have a higher education degree awarded by a University, have no less than five years of pedagogical experience, and have completed no less than 160 hours (6 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; *or*
- (4) Have a higher education degree and have completed 1600 hours (60 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses during full-time or part-time studies and have passed all exams in these courses (MoES 2014).

In this respect there is a possibility for current school teachers and graduates in education, the humanities or social sciences to change their profession and qualify as an Early Childhood or a Pre-primary Pedagogue. For instance, primary or secondary school teachers with a completed Bachelor's degree can gain an additional qualification in ECEC by attending a special module (90 ECTS points) provided by higher education institutions. For those applying for a modular course in a pedagogical specialisation (*Pedagoginės specializacijos modulio studijos*), the University accepts up to 30 ECTS points for previously completed similar courses (in terms of content and duration). For instance, a study programme of this kind is offered by the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences or Panevėžys College.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Learning in the early childhood workplace is not regulated in detail through national or regional guidelines. The only requirement for the IPS institutions is to dedicate at least 30 ECTS points to learning in the early childhood/pre-primary education environment (MoES 2012b). The way in which higher education institutions or post-secondary schools arrange placements/practica within the professional curriculum is the responsibility of each individual IPS institution.

During the programme, students are prepared for their future work as a pedagogue and learn how to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Work placements/internships are organised in early childhood/pre-primary education institutions. The skills and competences which students are expected to develop during their field-based studies are as follows: learn how to provide professional education support to children, evaluate the quality of education and children's achievements, reflect on and plan a child's progress (LUES n.d.). During the internship student pedagogues are assigned a mentor. A mentor is an experienced and practising pedagogue who supports students during their pedagogical practice at educational institutions. According to the Regulation of Pedagogue Preparation (*Pedagogų rengimo reglamentas*), mentors should have five years or more experience in pedagogy. The quality of the student's completion of the expected tasks during the practicum, the individual activities of students and their contribution to the educational programme are discussed between the IPS supervisor, the mentor and the student. Furthermore, at the end of the placement period, the principal of the institution, the centre team, the mentor, the IPS supervisor and the students discuss the results of the work placement together. Mentors spend up to 60% of the total placement time with the student.

Remuneration for the task of mentoring is agreed upon on an individual basis, as are all additional assignments carried out by Early Childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogues.

Future Early Childhood and Pre-primary Pedagogues follow initial professional studies in eight higher education institutions at Bachelor level (in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys and Marijampolė), and can continue with a master's programme in Pre-school Educology (*Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences*) dedicated to aspects such as consultancy, ECE analysis, educational policy as well as curricula design and the quality of implementation (LAMA BPO n.d.).

The table below provides an overview of workplace-based learning offered in different initial professional studies programmes.

Table 6

Lithuania: Workplace-based learning in different IPS study programmes

Institution	Name of the programme	ECTS points allocated to workplace learning ⁵
Kaunas University of Applied Sciences (Kauno kolegija)	Pre-school education (full-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinis ugdymas (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical practice 1, 6 ECTS points (3rd semester) • Pedagogical practice 2, 6 ECTS points (4th semester) • Pedagogical practice 3, 6 ECTS points (5th semester) • Practice of educational activity, 9 ECTS points (6th semester)
	Pre-school education (part-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinis ugdymas (sesijinė I)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical practice 1, 6 ECTS points (3rd semester) • Pedagogical practice 2, 6 ECTS points (4th semester) • Pedagogical practice 3, 6 ECTS points (5th semester) • Practice of educational activity, 9 ECTS points (6th semester)
Klaipėda State College (Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija)	Pedagogy of pre-school and pre-primary education (full-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinė ir priešmokyklinė pedagogika (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Practice of Learning Activities, 9 ECTS points (3rd semester) • Pre-school and primary teaching practice, 7 ECTS points (4th semester) • Pre-school and primary teaching practice, 9 ECTS points (5th semester) • Final teaching practice, 11 ECTS points (6th semester)
	Pedagogy of pre-school and pre-primary education (part-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinė ir priešmokyklinė pedagogika (sesijinė I)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observational practice, 3 ECTS points (3rd semester) • Test Practice of Learning Activities, 9 ECTS points (5th semester) • Pre-school and primary teaching practice, 7 ECTS points (6th semester) • Pre-primary teaching practice, 7 ECTS points (7th semester) • Final teaching practice, 11 ECTS points (8th semester)
Klaipėda University (Klaipėdos universitetas)	Childhood pedagogy (full-time) (<i>Vaikystės pedagogika (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory practice in educational institutions (5 ECTS points, 1st semester) • Pedagogical practice (8 ECTS points, 6th semester) • Autonomous practice of pedagogical work (17 ECTS points, 7th semester)
	Childhood pedagogy (part-time) (<i>Vaikystės pedagogika (sesijinė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory practice in educational institutions (5 ECTS points, 1st semester) • Pedagogical practice (8 ECTS points, 6th semester) • Autonomous practice of pedagogical work (17 ECTS points, 7th semester)
Marijampolė College (Marijampolės kolegija)	Pre-school education (part-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinis ugdymas (sesijinė I)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 ECTS points dedicated to the professional practice (pedagogical practice, practice of pedagogue assistant, educational practice, educational-pre-primary practice, final practice)
Panevėžys College (Panevėžio kolegija)	Pedagogy of pre-school education (part-time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory practice • Practice as a pedagogue assistant

⁵ 1 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit is equal to 25-30 hours of work.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_lt.pdf

Institution	Name of the programme	ECTS points allocated to workplace learning ⁵
	<i>(Ikimokyklinio ugdymo pedagogika (sesijinė I))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated practice in pre-school education groups • Integrated practice in pre-primary education groups • Final practice (no specific info on ECTS points)
Šiauliai University (<i>Šiaulių universitetas</i>)	Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education (full-time) (<i>Pradinio ugdymo pedagogika ir ikimokyklinis ugdymas (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical practice, 4 ECTS points • Pedagogical practice, 9 ECTS points • Pedagogical practice, 11 ECTS points • Pedagogical practice, 6 ECTS points
Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (<i>Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas</i>)	Pre-school and pre-primary education (full-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinė ir priešmokyklinė pedagogika (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice as a pedagogue assistant (3rd semester, 10 ECTS points) • Pedagogical practice with a mentor (5th semester, 10 ECTS points) • Autonomous pedagogical practice (7th semester, 10 ECTS points) • Students also have a possibility to enrol for professional practice abroad.
	Pre-school and pre-primary education (part-time) (<i>Ikimokyklinė ir priešmokyklinė pedagogika (sesijinė I)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of pre-school teacher assistant (4th semester, 10 ECTS points) • Pedagogical practice with a mentor (7th semester, 10 ECTS points) • Autonomous pedagogical practice (9th semester, 10 ECTS points)
	Pre-school and pre-primary education (in English language for Foreign students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
Vilnius University of Applied Sciences (<i>Vilniaus kolegija</i>)	Childhood pedagogy (full-time) (<i>Vaikystės pedagogika (dieninė NL)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of pedagogue assistant 1 • Practice of pedagogue assistant 2 • Pedagogical practice with a mentor • Autonomous pedagogical practice
	Childhood pedagogy (part-time) (<i>Vaikystės pedagogika (sesijinė I)</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The Education Development Centre (*Ugdymo Plėtotės Centras*), a national agency affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Science, regulates the in-service teacher and pedagogue training in Lithuania. This includes: the expert evaluation and accreditation of training programmes for teachers/pedagogues and heads of schools and ECEC centres; the external evaluation and accreditation of institutions implementing training programmes; the evaluation of school/ECEC staff's performance in the classroom.

Earlier, a Teacher Competence Centre, established in 2003, was responsible for organising the supervision of qualification developments in the pedagogue sector and accrediting institutions providing IPS and CPD programmes. When this institution ceased to exist, most of its duties were transferred back to the Education Development Centre. The majority of the CPD forms are available only for pedagogical staff (core practitioners and qualified co-workers) and does not include pedagogue assistants without a relevant qualification.

Core practitioners are entitled to five days per year for their professional development; however, they are not obliged to make use of this opportunity. As with other issues, there is no specific regulation for the professional development of pedagogue assistants since they are not considered to be part of the core educational staff.

Pedagogues do not have to pay for continuing professional development. Costs are covered either by the ECEC institution where the pedagogue is employed or by the state (organised nationally through the Education Development Centre).

Participation in further study routes such as Master-level studies is financially supported by the state according to the regulation applicable to all higher education programmes in Lithuania. Depending on their previous study achievements and/or an admission test as well as competition in the study area, students can receive full funding from the government.

CPD for early childhood and pre-primary education staff can be provided by the following institutions, according to the *Concept of Continuing Pedagogue Development (Pedagogų kvalifikacijos tobulinimo koncepcija)*: higher education institutions, state and municipal institutions (education centres and other educational support institutions), other organisations as well as private individuals provided they have a license for offering training services (they can participate in the competition for providing qualification development for pedagogues; MoES 2012c).

Specific forms of CPD are formally recognised in terms of career advancement: according to the *Description of the Remuneration for Education Institutions Staff and Pedagogues in other Institutions (Švietimo įstaigų darbuotojų ir kitų įstaigų pedagoginių darbuotojų darbo apmokėjimo tvarkos aprašas; MoES 2013a)*, pedagogues with an additional qualification (Master's degree) have a right to a salary supplement of 0.5 Basic Monthly Salary (*Bazinė menesinė alga*, equal to 35.50€). Additionally, their regular salary depends upon a teacher's qualifications; therefore, participating in CPD activities is a way of improving the salary as well as career prospects.

There are no specific additional requirements for principals/centre heads of ECEC provision in Lithuania. In contrast to the regulations for primary and secondary education, a college higher education degree and three years of pedagogical experience is a sufficient basis for becoming a centre head (MoES 2011).

No large scale research projects could be identified which have received funding to analyse CPD activities of ECEC personnel during the last five years (other than those outlined in Section 7).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

New Trade Union initiative

On August 6th 2015, a number of initiatives to improve early childhood/pre-primary education financing, quality and employee conditions were raised in a meeting between the Ministry of Education and representatives of the Trade Union for Lithuanian Education Institutions. MoE was encouraged to: (1) change the current pre-school basket of four daily hours to eight daily hours using EU Structural Funds, government funding and education sector savings; (2) increase ECEC employees' salary coefficients to reach school teachers' level; (3) create new workplaces for Early Childhood Pedagogues, assistants, speech therapists, and psychologists to meet the demand of a growing ECEC child population; (4) increase non-contact time from three to six hours without increasing the current total of 36 hours weekly; (5) change the regulation for remuneration of early childhood and Pre-primary Pedagogues by including work experience and qualification category into the coefficient for their regular monthly salary; (6) start considering the occupation of early childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogue assistants as pedagogical by giving financial and organisational opportunity to obtain necessary qualification and by acknowledging the importance of their role and responsibility regarding increased emotional-psychological pressure (LSIPS 2015).

Recent national training project

From January 2012 to August 2015 a national training project on the *Development of Pre-school and Pre-primary Education (Ikimokyklinio ir priešmokyklinio ugdymo plėtra)* aimed to increase the accessibility of early childhood and pre-primary education and its variety, ensure the quality of ECEC and to provide the necessary education support according to the individual needs of children. The target groups of the project were pedagogues, educational support specialists as well as children. The competence specifications of the target groups were developed during the project through workshops attended by both pedagogues and deputy heads (responsible for the curriculum in ECEC centres) of pre-school and pre-primary education institutions (UPC 2009).

New national professional organisation for physical activities in ECEC provision

On August 21st 2014, a national association of early childhood physical activities pedagogues (*Respublikinė ikimokyklinio ugdymo kūno kultūros pedagogų asociacija*) was established. It is an autonomous, voluntary, non-profit organisation which unites all Lithuanian Early Childhood Pedagogues who are willing to develop skills in mentoring physical activity classes as well as general cooperation. The association is planning to organise seminars, conferences, various projects as well as workshops.

Long-term internships for practising teachers

The third phase in the development of an In-service Teachers' Training and Retraining System (*Pedagogų kvalifikacijos tobulinimo ir perkvalifikavimo sistemos plėtra (III etapas)*) was organised between December 2012 and June 2015. During long-term internships (1 to 12 months in length), practising Early Childhood Pedagogues, pre-primary and general education teachers had a chance to detach themselves from their direct work and develop professional skills, get new experiences and learn to adapt in a different working environment. The following types of internships were organised during the project period: studies at university; development of education tools and textbooks; management of education projects or participation in project activities; internships in Lithuanian education, science, culture institutions and business companies in Lithuania and abroad. The project was aiming to create conditions for permanent teachers' qualification improvement by testing new forms of long-term internships as well as to evaluate an experience of long-term internships and envision opportunities for their further implementation (UPC 2015).

Teaching Lithuanian as an additional language

Methodical tools for the teachers who work with children whose first language is other than Lithuanian have been developed in a book published in 2015 by the Ministry of Education "Second language in early childhood", aiming to introduce teachers to various methods of teaching language and to different stages of language development (Ikimokyklinis 2015).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Mentoring competence model

Source: Monkevičienė, O. and B. Autukevičienė 2011. (see *References* for details)

Aims: To theoretically and empirically define a competence model for mentors who supervise and support early childhood pedagogy students during their practical work placements.

Procedure: The authors carried out a theoretical analysis of the professional competences of mentors as well as a survey of pre-school education mentors. It was then followed by the quantitative data analysis.

Findings: The empirical research confirmed the theoretical model of mentoring competence in pre-school education and emphasized the importance of distinguishing between skills and competencies. The authors highlight in particular the importance of a mentor's personal and assessment competence, expertise and ability to encourage reflection.

Professional Development of Pre-school Education Pedagogues.

Source: Bankauskienė N. and R. Masaitytė 2014. (see *References* for details)

Aims: The paper aims to analyse a specific professional development concept, its parameters, and ways in which (social) pedagogues in preschool education institutions have to organise their professional development taking into account their role and activities in ECEC.

Procedure: Qualitative research has been used to disclose the opinion of the informants on the concept of professional development, to indicate the activity fields of (social) pedagogues working in preschool institutions, to discuss ways of further development and the frequency of this process and to indicate what forms of development they would like to see in the future.

Findings: According to the study, it is essential to ensure systemic, specific, continuous professional development for (social) pedagogues in pre-school education institutions.

Typical features of dynamics, variety and evaluation of quality management systems in institutions of preschool education based on the views of centre heads and pedagogues

Source: Martišauskienė, D. 2011. (see *References* for details)

Aims: The paper aims to introduce theoretical knowledge of quality and its conception identifying typical features, principles and their dynamics in quality management.

Procedure: Empirical research was conducted by interviewing the heads and pedagogues of pre-school education institutions in Western Lithuania. This research included 470 respondents: 130 centre heads and 340 pedagogues working in pre-school education institutions.

Findings: The results reveal the difficulty of defining quality, its conceptualisation and the typical features of a quality management system. The study confirms that both the heads and pedagogues realise that the main indication for quality management is providing good quality early childhood education and meeting the demands of the children and parents.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The remuneration of education staff is low compared to the average salaries for other specialists in Lithuania. In the first quarter of 2016, the average monthly salary of teachers working at all levels of public sector education was 634.90€ after and 820.50€ before deductions (Statistics Lithuania 2016). The dissatisfaction of pedagogues at all levels is made publicly visible through regular participation in strikes and demonstrations. It is important to note, that the salaries of ECEC practitioners are lower than those of primary school teachers even though the qualification requirements are comparable. Moreover, compared with other countries, Lithuanian pre-school institutions have the highest numbers of children per pedagogue (European

Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014). No national data are available on the average salaries of early childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogues.

This reflects the low salary situation in the public services sector in general, including such professions as medical staff, police officers, fire-fighters etc. It is a challenge to live in a major city on an Early Childhood Pedagogue's salary.

Furthermore, it is essential to highlight the case of the pedagogue assistants in ECEC institutions. Despite the fact, that the importance of early childhood educational staff and assistants is repeatedly underlined in the international literature, these employees are experiencing the largest discrepancy between their responsibilities and the government-endorsed wage levels.

The specific salary of Early Childhood Pedagogues depends on their qualification category, experience and whether they work full-time or part-time. According to the *Description of the Remuneration for Education Institutions Staff and Pedagogues in other Institutions* (MoES 2013a), the service ratio for the salary is defined by the head of a specific educational institution after coming to an agreement with employee representatives. However, the document provides principals of ECEC provision with exact coefficient boundaries depending on the pedagogue's experience. Ratios and salary supplements are defined according to the Salary Fund confirmed for each institution. Summing up, the municipal and individual institution levels have considerable autonomy in deciding on the salaries of employees.

With the increasing number of children now participating in pre-school education and the disproportionately slow increase of national and municipal resources, the financing of pre-school education per child has been shrinking for some years despite the introduction of a pre-school children's "basket".⁶ Since this is one of the most important sources for ECEC staff salaries, basically no increase of remuneration can be noted during recent years. Neither the Department of Statistics nor the Ministry of Education provides information on an 'average salary' for early childhood/Pre-primary Pedagogues. With the national rise in the monthly minimum wage in Lithuania, remuneration for the lowest-paid employees (non-educational/technical staff) has experienced an increase to a threshold of 350€. The minimum wage was further increased to 380€ on 1st July, 2016 (BNS 2015).

Educational staff can receive additional remuneration for extra responsibilities or additional work such as mentoring and supervising students during their work placements/field studies. This is decided by the centre head in accordance with the Salary Fund capacity allocated to the institution. There is also a salary supplement which accounts for 5-20% of the total salary; awarding this supplement is also decided by the centre head, depending on the capacity of the Salary Fund (MoES 2013a).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Full time staff work 36 hours per week. Work contract issues such as being employed part-time or additional hours are agreed upon at the municipal level. For instance, the principals of pre-school education institutions in Vilnius can change the dedicated plans for each workplace under the condition that no additional workplaces are created and the annual Salary Fund is not exceeded (Ikimokyklinis.lt, 2013). Therefore, it is foreseen that employees and their representatives participate in the decision-making process regarding the planning of the workload and a fair calculation of the salary.

Table 7

Lithuania: Number of employees in the ECEC workforce, full- and part-time, 2015

⁶ In Lithuania, educational institutions are funded on the principle of 'the money follows the pupil'. In early childhood education and care the 'basket' method was introduced in 2011. The 'pupil's basket' which consists of funds for education is provided to both state and private educational institutions (Eurydice 2016).

	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Average full-time equivalent number of employees ⁷
Early childhood education pedagogues	7,764	1,896	8,951
Pre-primary education pedagogues	1,289	437	1,540
Art education pedagogues	518	644	787
Administration and technical staff (including pedagogue assistants)	6,010	3,759	8,222

Source: Statistics Lithuania 2015

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

One of the easily accessible platforms available for practising Early Childhood Pedagogues is a dedicated website on pre-school education (www.ikimokyklinis.lt), which supplies relevant, systemised information to the employees who are willing to develop their competences. In addition to this, there is also an E-School website (*Portalas emokykla*) which aims to improve conditions of information retrieval and to provide electronic services to pedagogues as well as to children and their parents.

The Centre for Special Pedagogy and Psychology (*Specialiosios pedagogikos ir psichologijos centras*) develops special pedagogical/psychological and social pedagogical support systems in the country, carries out supervision and gives specialist support to municipal ECEC services. The centre also organises professional development events for pedagogues.

Core practitioners in Lithuania are represented by the Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union which is most visible in public as an advocate for teacher/pedagogue salary issues and as a platform for demonstrations or strikes. Pedagogue assistants are not represented by any union, which further undermines their interests in the workplace.

Since July 2011, new Child Wellbeing Committees (*Vaiko gerovės komisija*) have been initiated for all pre-school education institutions. Their goal is to organise and coordinate preventive work, educational support, create a safe and friendly environment for children's education, tailor education programmes to children with special educational needs, conduct an initial evaluation of children's special educational needs and other activities related to ensuring children's wellbeing. Committee members generally, but not always, include: the centre head, a senior pedagogue, the head of the education programme department, educational support specialists (social pedagogue, psychologist, special pedagogue, speech therapist), a health care specialist, group leaders (curators), Early Childhood Pedagogues, parents (foster-parents, guardians), representatives of the local community and parishes as well as other members of society (NMVA 2015).

There is neither an organised system for on-site mentoring in Lithuania nor a formal induction programme for newly qualified teachers (European Commission 2015). This can perhaps be explained by the overall lack of young pedagogues involved in pre-school education institutions as well as by the requirement for higher education institutions to organise field-based studies during their IPS programmes; therefore, induction programmes are not deemed necessary at the policy level.

8.4 Non-contact time

Core practitioners working full-time in municipal pre-school institutions have 33 hours weekly to fulfil their regular duties with children. In addition to that, three hours of non-contact time are granted for complementary work such as planning or working with parents. In the case of pedagogue assistants there are no such regulations since they are not considered part of the pedagogical staff (MoES 2013a).

⁷ *Vidutinis sąlyginis darbuotojų skaičius* – relative number of employees recalculated as working full-time (complete month, daily-full time)

The regulation differs for Pre-primary Pedagogues. The principal of an early childhood institution or a school with a pre-primary education group prepares a specific description of the pre-primary education pedagogue's workload in which the number of hours to be spent on each activity are set down according to the pre-primary education organisation model approved by the municipality (or, in a few cases, state institution; Ikimokyklinis.lt 2012a).

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Recent policy changes in early childhood and pre-primary education (compulsory pre-primary participation and expansion of pre-school sector) have led to an increase in the ECEC population, meaning that additional pedagogues are needed. To increase the number of ECEC staff, the Ministry of Education has initiated a requalification programme for teachers who have lost their job due to a decreasing number of pupils to start working in pre-school and pre-primary education programmes without initially having the necessary competences for such work (see also section 3.3; MoES 2012a). The selection of pedagogues for the relevant IPS courses is carried out by the Education Development Centre (*Ugdymo plėtotės centras*).

However, overall the attractiveness of profession is undermined by the low wages offered to the employees by municipal institutions and the low social prestige of the profession.

Moreover, 87.5% of teachers in schools and ECEC centres in Lithuania are female. The overall share of male teachers across the country is very low; however, the number of male pedagogues in early childhood education institutions is even lower and accounts for less than 1% of the workforce (MoES, ŠVIS 2016). This can be partly explained by the rather unfavourable and biased views towards male Early Childhood Pedagogues amongst the general population.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The future of early childhood and pre-primary education is dependent on attracting well-educated and professionally prepared pedagogues. Unfortunately, the current **attractiveness** of pedagogical and educational studies is very low: In recent years, the grade point average for the admission to the ECEC and school education programmes was among the lowest - 15.62 in 2012. By way of comparison, medicine and health studies had an average of 19.22 in the same year. It clearly shows that the most advanced and educated students are not choosing education as their future profession (MoES 2013b).

It is clear that one of the main issues of this lack of attractiveness is related to the low remuneration for specialists in this sector. This is an issue that has to be solved in order to ensure a well-educated and motivated workforce for this level of the education system. At the very least, salaries for early childhood and Pre-primary Pedagogues should be aligned to those of the general teacher workforce, since working with young children brings with it the same emotional challenges and responsibilities.

In order to ensure the growth of quality in early childhood and pre-primary education, it is essential to guarantee the financial, psychological and social satisfaction of the pedagogue profession. Young specialists are not applying to the workplaces in ECEC institutions and are looking for other opportunities. Meanwhile, the average age of the workforce in ECEC, compared with staff working at other levels of the education system, is growing at a fast pace (NMVA 2015).

Newly prepared pedagogues who start working in the ECEC institutions just after completion of a higher education programme possess **insufficient competencies**. This situation is widespread despite the fact that the *Regulation on the Preparation of Pedagogues (Pedagogy*

rengimo reglamentas, 2010) underlines the importance of education and developing the competences of ECEC pedagogues through professional development activities both in IPS programmes and when they are members of the workforce (Stankevičienė and Monkevičienė 2008).

Moreover, it is crucial to highlight that far more attention should be paid to the conditions of **Pedagogue Assistants** who have been in a precarious situation for many years. As outlined in section 6.1., a number of changes regarding pedagogue assistants need to be made, including changing the imbalance between remuneration and duties/responsibilities. Moreover, a clear pathway towards qualification development for such employees should be ensured. The current situation creates dissatisfaction among the pedagogue assistants as well as tensions between non-pedagogical and pedagogical staff due to a number of inequalities.

Experts identify several existing **obstacles for effective initial professional studies** for early childhood education and care pedagogues in Lithuania. Firstly, there is a general unwillingness to accept innovations. Secondly, the national education policy direction is not clear whereas the institutions themselves do not pay adequate attention to the evaluation of their study programmes. Thirdly, the first level degree studies for future ECEC pedagogues are very similar and lack specialisation. Fourthly, the quality of academic research is not sufficient. Also, there is too much attention on task fulfilment rather than reflection on future pedagogues' skills development. Lastly, a high number of successful job searches (98%) after completing studies is creating a false image that the preparation of pedagogues is on the right track, even though it can be simply explained by a shortage within the ECEC workforce and lower numbers of students in study programmes (Gražienė 2015).

According to a *General Report on the Colleges and Universities 2013 - Pre-school Education Programs*, conducted by the IPS Quality and Evaluation Centre, initial professional studies for ECEC pedagogues face a number of problems and challenges ahead (SKVC 2013). These include: lack of quality control; low student numbers in programmes; lack of a detailed focus on psychology related to 0- to 7-year olds; a high drop-out rate; poor participation in exchange programmes; low standards of final thesis; lack of proper data on various aspects of studies; unclear focus of Master-level studies and other issues (SKVC 2013).

Initial teacher education providers need to improve their strategies for field-based studies related to developing criteria for selecting the early childhood centres/schools with pre-primary groups, the rotation of the institutions, payment to the pre-school and pre-primary education institutions for student internships, etc. Moreover, workplace-based learning needs to become a core element in the IPS programmes (Gražienė 2015).

There are noticeable differences between the accessibility and quality of ECEC in urban and rural areas. As illustrated in *Table 2* (see section 2.2), rural pre-school education institutions have a very small number of additional pedagogical staff working on their premises. This results in various issues such as the core practitioners having to take on additional responsibility and workload as well as affecting the overall quality of education. The most striking issue in this context is the inaccessibility of psychological support for both children and Early Childhood Pedagogues in rural pre-school education institutions.

As mentioned before, one of the issues is the pronounced unequal distribution of gender in the early childhood and pre-primary workforce, which does not reflect the child population and fails to ensure a diverse approach towards ECEC. Moreover, at the moment, most of the pedagogues are barely prepared to work with diversity. Currently the whole education system in the country tends to be rather segregated (with some Polish and Russian minority groups having their own pre-school institutions) and with a potential growth of other ethnic minorities, the lack of preparation among the pedagogue workforce could become an issue.

In our view, the following objectives should be followed in order to ensure a professional and prepared workforce in early childhood and pre-primary education: (a) making efforts to attract young people to the profession; (b) developing high quality modern study programmes which include up-to-date knowledge and give future pedagogues the possibility to improve their

competences and attitudes (c) strengthening the motivation of pedagogues by regularly offering possibilities of continuing professional development in various spheres and by giving them a chance to return to a higher education institution for a semester; (d) stimulating constant knowledge sharing between pedagogues in national and foreign contexts; (e) strengthening society's trust in the educational system as well as the pedagogues' self-confidence.

A further issue is connected with the decentralisation of the curriculum for pre-school education institutions. Pedagogues were formerly used to working with well-structured programmes. Currently they lack clear guidelines on how to effectively support children's learning processes: for many it is difficult to recognise the different levels of pre-school children achievements, create an evaluation framework for these achievements, and to individualise their education programme and to connect it with the real needs of children (Monkevičienė et al. 2009).

10. References

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LITHUANIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Hanna Siarova and Darius Buinauskas for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Lithuania – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 699-712.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

In Lithuania, early childhood education and care for children up to statutory schooling (at age 7) is organised as a unitary system but in two separate stages¹. Both ‘pre-school education institutions’ (*ikimokyklinis ugdymas*) for children from birth up to 6 years of age and ‘pre-primary education institutions’ (*priešmokyklinis ugdymas*) for 6- to 7-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science (*Švietimo ir Mokslo Ministerija*). Both stages are classified as non-formal education. The education system in Lithuania is decentralised, with the state and local levels working closely together. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the development and implementation of educational policy, delegating certain aspects to the local level. The local municipal education authorities have the duty of providing and organising early childhood education and care. Admission procedures are decided and regulated by the municipalities or other providers of education services (in the case of private institutions). Individual educational institutions, i.e. ECEC settings and schools, are relatively autonomous in decision-making regarding management, specific programme content and pedagogy.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

Education has high political priority in Lithuania and is supported and funded by the state. The 2011 Education Act (*Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas*), amended in 2014, sets out the basic principles of the education system: humanist and democratic values, human rights and individual freedom. Specific goals relate to, e.g.: developing persons with a sense of responsibility; supporting communication and language skills as well as creative and cognitive competencies; having regard both for national and ethnic cultural values; and enhancing the skills and competencies needed to become a responsible citizen in the Republic of Lithuania, in Europe and in the global community.

General objectives of the ten-year National Education Strategy 2013-2022 (*Valstybinė švietimo 2013-2022 metų strategija*) emphasise children’s right to education, high quality provision, and structural funding strategies.

Specifically for early childhood education and care, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced the Programme for the Development of Preschool and Pre-primary Education for 2011-2013 (*Dėl ikimokyklinio ir priešmokyklinio ugdymo plėtros 2011-2013 metų programos patvirtinimo*). This policy initiative set out strategies for improving the flexibility of opening times of provi-

¹ In official translations from Lithuanian into English, the term *pre-school education institutions* is used for the first stage (ECEC centres for children from birth to 6 years of age), and *pre-primary education institutions* for the second stage (pre-primary education groups for 6- to 7-year olds). Since it can be argued that the difference in meaning between ‘pre-school’ and ‘pre-primary’ is not immediately clear, for the purpose of this report we will refer wherever possible to the specific institutions under discussion. However, official documents and statistical sources increasingly use the above-mentioned generic terminology. In some cases, e.g. in the Official Statistical Portal data, the whole phase of education is referred to as *pre-primary education*.

sion to better meet the needs of families, for creating more effective structures in the organisation of ECEC, and for broadening access and participation.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

There is no universal entitlement to a place in ECEC provision in Lithuania. However, draft legislation proposing compulsory attendance in pre-primary education during the year preceding school entry was adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in December 2015 and came into force in September 2016, thus creating a de facto entitlement for the 6- to 7-year olds for 20 hours per week.

While there is no general obligation to enrol in ECEC provision, attendance has been compulsory for children who come from families categorised as ‘socially vulnerable’ since 2012.

Statutory schooling begins at age 7.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania 2016.

Types of provision

As previously mentioned, early childhood education and care provision in Lithuania is organised in two stages: one is termed ‘pre-school education’ and is provided for children from birth up to the age of 6; the other is termed ‘pre-primary education’ or ‘reception classes’ for children between 6 and 7 years of age with the explicit aim of preparing them for school.

Pre-school education can be provided in age-integrated early childhood centres (*lopšelis-darželis*), kindergartens (*darželis*) and school-kindergartens (*mokykla-darželis*). In addition, pre-school groups for children from 0 to 6 years of age may be provided in schools (in rare cases in remote areas) or in rural multifunctional centres.

Pre-primary education is provided in pre-primary groups (*priešmokyklinis ugdymas*) during the year before entering primary school. These groups can be located in early childhood centres, kindergartens and school-kindergartens, as well as in schools (*mokykla*) and, if there is a need, in rural multifunctional centres, or they can be provided by private teachers or other education service providers.

The following provides a closer description of specific types of provision.

Early childhood centres (*lopšelis-darželis*) represent an age-integrated, unitary form of provision for children from birth up to the age of 6 or 7 years. This is the most widespread form of provision. Most early childhood centres are open all day, either for nine to ten hours (2015: 213), or for 12 hours (2015: 278). Half-day provision is very rare (only six centres altogether). A number of centres provide round-the-clock care or have opening times that are negotiated with parents according to their specific needs for combining family and work duties.*

Kindergartens (*darželis*), traditionally for 3- to 6-year olds, are less common. They are usually open for a full day and comprise around ten groups, although the exact number may differ from setting to setting. More recently they have also been admitting children under age 3, although only a small proportion of the age group overall.

School-kindergartens (*mokykla-darželis*) are joint early childhood, pre-primary and primary education institutions for 3- to 10-year olds and are found predominantly in rural areas. They combine services of kindergartens (for 3- to 6-year olds) and primary schools (1st to 4th grades).

In 2015, there were 721 of these **pre-school education institutions** (*ikimokyklinis ugdymas*) in Lithuania, 606 of them public (run by municipalities or the state) and 115 privately run. Together they offered a total of 121,613 places and provided for 115,574 children in 6,527 groups. In 2015, 919 of these groups admitted children under age 3 (altogether 20,764 places) and 541 groups were located in schools and attended by 16,108 children*.

Pre-primary education groups/classes in schools (*priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupė mokykloje*) are a compulsory form of provision introduced in September 2016. Children attend for the year before they start school and are mostly 6-year olds, but 5-year olds or 7-year olds may also be admitted under certain circumstances.

In 2016, 54,832 children were enrolled in pre-primary education groups/classes, most of them (82.3%) located in pre-school education institutions (see *Table 1*). 732 pre-primary education groups are located in schools and attended by 9,695 children. Pre-primary education is provided for at least 640 hours, including holidays. Most groups open between 7:30 and 8:00 for at least four hours daily. Transport is provided for children who live more than 3 kilometres away*.

Table 1

Lithuania: Number of children enrolled in pre-primary groups, 2016**

	Number of children in pre-primary groups in pre-school education institutions	Number of children in pre-primary groups in schools	Total
5-year olds	25,809	418	26,227
6-year olds	19,210	9,181	28,391
7-year olds	118	96	214
Total	45,137	9,695	54,832

Multi-functional provision exists in some rural areas, providing additional activities beyond ECEC as a way to secure existence. A few EC centres work according to Waldorf and Montessori principles or implement the Suzuki method. Since 1997, Childhood Pedagogy Centres (CPC) have been established to promote innovative pedagogy and experiment with new educational models, and also to hold seminars and conferences.

Sources: EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Education 2016.
*OSP 2016.
**OSP 2017b.
Siarova, H. und D. Buinauskas 2017.

Provider structures

Private ECEC provision is rare in Lithuania. However, the number of privately run institutions has been increasing recently, and in 2015, they comprised 115 of the total 721 (cf. *Table 2*). The greater majority of children (94.2%) attend publicly provided provision**.

Apart from in some of the larger municipalities, there are generally more places available than children to fill them, although the differences between rural and urban areas are considerable. Between 2001 and 2010 the number of providers decreased significantly, but since 2011 is on the increase again. However, the number of providers in rural areas has almost halved since 2001.*

Table 2

Lithuania: Number of pre-school education institutions, children and available places according to provider type, 2015**

	Number of institutions	Number of children	Relative share in % ⁺	Number of places
State maintained	3	789	0.7	796
Municipal	603	108,856	94.2	114,260
Private	115	5,929	5.1	6,557
Total	721	115,574		121,613

⁺ own calculations

Sources: *Eurydice 2016.
**OSP 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to national statistics, 35.1% of children under age 3 were attending some form of provision in 2015, 87% of 3- to 6-year olds and 69.9% of 1- to 6-year olds*.

In 2016, the greater majority of 5-year olds (87.2%) and of 6-year olds (64.2%) were enrolled in pre-primary education groups in ECEC centres.

Table 3

Lithuania: Participation rates and relative share of 5- to 7-year olds in pre-primary education institutions, 2016**

2014	Pre-primary groups in ECEC centres	Pre-primary groups in schools
5-year olds	87.2% ⁺	1.4%
6-year olds	64.2%	30.7%
7-year olds	0.4%	0.3%
Total number	45,137	9,695

⁺ own calculations

Table 4

Lithuania: Number of children in ECEC settings and enrolment ratios according to age, 2015***

Age-groups	Number	Share in %
Under 2 years	3,260	5.4
2-year olds	16,778	55.2
under 3-year olds	20,038	22.1⁺
3-year olds	23,028	77.0
4-year olds	25,545	85.7
5-year olds	26,856	88.8
6-year olds	26,688	93.4
3- to under 7-year olds	102,117	86.1⁺
0- to under 7-year olds	122,155	58.4⁺

⁺ own calculations based on Eurostat data of 2015

Sources: ***Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
**OSP 2017a, 2017b, 2017c
*OSP 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

In 2015, 0.7% of Lithuania's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was dedicated to ECEC provision*. Pre-primary groups come under the general education budget (2% of GDP) for primary and secondary schools. In 2012, 11.7%** of all expenditure on education was allocated to ECEC.

Since 2011, a pro capita allocation is made for each child in formal education, which also applies to the non-formal education sector of ECEC ('pre-schooler's basket'). Since municipalities are the providers of public ECEC institutions, the municipal administrations are also responsible for organising the general financing of ECEC. Since the national 'pre-schooler's basket' only covers the costs for four hours per day per child, the local authorities have to manage the additional funding needed. Both public and private provision is subsidised by the government. This is primarily to guarantee at least four hours of daily attendance and to increase the number of places, also made possible by adopting more flexible practices regarding the regulations for buildings and hygiene (previously very stringent). Despite these new funding strategies, financial constraints affecting the national budget have in some cases resulted in more restrictive practices of funding ECEC.

Public ECEC provision is free of charge, but the local council regulates parental fees to cover the cost of meals (58€ monthly for children under age 3 and 64€ monthly for children above the age of 3: currency conversion rate 18.04.16). Single parents, parents who are studying and parents with more than three children pay half these amounts.

Although private centres are subsidised by the government, providers are allowed to charge a fee at their discretion to cover the remaining costs. This may be as high as 523€ per month^{2*}.

Sources: **EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
*Eurydice 2016.
OSP 2016.
Siarova, H. und D. Buinauskas 2017.

Staff-child ratios

Early childhood centres, kindergartens, school-kindergartens

Groups of children under the age of 1 are staffed by at least two practitioners. In age-integrated groups of 1- to 7-year olds, one of the two members of staff has to be either a fully qualified pre-school or primary school teacher, supported in most cases by assistant staff. The children generally stay with the same core practitioners throughout their time in the EC centre. The maximum number of children per group is regulated by hygiene criteria issued by the Ministry of Health.

In the age-integrated early childhood centres, the maximum group size varies according to group composition and the children's age:

Under 1 year: max. 6 children
1 to 1½ years: max. 10 children
1½ to 3 years: max. 15 children
0 to 3 years: max. 8 children
3 to 7 years: max. 20 children

If a child with special educational needs is included, he or she is counted as two children. Special groups only for children with disabilities are smaller.

² The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

Pre-primary groups

Pre-primary groups comprise a maximum of 20 children. This number is reduced to 15 if the children speak a language other than Lithuanian. In special education pre-primary groups, between 3 and 10 children may be together, depending on their specific type of disability.

According to national statistics, the average number of children per educator in preschool and pre-primary education institutions was 1:12 in 2015*.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
*OSP 2016.

Curricular frameworks

All ECEC and pre-primary institutions in Lithuania are required to work according to curricular guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Early childhood centres, kindergartens, school-kindergartens

In 2011, the Ministry of Education and Science issued a curricular document entitled 'Outline of criteria for preschool curricula' (*Ikimokyklinio ugdymo programų kriterijų aprašo*). This was followed in 2014 by 'Methodological recommendations' (*Rekomendacijos ikimokyklinio ugdymo programai rengti*) and in 2015 by the 'Description of the achievements of preschool-aged children' (*Ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų pasiekimų aprašas*). These are not viewed as National Standards, but as Curricular Guidance. Competences/goals are described in 18 learning areas (e.g. physical activities, expression of emotions, oral and written language, aesthetic perception, creativity) which children are expected to reach or have achieved by a certain age.

The providers of early childhood services usually adapt the national guidelines into a centre-specific educational programme aligned to local needs. All programmes must include human rights objectives, ensure that goals, resources and methods are age-appropriate, and include evaluation strategies.

Pre-primary groups

In 2015, a revised curriculum for work in the one-year pre-primary groups was issued by the Ministry of Education and Science, the 'Pre-Primary Education General Curriculum' (*Dėl priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendrosios programos patvirtinimo*), accompanied by a 'Draft on the Organisation of Pre-Primary Education'.

The curriculum foregrounds concepts such as individualisation, integration and relationships. Content and activities highlight health care, knowledge, communication and arts education. Activities are based on a holistic approach to pedagogy and not on separated curricular units. The envisaged framework is for at least 700 minutes weekly in half-day settings and at least 1,260 minutes weekly in full-day settings (roughly four hours daily). If a child attends for less than two-thirds of the stipulated 640 hours, it is considered that he/she has not achieved the curricular requirements.

Educators select their own teaching materials, and it is expected that the curriculum will be continually revised and material resources adjusted accordingly.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The Education Act (amended in 2014) assigns responsibility for providing a safe and supportive environment for children with special educational needs to the Child Welfare Committee. The Committee has the task of organising and co-ordinating the educational programmes to suit the needs of the individual children. It is also responsible for the initial identification of children with special educational needs through specialist staff.

Children with disabilities may either attend a regular group or a special group in a mainstream ECEC setting, or a segregated special education centre. Pre-primary groups including children with disabilities vary in size between 4 and 12 children, depending on the severity of the child's disability. Educational programmes and materials are adapted accordingly.

In 2015, 79 ECEC centres were open either exclusively for children with special educational needs, or maintained a special group specifically for these children. Altogether 1,737 children with special educational needs attended a centre-based setting. These were mostly children with language disorders (832) or with complex multiple disorders (561)*.

A government initiative entitled 'Children's Wellbeing 2013-2018' (*programa vaikų gerovės*) is focusing on children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, 5,000 socially vulnerable children are attending 175 ECEC centres with this focus, mostly run by non-governmental organisations.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, only 0.6% of the total population and 0.4% of the child population under 5 had a non-Lithuanian background. Two thirds of the total population with a non-Lithuanian background came from countries outside the EU28, whereas for the age group of children under 5, the respective share was 83.9%**.

The Ministry of Education and Science developed guidelines in 2012 for the support of children whose home language is not Lithuanian. In 2015, Lithuanian was the main language in 637 ECEC settings, Russian in 16 and Polish in 8 settings. More than one language was spoken in 60 settings, e.g. Lithuanian and Russian (20), Lithuanian and Polish (20), Lithuanian, Russian and Polish (14), Russian and Polish (4), Lithuanian and other language (2).

Altogether, the language of instruction was Lithuanian for 106,829 children, Russian for 5,162 children, Polish for 3,358 children and another language for an additional 225 children.*

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
EPIC 2016.
**Eurostat 2017f.
*OSP 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The municipal Education Offices are responsible for the monitoring and inspection of ECEC provision. They select the methods of self-evaluation and quality assurance, analyse the evaluations and make recommendations for improvement. The providers of ECEC services carry out self-assessment according to indicators provided in the 'Methods for the internal auditing of preschool education institutions' (*Dėl ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokyklos vidaus audito metodikos*, 2005).

Early childhood centres, kindergartens, school-kindergartens

There are no regulations regarding the formal assessment of individual children in pre-school education institutions. However, the group leaders carry out regular observations and discuss these with the child's parents. In the 'Description of the achievements of preschool-aged children' (see

section on *Curricular Frameworks*), six levels of achievement are set out, three for children under age 3 and three for children aged 4–6 years. If a 6-year old has not reached the sixth level, he/she remains in the same group for another year.

Pre-primary groups/classes

Assessment methods and how to act on evaluations are set down in the ‘Pre-primary Education General Curriculum’. The children are assessed at the beginning and end of the year by the core practitioner according to self-selected instruments. A written report is passed on to the primary school teacher. Since 2015, the children’s achievements are discussed at least twice a year with their parents.

Several internationally based projects in Lithuania focus on innovations in ECEC. One example is the Danish Egmont Petersen Project which looks at quality issues, another is the Head Start Project which foregrounds the importance of the family’s contribution to the child’s education. The ‘Zippy’s Friends Project’ focuses on the everyday problems of a specific child.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*nėštumo ir gimdymo, motinystės atostogos*) is granted for 126 days, 70 of which must be taken before the expected birth date. During this period the full net income is maintained up to a certain limit, assuming that social insurance contributions have been paid for at least 12 months during the previous two years.

Under the same conditions, fathers are granted 28 calendar days **paternity leave** (*tėvystės atostogos*) after the child’s birth.

Parental leave (*vaiko priežiūros atostogos*) is a family entitlement and can be taken up to the child’s third birthday. Parents can choose between receiving full net income up to the child’s first birthday or 70% of net income during the first year and 40% of net income up to the child’s second birthday. The maximum limit is the same as for maternity leave. The remaining period up to the child’s third birthday can be taken as unpaid leave.

According to data collated by SODRA (Social Insurance Fund Board), all working mothers take up the maternity leave entitlement, and in 2016, 78% of mothers and 22% of fathers made use of the parental leave entitlement.

Source: Braziene, R. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1847	First educational establishment for young children opened in Klaipėda
1936	Kindergartens included in national legislation
Until 1990	Steady expansion of ECEC provision
1990-1997	Two alternative programmes for pre-school education (1) The Guidelines of Pre-School Education: a Curriculum for Teachers and Parents, and 2) The Kindergarten Programme <i>Vėrinėlis</i>)
1998-2002	Parliament approves pre-primary education for 5- and 6-year olds
2003-2012	Access to early childhood education expanded, in particular for children from socially dis-

	advantaged families
2011	Introduction of the pre-school education basket - currently funding half a day (four hours) of pre-school
2014	The Education Act is amended to accommodate a needs-related approach in ECEC
2015	Parliament approves compulsory enrolment in a pre-primary group, which came into force in September 2016 Adoption of the 'Description of the achievements of preschool-aged children' (<i>Ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų pasiekimų aprašas</i>) (curricula guidelines) and the 'Pre-Primary Education General Curriculum' (<i>Dėl Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendrosios programos patvirtinimo</i>)

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania 2016.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Lithuania

Country expert assessment by Hanna Siarova

Quality of ECEC

Following the transfer of responsibility for the curriculum from the central to the local (pre-school education institution) level, combined with a lack of clear guidelines on how overall principles and recommendations for the content of pre-school education could be operationalised, the pre-school establishments and pedagogues face challenges on ensuring quality in pre-school education and responding to each child's specific needs. Many practitioners were used to working under structured and rigid curricula, and have not received adequate professional preparation on how to design curricula according to local needs or how to implement national guidelines effectively. For many, it is difficult to recognise different levels of pre-school children's achievements, to create an evaluation framework, to individualise the educational approach and to connect it with the real needs of children*.

Beyond this, the current work organisation of Early Childhood Pedagogues leaves very limited time for non-contact work, which could be dedicated to quality improvement (e.g. methodological work, self-reflection, cooperation with colleagues and other pre-school institutions).

The evaluation and monitoring system of pre-school education also needs to be improved. There is no evidence as to whether the results of self-assessments are actually used by ECEC institutions for the improvement of their performance. Moreover, in some cases recommendations provided in self-assessment reports are not implemented in practice due to a lack of external supervision on how internal audit results are applied.

Funding of ECEC

The growing number of children participating in pre-school/pre-primary education is not proportionate to the much slower increase of financing levels for ECEC, despite the introduction of the so-called pre-schooler's basket. Recent debates regarding this issue urge the Ministry of Education to change the current pre-school basket of four hours daily to eight hours daily, using EU Structural Funds, government funding and education sector savings.

Accessibility and inclusiveness of ECEC

There is a huge disparity between children's participation rates in ECEC in cities and rural areas. Whereas there is a shortage of places in pre-school and pre-primary education groups in cities, the number of children attending such groups in smaller towns and rural areas is minimal. Even though the overall number of private pre-school establishments has increased, they are not affordable for many population groups**.

There is also need for greater flexibility of the programmes on offer. Moreover, too little attention is paid to diversity within ECEC and pre-school institutions are not adequately prepared to deal with multilingual children, or those from families at risk or those having special education needs. There are no guidelines and support to ECEC educators on how to organise good quality learning for these children and to ensure their holistic development and the realisation of their fullest potential.

Sources: **Civitta 2013.
*Monkevičienė et al. 2009

Demographic data

Total population

The population in Lithuania in 2016 totalled 2,888,558. This represents a continual decrease over the past decade (3,642,991 in 1995 and 3,355,220 in 2005).

Children under age 7

Since compulsory schooling in Lithuania begins at age 7, this section includes data for children up to age 7 (rather than age 6) if these are available.

Children under age 3 accounted for 3.2% and children under age 7 for 7.3% of the total population of Lithuania in 2016. These shares correspond approximately to the EU28-average – shares of under 3 year olds being slightly above, those of 3- to 7-year olds slightly below.

Table 5

Lithuania: Number of children under 7 years of age, 2016**

Age	Number of children
Under 1 year	31,462
1-year olds	30,438
2-year olds	29,823
Total under 3-year olds	91,723
3-year olds	30,104
4-year olds	29,663
5-year olds	29,590
6-year olds	29,914
Total 3- to under 7-year olds	119,271
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	210,994

Table 6

Lithuania: Children under 7 years of age – relative share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

	1995	Ø EU15 ³	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	3.9	3.3	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.0
3 to under 6 years	6.0	4.7	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.2
0 to under 7 years	9.8	8.0	6.6	7.3	7.3	7.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, two thirds (65.6%) of households with children under age 6 in Lithuania were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 8.9% of all households, most of them being single mother households (7.4%).

Table 7

Lithuania: Households with children under age 6, 2015*

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
All households	297,400	
Couple households	195,000	65.6
Other household type	76,100	25.6
Single households, total	26,400	8.9
Single households, women	22,000	7.4
Single households, men	2,400**	0.8

* own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017c.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the labour market participation of men (aged 15–64) in Lithuania totalled 68%, and the employment rate of women of the same age was 66.5%.

In the same year, 73% of women and 86.5% of men with children under age 6 were participating in the labour market. Compared with other European countries, the relative share of fathers was slightly below the EU average in 2015, whereas the participation rate of mothers in the labour market was significantly higher (see Table 8).

³ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Table 8

Lithuania: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Lithuania	2005	68.5	83.9
	2010	67.5	75.2
	2015	73.0	86.5
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁴

In 2015, 25.8% of children under age 6 in Lithuania at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is somewhat higher than the EU average (24.7%) for this age group. 29.3% of the total population are categorised as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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⁴ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROE))

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LUXEMBOURG

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Michael-Sebastian Honig

Professeur émérite de l'Université du Luxembourg

and

Tina Bock

Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg,
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse

Staff at the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People of the Grand Duchy have given us considerable support by providing substantial elements of the data and information base for this report. We extend our thanks to **Luana di Bari**, staff member in the Department of Non-formal Education in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (data acquisition); **André van Kaufenberg**, staff member in the Department of Non-formal Education in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (preparation of the questionnaire); **Anne Reinstadler**, staff member in the Department of Childhood and Young People in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (preparation of the questionnaire); **Claudia Schroeder**, staff member in the Department of Non-formal Education in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (data acquisition, preparing the questionnaire). Ministerial support was coordinated by **Manuel Achten** (Senior Civil Servant in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People, Department of Childhood and Young People) and **Claude Sevenig** (Head of the Department for Non-formal Education in the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People). Last but not least, we would like to thank the **teams in early childhood settings** who participated in the online survey. Their commitment demonstrates how practitioners are actively involved in the development of quality in children's services in Luxembourg.

The report is not an official report of the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People. In terms of content, responsibility lies solely with Prof. Dr. Michael-Sebastian Honig.

Citation suggestion:

Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock. 2018. "Luxembourg – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 713-746.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

In some European countries, early childhood education as a public good can be traced back to the 19th century or earlier (Scheiwe and Willekens 2009). In this sense Luxembourg is a late-comer to the scene. A significant change took place following the 1997 European Employment Initiative and the European Council Summits in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002), when the Luxembourg government initiated major efforts to introduce policies for the expansion of early childhood education and care and for the improvement of educational practices¹. These policies enjoy cross-party support, albeit to varying degrees.

In Luxembourg, the systems of early education and non-familial childcare come under different sets of regulations and have different educational programmes. However, since the end of 2013 both come under the responsibility of *one* Ministry, the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People.

- Since 1963, the 118 communes have had a duty to organise preschool educational provision (*jardins d'enfants, Spillschoul*) (MEN 1963). Compulsory attendance was introduced in 1976 for all 5-year olds and the kindergartens were renamed pre-primary education (*éducation préscolaire*). Compulsory attendance was extended to all 4-year olds in 1992. Since the 2009 Schools Act, pre-primary education has been organised as Level 1 of the basic state education system (*école fondamentale, cycle un*). Since this time, compulsory schooling in Luxembourg begins in the school year following the child's fourth birthday (MNFP 2009a). Formal education in schools for 3-year olds (*éducation précoce*) comprises the first stage of Level 1 of basic state education (see Kneip 2009). However, it is organised in separate classes and attendance is voluntary. *Éducation précoce* was introduced in 1998; since 2009/2010, all municipalities have a duty to provide *précoce* classes (Kneip 2009, 710; Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010, 295). Although originally initiated as compensatory language learning provision, in the meantime around three-quarters of all 3-year olds are enrolled in *éducation précoce*, meaning that it has developed into a de facto regular form of early education provision (MENJE 2015).
- Non-familial childcare in Luxembourg essentially comprises complementary midday and leisure-time provision in out-of-school hours for children up to the age of 12 (*services d'éducation et d'accueil*). It is *not* merely provision for *early* childhood. *Early* childhood care for children before compulsory school age was traditionally an emergency measure for children from socially disadvantaged families and single parents. Compared with out-of-school provision for school-age children it always had a marginal position and was predominantly provided through privately run *crèches* and family day carers (Achten 2012; Achten, Horn, und Schronen 2009, 692; Schneider 2012). It was not until the expansion of ECEC, beginning at the turn of the century, and the development of corresponding mechanisms (childcare vouchers - *chèques-service accueil*) and programmes that early childhood care provision moved from the periphery to the centre of early education policies.

Since the Schools Act 2009 (MENFP 2009a), separate pre-primary facilities (*éducation préscolaire*) no longer exist in Luxembourg and as a consequence, staff are no longer educated and trained specifically to work in pre-primary education². At the same time, *éducation précoce* has a unique position; from a policy administration perspective it has been assigned to the education system and is part of the primary school; however, it is provided for 3-year olds who are not obliged to attend and who are taught by Primary School Teachers. According to the perspective

¹ Evidence regarding the 281% rise in the national budget for education and care services (*budget du service d'éducation et d'accueil*) between 2009 and 2016 can be found in the Annual Report 2016 of the Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (MENJE 2017a).

² Nevertheless, the first cycle of education in the primary school is defined in Art. 1 of the Schools Act as *éducation précoce* and *éducation préscolaire*, i.e. as *early and pre-school education in school*.

taken, *éducation précoce* can therefore either be understood as a foreign body or as a link between school and non-school contexts. Many 3-year olds in Luxembourg who are enrolled at a *crèche* also attend *éducation précoce* during another part of the day. From the child's point of view, the reality of care and education arrangements in Luxembourg presents itself as a complex organisational framework which the 3-year olds in particular are expected to navigate on a daily basis; it is defined through diverse care arrangements which shape the everyday life of children and parents alike (Bollig, Honig, und Nienhaus 2016).

The system of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg is currently undergoing a dynamic process of reorganisation, shaped by fast-paced expansion and measures to improve the educational programme. Policies aim to place children's rights and needs at the centre, to take into account the multilingual nature of Luxembourg society and to include the commercial sector of ECEC provision in this process of quality improvement (MFI 2013; MENJE 2016d).

In the Autumn of 2013, the administrative and political responsibility for out-of-school and early childhood care facilities was transferred from the Ministry of Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, MENJE*). At the same time, the childcare sector was transformed into an independent and uniformly regulated sector of *non-formal education* for children and young people, in order to define it separately from the organisation of *formal education* in schools. In this process, the clear distinction between formal and non-formal education (school versus non-school settings) is gradually replacing the distinction between education and care. In a child's individual biography, *formal education* starts with the onset of compulsory school at the age of 4 years; he or she is then a 'school child'. The education and care of younger children is classified as *non-formal education*. This is not just a case of adjusting terminology, but also of introducing a new understanding of 'education' which is seen as including both early childhood and out-of-school provision for children in the years following their fourth birthday. The educational programme of non-formal education is set down in the 'Guidelines for the non-formal education of children and young people' issued in April 2013 by the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People (MFI 2013).

In the context of these complex processes of reorganisation, this report on the early childhood workforce takes the beginning of compulsory schooling (at age 4 in Luxembourg) as the political-administrative cut-off line and views the conceptual link between education and care in early childhood as an approach to early education which needs to be interpreted and understood in different ways by formal and non-formal settings. A *specific* task of non-formal education is to enhance the links between non-formal and formal settings. This Workforce Report therefore distinguishes between early childhood and school personnel – at the same time taking into account the hybrid position of *éducation précoce* in the Luxembourg education and care system. In terms of content, the report includes *éducation précoce* but not the first two years in primary school; at the same time, it includes early childhood settings (*services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants*) (MFI 2013), but not out-of-school education and care provision for children who have turned four years of age, i.e. *school children*.

With this understanding of its framing, the report differs from that in the first SEEPRO study (Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010, 289-304). The first account paid stronger attention to the pre-primary phase of education since at the time of writing, the official age for compulsory basic education was still 6 years (this changed to 4 years with the 2009 Schools Act). By way of contrast, this current report foregrounds the more recent policy developments, including the introduction of an independent sector of non-formal education which locates school expectations in the context of children's lived experiences; in other words: it views school from the child's perspective.

Despite the pooling of jurisdictions within the Ministry of Education, the State undertakes its responsibilities in different ways. Whereas for the formal education sector the State is responsible for policy implementation, for the non-formal sector it is responsible for enabling the delivery of policy goals. The latter is ensured by granting operating licences (*agrément*s) and by en-

tering into contractual agreements (*conventions*) with private (not-for-profit and commercial) providers, although there are some communes which assume responsibility for implementation themselves. In terms of ECEC service delivery in the non-formal education sector, it should be noted that the proportion of publicly-run settings is relatively small, whereas the proportion of private settings, both non-profit and commercial, is significantly larger³. In the context of expansion in the ECEC field for the under 4-year olds, it has therefore become necessary not only to define more precisely what early childhood education can mean (this is the task of the previously mentioned 'Guidelines for non-formal education') and develop corresponding practices, but also to involve the commercial providers in policy developments relating to non-formal education.

More than two thirds (69.6%) of places in the non-formal sector are attended by *school children*. Out-of-school provision in Luxembourg (*foyers de jour; maisons relais*) has traditionally been provided as a complementary service to schools, aligning opening times to school hours and mostly also offering flexible options. In the context of increasing expansion, provision for children of *pre-compulsory school age* has grown more quickly than that for school-age children. According to the national statistics office, 32,000 children below the age of 4 currently live in Luxembourg (STATEC 2016). The Ministry of Education's annual report for the same year stated that 15,000 places were available in children's services. Roughly two thirds of these places were provided by commercial entities.

Table 1
Luxembourg: Children in non-formal education settings, 31.12.2016

	Number of places for under 4-year olds	Number of places for over 4-year olds (school children)	Total number of places
Services d'éducation et d'accueil conventionnés (with contract)	5,282	33,005	38,287
Services d'éducation et d'accueil commerciaux (without contract)	9,853	1,723	11,576
Total	15,135 (30.4%)	34,728 (69.6%)	49,863

Source: MENJE 2017, 31.

Roughly half of the 32,000 children of pre-compulsory school age attend services in the non-formal sector. However, many 3-year olds also attend an *éducation précoce* class in the formal education sector – often at the same time as being enrolled in a *crèche* or *maison relais pour enfants*. Table 2 shows how the number of *précoce* classes in the Luxembourg communes has grown steadily over the past decade.

Table 2
Luxembourg: Number of *précoce* classes in the Luxembourg communes, 2005 - 2014

	School year									
	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Communes	94	96	100	103	102	103	100	106	106	105
Groups/Classes	176	180	195	215	229	227	233	230	234	221

Source: MENJE 2015b.

³ The relationship between the State and private providers of educational and therapeutic services is regulated by the 1998 ASFT Act (2011 version, see MJI 2011). It is to a certain extent the codification of the Luxembourg version of the subsidiarity principle in Germany and forms the basis of the legislation and regulations which propelled the transformation of day care services into a sector of non-formal education.

At the beginning of the school year 2014/2015 there were 221 *précoce* classes in Luxembourg; in the first term of the school year 2015/2016, a total of 3,961 children were enrolled. Over half attend the *précoce* during official school hours (MENJE 2015).

The expansion of ECEC provision in Luxembourg has not only led to changes in the nature of the early phase of children’s lives (see Honig 2011), but also to changes in the significance of the childcare market. Both influence the structures of the Luxembourg system of early childhood education and care, not only in terms of policy steering but also in terms of the increasing importance accorded to market-based services (Honig, Schmitz, and Wiltzius 2015; Wiltzius and Honig 2015).

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Early childhood education and care in Luxembourg is located within both the formal and non-formal education sectors, although the extent to which this is the case differs. Staff in the early childhood workforce includes – alongside family day carers, whose tasks were regulated in 2007 (MFI 2007) – three different categories of personnel:

- Primary School Teachers and Educators employed in the public education system *précoce* classes;
- Staff in the publicly subsidised sector of children’s services who are remunerated according to the collective wage agreement; and
- Staff in commercially run ECEC provision who are not bound by the collective wage agreement.

Table 3 gives an overview of the various staff categories in early childhood settings, together with information about their qualifications and main fields of work. However, there are significant differences and inequalities in the way these staff categories are distributed across the formal and non-formal education sectors and settings. Additionally, core practitioners (i.e. persons with group or centre responsibility) are classified according to five professional profiles adapted from the first SEEPRO study (see Box 1).

Table 3

Luxembourg: Staff in centre-based ECEC settings (formal and non-formal education sectors)⁴

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ⁵
<i>Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation</i> Primary School Teacher – Bachelor Professionnel	<i>Éducation précoce</i> Early education in primary school, Level 1 (first stage) 3-year olds (non-compulsory)	Core practitioner in the formal education sector	3-12 years	4 years university Bachelor ECTS points: 240 EQR: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 655
<i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education	<i>Éducation préscolaire</i> Primary school,			

⁴ ECEC settings in the context of this report are the *services d'éducation et d'accueil (SEA)* for children under age 4; they are defined in the so-called SEA Regulation issued in 2013 (MFI 2013). The term also includes the *éducation précoce* classes, which can be understood as non-compulsory preparatory provision in primary schools; see Section 1).

⁵ UNESCO 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ⁵
Professional	<p>Level 1 (second stage) 4-6 years (compulsory)</p> <p>Primary school, Levels 2-4 7-12 years (compulsory)</p>			
<p><i>Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives</i></p> <p>Social Pedagogy/ Social Work Specialist – Bachelor Professional</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy and Special Needs Professional</p>	<p><i>Services d'éducation et d'accueil</i></p> <p>Children's services in the non-formal education sector</p> <p>All age groups – children and young people</p> <p>Also employed in: Leisure-time centres; special needs services; residential homes for children and young people; workforce integration measures for young people; support services for socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; services for older persons</p>	<p>Core practitioner in the non-formal education sector</p> <p>Centre head in the non-formal education sector</p>	All ages, including adults	<p>3 years university Bachelor</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQR: Level 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 655</p>
<p><i>Éducateur diplômé</i></p> <p>Educator</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Éducation précoce</i></p> <p>Early education in primary school, Level 1 (first stage) 3-year olds (non-compulsory)</p> <p><i>Services d'éducation et d'accueil</i></p> <p>Children's services in the non-formal education sector</p> <p>Also employed in: Leisure-time centres; special needs services; residential homes for children and young people; workforce integration measures for young people; support services for socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; services for older persons</p>	<p>Teacher's Assistant in the formal education sector</p> <p>Core practitioner in the non-formal education sector⁶</p>	All ages	<p>Post-secondary vocational</p> <p><i>Diplôme d'État d'Éducateur</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a⁷</p> <p>EQR: Level 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 454</p>
<p><i>Auxiliaire de vie</i></p> <p>Care Assistant / Care Worker</p>	<p>Social care services and Children's services in the</p>	Care Assistant in the non-formal educa-	All ages	Upper secondary, apprenticeship-type dual qualification

⁶ In the non-formal education sector, Educators (*éducateur diplômé*) can also be employed as Centre Head, see Article 7 in the 2016 law modifying the 2008 law on young people (*Loi du 24 avril 2016 portant modification de la loi du 4 juillet 2008 sur la jeunesse*) (MENJE 2016a).

⁷ n/a = not applicable. The qualifying routes for Educators and Care Workers/Assistants (*auxiliaire de vie*, see below) are not anchored in the Bologna system and ECTS points are therefore not applicable; instead different weightings are made within the course of study according to a coefficient system (the higher the coefficient, the more important the field of study) (<http://apache.ltpes.lu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Dossier-dinformation-13ED.pdf>).

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ⁵
	non-formal education sector <i>Services d'éducation et d'accueil</i>	tion sector		<i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle (DAP): auxiliaire de vie</i> ECTS points: n/a EQR: Level 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 353

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

In the *formal education sector*, the professional profiles of Teachers and Educators are regulated by law. The core practitioner with class responsibility is a (Pre-primary and) Primary School Teacher. Educators (*éducatrices diplômées*) are employed as support staff, i.e. as Teachers' Assistants (MENFP 2009d, Art. 1). One Primary School Teacher and one Educator work in each *précoce* class.

In the *non-formal education sector*, staffing is regulated by means of a percentage system which defines which category of staff may work in which function for how many childcare hours. The qualifications required for the granting of an operational licence (*agrément*) are set down in Article 7 of the Regulations on the Restructuring of the Educational and Social Services (*SEA-Reglement*⁸; MFI 2013). Lead staff are required to have undergone initial professional studies in the psycho-social or socio-educational field and to have three years of work experience (*SEA-Reglement*; MFI 2013, Art. 8). 60% of the total hours of childcare must be carried out by staff with a recognised professional qualification in a psycho-social, educational or socio-pedagogic profession awarded by a state-recognised vocational college or a university. Up to 40% of the total childcare arrangements may be carried out by staff with a qualification in the areas of music, the arts and sport. Children's Nurses also fall into this category – a French influence and a reminder of the roots of childcare in the healthcare professions. For half of this time, i.e. for 20% of the total childcare hours, low-qualified assistant staff with a *Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle (auxiliaire de vie)* or with a 100-hour qualifying course as an *aide éducatrice* may be employed.

The SEA Regulations also define the tasks assigned to staff. The Centre Head is responsible for the organisational development of the childcare setting, compiling a centre-specific educational programme, supervising and leading staff, for programme implementation and for supporting the children's social network. The childcare staff are responsible for the direct pedagogical work with the children, preparing educational activities, participating in staff meetings and communicating with the parents and teaching staff in schools. Participation in professional development activities is also one of their duties (*SEA-Reglement*; MFI 2013, Art. 11).

⁸ The SEA (*services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants*) Regulations are an extension of the so-called ASFT law (MFI 2011) passed in 1998. This legislation regulates the relation between the State and private providers of human services in Luxembourg and defines minimum standards for social and therapeutic work.

Against the background of these legislative requirements, there are five observations to make regarding the staff categories in ECEC settings for children up to age 4 in the formal and non-formal education sectors:

- In the formal education sector (*éducation précoce*), only Teachers with a Bachelor's degree may be employed as core practitioners; they are supported by a practitioner with a vocational, upper secondary social pedagogy qualification. In this sector, the children are taught according to an outcome- and competence-oriented curriculum.
- By way of contrast, in the ECEC settings in the non-formal sector staff work according to the 'Guidelines for the non-formal education of children and young people' (MFI 2013) which follow a process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented approach. A wide variety of staff are employed in these settings. Social Pedagogy/Social Work Specialists (mainly as lead staff) and Educators and Care Workers may be employed either as core practitioners or as support staff. In this context of mixed qualification profiles and levels, the proportion of staff with a Bachelor's degree is smaller than in the formal education sector. Apart from the lead staff, all staff categories have everyday contact with the children.
- The Teachers who work in *précoce* classes are trained to work with young children (although they are not specialised in work with under-threes). The Social Pedagogy/Social Work Specialists with a Bachelor's degree and the Educators (*éducatrices diplômées*) in childcare settings are generalists; they do not possess a specialist qualification in early childhood education and care.
- Whereas there are frameworks available for comparing higher education and university degrees in Europe, qualification routes such as those for the *éducateurs diplômés* or the *auxiliaires de vie* are not anchored in the Bologna system, which makes comparisons less easy.
- A special feature of the Luxembourg system in general, and also of the ECEC system, is the recognition attributed to qualifications acquired in other countries. Many specialist staff who have been trained elsewhere commute from neighbouring countries on a daily basis to work in Luxembourg. The commercially run ECEC settings in particular employ large numbers of staff from other countries. Moreover, many of the Luxembourg staff, in particular those with a higher education or university degree, were educated and trained in another country (Germany, France, Belgium); the diversity of qualifications in ECEC settings is therefore particularly pronounced in Luxembourg.

2.2 Structural composition of the ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Whereas current data on the staff in the formal education sector are compiled regularly, there are no such data sets available for the non-formal sector. This is mainly because of the complex subsidiary structures in the ECEC field. In the context of the SEEPRO project, the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People therefore conducted an online survey of the state subsidised and the commercial providers of ECEC in Luxembourg for children up to 4 years of age. Altogether 230 settings were invited to participate and 69 responded (41 state subsidised and 28 private for-profit). Not only the relatively low response rate, but also the extreme diversity in the field means that the findings cannot claim to give an exact picture of the status quo; however, they do provide some insights and indications of trends.

The following two tables outline some key features of the structural composition of the early childhood workforce in both the formal (*Table 4*) and non-formal (*Table 5*) education sectors.

Formal early childhood education sector

Table 4

Luxembourg: Structural composition of the workforce in the formal early education sector (*éducation précoce*)*

Staff categories	Year/Proportion
Staff with specialist higher education degree (BA <i>sciences de l'éducation</i> , BA <i>sciences sociales et éducatives</i>)	2016: 72.8% → 71.2% BA <i>sciences de l'éducation</i> ; → 1.6% BA <i>sciences sociales et éducatives</i>)
Staff with generalist vocational qualification (ISCED level 4)	2016: 27.1% (<i>éducateur diplômé</i>)
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff with no formal IPS	n/a
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	No data available
Male staff	2016: 7.1%
Staff with a background of migration ⁹	2016: 1.4%

*Source: [MENJE – SEF] Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People - *Service de l'Enseignement Fondamental*. December 2016. Information from the internal data bank *Scolaria*.

The figures illustrate a high proportion of staff with a higher education degree of at least three years' duration working with under 4-year olds in the formal education sector in Luxembourg. Graduates with a social sciences and education degree (*Bachelor sciences sociales et éducatives*) are not generally assigned to the formal education sector. The proportion of male staff is low: well over 90% of staff in *éducation précoce* classes are female. The figures reflect a classic picture of a (primary) school context.

Table 5 draws together data for the communal, private non-profit and private for-profit settings in the non-formal education sector.

Non-formal education sector

Table 5

Luxembourg: Structural composition of workforce in the non-formal education sector (*services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants*)*

Staff categories	Year/Proportion
Staff with a relevant higher education degree	2016: 23 % → 16% University of Applied Sciences → 7% University
Staff with relevant vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2016: 37 %
Staff with relevant vocational qualification (upper secondary)	See footnote ¹⁰
Staff with other, non-specialised qualification (so-called „low skilled“)	2016: 26 % → 17% <i>aide éducatrice</i> → 9% <i>auxiliaire de vie</i> CAP/DATP
Staff with no formal IPS ¹¹	2016: 4%
Specialist support staff	No data available
Male staff	2016: 7%

⁹ The category 'background of migration' refers here only to place of residence, whereas in Table 5, based on the online survey in the non-formal sector, it refers to place of residence, to nationality and to language(s).

¹⁰ In Luxembourg, legislation does not permit the employment of staff with a non-relevant upper secondary vocational qualification in the non-formal ECEC sector for under 4-year olds. In the online survey, a number of settings indicate that they do in fact employ staff with an upper secondary vocational qualification; these persons are often staff from another country. No exact figures are available; it could well be that these persons have special competencies that were not catered for in the survey questionnaire.

¹¹ Luxembourg legislation does not permit the employment of unqualified staff in ECEC settings. The proportion shown in the table presumably refers to staff who have qualifications acquired in another country and which are difficult to categorise within the classifications provided by the Luxembourg qualifications grid.

Staff categories	Year/Proportion
Staff with a background of migration	2016:
<i>according to nationality:</i>	→ LU 62 % Others 37% (BE 8%, DE 5%, FR 9%, PT 10%, others 5%)
<i>according to place of residence:</i>	→ LU 79% Others 20% (BE 7%, DE 5%, FR 8%)
<i>according to language:</i>	→ LU 77% → FR 91% → DE 73% → PT 16%

*Source: [MENJE – SEA 2017] Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People, *Services d'éducation et d'accueil*. February 2017. Online survey in early childhood settings (available on request).

In non-formal settings, the proportion of female staff is similarly high to that in the formal education sector – over 90% – but this the only similarity of note between the two early education sectors. The figures suggest that the proportion of staff with a higher education degree in the non-formal early childhood sector is not nearly as high as it is in the formal sector (*éducation précoce*). Staff with a post-secondary vocational qualification (37%) comprise the largest group; the proportion of lower qualified staff is comparable to that of staff with a higher education degree. Around 60% of staff have a Luxembourg passport; accordingly, the proportion of French- and Portuguese-speaking staff is high.

The summarised figures conceal some of the important *differences between the private non-profit and the private for-profit* sectors which the online survey made clear. The proportion of staff with Luxembourgian nationality and place of residence is higher in the state subsidised settings than in the commercially run settings. This means that the three Luxembourg languages are considerably more highly represented (85%) in state subsidised provision, whereas the proportion of French- and Portuguese-speaking staff is higher in the private for-profit settings, particularly in the southern part of the country which borders on Belgium and France. French is the main language in these settings. Only around 50% of staff in the private for-profit settings speak the Luxembourg language and German. Portuguese is spoken by 21% of staff, 8% more than in the state subsidised settings in the non-formal sector. A high proportion have the *Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle* (DAP/DAPT) qualification. They are low paid workers (who in many cases speak several languages) and thus fulfil two conditions which are important for the commercial providers: profitability and staff coverage.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

The initial professional studies of staff working in early childhood education was long influenced by the fact that Luxembourg did not have its own university. Primary Education Teachers were trained at the post-secondary level, similar to those entering the Educator profession. The University of Luxembourg was founded in 2003. The University offers a *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation – professionnel* degree, a course of studies for prospective Primary School Teachers, and a *Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives - professionnel* degree for prospective specialists in Social Pedagogy/Social Work. These two Bachelor's degrees reinforce the Luxembourg split system of early childhood education and care, particularly since the *Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives* is not a standard requirement in non-formal settings, where up to 40% of employees may have non-relevant and low-level qualifications. Some years ago the university started a part-time Master's degree in 'Management and coaching in the occupational fields of education and social work' for lead staff in these sectors (Uni.lu 2017c; see also *Section 5*). In this section, only the Luxembourg qualification routes will be presented, although many staff with a specialist qualification in Social Pedagogy/Social Work complete their studies abroad, and

there are a considerable number of cross-border commuters, mostly from Germany, Belgium and France, whose national qualifications are recognised for work in Luxembourg.

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

Students who have completed the study programme *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation* may also work in *précoce* classes. Since 2005, there is no longer a distinction between a Primary Education Teacher and a Pre-primary Teacher, i.e. specialised pre-primary courses are no longer available. Student candidates are only accepted if they are proficient in the three Luxembourg languages (Luxembourgish, German, French); this proficiency is tested during the entrance examination. Prospective Primary School Teachers are well prepared for the practicalities of teaching. Being able to teach lessons with a competence-oriented approach is the main goal; a specific specialisation in education and learning in early childhood is not a stated aim.

Table 6

Luxembourg: Primary School Teacher

Title in French: <i>Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation - professionnel</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: University entrance requirement (<i>diplôme de fin d'études secondaires</i> or equivalent), entry examination; proficiency in the three Luxembourg languages Professional studies: 4 years/8 semesters at the University of Luxembourg, one of which is spent abroad Award: Bachelor in Educational Sciences, <i>Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation</i> ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 655 Main (ECEC) workplaces: Primary school/Basic Education (<i>enseignement fondamental</i>), Levels 1-4 (3- to 12-year olds)

The university study programme *Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives* prepares generalists for work in the fields of social pedagogy and social work in Luxembourg. Prospective specialists can choose early childhood education as an in-depth topic. In contrast to the entrance requirements for the *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation*, language proficiency is not examined. Through the study programme *Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives*, the group of academically trained early childhood staff has increased considerably over the past decade.

Table 7

Luxembourg: Social Pedagogue/Social Worker – Professional Bachelor

Title in French: <i>Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives - professionnel</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy/Special Needs Professional
Entry requirements: University entrance requirement (<i>diplôme de fin d'études secondaires, secondaires techniques or technicien</i> , the latter with an entry examination), exclusion procedure, 60 candidates accepted per year Professional studies: 3 years/6 semesters at the University of Luxembourg Award: Bachelor in Social and Education Sciences/ <i>Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives</i> ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 655 Main fields of work: Generalist qualification for social pedagogical work with all age groups in various settings and services, often in a leading position, z.B. <i>Maison Relais pour Enfants</i> (Children's Centres), 4-12 years; <i>Maison de Jeunes</i> (youth centres, open youth work), 12-27 years; child and youth welfare settings and services, 0-27 years; settings and services for the elderly, persons with disabilities, sick or socially disadvantaged persons; diverse settings in the non-formal education sector (<i>services d'éducation et d'accueil</i>), 0-12 years.

Initial professional studies for the *éducateur diplômé* are undertaken at a *Lycée technique pour professions éducatives et sociales* (LTPES, Technical College for educational and social occupations). This is a specialised training institution and since 1990 located at the tertiary vocational level. At this kind of *lycée*, students can acquire the general university entrance qualification (*Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques*) and, alternatively, a three-year vocational award as state-recognised Educator. The award opens the way into a broad spectrum of educational and social occupations and also provides the requirement for university studies.

Table 8

Luxembourg: Educator

Title in French: <i>Éducateur diplômé</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: 11 years of general education, including successful completion of 5 years at upper secondary level (<i>Gymnasium</i>) or 5 years at vocational secondary level (social and paramedical), or equivalent; proficiency in the three national languages (Luxembourgish, German, French)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years (or 6 years part time) at a tertiary-level vocational college for the educational and social occupations (<i>Lycée technique pour professions éducatives et sociales, LTPES</i>)</p> <p>Award: State-recognised Educator, <i>diplôme d'état d'éducateur</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0922 ISCED 2011: 454</p> <p>Main fields of work: Generalist qualification for social pedagogical work with all age groups in various settings and services, e.g. <i>éducation précoce</i> for 3- to 4-year olds; <i>services d'éducation et d'accueil</i>, 0-12 years (infant-toddler centres/<i>crèches</i>, 0-4 years; Children's Centre/<i>Maison Relais pour Enfants</i>, 4-12 years; <i>Maison de Jeunes</i> (youth centres, open youth work, 12-27 years; child and youth welfare settings and services, 0-27 years; settings and services for the elderly, persons with disabilities, sick or socially disadvantaged persons.</p>

The vocational course for prospective Care Assistants/Care Workers (*auxiliaire de vie*) lasts three years, combining one year of full-time school with two years of alternating attendance at school and work in a care service. The award for successful completion of the course is a 'Diploma of professional competence' (*Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle, DAP*). *Auxiliaires de vie* belong to the category of low-qualified staff who according to law may make up 20% of the staff capacity in non-formal education and care settings. The diploma holders also work in other social care services, such as those providing care for the elderly or for persons with disabilities.

Table 9

Luxembourg: Care Assistant/Care Worker

Title in French: <i>Auxiliaire de vie</i>
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years vocational school, including 1 year of full-time attendance and 2 years of alternating weeks of school/practicum</p> <p>Award: Upper secondary vocational award <i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle: auxiliaire de vie</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 353</p> <p>Main fields of work: Assistance in diverse socio-pedagogical and social care services, services in the non-formal education sector (<i>services d'éducation et d'accueil</i>), 0-12 years; infant-toddler centre/<i>crèche</i>, 0-4 years; children's centres/<i>Maison Relais pour Enfants</i>. 4-12 years; youth centres, open youth work, 12-27 years; child and youth welfare settings and services, 0-27 years; settings and services for older people, persons with a disability, sick or socially disadvantaged persons.</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Primary School Teacher (*Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation professionnelle*)

The Bachelor study programme at the University of Luxembourg (Uni.lu 2017a) includes an obligatory semester abroad and comprehensive field studies. State certification depends on successful completion of a national examination which includes proficiency in Luxembourgish, knowledge of the history of Luxembourg and of the Schools Act and the school curriculum.

Competencies: Initial professional studies prepare candidates for teaching in the four levels of basic education (*enseignement fondamental* for 3- to 12-year olds) and in the lower classes of the *Lycée (régime préparatoire)* and also for teaching children with special needs (*éducation différenciée*, EDIFF). Teacher candidates are expected to achieve a level of competence which enables them to recognise and meet the numerous challenges of their future workplace. Particular emphasis is placed on taking into account a multilingual and multicultural environment.

Curricular areas: The *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation* (Bachelor in Educational Sciences) degree foregrounds the pedagogical expertise of the prospective teachers. The study programme is structured into three main areas: developing children's behaviour, skills and knowledge; supporting learning processes which take individual and cultural differences into account; and organising various and differentiated teaching situations.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The study programme attempts to relate theory and practice in an effective way; a practicum is mandatory during each of the eight semesters. Implementing individual and collective projects in school and out-of-school settings play a central role. The students participate in projects with teachers, school committees, administrative staff and parents. During the various courses they are supported by a tutor. The first two semesters comprise mostly compulsory courses; during the remaining semesters, students are free to a large extent to follow their own interests. One semester is dedicated to studying at a higher education institution abroad. The written and oral evaluation of students' achievements takes place through reports, presentations, essays, project portfolios and through evaluative discussions of the field studies (*practica*).

Social Pedagogue / Social Worker (Professional bachelor) (*Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives – professionnel*)

The initial professional studies for the degree in Social and Educational Sciences (*Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives*) are wide-ranging, combining elements of social pedagogy and social work. If the student chooses to follow certain optional courses and specialisations, the degree can also be awarded as a Bachelor in Social Work (*assistante sociale*) (Uni.lu 2017b). Degree holders may work in the government sector, in public authorities or in private enterprises. In the non-formal education sector, they may work as Centre Head or as a core practitioner. Bachelor studies can be followed up by a full-time or part-time Master's degree.

Competencies: The study programme aims to transmit basic theoretical, practical and didactic competencies in social pedagogy and social work. It enables students to plan and implement prevention, advisory, educational or care programmes and projects in educational and social care contexts.

Curricular areas: The curriculum builds on a life course approach. Correspondingly, it provides an introduction to educational conditions and social risks in different life phases (childhood, adolescence, adulthood, senior age). A further emphasis is placed on social problems such as unemployment, poverty, violence or exclusion in terms of the links between individuals, groups and society. Lectures and seminars follow the principle of critical problem analysis (conflicts, tensions, challenges in the field of social work) (Uni.lu 2017b, 2017d).

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: An interdisciplinary approach, combining different research disciplines, relating content to practical field situations and supporting the students' self-

organisation are key didactic principles of the study programme. It therefore offers a broad spectrum of topics and subjects for specialisation. Workplace-based practica play an important role in moulding a close relationship between theory and practice; at the same time, the study programme in Social Work aims to present itself as a research-oriented discipline and to introduce students to the corresponding research methods (Uni.lu 2017b, 2017d).

Educator (*Éducateur diplômé*)

The three-year initial professional studies to become an *éducateur diplômé* take place at a vocational technical college (*Lycée technique pour professions éducatives et sociales (LTPES)*), providing students with the general university entrance exam plus a one-year course of study to become a state-recognised Educator). During the first two years the curriculum offers basic courses in psychology, education and the social sciences (LTPES 2016a). The third year focuses on the professional preparation of Educators with a social pedagogy, childhood and special needs profile. Students can specialise in various areas; the chosen specialisation is included on the diploma certificate (LTPES 2016b).

Competencies: Initial professional studies aim to qualify for work in a number of occupational fields in the field of social education. Certificate holders have gained competencies for working with young children, school children, in early intervention, in residential care settings, in youth clubs and in special education settings. They are qualified to work with and support persons with a disability, the elderly and persons with multiple problems (LTPES 2016d).

Curricular areas: The curriculum is organised according to three overriding principles: providing a general education and knowledge base (*savoir et culture générale*), providing a balanced field-based approach for acquiring practically relevant competencies in everyday learning situations (*savoir-faire*), and contributing towards the students' personal development (*savoir-être*). These goals are pursued within five main curricular areas: social and educational pedagogy; sport and cultural pedagogy, leisure-time pedagogy; educational approaches in the developmental process; professional ethics; didactics. Compulsory field work in Luxembourg or abroad provides knowledge and experience of professional practices in a range of occupational fields.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: Basic courses, optional subjects and seminar work are complemented by practica in social and cultural education settings in Luxembourg or abroad. The general goal is to link the vocational college-based learning with the fields of practice so that students learn how to link practical and theoretical aspects with one another effectively. The students are supported and supervised both by staff in the practicum setting and by college staff (LTPES 2016c).

Care Assistant/ Care Worker (*Auxiliaire de vie*)

The occupation as *auxiliaire de vie* is a caring profession. Training can be compared with an apprenticeship. On successful completion of the course, students are awarded a secondary vocational qualification (*Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle - DAP*; LTB 2016).

Competencies: Award holders are able to care for persons in different phases of life.

Curricular areas: The course transmits basic knowledge about key health problems in society. Core content includes practical aspects of personal care and hygiene, preparing meals, communicating with people in difficult life situations, organising and supporting leisure-time activities, household work.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The course focuses mainly on practical situations in work settings; these are then underpinned in the college-based part of training with corresponding knowledge and reflection (Beruffer.Anelo.lu. 2016).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

An alternative qualification route open to Primary Teachers in Luxembourg is to study for a Bachelor's degree in Belgium. However, the Belgian Bachelor study programme in educational sciences separates the qualification for Pre-primary Teachers and Primary Teachers. Whatever the qualification, applicants need to pass a state eligibility examination in order to be able to work as a teacher in the *école fondamentale* (including *éducation précoce*). Those who do not pass the exam may be employed as a *Chargé* (contract teacher) and are paid a lower salary. It is also possible for those with a non-specialist degree to complete a three-week practicum in order to work as substitute staff in the *école fondamentale*. Substitute staff are employed ad hoc (e.g. if a teacher is on sick leave) or in cases of staff shortages.

The most common way of accessing employment in the field of Social Pedagogy/Social Work is by acquiring an equivalent degree in another country. A large number of Luxembourgers study for a Social Pedagogy degree in one of the three neighbouring countries. Many of these work as border commuters in Luxembourg. In particular the commercial service providers in the non-formal education sector frequently employ staff from abroad. For example, there are a number of francophone *crèches* who employ French-speaking personnel and use French as the main language in everyday communications within the setting.

Luxembourgers may complete initial professional studies for the Educator profession in Belgium or in Germany. It is also possible to apply for a *Validation des Aquis* (MENJE 2017b), i.e. official recognition of previous work experience. Persons with three or more years of relevant work experience can apply for this. A large number of staff in the non-formal education sector, particularly those working in private settings, has foreign qualifications, not least because the commercial providers find it difficult to recruit sufficient staff from Luxembourg. For a state recognised Educator, there are numerous possibilities to continue their studies, either at a university or higher education institution in Luxembourg or abroad.

The *École de la deuxième chance* (School for a Second Chance) provides a part-time course of studies for prospective Educators (*éducateur en alternance*) (e2c 2017). This adult education institution was introduced by law in April 2009 (MENFP 2009c) and has been operating since 2011. It is aimed at adults and young people between 21 and 30 years already working in the socio-educational field but who have neither a completed secondary school diploma nor access to professional development courses. The *École de la deuxième chance* combines principles of school and adult education; the certification modalities are similar to those of secondary schools or professional development qualifications. Awards gained can be either the *Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires technique* (two-year course) or the *Diplôme d'éducatrice* (one-year course).

Only Primary School Teachers and Educators are eligible to work in the formal education sector. The likelihood of lateral entry into the non-formal education sector is greater than in the formal education sector. In addition to the options already mentioned, there is also the legislation which enables 40% of staff to have a professional qualification in the arts, music and sport. Up to half of this group may comprise low-qualified staff (see *Section 2.1*, SEA Regulations; MFI 2013, Art. 7). These persons without a relevant basic qualification are able to gain entry into employment in the non-formal sector through a 100-hour professional development course (see also *Section 5*).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

All initial professional education of core practitioners in Luxembourg places particular emphasis on workplace-based learning. Degree and diploma holders are expected to have experienced a significant amount of time in their fields of work. Importance is placed on becoming familiar with the various institutions in the field. Further key aspects which are emphasised are self-

evaluation and continuing analysis of professional and personal goals. In all IPS courses, a tutoring system ensures mutual support of the students both by the training institution and in the practicum setting. The practica take place in a wide range of social and care settings at home or abroad which are chosen by the students; there is no mandatory linkage between the specific IPS focus and the practica.

Since early childhood education is only one of many topics in the various study routes, practica in early childhood settings are optional. Discussing and analysing the guidance for non-formal education (MFI 2013) has not been a compulsory part of these IPS routes up till now, although there are currently moves under way to change this. This lack of basic preparation for core practitioners working in the non-formal education sector is something that needs to be compensated through continuing professional development activities once they are already working in the field (see *Section 5*).

Primary School Teacher (*Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation*)

During their Bachelor studies, prospective Primary School Teachers complete practica in six different areas of education (levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 in *enseignement fondamental*; *regime préparatoire* at the lower end of the *lycée*; special needs education). These practica ideally take place in as many different schools as possible and with the support of different tutors. During the first two years, workplace-based learning accounts for 8 ECTS per year, and in the third and fourth years for 10 ECTS in each year, totalling 36 ECTS points overall.

The university has developed its own practica regulations; there are no legislative requirements for this. The *Bureau de temps de terrain* is responsible for organising and providing information about practica. Supervision of the practica is jointly conducted by a Primary School Teacher in the practicum setting (*formatrice de terrain enseignant*) and an academic university tutor (*tutrice académique membre du corps enseignant interne et externe de l'Université*). These two supervisors sign a contract with the individual students.

The purpose of the practica is to initiate students into the preparation and planning of class teaching and to learn about different pedagogical strategies. Starting in the first semester of their Bachelor studies, students participate in the planning and implementation of teaching activities; with time, they take over classes independently. The candidate teachers are expected to be able to identify elements of the institutional framework, to act in a situation-specific way and to intervene professionally. They learn to act independently and to take responsibility for the strategies they choose and their professional interactions.

The practicum evaluation comprises planning a teaching unit by the student teacher (Uni.lu 2017b).

Social Pedagogue / Social Worker (Professional bachelor) (*Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives - professionnel*)

The students complete two practica: the first takes place in the third semester, the second in the sixth semester. Again, regulations for the practicum are set down by the university. Similar to the practica for student teachers in the *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation*, supervision is carried out jointly by a qualified and experienced employee in the social and educational field, a member of the work team in the practicum setting and a tutor of the university study programme.

The practicum in the third semester is allocated 9 ECTS points. The total work load of 250 hours includes 125 hours in the workplace and 125 hours participating in practicum-related meetings at the university.

The first practicum aims to acquaint students with the occupational fields of social work: their historical and organisational development, target groups and the field-related programmes and approaches. During this practicum, students learn how to develop critical self-reflection, how to justify their choice for this particular field of work and how to deepen their self-perception and perception of others.

Assessment takes place in the form of a practicum report and includes an oral examination and a joint evaluative discussion.

The practicum in the sixth semester is twice as long (18 ECTS points) as that in the third semester. Students spend 450 hours in the workplace (mandatory attendance) and 50 hours at university meetings and events.

In the „Long Practicum“ students in the Bachelor programme learn to analyse work approaches and methods in the field of social pedagogy/social work – in particular those applied in the practicum setting - and also to reflect on the ethical dimensions of professional social work, to plan, carry out and analyse activities in the practicum setting, to critically question their own motives, resources and competencies and to analyse their own relationships to clients, colleagues and to stakeholders in the community.

Assessment is conducted by means of a comprehensive written practicum report (Uni.lu 2017b, 2017d).

Educator (*Éducateur diplômé*)

Prospective Educators complete four practica during their four-year course of initial professional studies. They take place in educational, social, sports or cultural institutions and provide a multi-dimensional preparation for the profession.

- First practicum (Year 6 after *enseignement fondamental*): 9 weeks total, 34 hours/week; professional orientation;
- Second practicum (Year 7 after *enseignement fondamental*; granted general university entrance award on completion): 6 weeks total, 34 hours/week; deepening and broadening professional knowledge;
- Third practicum (Year 8 after *enseignement fondamental*): 10 weeks total, 34 hours/week; perfecting the acquired competencies and preparing for entry into the profession;
- Fourth practicum (final year at the *Lycée technique pour professions éducatives et sociales*, LTPES); this practicum is part of the final examination for the award of State-recognised Educator) and is regulated by law (MENFP 2009e). The vocational college (LTPES) and the practicum setting sign a contractual agreement (convention). This sets out the fields of activity in which the practicum will take place, organisational details, the specific tasks and the responsibilities of the candidate educator. Institutions providing a practicum place receive a monthly compensation of 180€ through the duration of the practicum.

Students who have completed the series of practica have had the opportunity to improve their transversal competencies and should be able to implement the knowledge they have acquired during their IPS («*savoir et culture générale*», «*savoir-faire*», «*savoir-être*») in everyday situations at the workplace.

The practica are supervised by a tutor in the practicum setting and a teacher at the vocational college (LTPES, *enseignant PRAPR*).

Successful completion of the fourth practicum is certified through a final written paper (LTPES 2016b, c, e).

5. Continuing professional development

5.1 In-service professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is included in the relevant legislation and regulations for both the formal and non-formal education sectors as a statutory duty. These regulations are currently under review.

In-service professional development is not included in the Bologna system, and there are no courses which award ECTS points.

Formal education sector

Primary School Teachers who work in the *éducation précoce* classes are obliged to attend eight hours of CPD annually. Educators working in *éducation précoce* have to attend 40 hours of CPD per year (MENFP 2009b, Art. 4; MENFP 2009d, Art. 4).

Non-formal education sector

Article 11 of the decree on the reorganisation of children's services (MFI 2013) regulates the number of hours that staff are expected to spend on attending CPD activities. No distinctions are made between core practitioners, lead practitioners and assistants. Staff who are employed on a full-time basis are required to complete 32 hours of CPD within a period of two years (at least 8 hours annually); requirements for part-time staff are adjusted according to their hours of work. The obligatory CPD has to relate to the 'Guidelines for non-formal education'; this is a national-level requirement for the providers of children's services.¹² However, this does not mean that staff may not participate in CPD courses on other topics. Courses which relate to the curricular guidance have to be reviewed and certified by the Commission for Continuing Professional Development (*Commission de la formation continue*). Some are published on the internet portal www.enfancejeunesse.lu (EFJ 2017a).

Draft legislation on multilingual education (*Programme d'éducation plurilingue*; MENJE 2016d) is under review by the Luxembourg Parliament which commits staff in non-formal education settings to eight hours of CPD per year on the topic of 'Language development in young children'. Four of these eight hours are included in the 32 hours regulated by the 2016 amendment to the 2008 Young People's Act (MFI 2013). The draft law also stipulates that each non-formal education setting must name a pedagogical coach (*référént pédagogique*) who is responsible for the implementation of the multilingual programme in early education. This coach is required to attend a specific 30-hour PD course on multilingualism organised by the *Service national de la Jeunesse* (SNJ).

Expenses incurred by the state-subsidised and commercial providers of non-formal education for the obligatory CPD courses are reimbursed by the State. The providers regulate the leave arrangements for these compulsory hours of attendance on an internal basis.

Responses to the online survey (see *Section 2.2*) suggest that legal requirements and the actual situation correspond to a large degree. Being granted leave for participation in CPD is not a significant problem for most early childhood settings. Respondents confirm that expenses for the compulsory CPD activities are reimbursed. Regulations vary according to the setting in terms of meeting the costs for CPD courses which exceed the compulsory amount or go beyond the thematic framework; in most cases they are partially reimbursed.

¹² The University of Luxembourg research group *Early Childhood: Education and Care* has developed a CPD programme together with the *Entente de Foyers de Jour* within the framework of the 32-hour budget for supporting the implementation of the 'Guidelines' in terms of the programme development in ECEC settings for children up to age 4 (Neumann 2014).

The main providers of CPD are the large non-governmental agencies responsible for non-formal education (*Croix-Rouge, Caritas, Focus*) and the *Entente des Foyers de Jour* (EFJ).

- The *Entente des Foyers de Jour* is a non-governmental umbrella association of the providers of children's services in Luxembourg. Its members are largely associations and communes who provide day care in nurseries (*crèche, foyer de jour*) and out-of-school facilities (*maisons relais*) (EFJ 2017c).
- The *Croix-Rouge* (Red Cross) is one of the largest providers in the non-formal education sector in Luxembourg, with numerous childcare centres in different communes. The Red Cross also has its own CPD organisation and offers regular CPD activities (Croix Rouge 2017).
- *Caritas* focuses in particular on social inclusion. One of the numerous services provided by the organisation is a quality development programme in the non-formal education sector. Caritas offers a broad selection of CPD activities focusing on key topics in the sector (curricular framework, health and nutrition, leadership, cooperation with parents, etc.) (Caritas 2017).
- *Focus* is the CPD organisation of *Arcus*. *Arcus* is a non-governmental association, bringing together charities based on Christian ideals which for more than 60 years have had a common commitment towards social, educational, pedagogical and therapeutic work with children, young people and families (Arcus 2017a). *Focus* provides a wide-ranging programme of CPD courses related to childcare and the professionalisation of educational and social work. The courses are related thematically to the national curricular framework for non-formal education (Arcus 2017b).

CPD is coordinated at the national level by the *Service National de la Jeunesse* (SNJ), the tasks of which are regulated by the Young People's Act (*Loi modifiée du 4 juillet 2008 sur la Jeunesse, Art. 7*). The SNJ is a public service which was developed in the context of policies for young people. One of its assignments is to ensure pedagogical quality in childcare and family day care settings, to support the continuing professional development of staff in services for children and young people and to develop pedagogical material for working with children. SNJ hosts the internet home page www.enfancejeunesse.lu (EFJ 2017b).

5.2 Basic vocational courses for low-qualified adults and early school leavers

Since the turn of the century, a series of programmes have been developed which offer low-qualified persons seeking employment (frequently over 40 years old) a dual qualification route into the childcare field. These 'flexi-programmes' (Fogaflex 2001; Qualiflex 2008; Valiflex 2013) – supported by the European Social Fund – were developed and carried out by the *Confédération Caritas Luxembourg*. They aim to support re-entry into employment through qualifying options, to enhance personal development, to increase motivation and competence development (Caritas 2008; 2013), and to recruit staff for the expanding childcare services in Luxembourg.

Based on these projects, an advanced modular course has been developed since April 2003 which is recognised by the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle* and which seeks to integrate and validate personal and professional work experiences. This 100-hour basic training opens up employment perspectives in the childcare field for low-qualified applicants (*aide éducatrice* – other job titles are *formation de base de l'éducation et de l'accueil d'enfants, formation aide socio-éducative*). The qualification course is provided in various models by different CPD providers up to a total of 130 hours, not only for adults but also for school leavers. The training is available for communes and public-sector institutions in the *Institut national d'Administration Publique* (INAP) for persons without an initial professional qualification. It is also offered by the *Entente des Foyers de Jours, Arcus asbl* and *Caritas asbl*. In order to ensure consistent quality across courses, the constituent modules and contents of this basic qualification are the same.

Table 10

Luxembourg: Educator's Assistant in the non-formal education sector

Title in French: <i>aide éducateur</i>
<p>Entry requirements: none*</p> <p>Professional studies: 100 hours basic vocational course in six modules</p> <p>Award: Certificate of attendance</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQR level: 3</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: n/a</p> <p>ISCED 2011: n/a</p> <p>Main fields of work: Settings in the non-formal education sector/<i>Services d'éducation et d'accueil</i> (0-12 years), including infant-toddler centres/<i>Crèches</i> (0-4 years), childcare centres/<i>Maison Relais pour Enfants</i> (4-12 years)</p>

*Source: Caritas 2016.

Persons attending the basic vocational modular course acquire basic competencies for working as an employee in a non-formal early childhood education setting (*agent éducatif*). The programme comprises six modules; nutritional hygiene; fields of work in non-formal education; early childhood; fields of work in non-formal education: school-age children; responsibility and safety; child development; communication and conflict management (Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché du Luxembourg 2017).

Aides éducatrices belong to the group of low-qualified personnel which according to the SEA Regulations (MFI 2013, Art. 7) may contribute up to 20% of the total hours of care provision in non-formal education and care settings (*structures de l'éducation et de l'accueil*). They work in direct contact with the children but do not assume a leading function.

Leadership qualifications for Centre Heads

There are no specific qualifying courses for the lead staff in non-formal education settings; the only requirement made in Article 8 of the SEA Regulations (MFI 2013) is that lead staff must have completed at least three years of work experience. However, since 2009 the University of Luxembourg has been offering a part-time Master's study programme (*Master in Management and Coaching in the social and educational fields*) which targets this particular group. It aims to provide personnel with leadership and group responsibilities in the educational and social fields with key competencies to be able to cope with the specific changes taking place in these areas. Participants should be enabled to question their professional experiences in a systematic and research-based way and to develop, analyse and lead projects. Degree holders of the Master's programme are able to describe and explain the conditions, processes, results and effects of social interventions; they can also develop and organise such process and are prepared to shape reform processes in cooperation with colleagues and institutions and to develop target-oriented ways of dealing with everyday problems. They should also be able to cope with leadership assignments in their field in a competent way (Uni.lu 2017c).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Guidelines for non-formal education

A key document in terms of national reforms and reform initiatives in this sector are the *Leitlinien zur non-formalen Bildung im Kindes- und Jugendalter* ('Guidelines for the non-formal education of children and young people') (see *Section 1*; MFI 2013). The curricular guidance was

presented in April 2013 by the Charlotte Bühler Institute in Vienna and is based on the Austrian Curricular Framework for the early years. The ‘Guidelines’ emphasise the importance of children’s experiences in their social environment and represent a process-oriented approach towards the framing of early childhood education. They were the culmination of a debate starting in 2010 among experts and stakeholders about the realisation of the idea of non-formal education in early childhood settings initiated by CPD courses provided by *Fondation Caritas asbl* around the concept of a ‘world atelier’ (von der Beek 2006); these events are still being continued today. The ‘Guidelines’ are not only relevant for *early* education, but place it in the framework of *lifelong learning*; some sections give examples for the concept as related to early childhood, to school-age children and to young people. The “Guidelines” organise this life course approach for early childhood education into six learning areas: (emotions and social relationships; values, participation and democracy; language, communication and media; aesthetics, creativity and art; science and technology). Although they still have no official status, the ‘Guidelines’ have been a focus for debate and experimentation since they were first published.

The ‘Guidelines’ are to be included as a mandatory curricular requirement for all state-subsidised and commercial services in the non-formal education sector in Luxembourg in a decree amendment to the Young People’s Act (MFI 2016). They will provide the conceptual framework for legislative and administrative initiatives to improve structural and process quality.

- *Structural quality* refers to the conditions under which the not-for-profit and for-profit education and care services are granted an operating licence (*agrément*). The conditions are set out in the 2013 SEA Regulation (MFI 2013). It brings together the various traditional forms of education and care (*crèches, garderies, foyers de jour, maison relais* etc.) under the umbrella term *services d’éducation et d’accueil (SEA)* and specifies who may work in these services (minimum staff qualification requirements). The SEA Regulation also specifies the quotas for higher and lower qualified staff and determines staff-child ratios, age-related group size and maximum capacity of a childcare centre. These regulations refer not only to the children’s living conditions and their developmental chances but also to the working conditions of the staff. The *agrément* is granted by the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Young People.
- *Process quality* is ensured through the implementation of the ‘Guidelines’ in the early childhood setting. In this sense, the ‘Guidelines’ can be seen as a staff professionalisation instrument. The new Young People’s Act (*Loi modifiée du 4 juillet 2008 sur la Jeunesse, Art. 7; MENJE 2016a*) specifies various measures of quality control and confers responsibility for quality assurance in the non-formal education sector to the *Service National de la Jeunesse (SNJ)*. All childcare centres are required to have a written educational programme, to keep a regular log book about the activities carried out in the setting, to develop a professional development plan for the socio-educational staff, and to accept evaluation through the 22 external advisers (*agents régionaux*). These advisers check whether the centre-based and home-based settings are working according to the principles of the framework plan and whether they are implementing the indicators for process quality; they also make suggestions for improvement. Assessment and advice focus on the pedagogical approach of the staff, the programme activities and the interactions between staff and children. Moreover, the external advisers are charged with the task of implementing the new Young People’s Act and its provisions. These provisions aim to support the staff on their pathway to quality development. The new legislation combines the entitlement to accept the childcare vouchers introduced in 2009 (*chèques-service accueil; MFI 2009; MENJE 2016c*) and thereby cover 80% of the costs with the implementation of these provisions and strategies of quality development (MENJE 2016a, Article 32). In this connection, the provider’s duty to ensure professional development for their staff was newly regulated (see *Section 5*).

The framework plan (“Guidelines”) will be examined and revised every three years by a commission comprising representatives of the Ministry of Education, the communes, the providers, the parents and scientific experts.



Reforms relating to the initial professional studies (IPS) of staff in the non-formal education sector

The Luxemburg government has also taken first steps towards reforming the initial professional education/training of staff in the non-formal education sector. The qualification routes for early childhood staff is organised both as a full-time and part-time option; the reform initiative relates to both 'pillars' (for continuing professional development, see *Section 5*). In the first instance, changes were introduced regarding the full-time option; the most significant outcome was the introduction of the Bachelor study programmes at the University of Luxembourg (*Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation; Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives – professionnel*). In terms of part-time options, a Master's programme was introduced focusing on *Management and Coaching in the educational and social fields*, for which the entry requirements are a three-year Bachelor's degree and three years of work experience (see *Section 5*). In Luxembourg, considerable experience has been accumulated in terms of assessing life experience and many efforts made to help low-qualified persons gain access to the challenging tasks of work in the non-formal education sector. Building on these experiences, it is planned to expand the initial professional study options for Educators into a 'dual system' of vocational education and training in order to integrate early school leavers; it is also planned to offer home-based care personnel opportunities to qualify up to Bachelor level.

Childcare centres as pedagogical spaces

In the context of non-formal education, ECEC settings are seen as spaces for learning and education. They are currently developing a sharper profile and a more professional self-image. Correspondingly, expectations are changing in terms of formal schooling: should schools also rethink their understanding of education; should they see childhood not just as a school-childhood but as a room for experiences embedded in a socio-cultural life world? An initial thrust in this direction was included in the 2009 Schools Act (MENFP 2009a, *Chap. 1, Sec. 6, l'encadrement périscolaire, art. 16-17*). It specifies that primary schools should develop a plan for interlinking school and out-of-school care (*encadrement périscolaire*) and commissions the communes to provide the appropriate infrastructure. A current arena for the changing relations between school and non-school education is the *Programme d'Education Plurilingue*, legislation concerning language enhancement in the context of a multilingual environment (MENJE 2016d), which has been submitted to the Luxembourg Parliament. The programme acknowledges the language diversity in Luxembourg as a setting for language teaching both in the formal and non-formal education sectors. It aims to familiarise children at an early age with the Luxembourgian and French languages and supports integration at the local community level. The programme fosters the children's home language competencies in non-formal early childhood education settings through close cooperation with the parents and seeks to enhance the transition from non-formal education to formal schooling. In order to ensure commitment to the programme, its implementation (as with the commitment to quality assurance and quality development) is linked to the provider's entitlement to cover costs through childcare vouchers (*chèques-service accueil*). In this way, the legislation aims to make a contribution towards ensuring equality of life chances for children from different home language milieus – a challenge with special significance for Luxembourg with its multilingual population. There are no guidelines for a specific way of realising these goals; the law provides the framework for a competition of ideas (vgl. Brachmond, Günnewig, Kirsch, and Seele 2015).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg did not have its own university until 2003. This is a crucial factor for the genesis of research-based knowledge on early childhood education and care in Luxembourg. The national statistics office (STATEC), the varying ministries and the *Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research* (LISER, formerly: CEPS/INSTEAD) were the most important institutions for the relevant compilation and analyses of data before the University established, in 2008, its own area of expertise in social science and education research on practices, policies and administration in early childhood education and care (Uni.lu 2017e). The debates on the expansion and professionalisation of ECEC in Luxembourg have been strongly influenced by conceptual ideas from other countries and by supranational actors such as the European Union and the OECD. The OECD studies *Starting Strong I* and *Starting Strong II* (OECD 2001; 2006) were particularly influential and can be traced right down to the wording in government programmes.

The large not-for-profit provider organisations have played an important role in the realisation of supranational input and inspiration. Through a number of *Research & Development* departments, they have contributed to conceptual stimulation in curricular programme development, to the development of staff qualification programmes and to social and education policy debates – quite apart from their role in providing professional development activities (see *Section 6*; Achten and Schronen 2011). The concept of non-formal education appears for the first time in Flexi-Project publications (see *Section 5*). The large not-for-profit provider organisations continue to play a significant role in ECEC quality development. These activities and initiatives created the context for ensuring that Luxembourg, with its concept of a separate, non-formal education sector for children aged 1 – 12 years, could establish a specific profile in international ECEC debates within the space of a few years.

Since 2009, the Luxembourg government has a contractual agreement with the University regarding research, development and consultation in national ECEC policies. Within this framework of cooperation, a number of expert reports have been produced which analyse the Luxembourg system of early childhood education and care (e.g. Honig and Haag 2011; MENJE/Université du Luxembourg, Unité de recherche INSIDE 2015; Wiltzius and Honig 2015); further studies focus on curricular concepts and programme development (e.g. Bollig, Honig and Mohn 2015; Brachmond, Günnewig, Kirch, and Seele 2015; Köpp-Neumann and Neumann 2009), some of which were published in a brochure series issued by the Ministry of Family Affairs (later Ministry of Education). The Ministry of Education has established its own *Research & Development* department (SCRIPT) which, for example, recently published educational guidance in early multilingual education in the Luxembourg context (SNJ 2017).

Beyond this, the University has conducted independent research projects focusing on issues which are particularly relevant for Luxembourg and which provide links to the international debate on early childhood education and care. All refer either directly or indirectly to the role of early childhood personnel in ECEC settings.

Quality development as institutional practice in ECEC settings

Source: Honig, M.-S., S. Neumann, O. Schnoor, and C. Seele. 2013 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study ‘The Reality of Care and Education. Quality and qualifying processes in flexible ECEC structures’ (2009-2012) examines quality development procedures and the specific question of how measures of educational quality are constructed in the institutional practice of childcare settings. From a theoretical perspective a focus is placed on aspects of the institutionalisation of extra-familial education and care in early childhood.

Procedure: The ethnographic study examined six settings for children up to age 4 (*crèches* and *maisons relais*) through methods of field research. Alongside participatory observations of eve-

ryday practices, interviews were held with the staff and setting-related documents were analysed.

Findings: The study shows that because of the diverse and partly dilemmatic expectations placed on work in ECEC settings, practitioners tend to review, become aware of and present the educational aspects of their work in retrospective. ‘Educational quality’ emerges not so much through the systematic implementation and evaluation of educational programmes but rather through situated practices of transforming everyday care into pedagogical topics.

The positioning of children in the Luxembourg ECEC system

Source: Bollig S., M.-S. Honig, and S. Nienhaus 2016 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The study ‘CHILD – Children in the Luxembourgian Day Care System’ (2013-2015) analysed the Luxembourg ECEC system in terms of the position that children have and the position that they are given.

Procedure: CHILD is an ethnographic fieldwork research project. It followed 13 systematically selected children for a period of up to two years in their everyday transitions between family, *crèche* and *éducation précoce*. Procedures included extensive field observations, interviews with parents, staff and experts, documentary analysis and tapping further resources in the early childhood field. A camera-ethnographic component was utilised as material for the professional development of staff.

Findings: The study focuses especially on the horizontal transitions in the system of day care. It illustrates how the everyday care arrangements for children not only take place *in* certain settings but also *between* them: children are positioned as border-crossers in the ECEC system. They are not only the recipients of educational programmes, but actors in an institutional context. The project not only contributes to a theory of care in everyday childhood, but can also help to substantiate the concept of non-formal education.

Commercial day care and the quality of education services

Source: Honig M.-S., A. Schmitz, and M. Wiltzius 2016 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: Luxembourg has a large and expanding commercial sector in ECEC. The project attempts to find answers to the following questions: What relevance does the economy of service provision have for the quality of educational services? Is there such a thing as a pedagogy of commercial childcare? The project ‘*Doing Quality in Commercial Childcare*’ (2013-2016) presents in detail the specific features of commercial childcare in Luxembourg, analyses the diversity of commercial providers and observes their organisational practices.

Procedure: This is an exploratory study of a largely unknown but highly controversial part of the ECEC system in Luxembourg. It therefore draws on all available or discoverable sources of information. Interviews with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and experts, mostly organised in a snowball system, played an important role, as did the compilation and evaluation of disparate data sources and participatory observations of practices in non-formal education settings.

Findings: The study shows how closely the functioning of the commercial childcare market is linked with the particular cultural and social welfare circumstances in Luxembourg. Commercially run *crèches* and home-based care settings are indispensable elements of social inclusion in Luxembourg’s multiethnic society. At the same time, the chances of regulating this childcare market through measures of educational quality appear to be more feasible in the context of the Luxembourg welfare state than in liberal market economies.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Basically, a two-tier layer of differentiation in salaries can be observed: Teachers in the formal sector are better paid than staff in the non-formal sector; staff in the state licensed (*conventionnées*) settings in the non-formal sector are generally paid better than those working in commercially run settings.

Formal education sector

Teachers working in *éducation précoce* classes are paid as civil servants.

Non-formal education sector

- Private not-for-profit (*conventionnés*) providers: The contractual agreement between the State and the provider specifies remuneration according to the collective agreement.
- For-profit (*non-conventionnés*) providers: Staff salaries are determined by the individual provider.

Differences between salaries are considerable. Payment in the commercial sector is very often lower; this has an impact on staff recruitment. Staff from Luxembourg tend to seek employment in the licensed sector. Staff from Germany, but above all from Belgium and France tend to find better paid jobs in commercial settings than in their countries of origin. This makes it difficult for commercial childcare providers to recruit staff from Luxembourg and contributes to a segregation within the non-formal education sector.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Formal education sector

There are no data available on full-time and part-time employment.

Non-formal education sector

According to the findings of the online survey (see *Section 2.2*), the distribution of staff working full time and part time in the non-formal education sector is as follows:

Table 10

Luxembourg: Staff in full-time and part-time employment in not-for-profit and commercial ECEC settings, 2016

	Private not-for-profit providers (with contract)	Private for-profit providers (without contract)
Staff in full-time employment (35.5 hours or more)	36.5%	93.5%
Staff in part-time employment	63.5%	6.5%

Staff in both not-for-profit and for-profit settings in the non-formal sector are largely women (see *Section 2.2*). Otherwise, there are marked differences between settings with a contractual agreement and those without. In the contracted settings, salaries are high enough to allow a large number of staff to work part time. In the non-contracted settings, the proportion of full-time employees is double that in the contracted services: Over 90% of staff work full time. This is partly because of the lower wages in the non-contracted sector, which mean staff cannot afford to work part time, and partly because of staff shortages in the commercial sector, which mean the available staff are expected to work full time.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Formal education sector

For the graduates of the *Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation* degree, a three-year introductory internship in a specific primary school, coordinated and supervised by the *Institut de Formation de l'Éducation nationale*, is mandatory (IFEN 2017). The internship is organised in three phases: an introduction into the school setting; a general induction course of 108 hours' duration organised in modular form; mentoring support. The three components are expected to link theory and practice effectively (<https://ssl.education.lu/ifen/stage-f-ef-2016>).

Das IFEN (*Institut de Formation de l'Éducation nationale*) is a subsidiary institution of the Ministry of Education and a partner for teachers in Luxembourg schools (primary and secondary levels). Besides organising the introductory internship, the IFEN coordinates professional development courses. The institute describes itself as an active and progressive platform which offers staff in the national school system the possibility to improve their professional competencies and to ensure that schools are lively and stimulating places. The IFEN has at its disposal an educational documentation centre.

Non-formal education sector

In the non-formal education sector there are no formal measures for supporting career beginners. These are organised according to need. Since there is no specific initial professional study route for working in early childhood education and care in Luxembourg, much time and money has to be invested in those beginning work. It is frequent practice to assign a tutor to newly-qualified staff. On-site professional development activities are also provided to ease the staff into their job. Some settings work with accompanying guidance and documentation to support career beginners. The main CPD providers also offer courses for new staff in order to familiarise them, for example, with the curricular framework plan.

8.4 Non-contact time

Formal education sector

The working hours of Pre-Primary/Primary Teachers (MENFP 2009b) and Educators (MENFP 2009d) are regulated by law. Article 4 of the *Règlement grand-ducal du 23 mars 2009 fixant la tâche des instituteurs de l'enseignement fondamental* specifies that teachers should spend 60 hours a year for meetings with educational staff and staff in childcare centres, 40 hours for co-operation activities with parents, 18 hours for administrative work (this is to be raised) and eight hours for professional development (MENFP 2009a, Art. 4). The same regulations apply to the Educators (*éducatrices diplômées*) who work as a Teacher's Assistant in the *éducation précoce*; however, the time allocated for professional development is more extensive (40 hours).

Non-formal education sector

Article 11 des *Règlement grand-ducal* on the restructuring of ECEC (SEA Règlement; MFI 2013) specifies that full-time employees in childcare services are to spend 103 hours annually of their working time for team consultations and for the preparation of educational activities; this regulation applies both to personnel in contracted and non-contracted services. The number of hours is adjusted proportionally for part-time staff.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Formal education sector

In cases of short-term staff shortages in primary schools, substitute staff are available. This is organised on a nationwide basis (see *Section 3.3* on the IPS requirements for substitute staff).

Non-formal education sector

It seems that staff shortages are a problem in many ECEC centres: This was one of the findings extrapolated from the answers to open-end questions in the online survey. Particularly the commercially run services have difficulties with staff recruitment (not least because of the low salaries), but the problem is also known in the state-subsidised settings.

Staff shortages in the non-formal education sector are regulated on an internal basis. Employed staff take on overtime work to ameliorate the problem and to adhere to the mandatory staff-child ratios. Another way of solving the problem is to merge groups together.

The online survey provided insights into the reasons why staff recruitment can be difficult. One of the main issues is not only the quantitative lack of applicants, but not least a lack of appropriate qualifications; job applicants often have no initial professional qualification in early childhood education and care. This quality gap is likely to intensify when the expectations in terms of the educational quality of ECEC settings in the non-formal sector (SEA services) increase, but IPS and CPD do not develop in the necessary direction. Another important reason is the applicants' lack of language competence: This is one of the problems arising from the multilingual composition of society in Luxembourg. ECEC services very often offer only limited employment contracts (substituting for those on maternity leave or who are off work because of illness, etc.) which are uninteresting for many job applicants, and this makes flexible arrangements in the case of temporary staff shortages difficult or even impossible.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Michael-Sebastian Honig

The organisational and conceptual framing of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg is in the midst of a comprehensive process of change. This process is not taking place in a consistent manner and is nowhere near to being finished. It comprises administrative aspects, as the legislation and regulations in recent years show. It is changing the age contours of 'early' childhood and is developing a new perception of how children live and learn. Not least, this process of change will need a content-related reconfiguration of the relationship between the formal and the non-formal sector, between school and childcare, in the context of early education. All aspects have implications for the professional staff working in ECEC.

The following five lines of argument relate to selected aspects of these implications. In order to avoid misunderstandings: They do not represent the position of the Luxembourg government but are based on expert assessments of the responsible author, Michael-Sebastian Honig.

1. Early childhood education and care is a cross-sectional task which needs to be interpreted and fulfilled by the organisations and staff in the formal and non-formal education sectors in different ways. As the overview of initial professional education and training (*Section 3*) has shown, staff are not prepared to be early childhood education and care specialists. In the same way as there is a specific teacher education for the formal sector, so there is a need for a specialist initial education and training profile for non-formal education, and within this framework for a specialisation in the pedagogy and didactics of early childhood.

2. Luxembourg is a multilingual and multicultural country. Not only language diversity among children is a challenge for the establishment of non-formal education in Luxembourg, but also the language competencies of the staff working with them. The qualifications background of staff is also diverse. Many of these practitioners are not educated and trained in Luxembourg, but in Belgium, France or Germany.

3. A large number of staff are recruited from neighbouring countries and work for commercial childcare providers for low wages. Expressed pointedly, it is possible to talk of two classes of

professional staff in the *services d'éducation et d'accueil*. The transformation of childcare into a field of non-formal education therefore needs to find effective ways of involving the commercial providers.

4. Family day carers, mostly female, represent a special category of 'early childhood personnel'. They are not the subject of this report, but they play an essential role in Luxembourg in what is essentially an ethnically segregated childcare market. If ECEC is to contribute to social inclusion, the position of family day carers must be clarified and regulated within the system as a whole.

5. For the support of early childhood staff, conceptual, organisational and financial aspects play an important role. The issue of providing ongoing coaching and consulting for staff in the non-formal sector has not yet been answered in a satisfactory way. In particular, the numerous small settings at the local level are in need of coordinated support at the regional level. A further challenge is the need to include the growing number of commercial CPD providers into a conceptually and administratively coordinated system of quality development.

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LUXEMBOURG

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank
Michael-Sebastian Honig and Tina Bock
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Luxembourg – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 747-763.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Up to the end of 2013, early childhood education and care in Luxembourg was organised as a dual system, with separate ministerial responsibilities for early childhood and after-school childcare provision (Ministry of Family Affairs) and early childhood education (Ministry of Education).

Since December 2013, childcare settings are formally viewed as provision with an educational mandate. A distinction is now made between a sector of **non-formal education** and a sector of **formal education**. The non-formal sector includes (1) all public and private forms of provision for children below 4 years of age, (2) outside-school-hours provision for 4- to 12-year olds and (3) home-based settings. The formal sector comprises two classes within the compulsory school system (the term *éducation préscolaire* is used for the classes for 4- and 5-year olds) as well as a non-compulsory class within schools for 3-year olds (*éducation précoce*).

Since 2013, both the non-formal and the formal sector of early childhood education and care come under the overall responsibility of the Ministry for Education, Childhood and Youth (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse*). For the formal education sector, the State has an implementation responsibility and for the non-formal sector a guarantee responsibility; this is provided through the granting of operating licenses (*agrément*s) and through service agreements (*conventions*) with private providers.

Sources: Achten und Bodeving 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2014, 2017.
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

The system of early education and care in Luxembourg is guided by family policy and social policy goals. These include supporting parental participation in the labour market, gender equality and work-life balance. Offering flexible, high-quality and affordable childcare provision is high on the list of priorities and includes measures such as providing free childcare service vouchers or low enrolment fees for low-income families.

In terms of educational goals, the Luxembourg government views the non-formal and formal education and care sectors as complementary. Overarching goals or principles in the **non-formal sector** are: viewing children as competent persons with an individual biography who learn with and from others and are members of society with their own rights.

The ASFT Act of 1998 (*Loi du 8 septembre 1998 réglant les relations entre l'Etat et les organismes oeuvrant dans les domaines social, familial et thérapeutique*, amended on 28 July 2011) regulates the relationship between the state and the non-governmental providers. An implementation regulation (2013) of the ASFT Act, the so-called SEA Regulation (*services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants*, SEA), sets out the framework requirements for the non-formal sector.

Key legislation for the **formal sector** is the Education Act 2009 (*Loi du 06.02.2009 portant organisation de l'enseignement fondamental* with amendments), which reformed the Luxembourg school system. Since this time the 9-year primary school (*enseignement fondamental*) has been

organised into four cycles. *Éducation précoce* (for 3-year olds) und *éducation préscolaire* (for 4- and 5-year olds) belong to the first cycle.

The Education Act 2009 provides the framework only for the formal early childhood education sector. At the same time, it specifies that the communes/municipalities are obliged to provide outside-school-hours provision for school-age children (*encadrement périscolaire*). In order to further promote cooperation between schools and out-of-school services, since 2012 each commune is obliged to issue a so-called out-of-school care plan (*Plan d'encadrement périscolaire, PEP*).

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Eurydice 2014, 2017.
Honig, M.-S. 2015.
MENJE 2016a, 2016b.
Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2013.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 226.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Entitlements and compulsory attendance apply only to the **formal sector**. Since 2009, children aged between 3 and 4 years are entitled to a free place in the first cycle of primary education for 36 weeks per year (*éducation préscolaire*). Compulsory attendance was introduced in 1976 for all children who had reached their fifth birthday by the 1st September and in 1992 for all children who were 4 years old on the 1st September of the current year. Compulsory schooling begins at age 4 (despite the fact that the first two years in school are called *éducation préscolaire*).

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2016.
OECD 2015.
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

Main types of provision

Provision in the **non-formal sector** is characterised by different kinds of settings. Of particular significance are the relatively new, mixed-age 'children's centres' (*maisons relais pour enfants*) for 4- to 12-year olds, sometimes also for under 3-year olds (see *Table 1*). Since 2005, these centres have aimed to act as a link between family, school and community, providing for children during out-of-school-hours times and during the midday break at school. The predecessors of the *maisons relais* are the *foyers de jour pour enfants*, which offer school-age children a midday meal and homework support. The services provided by the *maisons relais* are much broader. They are also open for younger children, i.e. for under 4-year olds. As non-formal education provision, they provide a comprehensive mix of social pedagogy and education services.

Crèches generally provide for children below the age of 3 years. *Garderies* are a form of sessional care for a maximum of 16 hours per week, and have been losing importance during recent years.

As from mid-2019, all provision will fall under the SEA Regulation requirements. It is probable that the terms *maison relais*, *crèche* und *foyer de jour* will gradually disappear, since they will all fall under the umbrella term of 'education and care services' (*services d'éducation et d'accueil*).

According to the ASFT Act, all settings are required to have an operational licence (*agrément*). Some (the majority of settings for 4- to 12-year olds) enter into a contractual agreement (*convention*) with the State. However, these contracts are not mandatory. It is still possible for settings to be run just on the basis of an operational licence.

Non-formal sector settings are usually open for at least 46 weeks per year, mostly from 7:00 until 19:00.

The non-compulsory **early education groups** for 3- to 4-year olds (*éducation précoce*) are part of the school system (cycle 1) and therefore belong to the formal sector, along with the compulsory first two years of primary school as **pre-primary groups** for 4- to 6-year olds (*éducation préscolaire*). They are open for 36 weeks in the year, offering 26 hours per week of educational activities. They are usual open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 16:00, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings only. During school holidays they are closed. During this time the children may attend a setting in the non-formal sector (*services d'éducation et d'accueil* - SEA).

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
Honig, M-S. 2015.
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

Provider structures

Settings belonging to the **non-formal sector** are operated either by communes or by private non-profit and private for-profit providers. According to the ASFT Act (1998, amended 2011), all providers need a state-granted operating licence (*agrément*). Non-profit providers that enter into a contractual agreement with the State (*convention*) receive public funding.

Since the introduction of childcare service vouchers for parents in 2009 (*cheque-service accueil*, see also below), the number of private for-profit providers in the non-formal education sector has increased substantially. This development regarding the commercial providers is a significant structural change which, although not intended through policy measures, has been accepted**. Nearly two-thirds of places for under 4-year olds in *crèches* are provided by these commercial entities.

Table 1

Luxembourg: Children in non-formal education settings, 31.12.2016*

	Number of places for children under 4 year olds	Number of places for children over 4 year olds (school children)	Total number of places
Services d'éducation et d'accueil conventionnés	5,282	33,005	38,287
Services d'éducation et d'accueil commerciaux	9,853	1,723	11,576
Total	15,135 (30.4%)	34,728 (69.6%)	49,863

Source: MENJE 2017b, 31.

The **formal education** settings for 3- to 6-year olds in the first cycle of primary education are, as part of the school system, almost exclusively state-maintained. Very few private schools exist in Luxembourg.

Sources: Honig, M-S. 2015.
**Honig, M.-S., A. Schmitz, and M. Wiltzius 2016.
*MENJE 2015b, 12.

Participation rates in regulated provision

In the **non-formal sector**, the number of places provided by *maisons relais* (MREs) and *crèches* (and also home-based family day care) increased from less than 8,000 in 2004 to more than 42,000 in 2012*.

In the year 2012, nearly 49% of under 3-year olds and over 72% of children between 3 years and the minimum school entry age (4 years) were enrolled in a non-formal education setting (or a family day care setting)**.

According to data provided by the Ministry for Family Affairs, the settings with a contract with the state (*conventionnés*) provided almost four times the number of places in 2013 than those without a service agreement (*non-conventionnés*) (Table 2). These are mostly places for school-age children (4-12 years old). For children under 3 years of age, most of the places provided are by commercial entities which have no service agreement with the State.

Table 2

Luxembourg: Number of places in non-formal education sector according to type of setting, 2013***

Type of setting	Number of places
With contractual agreement with the State (<i>conventionnés</i>)	
<i>Crèche</i> (0-3 years)	1,606
<i>Maison relais</i> (0-3 years)	2,928
<i>Garderie</i> (0-8 years)	37
<i>Foyer du jour</i> (4-12 years)	438
<i>Maison relais</i> (4-12 years)	29,044
Total	34,053
Without contractual agreement with the State (<i>non-conventionnés</i>)	
<i>Crèche</i> (0-3 years)	8,084
<i>Garderie</i> (0-8 years)	206
<i>Foyer du jour</i> (4-12 years)	904
Total	9,194

Source: Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2014.

Although there is at least one setting in each commune for under 3-year olds and provision for this age group was expanded during recent years, the demand for places in 2012 exceeded the supply***.

Table 3 shows the development of participation rates in the **formal education sector** (cycle 1, 3- to 6-year olds). Over the past decade, a slight increase in the participation rate of 3-year olds can be observed who attend a non-mandatory early education group (*éducation précoce*). For the school year 2015/2016 this applied to nearly two thirds of children below 3 years of age (64.5%). The number of 4- to 6-year olds in mandatory primary education (*éducation préscolaire*) has also increased slightly. Because of the compulsory nature of attendance, it can be assumed that 100% of 4- and 5-year olds respectively were enrolled in this kind of provision.

Table 3

Luxembourg: Number and quota of enrolment in formal educational settings (Cycle 1, 3- to 6-year olds)

Year	Cycle 1			
	<i>Éducation précoce</i> Early education in primary school, 3-year olds		<i>Éducation préscolaire</i> Primary school, level 1 4- to 6-year olds	
	Number	Proportion of 3-year olds, in %	Number	Proportion of 4- to 6-year olds, in %
2005/2006	3,492	62.4	10,411	100% (=compulsory schooling)
2010/2011	3,961	67.8	10,195	100% (=compulsory schooling)
2015/2016	4,183	64.5	11,027	100% (=compulsory schooling)

Source: MENJE 2017b, 130

Sources: *EPIC 2016.
**Eurydice 2014.
Honig, M.-S. 2015.
***Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2014.
Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

In some **non-formal education** settings, the running costs are subsidised by the state up to 75%, in others up to 100%. The differences depend on various factors, including who met the costs of building the setting (state or commune). The remaining costs are covered by the commune or the specific provider.

Since 2009, childcare service vouchers (*chèque-service accueil*) have been issued to enable all parents and their children (under 12 years of age) to have access to a place in non-formal provision. The main goals of this measure are to support social integration and equality of opportunity at the local level as well enhancing the children's (language) competencies for school. With the vouchers, parents can enrol their child free of charge for a certain number of hours daily in a setting of their choice (the exact number of hours depends among other things on whether the child is already attending a setting in the formal sector). The commercial settings are funded exclusively over these vouchers; all other costs must be covered by the service provider. Low-income parents pay reduced fees for additional hours which exceed those covered by the vouchers. Since the introduction of the childcare service vouchers, utilisation of services has increased considerably, particularly in the non-formal settings without a contractual agreement with the state.

Private providers can decide on the fees they wish to charge. In general it is the case that parental fees in the commercial settings are markedly higher than those for enrolment in public or non-profit provision.

The **formal education** sector settings (*précoce*) are free of charge for parents, apart from the costs for meals*.

Costs for the setting infrastructure and equipment are borne by the communes; the state contributes to staff salaries through annual budgets. In general, private schools which may or may not work according to the national curricula receive state subsidies, but these are not as high as for the state-maintained schools.

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2014.
Honig, M.-S. 2015.
MENJE 2017.

Staff-child ratios

The following regulations apply for the non-formal settings:

Under 1 year and 1-year olds: 6 children per staff member, max. 12 in one group
2- and 3-year olds: 8 children per staff member, max. 15 in one group
4- and 5-year olds: 11 children per staff member, max. 15 in one group

In some settings children are organised in mixed-age groups.

In *éducation précoce* and *éducation préscolaire* ratio requirements apply only to the 3-year olds: 10 children per staff member, max. 20 children in one group. For home-based settings (*assistance parentale*) the ratio requirement is 1:5.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2014.
Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2007; 2013.

Curricular Frameworks

A national framework plan (*Cadre national de référence "Éducation non formale des enfants et des jeunes"*) was issued for the **non-formal sector** in 2012. This includes general goals and basic educational principles. It foregrounds the children's learning process, not a standardisation of educational methods or children's achievements. The framework plan was developed by the Charlotte Bühler Institute in Vienna. It was made mandatory within the context of the Quality Act (2016) and will be revised every three years by representatives from the Ministry of Education, the municipalities/communes and the provider organisations as well as by parents and other experts.

Four areas are particularly highlighted: (1) an understanding of learning as a dynamic and age-related process; (2) an image of the child as curious, responsible and autonomous; (3) a process-oriented understanding of learning based on the principles of openness and voluntariness; and (4) an emphasis on language, creativity, technology and values as key learning activities. The following dimensions of learning are highlighted: emotions and relationships; language, communication, media; aesthetics, creativity, the arts; values and participation; science and technology; movement, body awareness, health. The staff decide on the appropriate methods and materials. The National Youth Service has compiled examples for daily practice in the settings. Service providers are required to adapt their centre-specific programme to the framework plan.

Learning areas and goals for the first school cycle in the **formal sector** are specified in a curricular framework for the four cycles in primary education (*Plan d'études pour les quatre cycles de l'enseignement fondamental, 2011*). These are: logical thinking and mathematics; language; discovering the world through the senses; psychomotor skills and health; creative expression; aesthetics and culture; living together and values. Staff are to a certain extent free to choose appropriate didactic approaches within the framework of the Ministry of Education specifications, but they have to fit into a competence-based approach. Particular emphasis is placed on play-based learning.

For children with special educational needs there is a general educational programme (*plan d'études commun, 1996*) which relates to the children's developmental needs and includes ten psycho-pedagogical areas: personal independence, communication, basic school-oriented learning, culture, psychomotor development, health and hygiene, affective and social development, personal responsibility, starting employment, leisure-time activities.

Sources: Achten und Bodeving 2017.
Eurydice 2014.
MENJE 2016a, 2016b.
Service National de la Jeunesse 2016b.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In the **non-formal sector** there are no legislative requirements regarding the inclusion of children with special educational needs. The specific programme for individual settings is – at least for the settings with a contractual agreement – specified in this agreement.

For the **formal sector** legislation specifies that children with special educational needs should receive all the support measures that they need and that only when these prove to be insufficient they should be offered a place in a special education institution. This means that children, wher-

ever possible, are first admitted to a regular setting. In some cases special provision is integrated within the regular setting building.

At the local level, specialist staff from the multi-professional special education service (*service d'éducation différenciée*) provide mobile support. An individual educational programme (*plan d'éducation individualisé*) must be compiled for each child which describes and goals and further developmental steps. Since 2009, the Commission for School Inclusion (*Commission d'inclusion scolaire*) also compiles an individual support plan (*plan de prise en charge individualisé*) based on the individualised educational plans.

Children with a background of migration

In Luxembourg, the total proportion of the population with a foreign passport is the highest in Europe (2016: 46.7%). Over 85% of these persons come from EU28 countries (with persons from Portugal making up the largest share of over a third); approximately 3% respectively originate from Asian and African countries. Within the group of under 5-year olds, in 2016 also almost half (49.2%) were children with a background of migration. Here also, 85% came from other EU countries.

In 2013/14*, 43.7% of children in the early education groups and 47.2% of children in *éducation préscolaire* groups were children with a background of migration. Of these, Portuguese children (19.9% and 24% respectively) comprised the largest group. In cycle 1 groups with a particularly large number of Portuguese children, a Portuguese-speaking Assistant is employed for a number of hours weekly in order to support the children in learning the French, German and Luxembourg languages. This represents a huge challenge both for the children and also for the Luxembourg education system.

In the light of the growing number of asylum seekers, so-called 'welcome classes' (*classes d'accueil étatique*) have been established. The main goal of these classes is to support children in the acquisition of the necessary language competencies.

Sources: Eurydice 2014.
Le Portail Statistique, 2016a, 2016b.
*MENJE 2015a, 8

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The structural quality of **non-formal settings** (e.g. staff-child ratios, infrastructure) is regulated through the previously mentioned ASFT Act (1998). Measures to guarantee pedagogical and structural quality are anchored in the Youth Act (*loi sur la jeunesse, 2008*): Private providers of settings which accept the childcare service vouchers or receive State subsidies on the basis of a contractual agreement are required to produce a centre-specific educational programme based on the framework plan. This programme has to describe the educational goals, self-evaluation measures and staff professional development plans and has to be published on the relevant website. The programme is valid for three years. Moreover, a so-called log book (*journal de bord*) is also required which contains daily and weekly documentation entries. Also included is the division of responsibilities among the staff, the activities with the children and staff participation in continuing professional development activities. Pedagogical staff employed on a full-time basis are required to attend at least 32 hours of professional development within a period of two years.

Child-related assessments for children under the age of 3 years are only carried out from a medical perspective on their development.

External evaluations are generally carried out once a year by regional advisers of the National Youth Service (*agents régionaux*), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education. They examine the alignment between the framework plan and the centre-specific programme, the professional development strategies of the staff, the overall quality development and the rooms and buildings.

Settings are given notice of the supervisory visits two weeks beforehand. On the basis of these inspections the supervisory prepare a written report which also includes comments made by the provider.

For the **formal sector**, a Quality Agency (*Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologiques – SCRIPT*) was established in 2009. Its tasks are to support the primary schools in evaluating their performance and in compiling a quality development programme. The agency is integrated into the Ministry of Education and cooperates closely with the University of Luxembourg. External evaluations of the compulsory *école préscolaire* groups are conducted at least twice a year.

Within the context of self-evaluation measures, school development plans (*plan de réussite scolaire*) are compiled every four years. A school-specific analysis is prepared, based on the recommendations of the district inspector and the Quality Agency and on the requirements made by the Ministry of Education. Alongside quantitative data about finances, facilities and infrastructure, they also describe the strengths and weaknesses of the specific institution.

In cycle 1, formative intermediate assessments (*bilans intermédiaires*) are carried out for all children every three months and handed over to the parents. These assessments include: (1) staff observations about the child's development and learning processes; (2) observations made by the parents; (3) further goals to be worked towards. At the end of the 1st cycle a summative report (*bilan de fin de cycle*) is prepared, describing the child's achievements in basic skills. A supporting observation instrument for staff (*LBK1 - Lëtzebuurger Beobachtungskonzept für den 1. Zyklus*) and advice on continuous assessment (*L'évaluation au quotidien à l'école fondamentale*) have been issued by the Ministry of Education.

In Luxembourg, research and development of formal and non-formal education and care is conducted by the country's only state university; the state also commissions scientific services from research institutions in other countries. Before the university was founded in 2003 this was the norm. The university has declared empirical research in education to a research priority, with a focus on multi-lingualism and diversity in the Luxembourg education system. Since 2008, a research unit called *Early Childhood: Education and Care*, has been monitoring and analysing the activities and qualification of non-formal education in centre-based and home-based settings. The research and scientific monitoring projects are funded partly by research sponsorship institutions and partly in the context of commissioned projects with state funding.

Sources: Achten und Bodeving 2017.
Eurydice 2014.
OECD 2015, 83, 105.
Service National de la Jeunesse 2016a.

Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*congé de maternité*) is for 16 weeks, eight of which must be taken before the expected date of birth. If the mother has been paying social insurance during the six months preceding birth she is paid 100% of earnings.

There is no statutory entitlement to **paternity leave**. However, fathers are entitled to two free days at the time of the birth ('exceptional circumstances'), paid by the employer.

Parental leave (*congé parental*) is granted for a period of four up to 20 months per parent (depending on the working hours and chosen option). Parents can choose between different options in terms of length and payment: they can take four or six months of full-time parental leave or eight or 12 months on a part-time basis. During the full-time option, 1,922.96€ are paid for the six month option or 3,204.93€ for four months, on the condition that the parent has worked without a break for at least one year before the start of parental leave.

There are few data available regarding the take-up of parental leave. In the Annual Report of the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration (MFI), some trends are reported: Women utilise parental leave more frequently than men (on average 79% between 1999 and 2015); they prefer the first six months of parental leave and usually choose the full-time option. Between 1999 and 2015 the proportion of fathers who made use of parental leave rose from 6.3% in 1999 to 24.1% in 2015.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Zhelyazkova, N., M. Loutsch, and M. Valentova 2017.

Luxembourg: Highlights in the history of formal and non-formal education and care

Approx. 1850	First custodial institutions (<i>écoles gardiennes</i>) established through caritative foundations and commercial enterprises
Approx. 1860	First public kindergartens established
1963	First legislation on preschool education (<i>jardins d'enfants</i> , later; <i>éducation préscolaire</i>), specifying the role of the communes
1976	Compulsory preschool enrolment (<i>éducation préscolaire</i>) for 5-year olds
Beginning of 1980s	First state subsidised centre-based childcare settings
1992	Compulsory preschool enrolment for 4-year olds
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of non-compulsory early education groups (<i>éducation précoce</i>) • ASFT Act comes into force, regulating the relationship between the state and private providers of educational and therapeutic services, and also the organisational and funding framework for childcare provision
2005	Establishment of the first <i>maisons relais pour enfants</i> (MREs)
2007	Home-based family day care is regulated by law.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Education Act and restructuring of the school system into cycles: <i>éducation préscolaire</i> is included in the 1st cycle • Entitlement for 3-year olds to a place in <i>éducation précoce</i> • The communes are required to provide outside-school-hours care (<i>encadrement périscolaire</i>) for school children. • Introduction of childcare service vouchers (<i>chèques-service accueil – CSA</i>)
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth takes over responsibility from the Ministry of Family Affairs for all provision outside the school system as well as for formal education settings. • The SEA Regulation (implementation decree, ASFT Act 1988, amended 2012) introduces common requirements for all centre-based and home-based settings for children in the non-formal education sector (<i>services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants</i>). The Regulation specifies the criteria for the contractual agreements (<i>agrèments</i>) – staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, maximum capacity, size, etc. • Framework plan for non-formal education for children and young people introduced
2016	Child and Youth Welfare Act amended, regulating among other things quality assurance in all non-formal education settings.

Sources: Honig, M.-S. 2015.
Honig, M.-S. und Bock, T. 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Luxembourg

Country expert assessment by Michael-Sebastian Honig

Legislation for institutions aiming to prepare children for school (*jardins d'enfants*) was first introduced in Luxembourg in the early 1960s. Provision for extra-familial care can be traced back much further to the mid-nineteenth century, but up to the 1980s this remained a field of sporadic initiatives provided by caritative organisations and commercial enterprises for socially disadvantaged families. A comprehensive system of (early) childhood education and care, regulated by law and (co-) financed by the state, does not fully emerge in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg until the beginning of the 21st century. In this sense Luxembourg can be described as a *latecomer* to the field of ECEC. In the twenty years or so since the turn of the century, state and communes, as well as private non-profit and private for-profit providers, have made considerable efforts in terms of legislative, financial, organisational and conceptual measures.

The conditions of formation influence self-perception and operating principles. Today's organisation of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg emerged from a concept of childcare provision for school-age children in out-of-school hours. Offering compensatory and early education facilities in the sense of an 'other' kind of education than school education traditionally played a secondary role in a country with conservative family values. The Luxembourg system therefore does not follow a developmentally related logic of 'younger' and 'older', but instead a cross-age logic of school and non-school. The internationally widespread debates about *early* childhood are therefore only relevant for the situation in Luxembourg to a certain extent, and the controversies about the relationship between education and care are rather confusing when it comes to trying to understand the organisational and conceptual developments. Characteristic for this development is the more recent *programmatic distinction between formal and non-formal education*. This distinction combines the complementary and compensatory function of early childhood services in relation to families and the task of preparing children for school under the leitmotif 'education' and situates non-formal education in relation to families and schools. In this context, the term 'early' education is applicable to all types of formal and non-formal education for children who are not of compulsory school age, i.e. who are not yet 4 years of age.

However, it is not just the path dependencies which shape the contemporary system of education and care in Luxembourg, but the conditions under which its expansion and differentiation has taken place since the turn of the century. To put it pointedly, these conditions have been influenced through supranational processes, particularly through a dynamic political-economic development which has been strengthened and formalised through resolutions of the European Union. Within this framework, Luxembourg began with the reconstruction of its welfare state architecture. With the expansion, qualification and programmatic conceptualisation of early childhood and out-of-school childcare provision as a sector of non-formal education, the Luxembourg welfare state has developed a new sector of human services and has re-regulated the relationship between family, children, state and market. This re-regulation is shaped through a social investment understanding of welfare state responsibilities, through gender mainstreaming issues and, last but not least, through a re-positioning of the child in relation to parents and state. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child plays a significant role in constructing an image of the child as a person with individual rights and as a participating actor in his/her social relationships and living conditions and not just as a learning person in need of protection.

Against the background of these complex and multifaceted conditions, the current challenges for the system of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg, including the contradictions and controversies, can be identified more precisely:

- (a) Luxembourg has an unemotional relationship to the **political-economic function of childcare services**. Long opening hours, high flexibility, a broad spectrum of care provision ranging from commercial to state/communal are not only funded but also organised, enabling support for the employment conditions of mothers and fathers. On the one hand, in many areas

the approach to pedagogical quality is problematic, but accepted. On the other hand, recent legislative initiatives are focusing on the issue of quality development.

- (b) This makes it all the more important to clarify the question of what **‘non-formal education’** as a pedagogical programme implies. What does it mean for the shaping of the relationship between family, school and childcare settings in different phases of children’s development, and how should the criteria regarding the quality of this relationship be articulated? Non-formal education cannot be thought of as a separated field in this relationship, it is not about a pedagogy of child care. Instead, it confronts the school with the challenge of no longer regarding itself only from an instructional perspective; considering the dominance of the education system, this is much easier said than done. At the same time, childhood education and care settings are also facing challenges. It is no longer sufficient to follow the idea of age-specific learning needs. Instead, it has become necessary to foreground the children and the diversity of their living conditions and experiences. What is needed is a cross-sector, differential didactical approach towards non-formal education. Deliberations in this direction are only just beginning.
- (c) **Early education** is accordingly a *task* for the sectors of non-formal *and* formal education, for childcare settings *and* school, albeit in different ways. How can the criterion of developmental appropriateness be re-defined under these cross-sectional conditions? How can it be supported from an organisational point of view? For school-age children Luxembourg has provided an answer to this question by establishing an organisational link between school and childcare provision through the *maisons relais pour enfants* (MRE, for children up to age 12); in the meantime this decision is provoking vehement disputes about the extended task of the MRE as a non-formal educational institution. For *early* childhood, which means for children who are not yet obliged to attend school, there is a parallel form of provision: the *éducation précoce* groups are preschool settings for 3-year olds. The *éducation préscolaire* groups (for 4- to 6-year olds) have even been integrated into the primary school. *Crèches* und *maisons relais* provide non-formal, outside-school-hours settings for these children. Early education is education prior to school and requires integrated, non-formal learning and living spaces – integrated here meaning not only in terms of the specific locations of education and care, but also in terms of the social-ecological environment, including the children’s families – and it requires specialist staff who are sufficiently prepared for these new tasks.
- (d) Part of the inheritance of the system of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg is the marginalisation of **extra-familial care of children who are not of compulsory school age**. Although the situation today cannot be compared with that of twenty years ago, the care of young children has remained up to the present day in the domain of commercial providers and family day carers. The concessional terms under which they can offer their services are their competitive advantage. The consequences are diverse; they relate for example to the issue of staff recruitment: many childcare staff come from neighbouring countries, do not speak all the national languages and work for low wages. The transformation of the childcare field into a field of non-formal education will need to include commercial providers and family day carers. First steps have been made; the state is making attempts, most recently through the Quality Act*, to incorporate commercially-run provision; one example is that the granting of childcare service vouchers (*cheque-service accueil*) is linked to adherence to the official ‘Guidelines for the non-formal education of children and young people’.
- (e) More than in many other European states, Luxembourg is a **multicultural and multilingual** country (see the demographic data in the next section). The language and cultural diversity of the children is a socio-political challenge, entailing social inequality and the danger of institutional discrimination. The problem of the production and re-production of social inequality has long been discussed in relation to school education, but it also applies to childcare settings. This includes the issue of access to the diversity of provision and also how diversity is handled in the everyday practices in settings. As a cross-sectional task of school and childcare provision, the idea of non-formal education is particularly appropriate for grappling with this

challenge. Approaches have already been initiated, particularly in the area of language support in a multilingual environment.

- (f) An under-estimated and little regarded feature of the Luxembourg system of non-formal education over the past twenty years is the fact that the nation made available its own resources for **research and scientific monitoring** only in parallel to these developments in the field. The Grand Duchy has a state-maintained university since 2003, and only since 2008 a professorial chair and a working group which guarantees research and teaching in childhood studies and childcare provision. Research into school education and the professional education/training of school teachers are more broadly established at the university. State, communes and provider organisations work closely together. The development of an appropriate research and development infrastructure which combines theory-based basic research with applied aspects remains a considerable challenge. A fundamental issue, for example, is a sustained monitoring of the education and care system; first steps towards educational reporting have been made in the context of recent legislation.

Sources: Honig, M.S. 2015.
*MENJE 2016a.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Luxembourg totalled 576,249. This is a further indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 405,650 and 2005 total: 461,230).

Children under 4 years of age (i.e. before compulsory schooling)

Since children in Luxembourg enter the compulsory school system at the age of 4 years, the following tables show the number of children under 4 years of age and their share in the total population of the age group.

In 2016, children under 4 years of age accounted for 4.4% of the total population in Luxembourg. Since 2005, these percentage rates have been above the EU average.

Table 4

Luxembourg: Children under 4 years (below compulsory school-age), 2016

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	6,100
1-year olds	6,342
2-year olds	6,558
Under age 3 total	19,000
3-year olds	6,490
Total 0- to under 4-year olds	25,490

Table 5

Luxembourg: Children under 4 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %⁺

	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
under 3-year olds	4.1	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.0
3-year olds	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.0
0- to under 4-year olds	5.4	4.5	4.8	4.1	4.4	4.0

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

There are no data available on the number of households with children under 4 years of age. In order to enable comparison with other countries, the data in *Table 5* are for households with children under 6 years of age.

In 2015, 84.4% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 2.9%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.5%).

Table 6

Luxembourg: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	55,700	
Couple households	47,000	84.4
Other types of households	7,100	12.7
Single households, total	1,600	2.9
Single households, women	1,400	2.5
Single households, men	200**	0.4

⁺ Own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Luxembourg was 71.3% and that of women 60.8%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 72% were employed in 2015, whereas 89.1% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Both employment rates were higher than the EU28 average in 2015, they are among the highest in Europe.

¹ Für die Daten von 1995 wurden die damaligen EU15-Länder (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK) berücksichtigt, die Daten von 2005 (EU25) umfassen zusätzlich CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK und die Grundlage der Daten von 2014 sind die Länder der EU28 mit zusätzlich BG, RO und HR.

Table 7

Luxembourg: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015[†]

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Luxembourg	2005	61.1	95.2
	2010	67,6	93.3
	2015	72.0	89.1
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

[†]own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 22.8% of children under age 6 in Luxembourg were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is below the EU28 average (= 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 18.5%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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MALTA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

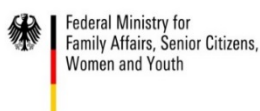
Valerie Sollars

Associate Professor, University of Malta,
Faculty of Education, Msida.

Citation suggestion:

Sollars, V. 2018. "Malta – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 764-808.

Funded by:



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Introductory note

As a result of recent changes within the system of early childhood education and care in Malta, the country now has a coordinated ECEC system known as the Early Years Cycle (MEDE 2012). This comprises three rather distinct stages of ECEC provision:

- childcare services for under 3-year olds;
- kindergarten settings for 3- to 5-year olds; and
- the first two years of compulsory primary school, for 5- to 7-year olds.

For the purpose of this report, attention will be given to the workforce engaged with the under 5-year olds. However, where necessary and in order to help readers contextualise and position the information about childcare and kindergarten practitioners, salient differences between the non-compulsory and compulsory sectors of the Early Years Cycle will be included.

Retrieving data about the qualifications of Childcare Workers and Kindergarten Assistants currently employed in Early Years settings was one of the challenges faced in drawing up the current report and the research methodology employed to collect the information deserves a short overview. Where available, data were compiled from different sources including going through documentation pertaining to individual early years settings. Where data about staff qualifications were not available, an attempt was made to collect these through a short questionnaire which was distributed after seeking and gaining approval from the Research Department within the Education Directorate. To the extent possible, data cited in this report are quoted from the official documentation maintained by the Education authorities. Whilst gratefully acknowledging all the assistance offered by several departments and personnel within the various offices at the Education Directorate (see *Acknowledgements* at the end of this report), it needs to be emphasised that some of the data cannot be interpreted as official or exhaustive. However, it is highly indicative of the status of the early years workforce. Information provided refers to data from 2015/16 and 2016/2017.

1. ECEC governance

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) is responsible for the regulation of non-compulsory ECEC settings, that is, for childcare settings for under 3-year olds and kindergartens for 3- to 5-year olds. State kindergarten settings, which cater for children between the ages of 2 years 9 months to 5 years 6 months, have been under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education since 1987. Kindergarten settings are provided in State, Independent and Church schools. The state sector is the largest of the three sectors.

Full responsibility for childcare settings passed from the Department for Social Welfare Standards (DSWS) within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) to the MEDE on 30th June 2016. Most childcare settings are privately-owned and around 13% are managed by the state. However, all were eligible to join a free childcare scheme introduced in April 2014 (MEDE, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

The MEDE has overall responsibility for educational direction, policy development and decision-making. Within the Ministry, the Education Directorate has a number of divisions. Particularly relevant for ECEC are: (1) the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) which is responsible for providing and monitoring students' services¹. Student Services include *Education psycho-social services, Special education, Inclusive Education, Projects and initiatives*. These ser-

¹ DES has three departments: *Education Resources; Student Services; and Lifelong learning and Early School Leavers*. The *Education Resources Department's* remit is mainly the deployment of teaching grades in State schools (Ministry for Education and Employment 2016a).

vices are available for children in any education sector (Church, State and Independent schools); (2) the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) which acts as the regulatory body for all educational institutions (State, Church and Independent) at all levels and is responsible for establishing quality standards. Within the DQSE the Accreditation Unit (AU) is responsible for the issuing of both the temporary and provisional registration for childcare settings² and the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) is responsible for monitoring childcare and visiting kindergarten settings when school audits are underway.

Abbreviations used in this report

AU	Accreditation Unit	LRP	Legally Responsible Person
B.Ed.	Bachelor in Education	LSA	Learning Support Assistant
CACHE	Council for Awards in Health, Care and Education	MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
CDEC	Centre for Child Development, Education and Care Studies	MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
DCM	Department of Curriculum Management	MFSS	Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity
DES	Directorate for Educational Services	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education	MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
DSWS	Department of Social Welfare Standards	MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
EO	Education Officer	MTL	Master in Teaching and Learning
ERCS	Education Regulatory Compliance Section	MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
ETC	Employment Training Corporation	NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
ETP	Extended Training Programme	PD	Professional Development
FES	Foundation for Educational Services	QAD	Quality Assurance Department
IfE	Institute for Education	SDP	School Development Plan
INSET	In-service Training	SKGA	Supply Kindergarten Assistant
KGA	Kindergarten Assistant	SMP	Statementing Moderating Panel
		UHM	Union Haddiema Magħqudin
		UM	University of Malta

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

There are two main categories of staff working directly with children within the non-compulsory early childhood education and care settings:

- **Childcare Workers**, generally referred to as child carers or child care assistants, work as core practitioners with the under 3-year olds in childcare settings; and
- **Kindergarten Assistants (KGAs)** work as core practitioners in kindergarten settings with 3- to 5-year olds.

The word 'assistant' is a misnomer as neither the Childcare Workers nor the Kindergarten Assistants actually assist anyone. Individual staff members are directly responsible for all aspects of work with very young children: planning, organising, managing, educating and caring.

² The Accreditation Unit is responsible for issuing a temporary registration for new childcare settings and a provisional registration for childcare settings which are operating in full compliance with the National Standards for Child Day Care (Ministry for Education and Employment 2016b; 2016c).

Data collated for this report indicate that in addition to the Child Care Workers within childcare settings, employers make reference to additional staff on their employee lists. These include individuals designated as ‘coordinators’, ‘relievers’, ‘helpers’, ‘students’ and ‘cleaners’. One setting refers to its staff as ‘play assistants’ and ‘play leaders’, with the latter taking the lead and the former providing support. There is no official/national description of duties for the various nomenclatures or designations attributed by the service providers to their staff.

Irrespective of assigned titles or official designations, across all settings Childcare Workers and Kindergarten Assistants have similar duties – though differences in titles or designations have an effect on the conditions of work (part-time/full-time) and salary. A MQF/EQF Level 4 qualification in early years is the minimum requirement expected of ‘qualified’ Childcare Workers and Kindergarten Assistants.

Staff in childcare settings

According to the Occupational Standards (MQC & DSWs 2013), within childcare settings there are three tiers of employees:

1. the ‘Legally Responsible Person’ (LRP) who is not necessarily on site, does not have contact with children and therefore cannot really be considered as belonging to the workforce;
2. the Manager, Supervisor, Coordinator or Director; and
3. the Childcare Worker.

Legally Responsible Persons are accountable for the service provided at the facility and are to ensure a high quality care service in line with the National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities (MFSS 2006). They are not necessarily directly involved in the running of the child day care facility. Since the LRP may be detached from the service and the client group, the DSWs standards only stipulate that this person must have reached the age of majority and must be of good conduct.

Some LRPs own or are responsible for multiple childcare settings operating from different locations on the island. Where childcare settings are located within school premises or within public-private entities or companies, the Head of School and the Head of the entity respectively, are listed as the LRP but are generally rather distant from the operation of the facility. In the documentation of the settings, information about the qualifications of the LRP is rarely included.

Whilst collecting data it was evident that in several private childcare settings, the **Manager** or **Supervisor** has a Childcare Worker’s role too and is directly responsible for a number of children. In some settings, a Childcare Worker is also identified as the **Coordinator** and whilst having the responsibility for a group of children, the coordinator would also be overseeing the activities which are organised at the setting. The decisions about dual roles for ‘coordinators/carers’, ‘supervisors/carers’ depend on the size of the setting, the number of children attending, whether the same owners have one or more childcare setting to manage and whether there are ‘relievers’ who can be called in to replace the regular care workers when the latter are away.

The 13 state supported and managed childcare settings run by the Foundation of Educational Services (FES) have a different set-up than the privately-owned childcare settings. Whilst the Chief Executive Officer for FES is identified as the LRP for all the settings, a childcare centre coordinator is appointed for each of the 13 settings. The overall objective of the position of a coordinator within the FES organisation is:

To ensure effective leadership and management of the Childcare Centre, working with partners across all sectors and promoting high quality care to all children. This service is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment; to establish and promote a working environment in which the emotional, social, psychological, physical, developmental and educational well-being of children is paramount and in which a supportive, empathetic and non-judgemental approach is used in all interactions with children and their fami-

lies. (FES - Job description, Childcare Centre Co-ordinator, Call for Application, personal communication, email 26th August, 2016)

Coordinators/Managers are responsible for the day to day running of the child care service and report directly to the LRP on the management and organisation of the service. They ensure that the service is in line with National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities (MFSS 2006) whilst providing high quality care and safety for the children. Moreover, they are responsible for inter alia supervision of suitable staff, availability and implementation of sound policies and procedures, for structuring the programme of activities, and for the intake of children.

The Coordinator has duties and obligations towards the service users, the team of Childcare Workers employed at the setting and the management. According to the call for applications for Coordinators³, duties towards the team require, for example, that they coordinate the work of the staff to ensure that the centre's aims, objectives and policies are implemented, monitored and evaluated; they lead, manage and support staff effectively on a day to day basis; they ensure that the team is well organised or they identify and sort out conflicts of interest and disagreements with colleagues.

According to email correspondence between the Acting Manager of the Welfare Services Assessment Unit and the childcare service providers (13th December 2015) and in an effort to improve the services by strengthening compliance with the National Standards in Child Day Care Settings (MFSS 2006), service providers were informed that in accordance with Standard 1.1 of the National Standards document:

Managers/Supervisors [are] to be qualified at Level 5 in a qualification in child care recognised by DSWS, or be enrolled in a course which leads to that qualification by December 2016.

Carers [are] to be qualified at Level 4 in a qualification in child care recognised by DSWS, or be enrolled in a course which leads to that qualification by December 2016.

Staff who do not possess the necessary qualification, nor are enrolled on the course, should take the relevant trade test. Proof of application for trade-test is to be submitted to DSWS by end of December 2016.

Managers / Supervisors / Carers who are not adequately qualified or who do not register for a course which fulfils these basic requirements will not be considered as contributing towards the child to carer ratio as from January 2017. Additionally, the DSWS will not accept that LRPs of child-day care centres recruit new employees (carers) who are not in possession of the necessary child-care qualifications as from June 2016. (Correspondence held in Childcare files available at the Accreditation Unit)

Childcare Workers are responsible for following the manager's decisions, policies, procedures and programme of activities and for ensuring the safety and well-being of the children within their care. They also indicate possible areas of improvement to the manager. According to the DSWS standards, a Childcare Worker must have reached the age of majority, be of good moral character and be trained in childcare.

Staff in kindergarten settings

Within the kindergarten settings, **Kindergarten Assistants** (KGAs) are responsible for working directly with the children. They are expected to plan, prepare and conduct educational activities to stimulate and foster children's abilities, their personal, social attitudes and values as well as their autonomy and intellectual curiosity. Furthermore, they are expected to develop and implement schemes of work towards achieving the school development plan. In addition to creating an appropriate learning environment with suitable resources, they are to observe, assess and record children's development, progress and behaviour.

More often than not, KGAs work within a school structure and whilst they are the sole persons responsible for a group of children in their 'classroom', the Head of School has the overall responsibility for the kindergarten setting. In most schools, an Assistant Head of School is as-

³ A copy of the application call for 2014 was shared through an email communication on 26 August 2016.

signed the responsibility of the kindergarten section but this depends on the school population and the distribution of roles assigned by the Head.

All practitioners working with Kindergarten children are referred to as 'Kindergarten Assistants'. There are two grades of KGAs, replacing the former grade of 'KGA'. The new grades are referred to as KG I and KG II and came into force following a number of agreements and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Government of Malta and the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) (MEYE 2007, 2009a; MUT 2010). Staff initially employed in the grade of KGA is being assimilated into the new grades depending on years of service and their following an up-skilling programme with an established number of hours.

Apart from the regular KGAs with a full-time appointment, from time to time the DES issues calls for **Supply Kindergarten Assistants** (SKGAs). As the name implies, supply staff are employed either on a definite contract with a clear timeframe within which their services are required or may have their services terminated as a result of particular events (MEYE 2009b, Clause 2.2, 2.3, 2.4). SKGAs are also required to engage in training in order to obtain a recognised qualification in Early Years if their services are required for longer than one year. Provided they start a diploma or a first Degree Honours in Early Childhood Education on a part-time or distance learning basis from a recognised higher education institution they receive a permanent contract.

In conclusion, differences in nomenclature of KGAs arise from differences in qualifications and conditions of employment at the time of the call for applications. Irrespective of whether individuals are employed as KGA, KG I, KG II or SKGA, they are all expected to perform identical duties. This is evident by the various calls for applications which are issued periodically and where details about expected duties, entry qualifications and remuneration are provided.

Table 1 shows features of staff in centre-based settings in Malta and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Malta: ECEC contact staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s ⁴	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ⁵ level
Childcare sector				
Supervisor / Manager / Coordinator <i>Profile:</i> Social/Health Care Professional	Childcare settings Under 3-year olds	Core practitioner with management responsibilities, sometimes also working with children	Depends on the Awarding Body; 0–3 years 0–5 years	2 years full-time study in management ECTS points: vary depending on programme/provider EQF level: 5 ISCED: 4
Childcare Worker <i>Profile:</i> Social/Health Care Professional	Childcare settings Under 3-year olds	Core practitioner with group responsibilities	0–3 years	2 years full-time post-secondary qualification or various alternative routes e.g. 372 hours and 500 hours work placement; e.g. 3 phases, including 500 hours work placement ECTS points: not applicable

⁴ The description of the responsibilities for staff in childcare settings is taken from the Occupational Standards (MQC and DSWs 2013). The summary /excerpt of responsibilities for KGA is drawn from the Calls for KGA II published in the Malta Government Gazette (July 11th 2014 and November 24th 2015).

⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012. International Standard Classification of Education 2011.
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s ⁴	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ⁵ level
				ECVET: between 54 and 64 EQF level: 4 ISCED: 4
Kindergarten/education sector				
Kindergarten Assistant (KGA) <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	Kindergarten setting located in primary school 3- to 5-year olds (youngest possible starting age 2 years 9 months)	Core practitioner with group responsibilities	3–5 years	2 years full-time post-secondary qualification Certificate (KG 1) OR Diploma (KG II) ECTS points: vary ECVET: depends on the programme or provider EQF level: 4 ISCED: 4

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/ Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Overall, there is a very low, indeed negligible presence of men in KG and childcare settings. Early childhood education and care is still predominantly considered to be appropriate for women rather than men.

Staff in childcare settings

Data on the workforce in childcare services were collected by going through documentation which is available for each specific childcare setting. In all, 95 files were reviewed corresponding to the number of settings in operation at the time. Data presented include information recorded between January and June 2016 from 93 childcare settings (no appropriate data were available for two settings).

The data are to be interpreted cautiously as currently there is no accurate or official system to maintain an up-to-date national database of the workforce in childcare settings or to monitor and trace the mobility of individuals within and beyond the sector.

Although a template prescribed by the DSWS required service providers to distinguish between qualified and unqualified staff as well as indicate the awarding body for the Childcare Worker's qualification, the course title and the MQF level of actual and/or prospective qualifications⁶, some service providers tended to simply list 'childcare' as the course title. This lack of attention to specification of course titles suggests that service providers are not necessarily

⁶ Information requested about prospective qualifications includes the termination date as well as documented evidence that unqualified staff have actually started the programme of studies.

knowledgeable about the basic skills, knowledge and in-depth understanding which those seeking employment as a Childcare Worker ought to obtain through their initial professional studies.

Table 2 shows that in the 93 settings in the survey, 43% were in possession of the minimum entry requirement (MQF Level 4) for Childcare Workers set by the Occupational Standards (MQC & DSWS 2013) and a further 11.2% had a qualification level above the minimum requirement.

Table 2

Malta: Qualifications of staff employed in childcare settings (N=93), 2015/16

Qualification (by EQF/MQF Level)	Number	Per cent
Level 3 qualification	43	5.7
Level 4 qualification	325	43.0
Level 5 qualification	32	4.2
Level 6 or Level 7: University degree ⁷	53	7.0
Miscellaneous ⁸	50	6.6
In the process of obtaining a qualification	57	7.5
Insufficient information	37	4.9
No qualifications/no details included ⁹	163	21
TOTAL	760	100

Table 3 gives a breakdown of the number and proportion of men working in childcare settings.

Table 3

Malta: Gender of the workforce in childcare settings (N=93), 2015/16

	Male	Female	Male	Female	Males + Females
	Number		in %		Number
LRP	25	60	3.3	7.9	85
Manager/Director	9	52	1.2	7.0	61
Childcare Worker	2	563 ¹⁰	0.3	74.0	565
Others ¹¹	1	48	0.1	6.3	49
Totals	37	723	5.0	95.0	760

There are several employees working in childcare settings with a foreign qualification¹². Recognition of such a qualification in terms of its MQF Level rating is obtained by formal confirmation sought through the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE¹³). However, recognition of the qualification in terms of its relevance and suitability for employment is the responsibility of the employer. Several employees and employers in child-

⁷ Not necessarily related to childcare or early childhood education

⁸ Individuals in possession of various certificates. Examples: CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing; Cambridge Institute "Good Practice in Childcare"; Diploma of Higher Education in Social Work; Institute of Tourism Studies - Tourist guide; Diploma in languages (Castellan, French and English); BTEC Level 2 in Health and Social Care; Foundation Diploma in Art and Design.

⁹ Includes male and female LRPs; managers and directors; care workers, helpers and cleaners.

¹⁰ In 22 instances, one Child Care Worker was also identified as the Manager or Supervisor, or Co-ordinator or Guide

¹¹ Includes helpers, relievers and cleaners.

¹² Examples of foreign qualifications of individual employees include: Certificate of Vocational Diploma in Early Childhood Educator, Centre for Education and Culture Trebnje, Slovenia; Certificate III in community services (Children's services) – Victoria University of Technology, Australia; Scottish Nursery Nurses Certificate; Early Childhood Education awarded by the Further Education and Training Awards Council, Ireland;

¹³ The NCFHE is the entity responsible for recognition, validation and accreditation of further and higher education.

care settings are in possession of a University degree or qualification. Amongst such qualifications, there are a number which are not related to early years¹⁴.

Within childcare settings, just under 10% of all Childcare Workers come from other European countries (Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Serbia, Hungary, Italy, Spain, England, Scotland and Belgium) as well as from non-European countries (Thailand, Russia, Cuba, Honduras and Brazil).

Table 4 gives an overview of the composition of the workforce in childcare settings.

Table 4

Malta: Composition of the workforce in childcare settings (N=93), 2015/16

Staff category	%
Staff with higher education degree (but not all ECEC specialist degrees)	7.0
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary ¹⁵)	52.9
Staff with non-specialist or other, partly-related qualification ¹⁶	6.6
Staff with no formal IPS ¹⁷ or in process of obtaining qualification	28.5
Specialist support staff	No data available
Male staff	5.0
Staff with background of migration	10.0
Insufficient information	4.9

Kindergarten staff in the education sector

Within the State sector, data about professional qualifications of Kindergarten Assistants or Primary Teachers are not maintained or updated and the information was collated through a short survey conducted as an independent piece of research. The survey which was completed voluntarily, was sent to all 62 State schools with Kindergarten Assistants and Primary Teachers working in the first two years of compulsory education, teaching 5- to 7-year olds. The response rate was very encouraging: 382 (75%) of the potential 512 Kindergarten Assistants and 203 (71.5%) of the potential 284 Year 1 and Year 2 Teachers returned the completed questionnaire. Apart from items yielding background information, participants were asked to include details about:

- their professional qualification/s in early years when they were initially employed in their current role;
- alternative qualifications they were in possession of at the time of their employment if none were available relating to early childhood education;
- whether they had obtained a professional qualification in early childhood education whilst in employment;
- whether they were following a professional qualification in early years at the time of the research in March/April 2016.

There are no official data about the nationality of staff working within early childhood education and care settings, although the great majority is Maltese. In State KG settings, 13 of the 382 respondents (3.4%) were born in a country other than Malta. Six KGAs were born in Aus-

¹⁴ Secondary school teacher of Serbian Literature and Language, University of Pristina; B.A.(French & Psychology); B.Sc. (Computing and Information Systems); B.Com (Business Management); Master in Diplomacy; Master in Pastoral Counselling; Bachelor degree in Philosophy and Social Sciences (Šiauliai University in Lithuania).

¹⁵ Compulsory education in Malta lasts 11 years. Children spend 6 years in primary school (aged 5 to 11 years) and five years in secondary school (11-16 years). Any courses/programmes of study followed after the age of 16 are referred to as post-secondary education.

¹⁶ Individuals in possession of various certificates. Examples: CACHE dip in nursery nursing; Cambridge good practice in childcare; Diploma of Higher Education in Social Work; Institute of Tourism Studies - Tourist guide; Diploma in languages (Castellan, French & English); BTEC Level 2 in Health and Social Care; Foundation Diploma in Art & Design.

¹⁷ Includes male and female LRPs; managers and directors; care workers, helpers and cleaners.

tralia, three were born in England and one KGA was born in Canada, USA, Italy and Romania respectively.

Data about the non-state sector (Church and Independent schools) were collected by reviewing documentation which each school is obliged to submit annually to what until recently was known as the Education Regulatory Compliance Section (ERCS)¹⁸ within the DQSE. This implies that data concerning the designation and qualifications of members of staff depend on the accuracy of the reporting of the school administration and as with the qualifications data about staff in childcare settings, it is an aspect where schools need support in ensuring that correct information is submitted.

Kindergarten staff in the State sector

In total, there are 68 State primary schools organised in 10 colleges¹⁹. Of these, 62 schools offer kindergarten services for 3- to 5-year olds and include the first years of compulsory education for 5- to 7-year olds. The remaining six primary schools offer education services for the final three years of compulsory primary education (8- to 11-year olds).

Overall 310 (319 including “relievers”) Kindergarten Assistants in the state sector (including one male KGA) work with 3- to 4-year olds, and 202 (207 including “relievers”) with 4- to 5-year olds (Directorate for Educational Services 2016, email communication 3rd May 2016):

Table 5 shows data collected from questionnaires sent to 62 State schools in March/April 2016 and reflects possession of qualifications at the start of their current designation.

Table 5

Malta: Composition of the workforce in kindergarten settings in the State sector, 2016²⁰

Staff category	%
Staff with specialist higher education degree (BA/MA)	0.6
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	58.6
Staff with non-specialist qualification	no data available
Staff with no formal IPS - or in process of obtaining qualification	38.5
Specialist support staff	no data available
Male staff	Only 1 person
Staff with background of migration	3.4
Insufficient information	2.1

About 60 of the respondents who had no formal qualification at the beginning of their career reported that they followed the 70 hours, 140 hours or 210 hours of up-skilling to be assimilated into the grade of KG II according to the agreement between the Government and the MUT (2010). Eight KGAs reported that they have followed/were following the B.Ed. (Hons.) degree in Early Childhood Education offered at the University of Malta.

Kindergarten staff in the non-state sector: Church school settings

The 40 Church schools which provide educational facilities for very young children vary in that some offer services for 3- to 5-year olds, some cater exclusively for compulsory primary education (5- to 11-year olds) and others offer both KG and compulsory education. Out of the 40 Church schools, 12 schools provide primary school services only; 14 offer Kindergarten services only and 14 have both kindergarten and primary school services for a total of 67 kindergarten

¹⁸ At the beginning of July 2016, ERCS was renamed as the ‘Accreditation Unit’. As a Unit, it will operate separately, although closely, with the Quality Assurance Department. ERCS used to form part of the QAD but they are now two separate entities.

¹⁹ Each College incorporates a number of primary schools, a middle school and secondary school. There are nine colleges in Malta. Gozo constitutes one college made up of 11 primary schools and the secondary school.

²⁰ Data collected from questionnaires sent to 62 State schools in March/April 2016 and reflects possession of qualifications at the start of their current designation.

classes. 68 Kindergarten Assistants are employed in these 28 settings. Most of them (46 females, one male) work with 4- to 5-year olds in KG 2.

Table 6

Malta: Composition of the workforce in kindergarten settings in Church schools (N=28) with 67 KG classes, 2015/16

Staff category	%
Staff with specialist higher education degree	1.5
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	75.0
Staff with non-specialist qualification	no data available
Staff with no formal IPS	23.4
Specialist support staff	no data available
Male staff	Only 1 person
Staff with background of migration	no data available

Kindergarten staff in the non-state sector: Independent school settings

There are 13 independent settings which offer KG provision and primary school and 10 settings which offer childcare services and KG provision²¹. No reliable data were available for three of the settings and these were therefore excluded. 59 Kindergarten Assistants worked with the 3- to 4-year olds and 45 KGAs worked with the 4- to 5-year olds. All of them were female.

Table 7

Malta: Composition of the workforce in kindergarten settings within Independent schools (N=20) with 102 KG classes, 2015/16

Qualification	%
Staff with specialist higher education degree	1.9
Staff with higher education degree – unrelated to Early Years	9.6
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	63.2
Staff with non-specialist qualification	no data available
Staff with no formal IPS	19.3
Specialist support staff	no data available
Male staff	None
Staff with background of migration	no data available
Insufficient information	5.8

It is worth noting that in contrast to the required qualifications for staff working with under 5-year olds, staff employed to work with children in compulsory education, including 5- to 7-year olds, are predominantly warranted (licensed) Primary Teachers who are qualified with a Bachelor's degree in Education (Government of Malta 1988, Education Act, Cap 327, Article 23 and Article 24, pp. 14-16). To date the B.Ed. (Hons.) has been offered as a four-year full-time programme of studies at MQF/EQF Level 6; ISCED 6, (UNESCO 2011) for a total of 240 ECTS. Very few practitioners working with under 5-year olds have a university qualification. They are not yet referred to as ECEC teachers, despite being given a warrant²². By November 2016, there were 67 graduates with a B.Ed. (Hons.) in Early Childhood Education and Care awarded by the University of Malta. Rather than working in KG settings, most of those who have completed the University course have been employed to teach within the compulsory sector.

²¹ Taken from records for 2015/2016 submitted by schools to ERCS within the DQSE. Data were available for 20 of the 23 independent settings with KG provision.

²² Teachers apply for a permanent warrant which is given by the Minister of Education upon the recommendation of the Council for the Teaching Profession. Warrants are recommended on the basis of appropriate qualifications.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

The Occupational Standards (MQC & DSWS 2013; NCFHE, 2017a, 2017b) established that within childcare settings, Childcare Workers should be in possession of a relevant qualification at EQF/MQF Level 4 whilst Supervisors/Managers should be in possession of a qualification at EQF/MQF Level 5. There are no specifications about the number of ECTS, the duration or the components of the courses.

With regard to IPS requirements for KGAs, apart from being proficient in English and Maltese, subsequent calls issued in recent years initially referred to explicit courses which were pegged at MQF/EQF Level 4 by the NCFHE (Malta Government Gazette, Dec 2009 and Feb 2011).

*in possession of the **MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Early Years** including the Extended Training Programme organized by the DQSE in collaboration with MCAST or an appropriate recognized comparable qualification including a **Pre-school certificate in Education for KGA issued by the Education Division or a Pre-School Certificate in Child Care issued by the Education Division** (Malta Government Gazette, 2009, p. 15,070)*

More recently, the 2014 and 2015 recruitment calls for KG II with the DES did not identify a specific course/programme of studies but referred to a recognized Diploma (Government Gazette, 11th July 2014; 24th November 2015). Applicants were to be:

*in possession, or have been approved for the award, of a **recognised Diploma at MQF level 4, in early Childhood Education and Care** that includes a component of training Practice (including the Extended Training Programme organised by the education Directorates in collaboration with MCAST), or a recognised appropriate comparable qualification including qualifications in **pre-school education or pre-school childcare 0-5 years at MQF level 4** (2014, p.8546) and (2015, p. 15,623)*

Three subtle shifts in the call for applications to recruit KGAs in the State sector with implications for the workforce and IPS are worth noting.

1. Moving away from specifically identifying courses or programmes of study is a way of acknowledging the proliferation of training courses by different entities, all of which purport to address early years matters. This increases the urgency of establishing clear standards and expectations (as yet, these are non-existent) about the qualifications of practitioners in early childhood education and care which could then be addressed within the different courses.
2. It appears that irrespective of the content of the programme of studies, the only distinction between recruitment/employment requirements for Childcare Workers and KGA relates to the practical or work placements conducted during IPS. Irrespective of the programme of studies followed, prospective KGA seeking work within the State KG sector, require evidence of a practicum in a kindergarten setting.
3. The 'Extended Training Programme' (ETP – for details see section 8.3), initially set up in 2006 and offered exclusively to MCAST students, had four components: induction, observation visits, teaching practice and tutorials. The Education Directorate retained responsibility for the induction component only (which in 2014 and 2015 was allocated 25 hours) whilst MCAST has responsibility for the remaining three components which were delivered as an integral part of the BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) programme. However, according to the MCAST Principal (personal communication, Nov 2016), the ETP will no longer be a requirement for KGAs in the State sector since this was unfairly penalising MCAST students. DES/DQSE will consider transforming this into an induction programme for all newly recruited KGAs.

In 2011, apart from being able to communicate in Maltese and English, the recruitment call for KG II with the DES (Malta Government Gazette 2011) stated that applicants were to be:

“...in possession of or have been approved for the award of a Diploma or higher, in Early Childhood Education and Care that includes a component of training practice including the Extended Training Program organized by the DQSE in collaboration with MCAST or a recognised appropriate comparable qualification that comprises a component of Training Practice, including a Pre-school certificate in Education for KGA or a Pre-School Certificate in Child Care.” (Malta Government Gazette 2011, 808)

Whilst tangible efforts have been made to raise the IPS for KGAs to EQF Level 6, and despite the Government and MUT 2007 (MEYE 2007) and 2010 (MUT 2010) agreements, it appears that the current EQF Level 4 courses will still be accepted and expected as the minimum entry requirement. A draft document with proposals about changes to the Education Act (Professions in Education Act, MEDE 2016d), explicitly recommends Level 4 as the minimum qualification for recruiting KGAs. This is discussed in greater detail in section 9.

Several entities offer training programmes which purport to make students eligible to work within childcare and/or kindergarten settings. Some courses are offered on a full-time basis, others are run as part-time courses. Some programmes target 16-year old school leavers, whilst others attract women who are seeking to (re)join the labour market. Entities which offer programmes of study are licensed by the NCFHE and seek to get their programmes accredited according to the MQF level rating. The University of Malta (UM) and MCAST are both self-accrediting entities (Government of Malta, 2012b, S.L. 327.433)²³.

Whilst the NCFHE publishes a list of accredited courses offered by licensed institutions (NCFHE 2016a), it has always insisted that the decision whether to accept a programme of studies as valid in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies for a specific employment rests with the employer²⁴. The accreditation awarded by NCFHE has an expiration date of five years; after that, providers are required to resubmit an application. It is possible for a provider to update a course to be in line with developments while keeping the same title. The MQF/EQF level rating of the course is assigned taking into consideration the course objectives and the learning outcomes. It is not linked to the duration of the course. The Referencing report (NCFHE 2016b) distinguishes between an ‘award’ and a ‘qualification’, specifically to “overcome the confusion in understanding the different types of certification that exists” (p 53). Substantial courses lead to a ‘qualification’; short courses which do not fulfil the requirements in terms of minimum ‘credits’ required, are referred to as ‘awards’.

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

The following tables show the entry requirements, professional studies, awards as well as credits, EQF and ISCED levels of the different initial qualification routes of the ECEC workforce.

²³ A self-accrediting entity is one which does not have to submit its programmes and courses to an external agency in order to have the programmes pegged to the MQF/EQF. Private entities which are planning to offer courses or entire programmes of study, need to submit their documentation through NCFHE in order to get the level rating and thus recognition of the programme/course.

²⁴ The entry requirements or job requirements are the prerogative of the employer and it is up to them to determine if the course is suitable. The NCFHE examines the prospective level of the course and the number of ECTS/ECVET proposed. It also utilises external evaluators to attest the validity of the learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment proposed by the applicant. (Email communication with Head of Accreditation Unit, NCFHE, August 2nd 2016). Further details are available through the Referencing Report (NCFHE, 2016b).

Table 8

Malta: Kindergarten Assistant

Job title in English: Kindergarten Assistant
Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: MCAST-BTEC Diploma in Health and Social Care OR MCAST Diploma in Health and Social Care OR four O-Level/Secondary School Certificate and Profile²⁵ (Level 3) including (compulsory) English Language, Maltese and Mathematics.</p> <p>Professional studies²⁶: 2 years full-time, post-secondary – students can enrol at MCAST when compulsory education is completed at the age of 16.</p> <p>Award: MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development²⁷ including the Extended Training Programme</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergartens for 3- to 4-year olds (youngest entry age 2 years 9 months), located in State, Church-affiliated or Independent (private) primary schools or Independent kindergartens.</p> <p><i>Until 2001</i> (the Programme used to be offered by the Education Division when MCAST was set up):</p> <p>Entry requirements: At least four 'O' levels including English, Maltese and Maths.</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years full-time, post-secondary; the programme has been discontinued but holders of the certificate are eligible to apply as KGAs.</p> <p>Award: Pre-School Education Certificate</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>ECVET: not available</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: see above</p>

Table 9

Malta: Childcare Worker/Child Carer/ Childcare Assistant

Job title in English: Childcare Worker
Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional
<p>Entry requirements: MCAST-BTEC Diploma in Health and Social Care or MCAST Diploma in Health and Social Care or 4 SEC/O-Level/SSC&P²⁸ (Level 3) passes; compulsory: English Language, Maltese and Mathematics</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years full-time, post-secondary – students can enrol at MCAST when compulsory education is completed at the age of 16.</p> <p>Award: MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>ECVET: not available</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years and KG settings, 3-5 years</p> <p>Alternative routes:</p> <p>Any IPS in child care pegged at MQF/EQF Level 4 and approved by NCFHE followed on a full-time or part-time basis. Courses to date are offered by several private institutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Entry requirements: 16 years of age or older; an MQF Level 2 qualification in Mathematics, English and Maltese and a clean Police Conduct Certificate. In the absence of an MQF Level 2 qualification, individuals can apply if in possession of other qualifications or relevant experience. <p>Professional studies: 372 hours (lectures), 500 hours practicum</p>

²⁵ Secondary School Certificate & Profile. Details available in DQSE & NCFHE (2012) *SSC & P Handbook*

²⁶ Other comparable Level 4 IPS are listed with 'childcare' as the field of work but have been accepted for KG

²⁷ Earlier programmes offered at MCAST through BTEC were known as Edexcel Level 3 BTEC National Diploma in Early Years; MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children's Play, Learning and Development; MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development. The MCAST courses are now home-grown.

²⁸ Secondary School Certificate and Profile. Details available in DQSE & NCFHE (2012) *SSC & P Handbook*.

Job title in English: *Childcare Worker*
Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional

Award: JobsPlus (formerly ETC) – VET Award in childcare (0-5)

ECTS points: n/a

ECVET: 54

EQF level: 4

ISCED 4

Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years

2. **Entry requirements:** At least pass grades in 3 ‘O levels’ – Maths, English and Maltese (MQF Level 3). Eligibility tests, known as a pre-course assessment²⁹, are offered to potential students who are not in possession of the ‘O’ levels.

Professional studies: Three phases (no details available about duration); Phase 3: 500 hours practicum

Award: ETC/NCFHE: Certificate of Competence in Child Care (0-5) after a period of traineeship; Certification awarded upon successful completion of the Trade Test

ECTS points: n/a

ECVET: not available

EQF level: 4

ISCED 4

Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years

3. **Entry requirements:** ‘O’ level English *or* CACHE level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young People’s Workforce (QCF) also referred to as the foundation course for persons interested in working as child carers but who do not have at least an ‘O’ level in English or have not studied for a long time (Future Focus Ltd. 2016).

Professional studies: offered as a part-time course; 360 hours of work experience/practicum are to be completed

Award: Future Focus – CACHE Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People’s Workforce (QCF)

ECTS points: 65³⁰

ECVET: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED: 4

Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years and KG settings, 3-5

4. **Entry requirements:** An ‘O’ level Standard of education: Maths, English and Maltese recommended

Professional studies: evenings and weekends, over one year; 450 hours of placement

Award: Minds Malta³¹ – Diploma in Childcare (The early years)

ECTS points: n/a

ECVET: 56

EQF level: 4

ISCED 4

Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years and KG settings, 3-5

5. **Entry requirements:** ‘O’ Levels in English, Maths and Maltese. ‘Eligibility tests’ are offered to applicants who are not in possession of ‘O’ levels.

Professional studies: Full time or part-time route; Includes 500 hours of practical work. Course divided into three components.

Award: Centre for Child Development, Education and Care Studies – VET Diploma in Child Development, Education and Care

ECTS points: n/a

ECVET: 60

EQF level: 4

²⁹ The pre-course assessment was developed by Jobsplus Training Design and Quality Assurance Unit. The scope of this assessment is to ensure that a person who enters the course has the capability of coping with the workload requested from MQF Level 4 qualifications. This pre-assessment consists of a number of exercises to assess the reading and writing abilities of prospective trainees as well as their numeracy skills.

³⁰ According to a footnote on the NCFHE register for accredited courses, “the number of Credits was obtained from the Ofqual website; programmes of studies accredited internationally may not use ECTS or ECVET system”.

³¹ From January 2017, will be offered by St Catherine’s High School, Higher Education Tuition Centre.

Job title in English: <i>Childcare Worker</i> Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional
<p>ISCED 4 Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years</p> <p>6. Entry requirements: No specific qualifications – seeking recognition of prior learning or in possession of a qualification which is not at MQF Level 4 or in possession of a qualification which is not home-grown. Prospective candidates need to have 3 years’ experience with children in a childcare facility catering for children from 0–5 years. Applicants also need to present a reference letter by a previous employer, confirming the number of hours of their experience to the Assessment Board, prior to the Assessment.</p> <p>Professional studies: Process of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Assessment consists of: Written test (100%); Interview (90%) and Portfolio (10%); Practical test (100%). (Pass mark 50 in each of the sections.)</p> <p>Award: Jobsplus and Trade Test (NCFHE 2016a)</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>ECVET: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 4 Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years</p>

Table 10

Malta: Childcare Manager/Coordinator (IPS)

Job title in English: <i>Childcare Manager/Coordinator</i> Profile: Social/Health Care Professional
<p>Entry requirements: MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development and SEC/O-Level passes in Mathematics, English and Maltese or MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children’s Play, Learning and Development and SEC/O-Level passes in Mathematics, English and Maltese or 2 A-Level passes and 2 I-Level passes Compulsory A-level or I-level: 2 subjects from Mathematics, English, Maltese.</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 years full-time study at College of Arts, Science and Technology</p> <p>Award: MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in the Early Years (MCAST 2016a)</p> <p>ECTS points: 120</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 4 Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: Preference will be given to students who hold the CACHE level 4 diploma certificate or equivalent irrespective of age. Students who completed the Future Focus Level 3 certificate and wish to proceed directly to level 5 must be at least 23 years on date of application.</p> <p>Professional experience requirement: At least 3 years of continuous experience working as a child carer</p> <p>Award: Future Focus: CACHE Level 5 Diploma in Leadership in Children’s Care Learning and Development for child care centre managers</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>ECVET: 90 (Future Focus Ltd. 2016)</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 4 Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years</p> <p><i>Alternative route:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: No specific qualifications</p> <p>Professional studies: Process of validation of informal and non-formal learning for Childcare Managers and Supervisors in childcare centres. Assessment is composed of three components: Written Test (100%); Interview (100%) and Portfolio (100%)</p> <p>Award: Trade Test for Childcare Supervisor/Manager (Jobsplus and NCFHE 2016b); Certificate of Competence pegged at Level 5 within the MQF and EQF and endorsed by the NCFHE</p> <p>ECTS points: not applicable</p> <p>ECVET: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 4 Main ECEC workplace: Childcare settings, 0–3 years</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Tables 11a-11i highlight the competencies, curricular areas and pedagogic approaches within the various MQF/EQF Level 4 courses for Kindergarten Assistants and Childcare Workers. Most of the information presented was elicited from the public domain including websites, the transcript which accompanies the certificate and records at the MEDE Registry.

Table 11a

Malta: Competencies, curricular areas and pedagogic approaches for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS
(Provider: MCAST (2016b), Award: MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development)

Competencies	Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enabling students to work in a professional capacity with children in the early years sector, - planning activities for babies, toddlers and children in the early years, - maintaining health and safety standards in early years settings, - implementing activities and constructing resources for children, - monitoring and recording the development of children. 	<p>Core study units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relations for children's care, learning and development; • Positive environments for children's care, learning and development; • Promoting children's development; • Safeguarding children; • Promoting children's rights; • Children's learning activities and play; • Diet and nutrition for children; • Physical activities for children; • Psychological perspectives on children's behaviour; • Supporting children's numeracy skills; • Supporting children's literacy skills; • Design and technology for the early years practitioner; • Environmental science for the early years; • Meeting additional requirements for children's settings, learning and development; • Psychological observation; • Reflecting on and developing practice for children. <p><i>Mandatory specialist units:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills; • Health, education and social services for children and their families; • Food and mealtimes in Early Years. <p><i>Optional specialist units:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with children with additional needs; • Promoting mathematical development in children aged 4-8 years; • Promoting literacy in children aged 4-8 years; • Cooking activities with children; • Supporting children's creativity. 	<p>A mix of lectures and supervised practical work with children of different age groups in childcare settings and schools. Students are expected to dedicate a number of self-study hours to work on the assignments given out by the lecturers but also to prepare materials and activities for placement purposes.</p> <p>Students are exposed to the most innovative teaching techniques and are also trained on observation techniques required to monitor the development of children. There is a major emphasis on the practical components carried out in this course.</p>

Table 11b

Malta: Curricular areas and pedagogic approaches for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS
(Provider: Education Division³²; Award: Pre-School Education Certificate)

Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
<p>A two-year course in Child Development and Child Care in three components:</p> <p>1) <i>Theory</i>: Child development; Child care; Curriculum</p>	<p>Lectures; seminars and workshops. Discussion, planning and preparation of classroom equipment and materials in; language acquisition;</p>

³² Programme used to be offered through the Further Studies and Adult Education Department

Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
development; Personal enrichment 2) <i>Methodology</i> : The curriculum: the integrated day. Use of projects and story themes to combine 'subject' into interesting learning programmes. 3) <i>Practice</i> : School Practice: one term in the first year (approximately 33% of the time); two terms in the second year (approximately 66%)	mathematical concepts; environmental studies; moral/ethical issues; science concepts; creative arts Planning a programme of learning while implementing theories and methodology studies.

Table 11c

Malta: Competencies, curricular areas and pedagogic approaches for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS

(Provider: ETC; Award: *VET award in childcare 0-5*³³)

Competencies	Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
All competencies enlisted under the National Occupational Standards for Childcare Workers (MQC & DSWS 2013)	8 Modules: 362 hours + 500 hours practicum + 10 hours assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child development (86 hours); • Development of communication, imagination, creativity (60 hours); • Physical care of the child (65 hours) • Nutrition and hygiene (21 hours) • Health and safety (32 hours) • Children's rights, equality and inclusion (37 hours) • Supporting a child with disability or individual needs (49 hours) • Self-reflection and self-development (12 hours) 	Modules 1 to 7 are delivered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecturing - Discussions - Role plays - Presentations Module 8 is based on lecturing and hands-on experience in a childcare facility.

Table 11d

Malta: Competencies and curricular areas for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS

(Provider: ETC/NCFHE³⁴; Award: *Certificate of Competence in Child Care 0-5*)

Competencies	Curricular areas
All competencies enlisted under the National Occupational Standards for Childcare Workers. (MQC and DSWS 2013)	Programme organised in three phases: <p>Phase 1: Foundation course focused on child development (physical; intellectual; social/emotional and moral; development of imagination and creativity; development of language) and child care (basic concepts of nutrition; hygiene and care; the physical needs of the young child; environmental and safety issues; childhood ailments and immunisation). Can proceed to Phase 2 and Phase 3 on successful completion of the foundation phase</p> <p>Phase 2: Traineeship (off-the-job training) focused on further studies in child care issues (importance of equal opportunities; inclusion of children with special needs; parental involvement; observation and records in child study; first aid in emergencies; team work between colleagues) and methodology (ECE pioneers; play as a major medium of development; theories and types of play; daily programmes in child care settings; preparation of materials and evaluation; choice and care of play materials).</p> <p>Phase 3: On-the-job training focused on <i>Physical care</i> (students are monitored and examined in all aspects of physical care of babies, toddlers and 2- to 3-year old children including preparation of food, feeding, cleaning and caring for equipment; bathing, nappy changing; health and safety routines; exercise and settling children down) and <i>Play activities</i> (students are monitored and examined in all aspects of prepara-</p>

³³ Information retrieved from transcript accompanying certificate. Future certification will be issued by Jobsplus

³⁴ Certificate of Competence through Trade Test awarded after a period of traineeship. Traineeship organised in three phases as well as practice placement.

Competencies	Curricular areas
	<p>tion and execution of all aspects of play activities as appropriate to the stage and age of child's development: baby play and suitable play for toddlers and children 2-3).</p> <p>Plus: 500 hours of practice Certification issued on successful result of Trade Test</p>

Table 11e

Malta: Competencies and curricular areas for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS

(Provider: Future Focus; Award: *CACHE Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce*)

Competencies	Curricular areas
<p>Designed to build the knowledge and skills needed when working with children and young people from birth to 19 years (CACHE 2016).</p> <p>Understanding ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the importance of effective communication in the work setting; - which competences are required in one's own work role; - the importance of diversity; - how duty of care contributes to safe practice; - the expected pattern of development for children and young people from birth to 19 years; - the factors that influence children and young people's development and how these affect practice; <p>Knowing ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to address conflicts or dilemma that may arise between an individual's rights and the duty of care; how to respond to complaints; - how to monitor children and young people's development; - which interventions should take place if development is not following the expected pattern; - the importance of early intervention to support the speech, language and communication needs. 	<p>70 credits³⁵:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote creativity and creative learning in young children (5); • Engage in personal development in health, social care or children's and young people's settings (3); • Care for the physical and nutritional needs of babies and young children (6); • Support children and young people's health and safety (2); • Promote the well-being and resilience of children and young people (4); • Professional practice in children and young people's social care (4); • Develop positive relationships with children, young people and others involved in their care (1); • Context and principles for early years provision (4); • Promote communication in health, social care or children and young people's settings (3); • working together for the benefit of children and young people (2); • Promote learning and development in the early years (5); • Understand child and young person development (4); • Assessment and planning with children & young people (5); • Understand how to support positive outcomes for children and young people (3); • Principles for implementing duty of care in health, social care or children's and young people's settings (1); • Promote child and young person development (3); • Support children's speech, language & communication (4); • Promote children's welfare and well-being in the early years (6); • Promote equality and inclusion in health, social care or children's and young people's settings (2); • Understand how to safeguard the well-being of children and young people (3).

Table 11f

Malta: Curricular areas and pedagogic approaches for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS

(Provider: Centre for Child Development Education and Care Studies; Award: *Diploma Course in Childcare 0-5*)

Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
<p>Three parts with 16 Modules - each with different ECVET weighting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child Development and Care <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) all aspects of child development; (b) physical care of the child. 2. Early Childhood Education: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) principles of ECE; 	<p>Taught through contact hours; self-study hours; hands-on-hours in childcare settings; assessment hours.</p> <p>The contact hours in each of the 16 modules are divided into: an introductory power point presentation; videos or other related visual material; class discussion on the topic/knowledge involved in the particular module; a short written exercise - discussed and reviewed.</p>

³⁵ Taken from transcript accompanying certificate although details on the NCFHE documentation (list of accredited courses) indicates 65 credits

Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
(b) play as a major medium of ECE; (c) other important Issues in ECE: e.g. equal opportunities; self-reflection, child-welfare 3. Practicum: 500 hours of mentored and monitored practice.	

The information document for the course scheduled to start in October 2017 and offered by *SCHS Higher Education Tuition Centre*³⁶ defined the general competences and objectives through 'skills' and 'competences'. By the end of the course, the student/prospective child-carer will be able to

- provide care promoting health and development for babies and children under 5;
- develop and maintain a healthy, safe and secure environment for children aged 0 to 5 years which promotes positive behaviour;
- deliver services to families who are bilingual or whose preferred language is not English or Maltese;
- follow the manager's decisions, policies and procedures and programme of activities;
- perform with integrity, respect and responsibility towards the children in her care;
- build positive relationships with team members and parents with the aim of providing the best possible care to the child;
- reflect on herself and her service provision;
- be open to further develop herself and her practice;
- ensure that the quality of her care is non-discriminatory and not affected by the child's gender, race, creed, ability or other characteristics.

Table 11g

Malta: Competencies and curricular areas for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS

(Provider: Minds Malta³⁷; Award: *Level 4 Diploma in Childcare (The Early Years)*)

General Competencies	Curricular areas
A clear understanding ... - of a child's development; - of the Maltese legal framework regarding child services; - of health and safety requirements; - of how to support children with special education needs; - of the role of play in a child's development; - of how to plan and implement learning activities based on play; - of how to create and promote a multicultural learning space for children and - an increased awareness of the influences of personal upbringing, beliefs and value systems on the type of carer one becomes.	Taught Courses – Total: 35 credits Lectures and group discussions form the main pedagogic approaches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a reflective and professional child carer (2) • Caring for babies – the first year (3) • Early childhood education (4) • Health and safety in the Early Years (3) • Child development ages 0–5 (8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive development (2) - Communication development (2) - Emotional and social development (2) - Physical development (2) • Legal considerations in the child care field (2) • Play and development in the Early Years (2) • Understanding the behaviour of children aged 0-5 (2) • Working with disability and diverse educational needs in the Early Years (3) • Observing and assessing children in the Early Years (2) • Personal and social development for Childcare Workers (2) • Psychosocial issues in the Early Years (2) Practice placement – 21 credits With babies (0–18 months) – 225 hours With toddlers (18 months–3 years) – 225 hours

³⁶ *St Catherine's High School Higher Education Tuition Centre* bought the programme from *Minds Malta*. *SCHS* initially planned to start the Diploma in Child Care Course in January 2017. However, the number of applications did not warrant the start of the course in January (email communication 5th January 2017),

³⁷ Details provided by Head of Training Centre via email communication on 10th and 11th September 2016.

Table 11h

Malta: Competencies, curricular areas and pedagogic approaches for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS(Provider: MCAST; Award: *Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years*, MCAST 2016a)

Competencies	Curricular areas	Pedagogic approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conduct research in the Early Years sector maintain health and safety standards in childcare and kindergarten settings enhance managerial and pedagogical competences provide an adequate educational environment for young learners being able to link theory with practice 	<p><i>Core study units:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing professional development; Communicating values and leadership in an early years environment; Theories of development birth to three; Early Years curriculum, play and learning. <p><i>Theories of development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 – 8 year olds; Early Years research and project; Understanding children’s behaviour; Child protection; Professional practice. Specialist units: Contemporary issues in child’s health; Promoting language development; Promoting numeracy skills; Promoting knowledge and understanding of the world; Working with families; Developing play in the early years; Pedagogic issues for the early years. . 	Throughout the course students will engage in critical pedagogical discussions and field internships which will help them acquire the required leadership skills.

Table 11i

Malta: Competencies and curricular areas for Level 4 and Level 5 IPS(Provider: Future Focus; Award: *CACHE Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People’s Services (England)*; *Children’s and Young People’s Management*)

Competencies	Curricular areas
<p>The students should be able to know ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> principles of professional development, diversity, equality and inclusion in their own area of responsibility; how to develop systems and processes that promote diversity, equality and inclusion; the current legislative framework as well as health, safety and risk management policies, procedures and practices relevant to health, and social care or children and young people’s settings; how to engage in working partnerships; how the components of research are used; the pattern of development that would normally be expected for children and young people from birth to 19 years; the factors that impact on children and young people’s development; the benefits of early intervention to support the development of children and young people; the potential effect of transitions on children and young people’s development; the influence of assessing, monitoring and recording the development of young children and young persons on the use of intervention strategies; theoretical approaches regarding the development of children and young persons; the impact of current legislation that underpins the safeguarding of children and young persons; the features of effective team performance; 	<p>Core mandatory units: (30 credits)</p> <p>Use and develop systems that promote communication (3 credits; 1 lesson);</p> <p>promote professional development (4 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Champion equality, diversity and inclusion (4 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Develop health and safety and risk management policies, procedures and practices in health and social care or children and young people’s settings (5 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Work in partnership in health and social care or children and young people’s settings (4 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Undertake a research project within services for health and social care or children and young people (10 credits, 4 lessons).</p> <p>Pathway mandatory units: (38 credits)</p> <p>Understand children and young person’s development (6 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Lead practices that supports positive outcomes for child and young person development (6 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Develop and implement policies and procedures to support the safeguarding of children and young people (6 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Lead and manage a team within health and social care or children’s and young persons’ setting (7 credits, 3 lessons);</p>

Competencies	Curricular areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the purpose of professional supervision; - how the principles of professional supervision can be used to inform performance management; - different approaches to promote positive wellbeing and resilience in children and young persons and their impact on practice; - regulatory requirements, codes of practice and relevant guidelines for managing concerns and complaints; - recruitment and selection processes; - the purpose of induction; - the financial management in their own work setting; - how to manage a team; - policies, theories and models which underpin appraisal of performance. 	<p>Develop professional supervision practice in health and social care or children’s and young persons’ work settings (5 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Lead practices in promoting the wellbeing and resilience of children and young people (8 credits, 3 lessons).</p> <p>Optional: (24 credits)</p> <p>Develop procedures and practice to respond to concerns and complaints (6 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Recruitment and selection within health and social care or children’s and young persons’ settings (3 credits, 1 lesson);</p> <p>Manage induction in health & social care or children & young people’s settings(3 credits, 1 lesson);</p> <p>Manage finance within own area of responsibility (4 credits, 2 lessons);</p> <p>Understand how to manage a team (3 credits, 1 lesson);</p> <p>Appraise staff performance (5 credits, 2 lessons).</p>

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

In childcare settings, Childcare Workers must be in possession of one of the recognised MQF/EQF Level 4 courses or show evidence that they have started a course if they are already in employment. Since June 2016, employers are no longer allowed to employ workers who are not appropriately qualified.

Prospective Kindergarten Assistants must be in possession of one of the recognised MQF/EQF Level 4 courses (as outlined earlier in the report) otherwise, individuals can only be offered a position of ‘Supply KGA’.

Individuals with higher qualifications, whether directly relevant or not, may be employed in both kindergarten and childcare settings. However, there is no extra salary or remuneration for someone who is in possession of a first, second or third cycle degree level. Considering the generally poor working conditions, rather than opportunities for moving up and across qualifications, Childcare Workers seek opportunities to move *out of* the system or secure employment in the State sector as Kindergarten Assistants.

Another route into achieving recognition and thus approval to be employed without formal qualification is possible through the Trade Testing System (Jobsplus³⁸, 2016). Trade Testing was set up in order to assess individuals who have acquired knowledge, skills and competences in a particular occupation but do not possess a formal qualification. Through trade testing, a person is assessed by an interview, a theoretical and a practical test. Successful candidates are awarded a Certificate of Competence in a particular occupation. In order to sit for these assessments, a candidate must be proficient in written English. With regard to childcare, there are two Trade Tests: 1) for a Childcare Worker leading to a Level 4 Certificate of Competence; 2) for a Manager/Supervisor leading to a Level 5 Certificate of Competence. Information guides for both the MQF Level 4 and Level 5 (Jobsplus & NCFHE 2016a, 2016b) Trade Tests in childcare are available for prospective applicants. Especially for individuals working in childcare settings, and having reviewed the qualifications documentation available, many are being advised to sit for the Trade Test in order to earn the Certificate of Competence. Usually the Trade Test is being taken by individuals who either (1) have no formal qualifications, (2) have a qualification in ‘care’ or ‘management’ but not with a Level 4 or Level 5 rating by NCFHE, or (3) have a foreign qualification which may or may not have a Level 4 or Level 5 rating.

³⁸ In August 2016 Jobsplus replaced what was formerly known as the Employment Training Corporation (ETC).



4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Most of the Level 4 programmes which are currently available for KGAs and Childcare Workers have a component of practice within Early Years settings. The workplace/practice placements are not nationally regulated but are determined by the providers of the various programmes available. The amount of time students spend at kindergarten and childcare settings whilst following their initial professional studies varies. From documentation available about the content of the programmes, it would appear that students are expected to complete between approximately 300 hours of placement to 500 hours or more. Where students are following part-time studies, work placement hours are completed at times when they can be accommodated.

In some IPS routes, the supervision of the student placements falls to the regular staff working within childcare settings. There are no specific mentoring programmes to prepare Managers/Supervisors or Childcare Workers on how to support students in their placement and to date, whoever accepts to mentor or support students at the workplace does not receive any remuneration for doing so. Neither is there a designated time allocated explicitly for mentoring.

It is worth pointing out that the BTEC courses for both level 4 and 5 came to an end in June 2016 and have now been replaced by the MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development (MQF Level 4) and MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in the Early Years (Level 5), both introduced in September 2015. The first cohorts of students are expected to complete their studies in June 2017.

MCAST Level 4 programme of studies – BTEC Course³⁹

The total number of hours of placement over the two-year course amounts to 750 hours. The minimum required by BTEC is 100 hours in each of the assessed placements, which include: children from 0 to 2 years, from 2 to 4 years and from 4 to 8 years

In order to achieve the required number of hours, the MCAST course provides students with the following placements:

Year 1 of Course Programme

- Mid-November to January – a weekly placement for orientation/observational purposes in a childcare/nursery setting;
- February to March/April (depending on Easter dates) – a six-week block placement in the same setting with babies or toddler groups;
- After Easter – a weekly placement in a different childcare/nursery setting;
- End of April/May to June – a five-week block placement with babies or toddler groups in a childcare/nursery setting.

Year 2 of Course Programme

- November to mid-December – a five-week block placement part-teaching in Kindergarten 1 classes;
- February to March/April (depending on Easter dates) – a seven to eight-week block placement in Kindergarten 2 classes with six to seven weeks of full teaching:
 - most of the students will be paired in the same class;
 - some students are placed in classes on their own depending on the logistics of the school;
 - students under the age of 18 are placed in class with the class teacher to cater for the legal responsibilities – class management is the responsibility of the student for the said six to seven weeks.

³⁹ Information supplied by the Deputy Director, Programme Management of the Technical College (MCAST)

All placement hours fall within a 60-hours guided learning unit which is the equivalent of around 6 ECVETs.

Students have to achieve a broad range of specifically defined skills in different settings which they go to throughout the two years. The BTEC logbook of observation skills lists 103 skills which target the overall development of babies, toddlers and infants. The specific skills refer to social development; health and hygiene (toileting; changing nappies; bedding); food handling and preparation; preparing and planning for indoor and outdoor activities; making and using different media for creative arts activities; promoting number work by modelling and encouraging children to count; engaging with storytelling; promoting play through selecting items for a treasure basket, heuristic and sensory play; physical play activities; table-top activities etc.

Moreover, students are required to carry out various types of self-evaluation activities:

- on all their planned and implemented activities;
- a weekly evaluation on different aspects of their experience within the setting;
- an evaluation on the different areas of the skills/competences as they are achieved in the various settings – students have to reflect on preparation prior to placement, skills developed during placement and come up with an action plan to develop further such skills.

Mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres are not required to complete a specific qualifying course for such a task. Centres are chosen by designated staff within MCAST after having checked the list of registered centres and having visited the selected centre. Information is sent to the centre prior to sending students for placements and lecturers make it a point to speak to the centre manager and supervising staff on each of the assessment visits.

There is open communication between the centres identified for placements with the MCAST administration, the Early Years coordinator, the staff responsible for identifying settings for students' practice placements and the assessing lecturers/tutors depending on the type of query or difficulty they may have.

Although the Supervisor in the centre is not responsible for the student's assessment, the assessors actively seek their feedback during each of the visits. This feedback, together with observed practices by the lecturer, has an impact on the overall performance of each student. Supervisors are not remunerated by MCAST for the work they carry out with the students.

There is no time allocation for mentoring since it is considered to be 'on-going' in both nurseries and schools, i.e. focused, reflective talks between student and mentoring staff are not part of the approach. Unless the placement requires otherwise, students are not allowed to be responsible for any group of children unless they are supervised.

MCAST MQF Level 5⁴⁰ programme of studies

Just as in the level 4 course, students cover 750 hours for work placements over the two-year programme. From the students' perspective, the workplace placements vary depending on the route through which they were recruited for the programme. Students who join the Level 5 programme after having completed their studies at 6th grade (predominantly such individuals would be approximately 17- to 18-year olds) and who therefore do not have the MQF Level 4 qualification in childcare, are sent to a childcare setting in their first year of the programme in order to conduct two practice placements with a group of babies and a group of toddlers. In the second year of the programme, their workplace assignments are conducted with children in kindergarten. Students who proceed to the Level 5 programme after having completed the Level 4 qualification, conduct the workplace placements in the first two years of compulsory education in the primary sector. Similarly to the Level 4 programme, the placements for stu-

⁴⁰ MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in the Early Years is the MQF Level 5 course which is being offered from 2016 onwards. As a home-grown course it is replacing the former MQF Level 5 MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years.

dents following the Level 5 course are also conducted in block, more or less at the same time as the Level 4 students are in the settings.

The assessment of skills for students on work placements during the Level 5 course is very similar to the skills expected of Level 4 students especially for students who were following the Higher National Diploma as their introductory course into child care. Assessors ensure that lessons and classroom management are equally adequate for practitioners working with 5 to 7 year olds.

Jobsplus (formerly ETC⁴¹)

A person attending Jobsplus childcare courses is given a timeframe during which a total of 500 hours placement have to be completed within four to five months. This gives trainees the flexibility to make arrangements with the childcare facility offering the placement and set an individual timetable.

During the work placement, students are expected to achieve the competences listed in the National Occupational Standards (MQC & DSWS 2013) (see section 3.2). With regard to self-evaluation and external evaluation, trainees have to fill in a portfolio, which needs to be countersigned by the Childcare Centre Supervisor/Manager and is evaluated by Jobsplus trainers. Persons mentoring trainees within childcare centres are expected to have at least an MQF Level 4 qualification in childcare. Given that these mentors do not receive any form of remuneration, they decide themselves about the amount of hours needed to supervise trainees as this time might vary depending on trainees' aptitude and activities planned. Notwithstanding this flexibility, the Quality Assurance Unit within Jobsplus conducts physical spot checks at the childcare settings to ensure that trainees are being exposed to different activities to enhance their learning experience as well as to ensure that the trainees are complying with the policies of the childcare setting.

Future Focus – MQF Level 4 study programme

The CACHE Level 3 Diploma for “children and young people’s workforce - social care pathway” includes 360 hours of work placement which are attributed 18 credits. The placement hours are conducted throughout the programme whilst lectures which have a two-hour duration, take place weekly.

For example, the students are expected to support children and young persons in their creative, cognitive and affective development and learning as well as facilitate transition experiences; to respect diversity, equality and inclusion; to follow hygiene and prevention standards, organisational processes and the relevant early years framework; to meet the individual needs of children and young persons; to provide environments within the setting that support and extend children’s development and learning; to engage in positive working relationships with colleagues. They also have the professional responsibility to reflect and evaluate their own performance and prepare a personal development plan.

No information was available about the assessment of the placements or the evaluation conducted by the students although the director of the centre reported that one assessor is responsible for the theoretical component of the programme and another assessor checks the practical component.

Future Focus – MQF Level 5 study programme

The Level 5 programme offered by Future Focus runs for eight months with two hourly lectures each week as well as 100 hours (5 credits) allocated for a work placement. Skills and competences developed through the work placement include being able to: use and develop systems that promote communication, professional development, equality, diversity, equality

⁴¹ Information supplied by the Department Manager for EU Affairs, Labour Market Analysis & Employers Services Division via email communication on 7th September 2016.

and inclusion as well as the wellbeing and the resilience of children and young people; develop health and safety and risk management policies, procedures and practices; work in teams; undertake a research project within the setting; lead and manage a team; develop professional supervision practice; develop procedures and practice to respond to concerns and complaints; contribute to the recruitment process; manage induction; manage finances within their own responsibility; appraise staff performance.

Centre for Child Development, Education and Care Studies⁴²

The programme of studies offered by the CDEC and leading to a Level 4 Diploma in Child Care includes 500 hours of mentored and monitored practice. This is a continuous learning process and includes: taking part in the physical care of children; learning from peers; planning, delivering and self-evaluating daily activities conducted with the children; observing children and compiling a 'child study' (report on one specific child). Monitoring during placements is done by the centre manager but the examination and assessment of all components, including the child study, are undertaken by the course tutor.

Students are free to negotiate with centre managers the time of day and hours done per week. Times and days are flexible according to lecture and students' personal needs. Students are not allowed to start practice until the first theoretical part (child development) of the study course is completed. During the second part, students can do some practice on days when there are no lectures. This helps them to practise items learned in class and return to discuss and evaluate findings, but the bulk of the work placement is done when the theoretical parts are over.

Minds Malta⁴³

Students were required to carry out two placements, one with babies aged between 0-18 months and one with toddlers aged 18 months-3 years. Hours were divided equally between both placements.

Placements were to take place in a setting approved by the DSWS and started after a few weeks of the course commencing, to give the students some time to familiarise themselves with the course content and allow for personal learning. This helped them link theory to their observations on site. The toddler placement included gifted children and those with additional needs.

During their placements, students were required to keep a logbook to record their observations of what was happening within the centre; the activities and tasks they were involved in; their reflections of their own performance, including their strengths and weaknesses and possible improvements. These two logbooks (one for each placement) accounted for 80% of the marks allocated to the placement. The remaining 20% were assigned on the basis of evaluations by early childhood educators⁴⁴ who visited the students during their placements and who observed them interacting with children, their colleagues and the manager. The educators visited the students four times: twice during their first placement and twice during their second placement. Whilst the centre manager was asked to provide feedback about the students' performance, the students were formally assessed during the second and the fourth visit by the early childhood educators. The early childhood educators, who were remunerated for these tasks, provided guidance, mentoring and assessment.

⁴² Information supplied by the Head of the training centre via email on 26th August 2016.

⁴³ Information about the placements provided by the Head of the training institute via email 11th September 2016. The Diploma which used to be offered by Minds Malta will be offered by a different entity from January 2017.

⁴⁴ The early years educators are in possession of a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Some participated in the teaching of some credits but did not necessarily have a qualification in supervision or mentoring.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

For staff working in childcare settings, there are currently no requirements at any stage for any kind of CPD. The setting up and proliferation of childcare settings is a relatively recent phenomenon and to date, most efforts have been to ensure that employees in the sector are in possession of their minimum Level 4 or Level 5 qualification. However, a number of settings do have arrangements in place where staff participate in in-house CPD sessions. This is mostly the case in organisations responsible for managing several settings or in large childcare settings where there are specific coordinators whose duties include overseeing the organisation of the activities.

CPD in the private sector

Anecdotal reports indicate that one private organisation arranges a one-day CPD session annually which takes place on a weekend and is awarded with a certificate of attendance/participation. Examples of issues which have been dealt with thus far include management issues with emphasis on the relationships with parents; story-telling; play therapy and emotional well-being. This organisation is keen on further investing in its staff and plans to send 30% of their carers abroad for job-shadowing and formal training to improve their knowledge about the Reggio Emilia approach.

In another large privately-run childcare setting, CPD is organised after hours or on Saturdays. Training is conducted in a number of ways:

- 1.5 hours per week for preparation and research for which Childcare Workers are paid;
- 4 to 6 hours per month with training or staff meetings for which Childcare Workers are paid. The meeting is normally divided in two or three components and organised as follows: Part 1: reflecting on procedures where the staff are shown practical case studies collected by the principal/administrator over the week or issues that staff would want to discuss; Part 2: Human resource issues or clarifications; and Part 3: specific subjects or company information as required.
- 4 to 10 hours every three or six months are spent on CPD. The practitioners are not paid for these hours but they are given a certificate of attendance.

CPD in the State and Church sector

Childcare Workers employed with the 13 state-funded childcare settings managed by the FES have their own CPD sessions. Staff training days are carried out twice yearly. Childcare centres are closed on these two days and all childcare staff (Coordinators and Childcare Workers) are present. Attendance is compulsory. The table below gives an overview of the topics and focuses on staff development activities held over recent years for FES coordinators and carers.

Table 10

Malta: Topics explored during staff training days at FES childcare settings and CPD providers

Topics	Providers
Learning outcomes Sharing of good practice Collaborative learning	
Early childhood language policy Aqra Mieghi/Read with me methodology	National Literacy Agency
Policies and procedures Best practice Teambuilding - outdoor living	Programme Coordinator Childcare Centre Coordinators and Childcare Workers
Manual handling of children Secure attachment Self-help skills	Institute of Health and Safety Childcare Centre Coordinator Occupational Therapist

Topics	Providers
Fire-fighting course	
Emergent literacy	Programme Coordinator
Story-telling techniques	Programme Coordinator
How to apply the National Curriculum Framework to the 0–3 age group	Programme Coordinator
Challenging behaviour in young children	Educational Psychologist
Healthy eating for infants: what, why and how?	
Creativity	
Food handling course	
First aid course	St John’s Ambulance

For staff working within the State and Church kindergarten sectors, professional development/in-service training is regulated by agreements between the Government of Malta and the Malta Union of Teachers (MEYE 2009a, 2009b; MUT 2010) and an *Agreement between the Church Authorities and MUT for teaching grades in Church schools* (2011). The specific CPD framework regulates all ‘school-based teaching staff’ who, in the 2010 agreement are defined as “*Heads of School, Assistant Heads, Heads of Department, Teachers, Instructors, Kindergarten Assistants, Learning Support Assistants and all students’ psycho-social services personnel*” (p. 48). There are compulsory CPD sessions and voluntary ones.

According to the 2010 agreement, professional development obligations for teaching grades are as follows:

- Each school is allocated one afternoon per term during school hours to organise a school development session (staff meeting). On these afternoons, children are dismissed from school at lunch-time rather than staying on as usual for the afternoon hours.
- One day-long School Development Plan (SDP) day dedicated to the review and planning of the school’s SDP. This day is held during the school’s full-days calendar, that is, between October and May. Children do not attend school.
- Three sessions of two hours each after school hours, spread over the scholastic year. These sessions are meant for staff, curriculum and/or school development. They can be organised on a College (group of schools) or individual school basis. Attendance is remunerated at overtime rates.

From the perspective of the Education Directorates and in order to strengthen the schools’ internal quality assurance system, the focus of discussions for the day-long school development plan should be guided by an internal review of the individual schools. The senior management team is expected to present a SWOT⁴⁵ analysis to the staff. Together, the teaching staff and management are responsible for developing an action plan in order to prioritise work for the following academic year.

In-service training

With regard to in-service (INSET) training, practitioners are required to attend in-service training for three working days immediately prior to their reporting for duty in September or immediately following the closure of schools for the summer recess”. These INSET courses last for 12 hours in total during the summer timetable⁴⁶. Until 2015, the overall responsibility for overseeing the CPD sessions rested with the Department of Curriculum Management (DCM) within the DQSE but since the setting up of the Institute for Education (IfE) in January 2016, in-service courses will be organised and co-ordinated by the Institute (2016a, 2016b, 2016c) .

Compulsory sessions generally address specific issues and all practitioners working with a specific age group or subject are expected to attend. These trainings are organised by Education

⁴⁵ SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is a structured planning method that evaluates a project or organisation.

⁴⁶ Schools are open from about 8.00a.m./8.30a.m. until 12.00/12.30pm during June, July and September.

Officers. Trainings regarding national innovations, such as the introduction of interactive whiteboards; changes to syllabi and changes to the National Curriculum are also compulsory. They are organised to reach all practitioners in Malta who usually participate in small groups.

Voluntary courses are organised by different entities such as the Institute for Education, in conjunction with the Secretariat for Catholic Education or even at College or school level if organised by Heads of School.

Compulsory and voluntary courses within INSET training are free of charge and participants receive certificates of attendance/participation. Since setting up the Institute for Education, in-service trainings have to be accredited. This implies that participants would be obliged to present an assignment if they are to be awarded a certificate of achievement rather than a certificate of attendance.

INSET specifically targeted for KGAs often are voluntary. The INSET Catalogue for 2014 (DCM, 078/2014) listed for example one voluntary course titled “*Playing to learn ...Learning to Play*”: *Hands-on science adventures for the early years* targeted at KGAs I and KGAs II, and Year 1 and Year 2 teachers. A compulsory course for KGAs was organised in 2015 when the Education Officers (EOs) responsible for the sector drew up a 12-hour course titled “*Emergent literacy in context*”. By the end of the three four-hour sessions, participants were expected to be able to identify the different skills of emergent literacy; be familiar with the different approaches to emergent literacy skills within a context and use different approaches to develop children’s listening and speaking skills. College-based courses held in July and September 2014 also emphasised Literacy: A practical approach; Literacy: A hands-on approach and Effective literacy and language teaching and learning in the early years. The latter 12-hour training had four overall objectives, namely (1) to make the teaching staff more aware of ways that ensure a smoother transition between kindergarten and first grade of primary school; (2) to enable the teaching staff in the Early Years classes to implement the NCF guidelines in a more concrete way; (3) to improve the quality of teaching and learning regarding receptive and productive language skills; (4) to encourage teaching staff to promote creativity and autonomous learning. All KGAs and Year 1 and Year 2 primary school teachers in the College were expected to attend these sessions. Whilst the main topic for each of the three days was different for KGAs and teachers, the organisation of the morning was identical: each training day started with a presentation; activity plans were developed during workshops and in conclusion, working groups presented their activity plans. Effective communication skills and nurturing positive attitudes towards learning, Pre-reading and pre-writing skills and Smooth transitions KG 2 to Year 1 were the three topics for staff working with the under 5s. College-based CPD strengthens the collegiality between and amongst members of staff from different schools.

Since 2013, KGAs hosting student practitioners during their work-place/practice placements, were withdrawn from the classroom for a number of weeks in order to attend training sessions. The DQSE, through the DCM and in collaboration with IfE presented the programme as part of the Early Years on-going reform (DCM 270/2015). The first and last week of the students’ placement were used to enable a smooth transition or ‘handing over’ between the student practitioner and KGA whilst the intervening five weeks were dedicated to the training of KGAs.

According to the timetable for the *Training programme for the Hosting KGII 2015*⁴⁷, over four consecutive weeks participants attended three 1.5-hour sessions daily. Topics/subjects included *Emergent literacy*, to which six sessions were dedicated over three weeks. Every double session on literacy was followed by a tutorial. A whole day was dedicated to other topics like *Healthy Eating* or *Physical activities for the very young*. Moreover, individual sessions were added, e.g. *How children learn* or *Socio-emotional behavioural difficulties*

During any scholastic year, further opportunities for ad hoc voluntary training sessions are supported by the Directorate. In February 2015, a science conference was organised during a

⁴⁷ Records available in MEDE Registry files.

weekend (DCM 009/2015) titled *New Perspectives on Early Years and Primary Science Education*. The conference was organised by the DCM as part of the Scientix Project Implementation and sought to engage early years and primary level educators in innovative pedagogical practices based on the Little Scientists' House Programme.

Two initiatives by the National Literacy Agency targeted KGAs, LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) and primary teachers for after-school sessions. One focused on the "Read with Me" (DCM 008/2016) programme, aimed to promote literacy amongst new born to 3-year old children and seeks to train personnel to help and support parents, grandparents and guardians in regularly conducting activities with their children. Another initiative focused on the programme "The Magic of Stories" (DCM 018/2016) with the aim of educating and training participants in presenting stories in an interactive and motivating manner for 4- to 10-year old children.

Heads or Assistant Heads of schools who are responsible for KG classrooms and KGAs are not required to have any specific qualification or training focusing on the early years but can voluntarily attend courses or presentations related to early childhood education and care. For example, as outlined in an invitation extended to Heads of schools across the three sectors (State, Church and Independent), a two day training programme was offered to Assistant Heads who were responsible for Kindergarten. The training was part of the Early Years ongoing reform (DCM 085/2015). Topics included e.g. *Developing fine and gross motor skills* or *Early intervention Strategies*. About 80 Assistant Heads participated.

All members of staff irrespective of whether they are working directly or indirectly with very young children could be eligible to follow undergraduate or post-graduate studies depending on the entry requirements for their chosen programme. For example, the initial three cohorts of students who followed the University of Malta's Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and Care were mostly practitioners working with 3- to 5-year old children in State, Church or Independent schools. KGAs who are employed in the State sector and have been employed with the Ministry for at least two years, can apply for a paid study leave lasting less than one year (MEDE 2016e). Documentation about the programme of studies must accompany the application which needs to be submitted to the appropriate office at least 25 days before the start of the requested study leave period. Successful applicants must agree to serve their organisation for a certain period of time after completion of the studies. (CDRT 2014)

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Qualification of ECEC staff

Recent national policy reforms and initiatives concerning ECEC staffing have focused on the upskilling and professional development of KGAs and arise from agreements and memoranda of understanding between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers (MEYE 2007, 2009a, 2009b; MUT 2010). These agreements collectively steer a rather gradual and cautious upgrading in the qualifications of the early years workforce; the initiatives are also at different stages of implementation. When state KG settings were introduced in 1975 for 4-year-olds and extended to 3-year-olds in 1988, KGAs were employed on the strengths of their GCE (General Certificate of Education) 'O' level qualifications (EQF Level 3, equivalent to school leaving exam). They received training on the job through short, intensive courses (Education Division files, 1975).

Some 30 years later, the agreements and grade structures for KGI and KG II refer to a **Level 4** 'certificate in education' and a 'certificate in pre-school education' or a 'national diploma in early years' as entry requirements for the respective grades.

As detailed earlier in this report, the assimilation of the older KGAs who had no formal initial professional qualification at the time of their employment into the new grades depended on their years of accumulated service and an established number of hours (210, 140 or 70 hours) of up-skilling. This up-skilling programme, available for all KGAs irrespective of the sector within which they were employed, was organised by MCAST, which is the national entity responsible for vocational education and training. Aspects presented during the 210 hour course included:

- professional development;
- reflective practice and sharing of good practice;
- understanding and promoting children’s development;
- creating positive relationships and promoting children’s rights;
- a stimulating learning environment;
- a practicum; and
- a portfolio.

Successful candidates were given a certificate of achievement.

Another reform which was underway but is now being steered in a different manner relates to a **University qualification** for staff seeking to work with under 5-year olds. One of the recommendations published in the first national policy document for early childhood education (Solars, Attard, Borg, and Craus 2006), concerned the professional qualifications of staff working in the early years. The recommendation was that *Staff directly responsible for a group of 3- to 5-year olds should have a tertiary level qualification* (49).

The Government-MUT Agreements of 2007 and 2010 both include a section titled “Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher” (ECEC teacher). Whilst the 2007 Agreement was drawn up “to facilitate the implementation of an education reform process For All Children to Succeed,” the 2010 Agreement was drawn up “to further facilitate the implementation of an education reform process For All Children to Succeed”. With regard to early childhood education and care, the first agreement identified four major improvements (MEYE 2007, 6-7), the boldest being the introduction of a Level 6 teaching qualification for prospective staff wanting to work with under 5-year olds. Although this measure was to be adopted from scholastic year 2015-2016, it has not been carried forward.

Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher⁴⁸ (ECEC Teacher)

With effect from school year 2015-2016, new recruitment of personnel responsible for early childhood education and care were meant to be ECEC Teachers.

Entry in the grade of ECEC Teacher will be through a public call for applications open to persons: a) Who are in possession of the appropriate education and training in early childhood and care at first Degree level, or a comparable qualification, issued by an institution of higher education duly recognised by the Education Authorities, and b) who are holders of the appropriate Warrant awarded by the Council for the Teaching Profession as provided for in the Education Act. (Govt - MUT 2010 agreement, p. 13)

Between 2007 and 2009, the B.Ed.(Hons.) in Early Childhood Education and Care was developed by staff at the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta and externally validated before being launched in October 2009. The 180 ECTS programme was offered as a five-year part-time course in order to attract current practitioners seeking to up-grade their professional status. The course was offered for three consecutive years between 2009 and 2011, with the first two groups of graduates successfully completing the programme in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In November 2016, the third evening cohort of students graduated, bringing the total number of graduates with an early years teaching degree to 59. Since 2013, the programme was developed into a four-year full-time course of studies (240 ECTS) and as a daytime course

⁴⁸ Referring to early years practitioners as ‘teachers’ implies that they will have the same status and pay parity as qualified teachers working in the primary and secondary schools.

it has served to attract younger cohorts of students. In addition, through an agreement between the Faculty of Education at UM and MCAST, students who had successfully completed a two year full-time Higher National Diploma studies in early years, were eligible to complete 120 ECTS from the 240 ECTS in the B.Ed.(Hons.) programme and graduate with a B.Ed.(Hons.) too. By November 2016, this route yielded another eight students, graduates in early childhood education.

However, the B.Ed.(Hons.) in Early Childhood Education is being phased out as the corresponding programmes which served as initial teacher education routes for prospective primary (5- to 11-year olds) and secondary (11- to 16-year olds) school teachers are being replaced by a post-graduate Master in Teaching and Learning (MLT, 120 ECTS). The two-year full-time, Level 7 MTL came into effect in October 2016. Following discussions, the direction and request from the Ministry was for the development of a B.A. in Early Years for Kindergarten Assistants. Although this is a tertiary level programme (Level 6; 180 ECTS)⁴⁹ and as such an improvement over Level 4 qualifications, there are some serious implications of offering a Bachelor's degree in the unfolding, local scenario.

- Whilst initial professional education for prospective teachers who want to work in primary and secondary school, including teaching 5- to 7-year olds, is raised to Level 7, the Level 6 course reinforces the widespread belief that working with under-fives is of an inferior status. The B.Ed. (Hons.) degree for ECEC ensured that graduates with that qualification would have identical status to prospective teachers working in compulsory education.
- From a political and national perspective, any value or attraction of following a B.A. in Early Years is seriously compromised because a Level 4 qualification for KGAs is still sufficient as the **minimum qualification** and this therefore undermines any motivation for securing a Level 6 qualification. Draft documentation of a proposed updated Education Act was available for public feedback in 2016.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

To date, there have been no large scale or national research projects addressing issues relating to the professionalisation or staffing in early childhood education and care in Malta.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Childcare Workers

Data about salaries paid to Childcare Workers are rather sketchy. Since most of the settings are privately owned, the owner is the person who negotiates the salary with the carers seeking employment. Variations also exist depending on whether the carers are employed full time or part time. Some random requests about remuneration sought from a number of Managers or Child Care Workers employed in different settings yielded the following information: Childcare Workers in private settings earn between 5.50€ and 8.90€ per hour or between 8,500€ and 17,661€ per annum respectively, depending on their years of service and annual increments.

⁴⁹ The earlier agreement between the University of Malta & MCAST to accept HND students to join the B.Ed.(Hons.) cohorts will apply to the new three-year B.A.(Hons.) programme. Students who have successfully completed their two year EQF Level 5 studies at MCAST will join the B.A. students for 60 ECTS.

Additional duties (like supervising children in the morning to accommodate the parents' schedules) are usually remunerated separately.

The challenge to recruit and retain qualified Childcare Workers within private childcare settings is set to become stiffer since a new collective agreement between the state funded FES and the Union representing the FES employees has been drawn up. According to this agreement, the salary for Childcare Workers employed at the FES settings started at 16,760€ up to a maximum of 17,870€⁵⁰ in 2016.

A second challenge concerns the recruitment of qualified staff, which is experienced by all childcare settings, irrespective of whether these are privately-owned or state funded. Since the qualification for Childcare Workers and Kindergarten Assistants is identical, as soon as Childcare Workers are offered employment as Kindergarten Assistants in the state sector, they evidently choose to work in these settings. The working hours, conditions and salaries are more attractive. KGAs have a long summer⁵¹ and they can therefore take on part-time work, often in summer clubs, summer-school or even helping in childcare settings whilst earning extra money.

Kindergarten Assistants

The salary⁵² for the post of a KG I is pegged at Salary Scale 15, that is 13,163€. With annual increments of 298€ this can progress to a maximum of 14,951€. A Kindergarten Assistant I can progress to Salary Scale 14 (14,036.02€/316.83€ - 15,937.00€) on completion of five years' service and progresses to Salary Scale 13 (14,981€/335.50€ - 16,994€) on completion of a further five years' service.

The salary for the post of a KG II is pegged at Salary Scale 12: 15,972€ per annum, rising by annual increments of 354€ up to a maximum of 18,096€. A Kindergarten Assistant II can progress to Salary Scale 10 (18,127.98€/407.67€ - 20,574.00€) on completion of five years of service and subject to satisfactory performance. Additionally, a Kindergarten Assistant II receives an all-inclusive allowance of 300€ per annum as stipulated in the agreement between the Government of Malta and the MUT (2010).

Kindergarten Assistants have lower salaries than Primary School Teachers. Teachers, who are holders of a B.Ed. (Hons.) as their initial professional studies qualification, enjoy pay parity, irrespective of whether they are teaching in a primary or secondary classroom/school. They start their career at Salary Scale 9 (19,320€, up to a maximum of 22,004€ including 447€ annual increments) and can progress to Scale 7 after 16 years of service (22,043.98€/531.17€ - 25,231.00€). Depending on the grade they are teaching and any special duties, they additionally receive an annual allowance of 600 to 800€.

Deputy Heads and Centre Heads have higher salaries than Primary Teachers and Kindergarten Assistants. The former's salary is pegged at Scale 7 while Centre Heads receive a salary commensurate to Scale 6 (23,600.02€/596.33€ - 27,178.00€).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

There is no official data about the working conditions for **Childcare Workers** employed in the private sector. Anecdotal information suggests that whilst some are employed on a full-time basis with a 40 hour week, it seems common to have care workers employed on a part-time basis. These could be employed either on so-called reduced hours, working 30 to 39 hours a week or on part-time hours, working 20 to 29 hours a week. Several report that they are in-

⁵⁰ Includes increments of €370, awarded annually until maximum of the scale is reached. Salary also includes a Collective Agreement increase for 2016-2018.

⁵¹ School children start their holidays at the beginning of July and resume school around the 3rd week of September

⁵² The salary figures quoted in this section are taken from documentation supplied by the Public Administration HR Office (PAHRO). The various salary scales and increments over the years are also available in the *Collective Agreement for Employees in the Public Service effective from 1st Jan 2011 – 31st Dec 2016*.

formed about the duration of their working day from day to day, depending on the requirements of the service provider and the demand for hours booked by parents. Some settings offer their carers a full-time contract for a 40 hour week employment even if the children are only present for a shorter number of hours. This tends to occur within nurseries attached to large, private schools where child care workers do supervision duties especially where older children stay for extended hours.

In the 13 state-funded childcare settings and in accordance with the agreement between the UHM and FES, Childcare Workers had their work contracts raised from 30 hours to 35 hours in 2015 and increased to 40 hours a week from October 1st 2016. Thus Childcare Workers employed with the government have a full-time, indefinite contract.

Both Childcare Workers and service providers are highly aware of the challenging situation facing employment issues. Managers and service providers have complained that they have difficulties in employing qualified Childcare Workers. Whilst most privately-owned childcare settings offer part-time employment, carers naturally prefer to have full-time contracts. Private childcare settings face a major challenge in recruiting qualified staff since the employment contracts and payment offered within the State funded childcare settings are better than what the private sector can offer. State-funded childcare settings offer 40 hour contracts of indefinite employment.

Kindergarten staff within State school settings who are employed on a full-time basis, work 5½ hours a day or a 27½ hour week including mid-morning break. This applies from the fourth Monday in September to the 31st of May. Between the 1st of June and the 6th of July, the school working hours are 3¾ hours per day or an 18¾ hours week, including mid-morning break (MUT 2010). However, to date there is no official information about the distribution of full-time and part-time Kindergarten Assistants in private settings.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

To date, there are no formal measures available either for induction or for mentoring and supporting newly-qualified staff. This applies to practitioners working in kindergarten settings as well as practitioners in childcare settings.

Discussions about an induction period for newly qualified KGAs have been on-going but there are currently no tangible outcomes. However, within the State sector, Education Officers (EOs) who are responsible for specific Kindergarten classrooms within the ten Colleges, have taken the initiative to support KGAs and the senior management teams. Although there is no structured mentoring support offered, during routine visits, particularly on so-called Confirmation Visits, time is spent with the KGA reflecting on their practice and making suggestions for improvement. Most KGAs appreciate this support and get the necessary changes under way. Time constraints do not allow for regular follow-up but the assistance of the EOs is always provided should further support be sought or required.

Support is also given through publications of documentation which is then distributed to all KGAs in the State sector and sometimes also shared with the practitioners in the non-State sectors.

The 'Extended Training Programme' (ETP – see also *Section 3.1*), initially organised between January and March 2006, had four components. It included 27½ hours allocated for induction; 27½ hours for observation visits; 260 hours of teaching practice experience conducted over 10 consecutive weeks and 15 hours for tutorials with students on Friday afternoons for a total of 330 hours.

The induction week, conducted in the first week of the ETP had four aims: to familiarise participants with some aspects of ECE with the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC); provide further training in early learning strategies; establish a shared language to talk about early years practice; and identify what practitioners do to support and structure children's learning effectively. During induction week, presentations focused on a united approach towards providing a

high quality curriculum; the good practice game; from principles to practice; sessions about Emergent Literacy and Emergent Numeracy; project work; assessing Young Learners; and planning and preparation⁵³. During Week 2 of the ETP, students were assigned to classrooms to observe KGAs at work and to facilitate the transition ahead of their taking over the class. Teaching practice was conducted between Week 3 and Week 12 of the ETP. Staff from the Education Division and MCAST visited the students at their placement classrooms for assessment purposes.

Recently, the Education Directorate retained responsibility for the induction component only (which in 2014 and 2015 was allocated 25 hours) whilst MCAST has responsibility for the remaining three components (observation visits, teaching practice and tutorials) which are now delivered as an integral part of the BTEC program. In 2015, the induction component included sessions on Let me Learn, Science, Speech and language Development, Emergent Literacy, Spirituality, ICT, Aqra mieghi (Read with me), Positive Behaviour Strategies, Inclusion, PE, Numeracy, Art, Music and Drama.

The ETP has always been offered exclusively to MCAST students⁵⁴. However, considering that (1) the Education Directorate is responsible for the induction component only; (2) the Directorate sees this as an opportunity of introducing prospective members of staff to policies and expected practices within the State KG classroom; (3) recruitment of KGAs for the State sector incorporates students who would have followed their IPS through entities other than MCAST and (4) in the absence of any formal requirement of induction or mentoring, it seems evident to hypothesise that in the near future, the induction component is developed formally and independently of any IPS provider and becomes compulsory for all new recruits prior to commencing employment within any early years setting. According to the MCAST Principal (personal communication), the ETP will no longer be a requirement for KGAs in the State sector since this was unfairly penalising MCAST students. DES/DQSE will consider transforming this into an induction programme for all newly recruited KGAs.

8.4 Non-contact time

Generally there are no allowances for non-contact time among staff in childcare or kindergarten settings. There are, however, a few exceptions in this regard, predominantly where childcare and/or kindergarten settings are housed within independent schools, where the settings operate on timetables similar to those used at the school. When non-contact time is allocated, the staff is expected to work on the planning of the programme and development of activities. Within private settings, non-contact time tends to amount to 1.5 hours per week. In one of the largest private childcare settings, this time is allocated for quality assurance. This setting engages a part-timer to be with the children whilst the regular staff is planning their work.

Childcare Workers in private settings usually work 20 hours per week in direct contact with the children between 09:00 and 13:00 and have two hours per week for planning. Childcare Workers employed in state funded settings work 40 hours, 10 hours of which are non-contact hours. They are not obliged to spend these hours at the setting.

As illustrated below, the duties expected of Child Care Workers during non-contact time are specified in an appendix of the Union's Agreement (FES-UHM⁵⁵). Besides attending team meetings every three months and monthly meetings with the coordinator these duties include:

- assessing the children for whom they are directly responsible;
- updating the developmental checklist (Meggitt's)⁵⁶

⁵³ Documentation available in Registry files (MEDE).

⁵⁴ MCAST offers its components of the ETP prior to the second teaching practice placement for cohorts of students, irrespective of whether they are following the MQF Level 4 or Level 5 programme of studies.

⁵⁵ Union Haddiema Maghqudin – Voice of the workers

⁵⁶ Child care workers at FES settings are expected to complete templates according to the child's age drawn from Caroline Meggitt's developmental checklists.

- developing the objectives to be achieved by the children and planning weekly activities;
- evaluating the activities and seeking ways to improve them;
- drawing up a report on a prescribed template, about each child before s/he progresses to a kindergarten setting;
- proposing actions for improvement of service to be discussed and agreed to with the Co-ordinator during the mentoring time as well as inform other colleagues at the setting;
- seeking professional training in addition to that which is done twice a year, directly by FES.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Service providers claim to have difficulties in employing Child Care Workers with suitable qualifications. The reasons cited for this shortage are associated to better work conditions which are offered for Kindergarten Assistants. Child Care Workers and Kindergarten Assistants are both expected to be in possession of an MQF/EQF Level 4 qualification. Hence, when vacancies arise within KG settings, Child Care Workers understandably see this as an opportunity for a better salary and improved job security. Service providers are resorting to employing foreign childcare workers. This was confirmed through data collection – documentation was available for care workers who were born and/or educated in Spain, Italy, Russia, Hungary, Serbia, the Czech Republic, England, Scotland, Cuba and Honduras. A number of care workers were born in Australia or USA and are potentially returning migrants. In this regard, one issue which is yet to be investigated or discussed concerns language proficiency and communication between foreign care workers and babies, toddlers and parents who are predominantly Maltese and/or English speaking.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There are several challenges which Malta has faced and continues to struggle with in relation to the early years workforce. These include: (1) the required initial professional studies and expected qualification of staff in order to secure employment in early childhood education and care settings; (2) the monitoring and support of practices both during initial professional studies and during employment; (3) the nature and content of CPD activities and (4) recording, maintaining and evaluation of data about settings and services.

Initial professional studies and required/expected qualification of staff

The primary challenge concerns the level of qualifications which early years educators have or are expected to achieve. This applies to both childcare and kindergarten practitioners and it is a challenge which has hampered the sector ever since services were introduced. In the absence of a well-educated or professional workforce, only very few practitioners can withstand pressures, advocate for children's rights and make a difference by preparing and creating appropriate learning environments for young children's benefit and well-being. Whilst it is a well-documented and researched conclusion that highly-qualified staff are better positioned to offer quality services (Yoshikawa et al. 2013; Melhuish 2004; Lowe Vandell & Wolfe 2000), a current consultation document entitled *Bringing Education into the 21st Century: Professions in Education Act* (MEDE 2016d) proposes that individuals will be eligible for a license to practice the profession of a Kindergarten Assistant, if they are in possession of:

“a qualification in early childhood education at a minimum of Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and a certificate from a head of school certifying that the applicant has received adequate experience in the profession of kindergarten experience for a period of two years” (p. 9).

The consultation document with proposals to improve the Education Act fails to address childcare and despite the recent transfer of responsibilities for childcare settings to the Ministry for Education and Employment, there is no mention or reference to childcare workers, service providers or legal requirements with regard to their academic and professional qualifications.

A cursory look through the history of early childhood education in Malta suggests that rather than driven by vision, well-planned policy or strategy, initiatives are taken sporadically and haphazardly without much consideration for the long term implications on the well-being of the children. In the absence of a well-educated workforce, there cannot be any coherent contributions where the early years practitioners themselves could advocate for change and contribute to modifications in practices through a bottom-up approach. On the contrary, in the absence of highly trained staff, the sector will continue to embrace and accept ad hoc practices and policies which are dictated or imposed by administrators and policy makers with little regard to long-term implications or considerations for the immediate impact which decisions and practices will have on children and their overall development. Often decisions are only taken and implemented in order to address imminent or immediate concerns.

By 2014, the call for applications as published in the Malta Government Gazette (2014), specified that apart from being Maltese citizens and “proficient in the Maltese and English languages”, applicants were expected to be in possession of at least a recognised diploma at MQF-Level 4 in Early Childhood Education and Care (p. 8546f).

Ever since kindergartens were set up in the mid-1970s, over the years the need for highly qualified staff has been highlighted repeatedly via internal documentation and discussions within the Directorate of Education at the Ministry as well as echoed in national policy documents. Both kindergarten and childcare sectors developed in the absence of any plan to ensure the gradual development of a highly qualified workforce. This weakness is a reflection of the local, cultural perceptions and expectations about early childhood education and care. At the time when kindergartens were introduced and again, with efforts to extend child care provision, paramount importance was given to the potential increase in the country’s economic activity, the attraction of enticing women into the labour market and consequently the need to employ ‘staff’ in response to the demand for settings and placements to accommodate the children. Whilst efforts were made to ensure the obvious structural and organisational factors were in place, matters impinging on the learning processes, pedagogies, achievements and outcomes for children did not gain attention. The benefits associated with high quality early years provision may have started being addressed gradually, with lots of hindsight and in a rather haphazard manner. Just as the first KGAs received training after they were employed, Childcare Workers are still in the process of earning a minimum qualification whilst already being responsible for young children.

There are further difficulties related to current initial professional studies.

- The content of all the programmes available require a thorough study against expected standards to ensure that students are adequately trained to develop the skills, knowledge and competences corresponding to occupational standards and job descriptions. Employers are to determine whether a programme of studies is appropriate preparation for the personnel to be employed. Because they are not necessarily well-versed in early years’ matters, it is unrealistic to expect them to make correct decisions or even demands about the professionalisation of their prospective employees.
- The work-based components of any IPS are crucial for the students and are a vital learning experience if appropriately supervised and mentored. Currently, there is no programme for mentors who are monitoring, supporting and assessing students during their practicum. Especially in childcare, there seem to be very few appropriately qualified and experienced Supervisors who can follow students and assist them in their professional development.
- In situations where Managers of childcare settings, who may have only minimal understanding or work experience with children, find themselves mentoring and supervising

- students on their work placements, the placement experience can be simply a matter of clocking up hours rather than a real, learning experience.
- In a free market environment where institutions are mushrooming and Level 4 courses addressing early years' matters are increasing, it is difficult for employers to identify initial professional studies of good quality.
 - As long as the minimum entry requirement for IPS attracts students who do not have a high level of education, there are likely to be repercussions for the quality of the service.

Nature and content of CPD activities

CPD is another challenge which the childcare sector is facing. While both the Childcare Workers and Managers are still working towards achieving an initial qualification related to early years or management and leadership in the sector, CPD is currently unheard of unless individuals take the initiative to follow and attend courses, seminars or conferences. Induction periods, mentoring and support measures urgently need to be addressed to ensure that responsive and sensitive carers start planning and preparing appropriate activities and experiences for children. The documentation available in some of the childcare files however, raises several questions about the appropriate choice of activities or the expectations and understanding about young children's development.

Apart from activities simply being listed without any supporting context, the rationale, sequence, coherence and relevance of such activities for the under three-year olds raises doubts about any real understanding and knowledge of child development, or any in-depth logical, analytical and reflective approach to planning in a manner which addresses children's realities and lived experiences.

Although CPD for Kindergarten Assistants within schools is somewhat more organised, one challenge concerns the direct relevance of the CPD sessions for staff working with kindergarten-aged children. This view has been expressed by several Kindergarten Assistants working in state schools⁵⁷ and arises from the dilemma of simply being housed within a primary school on the one hand to belonging and being an integral part of the educational system rather than simply an appendix to the primary school setting on the other hand. The professional development sessions dedicated to discussing and agreeing on action plans which the school sets out for the subsequent scholastic year are driven by the needs of the primary school and its expectations about achievements of older children with the result that several Kindergarten Assistants from different schools are concerned that the focus of their work has shifted to the academic level even before compulsory education begins.

Monitoring and support of practices both during initial professional studies and during employment

Attempts at a decentralised and more autonomous system may be laudable. College or school-based initiatives within all sectors are to be encouraged and supported as a means of responding to issues which are of immediate relevance to the practitioners. Yet, having an overarching college-based, regional or national plan with clear objectives and targets could contribute to a more thoroughly informed and educated workforce. Sporadic one-off sessions which bring in a host of presenters who can individually conduct excellent sessions on their area of expertise, raising awareness, giving ideas and opportunities to try things are simply not enough to ensure that modifications and adaptations in day-to-day practices will follow or are even interpreted and adopted in a meaningful manner. Any initiative for CPD - whether taken by College Principals, Heads of schools, EOs or even following recommendations of staff members - should be addressed within a wider context of actual practice with children. In the absence of a wider

⁵⁷ Interviews are being conducted with early years' staff as part of a current study focusing on quality issues in early years settings. This research study is funded by Research Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) within the University of Malta.

strategy or vision, CPD activities risk becoming repetitive, lack coherence and fail to lead to growth, change and development. Ideally, an infrastructure is to be set up to enable and facilitate monitoring and support: it is futile to invite staff to attend CPD and expect participants to rapidly interpret, understand, adopt and adjust their practice and activities without further support, feedback or opportunities to reflect on their practice.

Recording, maintaining and evaluation of data about settings and services

A national system needs to be developed in order to ensure that all members of staff employed in childcare together with their employment history can be easily traced. This implies that upon employment, staff should be bound to provide accurate information about their qualifications as well as be obliged to inform the appropriate sources of their termination and/or engagement of duties elsewhere within the sector. In some instances, although staff lists were available, they were undated and it was thus difficult to determine whether the information was current or outdated. In some instances, the centre's staff list and the list compiled by an assessor differed to a great extent. The same applied to lists of staff's qualifications.

Service providers and other personnel involved in recording data about qualifications need to be instructed and assisted to ensure that information is reported accurately. Although a template prescribed by the DSWS required service providers to distinguish between qualified and unqualified staff, as well as indicate the awarding body, the course title and the MQF level of actual and/or prospective qualifications⁵⁸, service providers did not necessarily complete the form accurately.

Concluding remarks

Discourse about the quality of services provided remains rather shallow. There does not seem to be the political will or national interest to take stock of the situation from a holistic perspective and to address the crucial issues, keeping in mind that the quality of children's development and their learning experiences are of paramount importance and should be central rather than peripheral to any policy decision. Ironically, preventive measures identified to address the high rate of early school leavers in Malta (MEDE 2014) refers to good quality early childhood education and care experiences and recommend, for example, a continuous monitoring of ECEC programmes, provision of an environment that stimulates curiosity, inquisitiveness, creativity and an openness to learning as well as a smooth transition from childcare centres to kindergarten.

Incorrect practices which require modification have to be 'unlearnt' before new behaviours and practices are in place. In an environment where everyone and everything is allowed to flourish, regulating the sector becomes critical.

Raising the profile of the early years workforce is indeed a delicate balancing act: the entry requirements expected when accepting students for initial professional studies; the depth of knowledge and understanding acquired through the IPS; support through induction and mentoring together with opportunities for CPD; employability prospects; decent conditions of work, ensuring that the demand for services is met; and a high turnover of staff are challenges which are interlinked and have to be addressed. Resolving the different aspects satisfactorily requires a well-researched and well thought out policy which puts children as the main beneficiaries at the centre.

⁵⁸ Information requested about prospective qualifications includes the termination date as well as documented evidence that unqualified staff have actually started the programme of studies.



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Acknowledgements

Compiling the report⁵⁹ was possible with the prompt assistance of many individuals who willingly allowed me access to documentation and patiently replied to several queries which I raised from time to time. To all, thank you very much. Your assistance was invaluable and highly appreciated.

Mr Ian Mifsud – Director General, DQSE

Mr Gaetano Bugeja – Director, Department of Curriculum Management, DQSE

Mr Joseph Micallef – Director, Education Resources, Educational Services Division

Ms Ninette Sammut – Director, Accreditation Unit, DQSE

Dr Jacqueline Vanhear – Director, Quality Assurance Department, DQSE

Mr Stefan Borg – Assistant Director, Accreditation Unit, DQSE

Ms Alexandra Ebejer – Assistant Director, Department of Curriculum Management, DQSE

Mr Joseph Zarb – Principal, Accreditation Unit, DQSE

Mr Lawrence Azzopardi – Education Officer, Secretary to the Council for the Teaching Profession

Ms Catherine Falzon – Education Officer, Education Resources Department

Mr John Cachia-Fearne – Officer at Scale 5, Accreditation Unit, DQSE

Mr Peter Paul Carabott – Service Manager, Education Resources Directorate

Ms Carmen Grech – Education Officer, Training & Professional Development Unit, DQSE

⁵⁹ The data were compiled between Jan 2016 and April 2017. The name of individuals listed was accurate at the time data were being collected.

Mr Saviour Grech – Education Officer, Accreditation Unit, DQSE
Mr Andre' Galea – Education Officer, Accreditation Unit, DQSE
Ms Josann Ghirxi – Service Manager, Inclusive Education, Education Services Department
Ms Tania Mangion – Education Officer, Early Years DQSE,
Mr John Preca – Education Officer, Accreditation Unit, DQSE
Ms Maria Angela Schembri Meli – Education Officer Early Years, DQSE

Mr Stephen Cachia – Principal, MCAST
Ms Claire Flores – Deputy Director, Program Management, Institute of Community Services
Ms Rose Piccinino - Early Years Co-ordinator, Institute of Community Services

Ms Edel Cassar – CEO for the NCFHE
Mr Kenneth Camilleri – Head, Accreditation Unit, NCFHE

Mrs Rosanne Galea, Managing Director, Future Focus Ltd.
Mrs Grace Izzo, Head of Centre for Child Development, Education & Care Studies
Ms Fleur Mifsud Bons – Head, Minds Malta, registered private training institute
Ms Elizabeth Pisani – CEO for FES
Ms Suzanne Vassallo – Programme co-ordinator at FES
Ms Alexia Vella – Department Manager at Jobsplus
Ms Mariella Vella – Department Manager at Jobsplus

Thanks also go to the College Principals and Heads of state schools for supporting the data collection process as well as several service providers from childcare settings who willingly shared information with me.

MALTA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Valerie Sollars
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Malta – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 809-823.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

The National Curriculum Framework (2012) refers to the system of early childhood education and care in Malta as the *Early Years Cycle* and comprises childcare services for under 3-year olds, kindergarten centres for 3- to 5-year olds and the first two years of compulsory primary school, for 5- to 7-year olds. Overall responsibility lies with the *Ministry for Education and Employment* (MEDE). Within the MEDE, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is responsible for the regulation of non-compulsory ECEC settings. A few childcare services in the state sector are managed by the *Foundation for Educational Services* (FES). Others are privately owned and managed. Until 30th June 2016 all childcare services were regulated by the *Department of Social Welfare Standards* (DSWS). Since 1st July 2016, childcare services have been regulated by DQSE. Staffing qualifications within the three stages of the *Early Years Cycle* differ in that a low level qualification is required for work within the non-compulsory sector (0- to 5-year olds) compared to the university qualification necessary to work with 5- to 7-year olds. However, in terms of regulatory mechanisms, the ECEC system in Malta can be described as a unified system.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
MEDE 2012, 2014.
Sollars, V. 2013, 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

Overall objectives of the Maltese government for the state and non-state sectors of non-compulsory ECEC provision up to age 5 are to ensure that safe and developmentally appropriate children's services are available to promote the holistic development of children and the well-being of children and their families. In 2013, a policy document for ECEC was issued by the Ministry for Education and Employment (*Early Childhood Education and Care: the Way Forward*) which sets out general objectives and recommendations regarding an integrated system of ECEC, regulation and accreditation, staff training and qualifications, quality assurance and curriculum.

The two currently binding regulative frameworks are subsidiary legislation of the 1988 Education Act. These are the

- *National Minimum Curriculum (Pre-Primary Level) 1989*, which sets out the main curricular objectives for pre-primary classes for 3 and 4 year olds (see section on *Curricular Frameworks* for details of the more recent National Curriculum Framework 2012).
- *Registration of Childcare Facilities as Educational Establishments 2008*, which provides framework regulations for setting up provision for children under 3 years of age. There is currently no obligation for childcare settings to be registered with a specific authority.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
MEDE 2012.
Sollars, V. 2013, 2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Legal entitlement to a place in ECEC provision begins when the children start attending a kindergarten centre, i.e. from the age of 2 years 9 months.

Early childhood education and care in Malta (0 to under 5 years) is not compulsory. However, compulsory schooling begins early compared with most other European countries. The official school starting age in Malta is 5. Since children are enrolled during the year they reach their fifth birthday, some may be as young as 4 years 9 months when they enter the first class of primary school.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.

Types of provision

Kindergarten centres, which in reality are two-tier pre-primary settings, are available for children from 2 years 9 months up to school entry age. They are located either in state-maintained schools (62 in 2016/2017), or affiliated to grant-aided Catholic Church schools (28), or run by private entities as independent schools (22). Kindergarten centres thus come under the organisational regime of the school. The primary school head is formally head of the pre-primary classes. Pre-primary classes are typically open from Mondays to Fridays from 08:30 to 14:30 (i.e. opening hours do not always match parents' employment hours) and closed during school holidays. Children are grouped in same-age classes called 'Kindergarten 1' (mostly 3 year olds) and 'Kindergarten 2' (mostly 4 year olds). With the exception of schools belonging to two religious orders, all Church schools/pre-primary classes are single-sex whereas all state-run provision and most of the private/independent schools are co-educational.

Childcare centres (sometimes known as Childcare and Family Support Centres) are available for children up to 3 years of age. They may be home-based or centre-based, the latter being owned, managed and organised by various entities. In March 2017, there were 106 centres registered with the DQSE: 13 were state-funded and managed through the Foundation for Educational Services (FES); two were home-based and another two were organised by the Local Council for the town/village; three were managed by the Church and a further three were run on a private/public partnership basis, where the Government supports a private entity by hiring the premises; seven were set up by corporate entities which give priority to the children of employees of the entity before admitting children from the wider context and four were available in industrial parks; six centres were an integral part of larger private schools. The remaining 65 centres were privately-owned (for-profit) settings. The state-maintained centres are open between 07:30 and 16:30. Private centres have varying opening/closing times, ranging from 07:00 to 20:00, although most close between 16:00 and 17:00. Where larger independent schools offer the full range of educational provision – nursery, kindergarten, primary and secondary - the hours for nursery and kindergarten are rather short (8:30 to about 12:30/13:00). However, the parents have the option of making use of extended hours against additional payment.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Parliamentary Question No. 31899, Session No. 496, March 20th 2017 sitting.
Sollars, V. 2016.

Provider structures

Both childcare and kindergarten centres are run by three different providers and may be state-maintained, church-affiliated or private/independent. According to NSO (2016) statistics, 13,164 children under the age of 5 were enrolled in the non-compulsory sector.

Table 1

Malta: Total number of early years settings (childcare and kindergarten) according to provider, 2017*

Type of provision	Total
Childcare centres for under 3-year olds	106**
Kindergarten centres in state primary schools	62
Church-affiliated kindergarten centres	28
Kindergarten centres in private-independent schools	22

Most of the children under the age of 3 who attend childcare centres are in privately-run provision. Of a total of 106 settings only 13 are state-funded. As detailed earlier in the document, several providers offer childcare services including corporate entities, the church and local councils, and individuals investing in their private business. According to data provided by JobsPlus (April 2017)***, prior to April 2014, there were 1800 children in 69 childcare settings. By April 1st of 2017, there were 102 childcare centres registered in the free childcare scheme handling “over 6400 parents/guardians active applications”. Since the scheme was launched in April 2014, up to December 2016, a total of 9419 applications for the free childcare scheme were handled. Statistics published in mid-2017**** suggest that in June 2017, 3,579 children were registered in the free childcare scheme.

During the school year 2016/17, there were 62 state, 28 church-affiliated and 22 independent primary schools offering services for kindergarten children under 5 years of age. The largest provider is the state sector, followed by the independent and church-affiliated sectors. In 2016/2017, these accounted for 70.9%, 17.9% and around 11% of the kindergarten population respectively (see Table 2).

Table 2

Malta: Distribution of children in kindergartens according to provider, 2016/17*

Provider	3-year olds	4-year olds	Total	Per cent (%)
State	3,752	2,893	6,645	70.9
Church	320	730	1,050	11.2
Private	861	814	1,675	17.9
Total	4,933	4,437	9,370	100

Sources: *Records held at the *Accreditation Unit* at the Ministry for Education for Church and Independent schools data (email communication 21st March 2017); Records from *Research and Policy Development Directorate* at the Ministry for Education for State school data (email communication 23rd March 2017)
 **Response given to PQ31899, Session No. 496 on 20th March 2017.
 ***Data obtained from JobsPlus (email communication 3rd April 2017).
 ****The Malta Independent, Saturday 22nd July 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Between 2005 and 2015, the rate of children under age 3 attending childcare centres increased gradually over time (see Table 3). A report on the implementation of the strategic plan for the prevention of early school leaving*** with more recent data indicates that in 2016, 27.8% of children aged 0-3 attended childcare centres. The proportionate increase of 3- and 4-year olds participating in ECEC was even greater. Eurostat statistics of age-disaggregated data (Table 4) indicate that all 4-year olds and the larger majority of 3-year olds were enrolled in a centre-based setting.

Table 3

Malta: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	4	32
	Over 30 hours	1	26
	No attendance	95	43
2010	1 to 29 hours	6	26
	Over 30 hours	3	46
	No attendance	91	28
2015	1 to 29 hours	10.7	34.6
	Over 30 hours	7.2	53.8
	No attendance	82.1	11.6

Table 4

Malta: Number of children in ECEC settings and enrolment ratios according to age, 2015**

Age-groups	Number	Share in %
Under 2 years	No data available	
2-year olds	813	18.9
3-year olds	4,160	96.8
4-year olds	4,162	100.0
3- to under 5-year olds	8,322	99.3⁺
2- to under 5-year olds	9,135	72.1⁺

*own calculations based on Eurostat data of 2015

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.

**Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.

***MEDE 2017, viii, Early School Leaving Unit.

Financing and costs for parents

Childcare settings registered in the “free childcare scheme” (introduced in April 2014) receive 3€ an hour for each child who uses the service, depending on the number of pre-booked hours. According to a recent press report from the Education Minister (20th March 2017), some 6,400 families are taking advantage of the scheme, which is costing the government 12,000,000€, compared with fewer than 2,000 families when the scheme was introduced three years ago*. Since April 2014, government-subsidised places have been available free of charge in childcare centres for children with parents in education or employment**. Private-independent centres for children under age 3 may charge up to 470€ for a full-day place, whereas state-maintained centres charge only around 150€. Fees in state subsidised childcare centres differ considerably and may range from 80€ to 280€¹.

Attendance in state-maintained kindergartens is free of charge. Places in grant-aided church-run kindergarten centres are also free of charge, although parents are encouraged to give donations to help with institutional expenditure. Independent schools charge tuition fees for which parents receive a tax rebate. Parents whose children attend church-run and independent schools/ pre-schools pay for school transport and to purchase books and other requisites. In contrast, transport and provision of textbooks is free of charge for children in state schools.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 180.
Eurydice 2011, 2015.
**MEDE 2015a, 2015b, 2015c.
*Times of Malta, 20th March 2017.

Staff/child ratios

Childcare centres

For the childcare centres, the *National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities 2006* recommend the following ratios of qualified staff to children: 1:3 for infants under 12 months of age, 1:5 for children aged 13 to 24 months, and 1:6 for children aged 25 to 36 months. In the case of mixed-age groups, the recommended ratio is 1:6.

Kindergarten centres/pre-primary education

Irrespective of the service provider, all pre-primary settings are required to provide a standard ratio of one staff member for a maximum of fifteen 3-year olds and one staff member for a maximum of twenty 4-year olds.**

The 2014 policy paper on *Early childhood education and care: The way forward* recommends a reduction in the staff/child ratios for pre-primary settings.

In 2014, the average group size in Kindergarten 1 (3-year olds) was 12, and in Kindergarten 2 (4-year olds) 15. The respective maximum group size (15 for Kindergarten 1 and 20 for Kindergarten 2) may not be exceeded.*

Sources: *NAO 2015.
Sollars, V. 2013.
**Internal correspondence sent by Education Officer to Director of Education dated 11th Nov 1993. Subject: Policy in KG section. File KGS2/93. Retrieved from Registry files at the Ministry for Education.

Curricular frameworks

ECEC in Malta (childcare and early education) is not guided by a co-ordinated curriculum document.

The **kindergarten centres** are included in the *Early Years Cycle* of the National Curriculum Framework 2012 (NCF) for schools. The Early Years Cycle sought to incorporate the non-compulsory services up to the age of five, including childcare for under-threes, Kindergarten 1 (for 3-year olds), Kindergarten 2 (for 4-year olds) and the first two years of primary school (5- and 6-year olds). For the early years, five learning outcomes are defined: a strong sense of identity; a positive self-image; social competence; communicative competence; positive attitudes towards learning in order to become engaged and confident learners.

Activities in the **childcare centres** are loosely guided by the *National Standards for Child Care 2006* and two sets of *National Occupational Standards* for the Childcare Worker and the Childcare Manager respectively. Both documents refer to areas of child development, and helping children to develop their potential through inclusion and participation in a range of stimulating activities reflecting non-stereotypical roles and the diversity of race, culture and religion.

Sources: MFSS and MEYE 2006.
MEDE 2012, 45-5.
NCFHE 2017a, 2017b.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

National policy emphasises the importance of an inclusive approach from an early age. Children with special educational needs are usually admitted to mainstream kindergarten centres, a decision which is taken by the parents. The staff are required to refer children needing extra support to the relevant professionals. Such referrals are processed by the Statementing Moderating Panel. Furthermore, the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU) works in close collaboration with the Inclusive Education Network to provide early intervention for children born with a disability or one detected in the early months. In state-run pre-primary classes, a learning support assistant is allocated to give either one-to-one or small group support, depending on the specific educational need. The Directorate for Educational Services sponsors professional development for supply staff to work with special needs children as support staff. Church-run and independent pre-primary classes receive state support for staff. In terms of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), in 2016/2017, 331 were employed in state-maintained, 38 in church-affiliated and 34 in private-independent kindergarten centres, each responsible for one to two children with special educational needs*.

LSAs are usually employed without any formal training. They are required to follow a 70-hour course and subsequently another 140-hour course whilst already in employment. Several follow a two-year part-time Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education at University. More recently, a 210 hour course leading to a Level 5 Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education has been introduced and offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). LSAs are not trained to work with a specific age-group or a particular disability. They may be assigned duties to any child, irrespective of the child's age or whether s/he is in kindergarten, primary or secondary education. LSAs' responsibilities can range from one learner with full time one-to-one support to three learners on shared support depending on the assistance required according to the recommendations of the Statementing Moderating Panel (SMP).

Children with a background of migration

Data on foreign-born children in early years settings as reported by MEDE for 2015/2016 (Early School Leaving Unit 2017) indicate that foreign-born students within the State Sector in Early Years and Primary (3- to 11-year olds) accounted for 13% (N=2,748) of the population. Foreign-born children attending pre-primary settings (under 5-year olds) in Church and Independent schools accounted for 0.9% (N=7) and 24.2% (N=408) of the pre-primary population respectively. Across all levels of education (3- to 16-year olds) and for the scholastic year 2015/2016, the top six countries of origin in State schools included UK (462), Italy (334), Bulgaria (258), Libya (226), Syria (172) and Serbia (142). Within Independent schools, foreign students came from Libya (495), UK (313), Italy (263), Russia (186), Sweden (88) and France (84). Within Church schools, foreign students came from UK (13), Italy (9), Serbia (5), Nigeria (3), Spain (3) and Russia (3).

Whilst no data were forthcoming from the state sector for 2016/2017, the Church School Secretariat reported 10 children with a background of migration (defined as where both parents were born and raised abroad) in church school kindergarten settings (April 2017).

In 2016, 7.1% of the population in Malta was foreign born, around half of them coming from another EU member state. In terms of children under age 5, 10.1% did not have a Maltese background, with more than one third (37.2%) of them coming from EU member states.*

In order to improve the integration of children with a background of migration, a European project in 2013*** focused on the continuing professional development of staff regarding support for these children in their additional language learning. This included the implementation of specific resources and appropriate software for enhancing reading and writing skills.

Sources: **Data for Church and Independent schools obtained from Accreditation Unit, MEDE (email communication, 21st March 2017); Data for State schools obtained from Education Resources Department. MEDE (email communication 25th April 2017).
Early School Leaving Unit 2017.
EPIC 2016.
***European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2014, 29.
*Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2015.
Head of Church School Secretariat (Email communication, 6th April 2017)
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Sollars, V. 2017.

Monitoring– Evaluation – Research

Childcare centres

There are no formal assessment requirements for childcare centres. Until June 2016, the centres used to be monitored and inspected annually by the Department for Social Welfare Standards (DSWS) within the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity to ensure compliance with the *National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities 2006*. This responsibility has shifted to the Quality Assurance Directorate (QAD), forming part of the DQSE within the MEDE. Monitoring procedures used to include announced and unannounced inspections, assessments and administrative procedures. The QAD has recently piloted a reviewing model focusing on care, learning and play (Standard 5 of the National Standards 2006 document) with the intention to monitor but also support childcare centres towards improving the service provision. Currently, the QAD is evaluating the piloted review model in order to inform and propose a way forward in assuring quality in ECEC. In setting expectations, MEDE is ensuring recognition of the current reality in childcare centres to avoid larger differences between policy and practices. A policy paper issued by the Ministry of Education (2013) recommended that the governance and monitoring of the childcare sector be transferred to the Ministry of Education. No research has been undertaken at a national level to specifically compile evidence about the quality of childcare provision from the perspectives of the children and their families.

Kindergarten centres/pre-primary education

Monitoring and inspection of kindergarten centres for 3- and 4-year olds varies across sectors. Church-affiliated and independent schools with kindergarten centres organise and manage their own monitoring. Early Years Education Officers from the Department of Curriculum Management (DCM) visit Church and/or Independent KG settings upon invitation by the Secretariat for Catholic Education or the invitation from the senior management team of the independent school respectively.

The state kindergarten centres are monitored by Early Years Education Officers within the Department of Curriculum Management at the Ministry of Education. Kindergarten Assistants (KGAs) are supported on a regular basis starting from a year before they need to be confirmed in the Public Service. The frequency and intensity of these observation visits before and after confirmation depends on the level of support determined by the Education Officers until all Kindergarten Assistants show the expected level of quality in their performance. In theory, Education Officers may visit all Kindergarten Assistants each scholastic term, with each unannounced visit consisting of two different activities delivered by the KGA. However, considering time constraints and depending on the number of classes within each school making up a College for which individual Education Officers are directly responsible, regular visits to each and every classroom are difficult to maintain in every scholastic year. Each Education Officer has up to three Colleges and an equal number of KG centres under his/her remit every scholastic year. In addition to monitoring visits, KG centres are inspected by Education Officers (QAD). These inspection visits would be part of the broader school audits.

Apart from support and confirmation visits, Early Years Education Officers also conduct routine visits. These can be organised and structured according to:

- requests made by the Head of School through the College Principal and Director- DCM;
- requests made by the Council for the Teaching Profession; and
- evaluation of current performance by the Early Years Education Officers among Kindergarten Assistants who have been newly recruited or transferred to a different KG setting.

Although the Early Years Education Officers are considered to be fully qualified to be appointed Education Officers, they are not necessarily in possession of academic qualifications specifically in early childhood education but may have accumulated years of service or experience in a range of settings or appointments, even in the primary and secondary school sectors.

Within school settings, staff employed at the kindergarten centres do not perceive themselves to be a priority. This opinion has been shared by several practitioners*. Some practitioners reported that funds allocated to the KG settings are not sufficient for purchasing resources. Several claim to spend part of their salary on resources to better equip their classrooms or support them in activities with the children. Others admit that when they are involved in whole school professional development activities, the chosen topic is not always relevant for the early years.

There are no regular or steady research initiatives which could inform, monitor, support or improve practices. Research studies tend to be small-scale and to arise from individual initiatives. An example of such an initiative is an on-going study focusing on the interpretations of 'quality' from the perspectives of practitioners and parents whose children are attending any one of 50 child-care or kindergarten settings in Malta and Gozo, within the state, church or independent settings. Data have thus far been collected from around 1960 parents, representing 47% of the questionnaires distributed and interviews, conducted with over 400 members of staff.*

There is no national agency or specific entity focusing on early childhood education.

Sources: Eurydice 2012.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 308.
Sollars, V. 2013, 2017, *(in progress) - interview data from on-going research on quality issues.

Parental leave

Maternity leave is obligatory during the six weeks immediately following the birth of the child. A further eight weeks can be taken either before or after birth. These 14 weeks are covered 100% by the employer. They may be extended for a further 4 weeks; since 2015 mothers receive a flat rate from the government (166.26€ weekly) in alignment with the minimum wage.

Fathers working as public sector employees are entitled to five, fully paid days of **paternity leave** which have to be taken during the 15 days immediately following the child's birth. In the private sector, only one paid working day is guaranteed.

Parental leave in the public sector is granted for 12 months per family if the parent has been working for at least a full year. If both parents work in the public sector they have to divide this time between them, but cannot both be on leave at the same time. Leave may be taken in one continuous period or in blocks of four, six or nine months. Four months can be split in blocks of one month, up to the child's eighth birthday. Parental leave in the private sector is four months per parent and unpaid. It can be taken in blocks of one month, up to the child's eighth birthday. The requirement of at least one year continuous employment applies here as well.

In the public sector in 2014, 473 mothers – but only 13 fathers - took up the unpaid parental leave. There are no data for the private sector.

Source: Camilleri-Cassar, F. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1975	Introduction of the first state-funded kindergarten provision for 4 and 5 year olds, i.e. at a very late time in history compared with most other European countries
1987	Kindergartens were the responsibility of the Department of Social Services within the Ministry of Labour and Social Services until 1987. Since then they have been under the auspices of the Ministry of Education
1988	Kindergarten provision extended to include 3 year olds
1990s	Establishment of the first childcare centres for children under 3 years of age
2006	Publication of the first <i>National Policy for Early Childhood Education</i> and publication of <i>National Standards for Child Daycare Facilities</i>
2009	Introduction of a University qualification for kindergarten practitioners working in school settings
2012	Publication of the <i>National Curriculum Framework</i> – the first document to acknowledge the early years as a distinct cycle of education (<i>Early Years Cycle</i>). It projects a holistic vision of the early years which incorporates 0- to 7-year olds
2014	Free childcare services introduced for parents in employment or pursuing studies utilising registered childcare centres
2016	Publication of the <i>Professions in Education Act</i> (July 2016) – one of the proposals for the amendments to the Education Act identifies an MQF Level 4 qualification in early childhood education as the minimum required level in order to obtain a license to practice the profession of Kindergarten Assistant. This undermines earlier initiatives to introduce an MQF Level 6 qualification in the field

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 306.
Sollars, V. 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Malta

Country expert assessment by Valerie Sollars

One of the key challenges facing ECEC concerns the absence of an entity or agency with an explicit focus on and responsibility for early years policy development, promotion, guidance and implementation. The absence of such an entity (a) is an indicator of the minimal importance attributed to early childhood education; (b) perpetuates a situation where the sector is directed by inappropriate or inadequate policies which fail to acknowledge the specific needs of early years or to show an understanding about the development of very young children; (c) contributes to a situation where early childhood education and care has no voice; and (d) implies no holistic vision about the sector or a strategy to ensure quality provision of services. Indeed, there is no large scale research which has yet monitored actual practices and their short or long-term effect on children and their families.

A second challenge arises from the perceptions, beliefs and expectations of parents, practitioners and the general public. Anecdotal evidence repeatedly suggests that childcare settings are associated with a safe and clean environment where children are looked after whilst the parents are at work; kindergarten is seen as preparation for or even the start of school. Although learning through play is acknowledged, literacy and numeracy sessions are expected to be held regularly. School-based or commercially produced workbooks focusing on numbers, letters, shapes, colours and similar topics are not unusual. The choice of activities, the organisation of the day and the

planning of activities are the remit of the practitioner and children rarely contribute to determining activities, thus minimising opportunities for sustained engagement and involvement.

A third challenge faced by ECEC stems from the historical development of the sector. Over the years, responsibility for the kindergarten section swung back and forth between different Ministries before finally becoming part of the Ministry for Education. The responsibility for childcare settings was, until June 2016, within the Ministry for Social Policy. Although the Ministry for Education is now responsible for all settings, there is as yet no holistic vision for early childhood education and care. Many of the personnel who are expected to monitor and support the early years sector have little academic training or experiences specifically in ECEC and the much-needed support and guidance especially required because of the low-level of qualifications of the practitioners themselves, cannot be appropriately provided.

Demographic data

Population

In 2016, the population in Malta totalled 434,403. The population has been rising steadily over the past 20 years (in 1995: 369,451 and in 2005: 402,668).

Children under age 5

Since compulsory schooling in Malta starts at age 5, data in this section includes children up to age 5 from available sources, whereas otherwise the demographic data refer to children up to age 6.

In 2016, children under age 5 comprised almost 5% of the total population in Malta, 3% of the total population were children under 3 years of age (see *Table 5*). Although the relative share of young children in the population was higher than the EU average in 1995, it had dropped significantly by 2005. By 2016, it was approximately on a level with the EU-average (cf. *Table 6*).

Table 5

Malta: Children under 5 years of age, 2016*

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	4,407
1-year olds	4,253
2-year olds	4,159
Total under age 3	12,819
3-year olds	4,326
4-year olds	4,324
Total 3 to under age 5	8,650
Total 0- to under 5-year olds	21,469

Table 6

Malta: Children under 5 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016*, in %²

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	4.1	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.0

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO and HR.

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
3 to under 5 years	2.9	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.1
0 to under 5 years	7.0	5.7	5.0	5.2	4.9	5.1

[†] own calculations, differences due to roundings

Source: *Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age six

In 2015, over two thirds of all households with children under the age of six were couple households. Only 3.5% of all households are single households - mostly single mothers (3.2%).

Table 7

Malta: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	43,200	
Couple households	29,400	68.1
Other household type	12,300	28.5
Single households, total	1,500	3.5
Single households, women	1,400	3.2
Single households, men	100**	0.3**

* own calculations, **data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age six

The overall employment rate in 2015 was 76.2% for men and 51% for women.

Maternal employment rates in Malta have increased significantly over recent years. Whereas in 2003*, Malta had the lowest employment rate (29%) in the EU25 for mothers with children aged 3 to 5 years (average: 60%), in 2015, the rate of 57.1% for mothers of children under age 6 is only slightly below that of the EU28 average (61%) whereas the rate of the fathers (93%) is among the highest in the EU.

Table 8

Malta: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

		Mothers, in per cent	Fathers, in per cent
Malta	2005	29.3	90.1
	2010	40.6	88.3
	2015	57.1	93.0
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3

		Mothers, in per cent	Fathers, in per cent
employment	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b, 2017c.
*Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 21.4% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. This positions Malta slightly better than the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The relative share of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 22.4%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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THE NETHERLANDS

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

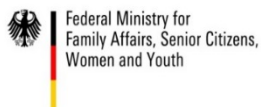
Ruben Fukkink

Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Amsterdam
and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

Citation suggestion:

Fukkink, R. 2018. "The Netherlands – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 824-839.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

Historically, the Dutch childcare context was characterised by a ‘split system’ with two separate sectors for young children, namely, childcare and education, each with its own pedagogical roots (see Bahle 2009; Bennett and Tayler 2006). The Netherlands now have a partially unified early childhood education and care system with involvement of two ministries. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid - SZW*) is responsible for the governance of childcare at national level (ECEC settings for children 0–4 years; after school care 4–13 years; family day care, 0–13 years). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap - OCW*) is both responsible for the governance of early childhood education for disadvantaged children (*vooren vroegschoolse educatie*, 2½–4 years) at national level and for the early education of 4- to 5-year olds in the *Basisschool*. Co-ordination, co-operation and integration have become a matter of urgency, and with the implementation of a law in 2010 (*Wet ontwikkelingskansen door kwaliteit en educatie, Wet OKE*) for harmonising and integrating preschool facilities and childcare, both sectors are now covered by the same laws and regulations.

Since the introduction of the Childcare Act, which came into force on 1 January 2005, it has been mandatory for each childcare centre to comply with four pedagogic objectives: the Act states that a responsible and high-quality childcare facility must offer children a safe and caring environment, promoting personal competence, strengthening social competence, as well as transmitting norms and values (see Riksen-Walraven 2004). In addition, the Act stipulates that these facilities must have a parents’ committee. Currently, a new Childcare Act is under preparation.

Inspections of childcare facilities and compliance procedures are located at the local level of the municipalities. The municipal public health services are responsible for conducting the childcare centre inspections. The inspections are conducted at least annually, during which the childcare inspectors assess whether or not childcare centres meet the national quality requirements as stated in The Dutch Childcare Act (2005). These national quality requirements cover seven different domains: parental participation, personnel, health and safety, buildings and interior design, group size and child-caregiver ratio, pedagogical policy and practice and complaint settlement. The findings of the inspection are registered in a public inspection report including advice on whether or not to carry out legal compliance procedures, which must be sent to the municipal authority.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In 2015, 68,000 persons worked in the childcare sector (Brancheorganisatie Kinderopvang 2016). This number includes all staff, not just contact staff. *Table 1* distinguishes between different types of contact staff categories and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Netherlands: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/ EQF level/ ISCED ¹ level
Childcare sector				
<i>Pedagogisch medewerker</i> (also often called <i>Leidster</i>) Pedagogical Worker <i>Former profile:</i> Social Care Professional <i>Current profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Dagopvang in kinderdagverblijf</i> Childcare centre (lit.: day care in childcare centre) 3 months–4 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility in same-age or mixed-age group	3 months–4 years	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4
<i>Peuterspeelzaalleidster</i> or <i>Pedagogisch medewerker</i> Toddler Playgroup Caregiver or Pedagogical Worker <i>Former profile:</i> Social Care Professional <i>Current profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Reguliere peuterspeelzaal</i> Playgroup (lit.: regular play group) 2½–4 years <i>Peuterspeelzaal met voor- en vroeg-schoolse educatie (vve)</i> Playgroup with early intervention programme 2½–4 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Children of all ages, also adulta	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
(Pre-) Primary education sector				
<i>Leerkracht</i> Primary School Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Basisschool</i> Primary school 4–12 years (including pre-primary class for 4- to 5-year olds)	Core practitioner with group responsibility	4–12 years	4 years higher education institution (<i>Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs – PABO</i>) or 5 years higher education institution (<i>academische PABO</i>) ECTS points: 240 EQF level: 5/6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Onderwijsassistent</i> Teaching Assistant	<i>Basisschool</i> Primary school 4–12 years (including pre-primary class for 4- to 5-year olds)	Qualified co-worker Teacher's class assistant	4–12 years	3 years upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4

¹ UNESCO 2012, 2014.² n/a not applicable

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (both narrow focus, 0–3, or broad focus, sometimes including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The large majority of personnel working in the **childcare 0-4 sector** have a certificate awarded for the vocational training for childcare at intermediate level (*Pedagogisch Werk* or the previous *Sociaal-Pedagogisch Werk*). The minimum requirement is a vocational qualification at ISCED level 3, but it seems that the number of caregivers with a certificate at ISCED level 4 is slowly increasing. In a random national sample of caregivers in the national Quality Assessment of 2012 (Fukkink, Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, Helmerhorst, Bollen, and Riksen-Walraven 2013), 56% of the staff were educated at ISCED level 3 and 44% at level 4. A recent study showed no significant differences between educational levels of staff in childcare centres and play groups (Veen, Fukkink, Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, Heurter, Helmerhorst, and Bollen 2014).

All Dutch caregivers also need a certificate of conduct (*Verklaring Omtrent het Gedrag (VOG)*). This is a document through which the Dutch State Secretary for Security and Justice declares that the applicant has not committed any criminal offences that are relevant to the performance of his or her duties (e.g., sexual child abuse). Obviously, this certificate is not a qualification in the professional sense of the word, but it is a requirement for contact staff in the Netherlands.

Staff in the Dutch ECEC workforce are predominantly female. The number of men has always been modest in childcare and has diminished further for work with children aged 0 to 4 years (Van Polanen *et al.* forthcoming). Male staff are more frequent in after school childcare settings (4–12 years). Teachers in primary schools are also predominantly female.

The ethnicity of ECEC staff is mixed. In the last large scale childcare/day care assessment (Fukkink *et al.* 2013), about one in 11 caregivers was not born in the Netherlands. Dutch was the home language for 92% of the caregivers. There is local variation in the composition of staff, which reflects differences in the population between the major cities in the urban part of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) and other parts of the country. For example, Amsterdam and subsequently Rotterdam and The Hague have recently become 'majority-minority cities' (Crul, Uslu, and Lelie 2016), where no one ethnic group can be described as a majority group, and the superdiversity of these cities is reflected in the child population and staff in these urban areas.

Finally, the length of working experience of staff in the childcare sector has steadily increased in the 21st century, as reported in nationally representative samples. In 1995, the average length of working experience was 5.5 years; by 2008 it had risen to 8.4 years; and in 2012 the average length was 8.9 years. Also, the mean age of staff has increased from 31.2 years in 1995 to 33.2 years in 2012.

In the 2012 national assessment, caregivers worked, on average, 27.7 hours per week, equal to 3.5 days per week. Caregivers in play groups work fewer hours per week. This is related to the

fact that childcare centres have a full-day programme, whereas play groups operate on a half-day basis.

Table 2

Netherlands: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: childcare 0-4 sector

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce	
Staff with specialist higher education degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor degree in social work, pedagogy or education Higher level academic degree 	2012: Managers/centre heads: 73% 2012: Managers/centre heads: 4%	
Staff with specialist vocational qualification* (ISCED level 4)	2012: approx. 44%	Managers: 23%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification* (ISCED level 3)	2012: approx. 56%	
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a	
Staff with no formal IPS	n/a	
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	n/a	
Male staff	No systematically compiled national data, presumably <1% for preschool population in childcare About 15% for primary school, but percentage is presumably lower for lower grades (grades 1 and 2, children 4-6 years)	
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data, about 10%*	

* Fukkink et al. 2012.

Managers in childcare centres

The educational background of managerial staff is diverse. According to the most recent national quality assessment (2012), the majority of managers had a Bachelor-level qualification (73%, with a background in social work, pedagogy or education). A further 23% were educated through an intermediate level vocational route, ISCED 3 or 4.4% of managers had an academic degree (Master's or PhD).

Pre-primary sector 4-5 years in schools

Teachers in the *Basisschool* who work with 4- to 5-year olds have a Bachelor-level qualification (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO*) and the course of studies lasts 4 years. In recent years, some IPS institutes in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Nijmegen have been offering, in close collaboration with the university, a new type of teacher education/training which combines a vocational track at higher education level and an academic track in a five-year IPS route (instead of 4 years). More specifically, the regular teacher education course is complemented with educational, pedagogic and research modules at academic bachelor level. This type of teacher preparation is referred to as academic teacher education/training (*academische PABO*).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The pre-service training requirement for the childcare sector in the Netherlands is a three-year upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work. Also the training routes for Social Cultural Work (*Sociaal-cultureel werker, SCW*) and Educational Assistant (*Onderwijsassistent*), both vocational qualifications at intermediate level, qualify for childcare work. The entry requirement for this education is the pre-vocational track of secondary education or equivalent

educational levels. This Pedagogical Work training has two levels: EQF 3 and 4. The majority of caregivers have a certificate at EQF level 3. The Dutch pre-service training distinguishes, at both level 3 and level 4 between two learning paths: the school-based pathway and the on-the-job training pathway. In the school-based pathway, school is the largest part of their education (about 60%) and students tend to be younger than in the on-the-job training route. Students combine this with internships, starting from their first year. In the on-the-job training pathway, students work mainly in childcare as trainees and they combine this with school experience (about 20%).

The national vocational training for childcare has shifted its broad focus on care in general (e.g., children, elderly, handicapped people) to one on care for children, reflecting a change from social care work to pedagogical work.

There is no certificate at higher educational level (EQF 5 or 6) which is required for employees in the childcare sector. This level is not included in the current childcare regulations for staff and the required qualifications. However, there are a number of types of vocational training at Bachelor level which qualify for ECEC work, including both an Associate Degree in education (AD for pedagogic-educational co-worker, childcare, educational support worker) and a Bachelor level degree (primary school education, pedagogy, social work, cultural-societal work, pedagogical management).

Table 3

Netherlands: Pedagogical Worker (IPS)

<p>Job title in Dutch: <i>Pedagogisch Medewerker, Leidster</i></p> <p>Profile: Formerly: Social Care professional; currently: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Completion of secondary education or equivalent</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year upper secondary vocational course in Pedagogical Work</p> <p>Award: Certificate in Pedagogical Work</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 3 or 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3 or 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Kinderdagverblijf</i> (childcare centre, 0-4 years); <i>Reguliere peuterspeelzaal</i> (regular play-group, 2.5-4 years)</p>

Note: Also the qualification routes for social cultural work (*Sociaal-cultureel werker*, SCW) and Educational Assistant (*Onderwijsassistent*), which have similar qualification requirements, qualify for working in childcare settings.

Pre-primary education sector 4-5 years

Table 4

Netherlands: Primary School Teacher (pre-primary)

<p>Job title in Dutch: <i>Leerkracht</i></p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p><i>Route 1:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: University entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years of study at a vocational higher education institution specialising in pedagogy ('Pedagogical Academy')</p> <p>Award: Professional Bachelor (<i>Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: <i>Basisschool</i>, working with 4-12 year olds</p>

<p>Job title in Dutch: <i>Leerkracht</i></p> <p>Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p><i>Route 2:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: University entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 5 years of study at a vocational higher education institution specialising in pedagogy in close collaboration with the regional university</p> <p>Award: Academic Bachelor (<i>academische PABO</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0113</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: <i>Basisschool</i>, working with 4-12 year olds (4-8, 8-12)</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in the IPS programmes of core practitioners

Pedagogical Worker (*Pedagogisch Medewerker*)

Competence specifications: Following the national profile, as described by the national curriculum organisation Calbris, the curriculum should teach students in the planning, practice and institutional skills domain (see Fukkink 2010). The Calbris profile distinguishes different institutional tasks, often with an emphasis on a managerial role. According to this profile, the curriculum should teach students co-ordination skills (e.g., the division of tasks in a team) and supervision skills (e.g., observing colleagues and discussing their performance). Furthermore, the curriculum should ensure that childcare workers can develop and implement new policy guidelines in the daily practice of a childcare centre (e.g., revising or updating a centre's policy document and discussing it with the parental committee and colleagues). Students should master these core competencies in their pre-service training.

An innovative part of the Dutch curriculum is devoted to the explicit training of seven interaction skills that are relevant for interactions between caregivers and children (see below). These competencies are an important part of the new curriculum.

Curricular areas: The curriculum of the current vocational training now has a stronger link with working in ECEC and childcare in general. Since recently, the curriculum also includes explicit training of language and interaction skills (including sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, developmental stimulation, fostering positive peer interactions (see Helmerhorst *et al.* 2014). In an ongoing research project, teachers of vocational education are supported by the Amsterdam of University to implement the new part of the curriculum related to the training of interaction skills.

Quality assessments of nationally representative samples have shown that qualified childcare workers have relatively high scores for the basic interactive skills of sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, and structuring and limit setting but lower scores for the more educational skills of developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interactions; verbal communication takes a middle position. The divide between emotional support and class management on the one hand and instructional support on the other hand has also repeatedly been found for qualified staff in studies in other countries (Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Fukkink, Tavecchio, and Gevers Deynoot-Schaub 2016). The (ongoing) development of a pedagogic curriculum for the younger child (0-6 years) reflects the fact that academic discussion about the pedagogic-didactic approach in the Netherlands is no longer framed within the traditional dichotomy 'play versus learning' or 'care versus education'. Moreover, the changed Dutch childcare context striving towards harmonising and integrating preschool facilities and childcare may provide a fertile breeding ground for further developments. The recent rise of integrated child centres (*Integrale Kindcentra - IKC*) with closer cooperation between primary

school and childcare may also stimulate the further development of balanced pedagogical approaches. However, more research is needed to monitor current and future developments in practice.

Primary School Teacher (*Leerkracht*)

Competence requirements: Seven competencies with Dublin Descriptors are distinguished in the national curriculum of the teacher education programme for primary school teachers (*Pedagogisch Academie voor het basisonderwijs - PABO*): interpersonal; pedagogical; didactic; organisational; team collaboration; collaboration with local community; reflection and professional development. Specific indicators are distinguished at different levels during pre-service training: qualified for training after year 1 (level 1), qualified for final traineeship (level 2) and qualified to start practising in schools (Bachelor level, level 3).

Curricular areas: The national teacher education profile distinguishes between seven key competency areas (see above). The (pedagogical) content knowledge includes language, maths, geography, history, physics, biology, music, drama, arts, gymnastics, ethical education or philosophy. Further, teacher education at different institutes may also include complementary curricular areas or a special emphasis (e.g., urban education, integrated child centre, science).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Childcare staff

Staff in childcare need a vocational training certificate (i.e., candidates with an academic master's degree in pedagogy, psychology or educational sciences are not permitted to work in childcare because their education is not vocational). Persons without the regular vocational certificates may start an APL procedure (assessment of prior learning) with additional, individualised schooling. This procedure may last three years with about 12 hours of training on a weekly basis.

Pre-primary education staff

Teacher candidates may also enter the teacher education for primary school teachers (*PABO*) if they have finished an alternative study route at professional bachelor or academic bachelor level (*zij-instromers*). For career advancement, staff may start a new study at a higher vocational level.

Recently, it is also possible for teachers working in primary schools and with an academic background to apply for a PhD scholarship (*Lerarenbeurs*).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Childcare sector 0-4 years

The Dutch pre-service childcare training routes distinguish between two learning paths: the school-based pathway and the on-the-job training pathway. The on-the-job training pathway is offered at EQF 3 and 4. This latter type of IPS is currently less frequent, possibly because, in a declining childcare market, it has become less relevant for childcare providers to invest in future staff with contracts for on-the-job trainees. Workplace-based learning starts at the first year and continues till the last year. This workplace-based learning is supervised by an educator from the IPS institution and by a staff member of an accredited job training childcare cen-

tre. Job training centres and vocational training centres ('ROC's') may collaborate at a regional level to advance professional development.

Pre-primary education 4-5 years

Workplace-based learning is a regular part of teacher education programmes for primary school teachers (PABO). Students have an internship in both the lower, middle and upper primary grades. Work-based learning starts in the first year of the PABO and students are placed in a primary school for one or two days per week. Students play an increasingly active role, starting with observing the class, then assisting with part of a lesson, and finally teaching classes for part of the day. In the final year of the Bachelor's degree studies, workplace-based learning takes place during an extensive period of half a year in which the student is responsible for the class and is also a full member of the school team (*lilo-stage*). Workplace-based learning is supervised by a tutor from the IPS institution and by a staff member of the host school. Dutch teacher education (PABO) works with primary schools in regional networks to exchange findings and to promote the professional level of the field.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The professional development of staff working in childcare settings is high on the Dutch educational agenda. Increasing attention is being paid to ongoing professional learning activities that complement initial vocational studies. Regular training approaches do not seem to produce satisfying results in terms of instructional support, and additional efforts seem to be required in development and training. In 2012, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs developed an agenda for improving the pedagogical quality of childcare together with stakeholders. Fitting in with this agenda, the Dutch National Bureau for Quality in Childcare (*Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang, BKK*) formulated a policy proposal (BKK 2012). A cornerstone in their policy is the provision of training aimed at the improvement of pedagogical interaction skills. This policy is informed by scientific evidence from Dutch experimental research which showed that specialised training can improve the process quality of childcare and the pedagogical quality of interactions between staff and children. International and national research has shown that early childhood teachers with higher levels of professional training are more often engaged in sensitive and stimulating interactions with children; they provide more sensitive care, are more involved with children, and offer richer learning experiences (see also Egert 2015; Egert, Fukkink, and Eckhardt, to be published; Eurofound 2015; Fukkink and Lont 2009; Werner, Linting, Vermeer, and van IJendoorn 2016 for meta-analytic reviews of international childcare studies).

Childcare staff

The National Office for Quality in Childcare, BKK, has stimulated the innovation and dissemination of pedagogical frameworks and coordinates CPD activities for ECEC staff at the national level, supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The office currently coordinates two training programmes of two different providers: *Oog voor Interactie*³, provided by the Dutch Youth Institute, and *TINK training (Taal- en Interactievaardigheden in de Kinderopvang)*⁴, provided by the national organisation Sardes. Both types of CPD focus on training the interaction skills and language proficiency of caregivers. The training programme *Oog voor Interactie* comprises six group meetings (3.5 hours each), some individual coaching with video feedback, three homework assignments, and one concluding session with a small group of

³ *Oog voor interactie*, Eye for interaction

⁴ *TINK*, Training Language and Interaction skills in childcare

trainees. The *TINK* approach comprises eight sessions of 3.5 hours each, seven practical assignments (4 hours each), eight team meetings (2 hours each), reading the syllabus (4 hours), and a concluding assignment (4 hours), totalling 80 training hours. Attendance for both programmes is voluntary and is paid for by the employer. The certificates gained from these two training programmes are not formally recognised in terms of career advancement. In an ongoing experimental study, the effects of the newly developed programmes on staff interactions skills are evaluated.

Also the national childcare sector organisation (*Brancheorganisatie Kinderopvang*) is currently involved in a pilot for lifelong learning (*Permanente Educatie Pedagogisch Professionals*). This project aims to stimulate professional development with modules, tests and certificates for ECEC staff.

Pre-primary education staff

Continuing professional development of Primary School Teachers takes place in different initiatives. The aforementioned *TINK* and *Oog voor Interactie* training programmes are also available for pre-primary education staff. Further, specific language training has recently been provided on a large, national scale to raise the linguistic competencies of staff; if teachers are not certified at a certain proficiency level (level 3F, which is equal to an ISCED level 5 or Bachelor level), they are not allowed to work in a pre-primary education setting.

One of the themes that has recently received attraction in the Netherlands is urban education and working as a teacher in an urban context (Fukkink and Oostdam 2016). Urban education may be an integral part of the IPS programme, but also plays a role in continuing professional development. For ECEC staff, early intervention programmes for young children are an important topic in urban contexts.

Primary School Teachers may choose to start a Master's degree in education. Popular courses are the Master in Educational Leadership, Master in Educational Needs and Master in Pedagogy, which are accredited by the Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO).

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Professionalisation: investing in childcare-specific competencies

The former vocational training programme for childcare (*Sociaal Pedagogisch Werk*) offered a general curriculum for pre-service workers who would care in their profession with a diverse population (infants, youth, elderly, handicapped people, etc.). The current vocational education/training (*Pedagogisch Werk*) (available since 2011) is tailored to working with children and has a clearer focus on childcare. In addition, explicit training of skills for the interaction between staff and children is included in the current curriculum (as explained in section 3.2).

Professionalisation: investing in interaction skills in in-service development

In an ongoing project, a successful in-service training format (see Helmerhorst et al. 2016) is being adapted to and implemented in a vocational training context, supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. An ongoing research project evaluates the effects of this in-service training on the interaction skills of pre-service ECEC teachers (NCKO 2017).

Professionalisation: investing in collaboration

Recently, extensive cooperation between schools, teacher training institutions and universities has been taking place in three collaborative field projects (“*academische werkplaats*” or “*werkplaats*”) in Amsterdam, Tilburg and Utrecht with external funding. In these projects, professional development occurs in field-based research and development projects between a

university, the teacher education department of a university of applied sciences and several primary schools.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Caregiver-Child Interactions

Source: Helmerhorst, K.O.W., J.M. Riksen-Walraven, R.G. Fukkink, L.W.C. Tavecchio and M.J.J.M. Gevers Deynoot-Schaub. 2016. (see *References* for details)

Aims: The study aimed to investigate the effects of training on the interactive skills of pedagogical staff in everyday caregiver-child interactions.

Procedure: Previous studies underscored the need to improve caregiver-child interactions in early child care centres. In this study we used a randomised controlled trial to examine whether a 5-week video feedback training can improve six key interactive skills of caregivers in early child care centres: sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit-setting, verbal communication, developmental stimulation, and fostering positive peer interactions. A total of 139 caregivers from 68 early child care groups for 0- to 4-year old children in Dutch child care centres participated in this RCT, 69 in the intervention condition and 70 in the control condition. Caregivers' interactive skills during everyday interactions with the children were rated from videotape using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales at pretest, post-test, and follow-up 3 months after the posttest.

Findings: Results at posttest indicate a significant positive training effect on all six caregiver interactive skills. Effect sizes of the CIP training range between $d = 0.35$ and $d = 0.79$. Three months after the post-test, caregivers in the intervention group still scored significantly higher on sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, verbal communication, and fostering positive peer interactions than caregivers in the control group with effect sizes ranging between $d = 0.47$ and $d = 0.70$.

Implications: This study shows that the quality of caregiver-child interactions can be improved for all six important caregiver skills, with a relatively short training program. Possible ways to further improve the training and to implement it in practice and education are discussed.

Professional development

Source: Henrichs, L.F., P.O. Slot, and P.P.M. Leseman. 2016. (see *References* for details)

Background: The article reviews findings of the CARE European project Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC.

Aims: A recent review of international publications was conducted to identify factors for effective professional development in an ECEC context.

Procedure: The review includes other (meta-analytic) reviews, individual empirical studies, and 'good practice' reports of different (European) countries.

Findings: The authors emphasise three core elements for professional development: permanence (i.e., continuous monitoring of professional development), collectivity (i.e., partnership with different stakeholders, including parents), and reflection (i.e., discussing the alignment between pedagogical theory and ECEC practice). Furthermore, the authors also highlight gaps in our current knowledge base.

Education in an urban context

Source: Fukkink, R.G. and R. Oostdam (eds). 2016. (see *References* for details)

In the Netherlands, there is an increasing interest in urban education for ECEC practitioners, elementary and secondary school teachers.

This recent handbook aims to facilitate teaching urban education in teacher education and educational science with contributions by authors with an educational, sociological or pedagogical background, addressing various topics of upbringing and teaching in an urban context from the perspective of professionals.

The different authors make clear that working in an urban context requires specific competencies for teachers and pedagogues, distinguishing between dealing with diversity of young people, diversity of parents and the diversity and complex dynamics of cities.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salary of a caregiver with a full-time job ranges from between 1,900€ and 2,600€ per month, depending on the length of working experience. The salaries of core practitioners in childcare settings are, on average, lower than those of primary school teachers. However, it is possible to live on a childcare salary as a professional caregiver. The salary of a primary school teacher varies according to length of working experience and professional award level, ranging between 2500€ and 4000€ per month.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Dutch society is characterised by part-time work and the childcare sector is no exception. According to the most recent national quality assessment of childcare for 0-4 years (Fukkink et al. 2013), caregivers worked, on average, 27.7 hours per week (standard deviation: 6.5). Teachers in primary schools may also work part-time.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The *Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang* (BKK) is a non-profit organization in the Netherlands to improve the quality of early childhood education and care. It was established and is governed by the national associations of employers, employees and parents in the field of ECEC. From 2013-2017, BKK is co-ordinating a programme called *Quality Impulse*, commissioned and subsidised by the Dutch government. This programme is aligned to the policy agenda of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in consultation with different stakeholders. With the *Quality Impulse* initiative, BKK is providing and maintaining an innovative and effective improvement of ECEC and sustaining continuing professional development in the field. The programme has the potential to contribute to the healthy and balanced development of all children who attend ECEC in the Netherlands, aiming to reach both centre-based and home-based childcare.

In order to realise this important and prestigious goal, BKK is facilitating CPD programmes, the development of a broad integral quality framework by an independent committee and transmitting it to the workforce. In addition, BKK is asking the field for their views on quality issues and is initiating academic research. The ultimate goal of BKK with the *Quality Impulse* is to support childcare providers to independently measure and guarantee the quality of early childhood practice in their childcare settings, and to make their quality results transparent (source: <http://www.stichtingbkk.nl/over-stichting-bkk/about-bkk>).

8.4 Non-contact time

There are no national regulations regarding non-contact time for Dutch ECEC staff. A recent study (see Veen et al. 2015) indicated that caregivers in playgroups with early intervention programmes have a larger number of hours of work stipulated in their contract, compared to

caregivers in regular playgroups, and this difference may be explained by the larger number of hours provided for development, coordination and training for preschool staff.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Since 2010, the Dutch childcare market has been declining following serious budget cuts by the government and, subsequently, a significant drop in demand for places in childcare settings has occurred as many parents decided to make less use of formal childcare. A shift was observed from the use of formal childcare to informal childcare arrangements (e.g., grandparents taking care of their grandchildren). This means that there are no significant staff shortages at the moment. In terms of recruitment, recent trends show a rise in the number of caregivers with EQF level 4.

In primary schools, the number of pupils is also in decline. It is expected that in 2019 there will be 150,000 fewer pupils compared to 2012, with a corresponding loss of 12,000 teacher jobs. About 100 primary schools have to close their doors annually. (<https://www.poraad.nl/themas/krimp>).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There is a cautious trend towards increased professionalisation of the ECEC workforce (see Snyder, Hemmeter, Meeker, Kinder, Pasia, and McLaughlin 2012; Zaslow 2009). If the professional development of Pedagogical Workers and others working with young children is to be supported effectively, four key challenges emerge:

Professionalisation: different educational levels

A new Childcare Act is expected to be implemented in the near future. The new Act encourages childcare providers to also employ staff at Bachelor level. This should result in a workforce with mixed ISCED levels, varying from level 3 to level 5 – or, if including the primary school teachers, level 6. It would seem important, therefore, to describe the professional profiles of the new staff at Bachelor level and monitor the professional and career development for this new group and their colleagues. For example, the staff qualified at Bachelor level may employ different work strategies, such as being active as a member in a team with other contact staff; acting as a coach or mentor to other staff; being responsible for planning and innovation; carrying out managerial tasks; communicating in depth with parents; being responsible for children with special needs; contacting and co-operating with colleagues from primary school, etc. Furthermore, it would be important to monitor the career development in a longitudinal perspective because the new staff may start initially with the more regular activities of contact staff and may only later in their professional development have different (or: complementary) responsibilities. It is also possible that staff with a Bachelor-level qualification may be more likely to leave the ECEC profession.

Professionalisation: investing in interdisciplinary skills

Coordination between childcare and the primary education system is a topical social issue in the Netherlands. Cooperation between primary education and childcare is not a given, and both childcare and school settings are currently searching for appropriate forms in terms of organisational governance and pedagogical practice. A practical question that has, therefore, recently received increasing attention is how various pedagogical professionals from different organisations and operating from within their own specialisms, can best work together to achieve an integrated range of services within a coordinated system of cooperation: how do professionals with different professional backgrounds (child care, education, youth care) work together in integrated child services? (see also Bennett and Tayler 2006; Littlechild and Smith

2013). This requires a broader perspective on teams and professional networks instead of individual staff members. Also the cooperation between Pedagogical Workers in a childcare setting and Pre-primary Teachers in an educational setting deserves more attention.

Professionalisation: investing in professional networks in ECEC practice

In-service development of ECEC staff is currently provided in a training format. Other formats may complement training. For example, team intervision, supervision, and learning communities seem promising complementary approaches for ECEC. Also the “(academic) workplaces” that already exist for teachers of primary and secondary schools in different places, may offer opportunities for professional development.

This challenge will become even more urgent if the Dutch ECEC workforce becomes more diverse with professionals at ISCED levels 3, 4 and 5/6 and with professionals from child care, education and youth care. Interdisciplinary networks may support interprofessional practice and collaboration (type 1: multidisciplinary networks), but also key stakeholders from different teams may organise meetings in (peer) supervision groups (type 2: mono-disciplinary specialist networks).

Professionalisation: evidence-informed practice

Scientific research has shown that not all pre- or in-service interventions for ECEC staff are (equally) effective (Egert 2015; Fukkink and Lont 2007). Moreover, there are many training modules in the field, but solid proof for their effectiveness is scarce. It is vital for future professional development that innovative practices are developed in an initial stage and are evaluated in a next phase. Mixed methods evaluation in controlled experimental designs may be helpful in charting the different learning experiences and learning gains, but also pitfalls of the different stakeholders.

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THE NETHERLANDS

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Ruben Fukkink for reviewing the text and Elly Singer for providing the section on the current challenges for the ECEC system.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "The Netherlands – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 840-855.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in the Netherlands comprises two separate and partly overlapping sectors (childcare and education), for which two ministries share responsibility. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid - SZW*) has the overall responsibility for ECEC settings for under-4-year olds, out-of-school care arrangements for 4- to 13-year olds and also family day care services. Since 2010, both private childcare centres for 0- to 3-year olds and publicly funded playgroups for 2- to 4-year olds are governed by the same legislation.

Provision for under-4-year olds at risk of language disadvantage and the early education of 4- to 5-year olds in primary schools¹ (*Basisschool*) come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap - OCW*).

An underpinning policy principle of the ECEC system in the Netherlands is to provide local access to services and freedom of choice for parents. Provision for the under-fours has a demand-driven structure, whereas a supply-side structure is in place for children in provision under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

Municipal authorities are responsible for the inspection and monitoring of childcare provision in terms of compliance with regulations and legislation. Both the municipalities and the schools inspectorate are responsible for the administration and management of schools. Whereas the municipal authorities are responsible for compliance with legislation and budget allocation, the schools inspectorate is responsible for the ongoing operation of schools (funding, curriculum, staff). This is the case both for public and private schools.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Fukkink, R. 2017.
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

The overarching objective of early childhood education and care is to guarantee continuity in terms of learning and support over a longer period of time. The underpinning principle is that of lifelong learning, starting at an early age to enable individuals to reach their fullest potential and to react to changes in a flexible way.

In recent years a considerable transformation has taken place in terms of the overall conceptualisation of ECEC in the Netherlands, and the sector has been experiencing dynamic changes which are still ongoing. As part of the implementation of the Dutch Child Care Act (*Wet Kinderopvang 2005*), all ECEC settings are required to work according to certain pre-defined general pedagogical goals: to provide children with a safe and caring environment, to support the development of their personal and social competencies and to transmit norms and values; they are also required to establish a parents' board. A new Child Care Act is currently under preparation.

¹ The Netherlands have a long tradition of children attending primary school at age 4 before the start of compulsory schooling at age 5.

The relevant legislation for primary schools, which admit 4-year olds in the year preceding compulsory school entry, is the Primary Education Act (*Wet op Primair Onderwijs 1998*). The legislation sets out not only the relevant areas of learning, but also requirements relating to the quality of education and funding modalities.

The Child Care Act (2005, amended in 2016) sets out requirements for various forms of ECEC provision for children aged 6 weeks and older, in particular regarding safety regulations. Since 2010, childcare centres (*dagopvang in kinderdagverblijf*) and playgroups (*peuterspeelzaal*) for under-4-year olds are subject to the same Education and Quality Act (*Wet ontwikkelingskansen door kwaliteit en educatie, OKE*). Additional relevant legislation for playgroups is the Law on Child Care and Quality Requirements for Playgroups (*Wet kinderopvang en kwaliteitseisen peuterspeelzalen, WKO 2010*).

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Fukkink, R. 2017.
Kinderopvang totaal 2016.
Naumann, I. et al. 2013.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Children in the Netherlands are not entitled to a place in an ECEC setting before compulsory schooling begins at age 5. However, local authorities have a duty to provide a place for children from 4 years of age if needed, particularly in the case of children from disadvantaged milieus.

Statutory schooling begins in the school year following the child's fifth birthday.

Source: OECD 2015.

Main types of provision

Childcare centres (*kinderdagverblijf*) admit children from 6 to 8 weeks up to age 4. Although they are mostly used on a part-time basis, and by dual-earner families, they may be open for up to 11 hours a day for 50 weeks a year, with morning and afternoon shifts.

Publicly funded **playgroups** (*peuterspeelzalen*) are in principle open for all children from age 2-2½ up to 4 years of age. However, in reality they are mostly attended by children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or by children with imminent disabilities or potential developmental delays. They are generally open only for a half day.

Regulated **family day care** services (*gastouderopvang*) take in children from the age of 6 weeks.

Once children are 4 years old they attend a **primary school** (*basisschool*) – often starting in the two months before they reach their fourth birthday. The groups for 4-year olds are required to be open on four half days for at least 2½ hours per day. The preferred daily opening times are decided by the school or the provider organisation. They are usually closed on Wednesday afternoons. The official school year begins on the 1st October and ends on the 30th September.

Municipalities are obliged (against payment of a fee) to provide 4-year olds who attend a primary school with a **midday** or **afternoon care** arrangement (*buitenschoolse opvang*) if their parents so wish.

Sources Akgündüz, Y.E. and I. Plantenga 2015.
 Eurydice 2016.
 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
 *Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2016.
 Naumann, I. et al. 2013.

Provider structures

Whereas **playgroups** are publicly subsidised, **childcare centres** for under-4-year olds are run by private for-profit or non-profit agencies. In 2010, only 30% of provision was operated by non-profit organisations, whereas in 2003 the proportion was 60%. In other words, provision is currently largely market-driven and for-profit, reflecting a demand-driven financing system. The providers of childcare services also often offer out-of-school services. Since ECEC for under-4-year olds is organised at the municipality level, there are no accurate data at the national level regarding the relevant share of childcare centres and playgroups. In 2013, only around one third of primary schools, where the large majority of 4-year olds are enrolled, were state maintained. Church-affiliated organisations operated 60% of primary schools (split equally between Catholic and Protestant agencies), and 8% were run by other private providers.

Sources: Akgündüz, Y.E. and I. Plantenga 2015.
 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2016.
 Naumann, I. et al. 2013.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data (see *Table 1*), fewer than half of under-3-year olds (46.4%) were attending ECEC provision in 2015, a slight fall since 2010 (50%). In terms of the 3- to 5-year olds, just over 90% were enrolled in some form of centre-based provision. This proportion has remained more or less constant since 2005.

Table 1

The Netherlands: Participation rates in ECEC centre-based settings according to age and duration of attendance, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance rate	Under 3-year olds, in %	3 years to statutory school age, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	36	82
	Over 30 hours	4	7
	No attendance	60	11
2010	1 to 29 hours	44	76
	Over 30 hours	6	15
	No attendance	50	9
2015	1 to 29 hours	41.1	77.5
	Over 30 hours	5.3	13.2
	No attendance	53.7	9.3

Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

It is difficult to find age-disaggregated data on ECEC participation. According to recently compiled structural indicators***, but without reference to a particular year, 90% of 3-year old children and 100% of children aged 4 and older in the Netherlands are enrolled in ECEC provision. According to

our own calculations based on Eurostat-Data for 2015, 82.7% of 3-year olds and 96% of 4-year olds attend some form of ECEC provision (see *Table 2*).

Table 2

The Netherlands: Participation rates and number of children in centre-based settings according to age, 2015**

Age	Number of children	Proportion of age-group
Under 2 years	n.d.	
2-year olds	n.d.	
3-year olds	149.345	82,7
4-year olds	177.777	96,0
5-year olds	184.457	99,2
3- to under 5-year olds	327.122	89,5⁺

*own calculations on the basis of Eurostat data from 2015

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
 ***European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016, 9.
 *Eurostat 2015d.
 **Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

Following the introduction of the Dutch Child Care Act in 2005, the financing of ECEC, particularly of the **childcare centres**, changed from a supply-financing system to one of demand-financing, meaning that centres compete with one another in a free market according to consumer preferences. Private services are not subsidised by the government. However, parents whose child attends private ECEC provision or a regulated family day care setting are granted tax compensations for childcare fees.

Since 2007, employers are obliged to transfer a specified proportion (2011: 0.34%) of the wages of all employees (including those without children) to the government, which is used to cover the costs of childcare. Moreover, employers reimburse a third of childcare costs for each of their employees with children.

The municipalities, or the individual EC centres, are free to decide on the level of parental fees in **playgroups**, and this leads to regional variations. Fees are usually income-related.

Primary schools are financed through municipal budgets allocated by the national government. They receive a lump sum from the municipalities to cover staffing and running costs. Additional basic subsidies are provided for equipment and the maintenance of buildings. Since 2012, schools receive additional funding for specific activities such as language tuition or providing natural science topics, and for the professional development of staff. Since 2014, financial resources for children with special educational needs are no longer reserved for individual children, as was the case previously; instead they are distributed to the relevant settings over a regional funding pool. Admission to schools is free of charge for the parents of 4-year olds, who nevertheless often donate money for excursions or cultural activities. Schools may also be supported by sponsors.

Sources: Akgündüz, Y.E. and I. Plantenga 2015.
 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
 Eurydice 2014.
 Naumann, I. et al. 2013.

Staff-child ratios

The staff-child ratios differ considerably in playgroups and childcare centres. The maximum group size requirements in **childcare centres** are:

- 12 in groups for children under 1 year of age;
- 16 in groups for children up to 4 years of age, with no more than 8 under-1-year olds.

One qualified member of staff is responsible for

- 4 under-1-year olds
- 5 one- to 2-year olds
- 6 two- to 3-year olds
- 8 three-to 4-year olds

In some municipalities there are also requirements for **playgroups**. After the introduction of a new law in 2010 (Law on Child Care and Quality Requirements for Playgroups - *Wet OKE*), day-care groups and playgroups are increasingly subject to the same regulations. In small settings with only one qualified member of staff there must be at least one other person employed to give support.

For **primary schools** there are no minimum or maximum requirements in terms of group size. However, regulations do exist regarding the total number of children in the building (usually 3.5 square metres per child). In general, each school comprises eight grades, with grades one to four covering children between 4 and 8 years of age. Schools decide themselves about the way the children are grouped. In most cases they are organised according to the children's age, but some schools choose a mixed-age group policy, or also group children according to their competence level. Special schools have a smaller number of children on roll, and sometimes they organise the children in mixed-age groups according to their level of development.

Source: Eurydice 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

There is no national curricular framework for the work in **childcare centres** and **playgroups** for under-4-year olds. Service providers have a duty to ensure that each centre develops its own programme. A centre-specific strategy for the children's development and learning is created in co-operation with the parents' committee. Key aspects include interactions between staff and children, caregiving procedures, age-distribution in the groups, transmission of norms and values and indoor and outdoor play activities. Play is viewed as the main vehicle for learning. A range of different programmes is used to promote specific areas of development. These programmes have to fulfil strict requirements in order to be authorised by the Accreditation Commission for Intervention Programmes (*Erkenningscommissie Interventies*) or by the Welfare and Development Stimulation Panel (*Panel Welzijn en Ontwikkelingsstimulering*). Five approved programmes are currently in use: *Piramide*, *Kaleidoscoop*, *Startblokken/Basisontwikkeling*, *KO Totaal* and *Sporen*.

Mostly within the context of **playgroups**, which are often used by lower-income and minority background families, specific programmes for children at risk of language disadvantage are offered and subsidised by the Ministry of Education. Such programmes (so-called VVE - Early Childhood Education - programmes) may be available for roughly 15 hours per week, i.e. for about three or four mornings or afternoons. The municipalities have a duty to ensure that this provision is available if needed.

According to the Primary School Act, **schools** are required to cover the following areas of learning, starting in the classes for 4-year olds: (1) sensory coordination and physical movement; (2) the Dutch language; (3) arithmetic and maths; (4) the English language; (5) Optional subjects such as geography, history, religion; (6) expression; (7) self-confidence; (8) healthy living. The required number of hours for each learning area is not prescribed. Schools may choose their own learning

approaches and resources. However, the government has set out certain goals to be achieved by the end of the children's time in primary school. The Ministry of Education has commissioned the National Institute for Curriculum Development (*Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling*) to develop further learning goals combined with detailed content and related activities.

Special schools have their own set of curricular regulations in a document on the "Main goals for special education" (*Kerdoelen in het speciaal onderwijs*).

Sources: Akgündüz, Y.E. and I. Plantenga 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In **childcare settings** young children, particularly those from a socially disadvantaged background, are given the chance to experience a variety of cultural and social activities. The municipalities decide on the implementation of various projects and programmes (e.g. *Piramide*, *Kaleidoscoop*). Since 2015, they have been supporting specific programmes which focus in particular on improving children's language skills and thus reducing language disadvantages; further programmes aim to increase participation in sports activities. Foundations and other cultural organisations (e.g. *Jeugdcultuurfonds* or *Stichting Leergeld*) receive government subsidies for this.

Since 1991, there has been a general policy of integrating children with disabilities and special educational needs into mainstream settings and since 2014, schools must ensure that these children receive the support they need. For this they receive subsidies for individual children, based on their specific needs. Parents can register their disabled child at the school of their choice, and it is the responsibility of the school to guarantee the appropriate support.

The Law on Competence Centres for Special Education (*Wet op de Expertisecentra 1998*) refers to four types of special school: (1) for visually impaired children; (2) for hard-of-hearing children and children with communication difficulties; (3) for physically and/or intellectually impaired children; and (4) for children with mental and behavioural disorders.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 5.3% of the population in the Netherlands had a non-Dutch background. Roughly half of these (50.9%) came from other EU countries. The relevant proportions for children under 5 years of age were similar (5.4% in total, 48% from other EU states)**. The largest group of persons seeking asylum was from Syria; in terms of the subsequent immigration of family members, most came from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan*.

Sources: *CBS 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2012, 2014.
EPIC 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The Education Inspectorate (*Inspectie van het Onderwijs*) is responsible for monitoring quality in ECEC (often with a special focus on children from disadvantaged backgrounds) and schools². In-

² Law on Quality in Education – *Wet ontwikkelingskansen door kwaliteit en educatie 2010* and Law on Supervising Education – *Wet op het onderwijstoezicht 2002*.

pections are usually carried out at least once a year. They focus on seven areas: parental involvement; staffing; health and safety; buildings and equipment; group size and staff/child ratios; pedagogical approach and practices; and complaint management. The results are made public.

External evaluations

Two relevant frameworks exist for the external evaluation of **childcare centres** for the under-4-year olds. One is to monitor the quality of all childcare settings in the Netherlands; the other is for the monitoring of settings where quality improvement strategies are considered necessary. The municipal health services (*Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst, GGD*) inspect aspects such as health and safety, the choice of programme, group size, and the number and qualifications of the staff. Questionnaires, check lists, observations and interviews are utilised for this purpose. If shortcomings are found, the Education Inspectorate is informed. The inspection visits by the GGD are made unannounced, and the evaluation reports are made public.

For the external evaluation of **schools** the Education Inspectorate works according to a framework document (2012). This describes the assessment instruments and the criteria and standards to be evaluated. It is a useful orientation document for schools and the inspectorate. The Education Inspectorate ensures that schools are complying with current legislation and also focuses on the quality of teaching. Although, since 2007, annual checks take place to identify schools which are not fulfilling the required standards, a complete inspection is conducted only once every four years. The results of inspections, which also include self-evaluations, are recorded in the so-called School Monitoring Card, together with suggestions for supervision and advisory support. Since 2010, the Education Inspectorate publishes an annual report on the Quality of Schools (*toezichtkaart*) on its internet website.

Self-evaluation procedures

Childcare centres are required to assess the quality of their work through an annual self-evaluation procedure. The following aspects are assessed: parental participation; programme quality; knowledge and skills of the staff; learning environment; and responding to individual needs. The Dutch Consortium for Childcare (*Nederlands Consortium Kinderopvang Onderzoek, NCKO*) has developed a self-evaluation instrument termed “quality monitor” (*Kwaliteitsmonitor*) which helps childcare centres to assess their quality, strengths and limitations more effectively.

Schools decide themselves about their standards and the preferred assessment instruments. Since 1998 they are required to develop a school plan which includes a description of the steps to be taken in terms of quality improvement. The school plan has to be updated every four years. The school plan is the basis for an annual brochure which keeps both parents and pupils informed. These two documents, together with the general outcomes of the self-evaluation procedures, provide a basis for the annual checks made by the Education Inspectorate (see above).

Child-related assessments

In the **childcare sector**, children are assessed by the centre staff through observations and check-lists. A range of developmental areas are usually assessed three times a year. This information is passed on to other members of staff, discussed with the parents and, in a summarised form, handed over to the primary school the child will be attending.

The research project „Pre-COOL“, commissioned by the Dutch Scientific Research Organisation (*Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO*) and the Ministry of Education, tracks the progress of around 5,000 children aged 2 to 5 years every two years. Since 2010 this has provided a basis for observing the short-term and long-term effects of different kinds of childcare on the children’s development and school achievements.

In the **education sector**, schools are required to document each child’s progress three times a year. Parents are invited to discuss their child’s progress and achievements. Some schools rely on school grades or marks for this, others prefer written assessments. Since 2014/15, schools are required to use a specific monitoring system. All primary schools are connected to an education data

bank administered by the national Education Agency (*Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, DUO*). Each pupil has an individual citizenship and education number. Information on each pupil is regularly fed into the data bank. In general, each child's progress is documented through observational assessments and tests. However, except for a final test at the end of the time in primary school, tests are not obligatory.

Sources: Eurydice 2013.
Fukkink, R. 2017.
OECD 2011.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Statutory **maternity leave** (*zwangerschaps- en bevallingsverlof*) lasts 16 weeks. Four of these must be taken before the expected birth date, with the possibility of extension up to six weeks. Maternity leave is fully paid up to a maximum amount of 202.17€ per day.

Fathers are granted two days of **paternity leave** (*kraamverlof*) which are fully compensated by their employer. They must be taken within four weeks after the child's birth.

Parental leave (*ouderschapsverlof*) is calculated as being 26 times as long as the number of weekly working hours of each parent and can be taken up to the child's eighth birthday. For a total of 38 weekly working hours, this means that parental leave would be granted for 988 hours, i.e. 26 weeks. Parental leave is granted on a part-time basis; only in exceptional cases is it possible to take it in one block period. This makes it possible for both parents to take parental leave at the same time. However, since 2014, parental leave is unpaid. Following the Law on Flexible Working Hours (2016), parents can apply for a change in their working hours or, in some cases, for permission to work from home.

In 2013, around 57% of mothers took leave for 10 hours a week over the period of one year, 23% took 8 hours a week over 16 months. The proportion of men who took parental leave was only 23% during the same year. In general, mothers and fathers with a higher level of education are more likely to utilise the possibility of parental leave.

Parents also receive an income-independent child allowance up to the child's 18th birthday. Families with a low or modest income are granted an additional child subsidy. A childcare allowance may be granted if parents make use of a childcare setting.

Sources: den Dulk, L. 2017.
EPIC 2016.

Historical highlights and shifts

1850	Increasing maternal employment leads to the establishment of the first institutions for the care of children from the age of 2½ years
During the following decades	Childcare institutions are gradually followed by kindergartens based on the pedagogical approaches of Pestalozzi and Froebel – and later, Montessori
1950s and 1960s	Childcare/nursery settings and playgroups are founded
1985	Kindergartens are integrated into the primary school system
Up to 1986	Significant increase in the number of playgroups for 2- to 4-year olds
1990-1996	Expansion of childcare/nursery settings

Since 1991	Decision to primarily provide for the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream settings
1996	First national assessment of quality of childcare
1998	First Chair in Childcare established at the University of Amsterdam
2002	Childcare settings for under 4-year olds come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs
2005	The Child Care Act comes into force
2007	Childcare settings for disadvantaged under 4-year olds come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education
Since 2010	Both childcare centres and playgroups come under the same legislation
2011	Peak year in Dutch childcare (835,000 children on roll)

Sources: Fukkink, R. 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Netherlands

Country expert assessment by Elly Singer³

A central issue and challenge for the ECEC system in the Netherlands are the remains of the split-up between care and education in childcare provision for 0- to 4-year olds. There is a growing consensus about the importance of early childhood education. Ideally, this would be organized as a unified system with regulations for settings for 0- to 5-year olds and would guarantee good quality provisions for all. Stakeholders of early childhood care and education in the Netherlands – local and national authorities, the primary school system, services for care and education, parent organisations, and experts all agree on this. However, there is a huge gap between dream and reality.

Some of the main obstacles are the following:

1. Different regulations in the care system for children of working parents on the one hand and in the education system for children in play groups and preschool classes for 2- and 3-year olds on the other. The childcare system comes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment while the education system for young children is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The education system is publicly subsidised, while private profit and non-profit agencies organise the care system. Regulations differ, for example for parental financial contributions; for the pedagogue-child ratio; for staff salaries and qualifications; for opening hours. There are different rules for the admission of children. For example, there is special funding for preschools for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and only working parents are financially supported to use childcare centres. A strong political will and significant investments in a unified education system for young children are needed to overcome such bureaucratic obstacles (Taskforce 2017).
2. Studies of the pedagogic and educational quality of childcare centres show large differences in quality, especially with regard to the educational skills of the pedagogical workers for stimulating development, fostering positive peer interactions and verbal communication. One of the reasons might be the privatised system. During the last 15 years several childcare organisations with more than 100 locations have been purchased by multinationals that are primarily focussed on profit (Lloyd and Penn 2010; Plantenga 2012; Postma 2018). Only a few, very small organisations with one or two centres are still active; in times of financial drawbacks, as during the economic crisis after 2008, such small organisations turned out to be very vulnera-

³ Formerly: Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Utrecht

ble with consequences for the educational quality. Besides that, small organisations cannot afford their own pedagogical counsellor or pedagogical manager.

3. The Dutch government has refrained as yet from establishing a national curriculum for childcare centres. The government only provides a broad framework that has to be followed by the childcare companies, i.e. the service providers. Parents get financial support from the government through tax credits, so they can choose services that meet their standards and demands. Consequently the childcare organisations offer 'content' that meets the demand of the parents. Parents' lack of knowledge and experience often leads to a prioritisation of the economic values of the (profit) organisation above pedagogical values. Two examples: Both non-profit and profit organisations compete with each other. Recently there has been a surplus in childcare places and many companies have been doing all they can to attract parents: They offer long and flexible opening hours to meet the parents' demands in relation to their working hours and even sell childcare on an hourly basis. This has a negative impact on the stability of the group composition and the stability of the child-pedagogue relationships. Also because of financial reasons, many childcare organisations have mixed age groups (0- to 4-year olds in one group). Mixed-age groups are easier to fill to the minimum (and maximum) number of children per group than same-age groups; and full groups guarantee a better income for the organisation, notwithstanding that recent research in the Netherlands has suggested that mixed-age groups tend to be of lower pedagogical quality than same-age groups (Slot et al. 2017).
4. In theory, parents have a powerful role in the childcare system: they are the consumers who can spend the money. But research about the position of parents is needed. It is not known if parents in general are aware of the big differences in quality of childcare centres.
5. In the Netherlands there is no organisation or governmental agency that has a leading role in innovation and supervision. Innovation and quality assurance are steered by market forces. Universities compete for government grants, and academics at the Dutch universities are forced to publish in international (English) peer-reviewed journals. Publications in Dutch, for a broader public, are not counted as scientific products. This has a negative impact on collaborative research between practitioners and academics (Singer and Wong 2018).

Continuing professional development for practitioners and innovations are offered by larger and smaller organisations that are also steered by the market system. They have to compete in getting assignments. Some of the big non-profit childcare companies do invest substantially in quality evaluation and the coaching of pedagogical workers (see below). But it is not the prime task of these companies to invest in the improvement of pedagogical quality of childcare centres in general. For example, no company ever pays for their pedagogical counsellors to participate in international conferences. Dutch representatives of the early education and childcare sectors rarely participate in international organisations like OMEP (*Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire*) or international conferences such as EECERA (European Early Childhood Education Research Association).

Among many professionals – caregivers, pedagogues, teachers, counsellors, academics – however, a strong need is felt for discussions and sharing of expertise. In 2008, the National Platform of Pedagogues in Childcare Centres managed to get a subsidy from the Ministry of Social Affairs for a project that resulted in *Pedagogisch kader kindercentra 0-4 jaar* (Pedagogical framework for childcare centres 0-4; Singer and Kleerekoper 2009). Professionals, policy makers and researchers from all over the country participated in discussion groups. Later, pedagogical frameworks for after-school care (Schreuder et al. 2011), childminding (Boogaard et al. 2013) and diversity (van Keulen and Singer 2012) were published. The Ministry of Social Affairs supported the implementation of the pedagogical frameworks by subsidising the Dutch National Bureau for Quality in Childcare (*Bureau Kwaliteit Kinderopvang; BKK*) up to 2013. Then there was a change in government, BKK had to reorganise, and the support for the pedagogical frameworks stopped.

6. In the Netherlands, like in any other country, there is an abundance of pedagogical potential; many parents and professionals are passionately involved in early childhood education and

care. There are many examples of excellence. In 2016, companies for (non-profit) childcare established the Sector Association for Socially Responsible Childcare (*Branchevereniging voor maatschappelijk Kinderopvang*; BMK 2016). The aim of this association is to promote sustainability, innovation and high quality in childcare that meets the needs of parents and children in general; the associated companies thus surpass their own (direct) interest. There are also initiatives at the local and the national level for cooperation between schools and the childcare organisations. The current challenge for the early education and care system in the Netherlands is to coordinate these initiatives, to promote cooperation between practitioners, academics, managers and social politicians, and to mobilise the pedagogical potential in discussions and constructive dialogues. Both Dutch politicians and the broader public have to be convinced that the main purpose of early childhood education is the well-being of young children and their parents - and also the well-being of the pedagogues, who deserve respect and salaries that are comparable with other sectors in education and social welfare.

Sources: Boogaard, M. Et al. 2013.
 BMK 2016.
 Lloyd, E. and H. Penn 2010.
 Plantenga, J. 2012.
 Postma, L. 2018.
 Schreuder, L. et al. 2011.
 Singer, E. and L. Kleerekoper 2009.
 Singer, E. and S. Wong 2018.
 Slot, P. et al. 2017.
 Taskforce samenwerking onderwijs en kinderopvang 2017.
 van Keulen, A. and E. Singer 2012.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, a total of nearly 17 million persons (16,979,120) lived in the Netherlands. The population has been increasing steadily over the past two decades, although in recent years the increase in numbers has slowed down somewhat (1995: 15,424,122 and 2005: 16,305,526).

Children under 5 years of age

Since compulsory schooling begins at age 5 in the Netherlands and relevant statistical data are available, this section focuses on children up to age 5. In the other sections of the demographic data, the data focus on children up to age 6.

In 2016, 3.1% of the total population in the Netherlands were children under 3 years of age and 5.2% children under 5 years of age. These proportions are very similar to the EU28 average, although during previous years they were consistently higher.

Table 3

The Netherlands: Children under 5 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	170.341
1-year olds	175.721
2-year olds	172.395
Under age 3 total	518.457

Age	Number of children
3-year olds	177.204
4-year olds	181.193
3- to under-5-year olds, total	358.397
0- to under-5-year olds, total	876.854

Table 4

The Netherlands: Children under 5 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2015, in %⁺

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ⁴	2005	Ø EU25	2015	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.0
3- to under 5-year olds	2.8	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.1
0- to under 5-year olds	6.4	5.7	6.2	5.2	5.2	5.2

⁺ own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

The large majority of households (91.2%) in 2015 with children under 6 years of age were couple households. Single households accounted for 4.3%; almost all of these were single mother households (4.0%).

Table 5

The Netherlands: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	1,555,500	
Couple households	1,418,500	91.2
Other types of households	70,000	4.5
Single households, total	67,000	4.3
Single households, women	62,600	4.0
Single households, men	4,400	0.3

⁺ Own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men in the Netherlands aged 15 to 64 was 79.0%, that of women 69.2%. In 2012, more than three-quarters of employed women were working on a part-time basis*.

⁴ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

In the same year, three-quarters of all women with children under 6 years of age participated in the labour force, compared with 92.7% of men with children of the same age. Both rates are significantly higher than the EU average and among the highest in the EU28.

Table 5

The Netherlands: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015[†]

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
The Netherlands	2005	69.7	93.0
	2010	77.3	93.5
	2015	69.7	93.0
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 – 2015	56.2	90.0
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden --78.9	Malta/Czech Republic - 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

[†]own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Plantenga, J. et al. 2012.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁵

In 2015, 14.1% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This represents the lowest proportion in the EU28 (average = 24.7%). The total share of persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the Netherlands was 16.4%, representing the second lowest rate in the EU28 states.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

⁵ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc100&plugin=1>)

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POLAND

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

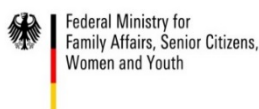
Małgorzata Żytko and Marta Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Education

Citation suggestion:

Żytko, M. and M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo. 2018. "Poland – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 856-875.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care in Poland is split into two stages and sectors. Responsibility for the first stage, covering provision for children aged 20 weeks up to 3¹ years, was transferred in 2011 from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej*). The second stage, catering for 3- to 6-year olds, is officially recognised as the first phase in the education system and falls under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*). Thus, the ECEC system in Poland can be described as having a ‘childcare sector’ and an ‘education sector’. The management and administration of ECEC provision in both sectors is delegated to local authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In Poland, the qualification requirements relating to ECEC staff working with children in the two sectors differ considerably and are regulated through different sets of legislation.

Overall, there are two main categories of staff working in centre-based settings with young children up to statutory school age at 7.

Nursery Educators/Caregivers (*opiekun dziecięcy*)

‘Caregiver’ is the generic term chosen here for the different kinds of staff who work in day nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*żłobek*), kids clubs (*klub dziecięcy*), as family day care providers (*opiekun dzienny*) or as nannies (*opiekunki*) with children up to 3 (4)² years old. They may be Nurses, Midwives, Pre-primary Teachers, lower Primary School Teachers, Childminders, School Counsellors, or persons with no specialised qualifications for work in the ECEC field (see *Table 1*). According to the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Article 16), they are called ‘Caregivers’ (*opiekun dziecięcy*) (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a). In day nurseries attended by more than twenty children, at least one Nurse or Midwife must be employed (Article 15, §3). Until 2011, ECEC centres for children under 3 years came under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and this is why Nurses and Midwives also belong to the catalogue of staff qualified to work as Caregivers. The quality of Nursery Educators’ qualifications is monitored by the local governments.

Nurseries may also employ unpaid **volunteers**. They work as assistants in the group and, unless they happen to be fully qualified Caregivers, they are required to complete a 40-hour course of preparation. The tasks they are entrusted with depend on their qualifications. All personnel employed in nurseries are subject to mandatory sanitary-epidemiological assessments.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers (*nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*) work in three different types of institution: kindergartens for 2/3- to 6-year olds (*przedszkola*), preschool classes in primary schools for 5- to 7-year olds (*oddziały przedszkolne w szkołach podstawowych*), or pre-primary education hubs for children aged 3 to 6 years (*punkty przedszkolne*). Since 2012, a Bachelor’s degree is the minimum requirement for working as a core practitioner in kindergartens. Prospective Kindergarten Teachers follow the same basic studies at university as teachers who

¹ In Poland, children may attend settings until the end of the school year in which they turn 3 years of age.

² In some situations, children who are 4 years old can attend a nursery or kids club, for example if there is no available place for them in kindergarten or if they are considered not ready to attend kindergarten.

later work in the first three grades of primary school. There is no separate study route or specialisation for Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers. The quality of the initial professional studies of Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers is monitored by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (*Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*).

Table 1 outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of staff working directly with children and also categorises the core practitioners according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Poland: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title and profile	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
Childcare sector				
<p><i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Nursery Educator / Caregiver</p> <p><i>No distinct professional profile: Many differently qualified or non-qualified staff may work as core practitioners</i></p>	<p><i>Żłobek</i> Nursery, infant-toddler centre 20 weeks–3 years</p> <p><i>Klub dziecięcy</i> Kids' club 1–3 years</p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Varies according to the IPS specialisation	<p>Minimum requirement: 12 years schooling plus 2 years of work experience (0-3 years)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a⁴ EQF: level 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Optional requirements: 3 years university, Bachelor's degree for qualification as Nurse or Midwife</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>or An upper secondary qualification as Caregiver (course of 280 hours for caregivers provided by institutions licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy).</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF: level 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>or A full qualification as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher (see details below)</p>
<p><i>Wolontariusz</i> Volunteer</p>	<p><i>Żłobek</i> Nursery, infant-toddler centre 20 weeks–3 years</p>	Co-worker with minimal specialist preparation	No IPS required; mandatory course focuses on 0–3 age-range	40-hour course provided by institutions licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014

⁴ n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
	<i>Klub dziecięcy</i> Kids' club 1–3 years			
Education sector				
<i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Przedszkole</i> Kindergarten 3–6 years <i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i> Preschool class in primary school 5–7 years <i>Punkt przedszkolny</i> Pre-primary education hub 3–6 years Primary school Grades 1–3	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head	3–6 years	3 years university, Bachelor's degree specialising in Early Childhood Education ECTS points: 180 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional** (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Unfortunately there is no research in Poland focusing specifically on the ECEC workforce. Nowadays this sector is expanding rapidly and regulations are constantly being adapted and changed. *Table 2* shows the relevant share of staff in day nurseries (*żłobek*), kids' clubs (*klub dziecięcy*), and home-based care facilities (*opiekun dzienny*).

Table 2

Poland: Structural composition of staff in ECEC centres for 0- to 3-year olds, 2014*

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with Caregiver qualification (ISCED 3, see <i>Table 1</i>)	89%
Staff with non-specialist (ECEC) higher education qualification (ISCED 6) (Nurse, Midwife)	11%
Staff with specialist higher education degree	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff with no formal IPS	Nurseries: 6.5% Kids' clubs: 97% Home-based care facilities: 96.5%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Speech Therapists)	n/a
Male staff	n/a
Staff with a background of migration	n/a

*Council of Ministers 2015 and Central Statistical Office 2014.

Table 3 shows the proportions of staff in kindergartens (*przedszkole*), preschool classes (*oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej*) and pre-primary hubs (*punkt przedszkolny*). In 2014, the greater majority of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers were university graduates holding a Master's degree (84% of teaching staff). Only a minority (11.8%) held a Bachelor-level qualification.

Table 3

Poland: Structural composition of staff in ECEC centres for 3- to 6-year olds, 2014/15*

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	84.0% Master's degree 11.8% Bachelor's degree 4% people employed according to the previous qualification standards (pre-2011)
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification	n/a
Staff with no formal IPS	Kindergarten: 15% Preschool classes: 85% Preprimary hubs: 95%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Speech Therapists)	No data available
Male staff	0.9 %
Staff with a background of migration	No data available

*Central Statistical Office 2015a.

Tables 4 and 5 give a breakdown of the qualified ECEC workforce according to their workplace settings (0-3 and 3-6).

Table 4

Poland: Fully qualified Caregivers in ECEC settings for children under 3 years, 2013/2014*

Type of ECEC setting	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
Nurseries/Infant-toddler centres	93.5
Kids' clubs	3
Home-based day care	3.5

* Council of Ministers 2015.

Table 5

Poland: Fully qualified teachers in ECEC settings for children aged 3-6 years, 2014/2015*

Type of ECEC setting	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
Kindergartens	85
Preschool classes	15
Pre-primary hubs	5

* Central Statistical Office 2015b.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Poland there are big differences between the level of qualification required for Caregivers (working with children under 3 years old) and for Pre-primary Teachers (working with 3- to 6-year olds). These differences are also reflected in the respective salaries and working conditions.

Nursery Educator ('Caregiver') (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

According to the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) there are four different ways to become a Caregiver:

- 1) Twelve years schooling plus two years of work experience with children aged 0-3 years. Legally, the kind of experience is not specified. This means that unqualified persons work in an ECEC setting to acquire their two years of work experience and officially start the job of Caregiver after completion. If there is a gap of more than six months between the two years and the beginning of the job, the candidate is required to attend an 80-hour course for Caregivers provided by an institution licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.
- 2) Twelve years of schooling plus a course of 280 hours for Caregivers provided by an institution licensed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The course consists of 200 hours of theory and 80 hours of practice in an institution for children under 3 years of age.
- 3) Bachelor's degree qualifying as Nurse or Midwife.
- 4) Bachelor's degree qualifying as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher.

Since there are currently no specific regulations regarding the Caregiver position in ECEC, all persons working as a core practitioner in settings for under 3-year olds are considered 'Caregivers', whether they have a Bachelor's degree in pedagogy or only two years of work experience but without a formal diploma. Some local governments and associations of public nurseries are trying to develop their own regulations with stricter requirements than the central ones.

Table 6

Poland: Nursery Educator ('Caregiver')

Job title in Polish: <i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Profile: No distinct profile
<p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling + 2 years of experience with children under 3 years of age</p> <p>Professional studies: none</p> <p>Award: none</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 3</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: n/a</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p>
<p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling + 280-hour course</p> <p>Professional studies: none</p>

Job title in Polish: <i>Opiekun dziecięcy</i> Profile: No distinct profile
<p>Award: Certificate as Caregiver ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p> <p><i>Route 3</i> Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 year university qualification as Nurse or Midwife Award: Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years</p> <p><i>Route 4</i> Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 year university as Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher Award: Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0913 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/Infant-toddler centre (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–3 years; Kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–3 years; Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers: Preschool class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–7 years</p>

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

According to the law, the minimum requirement for work with children over 3 years of age is a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Initial professional studies for prospective Kindergarten Teachers are organised and managed by both public and private universities and colleges. Public universities and colleges are free of charge, with the exception of external studies or post-graduate studies.

Table 7

Poland: Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

Job title in Polish: <i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: university entrance qualification Professional studies: 3 years university Award: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (<i>Przedszkole</i>) 3–6 years; Pre-school class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–7 years; Pre-primary education hub (<i>Punkt przedszkolny</i>) 3–6 years; Primary school Grades 1–3</p>

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

Route 2: 280-hour course

Competencies/curricular areas: During the 280-hour course (for persons having no experience of working with children under 3 years or if their experience dates back more than two years before starting a job as a Caregiver) participants acquire theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of infant and toddler care as well as knowledge of child development, basic nutrition, dietetics and emergency first aid. The programmes of study are organised around the following topics:

- learning how to arrange a care environment for very young children;
- learning psycho-pedagogical basics relating to children's development;
- providing first aid in life-threatening situations or temporary indisposition;
- observing, listening to and recording observations on the progress of the child;
- planning play activities for children;
- communicating with the child's parents/guardians;
- helping children to develop the 'right habits'
- ensuring a safe environment;
- helping children with personal care and responding to their physiological needs;
- complying with health and safety regulations, including ergonomics and fire protection;
- learning about methods of coping with stress and problem-solving;
- preparing meals according to the appropriate principles of nutrition according to the child's age.

Course content specifications must be approved by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (2011b).

A small number of colleges and universities are trying to organise new programmes specialising in the education and care of children aged 5 months to 3 years old, but these are still in the experimental stage.

During the course caregivers learn about different pedagogical theories. The typical approach aims to find the right balance between care and education or between adult-led and children-initiated activities. Free play and children's individual needs are guidelines for caregivers. Most approaches are based on theories of Polish authors, e.g.: *Quality standards of care and support regarding the development of children under 3 years*, compiled by specialists from the Come-nius Foundation (Rościszewska-Woźniak 2012); Lucyna Telka's concept of *accompanying the child's development* (Telka 2007). Both approaches are recommendations only since there is no established educational framework for nurseries/infant-toddler centres.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

Competencies: Prospective Kindergarten Teachers acquire psychological, pedagogical, socio-logical and philosophical knowledge and develop teaching skills necessary to reflect on educational processes in kindergarten (theoretically based e.g. on the works of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner). They learn about active methods of teaching, such as the project approach, and participate in community learning experiences (working in peer-groups or in teams with teachers). During the study programme they prepare individual portfolios using reflective methods.

Curricular areas: Since 2012, teacher education in Poland has been regulated by national standards prepared by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2012). According to these regulations, teachers are to be prepared for work both in kindergartens, pre-primary classes and in lower primary education (age-range 3–9 years).

According to this document, teacher education is divided into three learning areas:

- subject-integrated topics,
- psychological and pedagogical training, and
- didactic training (teaching methods).

These comprise different sub-groups which account for a total of 180 ECTS points:

1. Pedagogical theories (15 ECTS points)
2. Biomedical and psychological basics of education (15 ECTS points)
3. Fundamentals of ethics (10 ECTS points)
4. Foundations of social education (12 ECTS points)
5. Humanistic bases of pedagogy (15 ECTS points)
6. The basics of work in kindergarten and school (12 ECTS points)
7. Specialisation in kindergarten and school (15 ECTS points)
8. Supporting development of a child in kindergarten and school (10 ECTS points)
9. Didactic training (10 ECTS points)
10. Theory of didactics (2 ECTS points)
11. Voice emission (2 ECTS points)
12. First aid (1 ECTS point)
13. Health education (1 ECTS point)
14. Diploma seminar (16 ECTS points)
15. Other courses (44 or more ECTS points)

The curriculum for the IPS of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers comprises the following topics/subjects:

- psychological, pedagogical and sociological basis of child development;
- various curricular dimensions related to the national curriculum for pre-schools such as language, maths, science, art, physical education;
- alternative models of pre-school education (the most popular alternative models are Montessori pre-schools, bilingual pre-schools or, increasingly, the Reggio Emilia approach);
- play in education;
- parents and local communities in the educational process;
- activity methods in education;
- methods of monitoring children's development;
- children with special needs and individual programmes of development;
- solving educational problems;
- legal aspects of pre-school education;
- field-based studies in preschool work placements.

The pedagogic-didactic approach is based on constructivism and social learning as foundations of educational processes. The role of the teacher in kindergarten is viewed as that of an observer of the child's development and provider of a stimulating environment which enables children to participate in exploratory learning.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

Graduates with a non-specialist degree can work in kindergartens once they obtain pedagogical qualifications through postgraduate studies or two years of higher education in the field of ECEC.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

The requirements regarding workplace-based learning for Nurses, Midwives and Family Day Carers are regulated by the Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a).

One of the four options for persons applying for a post in a nursery/infant-toddler centre (see *Section 3.1*) is to complete a 280-hour course of training. At least 80 hours are field-based placements in an institution for under 3-year olds. The field-based practicum must take place under the supervision of a fully qualified Nursery Educator.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

The Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education regarding Standards of Education preparing for the Profession of Teacher (2012) requires 330 hours of field-based placements in kindergartens and lower primary schools. The time spent in kindergartens amounts to only 150 hours, i.e. is less than that spent in primary schools. In general, the workplace-based learning component in the teacher education curriculum has been strengthened since 2012.

Students take part in long-term and short-term practical placements. The workplace-based component focuses on learning about the organisation and characteristics of different types of kindergarten, e.g. public, non-public, varying educational programmes and approaches. Students complete topic work aimed at learning about the kindergarten as a social institution, about the different roles of the teacher, the principal, the children and the parents, including the range of their autonomy, applying innovative educational methods, the communication processes and forms of cooperation between teachers, parents and the local community. They also hold lessons with children of various age groups and take part in meetings with parents.

During the students' time in the work placements, the university cooperates closely with the kindergartens. Students are split into small groups and are supervised by the university tutor as well as by the mentoring teacher/s in the kindergarten. The students consult with both about the planning of lessons and observations. They are obliged to keep daily reflective diaries which provide a basis for evaluations of their activities. University tutors, along with the kindergarten teachers, assist in the students' teaching activities and discuss and reflect on them afterwards.

During the field-based studies, students learn how to apply acquired knowledge, and how to develop both pedagogical and social skills. They are expected to:

- develop skills related to the observation of educational processes in the kindergarten; these include the relationships between teacher, children and parents, the children's adaptation to kindergarten rules, monitoring the children's development, group interactions, educational successes and failures, types of activities undertaken;
- analyse the kindergarten's educational programme and compare different educational approaches;
- design, prepare and provide learning activities in kindergarten, including critical reflection with staff members and self-evaluation;
- plan their own professional development.

The number of ECTS points allocated to workplace based learning in graduate or postgraduate courses for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers amounts to 60 ECTS points.

University and higher education tutors are responsible for the students' workplace-based learning experiences in pre-primary settings. Usually they are experienced Kindergarten Teachers, but this is not a requirement. Universities sign bilateral agreements with kindergartens to receive students for practica. The Kindergarten Teachers (mentors) responsible for supporting students' practice receive extra payment from the partner university and various EU projects.

Recently debated issues include:

- strengthening the quality of students' placements in educational institutions;
- implementing innovative approaches;
- emphasising reflective approaches in workplace-based learning;
- formative assessment of students' achievements;
- closer cooperation between the early childhood education institutions and teacher training centres: exchange of experience, common seminars and courses;
- inviting innovative Kindergarten Teachers to present good practice at the universities and in ECEC centres for children from 0 to 6 years.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Nursery Educators/'Caregivers' (*Opiekun dziecięcy*)

In Poland, there are few courses designed specifically for the continuing professional development of Nursery Educators and no regulations at the national level regarding the funding of CPD activities. Caregivers in public settings are subject to the *Municipality Employees Act* (Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland 2008), which does not specify regulations regarding CPD. In the private sector, providing CPD options is the decision of the provider or Centre Head.

Currently there are no reviews or research studies relating to the professional development of Nursery Educators or to the overall quality of nurseries. Participation in additional forms of professional training mostly depends on a decision by the employer. In large cities, public nurseries work in groups and together the network organises some forms of CPD. Introducing mandatory higher education standards for employees in ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age is a matter currently under debate. There are a few courses offered at an academic level for those working in nurseries, but these are still very much at the experimental stage.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego*)

The situation for Kindergarten Teachers is quite different, and CPD activities are very popular. Teachers who work in pre-primary and primary education are generally very motivated to update their knowledge and skills. There are numerous courses on offer, and public institutions (for example, some kindergartens) are also obliged to organise CPD activities.

For public kindergartens CPD is legally regulated (*Teacher's Charter*, Ministry of National Education 1982). At the municipality level funding must be equal to 1% of the planned annual expenditure earmarked for teachers' salaries. These funds are distributed following consultation with the Teacher's Union at the regional level and regulations of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is obliged to provide funding equal to the amount of 5,000 average trainee salaries and distribute these funds for professional training.

CPD in Poland is not obligatory, apart from the newly qualified teacher's duty to prepare an Individual Programme of Professional Development. They may receive support from kindergarten career counsellors or colleagues.

There is no CPD entitlement in terms of a certain number of annual leave days. CPD participation is included in the non-contact hours of 15 hours/week for Kindergarten Teachers working with 3- to 5-year olds and 18 hours for teachers working with 6-year olds. Each kindergarten head has to ensure opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge. Moreover, kindergartens may organise on-site CPD activities in cooperation with external institutions which are related to the centre's specific expectations and needs.

However, CPD is usually organised as a one- or two-day course by various centres or institutions for teacher training at the regional or local level. Reimbursement of costs for participation in CPD courses depends on the employer.

There are about 400 public and private institutions around the country providing in-service training for teachers who work in different levels of education. There are diverse, specifically designed programmes for Kindergarten Teachers on offer. Universities, the Centre of Development of Education of the Ministry of Education (ORE – *Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji MEN*) or ECEC centres at the local level (*voivodship, community, city*) also provide CPD courses. In Poland, there are also many possibilities to take part in professional training courses for teachers financed by the European Union.

According to Karwowska-Struczyk and Wysłowska (2015, 115), the content of CPD courses is largely unregulated and tends to be aligned to the needs of the kindergarten providers' organisations rather than to the teachers' needs.

Whereas participation in CPD is not *formally* recognised in terms of career advancement, it can contribute favourably towards promotion.

The promotion of teachers is regulated by the Teacher's Charter (*Karta Nauczyciela*; Ministry of National Education 1982). The Teacher's Charter specifies four categories in the teaching career: (1) trainee teacher, (2) contract teacher, (3) appointed teacher, and (4) chartered teacher. All promotions are regulated by law.

This process aims to motivate teachers in their personal and professional development and thus, additionally, to improve the quality of educational institutions. A teacher's salary also depends on the level of the teaching category. After nine months of supervised internship and a successful interview, a candidate becomes a 'trainee teacher'. In order to become a 'contract teacher', the candidate has to successfully complete an interview in front of an examination board. After two years and nine months of employment and following an evaluation of his/her professional achievements, in order to be promoted to the category of 'appointed teacher' the candidate has to successfully complete an interview in front of a selection committee. To achieve the title of 'chartered teacher', very specific requirements have to be met. Chartered teachers who are considered to have outstanding professional achievements may be awarded the honorary title of professor of education.

In order to be promoted to a higher grade, a teacher needs to:

- hold the required qualifications;
- complete a 'probationary period' (the period preceding an application for promotion) and receive a positive assessment of his/her professional achievements during this period (the teacher follows an individual professional development plan during the probation period);
- have his/her application for promotion approved by a so-called qualifying board or, in the case of a contract teacher, pass an oral examination before an examination board.

Table 8 shows that almost one third of teachers in pre-primary settings are located in the highest career category.

Table 8

Poland: Teacher categories in centre-based settings for children aged 3-6 years, 2014/2015*

Teacher categories	Proportion of teaching workforce, in %
No specific title ⁵	7.1
Trainee teacher	9.3
Contract teacher	26.3
Appointed teacher	25.5
Chartered teacher	31.8

*Central Statistical Office 2015a.

There are no designated posts of responsibility within ECEC settings other than that of Centre Head.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads in nurseries

The heads of nurseries must hold a university degree and have at least three years of experience working with children or a secondary education diploma and at least five years of experience in working with children. The director of a group of public nurseries (*zespół żłobków*) must have at least one year of experience in managing a nursery or a children's club.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads in kindergartens

The principal or head of a kindergarten can be either an 'appointed teacher' or a 'chartered teacher' (*nauczyciel mianowany* or *nauczyciel dyplomowany*), but this is not a requirement. Persons who are not teachers can also be appointed as heads. In the first case, in accordance with Article 5 of the Teacher's Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982), the teacher must be a Polish or European Union citizen and have full legal capacity and use of public rights. The candidate must have at least five years of teaching experience. In the second case, the Centre Head must be backed by an appointed manager. The manager must have a teaching degree in pedagogical studies and have completed a postgraduate course in management or management education.

Beyond the above-mentioned conditions, a candidate for the post of Kindergarten Director must have been awarded (a) a good assessment score during the previous five years of being a teacher or (b) a positive assessment of professional achievements over the last year from a local government authority or, in the case of a university teacher, (c) a positive assessment of the work in the last four years in college or university. In addition, since December 2011, each candidate must provide documents proving that: she/he meets the health requirements necessary to perform the work in a managerial position; has not been subject to disciplinary action or disciplinary proceedings; has not been convicted of an intentional crime or an intentional tax crime; has not been subject to proceedings for a criminal offence involving indictment.

Three issues are currently being debated in terms of improving the system of continuing professional development of ECEC staff:

- Developing supervision strategies and improving the system of certification/accreditation for CDP institutions working outside universities and in the private sector.
- Increasing the quality and number of courses dedicated to Nursery Educators and Kindergarten Teachers.
- Supporting ECEC staff in evaluating intra-institutional processes and strengthening inter-institutional cooperation.

There is no research or monitoring practice investigating the effectiveness of CPD and its impact on the daily work in ECEC settings.

⁵ A person who was trained under former qualification requirements – without a professional promotion or during a process of achieving one.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

During recent years there have been many changes in the care and education system for young children in Poland. The constant changes issued by education directives have resulted in regulatory unsustainability. Moreover, the lack of a uniform education policy for the early years has created an unstable situation for the early childhood education and care system.

Three relevant reforms affecting the staffing of ECEC provision are described below.

- (1) Up until 2011, nurseries functioned as health care institutions and were subject to the same sanitary rigours as hospitals. The *Act on the Care for Children under the Age of 3* (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) established that institutions for children under 3 years of age should be transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. This change was accompanied by many changes in legislation regarding the role of nurseries. Nurseries are now committed to provide for the care, upbringing and also education of under 3-year olds. These new requirements have led to a considerable expansion in the number of settings and in the number of available places - in 2011 there were 32,053 places compared to 71,386 places in 2014 (Council of Ministers 2015). This expansion is ongoing. Some improvements have taken place in terms of quality of services but, despite the growth in places, there still is a drastic shortage of places for children up to age 3. The challenge of providing qualified staff for this expansion has not yet been fully realised.
- (2) In 2012, the teaching of a foreign language in kindergartens became a mandatory requirement. There was a change in the National Curriculum Framework for primary schools and also a change in the requirements for teachers. All preschool teachers must broaden their professional competencies regarding the teaching of an additional language (mainly English) to young learners before the year 2020. For that purpose, specialised training courses are starting up at universities.
- (3) In recent years, due to constant political changes, confusion has arisen regarding the obligatory starting age for primary schooling, which also affects the work of Kindergarten Teachers. During the year 2012–2013 parents could decide if their 6-year old child should stay in kindergarten for an extra year or attend school. In 2014, attendance became compulsory only for children born in the first half of 2008, and in September 2015 all 6-year olds were obliged to attend school. Since January 2016, parents can again decide whether their child will remain in kindergarten or attend a pre-primary class in school. Nowadays most parents tend to decide that their child will start school at the age of 7.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Research studies carried out over the last five years in Poland have focused mainly on structural reforms in the early childhood education sector, in particular on lowering the age limit of compulsory education at school.

Social agreements with children in kindergartens

Sources: Olczak, A. 2010; Olczak, A. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The aim of the research is related to Kindergarten Teachers' views on the implementation of a specific approach towards making social agreements with children in pre-school settings.

Procedures: The research was carried out with a group of 316 Kindergarten Teachers from Zielona Góra city in the south-western part of Poland. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose.

Findings: The Kindergartens Teachers were generally in favour of the use of the social agreement approach in preschool education, presenting arguments for and against. Arguments for included: developing educational processes, improving safety in the kindergarten environment and developing children's social skills and interaction in the peer group. Arguments against included: doubts as to whether some children were sufficiently mature to participate in this method in terms of not yet being able to create agreements and respect rules and principles, and safety issues. Kindergartens Teachers demonstrated personality traits that are helpful in the process of implementing a social agreement method. These included: openness, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance.

Implications: The study suggests a need to focus on the following aspects in the education and teacher education systems:

- Emphasising the development of students' social and emotional skills in relationship with children in workplace based learning in IPS;
- Developing children's activity, courage, resourcefulness, their ability to defend their individual convictions, and to express their thoughts and ideas;
- Focusing on education for democracy and on creating a balance between individual and social rules.

Teachers' pre-school styles and perceptions of professional work

Source: Parczewska, T. 2013 (see *References* for full details).

Aims: The research study conducted in Poland between 2008 and 2010 aimed to investigate pre-school teachers' perceptions of their professional role.

Procedures: The study utilised questionnaires for teachers and observations of 255 teachers' communicative processes with 1,744 5-year old children in 118 kindergartens across Poland located in both rural and urban areas. The observations were categorised according to three educational situations related to interpersonal relationships: problem solving tasks, choice of children's art work for the classroom exhibition, discussion concerning the name of the exhibition.

Findings: Two distinct styles in the professional work of teachers could be identified:

- Activating ('trigger') style (listening, accepting children's ideas and suggestions, participating in their decision processes, full focus on the children),
- Restrictive style (teachers as decision makers, fully focused on the programme, no attention to children's needs).

Implications: Teachers need to be able to reflect their role more effectively and to develop competences in supporting the children and in communicating with them using child-oriented approaches. This should be a key element in initial and in-service professional studies.

Quality of care and education in nurseries

Source: Telka, L. 2007 (see *References* for full details).

Background: One of the few Polish research studies on nurseries was based at the University of Łódź (conducted by Professor Lucyna Telka, University of Łódź). Between 1996 and 2000 a team from the university collaborated with public nurseries.

Aims: In 2000, an in-depth study was initiated in eight nurseries, aiming to find ways of improving the quality of care and education in nurseries. Between 2001 and 2003, various kinds of education programmes were implemented in all public nurseries registered in the city of Łódź. The guiding intention of the researchers was to transform the nursery as a social institution.

Procedures: Representatives of the university and management of nurseries of Łódź agreed on a mutual collaboration to improve the quality of education. The academic staff and the staff of 31 nurseries prepared an institutional diary which was later analysed by the joint group. A pedagogical project was developed by each participant in the research.

Findings: The sustained cooperation between staff in universities and nurseries influenced and facilitated the conditions for the exchange of theoretical/methodical and practical knowledge. Through this long-term cooperation, processes of transformation in the management and organisation of these nurseries could be initiated. It is worth mentioning that through this research, Telka drew considerable attention to ways of shaping and supporting the autonomy of very young children in the nursery setting (Telka 2007).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salaries of Nursery Educators/Caregivers and Kindergarten Teachers vary considerably according to (1) whether they work in cities or small towns or rural areas – earnings are much higher in the cities; (2) whether they work in the private or the public sector – earnings are higher in the private sector; (3) whether they have only minimal vocational qualifications (as is the case for Nursery Educators) or high-level university qualifications (as is the case for most Kindergarten Teachers) – earnings are higher for higher qualifications.

Staff in nurseries

Salaries for staff working in nurseries depend on local government regulations or the specific conditions of private service providers. There is no information available in the public domain about these differences, and there are no research studies which provide evidence.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers:

Public sector: All decisions are made at the central level and only additional compensations are made by local government authorities. The annual gross salary of full-time, fully qualified teachers is on average 49,631 PLN (11,615€). Salaries depend on the Teacher's Charter document (Ministry of National Education 1982), plus certain executive regulations which can be, for example, a positive teaching performance appraisal or children's results in tests. Motivational incentives depend on local government policies. Teachers may also receive extra payment for additional responsibilities, e.g. teaching children with special educational needs, or relating to the geographical location of their workplace (high cost of living, disadvantaged or remote areas, etc.). According to the Teacher's Charter some extra payment is granted for working overtime. For the Centre Head of a public kindergarten the current average salary is 72,860 PLN (17,050€) per annum. Moreover, salaries also depend on the achieved level within the teaching career (trainee, contract, appointed or chartered teacher, see *Section 5*).

Private sector: Teachers' salaries are paid in accordance with the Labour Code. A kindergarten or primary school head's salary may vary and depends on arrangements between the school and the head (European Commission 2015).

Usually teachers in the private sector earn more than in the public sector; however, they also generally work more hours per week. Teachers in kindergartens and primary school have the same basic salary. The only difference is related to the 'motivation allowance', extra money granted by the local government or the Centre Head/School Principal.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

There is no information about **Nursery Educators** working with children under 3 years of age. It is assumed that most work full-time for eight hours per day (40 hours per week).

The Teacher’s Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982) specifies the working conditions of **Kindergarten Teachers**, their duties and rights, and clarifies the levels of career advancement and remuneration. Private school teachers are employed under the generally applicable labour laws or the Civil Code. National statistics show that nearly all staff in kindergartens work 40 hours/week (92.5%); only 7.5% hold a part-time job (Central Statistical Office 2015a).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

There are no national guidelines for staff support in the workplace. Each institution organises its own staff support measures. Therefore quality and availability vary greatly.

8.4 Non-contact time

There are no official regulations about contact and non-contact time for caregivers who work in settings for children under 3 years of age.

According to the Teacher’s Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982) teachers working in public kindergartens have 15 to 22 hours per week non-contact time, depending on age-groups or needs of the children. Private settings establish their own regulations.

Table 9

Poland: Non-contact time of staff working in public kindergartens, Ministry of National Education 1982

	Contact time	Non-contact time
Teachers working with 3-,4-, and 5-year olds	25	15
Teachers working with 6-year olds	22	18
Teachers working with children with special needs	18	22

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

The current expansion in the childcare sector (see *Section 6.1*) is likely to lead to a shortage of available staff, but there are no official data on this. It seems that currently there are no staff shortages in the kindergarten sector. There are many graduates available on the job market.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Staff qualifications in nurseries

The Act on the Care of Children under the Age of 3 (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2011a) was the first comprehensive document regulating centre-based settings for children under 3 years of age. The Act also regulated the staffing of new alternative forms of child care (kids’ club, home-based day care provision). The Act stipulates that anyone with a minimum of two years of work experience as an assistant in a setting for under 3-year olds can work as a Caregiver, i.e. as a core practitioner with group responsibility. The research of Lucyna Telka has shown that the professionalism of the staff is a key factor in guaranteeing the quality of educational processes (Telka 2007). This minimum requirement of only two years of work experience, combined with a lack of compulsory training courses, means that the quality in nurseries varies greatly.

The situation in kindergartens is different because there the supply of teachers seeking employment is higher than the demand (Karwowska-Struczyk M. and O. Wysłowska 2015). If Kindergarten Teachers cannot find a job they have the opportunity to seek work in primary schools or in nurseries.

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POLAND

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Małgorzata Żytka und Marta Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Poland – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 876-890.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in Poland is organised as a split-sector system. In 2011, provision for children under age 3 was transferred from the remit of the Ministry of Health to that of the Ministry of Family, Employment and Social Affairs (*Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej*). ECEC settings for children aged 3 years up to school entry are regarded as the first stage of the education system and come under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*). The municipalities are responsible for the management, maintenance, buildings and administration of provision in both sectors.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
M. Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

Overarching goals in the early education of children aged 3 and above are described in the national core curriculum and the relevant Ministry of National Education guidance and regulations (2014) as supporting and promoting the intellectual, emotional, social, creative and aesthetic dimensions of children's development; fostering values; and learning a foreign language. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on supporting children from minority groups and those with special educational needs.

Besides the Education Act (*Ustawa o systemie oświaty*, 1991 with amendments up to 2015), key documents and legislation relating to the education and care of 3- to 7-year olds are the Teachers' Charter (*Ustawa o Karta Nauczyciela*, 1982 with amendments up to 2014) and the Local Government Act (*Ustawa o samorządzie terytorialnym*, 1990 with amendments).

Structural and legislative changes since 2011 have provided parents with children under 3 years of age with a number of options to support their return to the labour market. However, the main focus of provision for this age group is on custodial aspects, providing meals and rest times, age appropriate indoor and outdoor activities and health and hygiene.

Key legislation relating to provision for the under-threes is the Act on Care for Children up to the Age of 3 (*Ustawa o Opiece nad dzieckiem do lat 3*, 2011 with amendments in 2013).

Sources: CARE 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Since September 2009, 5-year olds are entitled to a preparatory year in kindergartens (*przedszkole*), in pre-school classes in schools (*oddziały przedszkolne w szkołach podstawowych*) or in other kinds of ECEC settings (*zespoły wychowania przedszkolnego, punkty przedszkolne*). As from

June 2013, all 4-year olds and since September 2017, all 3-year olds are entitled to a place in a public ECEC setting. The municipalities have a duty to provide sufficient places. However, they do not receive state subsidies for this, and therefore it is mostly only the larger municipalities which are able to meet this requirement.

Enrolment is not compulsory for 3- to 5-year olds and whether they attend an ECEC setting depends on their parents' wishes and the availability of places. Attending a kindergarten or a pre-school class in schools is compulsory for 6-year olds.

In recent years, the statutory age for starting school in Poland has been changed a number of times. Following new legislation in 2009, it was supposed to be lowered from 7 to 6 years. This meant that, up to 2014, 6-year olds could attend primary school if a place was available, if they had attended a one-year preparatory group in kindergarten and if their 'school readiness' had been attested by an advisory panel. As from September 2015, school attendance was made obligatory for 7-year olds born between 1st July and 31st December 2008 and for all children born in 2009. Following a change of government, the law was amended yet again in December 2015. Primary school attendance was made compulsory for 7-year olds but optional for 6-year olds. This means that, since January 2016, parents can decide whether their child should remain in kindergarten or attend school. Most parents decide to enrol their children for school when they are 7 years old.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Main types of provision

Since 2011, municipalities have a duty to provide four different options regarding provision for children aged 20 weeks up to 3 years (in exceptional circumstances up to 4 years). However, they are not required to provide a certain number of places.

Nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*żłobek*) admit up to eight children up to the age of 3 years for a maximum of ten hours per day. **Children's clubs** (*klub dziecięcy*) take in up to eight children from the age of 1 year upwards for five hours per day. These two forms of provision, which have an official mandate to provide education, upbringing and care, must be recorded in the municipality register and are supervised/inspected by municipal authorities. Beyond this they need a positive assessment from the Fire Prevention and Health authorities. There are large disparities in the regional availability of places.

Home-based settings (*opiekun dzienny*), staffed by a family day carer employed by the municipality, offer a more informal kind of provision for up to five children. If a child aged under 1 is included in the group, or a child with special educational needs, then the maximum group size is reduced to three children.

Parents may also employ a **Nanny** (*opiekunka*) for children aged 20 weeks and above. The employee's pay and social insurance are partly covered by the parents.

In terms of ECEC settings for the older children (3- to 6-/7-year olds), **Kindergartens** (*przedszkola*) are the main form of provision. 5- to 6-/7-year olds may also attend a **preschool class** located in a primary school (*oddziały przedszkolne w szkołach podstawowych*). Both forms of provision are open throughout the year, usually for nine hours daily. Same-age groups are the most common form of grouping children in kindergartens, although mixed-age groups may be found in rural areas or in private settings where there are not enough children to form homogenous age groups.

An additional form of provision for 3- to 6-/7-year olds are the **pre-primary education hubs** (*punkty przedszkolne*). This is an alternative form of provision for parents who are unable to find a place

in a regular kindergarten. Infrastructure requirements tend to be more lax than in regular kindergartens (for example, they can be organised in a block of flats). Grants are provided for establishing pre-primary education hubs. The number of children in each group can range from 3 up to 25.

Sources: CARE 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2017.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Provider structures

Nurseries and **Kids' Clubs** are largely run by private persons and organisations. In 2014, less than one third (451) of the 1,471 nurseries in Poland and only 18 of the 324 kids' clubs were provided by municipalities (*gmina*).

The municipalities are responsible for the administration and organisation of **kindergartens** and for providing sufficient places for the 5- to 7-year olds. In 2015, 60.5% (6,735) of the 11,124 kindergartens (excluding special kindergartens) were run by municipalities. Only 28.2% (533 out of 1,852) of the **pre-primary education hubs** were organised by municipal providers*.

Table 1

Poland: Number of ECEC settings for 3- to 6-/7-year olds, number of places and children according to provider type, 2015*

Number of...	Preparatory groups in kindergartens	Pre-primary education hubs	Kindergartens	Preschool classes in schools	Special kindergartens
ECEC settings	94	1,852	11,124	7,838	207
of which are municipal		523	6,736		130
Places	2,054	44,315	1,018,214	no data	4,392
of which are municipal	922	13,484	719,925		2,564
Children	1,627	31,701	903,262	200,872	3,360
of which are in municipal settings	1,407 Among them: 2-3 years old: 584 3-4 years old: 667	10,814	687,254		2,049

Sources: *GUS 2017a, 161, own calculations.
Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data, hardly any under 3-year olds were enrolled in centre-based settings in 2005 and 2010, whereas in 2015 the participation rate accounted for 5.3% of the age group (see Table 2). In 2015, 43% of children aged 3 years up to school entry were enrolled in a setting compared with only 30% in 2005.

Table 2

Poland: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015***

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years, in %	3 years up to school entry, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	0	8
	Over 30 hours	2	22
	No attendance	98	70
2010	1 to 29 hours	0	10
	Over 30 hours	2	32
	No attendance	98	58
2015	1 to 29 hours	1.1	7.5
	Over 30 hours	4.2	35.5
	No attendance	94.6	57.0

According to national statistics, a total of 80,891 places were provided by 1,935 nurseries and 387 kids' clubs in 2015, attended by 74,694 children. The enrolment rate of under 3-year olds rose from 2.6% in 2010 to 6.8% in 2015. The small differences to the Eurostat data could possibly be attributed to different cut-off dates during 2015 or also that 3- and 4-year olds attending these settings were included in the Eurostat data.

Table 3 provides information about the number of under 3-year olds in ECEC provision according to age groups; the enrolment ratios were calculated on the basis of Eurostat data for the respective age groups.

Table 3

Poland: Number of children and enrolment rates in ECEC provision for under 3-year olds according to age-groups, 2015*

Age groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 1-year olds	1,994	0.5
1-year olds	29,896	8.1
2-year olds	38,035	9.8
Under 3-year olds	69,925	6.2
3-year olds	4,590	1.2
4-year olds	179	0.04

* Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

In terms of provision for the over-threes, according to national statistics 21,115 settings (including 207 special kindergartens) provided 1,068,975 places in 2015 for 1,140,602 children. The demand for places is considerably above the current capacity.

In 2014/15, over three-quarters of the 4- and 5-year olds were enrolled, most of them in a kindergarten; over one fifth of the 5- and 6-year olds attended a pre-primary class (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4

Poland: Participation rates according to age groups and type of provision in %, 2014/15****

Age group	Kindergartens	Preschool classes in schools	Pre-primary education hubs	Total
2-year olds	6.4	0.4	0.6	7.3
3-year olds	57.7	3.0	3.1	63.9
4-year olds	69.1	6.0	4.0	79.1
5-year olds	64.6	28.3	1.1	94.0
6-year olds	27.7	21.4	0.2	49.4

Table 5

Poland: Number of children in different types of provision according to age group, 2015/16*

Age group	Kinder-gartens	Preparatory groups in kindergartens	Pre-primary education hubs	Preschool classes in schools	Total
2-year olds	31,063	87	2,137	1,522	34,809
3-year olds	247,183	584	11,481	14,985	274,233
4-year olds	287,825	667	12,780	31,437	332,709
5-year olds	287,412	62	4,314	111,662	403,450
6-year olds	50,347	6	804	39,666	90,823
Over 6-year olds	2,792	1	185	1,600	4,578
Total	906,622	1,407	31,701	200,872	1,140,602

Table 6 gives a detailed overview of the different kinds of provision, the number of places they offer and the number of children enrolled in 2015/16. The majority of places in kindergartens (70.7%) were provided by municipal authorities such as district and local boroughs. Only 30.4% of the places in pre-primary education hubs and only 44.9% of those in preparatory groups are provided by the municipalities.

Table 6

Poland: Number of settings for 3- to 6-/7-year olds according to type of provision and number of places/children, 2015/16**

2015/16	Number of settings	Number of places	Number of children
Public kindergartens (municipal, district, state-maintained)	6,963	728,368	693,526
Private kindergartens (associations, legal persons, church-affiliated)	4,368	294,248	213,096
Total number of kindergartens	11,331	1,022,616	906,622
Preparatory groups in kindergartens	94	2,054	1,407
Pre-primary education hubs	1,852	44,315	31,701
Preschool classes in schools	7,838	n/d	200,872
Total	21,115	1,068,985	1,140,602
Of these: special kindergartens	207	4,392	3,360

Sources: *GUS 2017a, 161.
 **GUS 2017b, 155.
 ****European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
 ***Eurostat 2017f.

Financing and costs for parents

For children attending a public kindergarten, five hours daily are free of charge. The costs for additional hours and mealtimes are met by the parents. However, since September 2013, not more than 1 PLN (0.23€) may be charged for an additional hour. Fees are reduced for low-income families. The exact costs are determined by the municipality; in the case of private provision, the provider decides on the level of fees.

In public settings for under 3-year olds, the fees in 2014 amounted to 52€ per month, in private, state subsidised provision 117€. ^{1*}

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Since 2011, an initiative of the Ministry of Family Affairs (*Maluch*) subsidises both public and private settings for under 3-year olds. Between 2011 and 2015, almost 500,000,000 PLN (116,826,491€) were provided for this purposes, although in 2015 only 151,000,000 PLN (35,281,600€) were granted.

Municipalities are not legally obliged to subsidise provision for the under-threes. Since there are no public nurseries/infant-toddler centres in many regions, parents are forced to make use of private provision, but this is not affordable for many.

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Staff-child ratios

In **nurseries** and **kids' clubs**, a maximum of eight children are cared for by a qualified member of staff. If a child with special educational needs is attending, the group size is reduced to five. In nurseries with more than 20 children, at least one children's nurse or midwife is employed, who may be supported by voluntary workers.

In 2014/2015, one member of staff in **kindergartens** was on average responsible for 14 children. In the **pre-primary education hubs** group size may vary between three and 25 children.

The maximum group size is 25 children, and if children with special educational needs are included it is reduced to between 15 and 20 children. Two qualified members of staff work in one group, one in the mornings and one in the afternoons; they are supported by teachers' assistants. It is not unusual for the same staff to accompany the children throughout their time in kindergarten. In integrative settings, additional staff with a special education qualification work alongside the core practitioners.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Curricular Frameworks

All **kindergartens** are obliged to follow a national ECEC pre-primary curriculum (*Podstawa Programowa Wychowania Przedszkolnego dla przedszkoli oraz innych form wychowania przedszkolnego*, 2012 with amendments in 2014) issued by the Ministry of National Education. Emphasis is placed on the children's intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic development and on the transmission of values. These overall goals are pursued in 17 different areas of learning which provide a detailed description of the competencies the children are expected to have reached by the end of their time in kindergarten. Guidance is provided for the daily organisation of activities. Roughly one fifth of the time should be allocated to each of play-based learning, outdoor activities and educational activities. The remaining two-fifths of the time are to be dedicated to caring and organisational tasks. On a daily basis, teacher led activities for 5-year olds usually last 30 minutes and for younger children 15 minutes. ECEC staff are required to develop their own centre-specific educational plan, using the national curricular framework as a reference point. Staff are free to choose their own ways of working with the children.

No such curricular framework exists for work in settings with **under 3-year olds**. Staff are expected to create a family-like atmosphere for the children's play, with an emphasis on supporting their psycho-motor development and working closely with parents. The centre head is responsible for complying with health and hygiene regulations and ensuring that the parents' wishes are taken in-

to account. As mentioned previously, the legal basis for work in nurseries is the Act on Care for Children up to the Age of 3 (*Ustawa o Opiece nad dzieckiem do lat 3*, 2011 with amendments in 2013).

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Inclusion agenda

Children with disabilities and children with a background of migration are explicitly included in the national curricular framework for the pre-primary years.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs can either be admitted to mainstream provision or to a special education setting. In 2015, there were 207 special education settings in Poland (54 of them municipal), providing 4,392 places for 3,360 children, among them 1,923 under 6-year olds*.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, only 0.4% of the total population in Poland had a non-Polish background; more than three-quarters of these persons (79.9%) came from countries outside the European Union. In the age group of under 5-year olds, the respective proportions were similar at 0.3% and 71.6%**.

The national pre-primary curriculum states that children from ethnic minorities should be educated according to their specific needs. Since 2015, it has become a requirement that 5-year olds should learn a foreign language, and this is gradually being introduced in all settings. As from September 2017, this requirement applies to all children. Language tuition is free of charge.

Sources: *GUS 2017a.
Eurydice 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Monitoring

In educational matters, supervision of the kindergartens and preschool classes is the responsibility of the local education authorities (*kurator oświaty, REA*). The municipalities and the education authorities only take action in cases of non-compliance with legal requirements.

The Centre Head and staff team are expected to adapt the educational programme of the setting to the national curricular framework and to document this in an annual report. They have to draw up timetables and to keep lists of the children present, and are also expected to conduct observations of the children's behaviour, particularly in the case of children with special educational needs.

Evaluation

Staff who work with 5-year olds in ECEC settings are required to assess the children's 'school readiness' in a so-called 'preschool diagnosis'. The assessment takes place at the beginning of the year preceding the probable year of starting school and is made available to parents. The goal is to in-

form the parents about their child's developmental progress and also to provide information for the primary school teacher in order to best support the child's transition to school.

Since the Ministry of Education decree in 2013, public kindergartens and preparatory groups/preschool classes are obliged to support children with behavioural and learning difficulties and to provide advice for their parents. This means that careful observations of each child need to form the basis of a competent diagnosis which matches the child's individual needs. The Centre Head decides on the most appropriate measures and receives advisory support from psychopedagogical experts.

The decree of the Minister of National Education from 2017 concerning requirements for schools and other educational institutions and the decree on pedagogical supervision are the key documents for the external and internal evaluation of kindergartens and pre-primary institutions**. In the process of external evaluation the following criteria are important: focussing on the development and education of the child; monitoring implementation of the national curriculum; children's active participation in educational processes and everyday life in kindergartens; development of children's social skills; needs-oriented individualisation; team work to increase professional competences and the quality of education; cooperation with parents and local communities (parents as partners in education); management of kindergartens and promotion of the role of early childhood education in the society.

Centre heads and staff of kindergartens are responsible for internal evaluations.

The results of external and internal evaluations are the basis for monitoring the quality of early childhood education and initiating discussions on quality improvements.

Research

The majority of research on early childhood education is carried out at universities and by NGOs, particularly the Comenius Foundation for Child Development, based on EU social funds and grants, local community grants and other funding sources. There is no state funded research on early childhood education. The Educational Research Institute (IBE) conducts interdisciplinary projects concerning the functioning and effectiveness of the education system in Poland. Within the institute there is a section on early years education, but research is focussed on primary education and transition from pre-school education to school.

Recently, Poland participated in the European CARE project (Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC)*.

Sources: *CARE 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
Karwowska-Struczyk, M. and O. Wyslowska 2016.
**Ministry of National Education 2017a, 2017b.
Żytko, M. und M. Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo 2017.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*urlop macierzyński*) is granted for 20 weeks, two of which can be taken before the birth date. 14 weeks are compulsory. There are two options regarding payment: (1) 20 weeks at 80% of average earnings over the past 12 months and also during the parental leave period; or (2) 100% of average earnings over the past 12 months and during the first six weeks of parental leave, followed by 60% for the remaining leave period. The decision about which option will be taken has to be made two weeks before the start of the maternity leave period.

Fathers are entitled to two weeks of fully paid **paternity leave** (*urlop ojcowski*), which have to be taken in the first 24 months following the child's birth, either altogether or in two blocks.

Parental leave (*urlop rodzicielski*) is granted for 32 weeks per family and is paid according to the option chosen for maternity leave. These weeks can be divided into a maximum of four blocks up to the child's 6th birthday, with each block lasting for a minimum of eight weeks. Parents are permitted to take leave simultaneously. It is also possible to work for half a day (maximum); in such cases, the length of parental leave is extended accordingly.

Almost all those who take advantage of parental leave are women. In 2014, fathers comprised only 1.7% of those receiving the parental leave benefit. In 2015 and up to November 2016, 637,000 parents used the leave entitlement and 50,800 of them (23.7%) were men. This indicates that utilisation by fathers is increasing considerably.

Since 2016, the Government has introduced measures to improve the situation of families: a child allowance of 89-129 Zloty (approx. 20-20€) per month; and a new kind of parent allowance of 1,000 Zloty (approx. 226€) for those who are not entitled to the maternity leave benefit (e.g. students, unemployed persons).

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Kurowska, A. and P. Michoń 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

Early 20th century	First kindergartens established
1919	The term <i>kindergarten</i> is used for the first time during the Nation Education Reunion (Teachers' Parliament)
1932	The term <i>kindergarten</i> is included in the Act on School Education
1940s	Expansion of provision following increased entry in the labour market by women
1961	First Education Act issued – aims of pre-school education and basis for curriculum
1977	Expansion of preschool education for 6-year olds (introduction of reading elements, emphasis on the preparation for primary school)
1991	School Education Act
1990-1993	Following the political changes, responsibilities for kindergartens are delegated to the municipalities
Up to 1995	Many ECEC settings are closed
1999	School Education Act - Educational reform focused on school
2008	Early education reform started – new curriculum for preschool education; Introduction of alternative forms of provision: pre-primary education hubs, children's clubs, playgroups
2009	Entitlement to a place in kindergarten or preschool class introduced for 5-year olds
2011	Attending kindergarten is made compulsory for 5-year olds and attending a preschool class for 6-year olds Responsibility for provision for under 3-year olds transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Family, Employment and Social Affairs
2015	Entitlement to a place in kindergarten or preparatory group introduced for 4-year olds
2016	Parents are entitled to decide at what age their child starts school (6 or 7)
2017	School Education Act – new curriculum for kindergarten and pre-school education

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Żytko, M., personal communication, October 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Poland

Country expert assessment by Małgorzata Żyto and Marta Pacholczyk-Sanfilippo

Raising societal awareness of the importance of high quality of ECEC

An increase in societal awareness regarding the crucial role of early childhood education is needed. It is necessary to present the arguments from research and international experience how the quality of ECEC affects social, educational, economic levels of life in society. For this reason it is important to assess the main problems of Polish Early Childhood Education, especially the role of education and care in this field, and to prepare recommendations for policy makers, experts, and parents regarding the dimensions of change needed in supporting families with young children.

Creation of a common vision and a system of cooperation in ECEC

It is necessary to integrate the different ideas, ways of thinking, activities and institutions around the main aim – raising the quality of ECEC. We need a clear vision of the social policy makers for parents, teachers, stakeholders and other people interested in education. Institutional integration of ECEC by the Ministry of Education and systematic cooperation between three services: education, health and welfare could be a big challenge for the future. The preparation of well qualified, creative people for working in ECEC, ready to engage in educational and social activities is necessary (Brzezinska and Czub 2012).

Organisation of ECEC provision

Access to kindergartens and other forms of ECEC provision varies significantly from region to region. Across the country, there are insufficient places to meet the rising demand, particularly in terms of provision for under 3-year olds in urban areas. Moreover, the children who would profit most from participation are the least likely to attend. The Ministry of National Education has therefore declared an increase in the participation rates as a priority: since June 2013, each 4-year old and since September 2017, each 3-year old is entitled to a place in a public kindergarten. The municipalities are required to provide the places needed; however, they receive no government funding to do this. This is a significant challenge, since it is mostly only the larger municipalities who are in a position to comply with this requirement.

Social programmes for families

Another challenge is the continuing fall in the birth rate. It has been estimated that this will mean that in 2030 there will be 25% fewer children in Poland than there are today. It has therefore become a government priority to provide a range of support measures for young couples to encourage them in making the decision to have a child. Alongside a year's paid combined maternity leave and parental leave, parents can apply for a child allowance (117€ monthly) after the birth of their second child, and there are special measures for parents from disadvantaged areas.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Poland totalled 37,967,209. Over the past 20 years the number of inhabitants has been sinking slowly but consistently (1995: 38.580.597; 2005: 38.173.835).

Children under 7 years of age

Since primary schooling begins at age 7 for most children, even though since 2016 parents may decide for an earlier school start at age 6, and since data are available, this section looks at the data for children under 7 years of age.

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.9% and children under 7 years of age for 7.2% of the total population. These percentage rates are roughly the same as the EU28 average. However, 20 years ago, the rates for both age groups were higher than the EU average (Poland was not a member of the EU at that time), whereas by 2005 they had fallen to below the average EU rates.

Table 7

Poland: Children under 7 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	362.273
1-year olds	374.711
2-year olds	369.496
Under age 3 total	1.106.480
3-year olds	388.732
4-year olds	388.666
5-year olds	412.586
Total 3- to under 7-year olds	428.356
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	1.618.340
	2.724.820

Table 8

Poland: Children under 7 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.8	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	5.7	4.7	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.2
0- to under 6-year olds	9.5	8.0	6.7	7.3	7.2	7.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, over half the households (57.2%) with children under 6 years of age were couple households. Single households accounted for only 2.6% of all households, and these were almost without exception single mother households (2.5%).

Table 9

Poland: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	4,909,500	

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Couple households	2,809,500	57.2
Other types of households	1,973,400	40.2
Single households, total	126,600	2.6
Single households, women	121,700	2.5
Single households, men	4,900 ⁺⁺	0.1

⁺Own calculations, ⁺⁺ data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Poland was 69.2% and that of women 62.9%. Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 63% were in the labour market compared with 89.5% of men with children of the same age. The employment rates for both mothers and fathers with children under 6 years of age are thus slightly above the EU28 average.

Table 10

Poland: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Poland	2005	49.8	79.5
	2010	57.4	85.6
	2015	63.0	89.5
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

⁺own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.

Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 22.8% of children under age 6 in Poland were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is slightly below the EU28 average (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 23.4%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ ‘At risk of poverty or social exclusion’ refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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PORTUGAL

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Sara Barros Araújo

Polytechnic Institute of Porto, School of Education

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Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her gratitude to the Directorate General of Education and Science Statistics (*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência*), **Manuela Sanches-Ferreira** (Portuguese expert in Special Education), **Margarida Marta** (Portuguese expert in Early Childhood Education), and **Célia Oliveira** (from the Portuguese Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-service Training, *Conselho Científico-Pedagógico de Formação Contínua*) for their availability and support during the data collection phase.

Citation suggestion:

Araújo, S. Barros. 2018. "Portugal – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 891-916.

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1. ECEC governance

In Portugal, the ECEC system comprises two main sectors: provision for children up to the age of 3, encompassing infant-toddler centres (*creches*) and childminders/nannies (*amas*)¹, and centre-based pre-primary provision for children from 3 years up to primary school age (6 years) (*estabelecimentos de educação pré-escolar* or *jardins de infância*).

Governance is characterised by a split system: the 0-3 sector (both centre-based and home-based) is governed by the Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security (MWSSS) (*Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social*) and the 3-6 sector is governed by the Ministry of Education (ME) (*Ministério da Educação*). The pre-primary sector (3-6) is part of the Portuguese education system as defined by the Education Act (Law 46/86, 14 October). Both sectors are centralised, i.e., responsibilities at the level of ECEC financing, monitoring and curriculum development are set at the national level.

This split system has been the focus of debate and criticism. This led the Portuguese National Education Council² to present, in 2011, a formal set of recommendations on the education of children up to 3 years of age (Vasconcelos 2011). The document stresses the need for the 0-3 sector to be integrated into the education system (requiring an amendment to the Education Act), progressive responsibility of the ME in this sector, and an articulated form of shared governance by the two ministries until full governance through the ME is reached.

At the governance level, two further initiatives are particularly noteworthy:

- (i) Inter-ministerial collaboration between MWSSS and ME on the development of a pedagogical framework for children up to 3 years of age. These pedagogical guidelines have been produced but not yet made available to the professional community;
- (ii) Defining underpinning educational principles for the 0-6 phase, safeguarding the unity and continuity of early childhood pedagogy. These common educational principles are integrated in the updated and revised edition of the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-School Education (Lopes da Silva, Marques, Mata, and Rosa 2016) and will be integrated into the pedagogical guidelines for working with children 0-3.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The staff categories in Portuguese ECEC provision are:

Educadora/educador de infância (Early Childhood Teacher)

The specific professional profile of the Early Childhood Teacher was legally established in 2001, through the Decree-Law 241/2001, 30 August. This document set the legal framework for the organisation of the initial teacher education/training. Early Childhood Teachers are qualified to work with children from 0 to 6 years old, both in the *estabelecimentos de educação pré-escolar/jardins de infância* for 3- to 6-year old children and in the *creches* for 0- to 3-year olds. Their professional qualification includes a three-year Bachelor's degree in Basic Education followed by a 3-semester Master's degree in Pre-School Education OR a four-semester Master's

¹ Corresponding to *family day care ECEC* or *licensed home-based ECEC* (OECD 2017, 60).

² The National Education Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação – CNE*) is an independent advisory body on educational issues that produces statements and recommendations according to its own agenda or as a response to requests from the Parliament or the Government (<http://www.tcnedu.pt/pt/>).

degree in Pre-School and Primary Education. In the latter case, the professional is qualified for working with children up to 10 years of age, both in early childhood education and primary education.

Assistente operacional (Auxiliary Staff)

The Portuguese Education Act establishes that auxiliary staff should have completed compulsory education, corresponding presently to a minimum of 12 years of schooling. In some cases, municipalities may give priority to staff with a related qualification (see *Section 3.1*).

The functions of auxiliary staff are described in Decree Law 184/2004, 29 July (annexe III) and include the logistical support of the Early Childhood Teacher, hygiene and cleaning of spaces, space security and surveillance/supervision of children indoors and outdoors, and guaranteeing the opening and closing times, including welcoming the children and being there when the children are picked up by their parents. Moreover, Portuguese regulations do not prescribe the need for an Early Childhood Teacher in 'rooms for infants' (*berçário*), which means that the monitoring and supervision of babies up to 12 months is guaranteed by employing two auxiliary staff members per group.

Diretor técnico (Technical Director/Centre Head) and **diretor pedagógico** (Pedagogical Director)

Each infant-toddler centre (*creche*) is coordinated by a *diretor técnico* (Technical Director/Centre Head) who is, preferably, an Early Childhood Teacher, but can also be a professional with a degree in another domain of the Educational Sciences or the Human and Social Sciences. According to Order no. 262/2011, the responsibilities of the *diretor técnico* are: to develop a management model that guarantees the functioning of the infant-toddler centre; to supervise the admission of new professionals; to promote the continuous improvement of the services provided (including the management of quality programmes); to manage, coordinate and supervise professionals; to implement staff education/training programmes; to encourage the involvement of the technical team and families in the planning and evaluation of activities; to ensure collaboration with external entities and services. In many cases, the Centre Head is also a core practitioner with responsibility for a group of children and pedagogical responsibility for the activities carried out in 'baby rooms' (*berçário*) by auxiliary staff.

Each kindergarten/preschool (*estabelecimento de educação pré-escolar/jardim de infância*) is coordinated by a Pedagogical Director who is responsible for the implementation of the curricular orientation guidelines and the coordination of the educational programme. In spite of some legal vagueness concerning the required qualification for this role (Law no. 5/97), the Pedagogical Director is, in the majority of cases, an Early Childhood Teacher who has had sufficient experience of being responsible for a group of children as a core practitioner.

Docente de educação especial (Special Education Teacher)³

The *docente de educação especial* collaborates in the creation and promotion of conditions for the socio-educational inclusion of children with special needs. The prime function of this professional is to guarantee educational support to the ECEC centre, the Early Childhood Teacher, the child and the family in the organisation and management of differentiated resources and measures for the teaching-learning process. The Special Education Teachers must possess a higher education degree in teaching (preferably, in early childhood education, but not mandatory) and a specialised training course in special education at a university or higher education

³ In Portugal, the assistance to children with disabilities from birth up to 6 years involves two systems: (i) the National Early Childhood Intervention System (*Sistema Nacional de Intervenção Precoce na Infância*), under the coordinated work of the Ministries of Work, Solidarity and Social Security, Health and Education. This system provides services to children from birth up to 6 years of age through local resource units, in cooperation with families and professionals working in infant-toddler centres or pre-schools; (ii) The special education services governed by the Ministry of Education that provide services in the public sector from pre-school to the end of secondary education (Sanches-Ferreira, Silveira-Maia, Lopes dos Santos, and Santos 2017).

institution (polytechnic). These courses are accredited by the Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-service Training and have a minimum of 250 contact hours. In order to gain access to these courses, besides the teaching certification, candidates must have had at least five years of teaching practice.

Besides the Special Education Teacher, other specialist professionals such as occupational and speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, interpreters and teachers of sign language, and experts on mobility and orientation training support the Early Childhood Teacher and the auxiliary staff in ECEC centres. The number and type of professionals that are integrated into the special education teams depends on the resources that are available in each ECEC centre (Sanches-Ferreira, Silveira-Maia, Lopes dos Santos, and Santos 2017).

Table 1 gives an overview of the staff in regular daily contact with children in centre-based ECEC provision. It also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 following Table 1).

Table 1
Portugal: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ ISCED level ⁴
<i>Educador/a de infância</i> Early Childhood Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional <i>In some cases:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Creche</i> Infant-toddler centre 0-3 years <i>Estabelecimento de educação pré-escolar/jardim de infância</i> Preschool/kindergarten 3-6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0-6 years	Bachelor's degree in Basic Education, 3 years university or polytechnic ECTS points: 180 plus Master's degree in Pre-school Education (3 semesters) ECTS points: 90 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 75
			0-10 years	Bachelor's degree in Basic Education, 3 years university or polytechnic ECTS points: 180 plus Master's degree in Pre-school and Primary Education (4 semesters) ECTS points: 120 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112, 0113 ISCED 2011: 75
<i>Assistente operacional</i> Auxiliary staff	<i>Creche</i> Infant-toddler centre 0-3 years <i>Estabelecimento de educação pré-</i>	Co-workers without specialist qualification	n/a ⁵	Compulsory school certificate ECTS points: n/a EQF: Level 3/4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 (preferably, but not compulsory)

⁴ UNESCO 2012, 2014.

⁵ n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ ISCED level ⁴
	<i>escolar/jardim de infância</i> Preschool/kinder-garten 3-6 years			ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Diretor técnico/ Diretor pedagógico</i> Specialist Director/Centre Head Pedagogical Direc- tor/Centre Head <i>Profile (mainly):</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Profes- sional	<i>Creche</i> Infant-toddler centre 0-3 years (in the case of the technical director) <i>Estabelecimento de educação pré- escolar/jardim de infância</i> preschool/kinder- garten 3-6 years (in the case of the pedagogical direc- tor)	Centre head (in most cases also a core practitioner with group responsibility)	0-6 years or 0-10 years In cases in which the direc- tor is not an Early Childhood Teacher, the age range is unspecified	A degree in Early Childhood Education (or other domain of the Educational Sciences or Human and Social Scienc- es) ECTS points: 180+90/120 EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112, 0113 ISCED 2011: 75
<i>Docente de educação especial</i> Special Education Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Profes- sional (special needs) <i>In some cases:</i> Pre- primary and Prima- ry Education Pro- fessional (special needs)	<i>Creche/ama/ Estabelecimento de educação pré- escolar</i> Infant-toddler centres/ family day care / preschools 0-6 (in the case of the National Early Childhood Interven- tion System) <i>Estabelecimento de educação pré- escolar/jardim de infância</i> preschool/kinder- garten 3-6 years (in the case of special education services provided by the Ministry of Education)	Specialist support worker	0-6 years (in the case of the National Early Childhood Intervention System) or 3-18 (in the case of special education ser- vices provided by the Ministry of Education)	A higher education degree in teaching (180 ECTS points) plus A specialised training course in special education ECTS points: 50 (the specific number of ECTS points is established by each higher education institution on the basis of a mandatory minimum of 250 contact hours) EQF: Level 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112, 0113 ISCED 2011: 75

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Data on the structural composition of ECEC workforce are difficult to access, not only because of the split system that characterises ECEC services in Portugal, but also because data are usually presented in a global form (e.g., in the public sector, the available data integrates information on pre-primary, primary and secondary education).

Concerning the qualifications of Early Childhood Teachers, the only available information relates to the professionals working in pre-primary settings (public and private) under the governance of the Ministry of Education. This information is reported in documents issued by the Directorate General of Education and Science Statistics (*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência*) and reports on a total of 16,002 Early Childhood Teachers (55.9% in the public sector and 44.1% in the private sector).

Table 2

Portugal: Structural composition of ECEC provision (3-6) under the Ministry of Education: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Early Childhood Teachers with higher education degree:	2015/16*
- Three-year bachelor degree or equivalent	12.7%
- Four-year bachelor degree (<i>licenciatura</i>) or equivalent	81.5%
- Master's or Doctoral degree	5.8%
Specialist support staff (e.g. Special Needs Teachers) (N=7,264)	2016/17** With a specialisation in special education: 99.1% Full time employment: 95%
Staff with non-specialist qualification	No data available
Staff with no formal IPS	No data available
Male staff	2015/16: 0.9%*
Staff with a background of migration	2014/15: 1.1%***

*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência n.d.-a.

**Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência n.d.-b.

***Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência 2016. The most frequently represented countries of origin are Angola, France and Brazil.

No systematically compiled national data are available for the 0-3 sector.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Early Childhood Teacher (*educador/a de infância*)

As previously stated, the Early Childhood Teacher's initial professional studies are characterised by a sequential model that integrates a Bachelor's degree in Basic Education (*Licenciatura em Educação Básica*) and a professional Master's degree in Pre-school Education (*Mestrado em Educação Pré-Escolar*) or Pre-school and Primary Education (*Mestrado em Educação Pré-Escolar e Ensino do 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico*). This model was established at the national level in 2007. The access to the 1st cycle of studies, Bachelor in Basic Education, requires successful completion of secondary education and of national exams of Portuguese and Mathematics. Entry requirements for the 2nd cycle of studies, corresponding to a Master's degree, are the

successful completion of the Bachelor's degree in Basic Education and an exam in Portuguese language. Depending on the institution, selection may also involve an analysis of the candidate's curriculum vitae and/or an interview.

The Bachelor's degree in Basic Education is common for all candidate teachers, from the pre-primary to the secondary level of education. Course length is six semesters, corresponding to 180 ECTS points. During the 2nd cycle of studies, there are two options: (i) a professional Master in Pre-School Education, lasting three semesters (90 ECTS points), which qualifies for working with children 0-6 (EQF Level 7); (ii) a professional Master in Pre-School and Primary Education, lasting four semesters (120 ECTS points), which qualifies for working with children 0-10 (EQF Level 7).

Table 3

Portugal: Early Childhood Teacher

<p>Job title in Portuguese: <i>Educador/a de infância</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: The requirement for both cycles of studies is a Bachelor's degree in Basic Education</p> <p>Professional studies: Master's degree in Pre-School Education (3 semesters) or Master's degree in Pre-School and Primary Education (4 semesters)</p> <p>Award: Master's degree in Pre-School Education (<i>grau de Mestre em Educação Pré-Escolar</i>) or Master's degree in Pre-School and Primary Education (<i>grau de Mestre em Educação Pré-Escolare Ensino do 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 270 / 300 (depending on the type of Master's degree)</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112 / 0112, 0113 (depending on the type of Master's degree)</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 75</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: infant-toddler centres, pre-primary settings (and primary schools, if qualified through the Master in Pre-School and Primary Education)</p>

Auxiliary staff (*assistente operacional*)

Auxiliary staff are required to have completed compulsory education that corresponds, in Portugal, to 12 years of schooling (secondary education). This formal requirement is set at the national level. No specific pedagogical requirements need to be met. In some cases, recruitment through the municipalities privileges additional preparation, such as a specialist course for gaining the title of 'specialist in educational activities' (*técnico de ação educativa*) (EQF Level 4) or a three-year secondary vocational course specifically focused on child support (*técnico de apoio à infância*) (EQF Level 4). Recruitment may also take place through employment centres, as a measure to promote the professional integration of unemployed persons.

Table 4

Portugal: Auxiliary staff

<p>Job title in Portuguese: <i>Assistente operacional</i></p>
<p>Entry requirements: Secondary education diploma</p> <p>Professional studies: No specific professional requirements need to be met, although related vocational qualifications may be favourable for recruitment.</p> <p>Award: Diploma of secondary education (<i>diploma de nível secundário de educação</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 3 or 4 (in the case of completion of a vocational course)</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922 (preferably, but not compulsory)</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 34 (or 35)</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: infant-toddler centres, pre-primary settings</p>

Technical Director/ Pedagogical Director (*diretor técnico/ diretor pedagógico*)

The Technical Director/Centre Head, who guarantees the coordination and management of infant-toddler institutions, and the Pedagogical Director/Centre Head, who coordinates and manages pre-schools/kindergartens, are in most cases experienced Early Childhood Teachers. An additional qualification in management is not required.

Table 6

Portugal: Technical Director (infant-toddler centres) and Pedagogical Director (pre-primary settings)

<p>Job title in Portuguese: <i>Diretor técnico/ Diretor pedagógico</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: The same requirements as for the Early Childhood Teacher (see Table 3).</p> <p>Professional studies: The same requirements as for the Early Childhood Teacher (see Table 3). In some cases, the holders of these posts may possess a five-year higher education degree in another domain, such as Educational Sciences.</p> <p>Award: Higher education degree (Master-level)</p> <p>ECTS points: 270 / 300 (depending on the higher education degree)</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112 / 0112 and 0113. Other detailed fields, such as 0111 (Educational sciences)</p> <p>ISECD 2011: 75</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: infant-toddler centres (Technical Director) and pre-schools/kindergartens (Pedagogical Director)</p>

Special Education Teacher (*docente de educação especial*)

Special Education Teachers are required to complete a higher education degree in teaching (preferably in early childhood education, but not mandatory). This is followed by a mandatory training course in special education (*curso de especialização em educação especial*) taught at a university or polytechnic, with a minimum of 250 contact hours. In order to gain access to this course, candidates must also possess at least five years of teaching practice.

Table 7

Portugal: Special Education Teacher

<p>Job title in Portuguese: <i>Docente de educação especial</i></p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (special needs) <i>or</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional (special needs)</p>
<p>Entry requirements: the same requirements as for the Early Childhood Teacher (see Table 3). Besides these, the access to a specialised course in special education is dependent on a minimum of five years of teaching experience.</p> <p>Professional studies: a higher education degree in teaching and a specialised course in special education</p> <p>Award: Diploma of specialised training course in special education (<i>Diploma de curso de formação especializada em educação especial</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: 270 / 300 (depending on the higher education degree) and a specialised course of around 50 ECTS points (the specific number of ECTS is established by each higher education institution, on the basis of a mandatory minimum of 250 contact hours)</p> <p>EQF level: 7</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112 / 0112 and 0113</p> <p>ISECD 2011: 75</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: (i) Local intervention teams that support infant-toddler centres/childminders/preschools (in the case of the National Early Childhood Intervention System); (ii) preschools/kindergartens (in the case of special education services governed by the Ministry of Education)</p>

3.2 Competences and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Given that no specific IPS requirements are needed for auxiliary staff or the Centre Heads, the following focuses on the Early Childhood Teacher and the Special Education Teacher.

Early Childhood Teacher (*educador/a de infância*)

In 2007, within the Bologna Process, a new legal framework for the professional qualification of staff in pre-school, basic and secondary education emerged, through Decree-Law no. 43/2007 (22 February), in the meantime replaced by Decree-Law no. 79/2014 (14 May). One of the major changes was the transition from an integrated model to a sequential or biphasic model comprising a Bachelor's and a Master's degree. The following takes into account these two education/training cycles for Early Childhood Teacher initial professional preparation.

Bachelor in Basic Education (*Licenciatura em Educação Básica*)

The Bachelor in Basic Education is a three-year course of study (6 semesters, 180 ECTS points) for all teachers in the education system, regardless of their subsequent professional profile.

Competencies: This first cycle aims to promote generic and transversal competencies that prepare for assuming a professional role in a diversity of educational contexts. Competencies encompass: (1) observing and evaluating educational contexts (formal and non-formal); (2) knowing and understanding the professional profiles of the Early Childhood Teacher and Basic Education Teacher; (3) developing educational projects and resources; (4) mobilising knowledge for working in early childhood, basic education and non-formal education contexts in an integrated and contextualised way; (5) reflexive, investigative and critical competencies.

Curriculum: The basic education/training components are prescribed by law (Decree-Law 79/2014) as (1) Teaching; (2) General education; (3) Subject-specific didactics; (4) Cultural, social and ethical dimension; and (5) Initiation into professional practice. The cultural, social and ethical dimension does not have formally allocated ECTS points but is integrated into the other components of education/training. Minimum ECTS points are distributed as follows:

Table 8

Portugal: First stage of IPS of Early Childhood Teachers, curriculum structure

Curricular areas	Minimum ECTS points
Teaching	125
General education	15
Subject-specific didactics	15
Initiation into professional practice	15

The particular focus of this *licenciatura* is on the knowledge needed for *teaching* in certain content areas or disciplines. The distribution of the 125 ECTS points prescribed by law is as follows: Portuguese (30 ECTS points); Mathematics (30 ECTS points); Natural Sciences, and History and Geography of Portugal (30 ECTS points), Expressive Arts (Music, Visual Arts, Drama) and Physical/Motor Expression (30 ECTS points). The higher education institution is free to allocate the remaining 5 ECTS points to selected content areas.

Curricular units focusing on these four content areas (see Table 8) are distributed throughout the three-year cycle of studies. *General education* includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes common to all teachers that are relevant for their work in the classroom, in the educational institutions and in cooperation with families and communities. It includes curricular units in the domains of developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, curriculum and assessment, organisational studies or special education. *Subject-specific didactics* and *initiation into profes-*

sional practice in educational institutions have limited presence in this cycle of studies (they are maximised at master's level). The integration of field studies into the overall course of study varies among the higher education institutions, with some institutions offering observation and cooperation experiences throughout the three years and others tending to provide these experiences only in the final year of the course.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The pedagogic-didactic approaches can vary among higher education institutions. However, two tendencies were identified in a study carried out by Almeida and Lopo (2015) in 17 Portuguese institutions of higher education: (i) a cluster of institutions with a profile characterised by the use of artistic and physical-motor experimentation, problem solving strategies, the use of authentic materials (materials that can be manipulated and worksheets) and the diary as an element of written assessment; (ii) a cluster of institutions characterised by the use of experimental activities / laboratory practices and simulation as activities to stimulate the appropriation of knowledge, and by the use of a project approach to assess learning.

In spite of these findings, the limited number of hours allocated to specific didactics and in particular to initiation into professional practice has been criticised as hindering the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge and, as a consequence, the effective construction of professional knowledge.

Master in Pre-School Education (*Mestrado em Educação Pré-Escolar*)

Competencies: The Master in Pre-School Education focuses on the professional specialisation of Early Childhood Teachers working with 0- to 6-year olds. Despite the course descriptor (*educação pré-escolar* corresponds to the 3-6 sector), the entity that formally evaluates and accredits higher education courses in Portugal, the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (*Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior – A3ES*) has been emphasising the need to reinforce the education/training of educators for working in infant/toddler centres. The competencies that the prospective Early Childhood Teacher needs to develop are closely aligned to the general and specific professional profile of the Early Childhood Teacher (Decree-Law 241/2001, 30 August, annex 1). For example, the intended general learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) of the Master in Pre-School Education of School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto are: (1) To mobilise scientific, pedagogical and cultural knowledge in the design, development and evaluation of a curricular project; (2) To organise the educational environment in its various pedagogical dimensions; (3) To encourage the development of positive and stimulating interactions with children; (4) To develop systematic participant observation and regulatory reflection (about contexts, processes and learning outcomes); (5) To plan and evaluate educational activities that are adequate for the development of integrated learning, considering strategies of pedagogical differentiation; (6) To develop strategies of collaborative and team work; (7) To promote actions that will facilitate continuity of learning (with families, community and other different levels of education); (8) To problematise the demands of professional practice in a grounded, reflexive and ethical way, considering a lifelong learning approach.

Curriculum: Decree-Law 79/2014 prescribes the following distribution of ECTS points for each of the four education/training components: (i) *Teaching*: a minimum of 6 ECTS points; (ii) *General education*: a minimum of 6 ECTS points; (iii) *Subject-specific didactics*: a minimum of 24 ECTS points; (iv) *Initiation into professional practice*: a minimum of 39 ECTS points.

This reflects a major focus on didactic approaches towards the teaching of Portuguese, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, History and Geography of Portugal, as well as the areas of Music, Visual Arts, Drama and Physical/Motor expression.

Another key component is the *initiation into professional practice*, which covers a minimum of 43% of the overall ECTS points. This component is composed of curricular units of Supervised Educational Practice (*Prática Educativa Supervisionada*) that integrate periods of practicum in early childhood contexts (infant-toddler centres and pre-schools/ kindergartens) (see *Section 4*

for further information on this component). The plan of studies also integrates a curricular unit on Methods of Research in Education that intends to support the candidate teachers' learning in the contexts of practice. In most cases, a curricular unit of Childhood Pedagogy or Early Childhood Education Methodology is also allocated to the plan of studies.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The curricular units of Supervised Educational Practice constitute the core of this cycle of studies, fuelled and supported by other curricular units, namely the subject-specific didactics. The practicum periods aim for the construction of professional knowledge, competences and attitudes, and are sustained by active and heuristic-hermeneutic methodologies: observation, supported experimentation, dialogue, and reflection. Research processes are valued throughout the professional preparation that encompass simultaneously several hours at the workplace and theoretical-practical classes at the higher education institution. A triadic model of supervision is frequently used, involving the prospective Early Childhood Teacher, the cooperating educator and the supervisor of higher education, aiming at stimulating students' critical and reflexive analysis and the articulation between theory and practice.

Master in Pre-School and Primary Education (*Mestrado em Educação Pré-Escolar e Ensino do 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico*)

Competencies: The course of study for the professional Master is of two years' duration (four semesters) and focuses on the professional specialisation for both early childhood and primary education. The competencies to be developed by the prospective Early Childhood Teacher/Primary Teacher are closely aligned to the professional profile (Decree-Law 241/2001, 30 August) of the Early Childhood Teacher (annex 1) and the Primary Teacher (annex 2).

Curriculum: Decree-Law 79/2014 prescribes the following distribution of ECTS points for each of the four education/training components: (1) *Teaching*: a minimum of 18 ECTS points; (2) *General education*: a minimum of 6 ECTS points; (3) *Subject-specific didactics*: a minimum of 36 ECTS points; (4) *Initiation into professional practice*: a minimum of 48 ECTS points. Once again, subject-specific didactics (Portuguese, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, History and Geography of Portugal, and the areas of Arts and Movement Expression) and the initiation into professional practice (curricular units of supervised educational practice carried out in pre-schools and primary schools) constitute the core of the plan of studies. This plan also integrates curricular units specifically designed for each of the educational levels included in this course of study. The plan of studies integrates a curricular unit on Methods of Research in Education that intends to support the candidate teachers' learning in the contexts of practice.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The pedagogic-didactic approaches are of the same nature as those that characterise the Master in Pre-School Education.

Special Education Teacher (*docente de educação especial*)

Competencies: As described in *Section 3*, the Special Education Teacher must possess a higher education degree in teaching and a specialised training course in special education (*Diploma de curso de formação especialisada em educação especial*). The legal framework for this specialised training defines the following main objective: to qualify for the tasks of support, accompaniment and socio-educational support to individuals with special educational needs. It also specifies competencies in the following domains: (1) critical analysis; (2) intervention; (3) training, supervision and assessment; and, (4) consulting.

Curriculum: The courses have a minimum of 250 contact hours, comprising three training components: (1) General training in the educational sciences (maximum 20% of total contact hours); this component must encompass, among others, contents relating to research in edu-

cation; (2) Specific training in special education (minimum 60% of total content hours); and, (3) Elaboration, development and evaluation of a project in the domain of special education.

Pedagogic-didactic approaches: The organisation of these courses should privilege a scientific and pedagogical approach and not a merely technical or administrative approach. Each course should take into consideration the specificity of the education levels in which the professionals work. Components (1) and (2) focus on different aspects of theoretical-practical issues. Component (3) represents an important approach, aiming at the development of project-related research activities by the candidates that result in a report subjected to public discussion before a jury. The conception, implementation and evaluation of the projects are recognised as an opportunity for linking the three components of the specialisation course and for the development of research competences by the candidates.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Since the Decree-Law 79/2014 came into force, the exclusive entry requirement for a Master's degree in teaching is a completed three-year Bachelor's degree in Basic Education. There are no other pathways of access. The professionals that hold a three-year or four-year Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, i.e. all professionals who qualified as Early Childhood Teachers before the Bologna Process, are formally recognised as fully qualified early childhood core practitioners. This has led to a scenario of coexistence of different levels of qualification within the profession, with 13.1% of core professionals holding a three-year bachelor's degree, 81.8% a four-year bachelor's degree or equivalent, and 5.1% a master's or doctoral degree (see Table 2). This also means that there is a growing tendency for younger practitioners to hold higher qualifications.

Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualifications frameworks

The Career Statute of Pre-school, Basic and Secondary Teachers (*Estatuto da Carreira Docente dos Educadores de Infância e dos Professores dos Ensinos Básico e Secundário*) (Decree-Law n. 139-A/90, 28 April, subjected to several amendments until the present day) establishes the following formal requirements for career progression: length of service; performance assessment (minimum qualitative assessment: "Good"); the successful completion of continuous education/ training or specialised courses (a minimum of 25 or 50 hours, depending on the career echelon). In some career echelons, class observations are required for progression to the next level, which also depends on whether or not a vacancy exists. In spite of these opportunities stated by law, the career progression in public posts has stagnated since 2011 as a result of austerity measures.

The career progression of educators working in the 0-3 sector is not subjected to the same requirements and is dependent on the decisions of the employers.

Options for men and women with non-specialist qualifications (career changers)

For those who have no specialist qualification, the options are limited to the completion of a higher education degree. Since 2015, it is also possible to obtain a formal authorisation for working as a childminder/ nanny if the candidate possesses an upper secondary education diploma and completes short term units of training from the National Qualifications Catalogue in the domain of support services for children and youth. Auxiliary staff that worked in an infant-toddler centre (*creche*) during a minimum period of one year over the last two years can also become a childminder.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

At the Master's level, the curricular area of *Initiation into Professional Practice* is called Supervised Teaching Practice (*prática de ensino supervisionada*). This component is organised around the following principles (Art. 11): "(a) Includes the observation and collaboration in education and teaching situations and the supervised practice in the activity room or classroom, in early childhood education institutions or in schools; (b) Provides experiences of planning, teaching and assessment to the trainees, according to the functions that are attributed to the teacher, inside and outside the classroom; (c) is carried out in groups or classes of the different levels and cycles of studies that are covered by the recruitment group for which the cycle of studies prepares; it should, if possible, be carried out in more than one establishment of education and teaching that is integrated, or not, in the same school cluster or in the same titular entity, in the case of particular or cooperative teaching; (d) is conceived in an education/ training perspective focused on the articulation between knowledge and the way of transmitting it, aiming learning; (e) is conceived in a perspective of professional development of trainees and promotes an attitude oriented towards the permanent improvement of their students' learning" (Decree-Law 79/2014, Art. 11, 2821).

ECTS points and duration: The number of ECTS points allocated to this curricular component is specified in Decree-Law 79/2014. Thus, higher education institutions must take into account the following specifications:

- Bachelor in Basic Education - a minimum of 15 ECTS points (divided among different age levels, including formal and non-formal educational settings);
- Master in Pre-School Education - a minimum of 39 ECTS points (divided between infant-toddler institutions and pre-schools);
- Master in Pre-School and Primary Education - a minimum of 48 ECTS points (expectedly divided between the two education levels).

The organisational logic behind this distribution is to reinforce practicum experiences in the final stage of education/ training of prospective Early Childhood Teachers. Departing from these ECTS specifications, each higher education institution establishes the number of hours and overall organisation of time blocks. Generally, at the level of Master's programmes, the students spend three or four days per week (five hours a day, in most cases) in ECEC centres and one or two days per week in IPS institutions, attending classes (theoretical-practical; tutorial meetings; seminars).

Cooperation between IPS institutions and ECEC centres: The national legal framework (Decree Law 79/2014) also establishes the conditions for the cooperation between the IPS institutions and ECEC centres, designated as cooperating schools (*escolas cooperantes*). It states the need for a formal, multi-annual cooperation protocol between the two institutions. This protocol should include the following (Art. 22): (a) Levels and cycles of education and teaching in which Supervised Teaching Practice is carried out; (b) Named cooperating supervisors (*orientadores cooperantes*) and any compensatory payments made available to the cooperating ECEC centre; (c) Number of places available for students; (d) Roles, responsibilities and competences of all stakeholders, including students; (e) Conditions for the 'supervised teaching practice' in the activity rooms, always in the presence of the cooperating supervisor; (f) Conditions for the participation of students in other curricular and organisational development activities outside the activity room, provided that they are supported by cooperating supervisors; (g) Counterparts made available to the cooperating schools by the higher education institution.

Students' learning and assessment: Decree-Law 79/2014 does not specify the skills and competencies students are expected to develop in the workplace. However, the principles inherent to the education/ training component of Initiation into Professional Practice emphasise the importance of observation, planning, teaching, assessing and collaboration processes throughout the practicum experiences. Also, these principles stress the focus on children's learning

through the articulation between knowledge and the way of *transmitting it* (sic) and state the importance of adopting a perspective of professional development.

Students' self-assessment can include a variety of forms such as oral and written reflexion (individually or collaboratively), field-based journals, portfolios, etc. The responsibility for the students' external assessment is attributed to the teacher that is responsible for the curricular unit of Supervised Teaching Practice, integrating information provided by the cooperating supervisor and the pedagogical director/coordinator. The students' assessment must also encompass a practicum report subjected to public presentation and discussion before a jury.

Mentoring/ supervising staff: The same decree-law establishes the criteria for selecting cooperating supervisors. These should be selected by the higher education institution, following the previous acceptance on the part of the cooperating supervisor and the direction of the cooperating institution. Furthermore, the cooperating supervisor should possess appropriate training and experience taking into consideration the demanded functions; possess a minimum of five years of professional practice in ECEC contexts and, preferably, post-graduate studies in early childhood education, specialised training in pedagogical supervision and professional experience in supervision. The legal framework does not specify time allocation for supervision/ mentoring activities. In some cases, this specification is registered in the cooperation protocol and can vary across institutions.

The cooperating supervisors are not remunerated for their work as practicum supervisors. The higher education institution is requested to pay the travel expenses of the cooperating supervisor whenever there is a need to participate in education/ training activities and seminars, and to collaborate with the cooperating schools in the professional development of its Early Childhood Teachers, especially the other cooperating supervisors.

Recent reforms: Regarding the new legal framework that regulates teacher qualifications, critique has emerged in terms of the way it conceptualises workplace-based learning (in comparison with the previous framework, Decree-Law 43/2007), particularly the endorsement of a more transmission-oriented perspective and the elimination of the importance attributed to the development of a critical and reflexive attitude by the candidate Early Childhood Teachers.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The Portuguese Education Act recognises continuing professional development as a right for all educators and teachers and emphasises its importance in complementing and updating initial professional studies within a perspective of permanent education. It also states the need for in-service education to be sufficiently diversified in order to ensure this complementary role of deepening and updating professional knowledge and competences, as well as enabling career mobility and progression.

Specific framework for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel: In 2014, a new national legal framework for continuing teacher education/ training, Decree-Law 22/2014, came into force (see Section 6). Concerning early childhood education, this new legal framework regulates the CPD of the 3-6 sector (with the exception of private institutions not affiliated to school clusters). There is no national or regional framework for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel working in the 0-3 sector and of non-qualified co-workers.

Main forms of CPD: Decree-Law 22/2014 considers the following forms of continuing education/ training for core practitioners: education/ training courses (*cursos de formação*), workshops (*oficinas de formação*), study circles (*circulos de estudos*), short-term activities (*ações de curta duração*), professional placements (*estágio*) and projects (*projeto*). Independently of their form, these activities must be accredited by the Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-Service Training (SPCIST) (*Conselho Científico-Pedagógico de Formação Contínua*).

Other CPD activities can include specialised courses in higher education institutions (also accredited by the SPCIST), congresses, seminars, and research activities that confer a higher education degree (academic master or doctoral studies).

Leave entitlement specifications: For Early Childhood Teachers working in the 3-6 sector (public, and private and social solidarity settings affiliated to a public school cluster), the leaves for CPD activities developed by the central and regional services or by the school clusters are granted during working hours, preferably during non-contact time. For CPD activities initiated by the Early Childhood Teacher, leaves may not exceed five consecutive days or eight intercalated days per school year. For these early childhood educators, a one-year special leave (*licença sabática*) can be authorised in order to participate in continuing education/ training activities, complete specialised courses or develop applied research. The authorisation is dependent on the following conditions: having a permanent post, having a performance assessment equal or superior to 'Good' and working uninterruptedly as an Early Childhood Teacher for a minimum of eight years.

Leave entitlements for the 0-3 sector are dependent on the authorisations of employers.

Access opportunities to CPD/costs: CPD activities are obligatory for Early Childhood Teachers working in 3-6 public sector, influencing performance assessment and career progression. In this case, 50% of continuous CPD activities must focus on the scientific and pedagogic dimension and at least one fifth of those activities must be accredited by the Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-Service Training. These CPD activities are free of charge for the Early Childhood Teacher. The costs for the remaining CPD activities, including Master's and doctoral studies, are usually covered by practitioners.

The most regular problem regarding access opportunities to CPD, both for core practitioners and for qualified and non-qualified co-workers, is the lack of specific opportunities for ECE continuing education/ training. When available, the most common difficulty is associated with the need to ensure a temporary replacement, given the shortage of staff.

Main providers of CPD: The main providers of CPD across the country are the education/ training centres from school clusters, higher education institutions, the education/ training centres of non-profit professional or scientific associations, central services of the Ministry of Education, and other accredited non-profit public, private or cooperative entities. According to the last report of the Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-Service Training, in December 2016 there were 275 accredited providers: 92 education/ training centres from schools clusters; 103 higher education institutions; 52 education/ training centres from non-profit professional or scientific associations; and 28 other entities (Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua 2016).

Specific conditions: The participation in specific forms of CPD can benefit the Early Childhood Teacher at the level of career progression: the completion of a Master's degree reduces by one year the time legally demanded of permanence in a given professional echelon. The completion of doctoral studies reduces that time by two years. In both cases, the degree must be completed in a scientific area directly related to the early childhood education, including Educational Sciences. Also, the result of teacher performance assessment must be at least 'Good'.

Specific qualification for heads of ECEC provision is not required. Institutions of higher education offer specialisation courses accredited by the SPCIST in domains such as School Organisation, Education Organisation, and Pedagogical Supervision and Training of Trainers, that can better prepare professionals for leadership roles. Master's and doctoral degrees in these areas are also offered in several higher education institutions. Shorter continuing education/ training activities are available in the following areas: School Administration and Educational Administration, and Leadership, Coordination and Pedagogical Supervision.

Further available courses on topics related to ECEC work may include: (i) specialised courses in higher education institutions: special education, sociocultural activities, educational orientation and education inspection; (ii) shorter continuing education/ training sessions in the four

subject domains that constitute the core of Early Childhood Teachers' education/ training (Portuguese, Mathematics, Environmental (Physical and Social) Studies, Art-related and Physical Expression), pedagogical practice and didactics, ethics and deontology, applied technologies of information and communication.

Current reforms/trends/debates: The current system of CPD for Early Childhood Teachers has been criticised for its lack of specificity and mismatch between the provided offer and the real needs of ECEC professionals and institutions. The previous Portuguese report for the SEEPRO project already stated that only a few in-service sessions were specifically designed for pre-school education needs (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2008). A report of the National Education Council (Afonso, Folque, Bragança, and Sucena 2013), also noted that the association between the CPD system and career progression (namely the mandatory number of accredited training hours each year, in order to guarantee career progress) may have led to a tendency to access CPD initiatives not predominantly for professional development motives. This report stated the need to rethink CPD in the context of profound social, cultural and political changes, namely the context of economic and financial crisis, the retraction of public investment, the stagnation of careers progression in recent years, the new priorities of educational policy, the changes in the social representation of the teaching profession, the diminishing number of teaching posts and the decrease in demand for both pre-service and in-service education. Following some of the recommendations stated in this report, Decree-Law 22/2014 defined a new paradigm for continuing education/ training in order to foster a higher level of contextualisation, specificity and alignment with the real needs of ECEC professionals and institutions.

In spite of this amendment to the legal framework for the 3-6 sector, the lack of specificity of CPD initiatives for ECEC professionals still needs to be addressed and a more contextualised and participatory ethos strengthened.

Particularly critical is the scarcity of CPD opportunities for the 0-3 sector, with the exception of some activities carried out by professional associations, especially the Association of Professionals of Early Childhood Education (*Associação de Profissionais de Educação de Infância – APEI*). The severity of these circumstances is magnified by the visible social need around the 0-3 sector, motivating significant expansion of the ECEC network for children up to 3 years of age over the last decade (from 25% to 49.9% of national coverage, according to the latest report of the Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security in 2014) and a corresponding need regarding the professionalisation of early childhood educators for this particular sector. Moreover, the CPD needs of non-qualified co-workers should also be seen as a matter of concern and public investment.

Finally, research focusing on the CPD activities for ECEC staff and their impact is very scarce, particularly large-scale research projects.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

In this section, three recent national policy reforms will be presented, regarding different aspects that affect ECEC staffing: initial teacher education, continuing professional development and family day care (child minders).

Decree-Law 79/2014, May 2014

This decree-law approves the legal framework for the professional qualifications of teachers working at the pre-primary, basic and secondary education levels. It constitutes a revised version of the Decree-Law 43/2007, February 2014, that laid down the requirements for initial

teacher education/ training within the fundamental changes in the organisation of Portuguese higher education brought about by the Bologna Process.

Decree-Law 79/2014 maintains the sequential model adopted in 2007, comprising a three-year Bachelor's degree in Basic Education followed by a professional Master's degree in different specialties (see *Section 3*). Concerning the initial qualifying routes of Early Childhood Teachers, this revised framework reinforces the qualification in two education/ training components, subject-specific didactics and initiation into professional practice, by increasing the duration of the cycles of studies and of the relative weighting given to each of these components. The following table presents the differences in relation to the previous legal framework.

Table 8

Portugal: Changes in the legal requirements for the professional qualification of Early Childhood Teachers

	Master in Pre-School Education	
	DL (Decree-Law) 43/2007	DL 79/2014
Duration of degree studies/ ECTS points	2 semesters/ 60 ECTS points	3 semesters/ 90 ECTS points
Weighting of education/ training components	Subject-specific didactics: 15 to 20 ECTS points Initiation into Professional Practice: 30 to 35 ECTS points	Subject-specific didactics: minimum of 24 ECTS points Initiation into Professional Practice: minimum of 39 ECTS points
	Master in Pre-School and Primary Education	
	DL 43/2007	DL 79/2014
Duration of degree studies/ ECTS points	3 semesters/ 90 ECTS points	4 semesters/ 120 ECTS points
Weighting of education/ training components	Subject-specific didactics: 25 to 30 ECTS points Initiation into Professional Practice: 40 to 45 ECTS points	Subject-specific didactics: minimum of 36 ECTS points Initiation into Professional Practice: minimum of 48 ECTS points

Decree-Law 79/2014 also introduces mechanisms for establishing the number of students admitted each year to Bachelor's and Master's degrees, in order for a better adjustment between the education/ training offer and the demands of the education system.

Over the years, a number of critical issues have been voiced as a result of the changes to the initial education/ training studies motivated by the Bologna Process and maintained in Decree-Law 79/2014. In the case of Early Childhood Teachers, the professional Master's degree courses continue to use the term 'pre-school', which in Portugal, according to the Education Act, refers to the education of 3- to 6-year old children. This neglects the education of the under 3-year olds, at least at the level of the adopted nomenclature. Another salient criticism refers to the substantial decrease in the number of hours dedicated to Supervised Teaching Practice. Despite the increase in the number of ECTS points from DL 43/2007 to DL 79/2014 (see *Table 8*) the current amount continues to represent a reduction in comparison with the pre-Bologna curricular organisation (Horta 2015). The shift of focus from the promotion of a critical and reflexive attitude to an approach aiming to improve students' performativity/outcomes has also been criticised (Lopo 2016). Further issues are related to the dilution of the cultural, social and ethical dimension of IPS (Tomás, Vilarinho, Homem, Sarmiento, and Folque 2015), as well as the less visible role of research in education, which could suggest a move towards a more instrumental view of the teaching activity (Lopo 2016).

Decree-Law 22/2014, February 2014

Decree-Law 22/2014 establishes the legal framework for the continuing professional development of teachers and defines the system of coordination, management and support, mainly

for the public sector provision of ECEC (3-6). Based on identified needs of the field, the National Education Council produced a set of recommendations, namely: the need for CPD to be centred on professional practice; the promotion of stronger cooperation between ECEC settings, education/training centres, higher education institutions, pedagogical associations and trade unions; the involvement and participation of Early Childhood Teachers in the preparation and implementation of planning strategies; the need for a more robust link to professional development activities and less to career progression; the need to reinforce CPD activities for pedagogical leaders, and the need to extend it to unemployed professionals or those who have precarious employment conditions (Afonso, Folque, Bragança, and Sucena 2013).

Decree Law 22/2014 foresees the establishment of a new paradigm for this system based on seven principles: “(a) Promoting the improvement of teaching quality and the outcomes of the educational system; (b) Contextualising education/ training projects and provision; (c) Relating to the needs and priorities of schools and teachers; (d) Prioritising the scientific and pedagogical dimensions; (e) Maintaining the scientific and pedagogical autonomy of the education/ training entities; (f) Strengthening institutional cooperation between basic and secondary education establishments, higher education institutions and scientific and professional associations; (g) Promoting a culture of monitoring and evaluation oriented towards the improvement of the quality of the education/ training system” (1287). Besides these principles, the decree-law regulates different aspects of CPD: aims; domains; modalities; duration; mandatory activities; education/ training entities; accreditation and qualifications of educators/ trainers; rights and duties of trainees; processes of accreditation and certification; evaluation, recognition, certification and monitoring; competences and composition of the Scientific and Pedagogical Council of In-Service Training; role of the inspection system; and guidance and support for continuing education/ training activities.

Decree-Law 115/2015, 22 June

Although family day care and family day care personnel are not a focus of this report, recent reforms in this area have implications for the overall professionalisation of the early childhood field in Portugal - and are therefore included here. DL 115/2015 establishes the terms and conditions for becoming a registered childminder/nanny (*ama*). The need for a focus on the activity of childminders/nannies was pointed out in documents by the National Education Council (CNE n.d., Vasconcelos 2011): (i) for a progressive professionalisation of the work of *amas*, recognising their right to a specified education/ training and to a career; (ii) to guarantee support and monitoring of their activities by specialised Early Childhood Teachers; and, (iii) to update the legal framework. DL 115/2015 states that the law amendment intends “to expand the network of *amas* and strengthen their training, qualification and monitoring” (4352) and at the same time, aims to impact positively on children’s developmental paths and ensure a better reconciliation between family and working life.

One of the major changes determined by this new legal framework is the liberalisation of the *amas* activity, which is no longer technically and financially framed by the Institute of Social Security (*Instituto da Segurança Social*), a dependency of the Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security. The *ama* activity is now carried out within a framing institution (namely private social solidarity institutions) or through the direct contractualisation of services with parents or others who have parental responsibilities.

Among other specificities, DL 115/2015 determines that access to the profession is determined by formal authorisation on the part of the Institute of Social Security. The authorisation is dependent on a set of requirements and conditions. These mainly relate to the professional (e.g. minimum age, compulsory schooling, health conditions), but requirements are also established in terms of the home environment. The candidate does not have to attend the required short-term units of training from the National Qualifications Catalogue in two instances: possession of a higher education degree in early childhood education or work experience in an infant-toddler centre (*creche*) during a minimum period of one year over the past two years. The

rights and duties of the *ama*, conditions for the effective exercise of the activity, and the compliance system applicable to this activity are also laid down in this new legal framework.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Praxeological research and context-based teacher education

Source: Oliveira-Formosinho, J. and J. Formosinho. 2012. (see *References* for details).

Background: The research overview is presented in a special issue of the EECERA journal focusing on praxeological research and its potential in the struggle for participative practices within classrooms and children's centres, and for social justice in early childhood education. Three articles from Portuguese authors address these premises: Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2012, Araújo 2012 and Mesquita-Pires 2012. The articles share a common link between praxeological research and context-based teacher education, which has been influencing transformative early years projects developed in Portugal over the past 20 years.

Aims: The article by Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho (2012) aims to present praxeological research as an alternative "for the change of pedagogical praxis, the transformation of educational contexts and the construction of empirical knowledge about complex educational realities." (591). Araújo (2012) and Mesquita-Pires (2012) present pragmatic illustrations of this potential. Araújo's study departed from the following research questions: (i) What are the main contents and processes that characterise a context-based teacher education process in education and care contexts for toddlers? (ii) What are the effects of a context-based teacher education process on the professional learning of Early Childhood Teachers? (iii) What are the effects of a context-based teacher education process on the well-being and involvement and learning experiences of children? Mesquita-Pires' study presented a central question: Which professional development strategies support educational transformation for the construction of children's participation and voice in their own learning? Mesquita-Pires aimed to identify relevant problems in a specific context, in which educators and the researcher engaged collaboratively to gather and organise relevant knowledge, analyse data and design interventions for change.

Procedure: Araújo's study was developed in an infant-toddler centre and encompassed three phases: an initial phase of multimethod evaluation of the quality of activity rooms, followed by a second phase that encompassed a context-based teacher education process centred on the transformation of quality through processes of experimentation and reflection. The third phase involved a multimethod evaluation of effects of the context-based teacher education process. Throughout the research process, three observation systems were used in a triangulated way: a narrative observation system, a category observation system and a technological observation system. Mesquita-Pires's research was developed in a pre-school institution. A single case study in the context of an action-research process was developed, centred on a cyclical process of thinking-doing-thinking. These cycles involved different interconnected phases: (i) a flexible plan; (ii) act; (iii) reflect; (iv) evaluate/ validate (describe and analyse the data, evaluate decisions and the observed effects); (v) dialogue in order to share the view with other partners (colleagues, or others). Effective Early Learning project research techniques were mainly used for data collection, which was systematically organised in a research portfolio.

Findings: The results of Araújo's project pointed out the positive effects of context-based teacher education process on the professional learning of Early Childhood Teachers, associated with a positive evolution of the quality of activity rooms. Positive effects were also identified at the level of children's well-being, involvement, quantity and equilibrium of learning experienc-

es. Mesquita-Pires's study showed the positive effects of a context-based staff development approach in the transformation of practices and on children learning and participation. According to the author, the reconceptualisation of the image of the child was a key for children's right to participate and a professional motivation for educators to change practices.

A participatory process of developing a recommendation on the education of children from birth to three

Source: Vasconcelos, T. 2013. (see *References* for details)

Aims: The article provides an analysis of the participatory process that led in 2011 to the approval by the Portuguese National Education Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*) of a set of recommendations to the government concerning the education of children from birth to three years of age, a process with a very relevant potential impact on the ECEC workforce in provision for children in 0-3 contexts.

Procedure: Based on documentary analysis and international research, the article stresses the importance of investing in early years, and specifically in 0-3, and describes the participatory process of developing the public statement on *Recommendations for Children from Zero to Three*. It also analyses the eleven recommendations to the government by the National Education Council's rapporteur, Teresa Vasconcelos, concerning several aspects related to the education of children in infant-toddler centres and settings provided by *amas*.

Findings: The article makes some important final remarks, pointing out the severe incoherence between the National Education Council's recommendations and legal initiatives from the government that represent a significant setback in what concerns the rights *for the youngest of our citizens*, as stated by Vasconcelos.

The role of participatory educational teams in promoting equity

Source: Formosinho, J. and I. Figueiredo. 2014. (see *References* for details)

This project was selected because it reports on research that is very scarce in Portugal: the role of educational teams and, within these, the role of educational assistants (auxiliary staff).

Aims: This study investigated the role of empowered educational teams in the development of quality and equity in early years. The main objective was to understand what it meant to work in a team in this particular context and to evaluate the quality of the educators' and the assistants' pedagogical mediation regarding their interaction as a team and with the children. Another objective was to study the consistency of their professional action, especially in regard to the image of the child, the image of the adult and the role of the situated development of learners' identities.

Procedure: The research was praxeological, centred on investigating praxis. It followed an intervention throughout four years that promoted the situated learning of the educational assistants using context-based professional education. The educational assistants were supported in their professional development by the respective Early Childhood Teacher and by a pedagogical supervisor. Data were collected through structured observations using the Adult Engagement Scale (Laevers 1994), ethnographic type observations, field notes taken during observations, photos and semi-structured interviews with all Early Childhood Teachers and educational assistants involved. The congruence of the research findings were supported and validated through triangulating information gathered from various instruments and participants.

Findings: Results showed that participatory educational teams develop more effective pedagogical and interactive skills and are more likely to reach out, in a spirit of equity and social justice, to disadvantaged children and families. In addition, participatory pedagogy and the involvement of every child in the co-construction of her own learning journey, are powerful motivators and an important contribution to overcoming passivity in the face of adversity. The study stressed that the building of participatory educational teams is critical to achieving the child's right to quality education and for policy development.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

In what concerns remuneration, there are differences between core practitioners working both in the public sector (3-6) and in the private sector (non-profit social solidarity or for-profit), either in 3-6 or 0-3. This disparity is due to the split system that characterises ECEC provision in Portugal (see *Section 1*). This division leads to differences in the financing systems of each Ministry and the practitioners' salaries. The salaries of Early Childhood Teachers working in the public sector depend on the professional echelons established in the Career Statute of Pre-school, Basic and Secondary Teachers. This statute establishes the same echelons, remuneration rates and career progression requirements for all teaching professionals in the public sector (from pre-school to secondary education). Since the launching of the Framework Law of Pre-School Education, Law no. 5/1997, 10 February (*Lei Quadro da Educação Pré-Escolar*), the Ministry of Education stated the intention to provide identical professional conditions for early childhood educators working in the private sector. This was materialised through a salary supplement provided by the Ministry of Education for these professionals, in order to reduce the disparities between the two sectors. In spite of this initiative, remuneration differences still persist.

In the case of posts of responsibility, the Centre Heads in the public sector have a reduction in the number of working hours. In the non-profit private sector, a higher salary is paid to the Technical Director/ Pedagogical Director (close to 10% more). Student mentors receive no monetary reward.

8.2 Full-time/part-time employment and working hours, non-contact hours

The vast majority of Portuguese Early Childhood Teachers work full time. In spite of the absence of data on this specific issue, part-time employment is a rare occurrence among ECEC staff. The most recent amendment to the General Law on Labour in Public Functions allows for part-time employment (*meia jornada*). The Early Childhood Teachers can benefit in the following cases: (i) If they are 55 years of age or older and have grandchildren under the age of 12; (ii) If they have children under 12 years of age or, regardless of age, with a disability or chronic illness.

Working hours may differ between the public and private sectors. Early childhood educators working in the public sector work 35 hours per week: 25 hours are dedicated to direct work with children (*componente letiva*) and ten hours consist of non-contact time dedicated to planning, staff meetings, work with parents and the community, research and CPD activities, etc. As for the Early Childhood Teachers working in the private sector, the number of working hours can vary. In general, those working in private non-profit institutions work the same number of hours as Early Childhood Teachers in the public sector. The professionals working in private for profit centres tend to work more hours than the educators working in the other sectors.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

An induction period to support novice Early Childhood Teachers at the beginning of their professional activity is established in Portuguese law. Meanwhile, some concerns and debates have arisen concerning the induction period. This issue was recently addressed by the National Council on Education through a technical report that reunited national and international perspectives in order to contribute towards a deeper reflection on the nature and models of the induction period (Faria, Rodrigues, Gregório, and Ferreira 2016). In Portugal, the induction period was translated into the probationary period, corresponding to one year, mandatory for

all Early Childhood Teachers entering a permanent post in the public sector. According to the Career Statute of Pre-primary, Basic and Secondary Teachers, the probationary period aims at verifying the teacher's competencies regarding the required professional profile; it is carried out in the educational setting in which the (pre-school) teacher is employed. This probationary period does not exist for those Early Childhood Teachers working in the private sector.

Besides some initiatives from professional associations, particularly the *Movimento da Escola Moderna*, there is no organised system of on-site mentoring or regional networking in place aimed at improving the quality of the professional work.

8.4 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Over the last years, a particularly severe shortage at the level of auxiliary staff (*assistentes operacionais*) was identified in the public sector, one of the effects of the financial crises and austerity measures. This led to a recent decision by the Ministry of Education to recruit 1,500 professionals during the school year of 2017/2018 and an additional 500 professionals throughout the school year of 2018/2019, establishing two priorities: pre-schools/kindergartens and special education services. The new ordinance reviews the ratios on pre-schools, establishing one auxiliary assistant per group of pre-school children (25 children in most cases).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

In the past decades, Portugal has experienced contradictory tendencies concerning public investment in the ECEC workforce. Following the massive attention it received in the 1990s, the workforce has been faced with major setbacks during recent years due to the economic crises and austerity measures, which have had a particularly pervasive impact at the level of social and educational policies. These circumstances contribute to shape Portugal's workforce challenges in the near future and in a longer-term perspective. Particularly critical are the following.

The challenge of increasing public investment in the 0-3 sector: Over the last decade, a major investment was made in the expansion of the 0-3 sector. However, this sector continues to be governed by the Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security and is not part of the Portuguese education system. The integration of ECEC services for children under 3 into the education system, under the governance of the Ministry of Education, needs to be viewed as a priority at the level of education policy, in alignment with a tendency towards integration that can be observed in several countries (OECD 2017). The lack of a national pedagogical framework, as well as the highly bureaucratic system of quality monitoring that is nowadays implemented in infant-toddler centres, are features of the system that should also be reviewed. In the 0-3 sector, the fragile pre-service and in-service education/training of professionals should also be addressed considering its influence in the qualification of this sector.

The challenge for a more specifically integrated and contextualised pre-service and in-service education/training of the ECEC workforce: At the level of Early Childhood Teachers' pre-service education, a major challenge is represented by the post-Bologna model that accentuates a disciplinary logic, creating a tension within a professional culture that is intrinsically integrated. Also, the induction period should be carefully monitored in order to truly constitute a locus of professional development. As for CPD opportunities, they should, as recommended in *Section 5*, be increasingly contextualised, specific and aligned with the real needs of ECEC professionals and institutions. Finally, an organised system of on-site mentoring or regional networking aimed at improving the quality of professional work should be carefully considered.

The initial and in-service education of *amas* and auxiliary staff should also be given higher priority on the early years policy agenda.

Demographic challenges: The very low birth rate registered over the last years has consequences with a direct impact in ECEC workforce. Another policy challenge is related to the ageing of Early Childhood Teachers (and the teaching profession in general). This issue has been identified in several reports as one of major concern in the Portuguese educational context (e.g. Conselho Nacional de Educação 2015; DGEEC 2016; Faria, Rodrigues, Gregório, and Ferreira 2016) and is primarily due to the rise in the retirement age. This also creates a difficult situation for employing younger Early Childhood Teachers.

Investing in research initiatives focussing on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues also presents a challenge. Another area where more research is needed concerns the close monitoring of the impact of education policies implemented in the field.

The challenge to create a robust ECEC culture: This can be perceived as an integrative challenge that encompasses all the challenges mentioned above, overlapping some other major areas of focus: the need to rethink observation, planning, action, assessment/evaluation in the context of a participatory and collaborative ethos; the needed respect for the idiosyncratic culture and identity of ECEC, and the struggle to avoid colonisation through a transmission-oriented and technocratic culture; the need for permanent and strong advocacy for ECEC professionals' societal and professional status and rights.

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PORTUGAL

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Sara Barros Araújo
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Portugal – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 917-929.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Portugal is organised in two separate sectors. Pre-primary education for 3- to 6-year olds is anchored in legislation since 1986 as the first stage in the education system and comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*). The Ministry is responsible for the funding, supervision/inspection and the curricular framework for pre-primary education. Settings in the childcare sector for children below 3 years of age are not part of the education system. They come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (*Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social*).

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

The rights of all persons to education are anchored in the Portuguese constitution, regardless of gender, race, language, religion, political-ideological views or sexual orientations.

The main goals of **pre-primary education** are: promoting the children's personal and social development, supporting integration into different social groups, fostering communicative competence and critical thinking and guaranteeing equality of opportunity. Additional key aspects are the children's well-being, their safety, identifying special needs and supporting parents in the educational process. Early childhood education is viewed as complementary to parental education and close cooperation with parents is strongly emphasised.

This close cooperation is anchored in the 1997 Law on Preschool Education (*Lei Quadro da Educação Pré-Escolar* 1997), which also defines pre-primary education as the first stage in the education system. The 1986 Basic Education Law (*Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*, 1986 with amendments up to 2009) defines the pre-primary stage as starting at age 3 up to school entry and states that this education should take place in kindergartens.

Goals for the **childcare sector** for under-threes emphasise supporting parents in combining their work and family duties. Infant-toddler centres adopt a social-educational and needs-oriented approach towards children and are responsible for providing a safe environment.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Enrolment in ECEC provision is not compulsory in Portugal. Since 2009, 5-year olds are entitled to pre-primary education of at least one year's duration. In 2016/17, this entitlement was extended to 4-year olds. Inclusion of 3-year olds is expected to follow in 2019.

Statutory primary school begins at age 6.

Sources: EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Main types of provision

Kindergartens (*jardins de infância*) for 3- to 6-year olds usually provide educational activities for approximately five hours daily, and also additional care activities and family support. Required opening hours are up to 17:30 for at least eight hours per day. Some settings have extended opening hours to better accommodate parental needs.

In order to reach children in rural or isolated areas, **mobile early childhood education** (*educação pré-escolar itinerante*) is provided for 3- to 5-year olds in a few cases, deploying early childhood educators in alternating locations.

Infant-toddler centres (*creches*) for children aged 4 months to 3 years decide on opening times themselves. In 2013, the majority were open from 7:00/8:00 until 18:00/20:00. On average, children spend eight hours daily in the centre.

Childminders (*amas*) also provide for children up to 3 years of age. The childminding occupation is governed by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. Minimum qualifications include a compulsory education certificate and short-term units of training in support services for children and young people. This requirement was established through a new legal framework which came into force in 2015 (Decree-Law 115/2015).

Sources: Araújo, S. Barros 2017.
EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.

Provider structures

In Portugal, a public and a private network of pre-primary settings complement one another. Private provision is both non-profit and for-profit.

In 2015, well over half of all kindergartens (61.6%) were publicly run. From a total number of 6,108 kindergartens, 3,760 were publicly owned. Of the 2,348 private kindergartens, 1,392 were private non-profit and 957 private for-profit.

Over half of age-eligible children (141,571, 53.5%) attended a public kindergarten and just below half (123,089, 46.5%) were enrolled in a privately run setting*.

All ECEC provision for under 3's is privately run (non-profit or for-profit). In 2015, there were 117,713 places in infant-toddler centres, representing an average coverage rate of 51.1% for age-eligible children. However, only 94,876 (80.6%) of these places were actually used. This can be explained by the marked demographic differences between the interior of the country (where there is an excess of places) and the large urban centres (where there is a lack of places).

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
GEP/MTSSS 2017.
*Pordata 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Over the past decade, a significant increase in the participation rates of children can be observed in both age groups (4 months to under 3 years/3 years up to school entry). Whereas in 2005, only 7% of children under age 3 were enrolled in a centre-based setting, by 2015 this proportion had increased to over 47%. Similarly, although less pronounced, the participation rates in pre-primary settings rose from 79% in 2005 to just under 90% in 2015.

Table 1

Portugal: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in % [†]
2005	1 to 29 hours	2	30
	Over 30 hours	5	49
	No attendance	93	22
2010	1 to 29 hours	1	14
	Over 30 hours	8	66
	No attendance	91	21
2015	1 to 29 hours	4.3	6.4
	Over 30 hours	42.9	83.5
	No attendance	52.8	10.1

According to national statistics, a total of 264,660 children were enrolled in a kindergarten in 2015. 16,079 members of staff were employed in these settings, of which only 0.9% were male. The participation rate of children aged 3 and above in kindergartens has risen significantly since 2000: from 73.3% to 90.9% in 2015***.

Age-disaggregated statistics show that more than three-quarters of 3-year olds are enrolled in a kindergarten, just over 90% of 4-year olds and nearly all 5-year olds (see Table 2).

Table 2

Country: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015****

Age groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	No data	
2-year olds	No data	
3-year olds	75,291	78.7
4-year olds	89,857	90.3
5-year olds	92,571	96.5
6-year olds	6,941	6.9
3- to under 6-year olds	257,719	88.5
3- to under 7-year olds	264,660	67.7

* Own calculations based on Eurostat child population data from 2015

In 2013, 46.2% of children below age 3 were enrolled in an infant-toddler centre – considerably more than double the participation rate of 18.6% in the year 2000. However, regional disparities are considerable. Participation rates tend to be higher in the northern and central coastal regions and in large towns**.

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.
****Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
**Eurydice 2016.
***Pordata 2017.

Financing and costs for parents

The funding of ECEC (pre-primary) provision is the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and the municipalities. State funding was guaranteed in 1997 and is anchored in legislation for the networks of public and private non-profit service providers. The educational programme in the public network is fully funded by the State. The private network receives government subsidies partly dependent on the level of parental earnings.

In 2012/13, private non-profit kindergartens received 101.81€ per child and month for the educational part of the programme and 62.68€ for family support services. The difference is covered by the service provider. Public kindergartens received 62.91€ for the family support part of the programme.

This means that up to five hours daily are free of charge. Additional costs for subsistence and extended hours of care have to be met by the parents.

No data are available on parental contributions for children's enrolment in an infant-toddler centre.

Sources: EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.

Staff-child ratios

Staff-child ratios vary according to the children's age, group size and the spatial environment of the setting.

Under 1 year: 5 children per staff member (maximum group size 10)
1-year olds: 7 children per staff member (maximum group size 14)
2-year olds: 9 children per staff member (maximum group size 18)
3- to 5-year olds: 12.5 children per staff member (maximum group size 25)*

In mixed-age groups the maximum group size is 25 children. Up to two children with special educational needs may be integrated into a group in a mainstream setting.

Family day carers/childminders may take in up to four children aged 4 months to 3 years.

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

Curricular guidance published in 1997 and amended in 2016 (*Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-Escolar*, OCEPE) provides the framework for the curriculum, pedagogy and organisation of learning in **kindergartens**. The following three areas are highlighted: 1) social and personal aspects, 2) expression and communication and 3) knowledge of the world. Practitioners are free to

choose the pedagogical approaches most appropriate to meeting the interests and needs of the children in their group. The Ministry of Education provides a number of brochures for supporting the staff's work with the curricular guidance.

At the time of writing, pedagogical guidelines are in preparation for work in **infant-toddler centres**. These will provide a link to the curricular guidance for pre-primary education. Each setting conducts its own pedagogical projects which provide a basis for planning and accompanying needs-oriented educational processes and include the motor, cognitive, personal, emotional and social development of the children. Nutrition, hygiene and safety aspects are also key aspects of the work with under-threes.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Since legislation passed in 2009, the support of children from birth to 6 years with special educational needs and disabilities is guaranteed through the National Early Childhood Intervention System (*Sistema Nacional de Intervenção Precoce na Infância - SNIPI*). Centrepiece of this legislation is the individualised support of all children with special educational needs and their families. The appropriate staff qualifications are also discussed. This system, under the joint coordination of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, provides services to children from birth up to 6 years of age through local resource units, in cooperation with families and professionals working in infant-toddler centres or pre-primary settings. An individual educational plan is compiled for each child with disabilities (*Plano Educativo Individual, IEP*), which includes the planned measures and evaluative aspects. These children generally are given priority when seeking a place in a kindergarten.

There are also special education services governed by the Ministry of Education that are provided by mainstream public kindergartens and schools.

A social emergency programme (*Programa de Emergência Social*) was set up in 2011 in the context of the economic crisis. This programme was operating until 2015 and its primary aim was to support disadvantaged families.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, only 3.8% of the total population had a non-Portuguese background. Almost three-quarters of these persons (72.9%) came from countries outside the European Union. Within the population under 5 years of age, 2.6% had a non-Portuguese background, with 76.2% coming from a country outside the EU28**.

In 2015, 21% of persons with a non-Portuguese background and a status as long-term residents came from Brazil. 10% of non-Portuguese nationals came from Cape Verde, 9.3% from Ukraine, 8% from Romania and 5.4% from China*.

Recently, guidance was introduced for Portuguese as an additional language in pre-primary education. An agreement has been made with Romania to provide language and cultural activities in Romanian so that these children can identify more with their heritage culture.

Sources: Araújo, S. Barros 2017.
EPIC 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.
*INE 2017, 7.
Serrano, A.M. and J. Boavida 2011.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

Overall responsibility for evaluations in the Portuguese education system lies with the General Inspectorate for Education and Science (*Inspeção-Geral da Educação e Ciência, IGEC*), the Directorate General for Education and Science Statistics (*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência, DGEEC*) and the Institute for Educational Assessment (*Instituto de Avaliação Educativa, IAVE*). IGEC provides supervision, audits and inspection in the entire education system and also makes recommendations for quality improvement.

The Ministry of Education issues guidelines for assessment in the **pre-primary sector** and funds an external evaluation study which provides indications of the effects of the curricular guidance on children's learning and the educational programmes in kindergartens. The Institute for Social Security (*Instituto da Segurança Social*) is responsible for assessments in **infant-toddler centres**.

External evaluations and self-assessment procedures take place both in kindergartens and in infant-toddler centres. Quality assurance measures include the overall quality of the setting, the quality of the staff, curriculum implementation (in kindergartens only), the general facilities, compliance with safety regulations, and the children's achievements. Self-evaluation procedures in kindergartens include, for example, workplace satisfaction, teamwork, or the availability of material resources. Checklists are the main form of assessment in infant-toddler centres, whereas in kindergartens questionnaires or self-reflective reports may also be used.

Kindergartens are usually assessed once a year and the inspection reports are made public. In infant-toddler centres the frequency of external evaluations depends on the results of the previous assessment.

Curricular guidelines now encourage a formative approach towards child-related assessments in kindergartens. They are seen as an integral part of the programme and as an ongoing process. The instruments used are chosen with the aim of observing, noting and assessing the children's progress in the required curricular areas. This enables the practitioners to plan activities according to the individual needs of the children. These assessments take place at the same time as assessments in the first year of school, which helps to improve coordination between the kindergarten educators and school teachers. At the end of their time in kindergarten, staff assess the learning and developmental progress of each child and compile an individual report which is passed on to the parents and to the primary school.

There are no official requirements regarding assessment for children below 3 years of age. At the same time, staff make observations of each child and discuss these with the parents.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Two options exist for maternity leave, which since 2009 is termed **Initial Parental Leave** (*licença parental inicial*), 42 days of which are obligatory for the mother after the birth: 1) either 120 days

fully paid, or 2) 150 days paid at 80% of previous earnings. Option 2) can be taken if both parents share the remaining time following the 42 compulsory days. Payment is based on average earnings during the first six months within the eight months previous to the Initial Parental Leave and on having paid the relevant social insurance contributions. If both parents take this leave, 30 additional days are granted. If the father takes at least 30 consecutive days of leave, the parents can also share 180 days at 83% of earnings. Leave times may not be taken simultaneously and there is no provision for working during these times.

Since 2009, fathers are entitled to 25 days of fully paid **Fathers-only Parental Leave** (*licença parental exclusiva do pai*). Since April 2017, 20 days are obligatory and must be taken during the first month after birth.

Additional Parental Leave (*licença parental complementar*) comprises an individual entitlement of three months for each parent. This can be taken up to the child's sixth birthday and also in different time blocks. If the three months are taken immediately following the Initial Parental Leave period, 25% of average earnings are paid. Additional Parental Leave is unpaid if both parents take leave simultaneously.

Up to 2014, a slight decline could be observed in the take up of the non-compulsory Initial Parental Leave. In 2016, the shared leave option was chosen by 31% of eligible mothers and fathers. 68.9% chose the longer option with payment at 83% of previous earnings.

Since 2002, the number of fathers making use of Fathers-only Parental Leave has been steadily increasing. In 2016, an estimated 62.7% of eligible fathers made use of the non-compulsory days. Additional Parental Leave tends to be used mainly by mothers, but the take up rate is relatively low (approx. 7% of all eligible parents in 2016).

Source: Wall, K. and M. Leitão 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1882	Opening of the first official kindergarten working according to Froebel's principles of pedagogy
1950 onwards	The first – mostly Catholic – training institutions are established for staff wishing to work professionally with young children
Up to the 1970s	Early childhood education continues to be viewed primarily as a private family matter
1973	Comprehensive reform of the education system
1978	First kindergarten opened under the auspices of the Ministry of Education
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Framework Law establishes kindergartens as an official part of the education system • Definition of the legal framework for the development and expansion of the national network of pre-school education • Publication of the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-School Education
2006	Creation of the PARES programme that allowed for the expansion of the national network of infant-toddler centres
2008	Definition of specialised support (special education) in public and private kindergartens
2009	5-year olds are entitled to a place in kindergarten for at least one year
2011	Publication of guidelines by the Ministry of Education on assessment and evaluation in pre-school education
2015	Revision of the Framework Plan, development of guidelines for work with children up to age 3 (these guidelines have not yet been officially issued)
2016	Publication of the revised and updated version of the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-School Education
2016/2017	Entitlement is extended to include 4-year olds

Sources: Araújo, S. Barros 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Portugal

Country expert assessment by Sara Barros Araújo

The need to reinforce the specific professionalism and identity of ECEC

This first challenge is related to the struggle against a colonisation by methodologies of a transmissive nature that are particularly used in primary education, in a process of pervasive 'schoolification' that can be observed very early in children's experiences. This brings with it the need to re-think several aspects at the level of educational policies, particularly those that regulate the initial teacher education/training of Early Childhood Teachers. Indeed, a considerable critique has emerged regarding the sequential model introduced by the Bologna Process at the level of Early Childhood Teachers' pre-service education, characterised by a disciplinary logic and a lack of units of pedagogical practice (*practica*) throughout the first three years of studies, two things that are likely to compromise professional learning and the specific identity of ECEC professionalism.

The challenge to address the qualification of infant-toddler contexts

The last 10 years constituted a period of public investment in the expansion of the network for the 0-3 sector. The launching of the PARES programme, in 2006, provided a framework for the creation of new facilities and an increase in the coverage rate (from 25% in 2006 to 51.1% in 2015). In the near future, improving these services will need to be prioritised. This encompasses several challenges, namely: a specific focus on infant-toddler pedagogy at the level of pre-service and in-service education/training of professionals; the urgent launching of pedagogical guidelines for the 0-3 sector; the revision of the highly bureaucratic quality monitoring system that is currently in place; the integration of the 0-3 sector into the education system; and a transferral of governance from the Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security to the Ministry of Education.

The challenge to de-escalate a highly bureaucratic system

In the Portuguese context, the ECEC system is influenced overall by a technocratic culture. This macrosystemic tendency has a severe effect at the level of daily life in pre-primary provision and infant-toddler centres. Indeed, a part of working hours has to be dedicated to paperwork, which is perceived as negatively affecting the pedagogical component of these services. Measures should be considered in order to reduce this bureaucratic overload so that ECEC professionals can focus more on education and care processes.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Portugal totalled 10,341,330. Since 1995 (10,008,659) the overall total has been increasing slightly, although since 2005 (10,494,672) a slight decline can be observed.

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.4% and children under 6 years of age for 5.2% of the total population. Since 2005, these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above.

Table 3

Portugal: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	85,527
1-year olds	82,422
2-year olds	82,848
Under age 3 total	250,797
3-year olds	89,778
4-year olds	95,790
5-year olds	99,557
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	285,125
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	535,922

Table 4

Portugal: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %⁺

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.4	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.2	5.2	6.2

⁺ own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 74.3% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 3.4%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.9%).

Table 5

Portugal: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	1,004,700	
Couple households	746,400	74.3
Other types of households	224,500	22.3
Single households, total	33,800	3.4
Single households, women	29,100	2.9
Single households, men	4,700	0.5

⁺ Own calculations

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Portugal was 66.9% and that of women 61.1%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 75.6 % were employed in 2015, whereas 88.4% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Although the employment rates of men in Portugal were slightly above the EU28 average in 2015, the maternal employment rate was near the highest of all EU countries.

Table 6

Portugal: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Portugal	2005	73.0	91.1
	2010	69.6	86.7
	2015	75.6	88.4
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 24.8% of children under age 6 in Portugal were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This corresponds with the EU28 average (= 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 26.6%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc100&plugin=1>)

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ROMANIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Laura Ciolan, Romita Iucu, Anca Petrescu, and Cristian Bucur

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

Citation suggestion:

Ciolan, L., R. Iucu, A. Petrescu, and C. Bucur. 2018. "Romania – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 930-954.

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



State Institute of
Early Childhood Research



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1. ECEC governance

In Romania, the system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) can be described as multi-sectorial. Whereas **kindergartens** for 3- to 6-/7-year olds come under the remit of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale - MEN*) and are part of the 'pre-university' education system, **nurseries/crèches** and infant-toddler centres for children up to age 3 belong both to the national system of social services and to the education system and come under the shared responsibility of three different ministries: the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (*Ministerul Muncii și Justiției Sociale*), the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Public Health (*Ministerul Sănătății*).

Nurseries are organised either as independent settings located within childcare centres managed by local authorities, or as specific age groups within kindergartens. Staffing structures and types of personnel in nurseries/crèches are approved by all three ministries.

Settings for under-threes are regulated by two laws: the Law on Education, regulating Early Education Services (no. 1/2011) and the Law on Social Work – Care and Supervision Services (no. 292/2011). Accordingly, the governance of crèches and infant-toddler centres comes under the auspices of the General Directorate for Social Work and Child Protection (*Direcția Generală pentru Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului*) and is administered through county-level local authorities. The governance of kindergartens comes under the auspices of the County School Inspectorate (*Inspectoratul Școlar Județean*), a decentralised unit of the Ministry of National Education, and local authorities are responsible for management and infrastructure.

A significant feature of the ECEC system in Romania is the fact that, due to the lack of a specific regulatory body for provision for 0- to 3-year olds, a number of nurseries and other settings have developed outside a regulated structure and without clearly defined educational/quality standards.

Both public kindergartens and nurseries are funded by local councils. Nurseries receive no central government funding, while kindergartens are still partly financed through the national education budget (i.e. salaries of qualified staff are paid by local authorities, but come as earmarked grants from the state budget, while salaries in nurseries/crèches or day care centres come exclusively from local council budgets). Private ECEC provision has expanded significantly during recent years, both as an alternative to public services and also as an answer to the insufficient provision mainly for the 0-3 age-group.

From a professional perspective, MEN is entitled to carry out the coordination and control of activities related to ECEC through County School Inspectorates. Inspections usually focus on kindergartens; inspection of nurseries does take place sometimes but it is not mandatory because of the uncertain legal status of the nursery as an institution.

Apart from the inspection and supervisory activities conducted and coordinated by the MEN, all other ministries involved in the process (see above) can conduct analyses, supervisory and counselling activities within the remit of their respective areas of responsibility.

In conclusion, Romania has a split system of ECEC services with different responsibilities and regulations for children under 3 years of age and those older than 3 years. This situation has led to a low level of overall coherency and sometimes also to a weak educational component in nurseries/crèches (Ciolan 2006, 35).

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres

Staff in nurseries currently comprise the following categories:

- a) management staff: director / head of centre
- b) pedagogical staff: educator – early years (*educator-puericultor*)
- c) specialist staff, e.g. medical assistant
- d) non-specialist staff: administrator, caregiver, cook, etc.

Two main groups of staff work directly with the children on a daily basis:

- **Educatori–puericultori** (educators – early years) hold a professional qualification acquired at a Pedagogical High School. Pedagogical High Schools are vocational upper secondary education institutions offering qualifications at EQF level 4 and ISCED (2011) levels 3 and 4. Some staff in nurseries may also hold a higher education Bachelor's degree (three years) in educational sciences (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education), mainly where services for the under 3-year olds are offered in groups affiliated to kindergartens. In recent years, Pedagogical High Schools have also organised a form of tertiary non-university qualification route for those already holding a high school graduation diploma from regular high schools.
- **Îngrijitori** (caregivers) complete a form of upper secondary education and a compulsory in-service training module of at least 30 hours focussing on early childhood education and care and parenting. Beyond that, there are no minimum requirements regarding initial professional studies for caregivers in nurseries. There is currently no formal obligation for nurseries/crèches organised as independent institutions to have staff holding a specialist higher education qualification, although employing staff with the appropriate qualifications should be a necessary prerequisite for quality in early education for children under 3 years of age.

In terms of the management of ECEC services, **Directors/Centre Heads** (*Director/șef de centru*) are trained professionals with educational and management responsibilities to ensure the continuous improvement of quality at the institutional level. Since 2012 (see Government Decision 1252/2012), new conditions have been in place for applicants for this position: they need to have a higher education award (Bachelor level) in one of the following areas: economics, law, administration, medicine, sociology, psychology or educational sciences, with a minimum of two years of work experience in the field of ECEC. This is a significant change in terms of formal requirements.

Although the staffing requirements for work in nurseries/infant-toddler centres are not formally regulated, some universities have started to offer specialist degrees in early childhood education. A relevant example here is the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, which has been offering a two-year Master's degree in Early Childhood Education since 2013.

Staff in kindergartens

At the level of pre-primary education/kindergartens (3- to 6-year olds), three main categories of staff may be working in direct contact with the children, each having followed a different qualification route.

- **Educatoare** (Educators) complete a specialist (early childhood education) qualification at a Pedagogical High School (upper secondary vocational). Persons with this qualification are still working in the system, although this specific route is not available anymore as a stand-

alone qualification. This route is now viewed only as a precursor to becoming a fully qualified Pre-primary Teacher, since in order to gain a permanent position in a kindergarten, the completion of a Bachelor study route in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education is now the formal requirement.

- **Institutori** (Elementary Teachers) complete a short-term higher education degree (three years) awarded by the University College of Elementary Teachers (*Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori*). This award originates from the pre-Bologna system (up to 2005), when regular higher education degrees took four to six years to complete. The title of *Institutor* could also be held by qualified educators (*educatoare*) who had completed a higher education diploma after their initial studies, regardless of the specialisation they had followed.

As from 2005 this qualification has been replaced by:

- **Profesori pentru învățământul Primar și Preșcolar** (Primary and Pre-primary Teachers) with a higher education degree and a dual specialism. The first graduates with this specialism completed their studies in 2008.

Although the minimum requirement for working in a kindergarten as a core practitioner is now a Bachelor's degree, the staff in kindergartens may have any one of the above-mentioned qualifications.

The **Director and/or Director adjunct** (director or deputy director) of a kindergarten is usually selected through a competition. Applicants are required to meet new formal requirements set out in the Education Act 1/2011 and subsequent regulations issued by the MEN: a higher education award (Bachelor's degree), a minimum of four years' professional experience in the field and membership in the National Registry of Management Specialists. To be registered as a management specialist, a person must have competencies in educational management and administration acquired through initial or continuing professional education.

Both nurseries/crèches and kindergartens can benefit from the services of professional support staff, mostly hired from County Centres for Educational Assistance and Resources (*Centrul Județean de Asistență și Resurse Educaționale – CJRAE*). In rather exceptional cases, these support staff are employed directly by ECEC providers.

Profesor logoped (Logopaedic/Speech Therapy Teachers), with professional studies in special needs education, psychology or pedagogy, support the staff, as well as children and families.

Profesor consilier (Counselling and Guidance Teachers) with a professional higher education degree in educational sciences, psychology, sociology or social work may provide psychopedagogic support, counselling and guidance directly for children, but also for regular staff and families.

Table 1 provides a summary of the staff working in nurseries and kindergartens and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at the end of this section).

Table 1

Romania: Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Job title and profile	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Childcare sector				
Îngrijitor Caregiver	<i>Creșă</i> Nurseries, infant-toddler centres 4 months–3 years	Low-qualified co-worker	0–3 years	Upper-secondary or school leaving certificate No formal IPS required, but compulsory 30 hours CPD ECTS points: n/a ² EQF Level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: n/a ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Educator-puericultor</i> Educator – early years <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus	<i>Creșă</i> Nurseries, infant-toddler centres 4 months–3 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0–3 years	Upper secondary vocational, Pedagogical High School (or post-secondary vocational for those who have completed a non-specialised high school) ECTS points: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0122 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4
Education sector				
<i>Educatoare</i> Educator <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary education professional	<i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens 3–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3–6 years	(No longer the minimum requirement for work in kindergartens) Upper secondary vocational, Pedagogical High School ECTS points: n/a EQF Level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4
<i>Institutori (învățăământ preșcolar)</i> Pre-primary Teachers <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens 3–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3–6 years	<i>Up to 2005:</i> 3 years University College for Elementary Teachers or Pedagogical High School and a higher education non-specialised award ECTS points: n/a

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.² n/a = not applicable

Job title and profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
				EQF Level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
<i>Profesori pentru învățământul preșcolar și primar</i> Primary and Pre-primary Teachers <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Grădinițe</i> Kindergartens and primary schools 3–11 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Director	3–11 years	<i>Since 2005:</i> 3 years University, Bachelor's degree ECTS points: 180 EQF Level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Overall, there are no statistics available at the national level regarding the composition of the ECEC workforce. However, an estimated 99% of the personnel in nurseries and kindergartens in Romania are women. There are no national data available on minority ethnic groups. According to regional data at the local/county level – the case of Bucharest, 177 kindergarten principals (96.2%) have a higher education degree, and 7 (3.8%) have a Pedagogical High School upper secondary vocational qualification. The average age of staff working in kindergartens is 39 years 4 months. 91 posts in kindergartens are filled by non-qualified staff.

Table 2

Romania: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	No systematically compiled national data for core practitioners Kindergarten heads only: 96.2%* (2016)
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary / post-secondary)	No systematically compiled national data for core practitioners Kindergarten heads only, including those of kindergartens attached to schools: 3.8%* (2016)
Staff with non-specialist qualification / un-qualified staff	2015 (kindergartens only): 8.4%*

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists, counsellors)	Mostly off site, available at county level specialised centres
Male staff	2016: 0.4% of total staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres and kindergartens: (144 out of 35,084)*
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

*Data for the local/county level (Bucharest) only.

Of all teaching staff in the pre-university education system, 14.8% work in nurseries and kindergartens.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Despite the fact that staff with a wide variety of qualifications are still working in the ECEC field, the current official requirements for initial professional studies for ECEC staff in Romania have been narrowed down to two main routes:

- For those working in nurseries/infant-toddler centres (*educator-puericultor*) this is the Pedagogical High School upper secondary vocational route **or** a post-secondary vocational study route for graduates of non-pedagogical high schools. After passing an entrance examination, graduates from these two routes can study for a Bachelor's degree (Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education).
- For those working in kindergartens (*profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*) this is the higher education route (Bachelor's degree) offering a double specialisation for work in kindergartens and primary schools; graduates are also eligible for a position as educator (*educator-puericultor*) in a nursery/infant-toddler centre. Support staff (speech therapists, counsellors), who are mostly employed by county administrations and provide services for ECEC provision in their area, are also required to have a higher education level qualification.

It is still possible to work as a Caregiver (*ingrijitor*) in settings for under-threes without having a formal qualification, and sometimes also as auxiliary support staff in kindergartens, mainly in those with an extended-day programme (7:30 to 16:00-18:00).

The main IPS programme for ECEC staff in kindergartens is the Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (three years, 180 ECTS points). The majority of kindergarten staff now has this level of qualification, since special pathways offered by universities attracted non-Bachelor professionals to complete their studies with a higher education diploma. Moreover, the management of ECEC settings has been offering staff with higher education qualifications a higher salary.

Table 3

Romania: Educator – early years

Job title in Romanian: <i>Educator-puericultor</i>
Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus
Entry requirements: completion of compulsory education and a successful "eligibility exam"
Professional studies: 4 years Pedagogical High School, specialisation as <i>educator-puericultor</i>
Award: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Baccalaureate</i>) plus certification as an <i>educator-puericultor</i>
ECTS points: n/a
EQF level: 4

Job title in Romanian: <i>Educator-puericultor</i>
Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional with infant-toddler focus
<p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: nurseries/crèches, infant-toddler centres, kindergartens organising crèche groups for infants/toddlers</p> <p>Note: Also eligible for this job are higher education graduates (Bachelor, Pedagogy in Primary and Pre-primary Education)</p>

Table 4

Romania: Educator

Job title in Romanian: <i>Educatoare</i>
Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: completion of compulsory education and an 'eligibility exam'</p> <p>Professional studies: 4/5 years of study at a Pedagogical High School (5 years up to 2005, 4 years after 2005)</p> <p>Award: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Bacalaureate</i>) plus certification as an <i>educatoare</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3, 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Kindergartens (3-6 years)</p> <p>The above route still exists, but there is no possibility to become a tenured teacher working full time without completing the following step:</p> <p><i>Since 2005: (see also Table 6 below)</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: <i>Bacalaureate</i>, university entrance examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year university study route in educational sciences, specialising in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0211 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: kindergartens and primary schools (3-11 years old) and sometimes in crèches</p>

Table 5

Romania: Elementary Teachers

Job title in Romanian: <i>Institutori</i>
Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: upper secondary school leaving certification: <i>Bacalaureate</i> and higher education entrance examination</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years of study at a <i>Colegiul Universitar Pedagogic de Institutori</i> (University Pedagogical College for Elementary Teachers) – short-term university degree (pre-Bologna system)</p> <p>Award: Certificate as an Elementary Teacher (Preschool and/or Primary)</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years).</p> <p>Note: An alternative route to obtain this qualification used to be successful graduation from a Pedagogical High School (<i>Bacalaureate</i> + professional certificate) and a course of studies at any type of higher education institution (Bachelor level). This route was closed in 2005, when the Bachelor's degree for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers was established.</p>

Table 6

Romania: Primary and Pre-primary teachers

Job title in Romanian: <i>Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: upper secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Baccalaureate</i>) and university entrance examination Professional studies: 3 years of study in Educational Sciences (Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education) Award: Bachelor's degree and teaching licence in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education (double specialisation) ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: Kindergartens (3-6 years) and primary schools (6-11 years). Graduates are also eligible to work in nurseries / infant-toddler centres. Note: Since 2005 this is now the main route of professional qualification for kindergartens and primary schools.

3.2 Competencies and curricula in the IPS programmes for core practitioners

Educator – early ages (*educator-puericultor*)

This upper secondary vocational qualification was strengthened by the Government Decision (1252/2012) on the organisation and functioning of crèches and other early childhood education institutions, which specifically required that this should be the minimum requirement for pedagogical staff. The duration of vocational high school studies is four years and the leaving certificate has two components: the *Baccalaureate* (final exam at the end of high school and prerequisite for accessing higher education) and the professional certificate (professional examination granting access to qualified jobs in nurseries/crèches, day-care centres). The main responsibilities expected to be carried out by these professionals are:

- a) caregiving and stimulating activities to increase the child's autonomy;
- b) activities focused on the social-emotional development of the child;
- c) training and development of oral expression;
- d) activities focussing on enhancing the child's attention span and receptivity;
- e) monitoring and documenting the developmental progress of the children;
- f) active cooperation with parents/legal representatives of the children.

Curricular areas: This IPS route comprises a combination of classic general subjects, allowing graduates to take their *Baccalaureate* exam and eventually go on to higher education studies, and also professional subjects and professional practice in ECEC institutions. The first two years of study comprise curricular areas such as language and communication, mathematics and sciences, but also social-humanistic disciplines, including General Psychology, Child and Family Psychology, Pedagogy, Early Childhood Education, Professional Practice. More specialised professional subjects are included in the last two years of study: Hygiene and child growth/care, Child pathology (0-3 years), Play and learning, Special Needs Education, Psychology of education, Child protection and Children's rights etc. All these are complemented with practice-oriented educational/learning activities in different areas: Language, Sciences, Technology, Arts, Music and Drama. Field-based placements take place for at least three to four hours per week and can also be organised as compact week(s) during the semester.

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

In Romania, all teachers in the pre-university education system have to have a higher education qualification. The profession of Pre-primary (and Primary) Teacher is regulated by law and preceded by a three-year Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education, which is part of the Educational Sciences domain. The degree can be offered by public and private higher education institutions if they have been accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, according to the official standards approved in 2016 (see ARACIS 2016). The agency has stringent compulsory criteria and quality indicators for these degree programmes in terms of curriculum, human resources, facilities etc.

Competences/didactic approaches: The key competences to be acquired are described in the table below. They are based on a national framework, but we use the example of the University of Bucharest. The objectives of the Bachelor programme for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers comply with identified professional needs and with the roles and specific competences that define the activity of educational science specialists (see also the pedagogical perspective underlined by Stan 2014). Since the academic year 2013–2014, the study programme has focused on professional and transversal competences, in accordance with the standards defined at national level by the Romanian National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Table 7

Romania: Primary and Pre-primary Teacher - Competence specifications (University of Bucharest, based on NQF)

General competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and developing educational programmes adapted to the primary and pre-primary education levels and to the target group; • Assessing educational programmes for primary and pre-primary education; • Group / classroom management and capacity to manage educational projects specific for primary and pre-primary education; • Offering counselling, guidance, psychological and pedagogical assistance to different stakeholder groups (children, families, teachers, employees, etc.); • Self-assessment and continuous improvement of professional practices and career evolution.
Instrumental competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising pedagogical knowledge appropriately in designing educational and instructional activities: concepts, models, methods, techniques, scenarios and educational alternatives; • Identifying and using educational concepts, models and strategies for appropriate pedagogical methods; • Identifying and comparing theories, models and specific techniques and instruments necessary in educational assessment; • Analysing specific concepts, theories, models and techniques for designing targeted interventions in counselling, guidance and psychological and pedagogical assistance of various target groups; • Conducting pedagogical research to inform theory and practice and reflecting on professional practices aiming at continuing improvement; • Interpreting and explaining various pedagogical theories, models and contexts from an educational manager's perspective; • Promoting reflective practice based on students/children's learning and on one's own professional development; • Creating educational projects/programmes regarding the efficient organisation of the learning environment and of the resources used, in accordance with the principles and specific functions of the educational management.
Interpersonal competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting educational programmes through the appropriate use of specific concepts, theories and methodologies, adapted for different age-groups; • Applying standard methods of assessment in educational activities with children / adults and using these to improve process quality;

- Analysing, interpreting and explaining evaluation data both at the individual and institutional levels;
- Designing educational programmes in order to identify, analyse and respond to specific educational needs;
- Developing good professional practices and being involved in the process of drafting research projects, taking into account specific methodological norms and principles.

Systemic competences

- Analysing, interpreting and correlating intra-/interdisciplinary practices and applying pedagogic knowledge in the designing of educational activities and didactic resources on different levels (macro, meso, micro);
- Explaining and interpreting educational contexts/situations and converting the knowledge, abilities and skills into pedagogical planning;
- Analysing and interpreting various educational contexts through the use of scientific concepts, paradigms and theories regarding persons with special educational needs;
- Carrying out educational activities in a methodologically appropriate way in accordance with the National Curriculum framework;
- Designing and applying evaluation tools, analysing and interpreting the results; providing arguments for the choice of methods, techniques and the instruments employed;
- Transferring the results of an evaluation into practice to support institutional or individual development;
- Creating alternative evaluation strategies for specific teaching and learning processes.

The following competences can be seen as the expected synthesis of the learning processes at the B.A. programme level:

- Designing, carrying out and assessing teaching and learning activities;
- Designing, carrying out and assessing extracurricular activities and educational partnerships;
- Psychological and pedagogical assistance for the pupils in a situation regarded as at risk, single parent families, parents who work abroad, parents with very low wages etc.);
- Accomplishing the optimal collaboration between the school and the families of the children, as well as with the local community;
- Performing management and resource management at class level;
- Institutional management and marketing;
- Design and evaluation of social and educational projects;
- Expertise in designing and implementing the curriculum and the initial and continuous training programmes.

Curricular areas: The curriculum of this programme is strongly regulated by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education through a set of specific standards. The most recent standards, approved in 2016 and covering around 75% of the total study programme, create a common national curriculum framework. Approximately 25% of the programme content is decided on by each university. The standards state some basic/fundamental subjects, valid for all degrees in educational sciences, but also a large number of study areas/disciplines specific to this particular degree. Practical training should cover at least 15% of the total duration of the study programme.

Table 8

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – first year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme in Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Name of subject	ECTS points
I. BASIC DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Fundamentals of Psychology	5
Fundamentals of Pedagogy	5

Name of subject	ECTS points
Fundamentals of Special Psycho-Pedagogy	5
Information and Communication Technologies	4
Curriculum Theory and Practice	5
Early Childhood Education	4
II. DOMAIN DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Psychology of Personality	4
Developmental Psychology	4
Romanian Literature	4
Psychology of Education	5
Mathematics	5
Psycho-Pedagogy of Learning Difficulties	4
Professional Practicum (Pre-School and Primary Education)	2
III. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Foreign Languages	4
TOTAL ECTS POINTS	60
OPTIONAL (elective)	
Physical Education	4

Table 9

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – second year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Name of subject	ECTS points
I. BASIC DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Instruction: theory, research and practice	4
Evaluation: theory and methodology	4
Methodology of Educational Research	4
Educational Theories	3
II. SPECIALISM DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Computer Based Learning	4
Class/Group Management	4
Primary School Education	4
Contemporary Romanian Language	5
Didactics of Languages and Communication (Preschool Education)	4
Children's Literature	4
Mathematics	4
Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Mathematics (Preschool Education)	3
Didactics of Mathematics and Sciences. Sciences (Preschool Education)	3
Professional Practicum (Preschool Education)	4
Professional Practicum (Primary School)	4
III. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
ONE OPTIONAL- PACKAGE A	
Sociology of Education (elective)	2
Educational Management (elective)	
TOTAL ECTS POINTS	60
OPTIONAL (elective)	
Theory, Solfeggio, Dictation (elective)	4
Foreign Languages (elective)	4

Table 10

Romania: IPS curriculum for prospective Primary and Pre-primary Teachers – third year of studies (University of Bucharest, Department for Teacher Education, Study programme on Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education)

Name of subject	ECTS points
I. SPECIALISM DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
Contemporary Romanian Language	3
Psycho-pedagogy of Play	4
Didactics of Romanian Language and Literature	4
Didactics of Arithmetic	4
History and Didactics of History	4
Geography and Didactics of Geography	4
Didactics of the Arts: Musical Education	4
Didactics of Physical and Psychomotor Education	4
Didactics of Civic Educational Activities	4
Didactics of the Arts: Creative Education	4
Environmental Education/ Didactics of Natural Sciences	4
Didactics of Practical Abilities	4
Professional Practicum (Preschool Education)	5
Professional Practicum (Primary Education)	5
II. COMPLEMENTARY DISCIPLINES (SUBJECTS)	
ONE OPTIONAL – PACKAGE B	3
Intercultural Education	
Educational management	
TOTAL ECTS POINTS	60

Students are awarded an additional 10 ECTS points for the Bachelor of Arts Degree Examination. For successful finalisation of studies, they need to pass a written exam on fundamental knowledge of primary and pre-primary education (curriculum, instructional design, assessment, communication and group management), and to defend a research based Bachelor dissertation paper in front of a committee.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

From the moment in which the profession of **teacher for primary and pre-primary education** was regulated, the flexibility of the routes decreased.

Regarding the **educator-puericultor** in crèches/infant-toddler centres, persons who have not completed the classical route of four years Pedagogical High School but have graduated from a different kind of high school and have a *Baccalaureate* diploma can enrol for two years at a 'post-high school' offering the same specialisation. These post-high schools are not permanent, but are organised on demand, when employers are in need of professionals. The main issue in Romania is that service provision for the under-threes is extremely low, and kindergartens, although they can form infant-toddler groups since 2012, are reluctant to do so, as local authorities are hardly financing this cycle of education. So this particular position, if available in crèches, is open also to other higher education graduates in educational sciences; however, the take-up is low, mainly because of the very low salary level.

In terms of the **Primary and Pre-primary Teachers**, some flexibility is offered through open and distance learning programmes, which also have to be accredited by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and also through professional reconversion programmes. The latter can be organised by universities for professionals working in kindergartens (or primary schools) who have a teaching certification in a different domain (i.e. teacher of Biology, Geography, Languages, etc.) and therefore work as unqualified staff in a kindergarten.

ten or primary school. These studies take two years to complete and are awarded 120 ECTS points. They are organised as modules, in a blended learning approach.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Educator – early years (*educator-puericultor*)

The IPS programme for Educators includes three to four hours per week compulsory workplace-based learning/professional practice in the field (three hours in the first two years and four hours in the last two years of study). The structure and content of this field-based practicum relates to the progressive stages of professional development: first observational practice, then practising professional skills under supervision, and finally designing and delivering educational activities under supervision. There are no clear standards regarding workplace-based learning in IPS for this level. The weekly hour allocations can also be organised as compact modules.

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher (*Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar*)

For Primary and Pre-primary Teachers, national standards require a minimum of 15% professional practice in the IPS curriculum and the ECTS points allocated. This means that in order to meet the standard requirement, every study programme should have at least 27 ECTS points allocated to professional practice. It is common for kindergarten placements to take place in specified institutions selected jointly by the university as the training provider, and the local school inspectorate as the main beneficiary of qualified staff. Professional practice periods are coordinated by an academic from the university side, who assists students in all stages and evaluates them at the end, but also by a mentor teacher from the kindergarten, who has a contract with the university and is remunerated for his/her work with the prospective kindergarten teachers. All universities providing the Bachelor's degree have their own network of placement kindergartens with experienced mentors. Nevertheless, the students do not have a sufficient number of sustained periods of time during their studies for working in these placement kindergartens. Workplace-based learning at IPS level tends to be fragmented and thus lacking in impact in the long run.

Key skills and competences to be acquired during professional practice include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following:

- understanding group dynamics and developing strategies for high quality interactions with children;
- designing and adapting learning experiences according to specifications in the curriculum, delivering and assessing them;
- developing reflective practice skills in order to improve one's own professional practices.

In general, students are asked to maintain a portfolio to document both their observational and research skills, but also their capacity to take responsibility for working professionally with children. The teacher mentor in the kindergarten assesses the student's performance and informs the academic supervisor at the university. The university tutor then undertakes the final evaluation of the student based on the mentor's evaluation, the quality of the portfolio and the progress made over the course of the semester (professional practice is assessed each semester).

There are two significant current debates and prospective reforms in Romania. The first is related to the qualification and role of teacher mentors in the kindergartens. An occupational standard was developed at national level with multiple roles for mentors and there was even an attempt to build a national registry of mentor teachers. But the initiative is not being followed up because of the lack of financial resources at the MEN. However, some effects can be seen, despite the fact that the formal status of mentors has not yet been clarified. One example is at the University of Bucharest where a new Master's programme in *Mentoring in education* has been offered since 2015, preparing interested teachers from schools and kindergartens.

The second debate has just recently started at the policy level, refocusing attention on a provision in the Education Act 1/2011 which called for a change in the institutional model for teacher education by introducing *didactic Master programmes*. One of the key ideas of these programmes is to spend the final semester as a compulsory internship in an educational institution. One reason for this could be the current procedures for newly qualified teachers, who have to wait for two years in order to take a final qualifying exam which confers teacher certification and makes them eligible for taking up a permanent teaching position.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development for educational professionals working in services for the under-threes is not regulated at the national level, but remains the decision of each institution and local authority. Taking into account the very low coverage of this service and the limited number of staff hired, a broader framework is possibly not yet needed. However, the various CPD opportunities available for Pre-primary Teachers do not apply to the pedagogical staff in nurseries/infant-toddler centres, where CPD is mostly offered in form of various projects and not as a coherent system. Moreover, the participation in CPD is unequal and there are still some professionals who just avoid it (see Lucian Ciolan 2014, 57).

Primary and Pre-primary Teacher

(Profesor pentru învățământul primar și preșcolar)

The CPD of Primary and Pre-primary Teachers (university route specialism) is located within a broad and comprehensive system organised and coordinated at the national level by MEN.

According to the Education Act 1/2001, CPD is both a right and an obligation for teachers, and can be realised in the following ways:

- a) programmes and activities for the continuous improvement of scientific, pedagogical and didactic skills;
- b) training programmes in the area of management, leadership and evaluation of education;
- c) training courses and exams for teaching awards II and I (see below);
- d) professional reconversion programmes for persons with a non-specialist background;
- e) studies corresponding to a degree specialisation.

Both pedagogical and management staff in pre-university education are required to participate in credit-awarding training programmes every five years after passing the final qualifying exam (*definitivat*) which confers teacher certification.

Accumulating credits has an impact both on salaries and career advancement. For instance, participation in CPD and credit accumulation is one of the key criteria for awarding teachers a salary supplement, called 'merit award' (*gradație de merit*). This is obtained through an open

competition and is based on the teacher's professional achievements over the last five years. The stipend adds around 25% to the salary for a duration of five years.

In order to accumulate credits, teachers have to participate in accredited training courses. At the national level, MEN has a specialised accreditation body for teacher and management training courses in pre-university education: This *Specialised Commission for Accreditation* is composed of twenty independent experts appointed through an open call for a duration of five years, with the possibility of two mandates. These experts work closely with the permanent staff in the Ministry of National Education responsible for CPD (Directorate for Continuing Training). The Commission is asked to evaluate the course proposals submitted by different providers. Once accredited, these courses are included in the register of accredited training providers and are assigned a specific number of professional transferable credits.

Graduates of the study programme *Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-primary Education* can benefit from CPD activities in public institutions, primary and pre-primary education units, County Teachers' Centres (regional CPD provider), professional associations and trade unions. According to the regulations in force, the continuing training provider can be an educational institution, public or private, a non-governmental organisation or even a private company specialising in CPD. The training courses they submit for accreditation to the national responsible body should comply with the professional standards for the teaching profession and with the regulatory framework for accreditation of training providers, provided by Ministerial Order no. 5564/2011: *Methodology for accreditation and periodical evaluation of CPD providers and their programmes*.

Teachers' Centres (known as 'Teacher Training Houses' - *Casa Corpului Didactic*) are important CPD providers at the local/county level and are part of a national network financed by Ministry of National Education.

In synthesis, the offer of accredited CPD should fall under one of the categories of programmes described in the table below.

Table 11

Romania: Structure of accredited CPD programmes and envisaged competences (compiled from Education Act 1/2011 and Ministerial Order no. 5564/2011)

Programme types	Envisaged competences
<i>Category 1:</i> Professional development programmes for specific competency areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improving and developing competences in the specific teaching domain (pre-primary, primary...) and in the area of educational psychology, pedagogy and didactics; b) Developing competences needed for career progression/ advancement; c) Acquiring or developing management and leadership competences.
<i>Category 2:</i> Professional development programmes related to Ministry of National Education policies and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Developing complementary competences to extend the professional's knowledge and area of activity, such as: computer-assisted teaching, teaching in a foreign language, counselling and guidance, adult education. b) Developing and extending overarching competences regarding interaction and communication in social and pedagogical milieus: organising, leading and improving performance of professional groups, reflective practice, etc.
<i>Category 3:</i> Non-profession-related modular programmes	CPD programmes initiated by training providers which cover competence areas other than those specified above.
<i>Category 4:</i> Special programmes	CPD programmes designed by training providers according to needs-based assessments.

Note: Category 1 programmes are offered only by universities known for their research competence in these areas (Category A universities), and Category 2 programmes by those known for their competence in teacher education and research (Category B universities, according to the national system of classification of universities).

A special form of CPD is directly related to **career advancement and promotion**, namely courses in Category 1b) in the above table. After they have passed their *definitivat* exam and have made the first step in their professional career, pedagogical staff follow special training courses to target the next two formal steps: 2nd teaching award and 1st teaching award³. Both the training courses and the examination for obtaining these further qualifications are organised by selected universities. Both courses cover the didactics of specific subject areas (mathematic and sciences, language, arts, etc.), and also a component of psycho-pedagogical knowledge and skills.

To obtain the 1st teaching award, teachers have to pass a practical examination based on classroom inspections conducted by specialists in the school inspectorate. They also have to follow a one-year period assigned for practitioner's research in a specific area, coordinated by an academic at the university and finalised with a paper that has to be defended in front of a committee including a specialist inspector and a university representative in the area of educational sciences. Career advancement leads to a salary increase and possible changes in the professional responsibilities (getting involved in mentoring, CPD of colleagues, etc.).

CPD as continuing skills development and upgrading is organised by the Methodology Commission⁴. This commission is a kind of community of practitioners who meet at least once a week and debate, reflect, exchange experiences and perform analyses of needs and improvement plans. Their activity is based on peer learning and deals with professional issues at the institutional level. From time to time, they may be asked by the school inspectorate to host a Pedagogical Circle (*Cercul Pedagogic*) in their kindergarten, a regular meeting of professionals from a designated area (i.e. Bucharest sector), coordinated by the local school inspectorate. CPD activities may include: demonstrating new materials or approaches in learning; encouraging inter-institutional collaboration and exchange of experiences; presenting papers and scientific research topics; debating legislative requirements; providing counselling support for newly qualified staff.

In addition to the nationally regulated framework for CPD in pre-primary education in Romania, a considerable amount of CPD activities also take place at the institutional/local level, but mostly these are non-credit based activities. Some examples are: sessions for learning about new research and educational approaches; symposia on current issues; workshops on psychological and pedagogical issues relating to ECEC, conferences, etc.

Box 2

Romania: CPD course content (examples for Bucharest)

Examples of the content of CPD courses provided by the Teacher Training House in Bucharest include: Educational management and leadership (60 credits); mentoring (60 credits); classroom management; career development in teaching (25 credits); quality management, institutional self-evaluation (11 credits); non-formal management activities (15 credits); education for human and children's rights (11 credits); creative approaches to the early childhood curriculum (12 credits); 'better parents, better children' (30 credits).

There are also other providers, such as the University of Titu Maiorescu, the University of Applied Sciences Bu-

³ 2nd and 1st teaching awards are part of the career advancement system in Romania, established by law. They are professional development steps on the career ladder, obtained through a specific process and after passing an examination. The 1st teaching award is the highest professional degree/step on the career ladder for qualified teachers. Both are available only for qualified, full-time teachers.

⁴ Methodology Commissions are organised at each educational institution level and comprise teachers from the same area of specialisation (e.g. pre-primary education). For example, in kindergartens, the Methodology Commission includes all kindergarten teachers and is chaired by an experienced and pedagogically competent teacher.

charest, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and various foundations. Their programmes include: Resource management in educational institutions; ethics in education through communication, training and responsibility (15 credits); educational management (25 credits); reshaping professional development in the pre-university education system (25 credits).

Overall, however, the number of courses specifically targeting ECEC staff is not extensive, particularly courses funded by the national or local authorities. Public investment in CPD in recent years mostly took the form of Structural Funds projects, but this situation created considerable disparities in terms of access, which was much easier for professionals working in large cities than for those in rural environments. The financing of CPD is currently a critical issue. Investment at the national level is restricted to projects and the modest funding of the Teacher Training Houses. Investment at the local/institutional investment is very limited and staff participation in CPD is compromised by the very low level of their income.

Two recent national projects had a significant component dedicated to human resource development in ECEC:

PRET (2007-2016), *Programme for Early Childhood Education Reform*, was mainly an infrastructure development project, addressing 750 kindergartens around the country, but also had a training component, comprising specific modules for educators (approx. 35,000), staff in child-care centres and crèches: caregivers, medical assistants (approx. 13,000), managers (approx. 2,500) and also parents.

PETI (2007-2011), *Programme for Inclusive Early Childhood Education*, aimed to increase participation in early childhood education for vulnerable groups, especially the Roma population, and also included a CPD component focussing on inclusive education, special needs, equity and working with vulnerable groups and communities. More than 4,000 professionals were involved in these training modules.

Important support materials were developed for the professionals working in the field, as is the case with the Good Practices Handbook (MEN 2008b), but also the newly revised curriculum for the early childhood education of children aged 3-6/7 (MEN 2008a).

An important benefit of CPD is that the credits acquired are useful for international professional mobility (i.e. Erasmus) or when enrolling in further education, such as a Master's study programme, post-university courses or even a PhD. There are plenty of Master's degrees relevant for ECEC practitioners and the level of interest and attendance rates for this type of education are currently increasing. In public universities, ECEC professionals (as well as any other candidates) are eligible for subsidised places (free of charge). The numbers of allocated subsidised places for a specific Master programme are determined by the higher education institution. Examples of Master programmes/domains with relevance for ECEC staff are: Early Childhood Education; School counselling and guidance; Learning, innovation and coaching in education; Educational management; Speech therapy; Inclusive education; Mentoring in education.

As previously stated, CPD is a legal entitlement for Pre-primary Teachers, but also an obligation. Participation in CPD activities is permitted during working hours, but only outside the direct contact hours. Nevertheless, some contact hours may also be used for CPD if a kindergarten is hosting a Pedagogical Circle or organises internal CPD activities involving demonstration activities.

In conclusion, the CPD system is quite diverse, even eclectic, but there is still a mismatch between the regulatory framework and formal provisions and effective implementation on the ground. Unfortunately, no large-scale research projects on CPD in ECEC provision were funded during recent years to document the key issues and challenges of the domain.

One of the significant debates about CPD in ECEC is related to the financing of this activity through public funds. This debate is not necessarily just an issue for early education teachers, but for pre-university education staff in general. What is needed is an improved correlation

between the formal requirements for participation in CPD, and the availability of funding resources for the providers of CPD.

Another area currently under scrutiny is the system for career progression/advancement, with the *definitivat* exam and the two subsequent teaching awards. A second issue, which is part of the national strategy on early childhood education, is to really contribute to an integrated system of ECEC, also from the perspective of professionals working with all age groups from 0 to 6 years.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Professionalisation of ECEC management positions

In 2016, MEN undertook the assessment of principals' positions. This represents an important step towards the professionalization of ECEC management activities and towards a more transparent process for the selection of Centre/Kindergarten Heads, based on explicit criteria, with the direct involvement of major stakeholders.

A National Assessment Procedure for those applying for the position is carried out in all pre-university educational institutions, i.e. in schools and kindergartens. In order to participate in this assessment process, candidates have to

- complete a standardised written test focusing on cognitive and management abilities;
- participate in an assessment interview held by a selection board comprising representatives of the County School Inspectorate, regional/local public authorities, the ECEC/school setting, and trade unions representing employees in education. Interviews focus on a management project related to institutional development of the ECEC/school setting in question;
- present a professional portfolio to the selection board in which his/her management experiences and expertise are assessed, including specialist management training courses undertaken.

The first round of this national assessment has already taken place and according to the policy message and the final results it was a success.

Pilot project for developing innovative nursery settings

In 2012, a significant pilot institution was founded in Bucharest: the Romanian-Danish Centre for Integrated Education. This nursery setting, which welcomes socially disadvantaged children between 0 and 4 years of age from vulnerable environments in Bucharest, resulted from a project financed by The Velux Foundation in Denmark and by the General Directorate for Social Work and Child Protection (DGASPC) in District 1 of Bucharest. The project was implemented by DGASPC in collaboration with the VIA University College in Denmark, the University of Bucharest (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences) and the "Pro Vocatie" Centre for Resources and Training in Social Professions. Beneficial for the implementation of this initiative were the previously established and stable partnerships between local authorities, university representatives and the non-profit sector organisations involved in early childhood education and care.

The know-how gained from this 'good practice' project has been incorporated into a new programme extending the programme to all crèches in Sector 1, with 'lessons learned' and disseminated on a broader level in Bucharest and beyond. Currently, DGASPC Sector 1 has managed to secure funding (more than 250,000 EUR) from local authorities (no further external funding involved) to support CPD, and successful educational interventions were consolidated in the first part of the project.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

There has been little large-scale funding of research on early childhood education and care in Romania. UNICEF Romania continues to support reports and studies about this age level which are very much needed and appreciated; however, they tend to be mostly policy-focused rather than practice-focused.

Effects of a Teacher-Focused Educational Intervention on Children's Well-Being

Source: Rodawell – Romanian-Danish Centre for Children's Well-Being (an ongoing research and development project coordinated by the University of Bucharest, 2016-2019).

Aims and background: The aim of this ongoing investigation is to devise, implement and measure the effects of a multi-component educational intervention targeted at 4- to 10-year old children recruited from two kindergartens and two primary schools located in areas of Bucharest that are lower-than-average in terms of socioeconomic living conditions. This is a longitudinal research study that compares the well-being and academic performance of children enrolled in two state education settings. In the first group the children are exposed to enhanced educational intervention; in the second (control group) the age-matched children do not experience the intervention programme. The intervention builds on the success of the RODACIE program that was developed by Romanian and Danish education experts and piloted during 2011-2015 with economically-disadvantaged preschoolers. The project is conducted by members of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at the University of Bucharest in collaboration with a team of educational researchers and trainers from VIA University College in Denmark.

Procedure: One of the main goals is to provide teachers with intensive training sessions in key areas which address both the content taught in class and the learning and relational environment. During the 12 months of intervention teachers are offered opportunities for "formative evaluation" while the intervention team offers on-going and direct support for transferring new skills to students in class.

Design: Two groups: control and intervention; Pre- (baseline), mid-term (six months into the intervention) and post-intervention measurement (at the end of the programme).

Sample: 247 children in the intervention group (89 in kindergartens; 158 in primary schools); 191 children in the control group (93 in kindergartens; 98 in primary schools).

Instruments: Well-validated and widely-implemented instruments are used to assess the children's emotional, behavioural and social functioning.

Findings and implications: It can be assumed that this research will produce a comprehensive final report on the well-being of children at risk in kindergartens and primary schools. The preliminary findings (May 2017) especially underlined a high level of vulnerability within the emotional and social indicators. Finally, it is intended to translate the findings of the study into a "Well-Being Barometer" to be used as a self-assessment and diagnostic tool in kindergartens and primary schools across Romania.

Evaluation of early childhood education environments

Source: Early Change project: 517999-LLP-1-2011-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP; Gregoriadis et al. 2014 (see *References* for full details)

Aims and background: This was a project funded by the European Commission, in which Romania was a partner. Besides having a professional development component, a research component had the following objectives:

- (a) collecting empirical data for the assessment of the structural quality and process quality of educational care and pre-primary settings for toddlers and pre-schoolers;
- (b) comparing the quality of early childhood education environments across six different educational systems by processing the selected data using advanced statistical analyses;
- (c) recording a wide range of ‘best practices’ implemented in early childhood classrooms in the participating countries. These data were compiled by the early educators during the second training phase, using an observation tool.

Procedure: The research was implemented in six countries: Greece, Finland, Denmark, Portugal, Romania, Cyprus, and from Romania a total number of 16 kindergartens, 128 groups of children and 120 ECEC educators were involved. The educators were trained to use the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-R (ECERS-R) that evaluates the quality of early childhood environments with different subscales: interaction, activities, language and reasoning, personal care routines, programme structure, space and furnishings. The standardised ECERS-R, which was translated and adapted to Romanian circumstances, was the main tool implemented both by the academic staff involved (the core team comprised the authors of the current report), and by the ECEC professionals in kindergartens who had been trained to use it. ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer 2005) was selected because it is a widely accepted and tested scale and has already been implemented in many developed countries (e.g. USA, UK, Germany, Sweden, Japan).

Findings: In all six participating countries the “interaction” subscale was rated the highest. In Romania “space and furnishings” was placed on second position, followed by “personal care”, “activities”, “language and reasoning” and “programme structure” (for details see Gregoriadis et.al. 2014, 18-19). Key findings in terms of research and examples of good practice were compiled in an e-book available at <http://earlychange.teithe.gr>.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salaries in **nurseries/crèches** and infant-toddler centres are the responsibility of local authorities, and there are no public data available.

The salaries of professional staff in **kindergartens** are regulated at the national level by law. Since 2016, many changes are underway regarding the legislation which regulates salaries in the public sector. One of the issues under debate is an increase in the salaries of teachers in kindergartens. The calculation of salaries will take into account many factors such as: level of studies, years of experience on the job, level of professional qualification gained through career advancement courses, etc. What the outcome will be remains unclear at the present time. The salaries are higher for professionals holding a higher education degree, and generally higher in kindergartens than in crèches.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

The majority of professional staff employed in ECEC works on a full-time basis, since there is little flexibility in terms of employment regulations. The regular working week comprises 40 hours, whereas the time for direct interaction with children varies according to the type of institution and the way the service is regulated. For instance, both short programme (around four hours per day) and extended programme (around eight hours per day) kindergartens exist. In the latter case, professional staff may work in shifts if the opening hours exceed the regular working hours of the staff.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

In the light of new policy initiatives related to the teaching profession, the induction of newly qualified teachers/educators is under debate again. After taking up their first job, teachers usually have a probationary period of two years (see end of *Section 4*), after which they take an examination called *definitivat*, which is both the final certification as a professional, and also the first step in career development. However, because of the lack of investment in this area, the amount of support they receive in the workplace varies considerably.

8.4 Non-contact time

The contractual obligations of both professional staff working in nurseries/crèches and in kindergartens include responsibilities which are not necessarily related to direct contact with children, such as participation in training and professional development activities, mentoring for other newly employed professionals, etc. In fact, staff responsibilities, mostly in kindergartens, diversified considerably in recent years, creating an increasing workload and pressure for the profession. There are no compiled national data available, but it can be estimated that a kindergarten teacher spends an average of two hours per day on this type of activity.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In terms of services for children under 3 years of age there is both a shortage of available provision and a shortage of qualified staff. The main reasons for the latter are the low salaries and the challenging work conditions.

In kindergartens/pre-primary education, the share of qualified staff is rather high, giving the system a certain level of stability. Basically, there is no shortage of qualified staff at the national level, particularly if the large number of study programmes in Pedagogy for Primary and Pre-primary Education accredited over the last few years are taken into account. However, the staffing situation in small urban and more isolated rural areas is a different matter, where providers have difficulties to recruit qualified staff. The main problem is twofold: one is related to the low level of income, and the other one is the inequality of qualified staff supplies in different areas.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The main challenge for the early childhood system in general and the ECEC workforce in particular is that there are **no formal employment conditions** and **no specialist qualification requirements** for staff working in **nursery settings** in Romania. Although universities have started to qualify appropriate specialists through Bachelor's and Master's degrees, the infant-toddler centres are nowhere near to being staffed with such specialists. Unfortunately there are no clear prospects for improving this situation in the near future. Debates on which authority should be responsible for regulating and funding such settings remain located at the administrative level and have failed to have an effective impact on the ground.

In terms of **kindergarten attendance**, although the official and formal attendance rates are high, many children attend only sporadically, creating significant challenges for the staff regarding appropriate support for the children's transition to school. Moreover, these irregular attendance patterns complicate a coherent and integrated educational approach with the whole group.

A third challenge relates to a significant **pressure on staff** in kindergartens/early childhood education to acquire as many formal certificates as possible through participation in training and professional development activities. Although the idea is not in itself negative, it creates a real run for formal certificates and tends to diminish interest in taking time for self-reflection, peer learning and cooperative action-research projects. The bureaucratic burdens and the high level of pressure emanating from both authorities and families regarding the safety and well-being of the children seriously limit the professional freedom of the staff and their possibilities of designing motivating learning activities.

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ROMANIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Laura Ciolan
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Romania – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeapro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 955-967.

Funded by:

Sources are briefly acknowledged at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Romania can be described as multi-sectoral. Services for children between 3 years and school entry come under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale - MEN*) and are part of the 'pre-university' education system. Responsibility for settings for the under-threes – which belong both to the national system of social services and to the education system - is shared with the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (*Ministerul Muncii și Justiției Sociale*) and the Ministry of Public Health (*Ministerul Sănătății*).

The Ministry of National Education, in cooperation with the County School Inspectorates (*Inspectoratul Școlar Județean*), regulates and coordinates settings and provides some funding. However, financing is primarily the responsibility of the local authorities, which also manage and organise provision, including staffing, materials and equipment.

Sources: Ciolan L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2016.
Ministry of National Education 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

The overarching objectives of early childhood education for children up to the age of 6/7 years are: a holistic, needs-based approach towards fostering all aspects of the child's personality which respects each child's individuality and autonomy; developing social competencies in interaction with other children and adults as a basis for exploratory and play-based forms of learning; supporting each child's identity construction and development of a positive self-image; supporting each child's acquisition of the knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes and behaviours required both for school and for life in general.

Key pieces of legislation for the ECEC sector are the National Education Act (*Legea educației naționale*, no.1/2011) with subsequent amendments, and the Social Work Act – Care and Supervision Services (no. 292/2011). The two main regulatory documents are *Methodology of Organization and Functioning of Nurseries and Other Early Pre-school Education Services* (GD Nr.1252/2012) and the *Regulation of Organization and Functioning of pre-university education units* (OM 5115/2014).

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Children in Romania are not entitled to a place in ECEC provision. However, the Education Act of 2011, with subsequent amendments, specifies that the municipalities and school inspectorates have a duty to ensure that sufficient places are available to meet local needs. Attendance is not compulsory, apart from the preparatory year in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds.

Primary schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2012.

Types of provision

Kindergartens (*grădinița*) are the main form of provision for 3- to 6-year olds, where the children learn and play together in same-age groups. Regular kindergarten programmes comprise a five-hour day, whereas extended programmes are open for 10 hours, including meals and rest times. Some settings offer boarding facilities between Mondays and Fridays. Provision for disadvantaged children under 6 years of age is coordinated by the Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection.

Since 2012, the first year in school for 6- to 7-year olds, called the **preparatory class** (*clasa pregătitoare*), has been compulsory (representing an effective lowering of statutory school age from 7 to 6 years).

Infant-toddler centres/crèches (*creșă*) provide for under 3-year olds, also usually in same-age groups. They are largely operated by private agencies and most commonly found in cities. Some facilities also admit older children as a way of sustaining the employment of staff. They are coordinated and financed at the local level, are not subject to control and are not obliged to follow a specific curriculum.

Since 2007, it is regulated by law (no. 263) that children in crèches participate in age-appropriate educational activities based on their individual needs. Furthermore, health and safety standards have to be met. Staff work closely with parents, offer support and contribute towards identifying possible risks for children. Most crèches are open between 7:00 and 17:00, but the opening hours can be adapted according to parents' needs.

In 2016, the number of crèches in Romania totalled only 39, compared with 1,138 kindergartens.

Disadvantaged or orphaned children can be cared for by 'motherly assistants' who are qualified through a crash course. They are paid as 'maternal assistants' by the Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2016.
INSSE 2017.

Provider structures

Kindergartens are mostly publicly operated (69.6% in 2016: 792 of a total 1,138), whereas crèches are predominantly organised by private providers (31 of a total 39).

In order to open a private setting, an individual or legal person has to make a contract with the school inspection directorate and go through a process of accreditation. If they are successful,

they receive state subsidies. Private facilities have to abide by the same regulations as public settings.

Table 1

Romania: Number and distribution of settings according to provider type, 2016*

Type of setting	Provider/ownership	Number of settings	Total no. of settings	Proportion in %
Crèche	Public	8	39	20.5
	Private	31		79.5
Kindergarten	Public	792	1,138	69.6
	Private	346		30.4

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2016.
*INSSE 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to Eurostat data, only a minority of children under 3 years (approx. 10%) were attending centre-based provision in 2010 and 2015. The participation rates of children aged 3 years up to school entry decreased slightly between 2010 (66%) and 2015 (58.2%). The low participation of children under age 3 can at least partly be explained by the poor provision and lack of services available.

Table 2

Romania: Participation rates in centre-based ECEC settings according to age and duration of attendance, 2015*

Year	Weekly attendance rate	Under 3 years, in %	3 years up to school entry, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	No data	No data
	Over 30 hours	No data	No data
	No attendance	No data	No data
2010	1 to 29 hours	4	49
	Over 30 hours	3	17
	No attendance	92	34
2015	1 to 29 hours	4.2	50.9
	Over 30 hours	15.2	7.3
	No attendance	90.6	41.8

Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

On the basis of national data on children in ECEC settings** and Eurostat data on the total number of children in each age group***, approximate participation rates have been calculated for 2016 according to age (see Table 3).

Table 3

Romania: Number of children in crèches and kindergartens and participation rates, 2016**

Age group	Children in ECEC settings	Total number of children per age group***	Participation rates, in % [†]
Under 1 year	n.a.	195,236	
1-year olds	5,698	196,060	2.9
2-year olds	11853	194,940	6.1
3-year olds in crèches	2,548	181,895	1.4
3-year olds in kindergartens	161,612	181,895	88.8
4-year olds	162,749	185,781	87.6

Age group	Children in ECEC settings	Total number of children per age group***	Participation rates, in % [†]
5-year olds	167,501	207,037	80.9
6-year olds	29,334	214,989	13.6

[†] own calculations

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
 ***Eurostat 2017a.
 *Eurostat 2017f.
 **INSSE 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

ECEC settings are mostly financed through local authority budgets. Kindergartens receive some state funding (e.g. for the salaries of qualified staff), whereas the salaries of staff in infant-toddler centres come only from local budgets.

Accredited private provision may also be granted state funding. All ECEC settings, including those in the public sector, can generate their own sources of revenue e.g. through donations or sponsorship.

Public-sector provision is free of charge for parents; parents only have to pay for meals (approx. 29€¹ in infant-toddler centres, and between 40€ and 63€ in kindergartens). Private, non-subsidised provision can cost up to 562€ per month.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
 Eurydice 2013.

Staff-child ratios

Both crèches and kindergartens have same-age grouping. In the 'small group' (*grupa mică*), children are 3 months to 1 year of age in crèches and between 3 and 4 years old in kindergartens. The 'middle group' (*grupa mijlocie*) comprises 1- to 2-year olds and 4- to 5-year olds respectively; the 'big group' (*grupa mijlocie*) comprises 2- to 3-year olds in crèches and 5- to 6-year olds in kindergartens. Mixed-age groups are possible but not common. When children with special educational needs are enrolled, the group size is lowered by 3 children.

Groups which cater exclusively for children with special educational needs range in size between eight to 12 children. If children with severe conditions are included, the number in the group is reduced to between four and eight children.

Professional staff usually work in five hour shifts. *Table 4* shows the maximum number of children in one group and per qualified staff member.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

Table 4

Romania: Number of children per group and qualified member of staff*

Age group	Number of children in group	Number of children per qualified member of staff
Under 1 year	max. 7 children, min. 5 children	4 children
1 to 3 years	max. 15 children	5 one-year olds, 6 two-year olds
3 to 6 years	max. 20 children, min. 10 children	17 children

On average, one qualified member of staff is responsible for just over 8 children, but the situation in the field varies considerably, since in the urban areas group size is much larger because of insufficient provision overall.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
*European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

Curricular frameworks

The restructuring of the education system led to a revision of the national curricular framework for early childhood education. In accordance with the National Education Act of 2011, the curriculum compiled at the time by the Ministry for National Education and Scientific Research (MENCS) emphasises children’s physical, cognitive, emotional and social development and aims to identify developmental difficulties at an early stage.

The curriculum for work in kindergartens adopts a holistic approach towards children’s development. Objectives relate to developing cognitive skills, such as handling problem situations and fostering divergent thinking; socio-emotional skills, such as living and working together, managing emotions, accepting diversity; and physical skills, such as motor abilities and health care. These objectives are followed through an integrated approach to learning which includes experiences in the domains of Language and Communication, Science, Aesthetic and Creative activities, Man and Society, Psychomotor activities. Tools for developing skills, attitudes, abilities and knowledge in these domains are exploratory play, storytelling, explaining and discussing, and project work.

Professional staff are responsible for the selection of didactical approaches, adjusting them to the situation and needs of the children.

For children under 3 years of age the curricular framework focuses on physical development, health aspects, oral language and socio-emotional development. In crèches, play, art, musical and creative are the preferred activities for stimulating these aspects. Regular observations, guided and exploratory play and outdoor play are all part of the everyday activities.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In general, children with special educational needs attend mainstream provision, sometimes in separated groups within the setting, e.g. if they have a chronic illness. Individual children may be supported by a specialist member of staff if this is considered necessary following an expert diagnosis. Regional education committees coordinate speech therapy centres for groups of schools and kindergartens. Certified Speech Therapists give guidance to the regular ECEC staff for support-

ing children with language difficulties. Some segregated ECEC centres are also available for children with disabilities.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, only 0.5% of the total population and 0.2% of children under 5 years of age had a non-Romanian background. More than half of these persons (54.9%) and 85.6% of the under-fives came from countries outside the EU28*.

3.2% of under 3-year olds and 7.6% of over 3-year olds attending an ECEC setting speak a language other than Romanian**.

Currently, there is a growing interest and motivation to design and implement specific programmes for these children, but currently there are few language support services in place.

Sources: Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
EPIC 2016.
*Eurostat 2017g.
**INSSE 2017.

Monitoring – Research – Evaluation

The National Ministry of Education is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the entire education system. Quality standards for the ECEC sector, which also form the basis of external evaluations, are developed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance (*Agentia Romana de Asigurare a Calitatii in Invatamantul Preuniversitar - ARACIP*) and implemented according to governmental resolutions. The Agency is also responsible for the accreditation of new educational institutions and for the organisation of external evaluations, which are conducted at least once every three years.

External evaluations and self-evaluation procedures

The regional school inspectorates are responsible for evaluating the educational work of the settings and compile regional annual reports at the end of each school year. These are forwarded to the Ministry of Education and to all schools and kindergartens in each district. Inspections are either related to the setting as a whole and include financial, administrative and didactic aspects, or may be focused on a specific topic. Rating scales are used to assess, e.g. management quality, relationships between staff and parents, and compliance with legal requirements. Staff assessments may also be made regarding the certification of those with permanent posts. Follow-up inspections review compliance with agreed targets. Centre Heads may also assess their staff teams in collaboration with the co-ordinators of the methodological centres. Depending on the size of the educational institution, inspections may take up to five days.

Criteria for self-evaluation procedures are either included in the evaluations conducted by the school inspectorates or the ECEC centres develop their own. They are required to evaluate the following on an annual basis: organisational development of the setting, the educational programme, curricular and extra-curricular activities, the quality of teaching and learning processes, the professional development of staff, relations with the community, and the European dimension of education. There are no specified self-evaluation instruments; outcomes are used at the institutional level for further planning. At the regional level they may be used to make budgetary decisions, and they are included in the annual evaluation reports.

Child-related assessments

Assessments of individual children's progress are based on reference standards issued by the Ministry of National Education. An initial or baseline assessment is undertaken during the first two weeks of kindergarten attendance. Staff make notes of their observations and conversations with

children and parents. During the course of the year, they keep written accounts of their observations and assessments and discuss these with the child's parents. They also work closely with educational psychology support centres (*Centrul Județean de Asistență Psihopedagogică*). A two-week evaluation at the end of the kindergarten year is recommended but is not a requirement. Planning for the following year is made on the basis of these assessments. At the end of the child's time in kindergarten, staff complete a standardised document which describes developmental aspects and is used for the transition to school. Testing or marking the children's work is not permitted in kindergartens.

In ECEC settings for under-threes, staff observations are compiled in each child's portfolio. They relate to medical and psychological aspects of the child's development.

Research

Research in early childhood education is mainly funded by non-governmental sources. The key studies in the area are supported by UNICEF Romania and realised, many times, with the specialist support of the Institute for Educational Sciences or academics from universities. Both public universities and the Institute for Educational Sciences have research projects on early years education, but they struggle with funding; most of the time they have to apply for grants coming both from national or international sources. Here we have to acknowledge the contribution coming from the non-governmental organisations active in the field, contributing not only to interventions, but also developing useful studies and reports.

A particular area of research in recent years is related to children's well-being. Two studies are very relevant for this field, one realised under the auspices of World Vision Romania*. The other, still under implementation, is coordinated by specialists at the University of Bucharest, which is attempting to determine the impact of social and emotional factors on global child development and validating a specific intervention to increase children's well-being in kindergarten and primary school. Preliminary findings will be published in 2018.

Sources: *Bădescu, G., N. Petre, and D. Angi 2014.
Ciolan, L. et al. 2017.
Eurydice 2012, 2016.

Parental leave

Maternity leave (*concediul de maternitate*) is granted for 18 weeks. Mothers can choose to take nine weeks before the birth date and nine weeks afterwards, or may take the entire period of 126 days after the birth. Six weeks after birth are obligatory. Remuneration comprises 85% of mean monthly gross earnings during the six months preceding the child's birth if social insurance contributions were paid during this time.

Fathers are entitled to five fully paid days of **paternity leave** (*concediul de paternitate*). Since 2016, if the father has attended a childcare course in a state approved institution, paternity leave can be extended up to 15 days.

Parental leave (*concediul parental/pentru creșterea copilului*) can last up to 24 months and since July 2016 parents receive a payment of 85% of net earnings over the year preceding the birth, and no less than 85% of the basic minimum wage (currently 1,450RON [315€] per month). One month of parental leave must be transferred to the other parent otherwise the total period of leave is reduced by one month. If the parent returns to employment before the child's 2nd birthday, they receive a monthly lump sum up to the child's third birthday (in July 2016: 531.25RON [118€]).

The majority of mothers make use of the 24 month parental leave entitlement. The take-up of paternity leave by fathers increased from 26,517 in 2012 to 30,335 in 2015 (approx. 14%).

Sources: EPIC 2016.
Macht, A. and R. Popescu 2017.
Pop, L. 2016.

Historical highlights and shifts

1866	The Project for the Law on elementary, primary and secondary and higher instruction contained for the first time specific norms on setting up <i>gradina de copii</i> (kindergartens).
1881	First kindergarten based on Froebelian principles established
1896 – 1910	166 kindergartens, with approximately 170 full time positions of <i>educatoare</i> (kindergarten educators)
1910	First curricular framework for early childhood education and introduction of free attendance and compulsory attendance for children aged 6.
1939	In the Law for organisation and functioning of primary and normal education, the term <i>gradina de copii</i> is used for kindergartens for children aged 5-7
1955	Around 19% of 3- to 6-year olds enrolled in a kindergarten
Up to 1970s	Expansion of early childhood provision to accommodate growing demand
1974	Participation rates rise to 42% The curriculum for educational and instructional activities in kindergarten is developed and issued at the national level.
1981	75% of 3- and 4-year olds and 90% of 5- and 6-year olds enrolled
1990	Reform of the education system – introduction of new educational standards and move away from the ideological legacy of communism
1990-1994	The first kindergarten groups based on alternative pedagogies are set up: Jena, Montessori, Waldorf, Step-by-Step.
1995	The first Education Act after the collapse of communism (Law 84/1995), consolidating the statute of kindergartens as part of the pre-university education system and the enrolment of children aged 3-7.
2000	A new framework curriculum and syllabi for the three kindergarten age groups is adopted and the statute of preparatory group for school is consolidated.
2003	A new legal provision extends compulsory education in Romania to 10 years, including a preparatory year preceding school entry.
2005	Professionals working in kindergartens are qualified at higher education levels and are called teachers for pre-primary and primary education, having the same statute as other teachers within the education system.
2011	New National Education Act
2012	Integration of the previous compulsory pre-primary class for 6-year olds into primary schools, effectively lowering the statutory school age by one year

Sources: Compiled by Laura Ciolan 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Romania

Country expert assessment by Laura Ciolan

The main current challenge for the ECEC system in Romania is the very low level of coverage and provision for the age group 0-3 years. This is due to a number of issues presented in the ECEC Workforce Profile for Romania. Following the transfer of financing and all logistical matters to the

local authorities, without sufficient preparation, some municipalities have not been able to secure resources for this service or they have neglected it. In our view, this low number of services, combined with rather poor educational quality, is directly impacting on the daily lives of the families, on early child development, but also, indirectly, on the national economy. Uniting the delivery of early childhood services for the youngest children, coordinating the educational function of these institutions and securing the necessary funding are the key measures needed for ensuring a better system.

Securing highly qualified professionals for the earliest years represents the second main challenge, since currently the personnel in infant-toddler centres do not necessarily have the appropriate education and training as professionals. Moreover, the providers of IPS are not highly motivated to organise such programmes since there are not many working places available. This vicious circle could be broken if education for the age group 0-3 was clearly regulated and funded and if the institutions were staffed with high quality professionals. Further challenges in this respect can be found in the ECEC Workforce Profile report.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Romania totalled 19,760,314. Over the past 20 years or so the total population has been in continuous decline (from 22,712,394 in 1995 and 21,382,354 in 2005).

Children under age six

In 2016, 3% of the total population were children under 3 years of age and 5.9% children under 6 years of age. These proportions are similar to the EU28 average; however, compared with 1995, they have sunk significantly.

Table 5

Romania: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	195,236
1-year olds	196,060
2-year olds	194,940
Under age 3 total	586,236
3-year olds	181,895
4-year olds	185,781
5-year olds	207,037
3- to under 6-year olds, total	574,713
0- to under 6-year olds, total	1,160,949

Table 6

Romania: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995-2016, in %[†]

	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.9	4.7	3.1	4.2	2.9	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.2	8.0	6.1	7.3	5.9	6.2

[†] own calculations; differences in sum totals due to roundings

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO and HR.

Sources: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age six

44.3% of the households in Romania in 2015 with children under 6 years of age were couple households. Single parent households accounted for only 1.2% of total households, and these were almost exclusively single mother households (1.1%).

Table 7

Romania: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	2,143,200	
Couple households	950,000	44.3
Other type of household	1,167,900	54.5
Single households, total	25,300	1.2
Single households, women	22,300	1.0
Single households, men	3,000**	0.1

*Own calculations; **data computed

Sources: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age six

In Romania, the total employment rate of men (15 to 64 years) in 2015 was 69.5% and that of women 53.2%.

In the same year, 56.7% of women and 82.9% of men with children under 6 years of age were participating in the labour market. Both employment rates are above the EU28 average.

Table 8

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 in Romania and the EU, 2005-2015

		Mothers, in per cent	Fathers, in per cent
Romania	2005	56.7	80.7
	2010	57.0	82.4
	2015	56.7	82.9
European Union	EU15 - 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 - 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Country with highest employment rate	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Country with lowest employment rate	2005	Hungary – 33.2	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 42.4% of children under age 6 in Romania were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This was the highest child poverty rate in the EU28 (average: 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 37.4% - the second highest rate in the EU28.

Sources: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(ARPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(ARPE))

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Tatiana Volkova

Institute of Developmental Physiology,
Russian Academy of Education, Moscow

Citation suggestion:

Volkova, T. 2018. "Russian Federation – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.see-pro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 968-986.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

During Soviet times, Russia had a unified system of early childhood education and care for children aged 0 to 7 years, with centrally regulated directives. Today, the Russian Federation has a multi-level approach towards early childhood education and care. Responsibilities are shared between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (*Ministerstvo Obrazovaniya i Nauki Rossijskoj Federacii*) and the Ministries of Education in the 85 administrative divisions or 'federal subjects' (provinces, republics, *okrugs*, *krais*, *oblasts*, federal cities). The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation sets down the curriculum requirements for both the public and private ECEC sector according to the 2010 Federal State Educational Standard (*Federal'nyye gosudarstvennyye standarty obshchego obrazovaniya - FGOS*) for Basic Education (in short: Federation Standard), whereas governance and implementation are devolved to the federal subject level.

At the level of the administrative divisions, ECEC is organised as a split system. Provision for under 3-year olds is not part of the official education system and is – particularly for the under 2-year olds – provided by the private sector and regulated by the Law on Consumer Rights. Hygiene standards are overseen by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Kindergartens for 3- to 7-year olds (ISCED 02) come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2012, early childhood education was officially recognised as the first stage in the education system (Bertram and Pascal 2016). The regional ministries of education are responsible for implementing national educational policies through steering and management strategies and through the allocation of resources. Responsibility for the organisation and co-funding of kindergartens lies with the municipalities (EFA 2015).

In 2010, the formal qualification requirements, competence specifications and duties of ECEC staff were regulated through an order of the Ministry of Health and Social Development (*Ministerstvo Zdravoohraneniya i Social'nogo Razvitija Rossijskoj Federacii*). In 2013, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs issued a Professional Standard for pedagogical staff (order No. 544). However, this order has not yet been enforced and professional competencies are now under the direction of the new Minister of Education. In November 2016, the Federal Ministry of Education initiated a public consultation to invite the views of ECEC teachers¹. Following this consultation, amendments will be made to the Professional Standard, which will be issued by the Federal Ministry of Education and is expected to come into force in 2018.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff in kindergartens

Kindergartens for 2-/3- to 7-year olds are the main form of ECEC provision in Russia. Five main categories of staff are employed on a regular basis in kindergartens:

- **Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers** (*doshkolny pedagog/vospitatel*)
- **Kindergarten Teachers' Assistants** (*assistant/nyanya*)
- **Specialist staff** (psychologists, speech therapists, teachers for music, sport, dance (*psykholog, logoped, pedagog po musike, fizkulture i tantcam*))

¹ From 14 Nov-1 Dec. 2017 there was a public hearing on this topic (<http://стандартпедагога.рф/theme.php?id=1#>)

- **Pedagogical Supervisors** (*metodist*)
- **Centre Heads** (principals) and Deputy Centre Heads perform managerial tasks and are responsible for pedagogic, financial and legal issues. They are not involved in the daily educational programme.

The following staff may also be employed in kindergartens:

Children with special educational needs are supported by **Special Needs Teachers** and **Special Needs Assistants** (*defektolog, tjutor*). Settings may also employ a **Social Pedagogue** (*socialny pedagog*) to support children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds or a non-teaching **Organisation/Coordination Teacher** (*pedagog organizator*) who organises special events for important national holidays² and cooperates with different social services. Since the Federal Standard stipulates that children in kindergarten have to learn about state and government, these holidays are organised as non-formal learning events.

Non-pedagogical staff include nurses as well as kitchen and administrative staff. Due to reorganisation in some federal subjects most of the non-pedagogical staff are outsourced.

Staff in childcare settings for under 3-year olds

Public infant-toddler centres (*yasli*) are mostly integrated into kindergartens and in these particular settings the children are educated and cared for by Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers (*doshkolnyj pedagog/vospitatel*) and Kindergarten Teachers' Assistants, i.e. these children have access to the same qualified staff as older children. However, in privately-run childcare settings, the staffing situation is different since most of these settings do not have to adhere to government regulations. On the one hand, some of these elite settings attract highly educated staff through higher salaries. On the other hand, some of the very small private settings employ staff who have little more than an Assistant qualification.

Table 1 provides an overview of staff who works in centre-based settings according to their occupational title, main workplace settings, main positions, main age-range focus of their initial professional studies (IPS) and the minimum qualification requirement. Core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are also categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1
Russian Federation: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
Pre-primary education sector				
<i>Doshkolny pedagog/Vospitatel</i> Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher	<i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	2/3–6/7 years	3 years post-secondary vocational qualification in the field of pedagogy and early childhood education
<i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvaniya</i> Sessional services 1½–5 years			ECTS points: n/a ⁴ in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4 <i>Option but not requirement:</i>

² Examples: *Novogodnie utrenniki – Jolki* (Christmas time), *Maslenitca* (traditional national carnival at the end of winter), *Den Pobedy* (Victory Day 9th May)

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014

⁴ n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
				University degree ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Assistant/nyanya</i> Kindergarten Teacher's Assistant	<i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years	Non-specialist co-worker	2/3–6/7 years	3 years post-secondary vocational qualification ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4
<i>Logoped</i> Speech Therapist <i>Psikholog</i> Psychologist	<i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years	Regular contact staff with specialist qualification who work alongside the Kindergarten Teacher	Age-range depends on specialisation	3 years post-secondary vocational qualification in the field of pedagogy or 4-year university degree plus 2 years of work experience in educational settings ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0114/0313 ISCED 2011: 4 to 6
<i>Metodist</i> Pedagogical Supervisor <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years	Supervision of teaching/learning processes and quality assurance	2/3–6/7 years	Qualified Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher with at least 2 years of work experience in kindergarten settings or 4-year university degree plus 2 years of work experience in educational settings ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0114/0313 ISCED 2011: 4 to 6 ⁵
<i>Defektolog</i> Special Needs Teacher <i>Tjutor</i> Special Needs Assistant <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional (special needs)	<i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years	Specialist support staff	Age-range depends on specialisation	University degree plus 2 years of work experience in educational settings ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6

⁵ We would like to point out that some parts of the Russian higher education system are not aligned with the Bologna system. The quality of the education plan differs considerably, therefore we decided to give ranges regarding the ISCED levels.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
<p><i>Vospitatel fiskul'tury/musiki/tvorchestva</i> Sport/Music/Art Teachers</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years</p>	Specialist support staff	ca. 2-7 years	<p>3 years post-secondary vocational education/training in the field of pedagogy</p> <p>or</p> <p>University degree (<i>diploma or diploma plus magistratura</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 4 to 6</p>
<p><i>Socialny pedagog</i> Social Pedagogue</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years</p>	Post for work with children/families in special social conditions (vulnerable groups or families with more than 3 children); position not obligatory	n/a	<p>3 years post-secondary vocational education/training</p> <p>or</p> <p>university education (<i>diploma or diploma plus magistratura</i>) in the field of pedagogy or social pedagogy</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0923 ISCED 2011: 4 to 6</p>
<p><i>Pedagog organizator</i> Organisation/Coordination Teacher</p>	<p><i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years</p>	Special post for organising events and coordinating with social services and community; position not obligatory	n/a	<p>3 years post-secondary vocational education/training</p> <p>or</p> <p>university education (<i>diploma or diploma plus magistratura</i>) in the field of pedagogy</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4 to 6</p>
<p><i>Direktor destkogo sada/Zamestitel rukovoditelya</i> Centre Head/Deputy Centre Head</p>	<p><i>Detskije sadyc</i> Kindergarten public and private 2/3–6/7 years</p>	Core practitioner with managerial tasks, not working directly with children		<p>4 years university degree ('Government and municipal management') plus 5 years work experience</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0413 ISCED 2011: 6 to 7</p>
Childcare sector				
<p><i>Vospitatel</i> Educator</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (with</p>	<p><i>Yaslie</i> Infant-toddler centres 1–3 years</p> <p><i>Gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvani-</i></p>	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0–3 years	<p>3 years post-secondary vocational qualification in the field of pedagogy and early childhood education</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia</p>

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ³ level
nursery specialism)	<i>ja</i> Sessional services 1½–5 years			ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 <i>Option but not requirement:</i> University degree (<i>diploma or diploma plus magistratura</i>) ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Assistant Vospitatel</i> Educator's Assistant	<i>Detskije sadye</i> Nursery group located in kindergarten (public and private) 0–3 years	Non-specialist co-worker; junior position	n/a	3 years post-secondary vocational qualification ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce

The ECEC workforce in the Russian Federation comprises two sets of personnel: those working in the pre-primary education sector (3–7 years) and those working in the childcare sector (0–3 years).

Education sector (3–6)

Staffing in the **education sector** comprises not only core practitioners but also therapists, sports, music and art teachers, psychologists and speech therapists (see *Section 2.1*).

Teachers working in kindergartens and other early childhood education provision have to have at least a three-year post-secondary vocational education with a specialisation in early childhood education and pedagogy.

The level of initial professional education has been rising over the past few years: In 2015, 51% of teachers (643,700) in early childhood education held a university degree, compared with only 29% in 2002 (Taratukhina et al. 2006). Roughly the other half has a post-secondary level vocational teaching qualification.

In the near future, the federal Ministry of Education and Science plans to make a university degree of at least three years' duration the minimum requirement for entry into the profession as a Kindergarten Teacher. This could lead to improved professional prestige and improved quality in early childhood education.

As in many other countries, male kindergarten/preschool teachers are rare (approx. 1%).

Table 2 and Table 3 give an overview of the structural composition of the workforce in the pre-primary education sector.

Table 2

Russian Federation: Structural composition of the workforce in the pre-primary education sector

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with university degree (including support staff with a university degree, e.g. psychologists)	2015: 50.7% (47.7% specialised in pedagogy)
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2015: 47.7% (44.2% specialised in pedagogy)
Staff with non-specialist qualification	No data available
Staff with no formal initial professional qualification	1.6%
Specialist support staff: speech therapists and psychologists	2015: 6.5%
Male staff	2015: approx. 1%
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

Source: Rosstat 2016.

Table 3

Russian Federation: Development of staff composition in the system of pre-primary education, 2012-2015

Year	Kindergarten teachers	Music teachers	Sports instructors	Education psychologists	Speech therapists	Others	Total
2012	485,500	42,100	21,300	14,500	27,400	17,700	608,500
2013	500,300	43,900	22,200	15,000	28,300	18,300	628,000
2014	515,100	45,100	23,100	15,400	29,300	18,900	646,900
2015	522,000	44,000	20,800	14,800	28,300	13,800	643,700
2015: share in %	81.1	6.8	3.2	2.3	4.4	2.1	100

Source: Skorolupov 2015.

Childcare sector (0-3)

Since the childcare sector for under-threes is not fully regulated, there are no reliable data available. However, it can be assumed that the pedagogical staff structure is similar to that for provision with the over-threes, although specialist support staff such as Special Needs Teachers, Organisation Teachers, Pedagogical Supervisors and Psychologists are not part of the staff in childcare centres. If special support is needed, parents have to apply for services in municipal or state kindergartens. In order to be more flexible in terms of job opportunities, staff in infant-toddler centres mostly follow qualification routes that also enable them to work in kindergartens.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Russia there are several qualifying routes on the vocational and university level. The VET training is very heterogeneously structured and the schedules are very different from each other, but they all contain a minimum of basic content and minimum hours, which are orientated on the required skills. The same is true at the university level (taking into account the studies for external participation on a part-time basis.) Therefore it is difficult to compare the quality of studies with the EQF or ISCD framework.

Education sector (3-6)

The following gives a brief description of the varying formal levels of initial professional studies, both within and between different occupational roles in the kindergarten sector (see also Klishin 2015):

Kindergarten/Pre-Primary Teacher

- University degree or vocational education/training with specialisation in Pedagogy and Early Childhood Education, *or*
- University degree or vocational education/training not related to education with additional training in the field of Education and Pedagogy

Junior Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

- General vocational education/training, *or*
- Vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy

Senior Teacher/Pedagogical Supervisor

- University degree or vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy
- At least 2 years of work experience as a Kindergarten Teacher

Kindergarten Teacher's Assistant

- School education and vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy
- No previous working experience required

Psychologist

- University degree or vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy, *or*
- University degree (*diploma or diploma plus magistratura*) or vocational education/training in the field of Pedagogy and Psychology

Speech Therapist/Special Needs Teacher

- University degree in the field of speech therapy/special needs

Special Needs Assistant

- University degree in the field of Education and Pedagogy
- Minimum of 2 years working experience in a pedagogical setting

Social Pedagogue

- University degree or vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogics or Social Pedagogy

Organisation/Co-ordination Teacher

- University degree or vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy or in a field which fits to the job profile

Art Teacher/Sports Teacher

- University degree or vocational education/training in the field of Education and Pedagogy
- Proficiency in arts/sports

Centre Head/Principal

- University degree in the field of Government and Municipal Management, Human Resources Management *or* working experience as a Kindergarten Teacher of at least 5 years, *or*
- University degree and additional professional education/training in the field of Government and Municipal Management or Economics *and* at least 5 years of working experience in a management position.

Deputy Centre Head/Deputy Principal

- University degree in the field of Government and Municipal Management, Human Resources Management *or* working experience of at least 5 years, *or*
- University degree and additional professional education in the field of Government and Municipal Management or Economics *and* at least 5 years of working experience in a management position.

Director of a sub organisation (*rukovoditel strukturogo podrazdelenija*)

- University degree with special focus on the profile of the organisation and working experience in this field of at least 3 years.

Table 4

Russian Federation: Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

Job title in Russian: <i>Doshkolny pedagog/Vospitatel</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>) Professional studies: 3 years at an post-secondary vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie chilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy Award: Vocational diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance qualification) ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Detskije sadyc</i> (Kindergarten), 2/3–6/7 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvanija</i> (sessional services), 1½–5 years <i>or</i> Entry requirements: University entrance qualification Professional studies: 4 years university study route in education, pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy either in full-time study courses (<i>ochno</i>) or as a distance education course (<i>zaочно</i>) Award: University degree (equivalent to a Bachelor's degree) ⁶ ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2 011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: see above

⁶ Please note that although Russia is now participating in the Bologna process, not all study curricula are 100% comparable.

Table 5

Russian Federation: Centre Head/Deputy Centre Head

Job title in Russian: <i>Direktor detstogo sada/Zamestitel rukovoditelya</i>
<p>Entry requirements: University entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years university study route in Government and Municipal Management plus 5 years work experience in a management position <i>or</i> 5 years work experience as a Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p>Award: University degree</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0413</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>detskije sadyc</i> (Kindergarten), 2/3-6/7 years</p>

Table 6

Russian Federation: Psychologist/Speech Therapist

Job title in Russian: <i>Specialist Psycholog/ Specialist Logoped</i>
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at a post-secondary vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie chilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy</p> <p>Award: Vocational diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114/0313</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Detskije sadyc</i> (Kindergarten), 2/3–6/7 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvaniya</i> (sessional services), 1½–5 years</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: University entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years university study route in education, pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy either in full-time study courses (<i>ochno</i>) or as a distance education course (<i>zaочно</i>) (plus 2 years of work experience in educational settings before taking up the post)</p> <p>Award: University degree (Bachelor equivalent)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114/0313</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: see above</p>

Table 7

Russian Federation: Pedagogical Supervisor

Job title in Russian: <i>Metodist</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at a post-secondary vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie chilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy (plus 2 years of work experience in educational settings before taking up the post)</p> <p>Award: Vocational diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance qualification)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p>

Job title in Russian: Metodist Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Detskije sady</i> (Kindergarten), 2/3–6/7 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvaniya</i> (sessional services), 1½–5 years</p> <p>or</p> <p>Entry requirements: University entrance qualification</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years university study route in education, pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy either in full-time study courses (<i>ochno</i>) or as a distance education course (<i>zaочно</i>)</p> <p>Award: University degree (Bachelor equivalent)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114/0313</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6 or 7</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: see above</p>

Table 8

Russian Federation: Kindergarten Teacher's Assistant

Job title in Russian: Assistant/nyanya
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at an post-secondary vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie uchilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy</p> <p>Award: Vocational diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance qualification)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Detskije sady</i> (Kindergarten), 2/3–6/7 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvaniya</i> (sessional services), 1½–5 years</p>

Childcare sector (0-3)

Although the childcare sector for under 3-year olds is not as regulated as the pre-primary sector and a three-year post-secondary vocational education is sufficient for working in settings for under-threes, staff mainly have the same qualifications as their colleagues working with older children in order to be more flexible in terms of job opportunities.

Table 9

Russian Federation: Educator/Childcare Worker

Job title in Russian: Doshkolny pedagog/Vospitatel Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at an post-secondary vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie chilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy</p> <p>Award: Vocational diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance qualification)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a in Russia</p> <p>EQF level: n/a in Russia</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>yaslye</i> (infant toddler centre), 1½-3 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvaniya</i> (ses-</p>

Job title in Russian: <i>Doshkolny pedagog/Vospitatel</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
sional services), 1½–5 years or Entry requirements: University entrance qualification Professional studies: 4 years university study route in education, pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy either in full-time study courses (<i>ochno</i>) or as a distance education course (<i>zaочно</i>) Award: University degree (Bachelor equivalent) ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: see above

Table 10

Russian Federation: Centre Head/Deputy Head

Job title in Russian: <i>Direktor detkogo sada/Zamestitel rukovoditelya</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Management Professional
Entry requirements: University entrance qualification Professional studies: 4 years university study route in Government and Municipal Management plus 5 years work experience in a management position or 5 years work experience as a Kindergarten Teacher Award: University degree (Bachelor equivalent) ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0413 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: <i>yaslye</i> (Infant-toddler centre), 1/1½-3 years

Table 11

Russian Federation: Educator's Assistant

Job title in Russian: <i>Assistant Vospitatel</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory school with school leaving certificate (<i>attestat ob osnovnom obshem obrazovanii</i>) Professional studies: 3 years at a vocational education/training college (<i>sredneje professionalnoje obrazovanie uchilishche</i>) specialising in pedagogy Award: Diploma (<i>diplom o srednem professionalnom obrazovanii</i>) (= university entrance qualification) ECTS points: n/a in Russia EQF level: n/a in Russia ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplaces: <i>yaslye</i> (infant-toddler centre) 1/1,5-3 years; <i>gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvanija</i> (sessional services), 1½–5 years

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

(post-secondary vocational route and university study route)

Educator/Childcare Worker (post-secondary vocational route)

Competency specifications

Prospective Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers and Educators/Childcare Workers are expected to acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- Developments in the educational system of the Russian Federation;

- Laws and other regulations on education;
- UN Convention on children's rights;
- Pedagogy; developmental and social psychology;
- Methods of observation and monitoring children's activities;
- Pedagogical ethics;
- Theory and didactics of educational work;
- Leisure time activities;
- Methods of management of educational systems;
- Using modern pedagogical and digital technologies;
- Cooperating with children of different age-groups, parents, co-workers;
- identification of conflict situations and coping strategies;
- Basic knowledge in ecology, economics, sociology;
- Basics of computer work with text editors, emails, browsers; using multimedia equipment;
- Employment policies and procedures in educational institutions;
- Regulations on labour protection and fire safety.

Curricular areas in the **vocational** route comprise:

- Pedagogical basics;
- Theory and methods of education;
- Federal Standard of Education;
- Didactics and methods of educational research and science;
- Pedagogy of preschool education;
- Psychology of the early years;
- Methods of teaching in preschool classes.

Curricular areas additional to the above in the **university** study route include:

- humanistic subjects such as philosophy, history, foreign language, economics, educational linguistics;
- Organisational and legal basics;
- Developing a professional identity;
- Health issues in preschool education;
- Inclusive education;
- Preparing children for school;
- Innovations in preschool education;
- Language development, diagnosis of disorders and their prevention;
- Information technologies in education;
- Development of children's graphic creativity.

Centre Head – university route

Competency specifications

A prospective centre head is expected to:

- Manage an educational institution according to the laws and other regulations;
- Combine teaching and administrative tasks;
- Implement the Federal State Educational Standard (FGOS);
- Decide on the grouping of children;
- Provide health and safety protection for the children;
- Respect the rights and freedom of pupils and employees of educational institutions;
- Define the strategic programme of the educational institution;
- Establish a work programme for the institution;
- Support participation in various programmes and projects;
- Supervise the continuing quality improvement of the educational institution;

- Implement educational programmes, curricula and training programmes in cooperation with municipalities or public organisations;
- Create conditions for the introduction of innovations;
- Promote a good working climate;
- Use budgetary funds effectively and efficiently;
- Supervise the salary fund according to the basic and stimulating aspects;
- Manage the staffing of the institution and select and recruit new staff;
- Solve personnel, administrative, financial, economic and other matters according to the charter of the educational institution;
- Create opportunities for the continuing professional development of staff;
- Provide satisfactory and safe working conditions;
Deploy staff according to their knowledge and experience;
- Promote and enhance staff motivation;
- Provide conditions of staff participation in management decisions;
- Plan, coordinate and control the work of staff in the educational institution;
- Cooperate with public authorities, local government authorities and the general public, parents and others;
- Represent the educational institution in the public domain;
- Promote cooperation with education-related organisations and associations;
- Feel responsible for material resources, documentation and finances;
- Prepare annual reports for the service provider, including financial statements.

Curricular areas include subjects focussing on administration, finance, pedagogy, municipal management, budget management, public relations.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Persons already in possession of a post-secondary vocational award or a university degree in a non-related field can follow a so-called requalification course (*perekvalifikacija*) to become a Kindergarten Teacher. The course comprises 500 hours of presence studies and 100 hours of personal/home-based study and includes the following curricular areas: pedagogical basics; theory and methods of education; Federal Standard for Education; didactics and methods of education research and science; preschool pedagogy; psychology of the early years; methods of teaching in kindergarten.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

In Russia, the study routes of ECEC core practitioners are mainly theory-based. Only some colleges provide short-term practical placements in kindergartens. However, these are not evaluated and are not acknowledged in terms of the vocational award. So most young ECEC professionals are not properly prepared for their practical work. However, training-on-the-job is monitored by the Pedagogical Supervisor and individually designed for the new staff members. This is a kind of step-by-step introduction to the ECEC working environment; it is not formally structured or related to specific curricular areas. There are at least two reasons for this: one is a basic lack of knowledge in skills-orientated teaching, the other is the fact that using a competence matrix for assessment is still unusual. In the end, quantitative assessment procedures remain the favoured approach for internal auditing or awarding a licence (Mansarliyskaya 2016).

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

In the Russian Federation, no standardised CPD exists for staff working in the childcare sector. Each member of staff is responsible for his/her own CPD, depending on their educational level. However, centre heads sometimes establish a CPD plan for their staff and are supported by the provider in terms of legal and administrative issues.

Kindergarten Teachers, on the other hand, are required to participate in at least one course of additional further qualification training of not less than 72 hours per year. These trainings can also include e-learning modules and homework as preparation for onsite CPD sessions.

In order to guarantee the quality of the teaching staff, all ECEC staff has to pass an accreditation or so-called attestation (*attestatcia*) every three years. For this they have to submit information on the teaching programmes attended, professional diplomas gained, additional qualifications, confirmation of participation in competitions to the local supervisory centre to prove that their qualification has been updated. Although staff in infant-toddler centres are not obliged to pass an attestation, most of them go through the process because it then enables them to work in settings with 3- to 6-year olds.

Whereas courses chosen for personal interests have to be paid by the employee, the obligatory 72-hours courses take place during working hours and are paid by the employer. They are provided either by public education service centres or by private teaching institutes. Moreover, pedagogical universities which are licensed by the local or federal ministry of education offer trainings on both general and specialised topics (e.g. improving creativity in kindergartens). There is a variety of courses on offer and the market is very competitive. Course fees vary between 5,000/6,000 RUB (79/95€) and 20,000 RUB (319€) depending on the topic and the reputation of the lecturer.

Centre heads decide about their staff's participation on CPD courses and about the chosen topic in order to improve the profile of their setting (e.g. to strengthen a focus on inclusion or natural sciences). Centre heads also can grant free time to participate in CPD or to pass exams. But CPD is not recognised in terms of career advancement and acquired skills are not evaluated.

Additional qualifications can be achieved through university courses or post-diploma degrees (so called *magistratura*) which are comparable to a Bologna Master's degree.

Kindergarten Teachers wishing to become Centre Heads additionally have to pass an examination with an oral test in front of a commission that decides whether the candidate is suitable for this position. If approved, the candidate is registered in a list for the next management position available. The test has to be repeated every three years.

Currently, there are no research projects on the topic of CPD, apart from some smaller regional model projects which have focused on team-building. There are no projects focussing on career assessment and development. At the moment all resources are allocated on developing competences on FGOS, so there is no room left for strategic career path development.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

In recent years there have been no policy reforms relating to ECEC staffing. As mentioned in *section 1*, a new Federal Standard for Professional Education regarding the qualification of Kindergarten Teachers is under review at the different ministerial levels following a consultation process. A new law or Professional Standard is expected to be announced in 2018.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Little research has been carried out on the initial professional studies of Kindergarten Teachers, possibly because of their low social status in Russia. New pedagogical and didactic approaches are taught in a 72-hour additional professional qualification, but not within the basic vocational education/training course. Current research tends to focus on the implementation of the Federal Standard, i.e. on topics needed to enhance Kindergarten Teachers' competencies to meet the national requirements. There is little other research on professionalization or staffing issues.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The career levels of kindergarten teachers are classified in three categories: junior, basic and senior level teachers. Salaries and work tasks vary according to these levels, which in turn are not only dependent on the qualification but also on additional activities such as publications, participation in conferences or professional competitions etc.

The salaries of Kindergarten Teachers vary greatly depending on the economic situation of a region. In 2015, the average salary was 25,600 RUB (406€) per month, i.e. 94% of the Russian average wage. According to order No. 167n issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2013, government institutions are obliged to follow the rules of a so-called effective contract (Gazeta.ru 2015). According to article 129 of the Russian labour code, wages comprise three parts: 1) compensation for the work, depending on the qualification (minimum wage) and municipal/state budget (co-efficients); 2) additional payment for special/additional work; 3) incentives.

Kindergartens charge parents for additional hours (swimming, art classes etc.) and use this income to increase the salaries of the staff through creating a bonus pool. (The culture of bonuses or stimulation goes back to the Soviet area, where extra shifts and over-fulfilment of the work load led to incentives.) This practice can lead to even greater disparities within municipalities: In 2015, wages in Moscow ranged between 24,000 and 49,000 RUB (380 and 777€) for a full-time job (City Government of Moscow 2016). This is almost at the same salary level as primary school teachers.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

The work in kindergartens is organised in shifts. Kindergarten Teachers generally work full-time; certain kinds of teachers for children with special needs may work part-time. However, there are no statistical data available on this.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

At the regional level, support for ECEC staff is organised through special centres set up by the regional governments (e.g. by the state ministry of education) that provide for example psychological advice or crisis intervention. Training on the job, when entering from education, is organised within the organisation. Mostly the methodical supervisor gives help and advice. Modern human resources approaches like career-path supervision or mentoring are not provided.

8.4 Non-contact time

Preparation and reporting is mainly done during the sleeping time of the children. Officially there is no extra time calculated in working contracts to fulfil non-teaching duties.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Young people are attracted to professions which provide a certain amount of stability in status and income, particularly in times of economic constraints, which has been the case since the early 1990s. The profession of Kindergarten Teacher is neither a high status profession (Yurchenko 2013), nor do these teachers have a steady and nation-wide or region-wide regulated income. There is no overall Russian remuneration system for Kindergarten Teachers. Attendance rates in kindergartens have been rising, leading to a stronger demand for qualified staff. These shortages are being addressed by providing possibilities for the 'requalification' of professionals who lack knowledge and experience in early childhood pedagogy (see Section 3.3). To date there are no regulated recruitment strategies.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Although the de-professionalisation trend of the 1990s has been halted, the Russian ECEC system still lacks modern approaches and kindergarten staff is not confident with their professional situation (Yurchenko and Mansurov 2014).

As described above, currently there is no Professional Standard for the ECEC profession. Due to changes in society, technology and educational policy, new standards and qualification routes need to be developed. The challenge is to develop a complex system which also matches the new FGOS. However, an assessment by the Moscow State Pedagogical University showed that 40% of the pedagogical teams are still not yet ready to implement the Federal Standard (Miklaeva 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Another challenge is the further development of the vocational qualification routes. Currently, most of the budget goes to the universities and policy makers have to decide whether to focus on higher education as a qualification requirement for work in kindergartens or to strengthen the vocational routes.

Moreover, ECEC staff is not well paid; their salaries mostly depend on the budget situation in local authorities. Earning more money can only be achieved by increasing the already heavy workload. There is no research confirming these problems empirically – so the situation will probably not improve and will result in more staff shortages and larger groups of children. This, in combination with a lack of proficient professional know-how, is not likely to solve the problems regarding the implementation of the new Federal Standard.

A further challenge will be to raise the effectiveness of the preschool and school sector and to develop new strategies of administration.

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Tatiana Volkova

Institute of Developmental Physiology,
Russian Academy of Education, Moscow.

Citation suggestion:

Volkova, T. 2018. "Russian Federation – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 987-1002.

Funded by:

Sources are briefly acknowledged below each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the relevant table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The Russian Federation has a multi-level approach towards early childhood education and care. Responsibilities are shared between the Federal Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo Obrasovanija i Nauki Rossijskoj Faderacii*) and the regional Ministries of Education of the 85 administrative divisions (provinces, republics, districts [*krajas*], regions [*oblasts*], federal cities). Governance and regulatory measures are thus devolved to the regional level. At this regional level, ECEC is organised as a multi-sectoral system regarding provision for under-threes and over-threes. Provision for the under-threes is not part of the education system and is – particularly for the under twos – provided by the private sector and regulated by the law on consumer rights. Hygiene standards are overseen by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Kindergartens for 3- to 7-year olds (ISCED 02) come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2012, early childhood education was officially recognised as the first stage in the education system. The regional ministries of education are responsible for implementing national educational policies through steering and management strategies and through the allocation of resources. Responsibility for the organisation and co-funding of kindergartens lies with the municipalities.

Sources: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2011.
EFA 2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

The relevant legislation for early childhood education for 3- to 7-year olds (ISCED 02) is the Education Act 2012 ('On Education in the Russian Federation', No. 273-F2) and the Federal Standard of Education, No 115, 17 October 2013, known as FGOS (*Federal'nyye gosudarstvennyye standarty obshchego obrazovaniya*). The Education Act forms the basis for all education policies and sets out the general and curricular regulations for the education system.

The main document which regulates early childhood education is the Federal Standard of Pre-school Education (FGOS DO). Early childhood education for children with special needs is also regulated by a Federal Standard (FGOS-OVZ).

Overall policy goals for the field of early childhood education are:

- to improve the status of early childhood education,
- to work towards creating equality of opportunities,
- to guarantee a high level of overall quality in early childhood education,
- to create a unified system of early childhood education and care.

The main goals of FGOS DO are:

- Encouraging parents to participate in the educational process (e.g. parents' councils in kindergartens can influence financial decisions);
- Strengthening the development of social-emotional skills, learning dispositions, basic language/literacy, mathematical competences and motor skills;
- Supporting school readiness skills, particularly in the case of 6-year olds;

- Providing equal opportunities for all children according to their individual needs;
- Ensuring that early childhood services are of a high quality.

Each kindergarten can set a programme priority, such as museum pedagogics, intercultural education or an ethno-cultural component (e.g. have a German or Jewish profile).

The State Programme 'On the Development of Education' (2014, No. 295) has a sub-section on the development of the early childhood education system and on the evaluation of preschool provision. This sub-section states that the aims are to modernise the curricular framework for kindergartens, to give all children a chance to participate in early childhood education, and to improve the level of participation rates and the quality of educational outcomes. By 2016, all 3- to 7-year olds had access to early childhood education and national educational standards were introduced in all forms of pre-primary provision.

The implementation of FGOS DO is the duty of the regional ministries of education and each of them has an individual approach. Since this is a relatively new development, there are no official reports yet, but implementation of the Federal Standard has been successfully set in motion.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal (IEA) 2016.
EFA 2015.
Ministry of Education and Science 2014.
Savinskaya, O. 2015.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

All children from the age of 3 years are entitled to a place in kindergarten. Attendance is not compulsory and is free of charge.

Compulsory schooling starts at age 7, although some children may begin when they are 6½ years old, others not until they are 8 years old. Delayed enrolment is only possible by special request of the parents and is only accepted in the case of developmental delays.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal (IEA) 2016.

Main types of provision

Current ECEC policies in Russia are mainly directed towards expanding and improving provision for children aged 3 years up to compulsory schooling.

Provision for under-threes (ISCED 01), which can be either centre-based or home-based, only receives limited financial support, and therefore only 40% of children applying for a place can be admitted. *Centre-based* day nurseries (*yaslie*) offer places for children aged from 2 months up to 3 years on a full-day or part-time basis (usually for two to four hours daily). *Home-based* childcare facilities (*domashije gruppy*) in so-called family groups are either organised by ECEC institutions (*detskije centry*) or provided by private persons. Since this sector is only loosely regulated, business models have spread, and in the meantime large franchise chains are also offering ECEC services across the country. According to the relevant legislation, it is also possible to establish groups for children aged 2 months up to 3 years in kindergartens for up to three hours a day.

Additionally there are some sessional groups (*gruppy kratkovremennogo pribyvanija*) that admit toddlers around 1½ years of age, sometimes together with a parent, for three or four hours per day. There is no publicly funded, full-time provision for under 2-year olds. In some areas, privately run nanny agencies are available.

Kindergartens (*detskije sady*) (ISCED 02) are the main form of provision for children aged 3 up to school entry age. Most kindergartens provide full-time, part-time and extended hours services. The children play and learn together in same-age groups. Kindergartens vary greatly in size. Nearly half (46% in 2015) are attended by not more than 75 children and are open 12 hours per day.

In the context of *Perestroika* and economic upheaval, investment in education fell, as did the social level and status of teachers. It became clear that the previous system of ECEC could no longer adapt to the changing needs of families and children. Although the level of kindergarten provision is currently stable, over the past two decades a considerable decline in the total number of institutions can be observed. Whereas in 1995 there were 68,600 kindergartens in the Russian Federation, by 2013 the total number had sunk to 44,200. At the same time, the number of children attending kindergarten increased from 5.5 million in 1995 to 6.3 million in 2013. Although expenditure on ECEC rose by 18% between 2012 and 2015, inflation has resulted in an effective decrease of funding to the sector. This can be explained by the following: In recent years, old buildings have been replaced by new ones able to take in a larger number of children (entities with 300 or more children are quite common); in urban facilities in particular, there has been an increase in group size; staff who retired were not replaced by a sufficient number of fully trained younger staff, leading to a certain deprofessionalisation of the workforce. At the same time, there has been an improvement in effectiveness in the sense of rising participation rates.

Table 1

Russian Federation: Kindergarten (3-7) development between 1932 and 2013* (numbers in thousands)

1932	1940	1950	1960	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013
27,5	29,9	30,2	47,6	74,5	87,9	68,6	51,3	46,5	45,1	44,2

Table 2 shows the allocation of expenditure on childcare provision and preschool education. Expenditure on ECEC programmes such as the family kindergartens or short-term stay groups has been increasing in recent years.

Table 2

Russian Federation: Expenditure on ECEC 2012-2015 (in millions of roubles)

Years	Expenditure on pre-school education	Expenditure on child care	Total expenditure
2012	144 737,4	254 509,0	399 246,4
2013	156 755,4	289 296,5	446 051,9
2014	161 536,5	298 120,3	459 656,8
2015	166 317,7	306 944,0	473 656,8

Source: Rosstat 2016.

Short-term stay groups in kindergartens (*grupy kratkovremennoe pribyvaniya*) cater mainly for children between 1½ and 5 years. They are provided on a sessional basis and usually organised in mixed-age groups (1½ to 3 years and 3 to 5 years). They are established both as preparatory groups prior to kindergarten attendance and as an alternative form to full-time attendance. These groups are also attended by children with special needs who are not able to attend kindergarten full-time. Most special needs groups are supervised by special education teachers who support the development of social and communicative skills in relationships with other children and adults. Although hours of attendance are shorter, these groups nevertheless have to adhere to the Federal Standard (FGOS DO), taking into account the specific structures regarding age and developmental differences.

Family kindergartens (*semeynyi detskiy sad*) are a form of family day care for families with three or more children from 2 months up to 7 years. The family kindergarten is connected with a regular kindergarten near the family's home. In special courses mothers or fathers are taught basic

knowledge in pedagogical and psychological issues. Following that they can take care of their own children or other children from families with three or more children - at most three children below kindergarten age. The mother (or father) is officially employed by the kindergarten and receives a salary plus money for meals.

Other forms of educational provision are:

- Kindergartens prioritising one or several directions of child development (intellectual, artistic and aesthetic, physical etc.);
- Health support kindergartens prioritising health improvement measures and procedures;
- Combined kindergartens which may include general development, compensatory and health improvement groups in various combinations;
- Child development centres - kindergartens which emphasise the physical and psychological development, and adaptation and health improvement of all children in the centre;
- Consultation points in government kindergartens where specialists provide psychological and pedagogical support for parents of children not attending preschools;
- Early child care services which provide medical/social and psychology support for young children with developmental delays or from disadvantaged/vulnerable families;
- Children's support centres, which provide pedagogical work directed to the early ages from 6 months to 3 years; these centres are mainly affiliated to kindergartens.
- *Legotheka*, open for children from 2 months to 7 years not enrolled in the public preschool system because of health or developmental problems who need support in psychosocial, health or pedagogic issues.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal (IEA) 2016.
*Rosstat 2015.
Taratukhina, M.S. et al. 2006.
Skorolupova, O. 2013.

Provider structures

Most kindergartens are provided by regional governments or municipalities (i.e. they are either state or municipal public institutions). There is some private provision, run by organisations/legal entities. These are required to have a license and are not subsidised through state funds. They are regulated in terms of sanitary standards, the centre-specific education programme and zoning criteria. In the larger cities there are also private facilities which do not have an official licence and these are often known as 'learning centres' or 'short-term stay facilities'. There are no national statistical data available for this form of private provision.

Source: Volkova, T. 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Over the past ten years, the participation rates of children aged 3 to under 7 years increased from 57.3% in 2005 to almost two-thirds (64.6%) of the age-group in 2014*. There are no national statistical data available for participation rates of children under 3 years of age.

Table 3

Russian Federation: Participation rates in kindergartens, 2005-2014*

Year	0 to under 3 years, in %	3 to under 7 years, in %
2005	n/a	57.3
2010	n/a	59.2
2014	n/a	64.6

Source: *Rosstat 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

Participation in the Russian education system is free of charge. This means that no parental fees are required for kindergarten attendance. This free provision covers food and materials and the basic educational programme. This also applies to some programmes for children under age 3. However, nearly all kindergartens offer additional courses for children such as swimming, handi-crafts, arts, etc., for which the parents have to pay. This also applies to additional support provided by speech therapists or psychologists. These extra-curricular activities boost the kindergarten's revenue and enable extra payments to be made to the teachers. Some kindergartens generate an additional budget of 100,000 -200,000 EUR per year¹.

Early childhood education is jointly funded through federal and municipal budgets. It is government policy to make education organisations more independent from federal-level funding and to promote a system of competition and entrepreneurship. In most regions, teachers' salaries are thus dependent on the financial success and overall rating of educational institutions through the national rating system.

For attendance at private ECEC facilities, which receive no state funding and therefore have to cover their own running costs entirely, parents pay a fee. This may be as high as between 1,000€ and 1,500€ per month. Staff salaries are higher in private provision and the group size smaller.

There is no information available regarding parental fees for children in day nurseries or other forms of childcare provision.

Staff-child ratios

According to the national standards the number of children in a group is related to the square meters of the premises. A typical kindergarten unit is divided into four areas: living/playing/learning room, sleeping room, bathroom and room for housekeeping. The group is staffed with two pre-school-teachers working in two shifts and one assistant. In terms of figures (6,000,000 children, 485,000 teachers in two shifts) the average group in 2012 comprised 25 children for which one teacher is responsible. Usually there is an additional teacher (for music, sport) present which reduces the number of children per teacher.

Source: Rosstat 2016.

¹ The sums mentioned are based on personal communications and differ from kindergarten to kindergarten. The idea is to give an indication of possible additional budgets.

Curricular frameworks

Education in the Soviet system was quite effective in dealing with the tasks set by the State. The programme in those times was adapted to different age groups, prescribing a particular regime of the number and content of lessons necessary for each age group, as well as norms for children's physical and psychological development (what a child should know and be able to do at each age level). However, the period following *Perestroika* made new demands on the curricular framework for early childhood education. In 1989 a new curricular programme for kindergartens was introduced, providing the basis for the new Law on Preschool Education in 1992.

Today, kindergartens have to work within the framework of the Federal Standard (2013) for pre-school education (FGOS DO). A broad and balanced approach to the curriculum is encouraged, including personal and emotional development as well as respecting diversity and individuality; social development and citizenship; learning dispositions; physical and health education; language and communication; reading and literacy; mathematical skills; understanding the natural world; science; technology and the digital world; and second/foreign language acquisition. The general pedagogical approach foregrounds play-based learning, creativity, communication and experiential learning. Parental involvement is encouraged. Recognising specific developmental and learning difficulties at an early stage also constitutes an important goal of early childhood education.

The daily educational programme is organised according to a tight schedule which allows only minimum time for free play. The content has to be age-specific and 'play-based'.

There is no official curricular framework for work with under 3-year olds.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal (IEA) 2016.
EFA 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

With the ministerial decrees of 19.12.2014 (No. 1598 and No. 1599) issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation**, the segregation of children with disabilities and other complex needs in special educational institutions was officially ended. According to article 28 of the federal Education Act (29.12.2012 No.273-F3 'On Education in the Russian Federation'***), the role of the state and municipal authorities in providing for these children and the conditions for educational activities for children with special/complex needs are spelled out in detail. Each educational institution can choose its own strategies and approaches towards working with children with special educational needs.

Today, each child with special/complex needs is entitled to attend a mainstream kindergarten. Kindergartens, like schools, are obliged to accept every child wishing to enrol and to provide a special learning programme which includes children without special/complex needs. Didactical support is organised by the Herzen University St. Petersburg. Currently, a number of pilot schemes are being conducted in different institutions, working on models of 'best practice', which will be reviewed by the Ministry of Education and Science. This concerns programme schedules as well as normative documents that have to be officially approved in order to fulfil the requirements for administrative monitoring. The final recommendations will be published by the Ministry, providing a framework of federal-level standards.

The regional ministries of education are currently engaged in the implementation of these decrees and in organising related professional development courses for teachers. In rural areas there are still problems of access, whereas in the large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, the inclusion agenda is well organised – from early childhood up to adult age.

Before entering the early childhood education system each child with special needs and disabilities receives a medical statement about the given level of special needs. It is then aimed to give

each child the appropriate support, e.g. through speech therapists, physiologists or psychologists or special education teachers. Children with significant physical and/or psychological disorders are supported by an individual tutor who is paid by the government. Mobility and access to the buildings is assured.

There are different inclusive and integrative models available in mainstream settings for these children. One of the forms is to establish a separate group for them within the regular setting.

In 2014, 54,691 children with disabilities up to 7 years of age attended a pre-school institution. Taking into account that a total 6.3 million children are enrolled in preschool provision, this indicates a proportion of roughly 1% (0.9%).

Table 4

Russian Federation: Number of children with disabilities in early childhood provision who receive state subsidies, 2014*

Age-group	number
Under 1 year	3
1-year olds	277
2-year olds	3,148
3-year olds	7,440
4-year olds	11,304
5-year olds	13,491
6-year olds	14,066
7-year olds and older	4,962
Total	54,691

According to national statistical data, 57.4% of children with special educational needs attended a kindergarten in 2016. Health grounds are the reason for the majority of those not attending. In Moscow in 2016, for example, there were 228 children with special needs attending 114 kindergartens.

Children with special needs and their parents can apply for support services provided by NGOs. These services are offered on the website of the "Common Government Services" (*gosudarstvennykh i munitcipalnykh uslug*) which is accredited by every regional government. Parents have to pay for the services, unless they are from disadvantaged backgrounds or have more than three children.

Children with a background of migration

Russia is a multi-ethnic country, with around 200 different minorities. In 2015, 86% of the population were Russians; 3.2 % Tatar, 1% Chechen and 10% 'others'. Russia officially recognizes Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as traditional religions. About 15% to 20% are Orthodox, 10% to 15% Muslims, 2% other Christians. The number of special ethnic or religious kindergartens is very low and these institutions do not play a role in ECEC overall. Immigrants are mainly living and working illegally in Russia. Enrolment in a kindergarten is tied to the place of registration. Since most immigrants are not legally registered, their children are therefore not entitled to attend a kindergarten or a school. Private provision is the only alternative, which is usually too expensive.

There are no state funded programmes on inclusion/integration.

Sources: Common Government Services 2016.
EFA 2015.
***Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation , Federal Law 2012.
**Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation 2014.
*Rosstat 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The main organ at the federal level is the Federal Agency for Supervision in the Field of Education and Science (*Federalnoe agenstvo po obrasovaniyu - Rosobrasovanie*). Its tasks are threefold: assuring that federal education standards are followed; licensing; and state accreditation. Each level of administration reports to the next higher one. Under the law, quality assurance is the duty of the regional administrations. Inspections of the kindergartens and schools focus on issues of compliance with regulations (room size, heating, equipment, meals, safety aspects) and with educational standards (organisation of daily programme and learning processes), management and funding. Results are reported to the settings, to the service providers, and also published on the internet. For teachers, this kind of administrative monitoring is mostly seen as a bureaucratic burden, since the reports are not used to establish a system of quality improvement but merely to assure that the requirements of the federal standards are met.

Russia has several institutions of higher education which conduct research on early childhood education issues, such as the Chair in Pedagogy at Lomonosow University, Herzen University in St. Petersburg, and Moscow Pedagogical State University. Further institutions working on topics of preschool education are the Russian Academy of Education (RAO) and Federal Institute of Education (FIRO), which are (independent) government institutions. Also all 85 federal subjects (political divisions) have a regional academy/didactical centre for school and early childhood education, responsible for vocational education and training but also conducting scientific research.

However, the quality of research often does not meet international standards. Also, because of a language gap, the work of Russian scientists is only rarely published internationally, and therefore rankings in the citation indices tend to be low. For researchers and teachers, hundreds of conferences, roundtables and seminars take place at the local, regional and federal levels each year. These provide a professional development context for teachers to present on 'best practices' and research, exchange with colleagues, and also to publish articles in the conference documentation.

Since 2012, the news agency RIA Novosti, together with the Russian Academy of Education, started to rate municipal kindergartens in Russia. In 2014, 7,100 out of a total of 43,000 kindergartens took part in this assessment. Participation was voluntary and depended on the interest of the local authorities. Therefore the figures and ratings do not provide statistical evidence. But data indicate that the implementation of the Federal Standard leaves a lot to be desired, particularly in rural areas.

RIA Novosti describes the purpose of the rating as follows: "By publishing ratings of the social domain, the Agency wishes to attain the following goals:

- transparency and openness of the social domain, reduction of corruption;
- public control;
- detection of progress and errors in the development and implementation of the social policy;
- stimulation of a healthy competition between the institutions of social domain;
- more accessible services of the social domain for the population;
- stimulation of a public discussion of the ways to reform the social domain."

The ratings show that, although they have been applied for several years now, none of the evaluated kindergartens met the requirements of the best group (100%-75% of all attainable points).

For the work in settings with under-threes a number of learning outcomes are detailed in the curricular framework, e.g. relating to language and social development. However, there are no assessments carried out at the federal or regional level or reports on these outcomes.

Sources: Bertram, T. and C. Pascal (IEA) 2016.
RIA Novost 2012.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*otpusk po berennosti i rodam*) is granted on a paid basis for 140 days (70 days before and 70 days after the child's birth). In the case of a difficult birth or the birth of twins, the period of leave is extended to 156 or 194 days. During this time the mothers receive a payment based on their last average salary.

After the second birth, women can apply for the so called 'Mothers' Capital' (*materinskij kapital*)*. This money (in 2017, 505.000 RUB –7369€) is not paid directly in cash but is used to improve the capital stock on the mother's pension fund (this can be done by writing an enquiry to the pension fund), to improve the housing situation (if you buy a flat engaging in a special state-supported mortgage programme for new buildings, you can use this as a first rate on your mortgage) or to pay for the children's education and childcare fees, although it is not entirely clear how this really functions in practice. In addition, several child allowance programmes for young families or families with more than three children have been established at local levels.

Mothers are entitled to a three-year period of parental leave (*otpusk po ukhodu za rebenkom*). For a period up to 18 months, the most recent monthly salary is paid. Fathers do not have this entitlement. After 18 months and up to a maximum of 3 years, the monthly payment is limited to 50 RUB (0.73€). There are also other forms of support, e.g. families with three or more children receive free bus tickets or discount on fees for water, electricity and gas.

Source: Maternity Capital Programme. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1860	From this date onwards the first, mostly private kindergartens are established in Russia, some of them attached to an elementary school, and strongly influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Pestalozzi and Froebel.
1917	Attempts to establish a public education system had already been made before the October Revolution. Following the Revolution, all education institutions are nationalised. Since this time, western pioneers such as Friedrich Froebel – and later Maria Montessori – have a sustained influence on the professional work of early childhood pedagogues.
1920s and 1930s	Lev Vygotsky's ideas start to influence the philosophical principles of (early childhood) education – and continue to do so up to the present day.
From 1927 to early 1950s	During the period of Stalinist rule, many progressive thinkers are repressed and deported. Education, including early childhood education, becomes more and more influenced by propaganda.
1930s and 1940s	The humanist ideas and moral ('character') education approaches of A.S. Makarenko, one of the most influential Soviet pedagogues, contribute towards the shaping of the education system in the context of communist ideals. He developed the idea of collective learning processes which included new group structures, combining various stages of development, and integrating methods of aesthetic and activity education. He is considered to have established the structure of the Soviet education system.
1950s and 1960s	During the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, resources are allocated towards building a competitive science sector.
1990s until 2005	<i>Perestroika</i> and change of the society system. Lack of financial support, very poor working conditions for teachers. Overall stagnation. 1989 new curricular programme for kindergartens, which was the basis for the new law on preschool education in 1992 and the amendment in 1996 regarding the "quality and function of preschool organisations and the development of psychological and physical health of children, their intellectual and personal development and the care of emotional wellbeing of every child". Also at this time, under Boris Yeltsin, first steps towards inclusion were initiated.
2012	The Education Act 'On Education in the Russian Federation' codifies the right of all citi-

	zens to education.
2013	Ministerial Order “On the Validation of a Federal State Standard for Early Childhood Education”
2014	The State Programme “On the Development of Education” puts a special emphasis on early childhood education. The Federal Standard (FGOS OVZ) changes the policy agenda for children with special needs to full inclusion.

Source: Compiled by Tatjana Volkova.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Russia

Country expert assessment by Tatiana Volkova

Creating a stable financing system

During recent years, the Russian early childhood education system has been facing immense changes. Unfortunately the financing is no longer stable. Whereas before the crises about 3 billion USD from the federal budget were spent on modernising buildings, further investment is now decreasing. This unstable situation has led to high levels of uncertainty among teachers since salaries are declining (by inflation or by less money on additional education) and because money additionally earned is allocated to renovations and other expenses. An immediate challenge for the future is to ensure that a certain percentage of the State budget is allocated and invested in education in order to mitigate the huge regional disparities in the education system.

Ensuring quality in staff development

The development of human resources will be another huge challenge. This does not only mean improving salaries or supporting life-long learning. In the current economic situation, the need for newly qualified pedagogical staff is leading to a focus on secondary vocational education rather than higher education.

It is also necessary to establish a nationwide system of quality management in preschool education settings as well as in the institutions responsible for the initial professional studies of teachers. The variety of standards in teacher education is widespread and does not always meet the needs of a modern education system.

A pathway for a structured curricular development is urgently needed and the TVET (Teachers’ Vocational Education and Training) - education has to be reformed by teaching relevant knowledge and involvement of social partners in the education process.

Linking early childhood education and social inclusion issues

The federal law on preschool education and on inclusion is an important step towards modernising early childhood education. It aims to equalise educational opportunities and provide a framework for regions and organisations which are below average. Until now steps have been taken to implement the new laws, but only a limited number of the recommendations worked out by several working groups have been approved by the federal Ministry of Education and Science (particularly regarding the issues of inclusion). So at the present time, Russia still faces considerable regional disparities regarding the quality of early childhood education.

Social exclusion is also a problem to be faced in early childhood education. Families with two or more children are financially excluded from the additional, fee-paying education programmes in kindergartens, which support specific skills and the development of children. Possibilities of escaping social exclusion through education are not high. The government is focusing on providing the basics of education and social support. Links could and should be set on a regional basis.

Demographic data

Total population

During the period of political and economic turmoil in the 1990s, the birth rate fell dramatically and – combined with a high mortality rate – led to a significant drop in population numbers. It is only since 2013 that the population in Russia has begun to increase again: whereas the birth rate in the year 2000 was 1.19, it had risen to 1.75 by 2015.

Table 6

Russian Federation: Population and households in numbers, changes between 1995 and 2015*

Year	Population	Estimated number of households
1995	148,293,000	54,923,000
2005	143,801,000	53,260,000
2014	143,667,000	53,210,000
2015	146,267,000	54,173,000

16% of the population is aged 0-14 years, 70% 15-64 years, and 14% are 65 or older.

Sources: * Rosstat 2016.

Children under age 7

Since most children do not start school until age 7 in the Russian Federation and since demographic data are available, children up to age 7 are included in this section.

In 2012, 7.9% of the entire population in Russia were children under 7 years of age, 3.6% were children under 3 years of age, and 4.3% children between 3 and 7 years. While these shares were well below the then EU-average in 1995, in 2012 they were slightly above the EU27 average. No more recent data are available.

Table 7

Russian Federation: Children under 7 years of age, 2012

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	1,837,406
1-year olds	1,722,170
2-year olds	1,670,080
Total under age 3	5,229,656
3-year olds	1,676,178
4-year olds	1,627,374
5-year olds	1,520,797
6-year olds	1,464,992
Total 3 to under age 7	6,289,341
Total 0- to under 7-year olds	11,518,997

Table 8

Russian Federation: Children under 7 years of age – share in total population compared with EU countries, 1995-2012, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2012	Ø EU27
Under 3 years	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.6	3.2
3 to under 7 years	3.8	4.7	4,4	4.2	4,3	4.2
0 to under 7 years	6.7	8.0	7.9	7.3	7,9	7.4

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Sources: *Eurostat 2015.
Rosstat 2016.

Single households with children under age 6

There are no national data available on the number/proportion of single households with children under age 6.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

The overall employment rate in the Russian Federation in the year 2016 was 66.6%³ (compared with 58.5% in 2000 and 62.7% in 2010). The proportion of male and female workers is roughly the same (51% and 49%). The unemployment rate is officially 5.2 %. The figures show a relatively low overall employment rate. This is due to the fact that not all economic activities are registered in the statistics.

With 64% of mothers with children under 6 years of age in employment, the proportion of working mothers in 2014 was slightly above that of the EU28 average (60.7%). There are no statistical data available for the percentage of working fathers.

Table 9

Russian Federation: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with EU states, 2005-2014

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Russian Federation*	2005	n/a	n/a
	2010	63.3	n/a
	2014/15	64.0	n/a
European Union**	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2014	60.7	86.5
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2014	Sweden – 79.2	Czech Republic – 93.9
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2014	Slovak Republic – 38.1	Spain – 76.5

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

³ The labour force participation rate includes jobseekers who are not employed; due to the social system, people do not apply for government subsidies in the case of unemployment.

Sources: *Rosstat 2016
**Eurostat 2015.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion

Around 60% of the population in Russia lives at least temporarily in poverty. Poverty in Russia is defined as income below the minimum wage. This minimum wage is set by the regional governments in relation to the economic circumstances⁴. The figures for 2015 show that nearly 35% of the population is either living in or is at risk of falling into poverty. According to Rosstat, in 2015, 13.3 % of all Russians were living below subsistence level (compared with 10.7% in 2012 and 11.2% in 2014). Major risk factors include place of residence, health status, and household composition. Official statistics show that families with children have a high risk of poverty. Likewise, a study by the Moscow Higher School of Economics, published in 2014*, indicates that children are at major risk of poverty: “Just 10% of households with two children avoid low-income poverty, while more than half of such families fall into chronic poverty.” Moreover, “The risk is even higher for households with three children, of which more than 80% fall into chronic poverty”**. Children living in rural areas are especially at risk of poverty.

Table 10

Russian Federation: Number of households living below subsistence level and percentage of these households with and without children***

	2002	2005	2010	2014
Number of households living below subsistence level	12,916,000	9,480,000	6,738,000	6,067,000
Households without children in %	46.7	50.0	42.5	37.1
Households with children up to 16 years in %	53.3	50.0	57.5	62.9
Among them: with				
1 child in %	34.2	31.2	31.2	30.7
2 children in %	15.7	15.2	20.3	23.6
3 and more children in %	3.3	3.6	6.0	8.6

Source: Rosstat 2016 and own calculations

The table shows that the number of households living under subsistence level dropped from 46.7% in 2002 to 37.1% in 2014, whereas the percentage of households with children living under subsistence level rose from 53.3% to 62.9%. A closer look at the data shows that especially households with 2 or more children have a higher risk of falling into poverty, even though net wages rose significantly during this period.

Source: **National Research University Higher School of Economics 2014.
***Rosstat 2016.
*Slobodenyuk, E. 2014.

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⁴ According to Rosstat, the median-wage in 2015 was 22,729 RUB. Rosstat only provides numbers for 2014 and 2015.

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SLOVAK REPUBLIC

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Zita Baďuríková

Associate Professor emeritus, Comenius University Bratislava,
Faculty of Philosophy

Ľudmila Šimčáková

Former employee at the Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education, Bratislava

Zuzana Pérez Renčíková

Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Philosophy

Citation suggestion:

Baďuríková, Z., L. Šimčáková and Z. Pérez Renčíková. 2018. "Slovak Republic – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1003-1021.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

In the split system of early childhood education and care in Slovakia, kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu*). The ministry is responsible for regulating legislative measures, national curricula, inspection, monitoring and funding. At the local level, the providers of kindergartens - mostly municipalities, but also regions (for kindergartens for children with special needs), private persons and churches - are in charge of the organisation of ECEC settings.

As from 1993, provision for the under-threes was not assigned to a specific jurisdiction. However, since March 2017 (Law No. 448/2008) ECEC settings for children under the age of 3 come under the auspices of the Ministry of Work, Social Affairs and Family (*Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*). The providers of these settings can be municipal or private (the majority). In the first case, they receive financial support from the Ministry. Municipalities can also choose to support private institutions from their own sources.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 shows the ECEC staff in centre-based settings in Slovakia and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1
Slovakia: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Učiteľ/ka materskej školy, Učiteľ/ka predprimárneho vzdelávania Pre-primary Education Teacher/ Kindergarten Teacher	<i>Materská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3-6 years <i>Základná škola s materskou školou,</i> Primary school with kindergarten groups 2/3-6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head	2/3-6 years	Required qualification: 4 years upper secondary vocational school (<i>stredná pedagogická škola</i>), specialising in pedagogy (<i>pedagogická a sociálna akadémia; pedagogická a kultúrna akadémia</i>) Award: <i>maturita</i> ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 354 OR Upper secondary school plus 2 years post-
<i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Špeciálna materská škola</i> Kindergarten for children with special needs 2/3-6 years <i>Materská škola v prírode</i> Forest kindergarten/			

¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

²n/a: not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
	nature school 5-6 years			secondary vocational qualification at above mentioned schools Award: <i>maturita</i> ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4 OR 4 years upper secondary vocational school PLUS additional qualification in special education ECTS points: n/a EQF: level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4 <i>Optional but not required:</i> 3 years university Award: Bachelor ECTS points: 180 EQF: level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Asistent učiteľa</i> Teacher Assistant	<i>Materská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3-6 years <i>Základná škola s materskou školou,</i> Primary school with kindergarten 2/3-6 years <i>Špeciálna materská škola</i> Kindergarten for children with special needs 2/3-6 years	Qualified co-worker	2/3-6 years	4 years upper secondary vocational education ECTS points : n/a EQF: Level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 OR <i>Optional, not required:</i> 3 years of studies at university Award: Bachelor ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Sestra v jasliach</i> Childcare Worker Nurse, Caregiver <i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Health Care Professional	<i>Detské jasle</i> Infant/toddler childcare centres 6 months - 3 years <i>Súkromné detské centrá</i> Private childcare centres 0-6 years	Core practitioner	6 months - 3 years 0-6 years	<i>Until end of 2016</i> non-regulated, therefore no official minimum qualification requirement, but medical nurses are often employed in the post of core practitioner. <i>As from March 2017:</i> 4 years upper secondary vocational school, specialising in kindergarten; education

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
				and care or health care OR Upper secondary education (<i>maturita</i>) plus 220 hours accredited course on child care ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3

Box 1:

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Since day nurseries and similar centres for children up to three years did not until recently fall within the competence of a specific ministry, qualification requirements for staff were not regulated and no official data were compiled about the composition of the workforce. Qualified medical nurses are often employed in the position of nursery nurse/childcare practitioner.

Regular contact staff in kindergartens are Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teachers and Teacher Assistants. 96.1% of Kindergarten Teachers and 60.4% of Teacher Assistants meet the necessary qualification requirements. 89.7% of Kindergarten Teachers are Slovak by nationality and 9% Hungarian. Women constitute an absolute majority in the Kindergarten Teacher workforce, only 0.3% are men (Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Table 2

Slovakia: Structural composition of core practitioners in kindergartens (3-6)

Staff categories	Proportion of teacher workforce – 2014
Staff with specialist higher education degree – Bachelor	10.5%
Staff with specialist higher education degree – Master	17.6%
Staff with specialist higher education degree – PhD.	0.3%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	67.7%
Staff with non-specified qualification	3.3%
Staff with no formal IPS	3.3%
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male kindergarten teachers	0.3%
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

Table 3

Slovakia: Structural composition of Teacher Assistants in kindergartens (3-6)*

Staff categories	Proportion of teacher assistant workforce – 2014
Staff with higher education degree – Bachelor	9.4%
Staff with higher education degree – Master	18.1%
Staff with higher education degree – PhD.	2.0%
Staff with vocational qualification (upper secondary)	30.2%
Staff with lower secondary qualification	0.7%
Staff with no formal IPS	39.6%
Male staff	No data available
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

*Source: (Damián Forgács, personal communication, March 2016).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

There are two legally regulated possibilities to obtain the qualification necessary to work with kindergarten-age children: to complete the upper secondary vocational school with a specialisation in pedagogy or to acquire a higher education qualification.

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher (*Učiteľ/ka materskej školy, Učiteľ/ka predprimárneho vzdelávania*)

Those who have completed lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and have successfully passed an entrance examination may apply for a course of study at an upper secondary vocational school with a specialisation in pedagogy. The main part of the entrance examination is the talent examination consisting of: (1) music education (tested areas: voice and intonation skills, rhythmic feeling, music memory, tone feeling, harmony); (2) fine art education (two fine art works testing fantasy and imagination, colour feeling, the ability to draw and paint visual objects); (3) literacy and language education (recitation by heart, to read a given text, correct pronunciation, ability to imagine on a given topic, ability to communicate promptly); (4) physical education (gymnastics, motor tests, sports games, etc.).

Applicants with severe and irreparable speech disorders as well as those who are exempt from physical education cannot be accepted for this course of study (Pedagogická a sociálna akadémia Bratislava 2016a; Pedagogická a sociálna akadémia Prešov 2016b).

The initial professional study route lasts for four years and is completed with a school leaving certificate (*maturita*) which qualifies for university entrance (ISCED 354, EQF level 4). School-leavers work as qualified teachers in kindergartens and private childcare centres. They are also qualified to work as educators in after-school clubs for children and in residential care settings.

School-leavers from other types of upper secondary schools can apply for a two-year post-secondary qualification at an upper secondary vocational school with a specialisation in pedagogy. They finish with a school leaving certificate which qualifies for university entrance and a post-secondary non-tertiary education at level ISCED 4, EQF 4.

The higher education qualification 'Pre-primary and Primary School Education' is structured according to two levels. The first one is the Bachelor's degree programme. Entry requirements include the completed school-leaving examination and the successfully passed entrance examination (the form of entrance examination is set out by the university faculties). The degree course takes three years to complete and the achieved level of education is ISCED 6, EQF 6, 180

ECTS points and graduates are awarded a Bachelor in Pre-primary and Primary School Education.

The subsequent second level is a Master's degree programme which can be followed after a completed Bachelor's degree in the same or related field of study and successful completion of an entrance examination set by the university faculty. The course of study lasts for two years and the achieved level of education is ISCED 7, EQF 7, 120 ECTS points; graduates are awarded a Master in Pre-primary Education. Graduates mostly work as teachers or directors/centre heads in kindergartens; they may work also as inspectors, methodologists³ for pre-school education, and also in the field of public administration.

They can also go on to take a Doctoral degree programme if they pass the faculty entrance examination. The doctoral programme takes three years to complete and the achieved level of education is ISCED 8, EQF 8, 180 ECTS points, with an award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Pre-primary Education. Graduates mostly work at universities and other specialised institutions.

Table 4

Slovakia: Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher

Job title in Slovakian: <i>Učiteľka materskej školy / Učiteľka predprimárneho vzdelávania</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p><i>Route 1:</i> Entry requirements: Completed lower secondary education, entrance exam (music, art, language, physical education) Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational study, specialising in pedagogy (<i>stredná pedagogická škola, pedagogická a sociálna akadémia, pedagogická a kultúrna akadémia</i>) Award: School leaving certificate (<i>maturita</i>) - higher education entrance certificate ECTS points: not applicable EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 354 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (<i>materská škola</i>), 2/3-6 years; Primary school with kindergarten (<i>základná škola s materskou školou</i>), 2/3-6 years; Kindergarten for children with special needs (<i>špeciálna materská škola</i>), 2/3-6 years; Forest kindergarten/nature school (<i>materská škola v prírode</i>), 5-6 years; After-school clubs for children 6-15 years</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i> Entry requirements: Completed upper secondary school Professional studies: 2 years post-secondary course of studies (<i>stredná pedagogická škola, pedagogická a sociálna akadémia; pedagogická a kultúrna akadémia</i>) in educational and social/cultural studies Award: School leaving certificate – higher education entrance certificate (<i>maturita</i>) ECTS points: not applicable EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 454 Main ECEC workplaces: see above</p> <p><i>Route 3:</i> Entry requirements: Completed school leaving exam (<i>maturita</i>) and university faculty entrance exam Professional studies: 3 years university* Award: Bachelor in Pre-primary and Primary School Education; can be followed with a 2-year Master's degree programme (Master in Pre-primary Education) and a 3-year doctoral programme (Doctor of Philosophy in Pre-primary Education) ECTS: 180 (BA), plus 120 (MA), plus 180 (PhD) EQF level: 6 (BA), 7 (MA), 8 (PhD)</p>

³'Methodologists' in Slovakia are senior Kindergarten Teachers responsible for professional support in organising the educational work in kindergartens. Usually they are based at regional methodological centres.

Job title in Slovakian: <i>Učiteľka materskej školy / Učiteľka predprimárneho vzdelávania</i> Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 (BA), 7 (MA), 8 (PhD) Main ECEC workplaces: see above; graduates with a Master's degree can work as directors/centre heads of kindergartens, inspectors, methodological experts; graduates with a Doctoral degree mainly work at universities or other specialised institutions.

* Students specialising in special education/pedagogy may work in classes/schools for children with special needs

Teacher Assistant (*Asistent učiteľa/ky*)

Guidance issued by the Ministry of Education (No. 1631/2002) on the implementation of the Teacher Assistant profession in preschool centres, primary schools and schools for children with special needs enabled providers to employ a Teacher Assistant in kindergarten classrooms attended by at least five children from a disadvantaged social background. The purpose was to facilitate their adaptation process in a new environment, to help them to overcome language and social barriers and to cooperate with their families.

Since this time, the qualification requirement for working as a Teacher Assistant is a 4 year upper secondary vocational education. However, not all Teacher Assistants are qualified to this level.

Table 5

Slovakia: Teacher Assistant

Job title in Slovakian: <i>Asistent učiteľa/ky</i>
Route 1: Entry requirements: Completed lower secondary education, vocational school entrance exam Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational education Award: School leaving certificate (<i>maturita</i>) – higher education entrance certificate ECTS points: not applicable EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplace: Kindergarten (<i>materská škola</i>), 2/3-6 years; Primary school with kindergarten groups (<i>základná škola s materskou školou</i>), 2/3-6 years; Kindergarten for children with special needs (<i>špeciálna materská škola</i>), 2/3-6 years
Route 2: Entry requirements: Completed school leaving exam (<i>maturita</i>) and university faculty entrance exam Professional studies: 3 years university Award: Bachelor ECTS points : 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplaces: see above

Table 6

Slovakia: Childcare Worker

Job title in Slovakian: <i>Sestra v jasliach/opatrovatel'/ka detí</i> Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional
<p><i>Since March 2017:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: Completed lower secondary education, vocational school entrance exam</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational school (<i>stredná pedagogická škola, pedagogická a sociálne akadémia, pedagogická a kultúrna akadémia, stredná zdravotnícka škola</i>), specialising in kindergarten, education and care or health care.</p> <p>Award: <i>maturita</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p>Upper secondary education (<i>maturita</i>) plus 220 hours accredited course on child care</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Infant/toddler childcare centre (<i>detské jasle</i>), 6 months-3 years</p>

Note: Since March 2017, 75% of all staff in ECEC settings for under-threes are required to have this qualification

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher – upper secondary route

Competence requirements

The prospective kindergarten teachers acquire the following basic competencies during the upper secondary vocational school route (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania 2016, 24-33):

1. Communicative and socio-interactive skills essential for working life, including skills to develop a culture of thinking and learning, to search for information, to use and to create knowledge, and to develop communicative skills in at least one foreign language:
 - Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed for engagement in society; skills of self-reflection to improve one's performance; skills to follow a lifelong learning strategy, to work in a team, to respect universal ethical values;
 - Creative problem solving skills – identifying the problem, analysing and establishing effective procedures, strategies and evaluative assessments;
 - To learn how to learn, to adapt to changes and to use information flows;
 - Capacity to use information technologies;
 - Capacity for democratic citizenship.
2. Professional competencies at the required level – being able to
 - Describe, explain, analyse, compare the conditions, principles, contents, methods, forms, and approaches in education – in music education, fine art education, physical education, literary and language education, drama education for pre-school age children;
 - Define rules for pedagogical communication;
 - Define and describe types, regularities and conditions of learning, efficiency and organisation of teaching, characteristics of educational practice.

Curricular areas

The vocational schools have to prepare their own syllabus in accordance with the content areas defined in the national curricular framework (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania 2016, 44-76):

1. **Language and communication:** Supporting the students' abilities to communicate, to use information, to develop their social competencies, to improve their verbal skills.

2. **Humankind, values and society:** Supporting students in developing their own identity and respect for others, for nature and national values, for the fundamental principles of democracy and tolerance; preparing them to nurture stable relationships with their families, at work, in community groups, both national and international.
3. **Humankind and nature:** Developing a positive disposition towards natural sciences through an interdisciplinary approach including chemistry, physics, biology and ecology.
4. **Mathematics and working with information:** Developing an understanding of quantitative relations in nature, society, technology or economics; providing students with sufficient knowledge to study a specific field and to transfer it to practice and use it as a basis for on-going learning.
5. **Health and movement:** Providing fundamental information about biological, physical, emotional, psychological and social aspects for leading a healthy lifestyle; providing knowledge about the body, movement development, movement skills, physical fitness and health, including health protection and prevention of diseases.

The school syllabus also includes drama education, music education, fine art education, physical education (swimming and skiing courses) and nature conservation courses.

Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher – Bachelor’s degree route

Competence requirements

These include theoretical and practical aspects:

- a) *Theoretical:* being familiar with the psychological interpretation of a child’s development and education; knowing and understanding the concepts of socialisation and educational processes within a broader social context; knowing the principles for creating and designing an age-appropriate learning environment; being able to interpret scientific texts and research in the field of pedagogy; being able to effectively cooperate to design school-wide and community projects regarding the work with children.
- b) *Practical:* being able to organise and manage pedagogical processes at the pre-school class level and with groups of young school-age children; being able to apply specific programmes, as well as to plan and implement different approaches for each part of the curriculum; being able to communicate personal pedagogical knowledge at the appropriate community level; following the principle of lifelong learning (Akreditačná komisia 2016).

Curricular areas

During the development of the syllabus for the Bachelor’s degree, all faculties are required to respect the so-called core curriculum approved by the accreditation commission. The core curriculum for the Bachelor’s degree in Pre-primary and Primary Education consists of: basic philosophical concepts in education; social and political context of education; basic concepts of developmental psychology and biology in early childhood; general theories of education; theory of early childhood and out-of-school education; curricula and methodology in fundamental learning areas (language, mathematics, natural sciences, art, physical education); management of educational institutions; selected topics in medicine, gender studies, alternative education programmes. An educational project (semester work), the final thesis (theoretical research) and the final state examination are also parts of the curriculum (Akreditačná komisia 2016).

Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher – Master’s degree route

Competence requirements

The required competencies for the Master’s degree are also organised according to theoretical and practical aspects:

- a) *Theoretical*: working critically with theoretical concepts in pre-primary and primary education; knowing the current theoretical models of education, socialisation and acculturation; knowing and analysing the concepts of cultural literacy; knowing cognitive algorithms in didactics and related fields (especially didactics of language, mathematics, natural sciences and art); knowledge of the legal framework, economics and ethical aspects within the field of study; specialisation in a particular didactic area.
- b) *Practical*: independently planning and realising educational processes; handling methodological and organisational work in the field of pre-primary education; planning integrative approaches for children with special needs; analysing and considering alternative pre-school education programmes; preparing methodological texts with a wide range of applicability; effectively communicating with a wider public and professional community (Akreditačná komisia 2016).

Curricular areas

Cultural and socio-anthropological contexts of education; sociology of childhood; methodology for creating social knowledge; theories for forming cultural literacy; models of cognitive development, models of personal and social development; theory and practice of primary education; theory of management of pre-primary and out-of-school education; didactics of the basic fields of education (language, mathematics, bases of natural and social science, art and physical education); research and project work in didactics; semester project (empirical research). The course of study ends with a Master's thesis either on general educational topics and issues or on a specialised area of didactics. Graduates are qualified to hold continuing professional development activities for pre-primary and primary school teachers (Akreditačná komisia 2016).

Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teacher – Doctoral degree

Competence requirements

Conducting research and guiding complex projects and development activities related to the field of study; identifying scientific problems and conducting projects in the field of pre-primary and primary education; adopting research methodology appropriate for the problem at hand; adhering to principles for presenting the research findings; contextualising the findings in the scientific literature; stating implications for further research and relevance for educational practices; being aware of the ethical and legal principles relevant to scientific work; contextualising the research in the broader philosophical and social context of the field.

Curricular areas

Methodology of educational research; quantitative and qualitative approaches; theoretical and empirical research; language of science; scientific texts; research on pre-primary and primary education; philosophy of education; individual research project work (Akreditačná komisia 2016).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There are no alternative qualification routes for staff working in ECEC settings in Slovakia. Almost all Pre-primary Teachers in the Slovak Republic are qualified. If an unqualified person is employed as a teacher, it is his/her duty to complete the qualification, either through a post-secondary, non-tertiary part-time education (ISCED 4) route at an upper secondary vocational school with a specialisation in pedagogy (two years) or by acquiring a Bachelor's (three/four years) or Master's (two years) degree through part-time study in the study programme Pre-primary and Primary Education (ISCED 6). Exception is 220 hours course for those who are already working as childcare workers with children 0-3.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

In the Slovak Republic, there is no regulated time allocation for workplace-based learning in the IPS of prospective Pre-primary Teachers, neither at the upper secondary nor at the tertiary level. However, the national curricular framework and the universities' approved and accredited core syllabus, both of which are binding documents, do provide a general framework for field placements.

Four-year vocational route

A minimum number of 68 hours is set out in the national curricular framework: 20 hours for theoretical studies and 18 hours for field-based studies. The remaining 30 hours can be used by the vocational schools according to their own conditions and needs (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania 2016, 38).

In consequence, the range and duration of practical experiences varies from school to school. The placements are usually conducted in the form of continuous pedagogical practice in the student's place of residence and surroundings, usually for between five to 10/15 working days per year for six hours a day. Beyond this, in the 3rd and 4th year of study students participate in pedagogical placements throughout the school year for three to ten hours a week. They spend half of this time in kindergartens and half in after-school clubs for children.

For example, at the upper vocational school for education and social studies in Prešov, the workplace-based learning component of IPS is set out in the syllabus as follows: in the 3rd year of study four hours a week and in the 4th year of study three hours a week. The continuous vocational practice is a part of the subject called "practice" and is scheduled for five working days in the 1st and 2nd year of study and for ten working days in the 3rd and 4th year of study (always for six hours a day), making a total of 180 hours overall (Pedagogická a sociálna akadémia Prešov 2016c).

Tertiary-level route

At tertiary education level, each faculty of education usually offers a Bachelor's degree programme in Pre-primary and Primary Education. It is the responsibility of each faculty to determine the range and the content of practical placements. For example, the faculty of education at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra implements 40 hours of introductory observational practice in kindergartens and after-school clubs into the 3rd semester. In the 4th semester there are 20 hours of observation and working in an assistant role in kindergarten and in the 6th semester there are 40 hours of independent practice in kindergartens and after-school clubs for children.

The range of pedagogical practice is not centrally determined; it is set out by each faculty in its study programmes. Two examples:

- The faculty of education at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra awards 10 ECTS points (2+2+6) for field-based studies during the Bachelor's degree programme. During the 3rd semester, 40 hours of observational practice take place in a kindergarten and an after-school club (2 ECTS points); during the 4th semester students work in an observational and assistant role in a kindergarten (20 hours, 2 ECTS points); and during the 6th semester students undertake independent pedagogical assignments in both a kindergarten and an after-school club for children (40 hours, 6 ECTS points; Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre 2016).
- At Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, the faculty of education's Bachelor's degree syllabus includes a course on the Theory and Practice of Pre-primary and Primary Education. This comprises one lecture, two seminars, two exercises and three practical sessions per week. 9 ECTS points are awarded for this subject. During the 6th semester students undertake pedagogical field placements for about 80 hours (6 ECTS points). Within the Master's study programme, students can study a course on Education of Children with Specific

Educational Needs. The course comprises one seminar and one placement per week (10 ECTS points). During the placement period, students are expected to develop observational skills, to monitor and record a child's development, to manage and evaluate the educational process, to carry out written preparations, to organise activities for children aimed at developing complex skills and supporting the child's personal development, to handle pedagogical documentation, to compile an individual pedagogical plan for a child. The students are expected to use self-reflection methods and write a report about their practice. A variety of self-evaluation tools are used, in particular a pedagogical diary or log book. The student's activities are also assessed by an experienced teacher, another student, or a university tutor. A written external evaluation is carried out by a supervising teacher and on this basis the responsible university tutor awards credits for the practical placement. Observation and analysis of the teacher's activity, familiarisation with the specific working conditions in kindergarten are all part of workplace-based learning (Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici 2016).

Teachers who take on a mentoring or supervising role are not required to have a specific qualification or training for this task. In general they are experienced teachers and are paid for this work by the faculty.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

In accordance with Law No. 317/2009 on pedagogical and professional employees, teachers and teacher assistants have both a right and an obligation to participate in continuing education that ensures professional development within a career system.

Independent of the education level of the teacher (vocational studies or university studies), teachers can progress from one career stage to another. Each of the following four career stages corresponds to a certain level of competence and each reflects a different salary level:

1. novice/newly qualified teacher (graduate in his/her first employment);
2. independent teacher (after completing an adaptation course);
3. teacher with first attestation (after meeting the established criteria);
4. teacher with second attestation.

The aim of continuing education is to gain up-to-date knowledge, skills and competences in order to maintain, refresh, improve and complement the teachers' professional competencies. CPD courses are organised through programmes for continuing education accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. They are mostly provided by universities, regional Methodological Centres, church-affiliated communities, or other legal entities specialising in education (Ministerstvo školstva vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej 2016a).

The centre head is responsible for organising the CPD activities of staff and preparing the annual programme for continuing professional development. Teachers can participate in CPD activities once they have completed six months of teaching.

There are five main types of continuing education within the career stage system:

- adaptation/induction courses,
- update courses,
- educational innovation courses,
- specialisation courses,
- kindergarten and school leadership courses.

The goal of *adaptation/induction courses* is to provide newly qualified teachers with the necessary professional competencies to carry out standard teacher activities which it was not possible to acquire during the practical placements provided by the secondary vocational schools or

universities. Induction courses are organised according to the programme drawn up by the employer and build on the framework programmes for induction courses issued by the ministry. Novice teachers are obliged to undertake and successfully complete an induction course not later than two years after signing their work contract, otherwise the work contract will be terminated. Unqualified persons working as teachers and teacher assistants are also obliged to attend an induction course.

Update and educational innovation courses aim to make teachers aware of new developments in their field and to provide them with a further improvement of the professional competencies needed for carrying out standard teacher activities.

The goal of *specialisation courses* is to provide teachers with the professional competencies to carry out specialised tasks (for example educational counselling).

The goal of *kindergarten and school leadership courses* is to provide teachers with the professional competencies necessary for carrying out management duties and to professionalise the work of centre heads. This includes the development of competencies in working with data, becoming familiar with indicators of teacher evaluation, learning about innovations in the management of kindergartens, etc.

Pre-primary Teachers are entitled to paid leave by the employer in the following cases:

- five working days of paid leave per year to participate in CPD activities;
- an additional five working days for preparation for the first or second attestation examination;
- an additional five working days to participate in a school leadership course or a course on innovation in school leadership education, the latter being specifically for the heads of ECEC settings.

The kindergarten plans the annual costs involved for CPD activities. The costs are covered by employers, providers and participants depending on the course provider.

Attestations and continuing education are funded through state budgets, municipal budgets, employers, participant fees, and through donations or other resources.

Problems related to participation in CPD activities include: releasing the teachers from their workload, financing in cases where the teachers have to pay for course attendance, substituting the teacher in the ECEC setting. For financial reasons, some municipalities prefer staff with a lower qualification.

Unqualified persons working as teachers in kindergartens are obliged to start the qualifying course (post-secondary study at a vocational school or university) within a period of two years after concluding a work contract and to complete it within four years at the latest.

Similarly, teachers in kindergartens for children with special needs have to gain the qualification within a maximum of seven years.

The Head Teacher of a kindergarten is appointed on the basis of a selection process. The Head Teacher must meet the following conditions: have the required qualification, have completed the first attestation, have the required length of professional experience (usually five years), have to complete the school leadership course within three years at latest.

A student mentor is required to have the first attestation, or to have at least completed the preparatory course for attestation. No specific topics focusing on the supervisory and supportive activities of a student mentor are required. Additional support staff (e.g. school psychologist, speech therapist, therapeutic educator) have developed their particular specialisation during their university studies and also have an obligation to participate in continuing study.

The state supports the university study of Pre-primary Teachers by offering full-time studies at all three levels free of charge. In the case of in-service study the employer can grant support according to the law (e.g. study leave; Ministerstvo školstva vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej Republiky 2016b).

Since 1997, the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR 2016d) has ensured the collection and management of data about institutions offering continuing education in the Slovak Republic and their educational activities. All programmes and activities that complement, broaden and deepen the acquired education are considered as continuing education. Large-scale research has not been conducted.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

A fundamental reform of the continuing education of Pre-primary Teachers began with the adoption of the Law on Pedagogical and Professional Employees (2009), when Kindergarten Teachers were first included in the state school system of continuing education. At present, there are intentions to drive the transfer of the initial professional studies of Pre-primary/Kindergarten Teachers at a greater rate to the university level and to accredit the programmes of continuing education aimed at pre-primary education.

Changes in the credit award system for continuing education are also on the policy agenda. The number of awarded credits for particular CPD courses currently takes into account:

- the extent and complexity of the continuing education programme;
- authoring or co-authoring approved textbooks, learning texts, workbooks, recommended teaching tools or other measurable creative/productive activities related to pedagogical practice or specialised practice.

Credits are valid for a period of seven years from the date of award; for serious reasons (especially maternity leave, parental leave or sickness absence longer than six months continuously) and upon a written request from the employee, the employer may extend this period for no more than three years.

Recent discussions have focused specifically on the allocation and recognition of credits.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

In the Slovak Republic, no research related to the professionalisation of ECEC staff has been conducted during the past five years. Some projects were carried out to prepare Pre-primary Teachers for changes in the education programme ISCED 0, particularly since the introduction of a new National Curriculum for kindergartens in September 2016 (Štátny pedagogický ústav 2017).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The salary of Pre-primary Teachers depends on the level of their initial professional studies and the length of professional practice. Teachers may obtain a so called *credit salary rise* for completed continuing education.

Taking into account the level of education and the societal value of their work, teachers belong to the group of employees with inadequate remuneration. Since teachers are state employees, their wages are relatively low, and the state is very conscious of this fact. Currently, a wage increase is under consideration.

One of the main problems that novice teachers have to face is to ensure their accommodation. Beneficial mortgages are available to help young teachers buy a flat. The state subsidises these by reducing the interest rate of commercial mortgages, in cooperation with banks. The state reduces the interest rate by 3% and the banks by another 1.5%. Neither mortgage for teachers is available free of charge. Those who want to take a mortgage have to agree to work for the state for a period of five years. Currently, there is a discussion under way about providing social housing for newly qualified teachers.

The cost of renting accommodation can be prohibitive, depending on the location, size and quality of the flat. For example, in Bratislava a single parent with a child can barely afford to rent a flat. Kindergarten head teachers, deputy head teachers and student mentors receive a higher salary (with extra payment for management).

In accordance with Decree No 437/2009, Pre-primary Teachers are classified into the following salary grades (monthly salaries, valid since September 2016):

Grade 7: beginning teacher with upper secondary education (ISCED 3, 4), 561.50€

Grade 8: independent teacher with upper secondary education (ISCED 3, 4) and beginning teacher with Bachelor's degree (ISCED 6), 620.50€

Grade 9: independent teacher with a Bachelor's degree (ISCED 6) and beginning teacher with a Master's degree (ISCED 7), 694.50€

Grade 10: independent teacher with a Master's degree (ISCED 7), 757.50€

Grade 11: teacher with first attestation, 849€

Grade 12: teacher with second attestation, 950€

In addition to this basic salary, teachers receive each year a monthly increase in pay according to their years of practice (e.g. after the first year 5.50 - 9€, after six years 31.50 – 53.50€, after 20 years 94.50 – 160.50€, after 30 years 121 - 205€).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Pre-primary Teachers work 37.5 hours a week and usually work full-time. Only a very small number in kindergartens for children with special needs are employed part-time (nine teachers of 255 working in public kindergartens, three teachers of 27 working in private kindergartens and one teacher of 12 working in church-affiliated kindergartens/schools).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Newly qualified teachers work under the supervision and with the support of a supervising teacher (mentor) who familiarises him with the organisation and activities of the kindergarten, explains relevant rules, and helps to plan and evaluate the new teacher's pedagogical work. Together they analyse and evaluate the activities of the children and the teachers, prepare meetings with parents, organise events, etc. There are also other colleagues who help the beginning teacher to get to know the children.

Additional support for teachers is available through regional associations (e.g. OMEP - national branch of an international early childhood education association, Society for Pre-school Education) that organise multiple education events for teachers (lectures, workshops, open days in kindergarten, etc.).

8.4 Non-contact time

Out of 37.5 working hours per week, 28 hours are allocated to direct pedagogical activities and 9.5 hours to other activities related to the working process (e.g. preparation and planning of activities, cooperation with parents, workshops, consultations with specialists, etc.).

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In the Slovak Republic, there are currently no staff shortages in the ECEC field, and therefore there is no need for special recruitment strategies.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

1. Guaranteeing the qualification level of Pre-primary Teachers. In some cases municipalities as providers of kindergartens prefer to employ unqualified persons as a teacher for financial reasons. Moreover, skilled teachers may possibly find better paid jobs in other areas of work.
2. Improving the quality of Pre-primary Teacher education at all levels of initial professional studies. Teachers' theoretical education is already at a high level, but more attention should be paid to the practical elements of the professional qualification and its planning and organisation as well as finding a balance between the two aspects.
3. Increasing the salaries of teachers and employees in the education sector.

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SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Zita Badúriková
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Slovak Republic – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepr.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1022-1033.

Funded by:

Sources are briefly acknowledged below each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

In the split system of early childhood education and care in Slovakia, kindergartens for 3- to 6-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education Science, Research and Sport (*Ministerstvo Školstva, Vedy, Výskumu a Športu*). The national ministry is responsible for overall regulatory measures relating to general educational objectives, inspection, monitoring and funding, whereas the municipalities are in charge of the organisation of services at the local level. Up until 1993, infant-toddler centres/nurseries for children up to age 3 came under the Ministry of Health. In the years that followed, provision for the under-threes was no longer assigned to a specific jurisdiction. However, since March 2017 (Law No. 448/2008) ECEC settings for children under the age of 3 come under the auspices of the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (*Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*). The providers of these settings may be municipal or private. In the first case, they receive financial support from the ministry. Municipalities can also choose to support private institutions from their own budgets.

Sources: Baďuríková, Z., Ľ. Šimčáková, and Z. Pérez Renčíková 2017.
EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

General objectives and legislative framework

Equality of opportunity and lifelong learning are the guiding principles of the education system and also apply to kindergarten education. Kindergartens are regulated by the Education Act (*Školský Zákon*) and the 2008 Decree issued by the Ministry of Education (No. 306/2008) as well as the ensuing Amendment (No. 308/2009). As mentioned in the previous section, centres for children up to age 3 are only required to comply with general health and safety regulations issued by the Ministry of Health. These regulations are not specific for this age group.

The Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family has introduced new regulations to define the basic requirements for the management of ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age. These regulations came into effect in March 2017*.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

According to the 2008 Education Act, 5-year old children are entitled to a free place in a kindergarten. This regulation came into effect in 2014. Attendance is not compulsory in any form of ECEC provision.

Compulsory schooling starts at age six.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice. 2016.
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Types of provision

Infant-toddler centres (*detské jasle*) for children aged 6 months to 3 years and settings called mother/child centres (*materské/detské centrá*) are privately provided and managed, either by individuals, parents' associations or the local authority. This provision may also be home-based.

Kindergartens (*materské školy*) for 3- to 6-year olds offer either full-day places for up to 12 hours, or part-time places for up to 5 hours daily. Most kindergartens open between 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning and close between 16:30 and 18:00 in the evening. If places are available, 2-year olds may also be admitted. Children aged 5 years and older are given priority, as are children assessed as needing deferred school entry. Kindergartens are generally free-standing institutions, but some are integrated into primary schools (*Základná škola s materskou školou*). The regular kindergarten year starts on 1st September and ends on 31st August. During the school holidays, opening times are a matter of negotiation with parents. However, the buildings always remain closed for at least three weeks during the summer period for staff holidays and renovations. Special kindergartens are available for children with special educational needs who are unable to attend a regular kindergarten (*Špeciálna materská škola*).

In 2016/17, there were 2,959 kindergartens in Slovakia, attended by 158.081 children*.

Transition classes (sometimes called zero classes) were set up in September 2002 (Education Act No. 208/2002) in primary schools. According to the Act, transition classes can be created to support 6-year old children from socially disadvantaged families who are not ready for school.

Children between 5 and 6 years of age can also attend alternative forms of settings such as **forest kindergartens** or nature schools (*Materská škola v prírode*).

Sources: Baďuríková, Z., L. Šimčáková, und Z. Pérez Renčíková 2017.
EFA 2015.
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*Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information 2017.

Provider structures

The majority of **kindergartens** in Slovakia are public and provided by the municipalities, although some may be state-run (founded by the district education office). Private kindergartens can be established by individuals or legal persons, or by churches or church-affiliated organisations registered with the state.

Since 2007, private kindergartens have received funding from the municipalities, and since 2009/10 they have been required to work according to the national curricular framework. The service providers are responsible for the educational programme at the centre level. However, some of these private kindergartens do not apply to the Ministry of Education to be included in the schools network. In such cases, they do not receive a state subsidy and do not have to follow the national curricular framework.

In 2016/17, from a total of 2,959 kindergartens, 2,744 were publicly run (92.7%), 137 were private (4.6%) and 78 were operated by a religious organisation (2.6%). They were attended by 148,971, 5,632 and 4,478 children respectively. There are also 64 special kindergartens in Slovakia (53 public, 7 private, and 4 church operated)*.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
*Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Between 2005 and 2015 the share of children under age 3 in centre based settings decreased from only 3% to an even lower 1.1%*, which can be explained partly by the comparatively long period of parental leave (see section on *Parental leave*). During the same period, the proportion of children between 3 years and school entry rose from roughly two thirds (67%) of the age-group in 2005 to 72% in 2010. By 2015 the proportion had sunk again to 67.6%*.

In terms of age-segregated data, the 4- and 5-year olds had the highest enrolment rates (over three quarters of the overall age group) in 2015 (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

Slovak Republic: Number of children in ECEC settings and enrolment ratios according to age-groups, 2015**

Age-group	Number	Enrolment rate, in % [†]
Under 2-year olds	No data	
2-year olds	7,581	13.4
3-year olds	36,996	60.3
4-year olds	43,896	75.6
5-year olds	48,590	81.2
2- to under 6-year olds	160,005	68.9
3- to under 6-year olds	137,063	77.8

[†] own calculations based on Eurostat data of 2015

In 2016/17 there were 159,081 children and 15,949 qualified staff in Slovakian kindergarten settings. Most were employed in public settings (14,777, 92.7%), only 4.6% in private and 2.7% in church affiliated settings. 317 persons worked in special needs kindergartens***.

The demand for places for children aged 3 to 6 years far exceeds the supply, and in 2015/16 there was a waiting list of 13,482 children, prompting the Ministry of Education to allocate 10,000,000€ in 2015 for the expansion of provision.

There are no statistics available for the participation rates of children under age 3, although for this age group in particular there is an acute lack of available places.

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.
**Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
Eurydice 2016.
***Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information 2017.

Financing and costs for parents

Kindergartens are funded either by local authorities or partly by private/church-affiliated providers. The local authorities receive subsidies from tax revenues and transfer these to the providers, e.g. for salaries. They are required to cover at least 90% of the funding.

According to the Education Act (2008), parents of children in a state-run kindergarten generally have to pay a contribution, but this should not be higher than 7.5% of the subsistence minimum. The centre head invariably decides on how much each family is expected to pay. Low-income families can negotiate with the kindergarten head about exemption from this requirement. In municipal/local authority kindergartens a binding regulation for fees is set but must not exceed 15% of the subsistence minimum. The average monthly fee for parents ranges between 15€ and 20€, excluding meals. The final year before school entry is free of charge, although parents are expected to contribute towards the cost of meals. No data is available about the fees charged by private providers.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 186. Eurydice 2015.

Staff/child ratios

In **infant toddler centres** group size and staff/child ratios were not regulated after 1993, but according to the new regulations which came into effect in March 2017, there should be no more than 12 children in a group. For children older than 2 years, the maximum group size can be raised to 15 children. The required adult/child ratio is 1:5.

In **full-day kindergarten** groups the maximum group size requirement is 20 for children aged 3 to 4 years, 21 for groups of 4- to 5-year olds, 22 for children aged 5 to 6 years, and 21 for mixed-aged groups of 3- to 6-year olds. In certain circumstances, mostly at the discretion of the centre head, up to three extra children may be admitted to a group. No more than two children with special educational needs may be included in any one kindergarten group, and in such cases the group size is reduced. The average staffing ratio/formula appears in national statistics as 1:10. However, in many cases the number of children per member of staff is significantly higher.

Sources: Baďuríková , Z., L. Šimčáková, and Z. Pérez Renčíková 2017. EFA 2015. Eurydice 2016.

Curricular frameworks

No statutory framework and no curricular guidance exist for work in **settings for under-threes**. It is the responsibility of the centre provider to ensure that the health ministry regulations are adhered to, which require times of rest, outdoor play during all weathers, physical exercises and stamina-enhancing activities.

In **kindergartens**, the emphasis lies on a holistic approach to children's socio-emotional, cognitive, physical, ethical and aesthetic development. The goal is an age-appropriate education which prepares children for life. Before starting compulsory schooling, the children are awarded a leaving certificate if they have attended kindergarten for at least one year.

Since 2009, Slovakia has a statutory curricular framework (*Štátny vzdelávací program pre materské školy, State Education Programme for Pre-Primary Education*) for the pedagogical work

in kindergartens. Each kindergarten is expected to develop its own centre-specific educational programme according to the principles and goals of the State Education Programme. Basic skills and life competencies, as well as content and achievement oriented standards, are set out in four thematic areas: (1) Myself; (2) Others; (3) Nature; (4) Culture. Each of these areas intersects, and each focuses on perceptual motor, cognitive and socio-emotional development. A new State Education Programme with a new structure and content was introduced on a voluntary basis in 2015 and came into force in September 2016.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The 2008 Education Act stipulates that children with special educational needs should receive the support they need. They may attend either a regular kindergarten or a special kindergarten for children with disabilities. Only children with multiple disabilities who are not able even with rehabilitation support to attend a mainstream kindergarten are enrolled in a special needs centre. Parents have the final choice following consultations with experts. In regular kindergartens, these children are either together in a separate group or they receive individual attention and tuition within a mainstream group. The kindergartens are supported by specialist staff and psychologists, and an individual plan is drawn up for each child which is also related to the State Education Plan. In 2014-15, 158 children were enrolled in 17 kindergarten groups for children with special educational needs, and in 2016/17 1,416** were enrolled in 64 specialist centres.

In terms of the social inclusion of children from marginalised Roma communities, a national project was conducted from February 2013 to November 2015 with the aim of achieving the integration of these children in kindergartens and to improve their 'school readiness', particularly through active communication with parents. A main focus was placed on improving staff competencies regarding social inclusion (*An Inclusive Model of Education for the Pre-Primary Level of the School System*).

Children with a background of migration

Children whose home language is not Slovak may be able to attend a national minority language kindergarten. In 2016/17, Hungarian was the most widespread language used in public kindergartens (in 262 kindergartens), followed by Slovak/Hungarian in 71, Ukrainian in four and three kindergartens used other languages. In the private sector there is one kindergarten with German language and four kindergartens with other languages. Hungarian is the language used in seven church-affiliated kindergartens**.

In 2016, only 1.2% of the total population had a non-Slovak background of whom more than three quarters came from the EU28-countries. In the under-fives age group these shares are even lower: 0.2% and 54.2% respectively.*

Source: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
*Eurostat 2017g.
Oberhuemer, P. and I. Schreyer 2010.
**Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information 2017.

Monitoring– Evaluation – Research

There are no statutory requirements regarding assessment and other forms of evaluation in the **infant-toddler centres**.

In **kindergartens** child-related assessments are based mainly on observations through the group leader, the centre head and the kindergarten/schools inspectorate. The idea is to assess each child's developmental progress and the impact of educational activities, and to improve the individual work with each child. Besides written observations, the children's drawings or construction work may be included in the overall evaluation. The group leader works closely with the parents and informs them regularly about their child's progress.

All educational institutions, kindergartens included, conduct annual (non-mandatory) self-evaluation procedures and provide a written report on these for the inspectorate and the centre provider. These reports include information about the children, the staff and their continuing professional development, educational activities and projects, co-operation with other organisations and institutions, material and financial resources, and the goals that are followed. The reports are prepared by the centre heads together with the staff and also include the results of external evaluations by the kindergarten/schools inspectorate. The inspectors act as an independent external authority, assessing the quality of the centre management, staffing, spatial and material resources, and educational processes according to prescribed criteria. This takes place e.g. through on-site inspections (observations, staff interviews), questionnaires and documentary analysis. All aspects of assessment are discussed with the centre head, and recommendations made in terms of improving the quality in specific areas. These external evaluations can be viewed on the web pages of all schools and kindergartens.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave

The length of statutory **maternity leave** (*materská dovolenka*) is 34 weeks, of which 6 to 8 weeks are to be taken before the expected birth date. During this time, women are paid 75% of their average daily income, calculated according to earnings during the previous year – provided an employee has contributed to sickness insurance for at least 270 days during the previous two years. Single mothers are entitled to 37 weeks of maternity leave. Mothers receive a lump sum at the time of birth of 829.86€ for the first child.

There is no legal entitlement to **paternity leave**.

Parental leave (*rodičovská dovolenka*) can be taken by both the mother or the father up until the child's third birthday, but only by one parent at a time. All families who live in the Slovak Republic on a permanent or short-term basis and have at least one child under the age of three in their care, since January 2016 are entitled to a maximum monthly parental benefit (*rodičovský príspevok*) of roughly 200€ per month. Only one of the parents is entitled to this allowance. It is possible to work while receiving the parental benefit.

Parents of children under 3 years of age who are employed or registered as students are reimbursed up to 230€ per month for making use of centre-based or home-based (with a registered family day carer) ECEC provision.

No statistical data are available regarding the uptake of parental leave. However, it is known that only a very few men are in receipt of the parental benefit.

Sources: *EPIC 2016.
Gerbery, D. 2017.
OECD 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1829	First children's home founded by Countess Therese Brunsvick
1872	First day nursery established – with a focus on child protection, instilling a sense of cleanliness and orderliness, and helping the children to develop age-appropriate skills
1881	The Hungarian Act XV stipulates that children aged 3 to 6 years are to attend a day care institution if their parents were unable to care for them at home on a regular basis
1913-14	Towards the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there are 416 day care institutions in the Slovak region, but not one using the Slovak language
1918	An expansion phase follows the founding of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, but by 1937 the number of centres had declined to 160
1948	A total of 1000 ECEC institutions are available at the onset of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia
1952	Day nurseries come under the auspices of the Ministry of Health
1950s and 1960s	Age-integrated centres are set up for 3- to 6-year olds and for children under 3 years of age under the auspices of the Ministry of Education
1970s and 1980s	Employer-based childcare facilities and co-operatives set up
1970	By 1970 there are 561 day nurseries and 2,645 kindergartens in the Slovak region
1980	Ten years later the total had risen to 973 day nurseries and 3,723 kindergartens
1989	At the time of the collapse of the communist regime, 92% of 3- to under 6-year olds attend a total of 4052 kindergartens.
1991	Day nurseries for children under 3 years of age removed from the auspices of the Ministry of Health.
1994	By 1994 there are only 3,343 kindergartens, meaning that 709 kindergartens were closed over a period of 5 years.
2001-2006	Closing of 330 services, mostly for children under 3 years of age
2014	Expansion of kindergartens begins, totalling 2,935 in 2015/16
2015/16	Extreme shortage of places: Parents of 13,482 children are unable to enrol their child in a kindergarten
2017	New regulations for the operation and management of settings for children under 3 years of age

Sources: Bad'uriková, Z. personal communication, May 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 306

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Slovakia

Country expert assessment by Zita Bad'uriková

Although the Slovak government has been investing in the reconstruction of ECEC buildings and has extended the capacity of kindergartens over the past two years, existing demands for places have still not been met. The shortage of places in kindergartens remains a big issue, not only to meet parents' current needs but also to cater for the 5-year olds' entitlement to a kindergarten place which is under discussion.

Another challenge is to integrate children from disadvantaged families (especially Roma children from remote communities) into kindergartens. Most children from these families do not attend kindergartens at all, and this may be one of the reasons of their failure at primary school. It is one of the reasons why compulsory attendance for all 5-year olds is being discussed as part of the proposed school reform.

Regarding the settings for children under 3 years of age, there are several challenges: expansion of places in public settings, quality of education and care and developing an elaborate framework curriculum for the work in nurseries and infant-toddler centres.

Demographic data

Population

In 2016, the population in Slovakia totalled 5,426,252. This represents only a gradual growth over the past 20 years (1995: 5,356,207; 2005: 5,372,685).

Children under age six

In 2016, children under age 3 comprised 3.1% of the total population in Slovakia, and children under age 6 6.3%. In 1995, these levels were above the EU average (even though the Slovak Republic was not a member of the EU at that time), whereas by 2005 they had fallen below. Currently they approximately correspond to the EU28-average level (see Table 2 and 3).

Table 2

Slovak Republic: Children under 6 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	56,110
1-year olds	56,119
2-year olds	55,942
Total under age 3	168,171
3-year olds	56,678
4-year olds	61,426
5-year olds	58,113
Total 3 to under age 6	176,217
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	344,388

Table 3

Slovak Republic: Children under 6 years of age, 1995 to 2016, in %*

	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	4.0	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.0
3 to under 6 years	4.3	3.5	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.1
0 to under 6 years	8.3	6.8	5.9	6.2	6.3	6.2

* author's calculations

¹The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: *Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age six

In 2015, more than half (55.9%) of the households with children under age six in the Slovak Republic were couple households. Single households constituted only 1.8% of all households, and nearly all these were single mother households (1.7%).

Table 4

Slovak Republic: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	639,500	
Couple households	357,700	55.9
Other household type	270,500	42.3
Single households, total	11,200	1.8
Single households, women	10,700	1.7
Single households, men	500**	0.1

* own calculations, **data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017b.

Employment rates of parents with children under age six

In 2015, the employment rate of men aged 15 to 64 years totalled 69.5% and that of women 55.9%. In the same year, of all women with children under 6 years of age, only 39.9% were in the labour market – the second lowest rate of employment in the EU28. The proportion of men with children under 6 years of age (86%) in work is slightly under the EU28 average.

Table 5

Slovak Republic: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2016

		Mothers, in per cent	Fathers, in per cent
Slovakia	2005	35.3	78.9
	2010	36.8	82.2
	2015	39.3	86.0
European Union	EU15 - 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 - 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
EU - highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
EU - lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 19.5% of children under 6 years of age were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. This positions Slovakia as below the EU average (24.7%) for this age-group. The relative share of all persons in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 18.4%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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²'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROE))

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SLOVENIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report authors

Tatjana Vonta

Formerly senior researcher at the Educational Research Institute;
now an independent consultant

Jerneja Jager

Researcher at the Educational Research Institute,
Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education, Ljubljana

Citation suggestion:

Vonta, T. and J. Jager. 2018. "Slovenia – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1034-1064.

Funded by:

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Note from the editors: In official translations of government documents, ECEC settings in Slovenia are often described as *Preschools* or *Pre-school Institutions* and core practitioners as *Pre-school Teachers*. The preferred terms in the **seePRO-r** reports for countries with a unitary ECEC system are: *ECEC Centre* (or *Setting/Institution*) and *Early Childhood Pedagogy/Educator/Teacher*.

The distinction is made because the term ‘pre-school’, whether as adjective or noun, is often used internationally to mean ‘pre-primary’ education, referring to the two or three years prior to school entry only. In this report, the term *Early Childhood Teacher* has been chosen to describe the main core practitioners in the Slovenian ECEC system.

1. ECEC governance

In Slovenia, early childhood education and care provision is organised as a unitary system. Since 1993, the age-integrated ECEC institutions for children aged 11 months up to statutory schooling, generally at age six, come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (*Ministrstvo za šolstvo, znanost in šport*).

Slovenia was the first of the post-communist countries to transfer responsibility for early childhood education from the then Ministry of Health, Family and Social Security to the then Ministry of Education and Sport (Krek 1995, 37). The government’s concrete responsibilities include issuing relevant legislation and providing an ECEC curriculum. Municipalities have a duty to provide sufficient places and to ensure that the national curricular framework is implemented.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Table 1 gives an overview of the main staff categories working in centre-based settings. Core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) are also categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Slovenia: Staff in ECEC settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>Vzgojitelj</i> Early Childhood Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrtec</i> ECEC centre 11 months–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre head of a free-standing ECEC setting Head of an ECEC unit in a primary school	0–7 years	3 years higher education Bachelor’s degree ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
	<i>Osnovna šola</i> Primary school 1 st grade, 6–7 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility (works along primary)	0–7 years	

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
		school teacher)		
	<i>Bolnišnica</i> Hospital 0–6 years	Core practitioner with small group responsibility	0–7 years	
<i>Pomočnik vzgojitelja</i> Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant <i>Profile in family day care:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrtec</i> ECEC centre 11 months–6 years	Qualified co-worker (works with core practitioner or alone with group during absence of Early Childhood Teacher, e.g. rest time for children, morning assembly, pick up time, etc.)	11 months – 6 years	4 years upper secondary/vocational qualification; vocational <i>Matura</i> ECTS points: n/a ² EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3
	<i>Varuh predšolskih otrok na domu</i> Home-based child-care setting 11 months–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility; at child minder's home, smaller group than in an ECEC setting (6 children maximum)	11 months – 6 years	

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i> (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years) • <i>Pre-primary Education Professional</i> (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years) • <i>Pre-primary and Primary Education School Professional</i> (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years) • <i>Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i> (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults) • <i>Social Care/Health Care Professional</i> (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)
--

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2 gives a breakdown of the ECEC workforce in Slovenia according to qualification and gender.

Table 2

Slovenia: ECEC staff in centre-based settings, 2015

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce – 2015
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	40.0 %*
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	n/a
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	59.2 %*
Staff with a non-relevant qualification	0.7 %*
Staff with no initial formal qualification	There are no official data, but according to research reports, around 26 Roma assistants work in

² n/a = not applicable

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce – 2015
	ECEC settings in the context of specific projects and most have been attending vocational courses.
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	2.7%** (324 of total 11,797 practitioners in kindergartens)
Male practitioners	2.5%** (292 of total 11,797 practitioners in kindergartens)
Centre leaders	4.6%** (19 of total 417 centre leaders)
Core practitioners	1.0%** (54 of total 5174 core practitioners)
School counsellors	0.6%** (1 of total 155 school counsellors)
Auxiliary staff/assistants	3.4%** (196 of total 5,727 auxiliary staff/assistants)
Other professional staff	6.8%** (22 of total 324 other professional staff)
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a 'background of migration'	There are no official data, but according to re-search reports, around 26 Roma assistants work in ECEC settings in the context of specific projects and most have been attending vocational courses.

* Statistical Office RS 2016a.

** Statistical Office RS 2016b.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Table 3 describes the initial qualifying route for prospective Early Childhood Teachers. The study route is open for those who have finished general secondary education with a university entrance exam (*matura*) **or** for those who have completed vocational secondary education with a *vocational matura* or final exam, and for those who finished the 4-year upper secondary programme before 1st June 1995. The course of study lasts 3 years; candidates must acquire 180 ECTS points from the compulsory and optional parts of the programme. Credits obtained at other higher education institutions or achieved on the basis of recognised knowledge and skills may also be considered. The course of study concludes by presenting and defending a written Bachelor thesis. If successful, the candidate is awarded the title of *Diplomirana vzgojiteljica/diplomiran vzgojitelj predšolskih otrok/Diplomirana vzgojiteljica predšolskih otrok* (State-approved Early Childhood Education Teacher).

Table 3

Slovenia: Early Childhood Teacher (IPS)

Job title in Slovenian: <i>Vzgojitelj</i> Profile: <i>Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i>
<p>Entry requirements: General <i>matura</i>, vocational <i>matura</i> or final exam or a 4-year upper secondary vocational programme completed before 1 June 1995.</p> <p>In the case of enrolment limitation, the candidates are selected according to: (1) overall performance in the general <i>matura</i>, the vocational <i>matura</i> or the final exam: 70 % of points awarded; (2) overall performance in grades 3 and 4 of the secondary education programme: 30 % of points awarded.</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years higher education; candidates must acquire all the required ECTS points (180) from the compulsory and optional part of the programme. Credits obtained at other higher education institutions or achieved on the basis of recognised knowledge and skills may also be considered. The course of study concludes by presenting and defending a Bachelor thesis.</p> <p>Award: State-approved Early Childhood Education Teacher (Bachelor)</p>

Job title in Slovenian: Vzgojitelj Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 Main ECEC workplace: A graduate Early Childhood Teacher can be employed in any organisation engaged in early learning and teaching; most often this means in ECEC settings and the first grade of the nine-year compulsory school. The graduate Early Childhood Teacher can also work in hospital units for young children.

The initial qualifying route for the Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant is presented in *Table 4*. The route is open for anyone who has successfully completed compulsory education (9 years) or lower vocational education or the equivalent qualifying route under previous regulations. The route is at the upper secondary vocational level and is of 4 years' duration. Students are awarded the vocational *matura* after successful completion of the course. The mandatory part of the vocational *matura* involves taking a written and oral examination in the Slovene language on the education of young children. An optional part is a written and oral exam in a foreign language or mathematics, or exam performances and their defence. Successful candidates are awarded the title of 'Early Childhood Educator' (*Vzgojiteljica predšolskih otrok*) and with this qualification they can work as Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant. Persons with a vocational *matura* can either enter employment or continue their initial professional studies at a higher education programme of early childhood education, other professional programmes, and various university programmes (after completing a specific subject at *matura* level).

Table 4

Slovenia: Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant (IPS)

Job title in Slovenian: Pomočnik vzgojitelja
Entry requirements: Completed compulsory education (9 years) or lower vocational education or equivalent education under the previous regulations. In case of enrolment limitation the candidates are selected according to the final assessment of the compulsory subjects in the 7th, 8th and 9th grade. Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary/vocational qualification, ending with vocational <i>matura</i> . The mandatory part of the vocational <i>matura</i> is a written and oral examination in Slovene language and early childhood education. The optional part is a written and oral examination in a foreign language or mathematics, or exam performances and their defence. <i>Note:</i> The vocational <i>matura</i> award qualifies for employment or continuing education, e.g. higher education programme in early childhood education, other professional programmes, various university programmes (after completion of one subject at <i>matura</i>). After successful completion of a one-year <i>matura</i> -course, it is also possible to enrol for any kind of university studies. Award: Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant/Vocational <i>matura</i> ECTS points: not applicable EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplace: ECEC setting (as EC Teacher's Assistant) or home-based childcare setting (as core practitioner).

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Early Childhood Teacher – higher education route

Competency specifications

In Slovenia, three universities (University of Maribor, University of Ljubljana, University of Primorska) provide Bachelor-level studies for future EC Teachers. Each university publishes its own list of competence specifications for graduates of the Faculty of Education. Here one example is presented. The other two can be accessed via direct links.

Early Childhood Teacher study programme, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education³

The Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana has adapted the list of general and subject-specific competences developed by an international working group for the field of educational science and the TUNING (*Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*) teacher education programme supported by the European Union within the Socrates–Erasmus programme (<http://www.unideusto.org/tuning/>) and used it for developing new study programmes.

General competence specifications

- Knowledge and understanding of social systems (in particular the education system).
- Sensitivity/openness to people and social situations.
- Knowledge and understanding of developmental principles, differences and individual needs.
- Knowledge of educational concepts, their philosophical and historical foundations.
- Knowledge of and compliance with the institutional frameworks of work (requirements, legislation, documentation requirements, legal aspects of educational work).
- Ability to research in education.
- Organisational and management skills in education, mentoring students and trainees.
- Use of ICT in education.
- Understanding individual values and value systems, management of professional-ethical issues.
- Knowledge, understanding, focusing on inclusive, non-discriminatory work, multiculturalism.

In addition to these competences, students also gain wider general competencies, acquired by students of *all* higher education programmes, irrespective of the course of study.

Subject-specific competence specifications

- Knowledge of the content and didactics of the field.
- Understanding and application of curriculum theories and general and didactic knowledge in the subject area.
- Interdisciplinary integration of contents.
- Use of special-pedagogical skills to work with children with special needs.
- Pedagogical classroom management and/or group management.
- Organising active and independent learning, supporting effective learning strategies.
- Ability to verify and evaluate the skills and achievements of pupils and developing feedback information.
- Communicating with professionals from various educational fields.
- Cooperation with parents.
- Understanding the relationship between the educational institution and the social environment. Systemic vision and action.
- Knowing and understanding the theoretical foundations of counselling.

³ Data obtained from the National Agency for Quality in Higher Education (received by post, June 2016).

- Creation of a comprehensive assessment of the needs of a child or a group of children, their strong and weak areas taking into account environmental factors (physical, social, cultural) with the appropriate procedures and instruments.
- Applying knowledge of management procedures and principles of counselling, planning and implementation of intervention programmes.
- Ability to establish and maintain partnerships with other users or groups (parents, local community, advisory services, economy, etc.).
- Promoting such changes of a system that ensure basic rights and needs of a user/group.
- Knowledge, critical assessment and application of theories of childhood development and learning in the planning, implementation and evaluation process of educational activities.
- Knowledge of forms, contents and methods of work and autonomous implementation of the curriculum for kindergarten and first grade curriculum of primary school.
- Knowledge of all early childhood curricular areas and first grade subjects and their (inter-disciplinary) integration in the learning process.
- Efficient and flexible organisation of time and space: the layout of the classroom for a variety of activities (places for play and for calm activities), the appropriate choice of teaching and didactic materials, flexible scheduling of activities and transitions between them.
- Observing and monitoring the achievements, progress and development of children.
- Identifying and taking into account individual needs and other differences among children (in personality, abilities, cognitive styles, family or socio-cultural environment, ...) at educational work.
- Providing emotional safety of children and the promotion of autonomy in accordance with their maturity.
- Nurturing curiosity of children, taking into account the intrinsic motivation and interests, spreading interests and promoting exploratory and active learning.
- Knowledge of teamwork and co-operation in a team with a teacher or teacher's assistant, work in a collective or professional team.
- Effective communication with parents and knowledge and use of various forms of cooperation with them.

Curricular areas

Tables 5 and 6 present an overview of the compulsory and optional content in the curricula of the three Slovenian universities.

Table 5

Slovenia: Early Childhood Teacher study programmes: Compulsory curricular areas/subjects, 2015

Curricular Area	Subjects under specific curricular area		
	University of Maribor ⁴	University of Ljubljana ⁵	University of Primorska ⁶
Pedagogy/ didactics			Basics of Pedagogy
	Pre-school pedagogy	Pre-school pedagogy	Pre-school pedagogy
	Didactics	School pedagogy with didactics	Didactics
	Theory of education	Theory of education	
Psychology	Developmental psychology	Developmental psychology	Developmental psychology
	Educational psychology	Educational psychology	Educational psychology
Pedagogical methodology	Basics of methodology of pedagogical research	Pedagogical methodology	Pedagogical research
Language and	Slovene language	Slovene language	Slovene language I

⁴ University of Maribor, Faculty of Education 2015, 72-77.

⁵ University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education 2016a.

⁶ University of Primorska, Faculty of Education 2016.

Curricular Area	Subjects under specific curricular area		
	University of Maribor ⁴	University of Ljubljana ⁵	University of Primorska ⁶
literature			Slovene language II
			Early learning of Slovene language
	Children's literature	Language and Literature	Children's literature
Didactics of language education	Language activities in kindergarten		
Mathematics	Didactics of mathematics	Early learning of mathematics	Early learning of mathematics
Art	Elementary art - educational practicum	Art education	Art activities
	Didactics of art activities		
Theatre	Puppet-theatre education	Puppets, drama, media	Puppets, theatre, film
Technics	Didactics of technical education	Technical education	Technical activities
Music	Vocal-instrumental practicum I	Music	Musical language
	Vocal-instrumental practicum II		Child and music
	Didactics of musical education	Music in early childhood	Musical activities
Dance	Didactic of dance education	Dance expression	Dance activities
Motor development	Didactics of physical education	Movement	Dance-sport activities
	Kinesiology of a child	Kinesiology of a child	Motor development
	Motor practicum		
Natural Sciences	Early natural sciences	Early natural sciences – chemistry	Early learning of natural science
		Early natural sciences - physics	
		Early natural sciences - biology	
	Didactics of learning about natural environment		
Social Sciences	Didactics of introduction to the social environment	Child in a society	Early learning of social studies
		Social studies	
	Sociology of a family and a pre-school child	Sociology of education	Sociology of education
Philosophy		Selected Topics in Philosophy	Philosophy of education
Inclusive/special pedagogy	Special pedagogics	Inclusive education	Inclusion in a pre-school
ICT			Educational technology
Health			Education for health in pre-school period
Other		Cross-curricular connections – projects	

Table 6

Slovenia: Early Childhood Teacher study programmes: Optional curricular areas/subjects, 2015 -Elective subjects (the list includes subjects of all three Faculties of Education)

Curricular Area	Subject areas in three universities		
	University of Maribor ⁷	University of Ljubljana ⁸	University of Primorska ⁹
Media		Media education	Communication and media in contemporary society
Dance	Dancing dramatisation in the kindergarten	Dance theatre	Dance theatre
		Artistic movement and	

⁷ University of Maribor, Faculty of Education 2015, 72-77.

⁸ University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education 2016.

⁹ University of Primorska, Faculty of Education 2016.

Curricular Area	Subject areas in three universities		
	University of Maribor ⁷	University of Ljubljana ⁸	University of Primorska ⁹
		dance pedagogy Stage of Faculty of Education	
Puppets	Preparation and implementation of a Puppet – Shows (project)	Puppetry	Puppetry
Nature	Play and exploring the natural environment	Nature in kindergarten, kindergarten in nature	Learn to read nature
		Nature and young children	
Mathematics	Learning mathematics through play	Mathematical challenges in kindergarten	Mathematical plays
		Mathematics through English	
Language and literature / literacy / communication	Slovenian language texts	Youth literature	Teaching the Slovene language at pre-school level
	Literary education	Family literacy	
	Language activities in kindergarten	Interpersonal communication	
	Interpretation of youth literature		
Technics		Creative technical workshops	Selected topics in technical activities
Music	Music activities in kindergarten	Choir III	Musical interpretations I
	Playing instruments - Orff instruments		
Experiential pedagogics	Sports in outdoor education		Experiential pedagogy
Children with disabilities	Children with special needs and Movement Therapy	Special pedagogics	Basic methods of working with pre-school blind and visually impaired children
	Speech and language disorders in children		
Psychology	Useful psychological approaches in pre-school education	Development, teaching and learning in early childhood	Family Psychology
	Children's play and attachment		
Motor development / sport activities	Sensory motor development	Movement - as a form of play	Physical sports activities in nature - swimming
		Mountaineering	
		Swimming	
	Motor gifted children	Movement – as a form of play for all stages of life	
		Basic physical education	
Foreign language	Teaching English language at pre-school level	English language I - Strategies for learning a foreign language	Teaching English language at an early stage
		English language II - linguistic abilities	
Music		Communication with music	Musical didactical games
Art	Artistic expression and space	Artistic creativity	
	Artistic activities in the museum and gallery		
Pedagogical methodology	The methodology of qualitative and quantitative pedagogical research	Research in education	
Pedagogy	Educational Concepts in Theory and Practice	Pedagogical language in kindergarten	Alternative pedagogical concepts in theory and

Curricular Area	Subject areas in three universities		
	University of Maribor ⁷	University of Ljubljana ⁸	University of Primorska ⁹
	Factors of successful teaching		practice
	Moral education and ethics		
	Pedagogical communication and partnership between kindergarten, school and family		
Other	The role of the adult in the child's introduction into society		
	Team work in kindergarten and in school		
		Children with an experience of violence	
		Children in the animals' kingdom	
		Play and natural sciences	
		Kindergarten – a democratic organisation	
			Education for diversity and social justice

Pedagogic-didactic approaches¹⁰

In line with general academic practice, higher education teachers are autonomous regarding the choice of content, literature and other resources for a particular course. In the public sphere, a teacher's autonomy is limited by the conflict of interest clause. This means that course content and approaches should be in tune with the mission of the relevant Faculty. In general, they are expected to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, including innovative and well-established procedures in the profession based on research evidence and theories of pedagogy.

In general, it can be said that all three Faculties follow child-centred approaches and educate their students regarding compliance with children's rights in educational processes. Any difference in approach is more a result of higher education teachers' varying understandings and interpretations of what is meant by concepts such as 'child-centred' and 'children's rights'.

Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant – vocational route

Goals of the study programme (Educational programme Pre-school education 2016a)

Students are encouraged to:

- systematically acquire general and basic knowledge for understanding the principles in nature, society and profession;
- develop skills for successful work and professional growth and ability to understand human relationships;
- learn how to analyse specific technical problems in the workplace, and to plan measures to address them effectively;
- develop personal skills (responsibility, communication skills, creativity and innovation, empathy and openness, and persistence) and values (honesty, act in accordance with ethical principles), which are important for the education context;
- learn about interdisciplinary expertise and acquire knowledge of the basic principles of teamwork;

¹⁰ Data obtained from the interview with a higher education teacher (11. 7. 2016, 14. 7. 2016).

- develop motivation for education, training and lifelong learning;
- develop a willingness to discover and follow new developments in the professional field;
- master the basic professional terminology and know how to use scientific literature;
- use modern information technology to work in the professional field and to work with the resources;
- acquire the basics of entrepreneurship, making it easier to adapt to changes in the workplace and the labour market, and to successfully plan and manage his/her own career;
- develop social skills, independence and responsibility;
- actively take care of their own health and the health of the children entrusted to them and to develop a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle;
- work safely and ecologically aware, to act as responsible citizens, and know how to properly protect and preserve nature;
- know about and link theoretical and practical knowledge about development and education of children;
- master theoretical and practical knowledge of individual educational fields, the methodology and didactics of these areas, educational resources, tools and materials;
- effectively and creatively plan and implement educational work in the group;
- know how to organise a stimulating educational environment for the all-round development of children;
- learn how to observe, monitor and evaluate the child's development and progress;
- learn to communicate with children and adults and to learn about the methods and forms of cooperation with parents.
- learn to evaluate their own work through self-reflection and self-regulation.

Competence specifications (Professional Standard Pre-school Teacher's Assistant 2016)

The candidate is able to:

- plan, prepare, carry out and evaluate his/her own work;
- participate in administrative processes related to the work;
- provide for the quality of work and carry out self-evaluation;
- contribute towards the maintenance of premises, equipment and working facilities;
- communicate with children and their parents;
- use technical terminology and communicate in a foreign language;
- use modern information and communication technology;
- participate in professional team work;
- develop entrepreneurial characteristics, skills and behaviour
- use energy, material and time rationally;
- protect health and environment, and be responsible for his/her own safety and the safety of other people;
- contribute towards the maintenance of an attractive, stimulating and safe learning environment for children;
- protect children from abuse;
- feed children, take care of their hygiene and ensure that they get sufficient rest and sleep;
- provide effective verbal, non-verbal and electronic communication with the child, his/her family, with co-workers and various institutions;
- implement the principle of equality and diversity in the individual development of a child in the social context;
- express personal principles and convictions in accordance with professional ethics;
- implement legislative regulations, rules and principles of pre-school education in accordance with the social context;
- participate in planning and implementing the curriculum based on an understanding of children's development;

- use modern pedagogical methods in his/her work with children, parents and co-workers;
- encourage the development of cognitive, perceptual, social, emotional and motor processes;
- support the development of positive behaviour in children;
- support children with special needs in their personal development through appropriate nurturing and protection and individualised curriculum implementation;
- maintain appropriate relations with a child and a group of children;
- communicate and cooperate with parents on educational matters concerning their child.

Curricular areas (Curriculum Pre-school Education 2016)

The vocational education programme is competence based and consists of various mandatory and optional modules. The emphasis is on practical training to work in ECEC settings, optional courses and an open curriculum (Secondary Pre-school Education and Gimnazija Ljubljana 2016). Assessment and evaluation of knowledge is regulated. For Slovene language, maths and a foreign language both an oral and written examination is required, for other general education subjects an oral examination is required; products or presentations are required for the more practice-oriented parts of the curriculum. Physical activities are examined through the demonstration of practical skills (Educational Program Pre-school Education 2016b).

General education subjects: Slovenian; mathematics; foreign language; arts; history; geography; sociology; psychology; physics; chemistry; biology; physical education.

Professional modules: Communication skills; pedagogy and pedagogical approaches in the pre-school period; development and learning in young children; safe and healthy environment; early childhood curriculum; games for children; creative expression; maths for young children; linguistic expression of children; nature for children; social studies for children; information and communication technology; artistic expression; musical expression; dance expression; sports for children; multimedia.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Alternative entry and qualification routes

For graduates with related academic qualifications

The University of Primorska (University of Primorska 2016a) and the University of Ljubljana (University of Ljubljana 2016a) both offer a study programme for graduates with related qualifications to qualify for work in ECEC settings. The programmes are expected to last for one academic year, and comprise 60 ECTS points. They are for those who have graduated as teachers in a particular field of expertise; those with a degree in the fields of education, the arts, humanities and sciences; or graduates of a higher professional or university programme in social work (University of Ljubljana 2016a).

For specialist staff

There are no alternative pathways of entry into ECEC work for specialist staff (speech therapists, psychologists, ECEC settings counsellors etc.) besides meeting the requirements of specific job vacancies according to current regulations.

For non-qualified co-workers

Romani workers can gain the title of Roma Assistant through project work (mainly ESF-funded projects) in ECEC settings and compulsory schools.

Formal opportunities for moving up

Early Childhood Teacher's Assistants can continue their studies by attending an Early Childhood Teacher Bachelor's degree programme at one of the three universities with this specialisation.

Qualified Early Childhood Teachers can continue their studies in a Master's programme (e.g. 'Early Learning' at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Education or 'Pre-school education' at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education). Besides employment in ECEC settings and primary schools, with this qualification post-graduates can find employment in all institutions/organisations dealing with early learning and teaching as well as in organisations which indirectly deal with children or with providing a stimulating environment for young children. Due to their broad professional profile, they can also take on:

- Tasks of providing professional support in work with children in different public institutions and in those organisations that are engaged in activities for children;
- Various forms of support to children with different needs;
- New, innovative forms of work with children in leisure time, after school classes, clubs and associations, centres, etc.;
- Expert tasks in mobile special pedagogical services;
- Work as a university tutor/assistant in the study programmes related to early learning and teaching, after acquiring additional and appropriate authorisation qualifications;
- Organisational and leadership work in animation programmes for children;
- Tasks of professional consultants in preparing programmes for children on radio or TV;
- Participation in editorial and expert commissions of printed and electronic media for children;
- Cooperation with producers of equipment, teaching aids and toys for younger children. (University of Primorska 2017).

The Master's programme at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education, is aimed to create a critical mass of experts who will ensure continuous and contemporary development of quality in early childhood education in Slovenia. Students are prepared to develop a system of early childhood education at the national level, i.e. in the direction of policy development, professional standards and ethical standards of the profession (University of Ljubljana 2017).

Both study programmes can be implemented as a full- or part-time study programme.

Formal opportunities for moving across qualifications frameworks

A qualified Early Childhood Teacher can continue studies for a Master's degree in programmes such as the following:

- **Adult learning /andragogy:** If their degree was awarded before 2004, and they can demonstrate completion of the following courses totalling 15 ECTS points: Basics in Andragogy (5 ECTS points), History of Education (5 ECTS points), Educational Psychology (5 ECTS points) (University of Ljubljana 2016b);
- **Pedagogy:** If their degree was awarded before 2004, and they can demonstrate completion of the following courses totalling 15 ECTS points: History of Education (5 ECTS points), Theory of Education (5 ECTS points), Didactics I (5 ECTS points) (University of Ljubljana 2016c);
- **Sociology:** If their degree was awarded before 2004, and if the candidate has completed the necessary entry requirements essential for a Master's degree; these obligations are determined in relation to the candidate's initial professional field and comprise up to 60 ECTS points (University of Ljubljana 2016d);
- **Inclusive Pedagogy:** At the University of Primorska, ECE teachers can continue with a study of Inclusive Pedagogy without any special entry requirements, while at the University of Ljubljana and the University of Maribor (study programme: Inclusion in Education), candidates must demonstrate knowledge of different subjects (different for each faculty) (University of Maribor 2016; University of Primorska 2016b; University of Ljubljana 2016e).

Options for men and women with non-specialist qualifications (career changers)

A candidate who has finished the 4th year of high school or the final year of a vocational education programme can enrol for a one-year vocational course in 'Early Childhood Education'

(60 ECTS points; B2 2016). The candidate is awarded the professional title of Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant after passing the vocational *matura* exam comprising a written and oral examination in the Slovene language, in the education of pre-school children, in a foreign language or mathematics, as well as examination performance and defence (Cene Štupar 2016). Following that they can be employed as Early Childhood Education Assistants. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many ECEC settings are not satisfied with the level of knowledge and skills, the values and reflective abilities of these candidates.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Regulation and cooperation

Each university Faculty of Education develops its own programme of workplace-based learning as a part of the initial study programme which must be accredited by the National Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Quality in Higher Education (*NAKVIS – Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije za kakovost v visokvem šolstvu*).

Since the profession of an Early Childhood Teacher is a regulated profession, the minimum amount of field-based studies is set by law and has to be taken into account when drawing up the curriculum and in the accreditation process of the programme in general.¹¹ Criteria for the accreditation of study programmes for teacher education (Official Gazette of Republic of Slovenia, 94/2011, Article 4) indicate that the workplace-based component should be compulsory and be valued at a minimum of 15 ECTS points. It should be organised and implemented according to the principle of reflective practice and should allow students to integrate subject-related and pedagogical-professional knowledge through a gradual introduction into teaching and the teaching profession.

For the envisaged number of enrolled students, each Faculty of Education must have signed agreements of collaboration with an adequate number of ECEC services (University of Maribor, Faculty of Education 2015, 7).

Duration of workplace-based learning

University of Maribor, Faculty of Education

600 hours (20 ECTS points) are allocated to field-based studies in the three-year IPS programme, comprising 11% of the total length of the degree course. Students start by observing everyday practices and organised activities, following by a gradual involvement in educational processes. At the end of their work placement they should be able to work independently with a group of children. Documentation is an integral part of field-based studies. There are two main forms of placement: *Integrated practice* (9 ECTS points in 3 years) takes place throughout the 3 years under the supervision and monitoring of higher education teachers. Students are expected to be in an ECEC setting one day per week and undertake specific assignments (e.g. observation of different aspects of educational processes, analysing, visits, interviews); *compact practice* (11 ECTS points) takes place for two weeks during the second year (4 ECTS points) and four weeks during the third year (7 ECTS points) (University of Maribor, Faculty of Education 2015, 80).

¹¹ Data obtained from the interview with a higher education teacher (11. 7. 2016, 14. 7. 2016).

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education¹²

Field-based studies take place during the second semester of each academic year and amount to a total of 740 hours (roughly 25 ECTS points). In the first year, students are placed in ECEC groups for 1- to 3-year olds for two weeks (3 ECTS points); in the second year they spend one week in the first class of a primary school (3 ECTS points); and in the third year they are placed in groups for 3- to 6-year olds for four weeks (6 ECTS points). *Integrated practice* is related to 17 different subjects and is carried out in ECEC settings or other institutions for young children under the supervision of a higher education teacher. At the end of their field-based studies, students are expected to be able to carry out independent work with children in the areas of art, nature, music, technical education, movement, literature and early maths. They receive support from teachers in the setting who act as a mentor for the students.

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education¹³

Field-based studies are allocated 12 ECTS points and take place during the second semester of each academic year. They are organised both as *integrated practice* (45 hours during the 1st year, 75 hours during the 2nd year, 105 hours during the 3rd year) and *compact practice* (6 ECTS points each study year) – altogether 25.5 ECTS points.

Table 7

Slovenia: Number of ECTS points allocated to workplace-based learning in the professional study routes for core practitioners, 2015/2016

University	Integrated field-based studies (workplace learning)			Compact field-based studies (workplace learning)			TOTAL
	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	
Maribor	4 ECTS points	3 ECTS points	2 ECTS points	--	4 ECTS points	7 ECTS points	20 ECTS points
Ljubljana	<i>Integrated practice</i> is implemented in the framework of 17 different subjects (12 ECTS points).			3 ECTS points	3 ECTS points	6 ECTS points	25 ECTS points
Primorska	1.5 ECTS points	2.5 ECTS points	3.5 ECTS points	6 ECTS points	6 ECTS points	6 ECTS points	25.5 ECTS points

Skills and competence specifications during workplace-based learning

University of Maribor, Faculty of Education

Students are expected to become familiar with the ECEC setting as an institution, the work of the core staff, to test the abilities and knowledge acquired during the study programme. During the compact practice periods, the student gradually learns to lead a group of children independently and has the opportunity to evaluate his/her performance (University of Maribor, Faculty of Education 2015, 80).

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education 2016b)

The field-based component contributes to the development of both generic and specific competences:

- Knowledge of a teacher's work in a group of young children through observing and co-operating.
- Getting to know and understand the institutional framework of work (ECEC centre as an institution).

¹² Data obtained from the National Agency for Quality in Higher Education (received by post, June 2016).

¹³ Data obtained from an interview with a higher education teacher (11. 7. 2016, 14. 7. 2016).

- Identifying and taking into account individual needs and other differences among children in educational work.
- Developing awareness for the care and safety needs of children.
- Independent (under supervision) implementation of the early childhood curriculum combined with self-reflection.
- Efficient and flexible organisation of time and space (e.g. prepares space for different activities and play, chooses appropriate didactic materials and resources) as well as transitions between activities.
- Cooperation with the Early Childhood Education Assistant and other educators in the centre team and beyond.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the achievements, progress and development of children.
- Communication with parents and implementation of various forms of cooperation with them.

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education¹⁴

The field-based component contributes to the development of both generic and specific competences throughout the three years of study. During the final year, two specific competences are added (the last two in the list below).

General competences

The student is able to...

- create a safe and supportive learning environment in which children feel accepted, where diversity and their social, cultural, linguistic and religious origin are respected, and where independence and responsibility are promoted;
- communicate effectively with children and develop a favourable climate in the group;
- identify children with special needs, adapt work to their needs and work together with other educators (teachers) and specialists;
- master the basic principles and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning processes;
- effectively communicate and collaborate with educators and other professionals in educational institutions (teamwork);
- show sensitivity for the child's values.

Specific competences

The student learns about...

- kindergarten/school as educational institutions;
- the legal basis of operation of kindergartens/schools;
- the integration of kindergartens/schools in the national education system;
- the vertical relations of kindergartens/schools in regard to other educational institutions;
- the role and work of an Early Childhood Education Teacher and an Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant;
- the role and the work of other professional services in the kindergarten/school;
- how to collaborate with the staff team in adapting the curriculum for children with special developmental needs;
- the daily timetable and routines in kindergartens/schools;
- approaches to learning for young children;
- the conditions for effective learning;
- the importance of partnerships with families and about forms and methods of building a partnership;

¹⁴ Data obtained from the interview with a higher education teacher (11. 7. 2016, 14. 7. 2016).

- different ways of planning (the annual work plan of kindergartens, annual work plan of units, the annual work plan of departments, plans and preparation of teachers for educational work);
- ways of customising the programme for children with special needs in relation to the programme for children with specialist support;
- forms of individualisation and ensuring inclusion (children with disabilities, children of migrants), and social cohesion;
- the objectives, principles and methods of monitoring a child's learning;
- the objectives, principles and forms of cooperation with the community.

Forms of student self-evaluation and external evaluation

In the case of a *compact practice* placement, university tutors evaluate the students' written assignments. During the *integrated practice* periods, the students' planning and direct work with children in compulsory subject areas are evaluated. Student self-evaluation is carried out mostly in the form of individual and group reflection.¹⁵

ECEC settings receive guidelines from the university on how to prepare a report about a student's work during the placement period. Students have to prepare and conduct several activities with children which are evaluated by his/her mentor teacher.¹⁶

Qualifying courses for mentors/supervisors in the workplaces

The teachers who act as mentors during the field-based studies of future EC teachers do not need any formally acquired training or qualification for this post. Teachers who have achieved the title/level of 'mentor' within the promotion system are eligible for this work. The University of Primorska, Faculty of Education, holds preparatory annual meetings for those interested in the role of mentor. Centre heads are usually present at these meetings and explain what is expected of a mentor teacher during the students' field studies. Participants are also informed about evaluation procedures during the placement periods. Following this meeting, they occasionally organise workshops on modern approaches to teaching and learning in the early years. Teachers-as-mentors have expressed their interest in this kind of training and have suggested that they should be organised as an e-learning opportunity.¹⁶

Centre leaders are in charge of choosing the student-mentor according to requests of students who choose the setting where they wish to be placed. The ECEC setting and the university faculty sign a special cooperation contract.¹⁶

It sometimes occurs that the students are not visited by their university tutors during their placement periods in ECEC settings.¹⁷

Working conditions of mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres

Mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC settings do not have a designated role, with a specific time allocation and specifications for mentoring. The roles of mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres differ from faculty to faculty. Faculties may introduce these roles at special meetings on ECEC management (see the example at the University of Primorska above), or students bring the allocated specifications for mentoring with them in the ECEC centre when they start their workplace-based learning.¹⁷

Mentoring staff are not remunerated for their work with students, but they do receive a certificate, which they can use when seeking job promotion.

¹⁵ Data obtained from an interview with a higher education teacher (11. 7. 2016, 14. 7. 2016).

¹⁶ Data obtained from interviews with pre-school head teachers (5. 5. 2016).

Recent reforms, trends and debates regarding field-based studies

The White Paper on Education (Krek and Metljak 2011, 488-489) proposed the following solutions in the area of mentoring: “The practical training of students in educational institutions (compact and integrated practice) should be carried out under the expert guidance of a mentor (teacher, educator or counsellor) who acquires a permanent license through a CPD programme for which at least 3 credits are awarded. Practitioners with this title agree to cooperate with higher education institutions during the students’ practical placements and contribute towards improving this area through further education and training.” The White Paper also proposes that “The work of mentors and partner institutions must be systematically regulated, given the technical and financial evaluation.”

At the informal level this proposal is under discussion in the Faculties of Education. But in order to really change something, many systemic changes are needed. However, such changes are associated with financial implications (e.g. training for mentors, employment of a person who will visit students in the ECEC setting, etc.) and can only be solved through initiatives of the relevant ministry,¹⁷ within the framework of overall government employment policies.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Slovenia has an exceptionally highly structured system of credit point acquisition for continuing professional development and career advancement. This enables both Early Childhood Teachers and ECEC centre directors to acquire different levels of recognised expertise and posts of responsibility. The three possibilities are: mentor, adviser and counsellor. Titles gained are permanent and do not have to be renewed.

Frameworks for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel

The CPD framework for ECEC staff is guided by general national regulations regarding in-service training for all educational professionals, i.e. also for school teachers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 64/2004, 42/2009). The overall aims of CPD are the provision of professional competences for carrying out specific specialist work, supporting a professional education system and thus improving its quality and efficiency.

Main forms of CPD

Further education and training for (a) core practitioners and (b) qualified and non-qualified co-workers are carried out in accordance with this regulation in many different forms. These include:

- Further training courses;
- Professional training courses (e.g. obligatory courses, updating courses, good practice dissemination courses, professional development courses);
- Thematic conferences;
- Training in study groups, mentored and other networks that connect professional staff from public ECEC centres;
- Computer literacy courses;
- Verified programmes outside the national framework of CPD (sometimes abroad) with objectives consistent to national regulations.

In general, there are no specific forms of CPD for different core practitioners and qualified co-workers (teachers and teacher assistants). The forms for those qualified workers who do not

¹⁷ Data obtained from the interview with a higher education teacher (11.07.2016, 14.07.2016).

have regular contact with children in the classrooms (such as psychologists, pedagogues, social workers etc.) are the same as those mentioned above. In many cases CPD is provided for all of them at the same time, especially if the CPD activity is workplace-based and out of working hours. In the case of CPD activities outside the workplace, ECEC providers have to cope with certain problems regarding the replacement of staff during CPD attendance and the costs for travelling. At the setting-level, the most popular form of CPD is the so called thematic conferences where ECEC centre heads can choose the topic either independently or from the providers' CPD programme, and these workshops usually take place at the ECEC workplace. In cases when there are not enough participants for this kind of event in one ECEC setting, up to four ECEC settings can organise the event together.

Non-qualified co-workers (here, Roma Assistants) employed in an ECEC setting may participate in all forms of CPD activities; however, attendance certificates are not formally recognised in terms of career development. They can also gain professional competences during project-related CPD activities.

Conditions of CPD

According to the Collective Agreement for the Education Sector in the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 52/1994, 8/2016, Article 53), workers have the right to continuing professional training. For those workers with at least an intermediate education at least five days of professional training per year are obligatory or 15 days every third year; for other workers at least two days per year and six days every third year. As both Early Childhood Teachers and Early Childhood Teacher's Assistants have an intermediate or higher level of education they are guaranteed five days per year for professional training during working hours.

The ECEC centre head is obliged to plan trainings and other CPD activities for practitioners within the yearly work plan and to enable them to participate. At the same time, it is also the practitioners' obligation to participate in these activities, although some, mostly older teachers, tend not to be very involved. CPD is thus both obligation and entitlement.

Providers of ECEC provision cover the costs for CPD activities, which are incorporated into the programme budget.

The main problem is that ECEC settings do not have enough replacement staff available on a regular basis, especially if other staff are off on sick leave at the same time. Many CPD activities take place in the late afternoon after the children have left, or even on Saturdays.

Main providers of CPD

The main providers of CPD include higher education institutions (Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts, Faculty for Social Work), the National Education Institute, the Educational Research Institute, the National School for Leadership in Education and non-profit and private organisations. Each year these providers are required to submit their programmes to the Ministry of Education in order to receive accreditation for the training formally recognised for career advancement.

Formal recognition of CPD

If the CPD activity is accredited by the Ministry of Education, staff are awarded credit points which are taken into account for advancement opportunities (i.e. promotion to mentor, adviser or counsellor). In order to achieve these titles, they collect points defined by the Collective Agreement for the Education Sector (mostly for participation in trainings, projects, professional conferences, publishing articles, organising events with children, etc.). The awarded titles are permanent and influence the salary to some extent but not the working obligations. The fact that professional titles are permanent and unchangeable does not encourage the motivation for continuing professional development and or promote the need for change. Furthermore, there is no promotional system for the teachers' assistants (Official Gazette of Republic of Slovenia 54/2002).

Specific qualification requirements for heads of ECEC provision

Public kindergartens are managed by principals/centre heads. They assume two roles: that of a pedagogical leader and that of an executive manager. A kindergarten head candidate has to be qualified as an Early Childhood Teacher (with the title adviser or counsellor) or as a school counsellor. They are also required to have at least five years of working experience in education, and to have completed relevant courses at the School for Leadership. Principals/centre heads are appointed by an ECEC setting council comprising Early Childhood Teachers, members of the local community, the council of parents, and a representative of the Ministry of Education (Taštanoska 2015).

Specialist courses/modules for other specified posts

For student mentors there are no official courses or modules but in some faculties one-day seminars are offered, sometimes for the mentoring teachers, sometimes just for the centre head.

For the early learning of a foreign language there is a special one-year Master's degree programme at all three universities. Students who have completed a first degree in a foreign language (English, German, Spanish, etc.) can also choose a study programme on Early Childhood Education or Early Learning as a Master's degree study programme.

There have been initiatives to develop training modules for language support coaches and to introduce this profile in ECEC settings for the Romani language. There is also a strong initiative to introduce the Roma assistant (in locations with a Romani population) in all kinds of ECEC settings (independent, organised as a pre-school unit located in primary schools or as a unit of the ECEC centre). Until now they were sometimes involved only in the work at pre-school units located in primary schools, since the Roma assistants were officially working at primary schools but received their salaries from project funding. In some projects focused on Romani education provided by the Educational Research Institute they are involved in all trainings provided for staff at ECEC settings where the projects took place.

Options for supplementary/additional study routes

Early Childhood Teachers can be admitted to a Master's degree programme on *Early Childhood Education and Early Learning* or other Master's degree study programmes - mostly after passing an additional examination defined in the entry conditions of those programmes. They are open for anyone who has completed a Bachelor's programme in early childhood education, primary school pedagogy, psychology, special education or educational sciences. Participants study at their own expense. For several years faculties organised Master's degree programmes on early childhood education and early learning as a regular afternoon study programme and on Saturdays to give employed teachers the opportunity to study alongside their work. The state and the municipalities are not very interested in supporting the students financially, since in legal terms a Bachelor's degree is sufficient to become an Early Childhood Teacher.

Candidates who have completed first degree studies in other areas have to meet certain exam obligations (up to a total of 30 ECTS points), e.g. in the Slovene language, pedagogy, developmental psychology, educational psychology or special education which have to be completed by the date of enrolment, or at the latest by the start of the 2nd year. Candidates who completed their initial professional studies before June 2004 (i.e. before the Bologna study reform) can also be enrolled, but they may have to meet additional obligations, such as examinations in the Slovene language, pedagogy, developmental psychology, educational psychology or special education.

Large-scale research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel

In 2013-2014, a research study on the *Identification of competences needed for particular jobs in comparison to competences of the study programs* (Vonta and Gril 2014) focused in one section on teachers' competences in contemporary ECEC settings and teachers' and principals' opinions about the importance of competences that were identified in the CoRe study (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari, and Van Laere 2011) and their presence in study programmes.

The research was carried out with a representative sample of preschools (110) and 320 teachers (see also Section 7). This was a government-funded project through the Slovenian Research Agency in the context of reforming study programmes at universities.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

In 2012, the government adopted the Fiscal Balance Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 40/2012, 102/2015) in order to ensure sustainable public finances and to reduce budget expenditure. Some of the measures were related to the staffing and working conditions in ECEC, for example: In cases of longer absence from work, e.g. longer sick-leaves, maternity leaves, or termination of employment, a principal/centre head must provide reallocation of responsibilities between other employees (Ministry of Education, Science, Education and Sport 2016a). In terms of reduced expenditure, the government proposed an increase in group size by one child and a reduction of the number of hours of simultaneous presence of the Early Childhood Teacher and the teacher assistants in a classroom (Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia 2016). The Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia was very active in negotiations with the government in this respect; they also organised a strike (April 18th, 2012). After more than half a year of negotiations, the government withdrew the proposals and measures (Krajnc 2012).

As from 2012, the government lowered the salaries of public servants. In 2014, a proposal was made to reduce the public sector salaries by another 5%. The employees were afraid that this would also result in severe job cuts, which would have led to between 5,000 to 8,000 unemployed people in the public sector (altogether, not just in education). What actually happened was another partial reduction in wages and the number of employees was reduced by one per cent point (Belovič in Starič 2014).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Comparing job requirements with competence specifications in study programmes

Source: Vonta, T. and A. Gril. 2014. *Kompetence, potrebne za opravljanje poklica vzgojitelj predšolskih otrok v sodobnem vrtcu: njihova pomembnost in zastopanost v študijskih programih: zaključno poročilo o raziskavi, Naslov temeljnega raziskovalnega projekta: Identifikacija kompetenc, potrebnih za opravljanje določenih poklicev v primerjavi s kompetencami študijskih programov.* [Identification of Competences Needed for Particular Jobs in Comparison to Competences of the Study Programmes.] Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut.

Background/Aims: The study was conducted in 2013-2014 within the context of developing new university study programmes. One section of the study focused on the competence requirements for teachers in contemporary ECEC settings and teachers' and centre heads' views on competences identified in the CoRe study (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari, and Van Laere 2011) and their presence in current study programmes.

Procedure: The research was carried out with a representative sample of 110 ECEC centres and 320 teachers. On a five-point scale teachers and centre heads evaluated each item from the CoRe list of individual competences for 'importance' and 'presence' in their initial professional studies. Individual competences were listed randomly but separately for knowledge, practices

and values and - if needed - were adapted to the Slovenian context. Overall, 24 items each for 'importance' and 'presence' were computed through non-parametric statistical tests.

Findings: Most important for teachers were competence categories directly linked to work in the classroom (holistic development, strategies of learning, communication and participation). Less important were competence categories not directly related to work in the classroom, but which represent foundations for high quality work such as cooperation with parents, context of diversity, ECE in partnership, team work. If the students do not become aware of the importance of certain aspects of knowledge, practices and values during their IPS, it is unlikely that they will be able to understand their relevance later in their job. This suggests that changes are needed in the higher education study programmes regarding the acquisition of attitudes and skills needed to see the relevance of certain aspects. Such changes would be:

- developing competences for co-operating with adults and the community in order to work more effectively within the ECEC centre;
- connecting all three levels of competences (knowledge, practice and values) with reflection.

Three main variables could be identified that influence teachers' opinions about the importance of particular competences:

1. Their experiences with competences in their initial professional studies
2. ECEC centre leaders' opinions about the importance of different categories influence the staff's rating
3. Organisational structure of the school (higher ratings in independent (free-standing) ECEC settings).

The teachers' age, their job experience and the region where they worked did not have a statistically significant impact on their views.

Discussion/Implications: Are ECEC teachers in Slovenia prepared for new challenges in ECEC? It seems that they are not yet ready to open up towards parents, community and life outside the institution and towards a contribution of ECEC to social cohesion. But it is not only the teachers who should change;-changes are needed particularly in leadership positions in ECEC centres, in initial and continuing professional studies regarding topics and methods, and certain changes at the governance level in supporting professional development at early childhoods units located in primary schools. Is the academic orientation of practitioners a result of the values in our 'knowledge' society or a result of the inability of those who should support the professionalisation of teachers and leaders and help them in connecting different levels of competences with reflection? Or both?

Views of pre-school principals, staff and community members on programmes for disadvantaged children

Source: Jager, J. 2015. *Odnos ravnateljcev in strokovnih delavcev vrtcev ter predstavnikov lokalnih skupnosti do izvajanja predšolskih programov za ogrožene otroke*. [The Attitude of Pre-school Principals, Pres-school Staff and Representatives of Local Communities Towards Implementation of Pres-school Programmes for Disadvantaged Children.] PhD diss. Koper: University of Primorska.

Background/Aims: In Slovenia, the proportion of children enrolled in ECEC programmes is relatively high, but the data raises questions, especially when we consider the involvement of children in ECEC settings in relation to the entire population of young children (76.8 % enrolment), and if we consider inclusion in ECEC programmes as being the realisation of children's rights. In this regard, we explored how well the Slovenian ECEC settings are aware of the importance of providing access to quality ECEC programmes *for all* children. For this purpose, we collected data on disadvantaged children and data on ECEC programmes for them (inclusive approach), and also about how ECEC heads support the professional development of ECE teachers.

Procedure: ECEC heads were selected in the sample using the stratified random sampling method. Data were obtained from a representative sample of Slovenian ECEC principals (29.94% of all pre-school principals in Slovenia).

Findings: Focusing on results about the ECEC head's support for staff CPD activities, we found out that according to the views of ECEC heads, ECE teachers mostly draw on a range of "internal sources", such as tandem work, professional literature, other colleagues, support through the school counsellor and/or the ECEC head. It was also found out that ECE staff often have access also to so-called "external sources" of support systems, such as CPD programmes, study groups, regional consultations and country-wide conferences. Less often do ECEC staff have access to observing practices among each other and mentoring, which indicates the still predominant practice of "staying only in my own classroom". This creates disadvantages for mutual learning and creating a common understanding of quality practices, lack of discussions about approaches for its improvement, about teaching concepts, etc. According to ECEC heads, ECE teachers also lack skills needed to work with disadvantaged children.

Discussion/Implications: Questions on what future teachers learn in connection with the topic of inclusion of disadvantaged children in ECEC programmes in the course of their studies, and what the options are for inclusion in further education and training programmes on this topic, have already been raised in Slovenia and call for a change in study programmes (Jager 2013; Vonta and Gril 2014) and the programmes of further education and training (Meke 2014). At the same time, ECEC heads are the ones who are responsible for developing ECEC settings in the direction that will enable ECE teachers to adapt to rapid social changes. However, the ECEC heads cannot answer all the questions: there is a need to develop a competent system (Urban, Vandebroek, Peeters, Lazzari, and van Laere 2011) that will help ensure access to quality pre-school education and equal opportunities for *all* children at several different levels. It is not enough for the enrolment of all children in quality pre-school programmes to be promoted only at the level of ECEC settings; this idea should be internalised by everyone who is (in)directly connected to early childhood education (Jager 2016; Vonta 2013).

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

When starting to work, core practitioners in ECEC are paid the same as primary school teachers. In terms of acquiring professional titles, both EC Teachers and Primary School Teachers can reach the title of counsellor. However, differences appear in the wage grades: Early Childhood Teachers can progress to a maximum of the 41st wage grade, whereas a Primary School Teacher (and also Early Childhood Teachers who work in the 1st grade of primary school) up to the 43rd wage grade.

Living as a single parent and being a teacher in a major city is a challenge, especially if you do not own an apartment/house. As children get older, more activities at school have to be paid for. It is even more difficult to live on the salary of an Early Childhood Assistant (which amounts to approximately half that of an Early Childhood Teacher).

Posts of responsibility mostly bring an increase in salary: Centre leaders can receive a 5-8% higher monthly salary (depending on the number of staff employed); they also receive an additional three days of annual leave.¹⁸ Deputy leaders with the professional title of counsellor (highest professional title possible) may receive a salary at the 43rd grade, instead of the 41st, which is the highest possible salary for an EC Teacher.¹⁹

¹⁸ Data obtained from the interview with pre-school head teachers (5. 5. 2016).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

In 2015, nearly all ECEC staff (94.8%) worked full-time (over 38.5 hours/week) (Statistical Office RS 2016a).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Induction measures for newly qualified staff

No specified regulations exist regarding induction measures for newly qualified staff. However, they may be supported by mentors if the Ministry of Education opens a call for applications for this post. Otherwise early childhood centres do their best to support new employees, although they are not officially classed as trainees.

Depending on the Ministry's call for applications, a trainee is allocated to an ECEC centre in order to be under the guidance of a mentor. The mentor's role is to train him/her to work independently. Traineeships in Early Childhood Centres or Primary Schools are conducted on the basis of a signed employment contract or contracts for the provision of voluntary traineeship (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b). The traineeship for trainees with ISCED 3 level education lasts six months, for those with an ISCED 6 level education ten months (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b).

During the traineeship, a trainee is supported by a mentor who has gained the job title of counsellor or adviser or has at least three years' experience as a mentor (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b).

Traineeships in education are regulated by law. In accordance with the regulations governing employment, a traineeship is not mandatory but can be implemented. However, since the end of 2014, voluntary traineeship in the public sector is no longer supported by the government (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b).

Appointment and tasks of a mentor

A mentor is appointed by the centre head and must meet the conditions defined by law. Mentors perform the following tasks:

- develop a programme of traineeship,
- advise the trainee to perform the tasks in accordance with the programme,
- cooperate with the head teacher, school counsellors, relevant expert working groups and other expert bodies in a kindergarten or school about the organisation and implementation of a traineeship programme,
- advise the trainee in the planning, organisation and implementation of practical presentations and other forms of direct educational work, and also monitor and analyse this work and provide the trainee with feedback,
- monitor the trainees' preparation and his/her logbook regarding the development of the traineeship programme,
- report on the trainees' skills for independent work and prepare an assessment of their practical work or written assignments necessary for admission to the professional examination,
- in cooperation with the head teacher, report on the completed traineeship,
- perform other tasks related to the traineeship programme (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 23/2006, 38/2014, Article 19).

Each practical assignment, monitored and evaluated by a mentor and the ECEC centre head lasts one hour. At least during the final three of five assignments, the centre head also has to be present. The trainee is given the topic of the assignment by the mentor at least three days beforehand. The assignments are assessed as 'passed' or 'failed' by both the mentor and the centre head. If a trainee fails the assignment, they are permitted to repeat it (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b).

Improving the quality of professional work – the role of selected organisations

DRCPI SBS - Developmental Research Centre for Pedagogical Initiatives Step by Step

For almost 20 years, the Developmental Research Centre for Pedagogical Initiatives Step by Step (DRCPI SBS; from 2016 named as Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education) at the Educational Research Institute in Ljubljana provides various activities for ECEC staff in order to support quality improvement through CPD activities and sharing experiences of good practice. The National Step by Step Network that brings together more than 1,200 professionals from around 40 Early Childhood Centres and Primary Schools was set up in 2000. Members can choose to participate in trainings, workshops, professional meetings, conferences, visits, observations with reflections, mentoring and consulting activities, action research and other research projects. In all these activities, DRCPI SBS strives to involve centre heads, teachers and teachers' assistants.

The framework for quality improvement activities is based on the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) quality pedagogy principles (ISSA 2010). The 20 ISSA principles comprise 85 indicators in seven areas (interactions; family and community; inclusion, diversity, and values of democracy; assessment and planning; teaching strategies; learning environment; professional development) that define quality teaching practices in work with children from 3 to 10 years and their families with the aim of supporting the children's development and wellbeing (Vonta and Ševkušič 2011). A similar document for children from 0 to 3 years (*A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Practices in Services for Children Under Three*) has also recently been published (ISSA 2016). The principles in the latter document were built on international documents and research findings and through the active participation of practitioners.

The DRCPI SBS has introduced the ISSA Principles of Quality Pedagogy to the National Step by Step Network. During the implementation process, the DRCPI SBS supports dialogues with and among professionals about child-centred, democratic and inclusive practices, through self-evaluation and social-constructivist learning processes supported by mentors or through the development of professional learning communities and networks. Members of the Network choose their preferred areas of quality improvement on an annual basis. In such a participatory process, they are much more active in making decisions regarding their professional development and take greater responsibility for the quality of their practice. The tools from ISSA's Quality Resource Pack and external support provided by the DRCPI SBS help to strengthen processes of change.

Key questions which have developed from this collaborative work include the following:

- What is the role of the centre heads and counsellors in these processes?
- How to assure participation in decision making processes and to assure autonomy?
- What is the role of the external professional support and how to organise it?
- How to assure reliability in assessing quality?
- How to connect members of the network?
- What are the needs for intensive trainings?
- How to assure continuity and sustainability?

National School for Leadership in Education

The *National School for Leadership in Education*, established by the government in 1995, carries out activities in adult education, especially in the field of educating early childhood and school leaders. The School develops lifelong education programmes for early childhood and school leaders, which are supplemented by other forms of training and support that they may attend at any time (National School for Leadership in Education 2016a).

Within an organised system of on-site mentoring or regional networking aimed at improving professional quality, the School for Leadership in Education carries out two relevant programmes:

- *Network of learning schools and early childhood education centres* (National School for Leadership in Education 2016b): In schools and ECE centres, teachers and other education staff, together with principals, improve the selected area of interest for meetings of school development teams and for related implementation strategies. In the school year 2016/2017, these areas of interest were: (1) Career and professional development of practitioners, (2) Culture and climate of educational institutions, (3) Strengthening cooperation through networking.
- *Training for self-evaluation* (National School for Leadership in Education 2016c): Education institutions monitor and self-evaluate the implementation of goal-oriented strategies. Based on the findings of self-evaluation, they plan measures for the next school year. The training programme for self-evaluation was prepared within two ESF projects conducted between 2008 and 2014. Evaluation of the training indicates that programme participants acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to generate improvement and self-evaluation and that the staff in the EC centres and school perceive positive changes in the organisational functioning of their institution.

8.4 Non-contact time

The full-time working obligation both for Early Childhood Teachers and Early Childhood Teachers' Assistants is 40 hours per week. Legally, the EC Teacher's work with children should not exceed 30 hours per week and the Assistants' work 35 hours per week (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 100/2005, 14/2015).¹⁹

Early Childhood Teachers thus have 7.5 hours/week non-contact time, and Early Childhood Teachers' Assistants 2.5 hours/week. The remaining time is intended for breaks (0.5 hour/day).

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In Slovenia, there are currently no staff shortages, but there are some weaknesses in the system. Newly qualified graduates often have difficulties in finding a job as an Early Childhood Teacher when he/she first enters the labour market. Most of them start as an Assistant, and subsequently they may be in danger of losing their initial drive to be productive, innovative, and to develop new ideas, etc. Young graduates often have to wait until an Early Childhood Teacher retires before being offered a post.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Promotion system

The current promotion system (in terms of professional titles and also in financial terms) does not reward practitioners who are striving to improve the process quality of their work, but focuses only on credits and certificates received at trainings, conferences, or through doing some extra work like being included in a project. That kind of system does not support efforts for better quality of work, but rewards only those who know how to wisely collect certain points/certificates. This means that no one knows how this person is performing in the classroom, since for a promotion no direct classroom observations are required.

¹⁹ Suggestions for changes in Pre-school Institutions Act are in preparation.

Professional titles

All professional titles (mentor, counsellor, advisor) are permanent – no renewal procedures are required, as is the case in higher education. In other words, professional titles are not limited to a certain period of time and no checks are made to ensure that the teacher is still fulfilling the requirements.

Educational levels of Early Childhood Teachers and Early Childhood Teachers' Assistants

Many younger Early Childhood Teachers' Assistants nowadays have a higher formal education level than the Early Childhood Teachers they are working with. Pre-school teachers who gained their qualification before the 2012 regulations were adopted are still allowed to work as a fully qualified teacher, even if the assistant in their group has gained a higher-level award.

Workplace-based learning

Much more attention needs to be paid to the conditions for workplace-based learning in ECEC centres and for collaboration at the workplace during CPD activities: the allocation of time and place for these activities, acquiring external professional support/expertise, organising support for creating learning communities both within the centre and with other centres.

Mentoring

Mentoring support for students and for novice teachers is neither well developed nor well organised. Instead, the centre teams are expected to carry out these tasks with little or no systemic support. For example, a much stronger collaboration between IPS institutions and mentoring staff in the workplace is needed, as are training courses for mentors, remuneration for those in a mentoring position, and greater participation of the ECEC settings regarding competence development during the workplace component of initial professional studies.

Retirement age

Raising the retirement age from 57 years and 4 months to 59 years and 4 months over the last five years is becoming a stress factor (physically and mentally) for older ECEC staff. A reconsideration of assigned tasks is needed to utilise their rich experiences more wisely.

Diversity issues

In 2015, only 2.5% of ECEC staff were men (Statistical Office RS 2016b) or staff reflecting the diversity and cultural differences in the ECEC neighbourhood. A study on *The attitudes of pre-school principals, pre-school staff and representatives of local communities towards implementation of pre-school programs for disadvantaged children* (Jager 2015) was carried out with a representative sample of Slovenian ECEC settings; only 15.4% of ECEC principals indicated that they explicitly employed staff to reflect the diversity in the community.

Recently there are projects (mostly EU funded) involving persons of the Romani minority in ECEC and providing them with special trainings. Many of those persons are now starting to begin a vocational education in order to complete a qualification as pre-school teacher's assistant or even as a pre-school teacher.

Quality improvement

Quality improvement procedures need to be regarded as an on-going democratic process; there will always be many open questions about shared understanding of quality indicators. In this respect, much more attention needs to be placed on involving parents and community stakeholders in these processes. The quality of educational processes can only be studied in specific educational environments. It is therefore important for researchers and other field experts to be actively connected with practitioners in co-constructing new knowledge and practices and in evaluating them, taking into account both the perspectives of the children's development and wellbeing and the needs of families and communities.

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SLOVENIA

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Tatjana Vonta and Jerneja Jager for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Slovenia – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seeipro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1065-1078.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in Slovenia is organised as a unitary system. In 1993, responsibility for the ECEC sector for children aged 11 months to 6 years was transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (*Ministrstvo za šolstvo, znanost in šport*). Before that time, the Ministry of Health, Family and Social Affairs (*Ministrstvo za zdravje, družino in socialne zadeve*) was the responsible national authority. Early childhood education and care is an integral part of the Slovenian education system.

The Government is responsible for legislation and general regulations and for the national curricular framework for early childhood education. However, it is the duty of the municipalities to ensure that sufficient provision is available and that the curriculum is implemented according to the local needs for ECEC.

Sources: Eurydice 2016.
Vonta T. und J. Jager 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

A fundamental reform of the education system, including early childhood education, was defined in a White Paper published in 1995 (with amendments in 2011). In terms of general objectives, a key emphasis is placed on equality of opportunities and equitable access for all.

The main goal of ECEC centres/kindergartens (*vrtec* = 'little garden'), is to provide each child with age-appropriate and high quality learning and social experiences. Kindergartens are seen to complement the family. They are places where children learn mutual respect for one another, and where they can develop their powers of imagination and independence.

There are two key pieces of legislation regarding early childhood education: (1) the Kindergarten Act* (*Zakon o vrtcih* 2005, 2015) and (2) the Organisation and Financing of Education Act** (*Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja* 2007, 2016). The Kindergarten Act describes the basic principles of democracy and pluralism, autonomy, competencies and staff responsibilities as well as referring to equality of opportunity for children and parents. Alongside various aspects of children's physical and intellectual development, diversity is emphasised, as is the right to freedom of choice. The Organisation and Financing of Education Act highlights, among other things, the importance of developing all children's potential regardless of gender, race or socio-cultural background; of educating for tolerance; of developing language competence, particularly in Slovenian; and of fostering national identity.

Sources: EFA 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
*Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 2005, 2015.
**Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 2007, 2016.
Vonta T. und J. Jager 2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Since 1987, all children are entitled to a full-day place in an early childhood centre from the age of 11 months onwards. Currently, however, many municipalities are finding it difficult to provide a sufficient number of places to meet local needs.

ECEC enrolment is not compulsory. Up to 1996, the final year in kindergarten was obligatory and primary schooling began at age 7. However, since the reform of the education system in 1996, the statutory school entry age was lowered to 6 years and the compulsory final year in kindergarten was abolished.

Primary schooling now begins at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, 2016.
Vonta T. und J. Jager 2017.

Main types of provision

According to national statistical data, there were 978 kindergartens in Slovenia with 5,040 groups attended by a total of 85,407 children (of which 24,413 were under 3-year olds). They were staffed by 10,901 Early Childhood Teachers (of whom 5,727 were Early Childhood Teachers' Assistants)*.

Table 1

Slovenia: Type and number of kindergartens (1- to 6-year olds), 2015**

Kindergarten type	Number of kindergartens	Number of children
Independent kindergarten	46	3,949
Independent kindergarten with affiliated groups	608	57,387
Kindergarten located in a school	8	698
Kindergarten group affiliated to a school but in a separate building	300	22,632
Kindergarten as part of some other institution	16	741
Total	978	85,407

Kindergartens/early childhood centres (*vrtec*) take in children from 11 months up to school entry age at 6, enabling seamless provision at the end of the parental leave period. According to the Ordinance on the conditions for the establishment of public kindergartens (*Odredba o pogojih za ustanavljanje javnih vrtecev*, 1999), kindergartens can operate as (1) independent, free-standing institutions (*samostojni vrtec*), (2) as kindergartens attached to a primary school and either located in the same building or in a separate building in the neighbourhood (*vrtec pri osnovni šoli*) or (3) as kindergarten unit(s) in a separate building outside the kindergarten to which they are affiliated (*enota vrtca*).

Besides the centres that offer a full-day ECEC programme (*celodnevni program*), some offer a half-day programme (*poldnevni program*) or sessional provision. All kindergartens provide a mixture of education and care, including meals.

Educational activities in full-day programmes are offered for six to nine hours per day, in half-day programmes for four to six hours. In general, kindergartens are open between 11 and 12 hours daily, in order to cater for parents' working hours. Some ECEC settings are also open on Saturdays or late into the evening. During the holiday periods, some ECEC centres close down due to a shortage of children, and children are placed in mixed groups or may attend another unit of the kindergarten which is open.

There are also settings which offer between 240 and 720 hours of provision annually (*krajši program*), predominantly for 3- to 6-year olds who live in remote areas. From July 2017, all children

who are not enrolled in ECEC have a right to 240 hours fully funded provision annually, as part of a government measure to increase the ECEC participation rates.

Home-based childcare settings (*vzgojno-varstvena družina*) are required to register with the Ministry of Education and provide for a maximum of six children. In May 2016, there were 313 registered family day care personnel in Slovenia. Children may also be cared for a short time at home by childminders (*varuh predšolskih otrok*) with a childcare qualification, but who are not fully qualified to implement the national educational programme. These childminders are also required to register with the Ministry of Education. For children who are unable to attend an ECEC setting because of a long-term illness, there are also possibilities for support at home (*predšolska vzgoja na domu*). Part-time support at home (*občasno varovanje otrok na domu*) can also be provided by staff with an upper secondary vocational qualification and at least five years of work experience.

Private settings, including those which follow an alternative pedagogical approach such as Steiner or Montessori, are required to comply with the same regulations and hygiene standards as public provision.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016b.
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2017.
*Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016c.
**Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016h.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Provider structures

ECEC centres in Slovenia are either public (mainly funded by the municipalities) or private (founded by individuals or legal persons). Sometimes the public provider networks offer concessions to private providers in order to cover the need for places. The greater majority of ECEC provision in Slovenia is run by public providers (see *Table 2*).

However, the proportion of private settings has risen in recent years, from only 4% in 2010/11 to 7% in 2014/15*, although statistical calculations vary between 5% and 8%**.

Table 2

Slovenia: Number of children in ECEC provision according to provider type, 2015*

Provider	Under 3 years of age	3-6 years	Total	
Public	22,923	58,223	81,146	95%
Private	1,490	2,771	4,261	5%
Total	24,413	60,994	85,407	100%

In the year 2015/16***, the number of kindergartens totalled 978 and 91% of these were public.

Sources: *Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016d.
**Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016g.
***Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2017.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The youngest children in early childhood centres are usually 11 months old, following on from the parental leave entitlement. The participation rates of children under 3 years of age have risen sig-

nificantly over the past decade or so. Whereas in 2005, 38.5% of under-threes were enrolled in an ECEC setting, by 2015 the participation rate had risen to 57.5%. The proportion of 3- to 6-year olds attending ECEC provision has also risen considerably. Whereas in 2005, just over three-quarters of this age group were enrolled, by 2015 the participation rate had risen to 88.5%.

Table 3

Slovenia: Participation rates in kindergartens 2005-2015*

Year	0 to under 3 years, in % ⁺	3 to 6 years, in % ⁺	Total
2005	38.5	77.6	63.6
2010	53.7	87.3	74.0
2015	57.5	88.5	78.1

Table 4

Slovenia: Number of children and enrolment ratio in ECEC provision according to age groups, 2015**

Age groups	Number of children	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	9,060	21.4
2 year olds	15,246	69.0
Total 0- to under 3-year olds	24,306	37.7
3-year olds	18,363	82.8
4-year olds	20,255	89.3
5-year olds	20,362	91.8
6-year olds	1,464	6.5
3- to under 6-year olds	58,980	88.0
0- to under 6-year olds	83,286	63.3

* Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

According to national statistical data, more than three-quarters of children under 6 years of age and over half of children under 3 years of age were enrolled in an ECEC setting (although there are discrepancies between these data and the Eurostat data regarding the under-threes). The enrolment rate for children between age 3 and school entry was almost 90%.***

Although enrolment rates in kindergartens increased by more than half over the past ten years, the EU-2020 Strategy goal has not yet been reached****.

Sources: *Eurostat 2017f.
 **Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
 ***Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016a, 2016b.
 ****Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016g.

Financing and costs for parents

Variations between municipalities regarding the costs incurred for kindergartens, including staff salaries, continuing professional development expenses, materials and equipment, and meals for the children, are minimal. The funding of ECEC centres is covered by state subsidies, municipal budgets, donations and income-related parental fees. Parents only have to pay 30% of the fee for the second child, and no fees at all for each further child.

Monthly parental fees for under 3-year olds can vary considerably, from 0€ up to 450-500€, and for 3- to 6-year olds from 0€ up to 350-450€. The variations depend on the contribution provided by the municipality, which can also vary. Fees are also income-related. Parents in the highest salary grade pay no more than 77% of the costs, whereas parents in the lowest grade of earnings pay

no fees at all. Municipalities only cover fees for children who live in the municipality region (and whose parents pay taxes there).

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Staff-child ratios

The number of groups in any one kindergarten and the number of children allocated to each group are agreed between the kindergarten and the municipality in accordance with the legal regulations (*Pravilnik o normativnih in kadrovskih pogojih za opravljanje dejavnosti predšolske vzgoje*, 2005). The children are usually in groups with children of the same age, with a maximum of one year's difference in age. According to the municipality, children are sometimes allocated in mixed-age groups (under-threes, 2- to 4-year olds and 3- to 6-year olds), or age-integrated groups (1-6 years).

Group size varies according to the age of the children and the way the groups are organised. In same-age groups with children under 3 years of age, the maximum group size is 12 and in mixed-age groups ten children. In same-age groups of children between 3 and 6 years old, the maximum group size is 17 children aged 3-4 years or 22 aged 4-5 or 5-6 years. In mixed-aged groups for 3- to 6-year olds, the maximum group size is 19 children. Age-integrated groups cater for a maximum of 17 children, including not more than seven children under 3 years of age. Group size is reduced if up to a maximum of two children with special needs are included in the group.

In groups with under 3-year olds, one Early Childhood Teacher and one Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant must be simultaneously present for six hours per day. In groups with children between 3 and 6 years old this is reduced to four hours a day, but in both cases this does not include the times during which the children have their nap – during this time, mostly only one member of staff is with the children.

The staff/child ratio in groups with under-threes is 1:6, with 3-year olds 1:8.5 and with 4- and 5-year olds 1:11*. The Early Childhood Teacher usually accompanies the same group of children throughout their time in kindergarten.

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2017.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Curricular Frameworks

In 1999, a new national curriculum for early childhood education was issued by the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education (*Strokovni svet Republike Slovenije za splošno izobraževanje*). In cooperation with practising teachers, it was conceptualised as an open-ended and flexible document which offers room for adaptation to diverse situations and circumstances. As such, the curriculum is not prescribed in detail; instead it provides an orientation for each ECEC setting and Early Childhood Teacher to develop its own individualised educational plan. The Expert Council has published additional documents, such as an Appendix on work with Roma children (2002, amendments 2011), Guidance on the integration of children with special educational needs (2003), or Guidance on the integration of immigrant children in kindergartens and schools (2009, amendments 2012).

The national curriculum is for work both with under-threes and the older children in kindergarten. It is organised into six learning areas: (1) Physical movement, (2) Language, (3) Arts, (4) Society, (5) Nature and (6) Mathematics. Goals are formulated for each of the learning areas, together with practical examples of how to work towards them. The content can be adapted to the daily programme, during which play and guided activities are alternated. No specific times are prescribed for the individual areas of learning, and staff can choose their own ways of working. They develop their own annual work plan in terms of the activities in their group.

The overarching goals of the early childhood curriculum are described as: learning to understand and respect oneself and others; developing emotional competence; fostering perception, forms of expression, curiosity and experimentation as well as imagination, intuition and independent thinking; fostering communicative and creative abilities; developing emerging reading and writing skills; and physical competence. Overall, the curricular framework emphasises the individuality of the children, their right to choose and the importance of play.

Sources: EFA 2015.
Eurydice 2014.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

According to the prevailing concepts of inclusion and integration in Slovenia, children with special educational needs are generally enrolled into mainstream provision. In 2015, 82% of children with disabilities (1,138 of 1,379) were included in regular ECEC settings*.

Kindergartens, in cooperation with external experts and institutions, therefore offer advisory services to support children with special needs (among them, children with intellectual and physical disabilities, children with autism, language disorders and chronic illness) and their parents. Individual and needs-related support for children with severe disabilities is provided within so-called developmental groups (*razvojni oddelek*). An individual educational plan is compiled for each child. According to the kind of special needs, individual support staff are available either for part (usually external staff, so-called mobile support personnel) or all of the child's daily attendance in kindergarten. Since 2013, the concept of inclusion is also supported by legislation (*Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami*). Professional development activities for staff and mobile support personnel are part of this concept.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 5.2% of the total population in Slovenia were of non-Slovenian origin. Most of these persons (83.7%) came from countries outside the European Union. In terms of under 5-year old children, the relative shares were 5.2% and 94.4% respectively**.

Of all under 6-year old children who were enrolled in an ECEC setting in 2015, only about 1% (905 of 85,407) were of non-Slovenian origin. Special arrangements are provided for these children: in kindergartens with children from Italian and Hungarian communities, since they have the status of national communities in Slovenia, two members of staff are present for six hours on a daily basis. Roma children are usually enrolled into mainstream settings, but some separate groups also exist just for this group (mainly in kindergarten units in Romani settlements where enrolment into mainstream setting is for different reasons not possible. This arrangement represents a kind of transition to the "regular system"). In kindergarten groups with Roma children only, the staff-child ratios are favourable: for work with the under-threes 1:4 and for work with the older children 1:7.

The rights of children of asylum seekers are not included in the Kindergarten Act. In fact, the right to pre-school education for migrant children, including refugee children, is not foreseen in any of

the relevant documents***. Staff focus in particular on improving the language acquisition of these children. In areas where Italian or Hungarian minorities live, dual language kindergartens are provided and additional curricular guidance is provided for these settings.

Sources: ***CSD 2012, 165.
EFA 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
**Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2014.
*Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2016e, 2016f.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The national early childhood education curriculum does not specify the knowledge and skills that children are expected to master by a certain age. However, the staff observe the children closely and encourage their learning progress, which they discuss with the child's parents. Standardised tests, particularly in terms of the children's language competence, *may* be used, but only on a voluntary basis. Written accounts of children's progress are only applied in the case of children with special educational needs.

Each kindergarten Centre Head is legally obliged to carry out an annual self-evaluation, the results of which are passed on to the kindergarten board (*svet vrtca*). A central focus is on the evaluation of educational processes. Instruments and methods (e.g. questionnaire surveys, rating scales) and the focus of the evaluation are chosen by the individual kindergartens. In general, the kindergarten staff members assess the implementation of the curriculum and the Centre Heads assess structural aspects, team work and professional development issues. Some ECEC centres also conduct surveys with parents.

External evaluation, carried out about once every five years, comprises both assessments of educational activities and inspections of the ECEC centre. Besides looking at the rooms and equipment, compliance with health and safety aspects, staff qualifications and general working conditions are also assessed. The national schools inspectorate (*Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport*), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education, is responsible for evaluating compliance with legislation and regulations. Inspections are carried out every five years. General findings are published on the inspectorate's website, but do not allow conclusions to be drawn about individual ECEC settings.

External evaluations also include the accreditation processes that are required for private ECEC centres. Their programmes are compared with existing ones and if they comply with the quality standards, they are officially approved.

Sources: Eurydice 2011.
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2016a.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*materinski dopust*) is granted for 105 calendar days. Four weeks are to be taken before and eleven weeks after the date of birth. Mothers are paid their full average earnings based on the past 12 months, from which parental leave contributions have already been deducted. The ceiling is now twice that of the monthly average wage, which is currently (2017) 1,600€ gross. At least 55% of the monthly minimum wage (323.54€) is paid. A maximum of 77 days of ma-

ternity leave after the birth of the child can be transferred to the father or to another person who looks after the child.

In 2017, fathers were entitled to 50 calendar days of **paternity leave** (*očetovski dopust*); as from 2018 the entitlement will be lowered to 30 days. During the first 25 days (as from 2018: every 30 days), 90% of average earnings are paid according to the same conditions as for maternity leave. A monthly sum of 129€ is paid for the remaining days, which is roughly the equivalent of the minimum wage. The first 15 days must be taken within the first six months following the child's birth; the remaining days can be taken up to the end of the child's first grade in primary school.

Parental leave (*starševski dopust*) is granted for 130 calendar days per parent and is remunerated with 90% of average earnings under the same conditions as those for maternity leave. 30 days are reserved exclusively for the mother; the remaining 100 days can be transferred to the father. Or fathers can transfer all their entitled days to the mother. These models have to be agreed on in writing 30 days before the end of maternity leave. At least 185 days must be taken on a continuous full-time or part-time basis. Up to 75 days can be taken at any time up to the end of the child's first year in primary school. Parents can take their leave entitlements simultaneously. If the father is unknown, single mothers may take the entire 260 days of the parental leave entitlement.

Four out of five fathers take up to 15 days of paternity leave; only one in five takes more than 15 days. Whereas all mothers take advantage of parental leave, only about 7% of fathers took up leave entitlements between 2012 and 2014. The reason for this is related to the low financial compensation.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
OECD 2017.
Stropnik, N. 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1863	First kindergarten established according to Froebelian principles
Post-1945	Expansion of early childhood provision in the light of increasing maternal employment
1970s	First moves towards decentralisation of responsibilities
1971	First legislation providing for age-integrated kindergartens
1980	Kindergartens become part of the general education system by law. The final year in kindergarten is made mandatory. The first early childhood curricular framework particularly emphasises preparing the children for school.
1985	The initial professional studies (IPS) of early childhood core practitioners is raised to university level.
1993	ECEC centres (0-6 years) are placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education
1995	A White Book sets out conceptual strategies for a reform of the entire education system, including ECEC.
1996	School entry age is lowered from 7 to 6 years; the final kindergarten year is no longer compulsory. The legal basis for the ECEC field is set out in the Kindergarten Act and in The Organization and Financing of Education Act.
1999	Introduction of the first national curricular framework for early childhood education
2016	Amendments to The Organisation and Financing of Education Act
2017	A new Kindergarten Act comes into effect

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Naumann, I. et al. 2013.
Vonta T. and J. Jager 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Slovenia

Country expert assessment by Tatjana Vonta and Jerneja Jager

In Slovenia, a major challenge will be to find ways of significantly strengthening the participation of vulnerable groups of children (such as Romani and migrant/refugee children) and children younger than 3 years in ECEC programmes. ECEC settings will need to be more flexible in the kinds of programme they offer, since currently most only provide whole-day programmes.

In parallel to increasing the accessibility of ECEC programmes for all groups of children, considerably more attention will need to be devoted to the quality of services. This includes paying more attention to issues of diversity and offering children and parents programmes suited to their needs and rights. It also means providing more flexible approaches towards professional learning opportunities, in particular on-site CPD activities to motivate staff involvement in quality improvement measures for the ECEC centre as a whole (see ECEC Workforce report for Slovenia).

Initial professional education will need to be more fully connected with practice and to include the changes occurring in contemporary ECEC, such as involving diverse families and communities in the life of ECEC settings, which demand intensive team working, critical reflective thinking, and a life-long approach towards learning and professional development. This kind of initial professional education needs not only to focus on knowledge transmission but to strengthen the processes that support the construction of professional values and skills.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Slovenia totalled 2,064,188. This represents a steady rise over the past 20 years (1995: 1,989,477; 2005: 1,997,590).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 3.1% and children under age 6 for 6.3% of the total population in Slovenia. Whereas the relevant proportions were still below the respective averages in the European Union, in 2016 they were slightly above the EU averages.

Table 5

Slovenia: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	20,620
1-year olds	21,172
2-year olds	21,222
Under age 3 total	63,014
3-year olds	22,129
4-year olds	22,178
5-year olds	22,714
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	67,021
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	130,035

Table 6

Slovenia: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.0	3.3	2.7	3.1	3.1	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.4	3.5	2.7	3.1	3.2	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	6.3	6.9	5.4	6.2	6.3	6.2

*own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, more than three-quarters (78.3%) % of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for only 2.2%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2%).

Table 7

Slovenia: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
Households – total	218,100	
Couple households	170,800	78.3
Other types of households	42,600	19.5
Single households, total	4,800	2.2
Single households, women	4,400	2.0
Single households, men	400 ⁺	0.2

*own calculations, ⁺ data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Slovenia was 69.2% and that of women 61%. Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 75.3% were employed, whereas 91.1% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Both rates are among the highest rates in the EU28.

Table 8

Slovenia: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Slovenia	2005	76.8	89.8
	2010	78.7	91.1

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2015	75.3	91,1
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

*own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 17.3% of children under age 6 in Slovenia were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is under the average rate in the EU28 (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 19.2%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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SPAIN

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

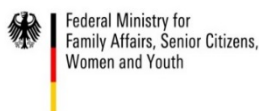
Ana Ancheta Arrabal

University of Valencia, Department of Comparative Education and
History of Education
(Profesora Contratado Doctor)

Citation suggestion:

Arrabal, A.A. 2018. "Spain – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1079-1104.

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1. ECEC governance

In Spain, an integrated approach to ECEC was adopted by the 1990 Education Act (*Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo* - LOGSE). This national law explicitly recognised that, from infancy onwards, ECEC provision constitutes the first step along the educational pathway. Since that time, ECEC has come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, currently called the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte* - MECS). ECEC is divided into two cycles (0-3 and 3-6 years), which can be provided either in separate settings (*centros incompletos de primer ciclo* and *colegios de educación infantil y primaria*, respectively) or in combined and integrated settings for both cycles (*escuelas infantiles*). Currently, the MECS defines the general framework for the entire national system of ECEC, but it operates as a decentralised governance system in terms of its implementation. This means that the Departments of Education of the 17 Autonomous Communities are responsible for the running of pre-primary education in their territories and that local authorities also play a role in the organisation of the first cycle of ECEC (0- to 2-year olds). This means that responsibilities are distributed on four levels: central government; regional government (autonomous communities); local authorities; and schools/early childhood centres.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The 1990 Education Act LOGSE not only made provision for a complete restructuring of the education system for children aged 0 to 6 years but also for a reform and up-grading of the professional qualifications needed to work in this field. Since 1990 there are now two main groups of professional workers in early years settings:

- *Maestra especialista en educación infantil* – Early Childhood Education Teacher
- *Técnica superior en educación infantil* – Senior Specialist in Early Childhood Education

Only the *maestras* work as group leaders in the second cycle of early childhood education, whereas in the first cycle, either *maestros* or Senior Specialist in ECE may take on the role as core practitioner with group responsibility. In infant-toddler centres for under-threes, at least one *maestro/maestra* has to be part of the centre team. Following LOGSE, the auxiliary worker training scheme was abolished and minimum entry requirements for the remaining personnel in early childhood services were up-graded considerably.

However, since the 2006 Education Act (*Ley Orgánica 2/2006 de Educación*, LOE), in educational institutions there are different types of professionals responsible for support in the fields of education and/or health of young children. They are specialists who have been specifically trained to perform such duties. Early childhood provision may have all or some of these professionals on their staff depending on the institution's needs and/or features (Royal Decree 1630/2006). According to their qualification, these staff members may be classified as follows:

Higher education graduates: These may include *licenciados* (those who graduated before the Bologna process was adopted), paediatricians, or architects, with duties corresponding to their respective training.

Intermediate graduates:

- Registered Nurses: within the scope of their professional qualifications, they monitor and care for pupils who fall ill, supervise the administration of prescribed medication, etc.
- Speech Therapists: they provide specific treatment for speech disorders in coordination with other professionals involved in each case.
- Physiotherapists: provide specific treatment to students with physical problems and are

responsible for students' health care if there are no nurses on the staff. They are also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the treatment the student is undergoing, in coordination with the rehabilitation physician, as appropriate, and for teaching pupils how to handle and use any equipment or aids adapted to their needs, etc.

- Occupational Therapists: provide specific treatment for functional recovery by teaching students how to handle aids and prostheses, by training them in various kinds of activities and by designing or making adaptations that contribute to students' learning and well-being. They are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the treatment the student is undergoing, in coordination with the other professionals in the institution.

Other qualifications:

- Practical Nurses: professionals with training in intermediate *ciclos formativos* (vocational education/training cycles) in the field of health care. They perform the tasks entrusted to them by a physician/paediatrician or a registered nurse, who supervises their work.
- Play workers: cooperate with the *maestra* to plan leisure and free time activities. They are responsible for carrying out such activities and assisting pupils during such activities; they coordinate and monitor extracurricular teaching and cooperate in monitoring pupils' schooling, liaising between the institution and families, etc.
- Infant Assistants: they help other staff look after pre-primary education pupils, especially in relation to their diet, their well-being and personal attention to children. They are specifically in charge of pupils' hygiene in the classroom.
- *Técnicas Especialistas III* in Education (Supervisors): persons with a second-level vocational training certificate or equivalent qualifications who provide additional support to pupils with disabilities, assisting them on the school bus, helping them with their daily personal care and also in the dining room, during the night and in other similar situations. They also monitor hallways during classroom changes, students' toilets, classrooms (when the teacher is absent) and school playgrounds (during breaks) in coordination with teaching staff, who are directly responsible for such activities.

Table 1 shows the main types of ECEC staff in centre-based settings in Spain and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this section).

Table 1

Spain: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<p><i>Maestro especialista en educación infantil</i> Early Childhood Education Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p><i>Escuela de educación infantil unificada</i> Integrated early childhood centre 0- to 6-year olds (1st and 2nd cycle)</p> <p><i>Centros incompletos de primer ciclo de educación infantil</i> Separate infant-toddler centre 0- to 3-year olds (1st cycle)</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head</p>	0-6 years	<p>Bachelor, 4 years university</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF: Level 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p>

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
	<i>Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria</i> Early childhood unit in primary school 3- to 6-year olds (2nd cycle)			
<i>Técnica superior en educación infantil</i> Senior Specialist in Early Childhood Education <i>Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional</i>	<i>Escuela de educación infantil unificada</i> Early childhood integrated centre 0- to 6-year olds (1st and 2nd cycle) <i>Centros incompletos de primer ciclo de educación infantil</i> Separate infant-toddler centre 0 to 3 years (1st cycle)	Core practitioner with group responsibility (only for work with 0- to 3-year olds) Qualified co-worker	0-3 years	Post-secondary Diploma/Higher Technician in Early Childhood Education ECTS points: n/a ² EQF: Level 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4
<i>Técnica / Auxiliar en educación infantil</i> ECE Teacher's Assistant	<i>Escuela de educación infantil unificada</i> Early childhood integrated centre 0- to 6-year olds (1st and 2nd cycle) <i>Escuela de educación infantil</i> Early childhood centre 0- to 3-year olds 3- to 6- year olds (1 st and 2nd cycle) <i>Escuelas de educación infantil primer ciclo</i> Early childhood centre/infant-toddler unit 0 to 3 years (1st cycle)	Short-term qualified co-worker	0-6 years	6 months (100-150 hours depending on the Autonomous Community) vocational education + 1-2 months (100-150 hours) in a work placement. ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Monitor/ Animadora de ocio y tiempo libre</i> Play Worker/ Sociocultural Animator	<i>Escuela de educación infantil</i> Early childhood centre <i>Escuela de educación infantil y primaria</i> Early childhood unit in primary school 0- to 3-year olds (1st cycle) 3- to 6-year olds (2nd cycle)	Short-term qualified co-worker	All ages	6 months (100-150 hours depending on the Autonomous Community) vocational education + 1-2 months (100-150 hours) in a work placement. ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3

² n/a = not applicable.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes focus on early childhood, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2:

Spain: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff categories	Year / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	No systematically compiled national data – but since a Bachelor’s degree is required for working as a core practitioner in early childhood settings (3-6), a high proportion can be assumed*
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	No systematically compiled national data**
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	No systematically compiled national data**
Staff with non-specialist qualification	No systematically compiled national data
Unqualified staff	2014: n/a ***
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	0.9% off-site*
Male staff	2014: 2.3% total* 19.1% centre heads or administrators (12.1% centre heads + 7% centre secretaries)*; unknown core practitioners; unknown qualified co-workers**
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

*In 2014, 6.2% of all teachers across the education system were pre-primary teachers (MECS 2015a: Sections B.3.2, B.3.3 and B.3.4).

** Disaggregated data for this category are not available. The official data from the MECS do not specify the percentages among professionals working in formal ECEC services by type of qualification. The only relevant data are the percentage of staff working with children from 0-3 in non-formal ECEC (with Professional Careers or other careers with no remuneration), which is 18% (MECS 2015b).

*** The 2006 Education Act LOE stipulates that only qualified staff may work with children aged 0 to 6 years.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

In Spain, both Early Childhood Education Teachers and Primary School Teachers are required to have a Bachelor’s degree. This is considered to be generalist qualification. For all other levels of education requiring a certain subject specialisation, a Master’s degree is required.

Today, following the reform instigated by the 1990 LOGSE Education Act, there are two main kinds of qualified professionals working with young children: (1) university-level trained teachers with a focus on early childhood education (Early Childhood Education Teachers) and (2) Senior Specialists in Early Childhood Education trained at post-secondary level for work mainly with the under-threes.

The following tables outline the professional qualifications and fields of work of the professional groups who work directly and on a daily basis with young children.

Early Childhood Education Teacher (*Maestra especialista en educación infantil*)

A four-year university-level degree with a specialisation in early childhood education is the required qualification for Early Childhood Education Teachers wishing to work in both public and privately run ECEC provision (Royal Decree 476/2013). The initial qualification route was transferred to university colleges specialising in teacher preparation in 1970, and the post-1990 route for prospective early childhood education teachers (*maestros especialistas en educación infantil*) stipulated higher entry requirements. The professional education/training syllabus was reformed in accordance with the Bologna Process, and currently the study route takes four years to complete and comprises 240 ECTS points. Today, the IPS programme takes place at university-based Teacher Education faculties and qualifies for the age-group 0 to 6 years. It is a Bachelor-level qualification (*primer ciclo de formación universitaria*), in contrast to the Master's degree which is the requirement for teachers working in all stages of the education system except pre-primary and primary.

Table 3

Spain: Early Childhood Education Teacher (IPS)

Job title in Spanish: <i>Maestra en educación infantil</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p><i>Since 2006:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 10 years of compulsory schooling (up to 16) + 2 pre-university foundation years from 16 to 18; school leaving certificate – <i>Bachillerato</i>.</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years higher education at a university faculty for teacher training (<i>Facultad universitaria de formación de profesorado</i>) – specialised training for work with 0- to 6-year olds</p> <p>Award: University Bachelor's degree/Early Childhood Education, <i>Grado en Maestro/a en Educación Infantil</i>.</p> <p>ECTS points: 240</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood centre (<i>Escuela de educación infantil</i>), 0- to 3-year olds (1st cycle), 3- to 6-year olds (2nd cycle); Early Childhood Education and Primary School (<i>Escuela de Educación Infantil y Primaria</i>), 3- to 6-year olds and 6- to 12-year olds.</p> <p><i>From 1990 to 2006:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling + school leaving certificate + 1 pre-university foundation year (COU)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years vocational higher education at a university college for teacher education (<i>Escuela universitaria de formación de profesorado</i>) – specialised training for work with 0- to 6-year olds</p> <p>Award: University degree/Early Childhood Education, <i>Diplomado Maestro Especialidad en Educación Infantil</i></p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: n/a</p> <p>ISCED 1997: 5A</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: see above</p>

Senior Specialist in Early Childhood Education (*Técnico superior en educación infantil*)

A number of transition regulations applied up to 2000 for those who had a job before the 1990 legislation came into force. In 1987 and 1993, a specific form of training was developed for practitioners working in early childhood centres without formal qualifications. This qualifying route was designed to take into account previously accumulated work experience and to enable them to continue working as an early childhood centre employee. The 2006 Education Act

LOE stipulates that only qualified staff may work with children aged 0 to 6 years.

Table 4

Spain: Senior Specialist in Early Childhood Education (IPS)

<p>Job title in Spanish: <i>Técnico superior en educación infantil</i> Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional</p>
<p><i>Since 2006:</i> Entry requirements: 10 years of schooling (6 to 16 years) + 2 years pre-university foundation; school leaving certificate (<i>Bachillerato</i>) or a successfully completed access test for higher professional training (minimum age 20 years) Professional studies: Approx. 1½ years (1,600 hours) post-secondary, non-tertiary vocational education + 3 months (400 hours) in a work placement. Focus on age-group 0 to 3 years. Award: Diploma/Higher Technician in Early Childhood Education, <i>Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil</i> ECTS points: 120 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood integrated centres/infant-toddler unit in separated settings (<i>Escuelas de educación infantil unificadas/unidades de primer ciclo en centros separados</i>), 0 to 3 years (1st cycle).</p> <p><i>From 1990 to 2006:</i> Entry requirements: 12 years schooling + leaving certificate (<i>BUP</i>) + 1 pre-university foundation year (<i>COU</i>) or <i>bachillerato experimental or Formación profesional, módulo 2</i>); minimum entry age 18 years Professional studies: Approx. 1 year (900 hours) post-secondary, non-tertiary vocational education + 3 months (400 hours) in a work placement. Focus on age-group 0 to 3 years. Award: Diploma/ Higher Technician in Early Childhood Education, <i>Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil</i> ECTS points: n/a EQF level: n/a ISCED 1997: 5B Main ECEC workplace: see above</p>

ECE Teacher's Assistant (*Técnica/Auxiliar en educación infantil*)

The *Técnicos o Auxiliares en Educación Infantil* assist other staff to look after early childhood education pupils, especially in relation to their diet, their well-being and personal attention to children. Mostly, they are specifically in charge of children's hygiene in the classroom or attending them during meal times. There is no national regulation for this professional profile. The 2006 Education Act LOE stipulated that only qualified staff may work with children aged 0 to 6 years. However, the Infant Assistant certificate is partly recognised, that means, not on a national basis by the MECS, but by some of the Autonomous Services of Employment, and it is mainly offered in agreement with certain private training institutions

The professionalisation of this sector has been an important reform to improve the quality of the provision especially for the first cycle of the stage and in order to guarantee the equality of attention due to the integration of vulnerable groups that represent a challenge within the ECEC provision.

Table 5

Spain: ECE Teacher's Assistant (IPS)

<p>Job title in Spanish: <i>Técnica/Auxiliar en educación infantil</i></p>
<p><i>Since 2006:</i> Entry requirements: 10 years of schooling (6 to 16 years) (minimum age 16 years) Professional studies: ½ year (100-150 hours depending on the autonomous community) vocational education + 1-2 months (100-150 hours) in a work placement. Award: Certificate of Infant Assistant in Early Childhood Education, <i>Técnica/Auxiliar en Educación Infantil</i></p>



Job title in Spanish: Técnica/Auxiliar en educación infantil

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 3

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 3

Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood centre (*Escuela de educación infantil*), 0- to 3-year olds (1st cycle), 3- to 6-year olds (2nd cycle); Early childhood centre/infant-toddler unit (*Escuelas de educación infantil primer ciclo*), 0 to 3 years (1st cycle)

From 1990 to 2006:

Entry requirements: 8 years of schooling + school leaving certificate

Professional studies: Approx. 1 year of vocational education. Focus on age-group 0 to 3 years.

Award: Kindergarten auxiliary specialist, *Técnica auxiliar de jardín de infancia*

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: n/a

ISCED 1997: 2

Main ECEC workplace: see above

Play Worker/Sociocultural Animator (*Monitor/Animador de ocio y tiempo libre*)

Play Workers are not specialists in early childhood education, but in leisure and free time activities in various educational institutions. They generally work independently with children before and after school hours and during the break times. However, in the case of settings for children below age 3, they may also sometimes work alongside the teacher, or even as a substitute for the teacher, particularly in private settings. The certificate of Play Worker for leisure and free time is recognised as a vocational education route on a national basis by the MECS, but the competence to establish the IPS route lies in the responsibility of the Education Authorities of each Autonomous Community (Institut Valencià de la Juventut 2002:7).

In Spain, the initial training of professionals in the leisure and free time field began in the 1960s with courses for play workers and managers of leisure time. Later, in 1988, the degree of Technician in Sociocultural Animation was regulated on a national basis (Figueres and Morros 2005). However, the training received by sociocultural animator still faces some complications, as they receive very small practical learning against a very broad theoretical syllabus and little time to explore and extend this knowledge (Morros 2008).

Table 6

Spain: Play Worker/Sociocultural Animator (IPS)

Job title in Spanish: Monitor/Animador de ocio y tiempo libre

Since 2006:

Entry requirements: 10 years of schooling (6 to 16 years) (minimum age 16 years)

Professional studies: 6 months (100-150 hours depending on the Autonomous Community) vocational education + 1-2 months (100-150 hours) in a work placement.

Award: Certificate of Play Worker for leisure and free time, *Monitor/Animador de ocio y tiempo libre*.

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 3

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 3

Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood centres, Early childhood Education and Primary School (*Escuela de educación infantil, Escuela de Educación Infantil y Primaria*), 0- to 3-year olds (1st cycle), 3- to 6-year olds (2nd cycle)

From 1990 to 2006:

Job title in Spanish: *Monitor/Animador de ocio y tiempo libre*

Entry requirements: 8 years of schooling + school leaving certificate

Professional studies: Approx. 1 year (900 hours) of regulated vocational education. Focus on leisure and free time in schools

Award: Play worker Specialist, *Técnico en Animación sociocultural*

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: n/a

ISCED 1997: 3

Main ECEC workplace: see above

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes of core practitioners

Early Childhood Education Teacher (*Maestra especialista en educación infantil*)

Competence specifications: Prospective ECE Teachers will be expected to acquire competencies related to the implementation of curricular goals and content. These include addressing diversity; knowledge of ICT; school organisation; learning to live together both inside and outside the classroom; addressing language learning within multicultural and multilingual contexts; working effectively with families; reflecting on classroom practice; and knowledge of quality improvement models (Oberhuemer et al. 2010). Specifically, legislation regulating the new university bachelor degrees in pre-primary and primary education establishes the competences and abilities to be acquired by students (Royal Decree 1594/2011):

- Being familiar with the goals, curricular contents and evaluation criteria of Early Childhood/Pre-Primary Education;
- Designing and regulating learning environments in diversity contexts attending to the singular educational needs of children, gender equality, equity and respect to human rights;
- Promoting coexistence in and outside the classroom and dealing with the peaceful settlement of conflicts; being able to observe systematically learning and coexistence contexts and to be able to reflect on them; reflecting in the group on the acceptance of rules and respect for others; promoting children's autonomy and singularity as factors for educating emotions, feelings and values in early childhood,
- Knowing about language evolution during early childhood, being able to identify possible dysfunction and ensure the right intervention; dealing with situations for learning languages in multicultural and multilingual contexts; mastering the use of different techniques of expression in oral and written language;
- Knowing about the educational implications of Communication and Information Technologies and, mainly, of television in early childhood;
- Knowing about the foundations of child nutrition and hygiene;
- Knowing the foundations of early attention, psychological, learning and personality-building processes during early childhood;
- Knowing about the organisation of ECEC centres;
- Viewing teaching as a professional activity needing continuous improvement and adaptation according to scientific, pedagogic and social changes;
- Acting as a counsellor for parents regarding family education with children aged 0 to 6 years old and mastering social abilities in the treatment and relationship with the family of each child and with all families;
- Reflecting on class practices in terms of innovating and improving teaching work;
- Acquiring habits and skills for autonomous and cooperative learning and promoting this among children;

- Understanding the function, possibilities and limits of education in current society and the key competences that affect ECEC centres and pre-primary education and their professionals;
- Knowing about models for improving quality in educational institutions;
- Mastering the Castilian language equivalent to level C1 (in those Autonomous Communities with a co-official language, the co-official language equivalent to the level C1) apart from a foreign language equivalent to the level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Curricular areas: The initial professional study route for prospective ECE Teachers is organised in three curricular areas or modules: (1) theoretical frameworks, (2) didactic and disciplinary training, and (3) practical work placement/field-based studies.

The Bachelor study programmes are required nationwide to include the following modules and contents, without jeopardising the universities' autonomy (Royal Decree 1027/2011):

- **Basic education:** Education processes, learning and personality development (0-6 years old); Learning difficulties and developmental disorders; Society, family and school; Childhood, health and food; Organisation of the school room, materials and teaching abilities; Systematic observation and contexts analysis; Pre-Primary Education School/ECEC centre.
- **Didactic and disciplinary education:** Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Mathematics; Languages and Reading and Writing Literacy; Music, plastic expression and body language.
- **Practicum:** periods spent in educational institutions and the preparation of the Bachelor thesis project.
- **Qualifying mention (*mención cualificadora*):** Special subject/topic (e.g. working with children with special needs, children with autism) proposed by the university when the students choose and develop their Bachelor thesis project.

Apart from these common core subjects, in all study programmes there are compulsory subjects to be included according to each specialisation. In addition to these subjects, which are called common core compulsory subjects and common core specialised subjects, each university, in the exercise of its autonomy, is entitled to establish other compulsory as well as optional subjects. The pedagogic-didactic approach of the Bachelor studies emphasizes the autonomous student work in experiential learning. The IPS study route for Early Childhood Education Teachers was conceptualised under this approach, hence the realisation of field-based studies and work experience in early childhood centres settings has an important place in the overall studies. According to Eurydice (2017), 50 ECTS points are allocated to practical work experience, representing around one fifth of the total (BA=240 ECTS points), starting during the first semester of the study programme. The remaining credits are allocated to modules of basic education (100 ECTS points), didactic and disciplinary education (60 ECTS points), and the qualifying mention (*mención cualificadora*) (30-60 ECTS points) which means that the student can obtain a specialised degree after taking a minimum of 30 ECTS points.

Senior Specialist in Early Childhood Education (*Técnico superior en educación infantil*)

The Royal Decree 1394/2007 (18 July) set out the conditions for this advanced vocational qualification. In addition, each Autonomous Community established a regulatory framework for the examinations required. Intermediate and higher vocational training may be provided in institutions exclusively devoted to vocational education/training, or in regular schools with a specific upper secondary vocational route. In the latter case, the vocational training is organised independently, but personnel and material resources may be shared.

According to the Royal Decree 1538/2006, all these institutions must meet a series of requirements and conditions which apply throughout the whole of Spain.

The qualifying route for the *técnico superior* is fairly short and emphasises the birth to 3 age phase. It was upgraded considerably following LOGSE in 1990, and again in 2006 when the course length was extended from one year to one and a half years, with an additional three months (400 hours) spent in a work placement. This may be in the infant-toddler unit of an early childhood centre, in a children's hospital ward or in other childcare and social institutions.

Competence specifications: Senior Specialists in Early Childhood Education are expected to acquire the following competencies during their IPS (Royal Decree 1394/2007):

- Organising resources according to the children's needs and characteristics.
- Developing the programmed activities, employing the appropriate resources and methodological strategies and creating a climate of confidence.
- Designing and applying appropriate action strategies with families related to the goals and procedures of the ECEC institution;
- Coping with uncertainties regarding people, resources or environment, transmitting security and confidence;
- Evaluating the intervention process and the results achieved; preparing and managing the documentation associated with the process, with the goal of improving the quality of the service;
- Updating research and technical knowledge regarding their professional activity, using the available resources for lifelong learning;
- Maintaining relationships with the children, their families, community groups and other professionals;
- Managing cultural diversity and providing solutions to the conflicts that may occur;
- Creating safe environments, respecting the regulations and security protocols in the planning and development of activities;
- Exercising their rights and complying with their obligations under the current labour relations agreements;
- Managing their professional career, analysing work opportunities, self-employment and learning;
- Creating and managing a small enterprise, carrying out a products feasibility study, planning the production and marketing;
- Participating actively in economic, social and cultural issues, with a critical and responsible attitude.

Curricular areas: Qualification routes at the Advanced Vocational level required to adhere to a state-regulated Core Curriculum framework including (see Eurydice 2017):

- Didactics of Pre-Primary Education: 125 hours (14 ECTS points).
- Personal autonomy and child education: 105 hours (12 ECTS points).
- Children's play and methodology: 105 hours (12 ECTS points).
- Expression and communication: 100 hours (11 ECTS points).
- Cognitive and motor development: 105 hours (12 ECTS points).
- Social and emotional development: 75 hours (8 ECTS points).
- Social abilities: 60 hours (6 ECTS points).
- Intervention with families and attention to children at social risk: 60 hours (6 ECTS points).
- Projects to become familiarised with alternative services in early childhood education and care 25 hours (5 ECTS points).
- First aid: 35 hours (3 ECTS points).
- Work training and guidance: 50 hours (5 ECTS points).
- Enterprise and entrepreneurial initiative: 35 hours (4 ECTS points).
- Placements in various workplaces: 220 hours (22 ECTS points).

These studies are fully or partly provided, and some vocational modules are delivered in different modalities: in person, at a distance, or mixed. The number of credits allocated to this

qualification is 120 ECTS points. 20% of the time is spent in a work placement, and just over 18% of the ECTS points are awarded for work placements.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Both levels of initial vocational education/training (intermediate and higher) are open to applicants who do not have the usual academic requirements, provided they pass a specific test proving that their background in the area will enable them to take full advantage of such training. In order to gain access to intermediate vocational training, pupils must hold the *Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* certificate. Pupils successfully completing these studies are awarded a *Técnico* certificate, with which they have access to Bachelor studies such as the degree of *Maestro en Educación Infantil*.

Also, plans are underway to establish a system for evaluating and accrediting knowledge and skills acquired through experience or non-formal means and for adapting and updating vocational qualification routes according to real market needs. The 2002 *Ley Orgánica de las Cualificaciones y de la Formación Profesional*, LOCFP (Act on Qualifications and Vocational Training) aimed to organise a comprehensive system of vocational training, qualifications and accreditation that provides a solution to social and economic demands through different types of training, including in-company and occupational training, and training addressed to the integration and reintegration of workers into the labour market. In this respect, among other measures, a system of grants and financial assistance was put in place for workers between 18 and 24 with no vocational training qualification to be able to combine their employment with the training activities required for obtaining that qualification (Royal Decree 1224/2009).

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

The practicum component of initial professional studies of both ECE Teachers and Senior Specialists in ECE includes periods spent in educational institutions and the preparation of a final project, which is necessary to get the qualifying mention (see above). Work placements are field-based studies supervised by a mentor at the institution where it takes place and by an academic tutor of the university or the vocational training centre. Their main objective is to enable students to apply and complement the acquired knowledge in their academic training.

Table 7 compares the practicum in the IPS of core practitioners in its different dimensions:

- whether this element of IPS is regulated by national and/or regional and/or provider guidelines and how explicit these are about the cooperation between and the complementary roles of IPS institutions and ECEC centres;
- the length of time spent overall in the workplace (in weeks or days) throughout the course of studies and how the time blocks are structured;
- the number of ECTS points allocated to workplace learning in the professional study routes for core practitioners;
- the skills and competencies students are expected to develop in the workplace;
- forms of student self-evaluation and external evaluation;
- whether mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres are *expected to* or *have to* complete a specific qualifying course for the task of supporting students in the workplace;
- whether mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres have a designated role, with time allocation specifications for mentoring, and whether/how they are remunerated for their work.

Table 7

Spain: Characteristics of workplace-based learning

	Early Childhood Education Teachers	Senior Specialists in ECE	ECE Teachers' Assistants
Regulation/Provider	Public and private provider agreements*	Public and private provider agreements**	Only private agreements***
Length/time blocks	First and last year of studies 1 semester	Final year of studies 3 months	Final year of studies 1-2 months
ECTS points awarded	50	22	n/a
Skills/ competences	Practising professional activities; facilitating their occupation; encouraging their entrepreneurial ability	n/a	n/a
Self-evaluation and external evaluation	Bachelor project with mentor at the IPS institution	Final project with mentor at the IPS institution	Unknown
Mandatory course for mentors	No	No	Unknown
Specified time allocation/remuneration for mentoring	No	No	Unknown

* Real Decreto 1027/2011; ** Real Decreto 1543/2011; *** Orden ESD/4066/2008

Recent reforms, trends and debates

There are no recent reforms or debates on this issue, but a worrying trend is emerging due to the latest reform of employment and labour in Spain which includes a new type of contract called “in placement” (*Contrato en prácticas*). This particular type of contract and the time students spend in the ECEC institution during the practicum are being used by private providers to cover their needs for staff during certain periods of the school year. This is having an impact on the quality of provision and of the work placements. One negative effect is the lack of staff in the institution who can take on a mentoring and supervising role with the students; another is that students are being used as substitute staff during their placement and are left to work alone with no supervision, despite the fact that taking on responsibility for a group of children is not permitted.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

National, regional and/or provider framework for regulating the CPD of ECEC personnel

National regulations regarding the CPD of ECEC personnel have been provided only for fully-qualified teachers. Professionals with lower qualifications are encouraged to pursue higher education studies in order to improve their initial education/training and to gain access to jobs in the public sector, which in turn guarantee free access to CPD.

Early Childhood Education Teachers have a right and an obligation to pursue lifelong learning (Article 102.1 of the Education Act 2/2006). Continuing professional development is thus a responsibility for the Education Authorities and educational institutions. ECE Teachers and Senior ECE Specialists are expected to continually update their knowledge in the areas of early childhood research, didactics and professional issues. However, participation in CPD activities is voluntary.

Education Authorities plan training activities for the teaching staff working in public schools, including ECEC provision. They guarantee a diversity of courses which are available free of charge, and take the necessary measures to foster teacher participation in these activities.

There are financial supports available for participants wishing to attend activities offered by other institutions.

The Education Authorities also facilitate teacher access to qualifications which allow mobility between the different teaching areas, including university education, through appropriate agreements with the universities. In turn, the MECS may also provide State in-service training programmes for teachers working at any of the educational levels regulated by the law and establish the relevant agreements with other institutions. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the 17 Autonomous Communities, is responsible for fostering the international mobility of public school teachers, post-to-post teacher exchanges and visits to other countries.

CPD programmes for ECE Teachers are planned according to the priorities of the specific Autonomous Community and to the professional development needs expressed by teachers themselves. The Autonomous Communities are free to establish their own priority guidelines, taking into account the training needs of the teaching staff within their jurisdiction. This implies that both the content of the training and the institutions in charge of its provision differ from one Autonomous Community to another.

CPD courses are organised according to the specific age-level and specialisation (e.g. ECE). The Communities regulate the announcements, validations, certificates, activities registrations, equivalences between research activities and university degrees, priority lines in lifelong learning, and so on. After taking part in these activities, educators receive attendance certificates.

The 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, which modifies the 2006 Education Act, lays down several guidelines for the CPD framework offered by the Education Authorities of the Autonomous Communities. These guidelines are: to adapt knowledge and teaching methods to trends in research and specific teaching methodologies; to offer training related to coordination, guidance, tutorship, attention to diversity and school organisation; to establish training programmes in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and foreign languages; to promote educational research and innovation programmes; and to provide specific training as regards equal opportunities between men and women, and coeducation.

Main forms of CPD for ECE Teachers

Continuing professional development can be implemented through in-person or on-line courses, seminars and working groups or training projects in educational institutions. ECE Teachers can take part in these activities outside their teaching hours, during the hours spent in the ECEC centre or during working hours if they are carried out outside the educational institution. To take part in some of these activities, teachers may have to comply with several admission requirements, usually related to their university qualifications or teaching experience at certain educational levels.

CPD activities can be grouped according to three basic types: (1) courses requiring attendance or participation in online courses, (2) seminars and (3) team work. CPD also takes place on-site. This form is considered to be an effective tool for meeting the training needs of a team or group of practitioners who work at a particular early childhood centre. Such projects are aimed at the theoretical and practical training of ECE Teachers and may include issues regarding centre administration, management and organisation, innovative projects and their development, and so on. The Spanish Institute for Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) also establishes the relevant agreements with other institutions to this end.

Leave entitlement specifications

The educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities encourage and grant paid study leave for teaching staff in the public ECEC centres they manage (Article 105.2.d of the Education Act 2/2006). The purpose of these leaves is to promote their participation in activities regarding training and educational research and innovation. CPD provided by public insti-

tutions is free of charge, whereas CPD offered by other types of institution is fee paying, but teachers receive financial support for participation. Terms and conditions are determined by the corresponding authority with competencies in the field of education in each Autonomous Community, and the amount of financial support depends on the available budget. Official internship periods are granted through a selective process and, if successful, teachers receive leave for this time.

Main providers of CPD for ECE Teachers

The Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, through the Spanish Institute for Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF), annually determines the priority guidelines of in-service teacher training programmes, and it establishes the relevant agreements with other institutions to this end.

All Autonomous Communities have a network of institutions which provide teacher training activities. Although they have different names, the most widespread term is Teachers' and Resource Centres and they are the main institutions responsible for providing formal CPD activities. Their tasks and powers are related to the organisation and development of the training plan within their area of activity, the promotion of interinstitutional working teams supporting the dissemination of knowledge, the provision of resources to the teaching staff to contribute to the development of their teaching activity and the improvement of educational innovation.

Each institution is responsible for a variable number of primary (including ECEC centres within primary schools) and secondary educational institutions to which they provide support in relation to professional development, resources or guidance to carry out innovation and improvement initiatives. In all the Autonomous Communities there are also other institutions involved in the continuing professional development of teachers, such as university departments, institutes of education, professional associations, unions or educational reform movements (Eurydice 2015).

Finally, there are numerous private associations, groups or institutions (such as official professional associations, unions, pedagogical reform groups, foundations, etc.) whose aim is to foster in-service teacher training; Education Authorities may grant these institutions financial assistance to help them achieve such an objective.

Formal recognition of CPD

Undertaking CPD activities has a direct impact on teachers' professional careers, since they are regarded as merits in competitive examinations (merit for transfers, secondments, management of educational institutions) or as a necessary requirement to be eligible for a salary bonus. The amount and name of this bonus varies in the different Autonomous Communities.

In 2011 several agreements were reached between the MECS and the regional Ministries or Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities in terms of continuing professional development for school teachers, including ECE Teachers. Education Authorities are required to recognise the CPD activities, research and innovation carried out by teaching staff in their jurisdiction, providing that they have been previously accredited by the education authority where they were implemented. The recognition of these activities is considered a merit in any call including the assessment of continuing professional development activities; in order to receive the specific additional remuneration for continuing professional development (Eurydice 2015).

The Education Authorities of the Autonomous Communities encourage the development of paid study leaves for teachers working in public educational institutions, with the aim of promoting their participation in activities regarding training and education research and innovation.

Content of CPD courses

The 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, which modifies the 2006 Education Act (Ley Orgánica 2/2006), lays down several guidelines for the in-service training programmes offered by the Education Authorities of the Autonomous Communities. These guidelines are: to adapt knowledge and teaching methods to trends in science and specific teaching methodologies; to offer training related to coordination, guidance, tutorship, attention to diversity and school organisation; to establish training programmes in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and foreign languages; to promote educational research and innovation programmes; and to provide specific training as regards equal opportunities between men and women, and coeducation.

In addition, each Community offers specific guidelines for different groups of teachers, depending on the demands and needs of the particular stage of education in which they are working (e.g. early childhood education). In fact, CPD for Early Childhood Teachers in Spain has been distinctly diverse since there are so many different entities offering such education and there has been little regulation in this regard (Úcar Martínez *et. al* 2007).

There have been no large-scale research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel over the past five years. Smaller-scale studies have included the following topics:

- Implementation and use of ICT in ECEC settings;
- CPD for foreign languages in ECEC centres;
- Quality teaching in ECEC for improving school integration preventing early school leaving/failure.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

In 2008, with the aim of improving educational care for the first cycle (0-3 years), the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport (MEPSyD) launched the **Educa3 Programme**. This was a programme to expand the provision of places for the under-threes and to improve quality through the continuing professional development of staff (MEPSyD 2009). This involved: expanding the vocational training for Senior Specialists in ECE, depending on the specific situation in the Autonomous Community; starting to recognise previous work experience and providing specific training modules offered through distance learning or based in an institution; promoting exchanges of experience between ECEC centres and supporting the improvement of educational quality, e.g. through the establishment of a website for professional training and a family education website including information about resources and didactic materials and providing a framework for exchange of experiences.

One outcome was the implementation of the Royal Decree on the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience (Real Decreto 1224/2009).

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Evaluation of CPD programmes

Source: Manzanares Moya, A., and M.J. Galván-Bovaira. 2012 (see *References* for further details).

Aims: In-service education for teachers is an essential requirement for professional teaching development. Along with other training providers, Teachers' Centres, variously named in the

different Autonomous Communities, have fulfilled their role of identifying and meeting teacher's training needs since their inception over twenty years ago. Using an evaluation model designed specifically for the purpose, the aim of this study, carried out between 2008 and 2012, was to analyse the relationship between training supply and demand.

Procedure: This evaluation research was structured in three stages: a) conducting a documentary analysis of the regulatory framework for ongoing teacher training and the characteristics of the training offered; b) carrying out a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with key reporting agencies and discussion groups with management teams and pre-school and primary school teachers; and c) on-site observations in four schools that provide training programmes in their centres. In order to perform each of these stages, different evaluation instruments were designed and both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were applied.

Findings: The study was a pioneer in its field. The findings emphasize the need for better alignment between the needs of teachers and the priority programme activities of the Education Authorities. The study notes that the training priorities set by the Education Authorities have a greater response among teachers if they are previously assessed as urgent needs for them and the Teacher Centres. Debates around the professionalisation of consultants, preferred consulting models, changes that must take place in the training culture of the Teacher Centres and the need to rethink training methods to meet new educational demands are the main topics with implications for policy makers.

Professional development for ICT use

Source: Fernández-Díaz, E. and A. Calvo Salvador. 2012 (see *References* for further details).

Aims: This research and development study aimed at consolidating a collaborative networking that promotes the use of ICT to bring about a change in the approach to teaching in schools.

Procedure: Through an action research project carried out from 2006-2010 in Pre-school and Primary Education settings, and in a blended-learning environment, researchers were able to set up collaborative projects such as digital child sponsoring. This involved teachers mentoring children in *Educación Infantil* in their use of digital technologies and facilitating tutoring among pupils; it also included different professional development strategies in terms of collegial learning and collaborative learning with researchers and building up a network for discussions about ICT use in pre-primary and primary settings.

Findings: The work enabled the researchers to develop innovation in education processes. The results highlighted the importance of creating communities of practice in which the meaning of digital technologies are reconsidered and discussed in a social learning environment.

Working with immigrant children: Teacher education, experience and attitudes

Source: Ocampo Gómez, C. I., and B. Cid Souto. 2012 (see *References* for further details).

Aims: The study was carried out at the Department of Teaching, School Organisation and Research Methods of the University of Vigo in 2009-2010. The aim was to find out how training and teaching experience of teachers influence or may influence the development of positive attitudes towards inclusive teaching practices with regard to immigrant children.

Procedure: The research question was to find out if a relationship can be found between the education/training of teachers, their age, their intercultural experiences and their professional attitude to working with immigrant children. A theoretical framework relating to attitudes, training and work experience is introduced, in which concepts are defined, and likely approaches and education models that form the basis of teachers' intercultural attitudes are discussed.

Findings: As a preliminary procedure to data analysis, the usefulness of the instrument was examined by carrying out a feasibility study following the method of homogeneity or internal consistency based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The resulting Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 indi-

cated a high relationship between the scales' items and, given the extent of the test, a sufficient level of stability was displayed.

Four conclusions led to a proposal of improvement of current teaching processes and guidance in Spanish schools:

- Teachers with fewer years of work experience demonstrate more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of immigrant pupils in mainstream classes (expressing less conformity with the statement "Integration makes the teaching-learning process in the classroom more difficult").
- Teachers who participate more often in CPD activities mostly state that the integration of immigrant children implies a difficulty for the correct development of teaching-learning processes, thus reinforcing the foregoing conclusion.
- The majority of teachers express a favourable attitude to the following assumptions: consideration should be given to the culture of other countries; the integration of non-Spanish children into mainstream classes is a source of learning for all students which promotes knowledge and mutual respect; it must be guaranteed that these children are able to maintain their respective customs in the host country.
- The model of multicultural education that underpins the responses given by the teachers of the sample is significantly eclectic, partly based on a hegemonic assumption regarding the Spanish (and Galician) culture, implying an assimilationist approach, and partly recognising the plurality of cultures in the school environment, including some elements of a "cultural pluralism" model.
- In view of the responses within the framework of this study, there do not appear to be any visions of a model of multicultural education based on an inter-cultural approach underpinned by an understanding of cultural symmetry, or of moving towards a fairer and more equitable society in terms of actively advocating against cultural, social and political injustices.

8. General workforce issues

Conditions of service for **Early Childhood Education Teachers** vary depending on the education level and the ownership of the educational institution. The Education Authorities, both the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECS) and the Regional Ministry or Department of Education of each Autonomous Community, are responsible for regulating these conditions. The 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education establishes that the Education Authorities must ensure that teaching staff receive consideration, treatment and respect which reflect the social importance of their task. This has led to new measures aimed at the social recognition and support of teachers and the improvement of their working conditions.

The **Senior Specialists in ECE** have been campaigning for improvements in their working conditions over the past decade, including being placed in a higher level category within public administration. The Senior Specialists in ECE belong to the so called 'technical category' for which only a baccalaureate or vocational training is required and as a professional group they are thus categorised at a lower level than Early Childhood Education Teachers. However, they argue that the majority of them have higher degrees, usually university degree, but the differences in the qualifications required in the first and second cycle keeps them in a lower professional category (Cadena Ser 2017), since there is still no equity between the conditions of work with under-three-year olds and over-three-year olds. According to a survey of Sánchez Muliterno (2009) this is more of an economically based justification than a professional one since it is commonly accepted that the younger the children, the less qualified the staff need to be. In fact, Senior Specialists in ECE work in regular and specialised services and perform a wide

range of duties. That is the reason for claiming more recognition of the job category itself and for wishing to clarify schedules, duties and other working conditions.

One issue to reconsider is the fact that, both in the IPS and CPD of ECE Teachers, there is insufficient focus on topics which are central to the quality of ECEC, e.g. the role of families in their children's education; improving learning processes; or optimising methodologies (Lebrero Baena and Fernández Pérez, 2009, 213). This is not a trivial issue, since studies that included the views of parents came to similar conclusions about the gaps in initial professional studies regarding the role and perspectives of families, and about the conditions which undermine the quality of ECE, such as the high teacher-child ratios in the groups, the constantly changing national ECE policies, or the lack of resources (Sánchez Muliterno 2009, 59). Therefore, further analysis should focus on the causes of these social and professional understandings, which can be related to the current working conditions and social status of ECE teachers.

8.1 Remuneration

In Spain, ECE Teachers' salaries can vary depending on the ownership of the educational institution. They are paid the same as primary school teachers. With this salary it is possible to live without additional support, even as a single parent in a major city.

Career civil servant teachers in public educational institutions, including ECEC centres, can receive the following (see Eurydice 2016):

a) **Basic rewards:** Paid according to the secondment of their body or category and to their seniority. They are:

- *Basic salary:* Standard amount set at national level for all civil servants belonging to the same Subgroup or Professional classification group.
- *Bonus* for every three-year period in service: Amount established at national level for every Group or Professional classification subgroup.
- *Additional rewards:* Paid according to the characteristics of the jobs, the professional career or the development, performance or results achieved by the civil servant.

b) **Additional bonuses:** Additional bonuses paid alongside the regular ones received in the summer and at Christmas. These bonuses are computed taking into account the regular monthly pay and the bonus received every three years. The teachers' salaries set out below refer to the minimum salaries established across the country.

ECE Teachers in public pre-primary settings are placed in Group B/Subgroup A2, level 21 on the salary table of career civil servant teachers. With three years' working experience they earn a gross basic salary of at least 1,988.39€ per month. With additional bonuses they can earn 27,129.72€ per year, or 2,260.81€ per month. For a detailed salary table, see Eurydice 2016.

The payment system for teachers in **private schools** is regulated by the various labour conventions and agreements. In **publicly-funded private schools**, the minimum salary for the staff in the jurisdiction of these agreements is set in their salary tables, and it comprises: basic salary, additional rewards, bonus for every three-year period in service and two extraordinary payments. These awards vary according to the Autonomous Community and they are paid by the corresponding Education Authority as delegated payment and on behalf of the owner of the institution. The awards of the staff in the 9th collective agreement on private education without grant-aided or subsidised levels (publicly-funded private schools) comprise: basic salary, a productivity bonus, a supplement for professional development (received by training and knowledge acquired, being necessary the verification of 100 hours as a minimum every five-year period) and extra salary transport bonus.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Both working time and holidays vary between the Autonomous Communities and whether the early childhood centres are publicly or privately owned. In general, a full working week in pub-

lic educational institutions is 37.5 hours. All ECE Teachers in the public sector work full time. It may be different in the private sector, but there are no disaggregated national statistics in this respect.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

In public educational institutions there are several general supporting measures, targeted at all the teachers, amongst them trainee teachers. Education Authorities are also responsible, for example, for promoting the development of paid leave for the purpose of promoting activities for training and education research and innovation and for reducing the amount of teaching time for teachers over 55 years of age if they so wish or partially substituting their teaching load with other activities (Real Decreto 1594/2011).

Organised induction measures for newly qualified staff

During their first year of teaching, candidates who have passed both phases of the selection process to access the teaching profession must complete a final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase before they are appointed as civil servants. During this phase, and as a support measure for newly appointed teachers, they are monitored by experienced teachers, so that responsibility for the trainee teacher's teaching plan is shared. This induction phase, including professional development activities, ranges from a minimum length of three months to a maximum of one school year. Education Authorities are responsible for the regulation and organisation of the final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase. The trainee teacher's mentor is appointed by the appraising board, and must belong to the same teaching body and specialisation which the probationer intends to join. This mentor monitors and assesses the candidate's work during the probation period. Similarly, trainee teachers must submit a final report on the difficulties encountered and the support provided. At the end of the probationary period, the candidate's teaching ability is assessed and he/she is declared eligible/not eligible. If a candidate is considered not eligible, Education Authorities may allow the candidate to retake this final phase. Those who do not take up their post or are declared not eligible for a second time lose their right to be appointed career civil servants.

8.4 Non-contact time

The working time of teaching staff in the **civil service** varies according to the Education Authority they are ascribed to. In general, the working day for teachers in *Educación Infantil* is similar in all Autonomous Communities and is currently around 37.5 hours per week, with approximately an hour of each 5 hours dedicated to the work without children (see *Table 8*).

The minimum number of hours which must be spent at the institution ranges from 25 to 30 hours depending on the Autonomous Community. Teachers devote most of their time to teaching and the rest is devoted to complementary activities. These hours are used for meetings, talks with parents, assessment sessions, and so on. Seven and a half hours of the working time can be used at discretion and do not take place at school. They are used for continuing professional development, class preparation, meetings, evaluations or extracurricular activities with pupils.

Table 8

Spain: Working time of full-time staff in public centre-based ECEC settings

	Minimum hours/week	Minimum hours/year
Teaching hours*	25	875
Hours to be spent at school **	up to 30	up to 1,140
Global working day **	37.5	1,425

Source: Eurydice 2016.

*The calculation of teaching hours is made up of the minimum number of school days in the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, 175 school days, although in the calendars established by the Education Authorities this number is increased with light differences depending on the Autonomous Community.

** The hours to be spent at school and the global working day are calculated taking into account the 190 days between September 2nd and June 30th, without including Christmas and Holy week and bank holidays (Eurydice 2016).

The working time of the teaching staff in **publicly-funded private schools** also includes a specific amount of hours devoted to teaching and non-teaching activities. The annual working time of teaching staff in the second cycle of pre-primary education amounts to 1,180 hours (1,140 in public settings). 850 hours are devoted to teaching (a maximum of 25 hours per week) and 330 to non-teaching activities (distributed over the school year). The annual working time of the teaching staff in the first cycle of pre-primary education (0-3 years of age) amounts to 1,362 hours for Early Childhood Education Teachers (a maximum of 32 hours per week) and 1,620 hours for Senior Specialists in ECE (a maximum of 38 hours per week).

875 hours are devoted to teaching (a maximum of 25 hours per week) and 330 to non-teaching activities (distributed over the school year). The annual working time of the teaching staff of the first cycle of pre-primary education (0-3 years of age) is 1,362 hours for school teachers (a maximum of 32 hours per week) and 1,620 hours for educators (a maximum of 38 hours per week).

The workload of teachers in **private-sector** schools depends on the Collective Agreement which covers them. The Agreement for pre-primary education establishes 32 hours of availability at school per week. At the remaining education levels, the Agreement establishes a workload of 27 hours a week plus 237 additional hours to be distributed over the school year, provided the overall working time does not exceed 8 hours per day. Besides, 50 more annual hours may be devoted to training, retraining and refresher activities.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In Spain, there are currently more ECE Teachers than needed. Many of them now follow an additional qualification to become a Senior Specialist in ECE, since there are more jobs available in the private sector settings for children aged 0-3 years. However, this means that they are placed in a lower salary category and experience less favourable working conditions than they would in a public sector *Educación Infantil* setting.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

One of the current workforce challenges in the teaching profession in general is achieving a balance between the teaching and administrative duties of core practitioners. A views survey focusing specifically on ECEC services in Spain (Sandstrom 2012) noted that an excessive bureaucratic workload has a negative impact on the practitioners' practice, reducing the time available for reflection, meetings, planning or participation in CPD. The study also showed that the over-enrolment of children led to teachers relying more on lesson books and worksheet activities as a way to control a large class.

In this respect, the new Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (Spanish Official Gazette of 10/12/2013), with implementation beginning in 2014/15, stipulates that the Government is responsible for establishing, for the second cycle of pre-primary education:

- the objectives, skills and evaluation criteria of the core curriculum, which will represent 55% of the school timetable in the Autonomous Communities with a co-official language and 65% in the rest;

- the foundations for multilingual education.

Whether the implementation of this Act is achieving the desired balance is a question that remains without a clear response, due to a lack of relevant policy measures or research.

Thus, a second challenge that needs to be addressed by the authorities is the identification and recognition of these conditions and the funding of research to help improve them. Improving the availability and accessibility of information is essential. Available official statistics do not show, for example, the proportions of professionals in ECEC by type or level of qualification. This is also the case for vulnerable groups related to lower professional positions, such as the number of assistants that are from ethnic cultural minority groups. One thing is for sure, the requirements to access the private sector (the predominant sector for 0-3 provision) are becoming higher and higher (such as having a higher education degree/training in English language or other languages, etc.), even for posts as Assistants. This situation, added to the more general financial crisis we are experiencing in Spain, has made it even more difficult for minority groups to gain access to high levels of education or even to finish their compulsory education, meaning that the chances to access this kind of employment are very limited. However, it is not right to assume that in most cases people coming from ethnic minority groups are Assistants in ECEC services, this is more the case for caregivers in family day care, as “the changes in demographic, economic, socio-cultural and health foster the emergence of a new set of caregivers: the hired caregiver, covered generally by immigrant women” (Ruiz López and Moreno Preciado 2013, 86).

Finally, as already outlined in *Section 8*, there is a need to reconsider the fact that both the initial professional studies and continuing professional development of ECE Teachers focus insufficiently on quality issues in ECE compared with other areas. This is a key issue for research – to explain a societal and professional perspective that fails to value the professional status of early childhood education and thus hinders the development of the profession and effective CPD policymaking. Further analysis needs to examine the causes for this. In line with the Decent Work Agenda (ILO 2013) this is a responsibility shared among social and economic agents, including social scientists and practitioners. Hence, a new space for debate, study and reflection around the (self-image) status of the ECE professionals in Spain and its consequences for the improvement of the profession should be promoted from the highest authorities of education to the professionals that work and dedicate their daily attention to the youngest and most precious lives of our societies, in order to recognise and value their education as it really is: a human right.

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SPAIN

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Ana Ancheta Arrabal
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Spain – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepr.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1105-1116.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Early childhood education and care in Spain is organised as an integrated system under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (*Ministro de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*, MECS). The Ministry regulates the system overall, and the education authorities in the Autonomous Communities are responsible for organising and managing ECEC provision. The municipalities (in cooperation with the Autonomous Communities authorities) are mostly responsible for regulated provision for children under 3 years of age.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Ancheta Arrabal, A. 2017.

General objectives and legislative framework

Early childhood education and care in Spain was first recognised in the 1990 Education Act as an integrated, non-compulsory stage of education in its own right. Key objectives include ensuring every child's right to education, maintaining equal access, and providing parents with freedom of choice in terms of the setting. The 2006 Education Act (*Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación*), which was amended in 2013 to accommodate the Improving Educational Quality Act (*Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa*), is the underpinning legal framework for the Spanish education system. Early childhood education is defined as the first stage in the education system and comprises two cycles, the first for children under 3 years of age and the second for children aged 3 to 6 years.

The goals and content as well as evaluation and organisation of the first cycle are regulated by the Autonomous Communities. The State is responsible for the second cycle and the Autonomous Communities adapt State regulations to the conditions in each region – or extend them in their capacity as the responsible body for education.

The overarching goals of early childhood education are to promote the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of each child in close cooperation with the children's families. Fostering a positive self-image and personal autonomy play an important part in the strategies implemented to reach these goals.

Source: Eurydice 2015.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

All children aged 3 to 6 years are entitled to a free place in ECEC provision for 25 hours weekly. Attendance is voluntary. As from 2008, some Autonomous Communities started to offer this provision to 2-year olds as part of a pilot initiative. Nowadays it has become quite common for 2-year olds to be admitted into pre-primary education settings if places are available.

Statutory primary school begins at age 6.

Source: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.

Main types of provision

Early childhood centres for children up to compulsory school age may be free-standing or attached to a primary school. First-cycle ECEC provision is either exclusively for under 3-year olds (*centros incompletos de primer ciclo*) or part of an integrated early childhood centre for 0- to 6-year olds (*escuela de educación infantil unificada*). Second-cycle early childhood education for 3- to 6-year olds is provided either as part of an integrated centre or as a separate unit within a primary school (*colegio de educación infantil y primaria*).

In both cycles, service providers may be public, private-non-profit (subsidised) or private for-profit (non-subsidised).

In some Autonomous Communities the length of attendance for under 3-year olds is limited to eight hours per day. In general, these settings are available for 25 hours per week, but opening times may vary according to the service provider. Public provision, for example, is usually open each weekday for a total of 35 hours per week.

The opening times of second-cycle public and publicly-subsidised private settings are the same as those in primary schools, i.e. they are closed for up to three months during the summer. In private settings, particularly in those for under 3-year olds, opening times are mostly adapted to suit the needs of families.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2015.

Provider structures

The number of groups in early childhood centres for children below 6 years of age in 2014/15 totalled 99,279. Almost two thirds were offered by public providers.

Table 1

Spain: Number of groups and children in early childhood centres according to provider, 2014/2015*

Provider	Number of groups	Number of children
Public ECEC centres	63,047 (63.5%)	1,177,233 (64%)
Private ECEC centres	36,232 (36.5%)	662,775 (36%)
Total	99,279	1,840,008

First cycle: In 2013/14, a total of 9,296 ECEC centres provided exclusively for under 3-year olds. Almost half of these (46.4%; 4,310) were publicly-run, 14.4% (1,340) private/subsidised and 39.2% (3,646) private (see Table 2).

Second cycle: The proportion of publicly-run ECEC centres is much higher in second-cycle provision. Of a total of 14,274 centres, roughly three quarters (10,625; 74.4%) were publicly-run, over one fifth (3,073; 21.5%) private/subsidised and only 4% (576) privately-run**.

Table 2

Spain: Number of ECEC settings according to provider and cycle, 2013/2014**

	First cycle	Second cycle
Public ECEC centres	4,310	10,625
Private/subsidised ECEC centres	1,340	3,073
Private, non-subsidised ECEC centres	3,646	576
Total	9,296	14,274

Sources: **Eurydice 2015, 2016.
*INE 2017, 69.

Participation rates in regulated provision

In 2015, almost all children (96.7%) aged 3 to 6 years were enrolled in ECEC provision. The overall participation rate for under 6-year olds amounted to 66.9%. Just over one third (34%) of under 3-year olds are enrolled. *Table 3* shows the number of children in ECEC provision and the enrolment ratio disaggregated according to age.

Table 3

Spain: Number and enrolment in ECEC provision according to age groups, 2015*

Age group	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	193,278	22.7
2-year olds	250,587	55.4
0- to under 3-year olds	443,865	34.0⁺
3-year olds	448,378	94.8
4-year olds	466,494	97.4
5-year olds	477,802	97.6
3- to under 6-year olds	1,392,674	96.7⁺
0- to under 6-year olds	1,836,539	66.9⁺

* Own calculations based on Eurostat child population data from 2015.

Source: *Eurostat 2017g, 2017h.

Financing and costs for parents

Public ECEC provision is funded by the State. The Ministry of Education is responsible for distributing funds to the Autonomous Communities for the provision of early childhood centres. The Communities have high funding autonomy and decide independently on how the budget should be used. For the building and upkeep of early childhood centres, the local authorities receive funds through tax revenues, as well as funding from the State and Community budgets.

Private centres which have a contract with the local education authority and fulfil certain criteria are also subsidised through the State budget.

Parental fees for the care of children below age 3 are decided by the service provider. However, they may not exceed a ceiling of 319€¹ per month (not including meals). No enrolment fees are required for 3- to 6-year olds in publicly-run and private/subsidised settings, which are free of charge apart from meals. However, the private/subsidised settings in particular are increasingly asking for (voluntary) donations for a variety of reasons, e.g. material resources, visits and excursions, which some families – particularly since the economic crisis – are finding it very difficult to meet, particularly since over the last decade 1 in 3 of children under 6 years of age live in relative poverty households.* The private for-profit settings can charge the fees they wish and also ask for additional donations.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat 2014, 156)

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Eurydice 2016.
Pérez F. and E. Uriel 2016.
*Save the Children 2015, 20-21.

Staff-child ratios

Group size in the *first cycle* is not centrally regulated. However, most Autonomous Communities provide specifications. On average, one qualified member of staff is responsible for 8 children under 1 year of age, 12 to 14 1- to 2-year olds and 16 to 20 2- to 3-year olds.

The Ministry of Education and the local education authorities regulate group size in the *second cycle*. The maximum group size for children between 3 and 6 years of age is 25. At least one member of staff must have a relevant qualification at university level.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015, 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

Following the 2006 Education Act, a core curriculum (objectives, content, evaluation criteria) was provided for the second cycle in 2007 by the State through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The Autonomous Communities adapt this framework to match local conditions. Each EC centre has its own development plan which further adapts the core curricular requirements to local, centre-specific needs and also includes organisational aspects.

However, the ways in which the Autonomous Communities adapt the core curriculum differ widely. Some produce just one framework for both cycles, some for each cycle separately and others just for the second cycle.

In the core curriculum three broad areas of learning are highlighted: 1) self-knowledge and personal autonomy; building one's own identity; 2) knowledge about the environment; 3) language, communication and representation: expressing feelings and thoughts, interactions with others.

The following goals are emphasised: learning about one's own body and respecting differences; observing and exploring the (social) environment; acquiring autonomy; developing emotional competence; interacting with others and practising peaceful conflict solutions; developing communication skills, also in other languages; beginning the acquisition of logical-mathematical, reading and writing skills; developing expressive skills through gestures and rhythm/movement.

During the second year in the second cycle (5- to 6-year olds), the local education authorities are expected to ensure the introduction of a foreign language, reading, writing, basic numeracy, information and communication technologies, and visual and musical expression. Religious aspects of the curriculum are set out in documents provided by the religious communities. It is the responsibility of each EC centre to provide alternatives for children whose parents so wish.

Books and material resources used in the EC centres have to be approved by the local education authority.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs generally attend mainstream ECEC provision. They are enrolled in segregated provision only if their specific needs cannot be met in a regular setting.

The Royal Law-Decree which came into force in 2015 (*Real Decreto-ley 9/2015, de 10 de julio, de medidas urgentes para reducir la carga tributaria soportada por los contribuyentes del Impuesto sobre la Renta de las Personas Físicas y otras medidas de carácter económico*), focuses primarily on disadvantaged families and providing support through tax concessions.

The 2012-2020 National Strategy on the Social Inclusion of the Roma people (*Estrategia Nacional para la Inclusión Social de la Población Gitana en España*) shows that progress has been made regarding the participation of Roma children in EC centres and primary schools. However, enrolment rates are still significantly below those of Spanish children, although there are some signs of increasing participation.

Children with a background of migration

In 2016, 9.5% of the total population in Spain had a non-Spanish background, with well over half of these persons (56.2%) coming from non-EU countries. In the under-5s age group, 11.2% of children have a background of migration, with the greater majority (71.1%) coming from non-EU countries*.

In 2014/15, 149,984 children in early childhood centres (*educación infantil/ preescolar*) had a non-Spanish background. 43.9% of these children came from African countries, 26.2% from other EU states and 12.6% from Latin American countries**.

Sources: EPIC 2016.
*Eurostat 2017f.
**INE 2017, 91 (own calculation).

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The Ministry of Education provides a framework of reference criteria for the assessment of children which may be adapted by the Autonomous Communities. However, not all Autonomous Communities ensure that both cycles of the ECEC system are evaluated.

At the beginning of the child's settling-in period, each ECEC centre carries out an initial or baseline evaluation within the framework of its centre-specific development plan. This is followed up by regular assessments. At the end of the year, a concluding assessment is made, describing the competencies and skills which each child has acquired. The education authorities expect three formal evaluations to take place each year which inform families in a written report of their child's progress. The centre head usually conducts observations or interviews with the parents for these evaluations. Screening instruments are also used to identify possible developmental delays.

External evaluations of ECEC provision may be carried out by the Education Inspectorate, the inspection authorities of the Autonomous Communities, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (affiliated to the Ministry of Education), and evaluation agencies in the Autonomous Communities.

Inspections conducted by Education Inspectorate officials aim to check compliance with legal requirements and to define the rights and duties of all those involved in the learning process. Both the general management of the centre and the educational programme are reviewed. The aims of these inspections and evaluations are to strengthen educational quality, enhance transparency and improve efficacy. They are usually carried out three times a year, depending on the resources of the Autonomous Community.

Some Autonomous Communities provide guidance on procedures of self-evaluation. These are generally conducted once a year.

In recent years, government-funded research on early childhood education in Spain has experienced a decline. This is partly due to the general economic constraints on the public Research and Development budget, and partly because these constraints have had a major impact on areas which had previously received little attention, such as the ECEC institutions. For this reason, research institutions or groups depend mainly on third-party funding, and the expansion and focus of research is based on private interests rather than public interest in early childhood education. Among current research topics are the following: digital technologies, action research, emotional education, innovation.

Sources: Eurydice 2015, 2017.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*permiso y prestación por maternidad*) is granted for 16 weeks. Six of these are obligatory and must be taken after the birth. Providing social insurance contributions have been paid for at least 180 days over the previous seven years, earnings continue to be paid in full up to a ceiling of 3.751€ (2017) per month. Mothers who do not fulfil this requirement receive a monthly flat rate of 532€.

Fathers in employment are granted two fully paid **paternity days** (*permiso de paternidad*) to be taken at the time of the birth and, since January 2017, four weeks of **paternity leave** (*permiso por nacimiento*) to be taken in one piece before the end of the maternity leave period.

Parental leave (*excedencia por cuidado de hijos*) can be taken by both parents up to three years after birth. During the first year, returning to the same place of employment is guaranteed. Apart from social insurance contributions, this leave is unpaid. During the first nine months after birth, both mothers and fathers in employment can take one hour per day off without a reduction in salary.

In 2015, 62.2% of eligible mothers received a maternity benefit. However, as a result of austerity measures, there is an observable trend of a sinking proportion. The proportion of fathers making use of paternity leave is also sinking – over 16 percentage points (16.4%) between 2010 and 2014 – largely because of the sinking birth rate and growing unemployment. In 2015, 56.8% of eligible fathers made use of paternity leave.

In 2012, 10.4% of eligible mothers took up parental leave, but only 0.5% of fathers. Most mothers took it directly following maternity leave and for one year at the most (85%). Following the period of parental leave, all fathers returned to their job, but only 55% of mothers; 35% continued working, but part time.

Source: Meil, G., I. Lapuerta, and A. Escobedo 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1857	First early childhood institutions established in regions with more than 10,000 inhabitants
Early 20th century	Following a phase of expansion at the beginning of the century, a strong slump in provision during the Spanish Civil War

1960s	Increasing maternal employment leads to renewed expansion of early childhood institutions
1970	Education Act: introduction of preschool education for 4- to 5-year olds
As from 1975	Expansion of state-funded pre-primary education
1980 - 1990	Experimental plans for the new ECE settings that the 1990 Education Act then embraced
1990	Education Act: introduction of the basic right to education. Early childhood centres for under 3's and 3- to 6-year olds are integrated into the education system and organised in two cycles
1991	Transfer of competences on ECE from the National Government to the Autonomous Communities concerning the regulation of the curriculum.
2006	Education Act confirms the integrated approach towards early childhood education
2013	Education Act amendments, but not specifically relevant for ECEC regulation

Source: Ancheta Arrabal, A. 2011.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Country

Country expert assessment by Ana Ancheta Arrabal

There is an urgent need for more institutional attention and public investment in the ECEC system. Governmental, fiscal and budgetary constraints are leading to an increasing reliance on private financing, mainly through families, but also through employers. This is particularly the case in terms of provision for the under 3-year olds. Access to ECEC services has become increasingly dependent on the alternatives offered by private providers. It is therefore crucial to address inequality of access among low-income families who may find it challenging, if not impossible, to pay the fees often required by private providers. Thus, public-private partnerships need to be regulated in terms of the costs for parents, since this is the only way to protect the rights of all young children in an equitable way*. The last decade has seen even larger disparities in terms of equity of access to high quality ECEC in the individual Autonomous Communities than were traditionally the case. Moreover, current efforts are not likely to ameliorate the lack of equitable access, thus reproducing the historical transmission of social exclusion. The differences in quality between ECEC institutions in Spain are also reproduced through the personnel who work in ECEC in terms of inequities in career regulations and working conditions (see the Workforce Profile for Spain in this publication).

In conclusion, we can say that the tension between quality and equity in ECEC is still significant and a main challenge to be solved in the diverse territories of Spain. This inequality undermines the principle anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to guarantee education for all children as one of the ratified rights**. Unfortunately there is no national programme in Spain to ensure access to pre-primary education for children from low-income families. The incomplete and under-developed societal dialogue surrounding ECEC, which mirrors the discourses at other levels of the education system, remains a further policy challenge in terms of the sector's further development.

Sources: **Ancheta Arrabal, A. 2011.
*Ancheta Arrabal, A. and J. Zhang 2016.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Spain totalled 46,445,828. This is a further indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 39,343,100 and 2005 total: 43,296,338).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.7% and children under 6 years of age for 5.8% of the total population. Since 2005 these percentage rates have been lower than the EU average, whereas in 1995 they were slightly above.

Table 4

Spain: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	419,395
1-year olds	429,530
2-year olds	427,406
Under age 3 total	1,276,331
3-year olds	453,587
4-year olds	472,844
5-year olds	478,775
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	1,405,206
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	2,681,537

Table 5

Spain: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %[†]

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	3.6	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.2	5.8	6.2

[†] own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 77.4% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 2.7%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.3%).

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Table 6

Spain: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	4,843,000	
Couple households	3,746,500	77.4
Other types of households	966,600	20.0
Single households, total	129,800	2.7
Single households, women	110,600	2.3
Single households, men	19,200	0.4

⁺Own calculations, ^{**} data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Spain was 62.9% and that of women 52.7%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, only 59% were employed in 2015, whereas 79% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Both employment rates, especially those of fathers in Spain, were below the EU28 average in 2015.

Table 7

Spain: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Spain	2005	55.1	90.5
	2010	56.6	77.5
	2015	59.0	79.0
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

⁺own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.

Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, 29% of children under age 6 in Spain were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is above the EU28 average (=24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 28.6%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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³ ‘At risk of poverty or social exclusion’ refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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SWEDEN

ECEC workforce profile

Country report author

Maelis Karlsson Lohmander

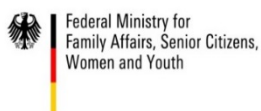
University of Gothenburg
Department of Education, Communication and Learning



Citation suggestion:

Karlsson Lohmander M. 2018. "Sweden – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.see-pro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1117-1141.

Funded by:



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1. ECEC governance

A unified education system

ECEC in Sweden is part of a unified education system covering the ages 1-19 years. Since 1996, the Ministry of Education and Research (*Utbildningsdepartementet*) has had overall responsibility for early childhood services. The National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) and the National School Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) are responsible for giving support and monitoring quality in all ECEC services.

In terms of provision for children aged 0-6 years, these include preschools¹ for children aged 1-5 years (*förskola*), preschool classes for children aged 6 years (*förskoleklass*) and leisure-time centre (*fritidsverksamhet/fritidshem*) for children from 6 years of age before and after school hours in either the preschool class or compulsory school. There are different curricular frameworks for the preschool and the preschool class/leisure-time centre. ECEC also includes facilities termed Pedagogical Care (*annan pedagogisk verksamhet*) such as family day care and open preschools.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Two main groups of qualified staff work in preschools: *Förskollärare* (lit. Preschool Teachers) with a university degree and *Barnskötare* (Childcare Workers) with a specialist upper secondary vocational education. Currently, over one quarter of the workforce does not have a specialist qualification in ECEC or is unqualified (see *Table 2* in Section 2.2).

Table 1 shows the ECEC staff in centre-based settings in Sweden and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at end of this section).

Table 1

Sweden: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ² level
<i>Förskollärare</i> Preschool Teacher/ ECEC Teacher	<i>Förskola</i> Early childhood centre/preschool 1-5 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1-6 years	Bachelor's degree 3½ years university
<i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Förskoleklass</i> Preschool class in schools 6 years	Centre head		ECTS points: 210 EQF Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
	<i>Öppen förskola</i> Open preschool			

¹ 'Preschool' is the official translation of *förskola* in government and other administrative documents.

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012; 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ² level
	1-5 years <i>Fritidshem</i> Leisure-time centre 6-12 years			
<i>Barnskötare</i> Childcare Worker	<i>Förskola</i> Early childhood centre/preschool 1-5 years <i>Öppen förskola</i> Open preschool 1-5 years	Qualified co-worker	Broad-based social care approach 1-10 years and beyond	Upper secondary vocational education (3 years) specialising in pedagogical work ECTS points: n/a ³ EQF Level 3/4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
<i>Grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem</i> Primary Teacher - Extended School <i>formerly</i> Leisure-Time Pedagogue <i>Profile:</i> This profile does not currently fit into the SEEPRO categories, which focus on ECEC and not primary school. <i>Former profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Fritidshem</i> Leisure-time centre 6-12 years <i>Förskoleklass</i> Preschool class in schools 6 years <i>Grundskolan</i> Primary school 7-12 years Aesthetic subjects	<i>In leisure-time centres:</i> Core practitioner with group responsibility <i>In schools:</i> Specialist teacher for practical/aesthetic subjects	6-12 years	Bachelor's degree 3 years higher education institution, specialising in leisure-time pedagogy and practical/aesthetic subjects with school-age children Award: Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education ECTS points: 180 EQF Level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0114 ISCED 2011: 6

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

³ n/a = not applicable

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Table 2 shows the proportion of various staff categories in all preschools, both municipal and independent, according to their structural composition.

Table 2

Sweden: Structural composition of ECEC workforce in centre-based settings: qualifications, gender, ethnicity, 2016

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education degree	39.3 % Preschool Teachers 1.7 % Compulsory School Teachers, 0.7 % Leisure-time Pedagogues/Teachers
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	20.4%
Staff with non-specialist vocational qualification	9.9 % in municipal preschools 11.6 % in independent preschools
Staff with no relevant or no formal IPS	28.1 % total - municipal preschools: 25.1 % - independent preschools: 39.9 % - open preschools: 2.3%
Specialist support staff (e.g. support for children with disabilities integrated in regular preschools)	approx. 5%
Male staff	4.3% of all staff in preschools (30.2 % of these with a preschool teacher degree) 6.9% of all staff in preschool classes 6.9 % of all centre heads 7.7% of specialist support staff.
Staff with a background of migration	Preschools: No systematically compiled national data Preschool class: 9.9 % of staff members were foreign-born (<i>utomlands födda</i>) in the school year 2016/2017.

Sources: Skolverket 2017a; Skolverket 2017b.

2.3 Main workplaces for ECEC staff

Preschool/Early Childhood Centre 1-6 years

As can be seen in the above table, in addition to Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers, 0.7% Leisure Time Pedagogues/Teachers (*fritidspedagoger*), 1.7% Compulsory School Teachers (*grundlärare*) and various support staff (5%) also work in preschools (*förskolan*). Some staff members (9.9%) who work with the children may have other kinds of non-specialist education. Looking at the municipal and independent preschools separately, the percentage of educated staff is generally lower in the independent preschools:

Table 3

Sweden: Proportions of the ECEC workforce qualifications according to provider in %, 2016*

	Qualified Preschool Teachers	Qualified Leisure-Time Pedagogues/Teachers**	Qualified Teachers	Upper secondary education specialist vocational (Child Care Workers)	Non-specialist vocational education	No formal pre-service education for working with children
Municipal preschools	39.3	0.7	1.7	20.4	9.9	28.1
Independent preschools	27.1	0.7	2.1	18.6	11.6	39.9

*Source: Skolverket 2017a

**Note: Although the official term for students who graduate from the current teacher education programme is *Primary Teacher – Extended School*, the former term (Leisure-Time Pedagogue - *fritidspedagog*) is still in current use, for example in statistics from the National Agency. This will presumably change when the number of graduates with the new qualification increases.

A large group of staff members in the preschools lack any formal or pre-service education for working with children: 39.9% in the independent preschools) and 28.1% in the municipal preschools (Skolverket 2017a). According to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800, chapter 2, §13) the work in the preschool should be carried out by educated/qualified Preschool Teachers. In addition, staff with relevant training and/or experience may also work in the preschool as long as they can support children's development and learning and work towards reaching the goals in the curriculum (Skolverket 2016a). Such a high number of uneducated staff causes concern when it comes to quality in the preschool. The revised curriculum demands enhanced responsibility for preschool teachers with regard to work in the preschool. They are responsible for maintaining high quality and making sure that the work is carried out in accordance with the overarching goals in the curriculum (Skolverket 2016a).

Preschool class in schools

With the intention to stimulate children's development and learning and to prepare them for compulsory school, the preschool class (*förskoleklassen*) provides a minimum of 525 hours in a school year (SFS 2010:800, chapter 1, §4). As with the preschool, attendance in the preschool class is not mandatory but municipalities are obliged to offer the service. They must provide a place in the preschool class for all children regardless of whether the parents work or study. Although it is not compulsory, attendance has been very high ever since the preschool class was first established. In 2016-2017, 97.8% of all 6-year olds were enrolled (0.6% 5-year olds and 1.2% 7-year olds) (Skolverket 2017c).

Out of the 80.4 % of the staff with university education 53.2% are preschool teachers, 22.3 % are Compulsory School Teachers and 4.9 % are Leisure-Time Pedagogues (also in the preschool class some may have the new extended qualification as Primary Teacher - Extended School, meaning qualified for work in leisure time-centre, preschool class and the first years of compulsory school) (Skolverket 2017c).

Open preschool

Open preschools (*öppen förskola*) are a service for children aged 1-5 years accompanied by their parents or another adult. Children do not have to be registered in the open preschool, nor do they have to attend regularly. 69.5% of staff in these settings are qualified Preschool Teachers, 2.6 % are educated Leisure-Time Teachers, some of whom may have the newer qualification (see *Table 1* and *Table 6*), 13.9.1% are qualified Childcare Workers and 11.7 % have some kind of education for working with children. Only 2.3% of the staff are unqualified (Skolverket 2017d).

Leisure-time centres for children in preschool classes and school

Leisure-time/after school centres (*fritidshem*) offer activities, care and education for children attending preschool classes and school, and are open before and after school hours and during school holidays. They are available for children aged 6-12 years whose parents work or study or need extra support and are a form of complementary provision to both. The curriculum for 6- to 16-year olds states the aims for the preschool class, the leisure-time centre and the compulsory school (Skolverket 2016b). The curriculum has recently been revised and the notion of teaching in the leisure-time centre has been emphasized (SKOLFS 2016:38).

Currently there are 4,238 centres in the country catering for 478,021 children, which means that 84.3% of all children in the age group 6-9 years and 21.5 % of children aged 10-12 years attend such a centre. 23.7% of the staff in the leisure-time centres are qualified Leisure-Time Pedagogues with a university degree (some may have the new extended qualification as Primary Teacher - Extended School specialised for work in leisure-time centres). 11.9% of the staff are qualified preschool teachers, and a further 9.1% qualified school teachers. Approximately 20% have some kind of non-specialist education for working with children such as leisure activities or social care. As with the preschool, a large group lack any kind of formal qualification: 35.2% in the municipal centres, 26.9% in the state centres (there are altogether

14 state centres with a total of 344 children. In earlier statistics these centres were included in the statistics for the independent settings). In the independent centres 56.2% lack any formal qualification (Skolverket 2017e).

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

The three main groups of staff in ECEC follow different qualifying routes. Whereas Preschool Teachers and Primary Teachers – Extended School (formerly Leisure-Time Pedagogues) are educated at university level, Childcare Workers have an upper secondary vocational education specialising in pedagogical work. *Tables 4-6* set out the details of these different routes.

According to legislative probations in 2011 it was decided that all teachers must be certified or licensed (*legitimerade*) as teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from the National Agency for Education in order to work in preschools and schools. Since December 2013, only Preschool Teachers and Primary Teachers who have QTS are accepted for a permanent post (SFS 2011:326).

Table 4

Sweden: Preschool/ECEC Teacher (IPS)

Job title in Swedish: <i>Förskollärare</i> Profile: <i>Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</i>
<p><i>Since 2011</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling (9 years compulsory schooling, 3 years upper secondary level) + matriculation</p> <p>Professional studies: 3½ years (7 semesters) at a higher education institution for the education/training of teachers/university department of child and youth studies. Students specialise in early childhood education (0 to 7 years)</p> <p>Award: Bachelor of Arts in Preschool Education (<i>Förskollärarexamen, grundnivå, 210 hp</i>) Since 2013: Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) necessary for permanent employment.</p> <p>ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood centre (<i>Förskola</i>), full-day provision for 1- to 5-year olds; Preschool class in schools (<i>Förskoleklass</i>) mainly for 6-year olds, open 3 hours daily. Also: Open preschool (<i>Öppen förskola</i>) for parents, family day carers and children aged 1 year and older as auxiliary worker; Leisure-time centres (<i>Fritidshem</i>) for children aged 6-12 years as a complement to the preschool class, open before and after school hours and during holidays.</p>
<p><i>2001- 2011</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General: 12 years of schooling (9 years compulsory schooling, 3 years upper secondary level) with + matriculation*): The specific requirements include three subjects: English, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. (This applies to both the 2001 and the 2011 programme).</p> <p>Professional studies: 3½ years (7 semesters) at a higher education institution for the education of teachers. Students specialise in early childhood education (0 to 7 years) and sometimes also in the first years of primary education (7 to 9 years), depending on the modules taken as part of the degree course.</p> <p>Award: Bachelor of Education for the early years I (ECEC and Years 1-2 of school) <i>Lärarexamen avsedd för pedagogisk verksamhet i förskola , förskoleklass, fritidshem och grundskolan år 1 och 2</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 210 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6</p>

Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood centre (*Förskola*), full-day provision for 1- to 5-year olds; Preschool class in schools (*Förskoleklass*) mainly for 6-year olds, open 3 hours daily; Open preschool (*Öppen förskola*) for parents, family day carers and children aged 1 year and older as auxiliary worker; Leisure-time centres (*Fritidshem*) for children aged 6-12 years as a complement to the preschool class, open before and after school hours and during holidays.

***Note:** There are two kinds of admission criteria to all university study programmes, *basic admission criteria* (mainly grades from upper secondary education) and *special admission criteria*. Both are related to the programme chosen. There are also three main selection groups for admission into university: (1) based on grades (minimum third of available places), (2) based on results on the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test, *högskoleprovet* (third of available places) and 3) selection decided by universities or university colleges themselves (maximum third of the places) (Swedish Council for Higher Education 2016).

Table 5

Sweden: Childcare Worker (IPS)

Job title in Swedish: <i>Barnskötare</i>
<p><i>Since 2011</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling with school leaving certificate.</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary level of comprehensive school in the childcare and leisure-time education programme - specialisation in <i>pedagogical work</i> (including 15 weeks in practical placement);</p> <p>Awards: Matriculation Certificate - <i>Pedagogical Work</i> awarded by the school authorities. Students who have passed the exam and have taken courses in Swedish and English are qualified to apply for university education.</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: Early childhood centre (<i>Förskola</i>), full-day provision for 1- to 5-year olds, as auxiliary worker; open preschool (<i>Öppen förskola</i>) for parents, family day carers and children aged 1 year and older as auxiliary worker.</p>
<p><i>1992-2011</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling with school leaving certificate</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary level of comprehensive school in the childcare and leisure-time education programme – specialisation in <i>pedagogical work</i> (including 15 weeks practicum)</p> <p>Award: Matriculation Certificate awarded by the school authorities Students who have passed the exam and have taken courses in Swedish and English are qualified to apply for university education.</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 1997: 3A</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Early childhood centre (<i>Förskola</i>), full-day provision for 1- to 5-year olds, as auxiliary worker; open preschool (<i>Öppen förskola</i>) for parents, family day carers and children aged 1 year and older as auxiliary worker, Assistants in primary schools.</p>

Note: Some child care workers who have been in the workforce for many years and who completed their professional training before 1992, when a two-year upper secondary programme (comprehensive school, specialising in childcare only) was introduced, may have shorter-length qualifications.

Table 6

Sweden: Primary Teacher – Extended School (formerly Leisure-Time Pedagogue) (IPS)

Job title in Swedish: <i>Grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem</i>
<p>Profile: Primary Teacher specialising in leisure-time pedagogy and practical/aesthetic subjects</p>
<p><i>Since 2011</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years schooling (9 years compulsory schooling, 3 years upper secondary level) + matriculation</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years (6 semesters) at a higher education institution for the education/training of teachers/university department of child and youth studies, specialisation in leisure-time pedagogy and practical/</p>

<p>Job title in Swedish: Grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem</p> <p>Profile: Primary Teacher specialising in leisure-time pedagogy and practical/aesthetic subjects</p>
<p>aesthetic subjects with school-age children 6 to 12 years.</p> <p>Award: Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education - Extended School. (<i>Grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem, 180 hp, grundnivå</i>).</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0114</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Out-of-school/leisure-time centres (<i>Fritidshem</i>), 6- to 12-year olds - most centres are integrated within school premises; Preschool class in schools (<i>Förskoleklass</i>), mainly for 6-year olds; <i>plus:</i> Primary school (<i>Grundskola</i>), 7- to 12-year olds, practical/aesthetic subjects</p> <p>2001-2011 (see note below):</p> <p>Entry requirements: 12 years schooling (9 years compulsory schooling, 3 years upper secondary level)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3½ years (7 semesters) at a higher education institution for the education/training of teachers/university department of child and youth studies, following the same course as early childhood pedagogues but with a specialisation in leisure-time pedagogy with school-age children 6 to 12 years</p> <p>Award: Bachelor of Education for the early years I (ECEC and Years 1-2 of school) <i>Lärarexamen avsedd för pedagogisk verksamhet i förskola, förskoleklass, fritidshem och grundskolan år 1 och 2</i></p> <p>ECTS points: 210</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Out-of-school/leisure-time centres (<i>Fritidshem</i>), 6- to 12-year olds - most centres are integrated within school premises; Preschool class in schools (<i>Förskoleklass</i>), mainly for 6-year olds, open 3 hours daily; <i>plus:</i> Primary school (<i>Grundskola</i>), 7- to 9-year olds, alongside the school teacher.</p>

Note: The 2001-2011 programme did not offer a special orientation for Leisure-Time Pedagogues on a universal basis. While the University of Gothenburg offered some courses covering a broad age range, where work in leisure-time centres was included, other universities, such as the University of Jönköping, offered a specialisation designed specifically for work in out-of-school hours.

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Preschool Teacher/Primary Teacher – Extended School (*Förskollärare, Grundlärare med inriktning mot arbete i fritidshem*)

Teacher education since 2011

In 2011, teacher education programmes were reintroduced related to distinctive age specialisations. Currently, teachers who specialise in early childhood education in preschools and teachers who specialise in leisure-time pedagogy/practical/aesthetic subjects follow two different programmes:

- Preschool teacher education for work in preschools (children aged 1-5 years), comprising 7 semesters (210 ECTS points).
- Primary teacher education specialised for work in leisure-time centres and for teaching practical/aesthetic subjects in the first years of compulsory school (extended school for children aged 6-12 years), comprising 6 semesters (180 ECTS points).

The overarching aims and competencies required for a degree in both programmes are regulated in the Higher Education Act/*Högskolelagen* (SFS 1992:1434) and the Higher Education Ordinance/*Högskoleförordningen* (SFS 1993:100). Graduates must demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for independent work as a preschool teacher/primary and leisure-time teacher in preschools and leisure-time centres/schools. The overarching aims are then further specified under the headings *Knowledge and understanding, Competence and skills, Judgement and approach*.

Four principles characterise the 2011 teacher education: a scientific and critical approach, a historical perspective, an international perspective, and IT as an educational resource. Based on these principles, three domains of knowledge make up the content of the IPS of both Preschool Teachers and Primary Teachers-Extended School specialising in leisure-time centre work:

- 1) educational sciences
- 2) subject knowledge including subject didactics
- 3) work placement - practicum.

In addition, students in both programmes have to produce a professionally relevant dissertation (degree project) of 15 ECTS (Karlsson Lohmander 2014).

In Sweden, universities have a high degree of autonomy. As long as they abide by the overarching aims and guidelines such as the Higher Education Act and Qualifications Ordinance (SFS 1992:1434), individual higher education institutions (HEI) can choose to focus on certain domains of knowledge. It is the local Board of Studies for initial teacher education programmes at respective universities that are responsible for translating the overall aims and guidelines in the Government Bill and Higher Education Act and Qualifications Ordinance to local curricula and syllabi. Therefore it is not possible to give detailed information about curricular areas and pedagogic-didactic approaches for the education of teachers across all HEI institutions in Sweden. The following information reflects the programmes offered by the University of Gothenburg.

Box 2

Sweden: Preschool Teacher education – course modules, University of Gothenburg

Preschool Teachers have a university degree of 3½ years' duration with a possibility to extend this to 4 years. The overarching principles and domains of knowledge that make up the content are translated into different themes/course modules (Göteborgs universitet, Lärarutbildningsnämnden 2016a)

1. Educational sciences (60 ECTS points)

Four integrated and overlapping themes make up this domain of knowledge:

1. Learning, development and didactics
2. Curriculum theory, organisation, follow up and assessment of learning and development
3. Leadership, special education, social relations and conflict resolution
4. Theory of science, research methodology, evaluation and developmental work

2. Subject studies including subject-related didactics within the domain of early childhood education (105), and a dissertation (15) (total: 120 ECTS points)

Six themes make up this domain of knowledge:

1. Children's learning, communication and literacy
2. Children's mathematical learning
3. Play, learning, development and care
4. Co-operation with carers, preschool class, leisure-time centre and school
5. Aesthetic learning processes
6. Nature, environment and technique/technology

Course modules are offered at both initial and advanced level.

3. Work placement – practicum, 20 weeks (30 ECTS points)

The practicum as a supervised work placement is organised as four distinctive course modules comprising a total of 30 ECTS points.

Students wishing to work in leisure-time settings, preschool class and compulsory school have a university degree of 3 years' duration, 6 semesters. As with the Preschool Teacher education the same domains of knowledge apply to this programme: (1) educational science with the same four sub-themes, comprising 60 ECTS points, (2) subject studies and subject-related didactics (90 ECTS points) and (3) work placement, comprising 30 ECTS points. The two programmes are different in length, 210 ECTS for Preschool Teachers and 180 ECTS for Primary and Leisure-Time Teachers. The work placement also takes place in settings that are

professionally relevant for the two groups, preschool and leisure-time centres /schools. In addition the subject studies are oriented towards the future profession.

Box 3

Sweden: Primary Teacher- Extended School – course modules, University of Gothenburg

For students qualifying for work in leisure-time centres subject studies include the following (Göteborgs universitet, Lärarutbildningsnämnden 2016b):

Subject studies including subject-related didactics within leisure-time education (75), and a dissertation (15) (total: 90 ECTS points)

The subject studies include five themes:

- Leisure-time centres as a social practice
- Children's upbringing and leisure in the local environment
- Children's digital media cultures
- Outdoor Education
- Language and creative processes

In addition to the above students are expected to specialise in one or more of the following subjects a) arts, b) home economics, c) sports and health and d) music.

Child care workers (*Barnskötare*)

Child care workers are required to follow a three-year upper secondary vocational education specialising in pedagogical work. The overarching aim of the IPS is to prepare students for working primarily alongside Preschool Teachers in early childhood settings. The education comprises both compulsory and optional courses focusing on children's development, learning, needs and rights as well as on various educational activities. During the course of the programme students have 15 weeks' work placement. The programme prepares students for work in the preschool or for work as student assistants in schools. Together with assessing the theoretical courses, the student's abilities to perform common tasks in the professional field are also assessed (Skolverket 2011).

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Alternative pathways

Since 2007, experienced teachers/preschool teachers who have an incomplete degree from a Swedish university or a degree from a foreign university but lack a formal teaching qualification, are offered an alternative route (SFS 2008:1101). The supplementary course usually comprises 90 ECTS points and is offered on a part-time basis alongside concurrent employment. The mode of delivery is internet-based in combination with campus-based studies. Through individual validations of previous courses taken, the length of study can be shortened.

Experienced childcare workers/equivalent (3 years of full-time or five years of part-time work experience) can qualify as preschool teachers by taking supplementary education courses at higher education institutions. At the University of Gothenburg their programme comprises 180 ECTS points over 4 years of study. The education is co-funded by the municipalities and the Childcare Workers themselves. Municipalities pay the costs for substitute staff at the various settings. Some also pay for course literature. The mode of delivery is a combination of campus-based and online study. The practitioners receive reduced salaries when they are on leave from work one day a week to participate in the teaching that takes place at the university. The rest of the time they study online.

Recently, due to the large number of migrants coming to Sweden, five universities in Sweden, University of Gothenburg being one of them, have launched a so-called fast track for Preschool

Teachers and teachers with a migrant background, *snabbspår* (Regeringskansliet 2016a; University of Gothenburg 2016). This means organising a faster pathway than the regular one through the system to take advantage of the experience the migrants bring both regarding language skills and cultural experience. It is hoped that this may be one way of reducing the vacancies and the shortage of teachers.

Moving up the career ladder

Adjunct teachers at the university

With the aim of including valuable expertise from experienced preschool teachers and school teachers in teacher education courses, and of strengthening the cooperation between work settings and the university, practising preschool teachers can be appointed as adjunct teachers (*adjungerad universitetsadjunkt*) at the university. They are usually employed on a part-time basis while working concurrently in preschools and schools. Long-term competence requirements for employment as an adjunct teacher responsible for the workplace-based courses in the university study programme include the following:

- Preschool teacher degree
- A course on “Teaching and Learning in Higher Education” (7.5 ECTS points)
- A course on “Supervision in Preschool, School and Leisure-time centre” (7.5 ECTS points)

Local Teacher Educator

Certified Preschool Teachers and Leisure-Time Pedagogues/Primary Teachers in schools can take a special mentoring course at the university comprising 7.5 ECTS points. This qualifies them to work as workplace-based learning teachers/on-site mentors (*lokala lärarutbildare*) in ECEC and leisure-time centres with responsibility for the mentoring of students.

ECEC Centre Head/Preschool Director

If a position as Centre Head (*enhetschef/förskolechef*) becomes available, Preschool Teachers and Leisure-Time Pedagogues/Primary Teachers can apply for this position, which usually means a higher salary. However, heads of ECEC centres do not necessarily need to have a specialised ECEC qualification. Applicants may have other kinds of valuable competences and skills, such as leadership, accountancy, etc. (see also *Section 5*). In 2016, 4,800 Centre Heads were responsible for on average two preschools each (Skolverket 2017f).

Pedagogical Leader

There are also posts of responsibility as Pedagogical Leaders (*pedagogisk utvecklingsledare*) with a higher salary and particular tasks regarding different aspects of the work in the ECEC setting such as quality assurance, mentoring, professional development, etc.

First Teachers and Senior Teachers

‘First Teachers’ (*förstelärare*) and Senior Teachers (*lektor*) were introduced by the Government following the reform (2011) of teacher education programmes (Utbildningsdepartementet 2012). The idea was to make use of the expertise of certified teachers considered to be highly qualified and who have demonstrated excellence in their work over a period of at least four years in the workplace. Initially this did *not* involve Preschool Teachers. However, various municipalities have introduced these possibilities for their preschool teachers. From 1st January, 2017 these positions are available for staff in preschools in Gothenburg.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based learning comprises an important part of all teacher education. It is in the workplace that students can acquire essential professional skills and competences that university-based courses alone cannot provide (Karlsson Lohmander 2015). The relation between the two parts of teacher education was highlighted in the most recent teacher education reforms (SOU 1999:63; SOU 2008:109). Following a discussion between the Government, representatives from the teachers' union and municipalities, the Government decided that a five-year trial period with special placements in schools and preschools would be implemented (SFS 2014:2). Since 2014, the University of Gothenburg (together with 14 other universities across Sweden) has been participating in the so called Placement School Project (*Övningskoleprojektet*). Participating universities receive state funding to remunerate municipalities for the mentoring work of preschool teachers and other teachers and for the additional qualification required for the position.

Preschool Teacher (*Förskollärare*)

Since the main form of ECEC provision is preschool and the largest group of core practitioners are Preschool Teachers, the following will focus on the workplace-based learning (practicum) for this group. However, the overall structure and organisation apply to the education of primary teachers specialising for work in the leisure-time centre as well. And again, this is valid for preschool teacher education at the University of Gothenburg. The following organisation applies to all students from the autumn semester of 2014. This means in effect that approximately 1,400 preschool student teachers are participating in this trialling period between 2014 and 2019.

The 'Placement Preschool Project'

The importance of workplace-based learning (practicum) is underlined in the guidelines for workplace-based learning:

"It is during the placement in the preschool, that the students lay the foundation for their ability to act as teachers. Work placements thus play a core function in the student's knowledge acquisition." (Göteborgs universitet, Lärarutbildningsnämnden 2013).

With a clear focus on the age-group 1-6 years, students spend approximately 20 weeks (corresponding to 30 ECTS points) in the workplace during the course of their studies.

During placements students are organised into small groups and placed in the same preschool in a particular area during all workplace-based modules. So called area managers (*områdeschefer*), heads of preschools (*förskolechefer*) and placement coordinators (*VFU-koordinatorer*) are involved in the nomination of the most skilled preschool teachers (and preschools) in the field to act as local teacher educators, on-site mentors, and safeguard a high quality of field-based studies.

The focus of the work placement modules is on *Investigating*, *Implementing* and *Synthesising* (Göteborgs universitet, Lärarutbildningsnämnden 2013), indicating gradually increasing complexity - from novice in the first module to a competent professional in the fourth and last module. Work placements take place in four different course modules comprising 7.5 ECTS points each: in semesters 1, 3, 4 and 6. 100% attendance at the workplace is required, which corresponds to the normal working hours of a full-time employee. Exceptions are made for time scheduled for participation in lectures, seminars and exams.

Module 1, semester 1: Observations focusing on the overall organisation of the setting and everyday practice. Investigating how the steering documents, including curricular frameworks, are implemented.

Module 2, semester 3: Central to this module is the planning, implementation and documentation of theme-oriented work with children, integrating mathematics, language and communication and aesthetics. Further, emphasis is placed on investigating how the setting uses digital tools to support children's learning and development and on developing own professional digital competence.

Module 3, semester 4: This course aims to develop knowledge and understanding of educational leadership and its importance for social relationships and conflict management. The focus is on systematic approaches towards promoting children's development and learning. Students are encouraged to gradually 'replace' the Preschool Teacher and take independent responsibility for planning and implementing different activities with children and to collaborate with the work team and parents/guardians.

Module 4, semester 6: Equality and equity in children's development and learning. How does the setting work towards reaching the goals in the curriculum in these respects?

For each course students are expected to keep a reflective journal (log book) and participate in introductory lectures, praxis seminars and exams. They also have to submit an individual written assignment. In addition to these tasks, three written documents are required: a self-evaluation by the students, the local teacher educator's report on the student's presence and activities during placement, and a report from the visiting university course teacher. The final grade is based on all of these. Students who fail a workplace-based learning course have the right to a second placement.

Both the university and the preschools participate in the planning of the workplace-based learning periods. Local teacher educators, university-based teachers/workplace-based course teachers (*VFU-kurslärare*), municipal workplace-based coordinators and students form a fixed team throughout the four modules. The team reflects on and discusses possible amendments/developments of the various modules in terms of safeguarding high quality. The university-based teachers visit students during their practicum. Together with the local teacher educator they assess the performance of the students and discuss with them areas for development and possible need for support. Further, the university-based teacher will also consult and discuss the performance of each student with the local teacher educator before reporting the grades.

The local teacher educators do not receive a specific remuneration. At the same time, taking on the responsibility as a local teacher educator is considered to be an important criterion when negotiating salaries at annual appraisal meetings. The time allocated for the mentoring work is 6 hours for one student per practicum period/module.

In order to become a local teacher educator, prospective candidates have to be fully qualified and certified preschool teachers and are obliged to complete a qualifying mentoring course (*Training Tutors in School, Preschool and Leisure-time Centres*, 7.5 ECTS points) before the end of 2018. The course is either campus-based on a part time basis (25%) or internet-based over two semesters. This applies to those local teacher educators who are involved in preschool teacher education at the University of Gothenburg.

In addition to increasing the quality of students' education, the project aims to promote development in preschools. At the national level, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslerämbetet, UKÄ*) will evaluate the project. Locally, the University of Gothenburg conducts regular evaluations during the course of the trialling period (Forsknings- och Innovationskontoret 2016).

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Framework, forms of CPD and entitlement

There is no specific **national or regional framework** that regulates CPD for ECEC staff. Municipalities have the main responsibility for the organisation and management of preschools including CPD, and there is no national coherent and transparent system which includes formal, informal and centre-based forms. Consequently, CPD may vary between different municipalities across the country.

At the national level, the government may outline and target domains of knowledge for CPD and allocate money to the municipalities. One example was the 'Boost for Preschool' **CPD initiative** (*förskolelyftet*) in 2009 and 2011 where both Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers were offered advanced continuing professional education courses of varying length, shorter courses for Childcare Workers than for Preschool Teachers and Preschool Heads. The main focus was on children's development in language, mathematics, natural sciences and technology.

Apart from the above-mentioned government Initiatives, the most common forms of CPD are **study days for all members of staff** where the focus is on current issues such as pedagogical documentation, difficult conversations, the professional role, etc. In some municipalities there is a strong focus on 'Reggio Emilia pedagogy' and this has been a recurring focus for CPD in many preschools. There are also digital programmes available, e.g. listening to online lectures addressing various topics. In some cases, Childcare Workers may be offered supplementary training which will deepen and expand their professional competences and skills. Likewise, unqualified workers may receive training to make them more professionally competent.

There is no regulation regarding the **number of days per year** granted for CPD. Preschools are usually closed for two days per semester. These days are used for the planning of the work in the setting and for CPD. The individual teacher's/childcare worker's need for competence development is discussed at the annual appraisal meetings and formulated in the competence development plan (*Kompetensutvecklingsplan*). The heads of preschools make the final decision about CPD and it is their responsibility to make sure that all members of staff are well qualified for the work they are expected to do (Skolverket 2016a).

CPD activities that are organised and funded (total or partial costs) by the individual preschool, the municipality or the government are **compulsory** for those members of staff who are invited/nominated to participate. The cost for any CPD that is not approved by the head of the preschool must be covered by the individual and has to take place outside working hours.

There is a multitude of CPD activities available such as high quality seminars, conferences, lectures and courses addressing various domains of knowledge. In recent years the number of different **providers** has increased substantially. In addition to the National Agency for Education, universities, municipalities and regional development centres, there are now a large number of independent providers, such as the Teacher's Union and private consultants, the latter often at very high costs. Municipalities/preschools are free to choose the topic and provider that suits them.

Regularly occurring problems regarding **access** opportunities to CPD have to do with the overall economy; the sum of money usually set aside for CPD for each practitioner is very small. At the same time, costs for attending various forms of CPD may be very high, which makes it difficult to participate. Another problem is the shortage of staff. Even if there is money available it still might not be possible for practitioners to attend since there is no substitute staff to replace them.

Concerning **formal recognition** of participation in CPD in terms of career advancement, participation in a number of CPD courses can be helpful if practitioners apply for a new job. They are able to show that they are well qualified and their knowledge is updated.

In the revised preschool curriculum of 2011, the role and responsibilities of **heads of preschools** (*enhetschefer*) were clarified. In a later revision (Skolverket 2016a) it was stated that the head has overall responsibility for quality issues in the ECEC centre. As a consequence, the role of heads of preschools has changed. They are now responsible for maintaining quality, sometimes in a number of preschools, and their work has become more administrative. Not only has the role become increasingly complex, but since the Centre Heads do not have to be qualified preschool teachers, there is also a need for pedagogical support in terms of implementing the goals of the national curriculum. Many municipalities have therefore contracted so called pedagogical leaders (*Pedagogiska utvecklingsledare*) to support heads of preschools. Before 2010, there was no particular qualification required for heads of preschools, although some had extra training. Special leadership education is still not formally required but heads of preschools are strongly recommended to follow a programme for school leaders (*Rektorsprogrammet*) to ensure their competence and managerial work.

No **large-scale research projects** on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel have received funding over the past five years.

Supplementary/additional study routes

There are additional study routes available, e.g. Master's degree programmes and doctoral studies. Participation is usually not supported by state or employer funding although there are some exceptions.

A consortium of five universities have organised so called Research Schools for practising Preschool Teachers and Leisure-time Pedagogues. The overall focus has been on different domains of knowledge relevant for the profession, the most recent one focussing on communication and relationships as the foundational competencies needed to promote children's learning.

Students study part time while working concurrently. Participation is funded by municipalities and universities. After completion students are awarded a *Licentiate* degree.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

In addition to the initiatives and reforms regarding career advancement and CPD such as the introduction of 'First Teachers', the 'Placement Preschool Project', the 'Teacher Salary Boost', and the licensing of teachers (*Sections 3.3, 4 and 5*) there are also a number of other current reforms and initiatives, such as the ones mentioned below.

Pilot phase of complementary admission criteria for the qualification route for Preschool Teachers

Starting in the autumn of 2016 two universities, Växjö and Jönköping, use interviews and written assignments to complement the general admission criteria. Admission will be based on grades or results of the Scholastic Aptitude Test in combination with assessment of personal suitability for the profession (SFS 2015:566). The interview and the assignment will focus on communicative ability, interactive capability, the ability for self-reflection, the ability to take a leadership role and motivation for the future professional role. Suitability tests are hoped to attract the most qualified applicants for teacher education, reduce dropout rates and ultimately improve the quality of teachers and the outcomes in preschools and schools. The project is coordinated by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet*) and will also be evaluated by them. A final report is expected for May 2018. Subsequently, the government will decide on whether to go ahead with this form of admission criteria or not.

Clarified responsibility for Preschool Teachers

The revised preschool curriculum (Skolverket 2016a), together with the 2011 teacher education programme and the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), have been important reforms with implications for ECEC staffing. The responsibilities of individual Preschool Teachers as well as those of the work team have been clarified and extended. For Preschool Teachers this means that they now are responsible for teaching, monitoring and evaluating everyday practice. The head of the preschool has to clarify the responsibilities and duties of preschool teachers, as well as those of the entire work team. The work has to be carried out by all members of staff (including childcare workers), but it is the responsibility of the Preschool Teachers to ensure and decide how it will happen.

Traditionally, the concept 'teaching' has not been related to the preschool context in a formal way. In recent years the notion of teaching in preschool has received increased attention and the National Agency for Education has commissioned a review of current research regarding the concepts of education and teaching in preschool (Skolverket 2017g; Regeringen 2017).

Review of the curriculum for the preschool, Lpfö98. Revised 2016

The Government has commissioned the National Agency for Education to conduct a review of the current curriculum for the preschool (Skolverket 2016a; Skolverket 2017g; Regeringen 2017).

The overarching values, goals and principles will not change. Rather, the revision will in particular focus on and take into account:

- a child's rights perspective
- a disability perspective
- the rights of national minorities
- the rights of the Sami as indigenous peoples

The revision is planned to be reported to the Government in March 2018.

Further reform initiatives

Education and teacher education has been and still is high on the political agenda both for the previous centre-right coalition government between 2006 and 2014 and the current government (Social Democrats in coalition with the Green party). Since 2010, a number of reforms have taken place and education is a recurring topic in political and public debate. In a recent document (SOU 2016:38) the Government suggests a number of strategies to further develop education in general, including teacher education. For example, by:

- Strengthening teacher education - resources, quality and recruitment of students;
- Increasing the number of certified teachers in schools;
- Making sure that professional and competence development are more equal and systematic.

Reforms such as the introduction of Qualified Teacher Status (see *Section 3.1*), the 'First Teacher'/'Senior Teacher' status (see *Section 3.3*) and the Teacher Salary Boost (*Section 8.1*) are hoped to make the teaching profession more attractive.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

There is a large and growing body of research on preschool with a mixture of both small-scale and large-scale projects. Many studies/projects focus on different aspects of the listed domains of knowledge in the preschool curriculum (Skolverket 2016a) or other aspects of the everyday practice in the preschool. In these projects the role of teachers is often addressed.

Some projects focus on issues of professionalism in a direct way. The four examples mentioned below are all externally funded large-scale studies lasting over three years with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Further, they were all conducted by senior researchers and address issues of professionalism, albeit in different ways.

Group size in preschool (2014-2016)

Sources: Within the framework of the project data presented below, a number of journal articles and books have been published. Two examples: (1) Williams, P., S. Sheridan, H. Harju-Luukkainen, and I. Pramling Samuelsson. 2015. (2) Williams, P., S. Sheridan, and I. Pramling Samuelsson. 2016. (see *References* for full details).

Background and aim: In past decades, group size in preschools has been widely discussed both among Preschool Teachers and parents. According to Preschool Teachers, large groups of children impact negatively on their working conditions and have implications for children's development and learning. The project therefore aimed to investigate these issues.

Procedure: A questionnaire was answered by 698 practising Preschool Teachers in 46 different municipalities. 12 different preschools from urban and rural areas across the country were followed as case studies. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 Preschool Teachers from the case study preschools. Both the questionnaire and the interview covered areas such as composition of the current group of children, group size, content, organisation and structure of the daily activities and the curriculum for the preschool in relation to children's learning and participation.

Findings: This overview of the project points to the complex relationship between the number of children in the group and both children's learning and teachers' work. The number of children can never be the only key issue that determines the quality of the preschool. Three dimensions constituted various interacting factors with an impact on the work of the teachers; Preschool Teacher qualifications and competence, physical indoor and outdoor environment and the composition of the group of children. According to the Preschool Teachers, large groups of children made it difficult for them to organise certain activities such as painting and excursions and they therefore tended to avoid these. Moreover, it was difficult to stimulate and challenge each individual child in line with the curriculum (Skolverket 2016a). With too many children of different ages and needs there was a risk of teacher-child dialogues becoming too superficial.

The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council.

Preschool teaching in Sweden - a changing profession (2007-2011)

Source: Sheridan, S., P. Williams, A. Sandberg, and T. Vuorinen. 2011 (see *References* for full details).

Background: A number of educational reforms in terms of both preschool and preschool teacher education have taken place over the last decade or two. During this period, preschools became part of the overall educational system and a curriculum for preschool was issued with increased emphasis on specific domains of knowledge. Taken together, these reforms have had implications for the profession of the Preschool Teacher and the competencies needed for the job.

Aim: The aim of this study was to investigate how practising Preschool Teachers perceive their competence in communicating and interacting with children in relation to the overall goals of the preschool curriculum.

Procedure: Altogether, 30 Preschool Teachers from 15 preschools in Stockholm and Gothenburg (the two largest cities in Sweden) and 15 preschools in a rural area in mid-Sweden representing different geographic, demographic, ethnic aspects and varied socioeconomic structures participated in the study. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to compare similarities and differences between competences teachers claimed they had and competences they wished to develop.

Findings: According to the findings a Preschool Teacher's competence is constituted in the intersection of values, knowledge and ideologies at different levels of the ECEC system. Guided by policy and curriculum intentions, teachers create shared understandings of the meaning of teacher competence both for today and tomorrow. According to this study, three intertwined dimensions constitute preschool teacher competence: Competence as knowledge of What? Why? and How?, with interactive, relational and transactional aspects. Seen together, these aspects highlight preschool teacher competence as a complex, multidimensional and relational phenomenon, constituted from a range of interacting abilities. These include, for example, subject knowledge and didactics, reflection, leadership, organisational skills, social and communicative competence.

The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council.

Clarifying the responsibilities of Preschool Teachers - balancing a democratic approach and a professional way of working (2013-2015)

Source: Eriksson, A. 2014 (see *References* for full details).

Background: Following the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the 2011 revised curriculum for the preschool, the overall responsibility for the pedagogical work in the preschool was transferred from a joint responsibility of the work team (Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers) to the single responsibility of the Preschool Teacher. Within the framework of the research project three different studies were conducted. One of them is presented below.

Aim: The overall aim of the project was to investigate how the clarified and increased responsibility for preschool was interpreted at a municipal level and translated into pedagogical practice in the preschool.

Procedure: Interviews were conducted in one medium size and one small municipality with six Preschool Teachers, one Childcare Worker, one Centre Head and one Pedagogical Leader. In addition to the interviews local documents were analysed.

Findings: Findings indicate that while the Preschool Head and Pedagogical Leader claimed that the difference in responsibility was related to the difference in qualifications and was therefore not problematic, practising Preschool Teachers found that it was a difficult and sensitive matter to discuss in work teams where there were both qualified Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers.

The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council.

'Teaching' in preschool (2016-2018)

Sources: (1) Vallberg Roth, A.-C. 2016; (2) Vallberg Roth, A.-C. 2017 (see *References* for full details).

Background: In Sweden, the concept 'teaching' has not been used traditionally in the preschool context. However, the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) stipulates that the concept applies not only to compulsory school but also to preschool. The ongoing project *Teaching in Preschool* is a research and development project conducted by Malmö University in conjunction with the independent Institute for Innovation, Research and Development in School and Preschool (Ifous) in Malmö.

Aim: The aim of the research project is to develop knowledge about teaching and co-assessment in preschool based on policy documents, scientific theory and evidence and proven experience and to reconsider the alternative concept of 'multi-level teaching and co-assessment' [*flerstämmig undervisning och samedömning*]. The focus is on teaching language-communication, music and mathematics in preschool.

Procedure: Preschool Teachers/Childcare Workers, Preschool Directors and management representatives in about 100 preschools in ten Swedish municipalities are participating in the project, which involves some 3,400 participants altogether. The project design includes a mixed-methods approach, including case studies, text analysis of participants' 'written

thoughts' on key features of teaching and assessment, analysis of work plans, and video-documentation and evaluation of assignments.

Findings: The project is ongoing and runs from 2016-2018. Data are still being compiled and analysed. Findings have not yet been published.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

Preschool Teachers do not usually receive the same salary as Compulsory School Teachers. One of the justifications given for this difference is that the length of the Initial Professional Studies differs. However, salaries are individually negotiated and given the shortage of qualified Preschool Teachers, there can be considerable variation in salaries between different parts of the same city and between municipalities across the country. While a common starting point may be SEK 27,000-29,000 (2,796-3,004€) per month, some municipalities have been offering up to SEK 36,000 (3,720€) per month as an introductory salary. Staff usually receive a higher salary for posts of responsibility e.g. as Centre Head or Pedagogical Leader. Preschool Teachers who take on the responsibility for the mentoring of students do not automatically receive a pay rise. However, it is considered an important criterion when discussing salaries at the annual appraisal.

The average introductory salary per month for Childcare Workers is approximately SEK 22,000-24,000 (2,279-2,480 €). Salaries for this group are also individually negotiated and may vary across the country depending on, for example, work experience. It is just about possible to live on this salary, although much depends on the living costs and family composition (e.g. single parents and number of children) and the area of residence.

Teacher Salary Boost

The Teacher Salary Boost (*lönelyftet*) is a government initiative, introduced in the autumn of 2016; specially qualified preschool teachers and primary teachers-extended school/ leisure-time teachers may receive a salary increase of about 1,000–5,000 SEK (ca. 106–529€) monthly. The aim of this initiative is to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and thereby improve outcomes in schools. The Government has set aside 3,000,000,000 SEK (ca. 310,622,000€) annually (Skolverket 2016c).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Full-time employment for Preschool Teachers in Sweden means 40 hours of paid work per week. Part-time employment can involve any percentage up to full time. Part-time employees have the right to change to full time if they so wish. There are no available data for part-time and full-time employment in preschools/leisure-time centres. Staff members with young children are entitled to work part time if they have children under the age of 12 years. Working six hours a day for four or five days is a common solution for many.

In terms of permanent or temporary employment, a total of 105.849 employees work in preschool which equals 97,309 full-time permanent posts. The remainder are employed on a temporary basis (Skolverket 2017f)

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Newly-qualified teachers have an induction period of approximately one year (SKOLFS 2014:44). Supported by a personal mentor, the aim of this period is to provide support for the professional, personal and social development of the new teacher and to develop an understanding of the school as a workplace and its role in society. At the annual appraisal meetings individual members of staff can discuss the need for support and for developing their competences in various areas.

8.4 Non-contact time

Non-contact time is not regulated but the teacher's union recommends four hours/week for Preschool Teachers. There is no such recommendation for Childcare Workers. It is up to the individual Centre Head if they want to allow non-contact time for this job category as well.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Currently, recruitment and retention of qualified preschool staff is in crisis. One reason is the number of teachers approaching or taking retirement, resulting in an estimated future shortage of preschool teachers (Regeringskansliet 2016b). According to a prognosis the total need for pedagogical staff in preschools (including Childcare Workers) is estimated to increase by 10,000 full-time positions from 2014 until 2024. The need for Preschool Teachers alone is expected to increase by 3,100 full-time positions by 2029 (Skolverket 2015).

Specific recruitment strategies include the 'Teacher Salary Boost' and various new career posts (see *Section 3.3*). Since there has been a shortage of Preschool Teachers, the number of places in the preschool teacher education programmes has increased in recent years.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

As mentioned above, the **recruitment and retention** of certified Preschool Teachers is a significant challenge for the ECEC system in Sweden. Currently, there is a substantial shortage of Preschool Teachers and there is a risk that this will increase in the years to come due to upcoming retirement among practising teachers (Regeringskansliet 2016b). Recently there has also been a growing shortage of qualified Childcare Workers. Another important challenge is the low percentage of male preschool teachers and how to make the profession more attractive to them.

Given the crucial role staff qualifications play for the child's development and learning as well as for working towards the curriculum goals, it is problematic that the number of **staff lacking relevant professional or formal education** of any kind currently working in preschools is very high.

Linked to the challenge of staff qualification is the **group size** in ECEC centres. A lack of qualified staff and large groups of children imply a worsening of the conditions needed (e.g. non-contact time) to take on the overall responsibility for pedagogical work aligned with the curriculum, including planning, documentation, cooperation with parents (Skolverket 2016a; Williams, Sheridan, and Pramling Samuelsson 2016). Furthermore, children might not receive the attention, support and trust needed for their development, wellbeing and learning. The youngest children are especially vulnerable in this respect (Skolinspektionen 2016). To safeguard high, even and equal quality in preschools across the country the above mentioned structural factors need to be addressed.

CPD opportunities for preschool staff also need to increase. Given the enhanced responsibility of Preschool Teachers regarding ‘teaching’ and the additional domains of knowledge included in the curriculum (e.g. the natural sciences and technology) (Skolverket 2016a), Preschool Teachers need to develop subject knowledge in these domains and subject-related didactics knowledge about children’s learning at different ages and from various socio-economic, cultural and language backgrounds. As in many other countries, the number of foreign-born families in Sweden has increased in recent years. To support these children and families in the most appropriate way, Preschool Teachers need more knowledge about the family backgrounds in regards to both language and cultural traditions. They also need to develop skills and competences regarding how to work with multilingual groups of children and their families (Harju-Luukkainen and Kultti 2017). As a response to these needs, in recent years some initiatives have been taken to offer CPD focusing on linguistic and cultural diversity and inclusion.

Furthermore, practitioners also need competences to support children in developing ‘**digital competency**’ including the role of media in society. From an early age children need to learn to become responsible users of digital tools (Skolverket 2016f).

The Government has initiated a number of reforms already reported, such as the salary boost and career advancement strategies. The Government has also commissioned a review on how to make the teaching profession more attractive. Areas to look into are, for example, an induction period for newly qualified graduates, CPD opportunities, teachers’ administrative tasks/work load (Regeringskansliet 2016c). Taken together these initiatives and reforms are hoped to make the teaching profession more attractive.

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SWEDEN

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Maelis Karlsson Lohmander for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Sweden – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1142-1155.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care

ECEC system type and auspices

Sweden has a unitary system of early childhood education and care with three main levels of government: national, regional (county) and local (municipality). At the national level, since 1996, both centre-based and home-based provision for children aged 1 to under 7 years come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Utbildningsdepartementet*). Through the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), the main administrative body at the national level, the government is responsible for setting out policy goals and guidelines and funding frameworks relating to early childhood provision. However, the system itself is highly decentralised. At the local level, the 290 municipalities (*kommuner*) are responsible for the planning and organisation of public ECEC provision and for ensuring that the relevant steering documents are implemented. The providers of independent ECEC centres (*fristående förskolor*), which are attended by roughly one fifth of Swedish children up to school entry age, are responsible for their management.

Sources: Eurydice 2017.
Vallberg-Roth, A.-C. 2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Sweden is part of the education system. National goals are drawn up by the Swedish parliament (*Riksdag*) and the Swedish government. 'Preschools' (*förskolan*) for 1- to 5-year olds and 'preschool classes' (*förskoleklasser*) for 6- to 7-year olds, are regulated by the Education Act (*Skollagen 2010*), which sets out general objectives for the education system as a whole. Principles, goals and values for early childhood education and care are more explicitly specified in the Curriculum for the Preschool (*Läroplan för förskolan Lpfö98*), first introduced in 1998 and revised in 2010. A further review of the curriculum is under way and conclusions will be presented to the Government in 2018. The curriculum document opens with a statement about democracy forming the foundation of the preschool and that all preschool activities should be conducted according to democratic values and principles (see section on *Curricular frameworks*).

Sources: Skolverket 2010, 2016c, 2016d.
Vallberg-Roth, A.-C. 2015.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

The Education Act 2010 requires municipalities to provide preschool services and out-of-school childcare for children aged 1–12 years whose parents are working or studying, and for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Children with parents who are unemployed or on parental leave are entitled to a part-time place (at least 3 hours/day) in publicly funded centre-

based or home-based provision. Municipalities have to ensure that parents receive a place within four months of their application.

Since 2003, all children are entitled to a free place for at least 525 hours per year from the autumn term when they turn 4 years old. In 2010 this was extended to 3-year olds. All children are guaranteed a one-year place in the preschool class (*förskoleklass*), starting in the autumn of the year they turn 6.

There is no obligation to attend an early childhood centre during the years preceding school entry. Compulsory schooling starts in the autumn of the year the children turn 7 years of age. Intake is on an annual basis.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Swedish Institute 2015.

Main types of provision

Early childhood centres (*förskola*), or ‘preschools’ as they are called in official translations of Swedish documents, are usually unitary, age-integrated settings and are the main form of provision for children aged 1 to under 6 years where the children are mostly grouped in two broad age-bands: 1- to 3-year olds and 3- to under 6-year olds. However, there are also settings with same-age groups. Most are open from 6:30 in the morning until 18:30.

Preschool classes (*förskoleklass*) are one-year transition classes for 6- to 7-year olds located in schools that offer a minimum of 525 hours of tuition in a school year. Established in 1998, they are not compulsory, but are attended by nearly all children in the year preceding school entry (96.5% of 6-year olds, 0.7% of 5-year olds and 0.9% of 7-year olds in 2015/2016*). Municipalities must provide a place in the preschool class for all children whose parents seek one.

Open preschools (*öppen förskola*) are community drop-in and advisory centres for parents and children who are not attending any other form of provision, and also for family day care providers. They are funded by the municipalities and generally supervised by a fully qualified early childhood teacher (*förskollärare*), although as a form of pedagogical care (*pedagogisk omsorg*), there are no specific requirements regarding the professional qualification of staff. Across the country there were 474 open preschools in 2016.

Family day care (*familjedaghem*) is a home-based form of pedagogical care. There are no specific curricular regulations and no required form of professional qualification for those working as family day carers. Although pedagogical care is not considered part of the education sector, in the Education Act 2010 (Chapter 25 §2) it is stated that pedagogical care “...should stimulate children’s development and learning”. These facilities are for children aged 1–12 years (but mostly used by families with children up to age 3) and are provided by registered family day carers (*dagbarnvårdare*).

Leisure-time centres/after-school centres (*fritidshem*) offer activities, care and education for children attending a preschool class or school before and after school opening hours and during the school holidays. They are open for children aged 6-12 years whose parents work or study or need extra support and serve as a complement to the school and the preschool class. Currently, there are 4,239 centres in the country catering for 461,871 children.

Sources: EPIC 2016
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
*Skolverket 2016a.
Swedish Institute 2015.

Provider structures

The majority of ECEC settings are provided and run by the municipalities. However, since the early 1990s, independent, grant-aided provision (organised by parent or staff co-operatives, foundations, limited companies, and other entities) has increased steadily.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of ECEC provision according to provider type.

Table 1

Sweden: Number of ECEC settings according to provider type, 2015/2016*

Type of setting	Public	Independent, grant-aided	Total
ECEC centre/Preschool (<i>förskola</i>)	7,106	2,668	9,774
Open preschool (<i>öppen förskola</i>)	427	47	474
Preschool class (<i>förskoleklass</i>)	3,063	587	3,650

Source: * Eurydice 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

The participation rates of children under age 3 in centre-based settings have increased steadily since 2005, from 53% to just under two-thirds of the age-group (64.2%) in 2015 (see Table 2). During the same period, the proportion of children aged between 3 and 6 years in ECEC provision rose from roughly three-quarters of the age-group to over 96%.

Table 2

Sweden: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings, 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	22	35
	Over 30 hours	31	52
	No attendance	48	13
2010	1 to 29 hours	18	29
	Over 30 hours	33	65
	No attendance	49	6
2015	1 to 29 hours	21.4	25.9
	Over 30 hours	42.8	70.3
	No attendance	36.0	3.8

Slight deviations from 100% due to roundings.

Table 3

Sweden: Participation rates in early childhood centres (preschools) according to age and provider type, 2015/16**

Age group	Total	Publicly managed in per cent	Independently managed in per cent
1 to under 6 years	83.2	67.0	16.2
1-year olds	47.6	38.4	9.3
2-year olds	87.8	70.7	17.2
3-year olds	92.3	74.2	18.2
4-year olds	93.9	75.6	18.3
5-year olds	94.1	76.0	18.2

Sources: * Eurostat 2017f.
**Eurydice 2017.
Skolverket 2017.

Financing and costs for parents

Funding of ECEC provision is shared between the state and the municipalities. A block grant is transferred from the national level to the municipalities and complemented by funding through tax revenues at the local level. Each municipality then allocates resources to individual settings, which also charge fees to cover part of the costs. Although the general policy in Sweden is fee-paying, a maximum fee (*maxtaxa*) is set annually at the national level to ensure affordability. Fees are calculated according to income and are capped at SEK 1.260 (about 140€) per month.

When the children reach the age of 3, ECEC provision is provided free for a minimum of 525 hours (approximately 15 hours/week). No fees are paid for attending the preschool class. Parents of 6-year olds who are working or studying and whose child attends a preschool class have the right to a subsidised place in a leisure-time centre (*fritidshem*).

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall, and E. Lloyd 2013.
Swedish Institute 2016.

Staff-child ratios

Swedish ECEC provision is internationally well-known for its favourable staff-child ratios. However, there are no national requirements. Instead, the municipalities are responsible for regulating criteria for group size and the number of children per staff member. The practised ratios may vary across settings, depending on the group composition, e.g. the number of children with special educational needs, or the number of immigrant children with special language needs. The monitoring of staff-child ratios is compulsory and part of ongoing evaluation policies. In early childhood centres (preschools) *Skolverket* suggests new recommendations for group size: six to 12 children for the ages 1-3 years and nine to 15 children for the ages 4-5 years. However, there are no recommendations about adult/child ratio. Since the suggested new group sizes are still recommendations, municipalities do not have to adhere to them. National statistics indicate a staff-child-ratio of 5.2 children per staff member in preschools and 16.4 children per staff member in preschool classes.*

In 2016, the group size decreased by nearly one child per group and is now the lowest since many years**. At the same time, the number of qualified and certified Preschool Teachers working in preschools has also decreased, which may have implications for the quality of the education offered.

Sources: *Eurydice 2017.
Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall, and E. Lloyd 2013.
OECD 2015.
**Skolverket 2016b, 2016c.

Curricular frameworks

Early childhood centres and preschool classes in primary schools are regulated through two different curricula.

The curriculum for preschools was first issued in 1998, revised in 2010 and is currently under revision again. All early childhood centres in Sweden are required to work according to this document. Philosophically, the early childhood curriculum is based on the notion of children as competent, active and engaged learners. The main approach is a play-based pedagogy, with a strong emphasis on children's participation at all levels. Areas for development and learning include: identity; independence; motivation and dispositions to play and learn; social competence; culture, language, aesthetic forms of expression; motor skills, health, body awareness; understanding the surrounding world; nature, mathematics, technology. The goals set down are goals to be aimed for and not goals to achieve. Consequently, they are formulated at a relatively abstract level, but Preschool Teachers are responsible for organising the pedagogical work in line with the curricular goals.

In the 2010 revised version of the curriculum, more specific objectives were included for children's development in language and mathematics, and in natural sciences and technology. The guidelines for staff responsibilities were clarified, both at individual teacher level and at team level. New sections referred explicitly to documentation, evaluation and quality development, and also to the responsibilities of centre heads. As part of a system of policy steering by goals, regional and centre-specific working programmes complement the national curriculum. In 2017, a review of the curriculum was initiated and a revised version will be presented to the Government in 2018. It is expected in particular to take into account children's rights, disabilities, the rights of minorities and of the Sami as indigenous people.

Goals and guidelines for the preschool classes are set down in the Curriculum for Compulsory Schools, Preschool Classes and After-school Centres (*Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011*, revised 2016). The goals to be pursued remain goals to aim for and not goals to attain. A small number of preschool classes work according to a designated approach, such as Montessori or Waldorf. The Preschool Teacher draws up a plan of work related to the national goals, for which the school principal has overall responsibility.

Sources: Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
Karlsson Lohmander 2017.
Skolverket 2016d.
Vallberg-Roth, A.-C. 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

According to the Education Act, a basic principle of each level of education is access to an equivalent education for all. Children with disabilities or in need of special support are therefore not treated or defined as a group that is any different from other pupils and their rights are not stated separately. Consequently, they are integrated into mainstream early childhood provision, either in a regular group or in a special group with fewer children and access to specialist staff (e.g. psychologists, speech therapists). The municipalities are responsible for providing the necessary resources, and children with disabilities have a right to priority access to early childhood provision. They should receive education and care according to their specific needs. Children with severe and multiple disabilities are entitled to personal assistance. For each child in need of special support, a continuously evaluated action plan is drawn up by teachers, in consultation with the children, their parents and specialist support teachers.

Children with a background of migration

In 2011, the number of preschool-age children with a family language other than Swedish totalled 85,734, representing roughly 19% of the overall preschool-age population**. With the aim of supporting active bilingualism and the children's bicultural identity, many municipalities have a policy of providing home language tuition for these children. Roughly one third of municipalities offer this provision for 21.5% of immigrant children in preschools.

In 2015, a good third of children under age 4 had a background of family migration. *Table 4* shows different groupings of children according to whether the child and/or the parents were born in Sweden or elsewhere.

Table 4

Sweden: Children 0-4 years and total population according to child's and parents' place of birth, 2015*

	0-4 years	%	Total population	%
Foreign born	21,314	3.6	1,676,264	17.0
Born in Sweden with two foreign born parents	102,856	17.5	510,756	5.2
Born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one foreign born parent	83,990	14.3	724,841	7.4
Born in Sweden with two parents born in Sweden	378,058	64.5	6,939,156	70.4
Total	586,218		9,851,017	

Looking at the child population under 7 years of age, 9% (calculated on the basis of Eurostat data) had a non-Swedish background.* The largest group of children with a background of migration come from Asian countries (30%); slightly more than one fifth (21%) come from an EU country (other Nordic countries excluded); approximately 17% from African countries; and roughly 10% from other Nordic countries.

Sources: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusion 2015.
 **Eurydice 2016.
 Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
 *Statistics Sweden 2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

According to the Education Act and the Swedish Preschool Curriculum, the quality of all preschools must be regularly and systematically documented, reviewed and evaluated, and steps for further improvement developed. The Swedish National Agency for Education has the task of ensuring that the municipalities and the private providers comply with the legislation and regulations relating to early childhood education and care. The Swedish School Inspectorate has supervisory and external monitoring responsibility for all levels of the education system, including preschools. This includes a self-evaluation by the municipality regarding various aspects of the quality in preschools. Self-evaluation instruments vary from municipality to municipality. However, centre-level self-assessment is not regulated at the national level. ECEC settings can decide whether it should take place, although centre heads are expected to encourage this. Sweden thus has a mixed approach towards monitoring and assessment, combining national quality audits with locally appropriate quality control.

Evaluations at the centre level are not officially expected to focus on child-related outcomes, more on overall quality enhancement. Criteria may include deciding on which curriculum areas and goals they should be focusing on to meet the needs and interests of the children, whether the goals they set themselves for the previous evaluation have been achieved, and how the current evaluation phase will be assessed (documentation, parent survey, discussions with the children.)

The Swedish Institute for Educational Research is a government agency established to provide staff in preschools (and other forms of school and adult education) with research-based information to improve the planning, implementation and evaluation of children's learning and their own pedagogical activities. This involves e.g. examining recent research in the field; disseminating and transmitting robust findings in a form relevant for practitioners; identifying areas needing

practice-centred research and announcing and allocating funding for high quality scientific studies for this.

The Swedish government has identified areas for research, one of them being migration and integration. In order to meet current and future societal challenges of increased migration and to maintain a democratic and inclusive society, the knowledge base about diversity and integration needs to be improved. In this respect education in general and early childhood education in particular play an important role. In its recent research bill the Government has proposed a ten year national research programme on migration and integration.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
Karlsson Lohmander, M. 2017.
Lunneblad, J. 2017.
OECD 2015.
Regeringen 2016.
Swedish Institute for Educational Research 2016.
Vallberg-Roth, A.-C. 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave (*gravitetsspenning*) is compulsory for two weeks. These can be taken before and after the child's birth. Under certain circumstances – also over a longer period of time – mothers are paid 77.6% of their previous monthly earnings.

For the care of other children in the family, or in order to be at the clinic during the birth period, one of the parents (or another person) is granted ten days of **temporary leave** (*tillfällig föräldrapenning*) within the first 60 days following childbirth, also paid at a rate of 77.6% of previous earnings (max. 34,495€).

Sweden is well known across the world for its generous parental leave.

Parental leave (*föräldraförsäkring*) for 240 days can be granted to either parent until their child is 18 months old. In 2008, a Gender Equality Bonus (*jämställdhetsbonus*) was introduced, with economic compensation if parental leave days are shared more equally by both parents. Up to 30 days can be taken by both parents simultaneously (*dubbeldagar*) until the first birthday of the child.

195 days per parent are wage-based (77.6% of the earnings up to a ceiling of 45,852€ per year). This paid leave requires parents to have had an income of over 25.60€ a day for 240 days before the expected date of delivery. The 45 remaining days are paid at a flat rate of 18€ daily. As an incentive for both women and men to take up parental leave, an economic incentive of 5€ tax free is awarded for each day the parents use the leave equally.

Since the beginning of 2014, parental leave can be taken up to the child's 12th birthday. However, only 96 days may be taken after the child's 4th birthday. For parents whose children are born in 2016 or later, 90 days are reserved exclusively for one parent and cannot be transferred to the other parent (so called mother's or father's quota). Leave can be taken in one continuous period or as several blocks of time, even for single days. Parents may work alongside only if they take the leave days part-time.

Paid parental leave was introduced in 1974 in Sweden, which was one of the first countries to do so. Today it is used by almost all families. The majority of parents take the main part of the leave before their child reaches the age of 2 years. As from the child's 1st birthday, there is an entitlement to ECEC on a full-time basis for employed parents either in a centre-based or home-based setting.

In 2016, 23% of eligible mothers made use of an average of 39 days of maternity leave. 75% of the fathers or same-sex parents or other persons close to the family made use of the 10 days 'baby time'.

In 2016, 45% of the persons making use of the leave available to them were men. They were mostly fathers with higher education or fathers whose partners had higher levels of education and higher income. This means that the take-up of leave by men increased, but mothers took on average 89 days of leave whereas fathers only took 39 days.

Sources: Duvander, A-Z., L. Haas, and C.P. Hwang 2017.
EPIC 2016.
OECD 2017.

Historical shifts and junctures

1854	Opening of first crèche in Stockholm for the children of poor working mothers. Early establishments were run by foundations and churches.
1890	First Froebelian kindergartens (<i>barnträdgård</i>) opened, providing part-time education for middle class families.
1904	First public kindergarten opens at the Froebel Training College in Norrköping; it is open for all children and with low or no costs for parents.
1932	Alva Myrdal proposes an integrated form of publicly funded provision with well-educated staff, to provide for children of <i>all</i> working mothers.
1943	First state grants are issued for provision and training; main responsibility for ECEC expansion comes under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the National Board of Health and Welfare.
1950s	Majority of mothers at home; if kindergartens are used, mostly only part-day
1960s	Women start returning to the labour market in the context of a fast-growing economy. Beginning of significant expansion of ECEC provision.
1968 – 1972	A major report issued by the National Commission on Child Care (<i>barnstugeutredningen</i>) sets out the goals, organisation, content and practices of early childhood education for the first time, proposing the integration of day care centres and kindergartens.
1974	Introduction of paid parental leave – one of the first countries to do so.
1975	Preschool Act (<i>förskolelagen</i>) guarantees all 6-year olds 525 hours per year of state-funded early education provision provided by the municipalities (<i>kommuner</i>).
1991	Local Government Act; decentralisation and more responsibility for the municipalities;
1995	New Childcare Act: <i>kommuner</i> are obliged to provide an ECEC place for all children from age one whose parents are working or studying, within four months of application
1996	Responsibility for ECEC transferred from Ministry of Social Affairs to Ministry of Education
1998	First preschool curriculum introduced (<i>Läroplan för förskolan, Lpfö98</i>); preschool classes set up in schools for 6-year olds (voluntary attendance)
2000 ff.	Universal entitlement to a place in ECEC – initially for children of non-working parents or those on parental leave on a part-time basis (15 hours/week)
2002	Maximum cap (<i>maxtaxa</i>) on parental fees introduced
2003	Free universal ECEC provision for 4- and 5-year olds (525 hours/year)
2010	Free universal ECEC provision extended to 3-year olds; first (significant) revision of the preschool curriculum
2016	Second (moderate) revision of the preschool curriculum
2017	A further review of the curriculum commissioned, with expected report to the Government in 2018.

Sources: Karlsson Lohmander, M. 2004.
Moss, P. and J. Bennett 2010.
Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall, and E. Lloyd 2013.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Sweden

Country expert assessment by Maelis Karlsson Lohmander

- The first and foremost challenge in Sweden relates to staffing shortages (see also the ECEC Workforce Report). The current lack of qualified staff has severe implications for the overall quality of preschool education and for the possibility of offering equal education of high quality across the country. This also impacts the staff working in the preschools, who are faced with less favourable working conditions and increased pressure. One consequence is a rise in the number of staff on sick leave. Therefore the recruitment and retention of qualified staff, not only licensed Preschool Teachers but also Childcare Workers, are major problems which policymakers at the municipal and national level are struggling to solve.
- In the light of increased migration and growing numbers of foreign-born families living in Sweden, a national challenge is how to best provide preschool education for the children of asylum seekers and migrants. Linked to this challenge is the need for increased and improved cooperation between the various actors and public services in the Swedish welfare system to facilitate migrant families' inclusion in society. Preschools are often the first place of encounter with this system. Although CPD provision is increasingly focusing on such challenges, Preschool Teachers and Childcare Workers also need supportive working conditions in order to maintain the special character of participatory pedagogy with a holistic perspective on care, wellbeing and learning as shared meaning-making processes.
- Group size in preschool has been a recurring topic in public debates. Over the years, and as a consequence of various reforms such as children's entitlement to a place in preschool, group size has increased. In 2016, in response to the debate, the National Agency for Education proposed recommendations for group size: 6-12 children for the ages 1-3 years and 9-15 children for the ages 4-5 years*. The municipalities are free to adjust group size according to local needs. Over the past year, average group size has in fact decreased by one child per group.

Source: * Regierungskansliet 2016.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Sweden totalled 9,851,017. Since 1995 (8,816,381), there has been a slight but steady increase in the total population.

Children under age 7

Since compulsory schooling in Sweden starts at age 7, data in this section include children up to age 7 from available sources, whereas otherwise the demographic data refer to children up to age 6.

In 2016, children under age 3 comprised 3.6% of the total population, and children under 7 years of age 8.4%. For almost 20 years, these proportions have been higher than the respective EU-average.

Table 5

Sweden: Children under 7 years of age, 2016

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	115,878
1-year olds	117,932
2-year olds	117,126
Total under age 3	350,936
3-year olds	117,959
4-year olds	117,323
5-year olds	121,939
6-year olds	118,812
Total 3 to under age 7	476,033
Total 0- to under 7 year olds	826,969

Table 6

Sweden: Children under 7 years of age – share in total population, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3 years	4.0	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.6	3.0
3 to under 7 years	5.5	4.7	4.1	4.2	4.8	4.2
0 to under 7 years	9.6	8.0	7.4	7.3	8.4	7.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, almost 90% of households in Sweden with children under age 6 were couple households. Single households accounted for 10% of all households. The majority of these were single mother households (7%), whereas single father households accounted for approximately 3% only.

Table 7

Sweden: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent*
All households	872,000	
Couple households	767,000	88.0
Other household type	18,000	2.1
Single households, total	87,600	10.0
Single households, women	60,700	7.0
Single households, men	26,900	3.1

* own calculations

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the total employment rate for men in Sweden aged 15 to 65 years was 77%, for women 74%. In the same year, 78.9% of all women with children under age 6 were employed – the highest rate in the European Union (EU28). The employment rate for men with children under age 6 (92.6%) is also one of the highest in the European Union.

Table 8:

Sweden: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Sweden	2005	N/A	N/A
	2010	75.2	91.6
	2015	78.9	92.6
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 14.7% of all children under age 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, placing Sweden well below the EU28 average in the same year and age-group (24.7%). The proportion of people in the total population at risk of poverty was 16%.

Sources: Eurostat 2017d.

² “At risk of poverty or social exclusion” refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.
[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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UKRAINE

ECEC workforce profile

Country report author

Natalia Sofiy

Ukrainian Step by Step Office, Kyiv

Citation suggestion:

Sofiy, N. 2018. "Ukraine – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1156-1173.

Funded by:

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Note from the editors:

In official translations of government documents, early childhood settings in Ukraine are often described as *Pre-schools* or *Preschool Institutions* and core practitioners as *Preschool Teachers*.

In the **see**pro-r reports, the preferred terms for countries with a unitary ECEC system are *ECEC Centres* and *Early Childhood Teachers* or *Educators* or *Pedagogues*, depending on the country-specific tradition. For countries with a bi-sectoral or multi-sectoral system, the preferred terms are: *Nurseries* or *Infant-Toddler Centres* for children under 3 years of age and *Pre-primary Education* or *Kindergartens* for 3- to 6-year olds (if the latter is the term most in use). For staff the respective preferred terms are *Childcare Worker* and *Pre-primary Teacher*.

The distinction is made because the English-language term 'preschool' is used differently in different country contexts. In some, the translated term refers to a unitary ECEC institution in a unified ECEC system. In other countries it refers to an institutional setting only for the two or three years prior to school entry.

In this report, the term *Early Childhood Teacher* has been chosen to describe the main core practitioners in the Ukrainian ECEC system.

1. ECEC governance

Ukrainian legislation on early childhood education and care is based on the Constitution of Ukraine and comprises the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Verkhovna Rada 1991; 2016), the Law "On Preschool Education" (Verkhovna Rada 2001; Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2015) and other regulatory acts. ECEC is high on the government agenda.

Ukraine has a partially unified system of early childhood education and care. Both centre-based settings for the under-threes – nurseries and nursery-kindergartens – and preschool/pre-primary education for children from 3 to 6/7 years of age come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (*Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy*). The latter are part of the state education system.

Home-based childcare settings and health support childcare centres for children under 4 years of age fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (*Ministerstvo okhorony zdorov'ya Ukrainy*).

National ECEC policies are determined by the legislation mentioned above, and regional state (*oblast*) administrations (including Kyiv state city administrations, local executive and self-governing bodies) are responsible for the management of ECEC settings: almost 99% of ECEC settings are funded and managed by local authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

According to the Law on Preschool Education, staff in ECEC settings comprise:

Early Childhood Teachers (*vykhovatel*) are the core practitioners and they have to have a higher education degree (minimum Bachelor's degree, optional Master's) to work with children aged 0 to 6 years in centre-based settings.

Each early childhood institution/kindergarten is managed by a **Centre Head/Director** (*zaviduvach*) who is responsible for the organisation of the pedagogical (methodological) programme and administrative work. She/he also cooperates with the parents' committee, local administrative bodies, non-governmental organisations, and other educational institutions.

Pedagogical Mentors, known in Ukraine as **Teacher Methodologists** (*vyxovatel-metodyst/starshyj vyxovatel*), are also part of the ECEC staff and have supervisory duties in the centres.

Furthermore, a range of **support staff** are employed, such as Special Needs Teachers, Speech Therapists, Educational Psychologists, Social Pedagogues, Craft Instructors, Sports Instructors, and medical staff.

In 2016 (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No 526 from 23.08.2016), the new position of **Early Childhood Teaching Assistants** was introduced for inclusive classrooms. All the necessary documents (job descriptions, etc.) are still in the process of adoption. Their tasks comprise assisting teachers in developing individual educational plans for children with special needs. Currently, the qualification requirements for this position are the same as those for the Early Childhood Teachers, although there is a clear understanding that this needs to be changed.

Table 1 distinguishes between different types of contact staff and also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this section).

Table 1

Ukraine: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
Vykhovatel Early Childhood Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Yasla – dytyachyy sadok</i> Nursery/nursery-kindergarten 2 months – 6/7 years <i>Doshkil'nyy navchal'nyy zaklad</i> Early childhood education setting/ kindergarten 3-6 (7) years <i>Spetsial'nyy doshkil'nyy navchal'nyy zaklad</i> Special early childhood education setting/kindergarten 2–7 (8) years <i>Tsentr rozvytku dytyny</i> Child development centre 5-6 (7) years	Core practitioner with group responsibility Centre Head	2 months – 6/7 years	Bachelor, 4 (or 3) years university study route ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
<i>Asystent vykhovatel</i> Early Childhood Teaching Assistant	<i>Yasla – dytyachyy sadok</i> Nursery/nursery-kindergarten 2 months – 6/7 years <i>Doshkil'nyy navchal'nyy zaklad</i> Early childhood education setting/ kindergarten 3-6 (7) years	Qualified co-worker	2 months – 6/7 years	Bachelor, 4 (or 3) years university study route ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, 2014.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED ¹ level
<i>Pomichnyk vykhovatelya</i> Early Childhood Technical Assistant	<i>Yasla – dytyachyy sadok</i> Nursery/infant-toddler centre Birth – 3 years 2 months – 6/7 years <i>Doshkil'nyy navchal'nyy zaklad</i> Early childhood education setting/ kindergarten 3-6 (7) years <i>Spetsial'nyy doshkil'nyy navchal'nyy zaklad</i> Special early childhood education setting 2 – 7 (8) years	Unqualified co-worker	n/a ²	No formal IPS requirements

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

According to the Statistical Bulletin, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, on 1st January 2016 the ECEC workforce comprised 133,108 persons. Of those with a two-year post-secondary qualification (40% altogether), 34.6% (53,253) were Early Childhood Teachers and 5.4% (7,181) were Special Needs Teachers or Early Childhood Teaching Assistants or 'others'. Of those with a Bachelor's or Master's degree (60% altogether), 49.6% (79,855) were Early Childhood Teachers and 10.4% (13,832) were Special Needs Teachers or Early Childhood Teaching Assistants.

Table 2

Ukraine: Structural composition of ECEC workforce - qualifications, gender, ethnicity

Staff category	Year/provision/proportion of workforce*
Staff with specialist higher education degree	2016: approx. 60%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	2016: approx. 40%
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary)	n/a
Staff with non-specialist qualification (other qualification)	No disaggregated data available

² n/a not applicable

Staff category	Year/provision/proportion of workforce*
Unqualified staff	No disaggregated data available
Specialist support staff (e.g. special needs teachers)	No disaggregated data available
Male staff	No data available
Staff with a background of migration	No systematically compiled national data

*Source: Statistical Bulletin/State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2016.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

Initial professional studies for prospective Early Childhood Teachers are provided by Pedagogical Colleges, Pedagogical Universities and Classic Universities.

The minimum admission requirement of *Pedagogical Colleges* for Bachelor degree programmes is a completed secondary education. Some of the pedagogical colleges have signed transfer agreements with pedagogical universities or classic universities. According to these agreements, holders of Junior Specialist diplomas from pedagogical colleges are granted priority and may enter university level teacher education studies in the third semester. *Pedagogical Universities* train teachers for lower and upper secondary schools, and colleges. However, many of the pedagogical universities along with the pedagogical colleges provide training programmes for Early Childhood and Primary School Teachers. Bachelor degree diploma holders may continue their pedagogical education at universities to pursue a Specialist or Master's degree.

Universities provide training for teachers within the study programme "Education"; classic universities may have pedagogical institutes as part of their structure. Bachelor degree programmes at universities have a nominal study length of four years (three years for persons with the Junior Specialist diploma). Specialist and Master's degree programmes normally take one year to complete; in some cases the Ministry of Education and Science has approved a length of 1.5 years. The duration of the Master's degree programme for the holders of a Specialist degree may be determined individually, based on the differences between Specialist and Master's degree curricula.

Persons with a basic secondary education and sufficient knowledge and skills in ECEC activities may enroll in a **Junior Specialist** study programme (2.5 to three years) to obtain a Bachelor's degree. The usual length of a higher education **Bachelor** programme is four years (240 ECTS points), although for the early childhood field only 180 ECTS points are required. In ECEC settings all graduates perform the same duties and tasks.

Table 3

Ukraine: Early Childhood Teacher

<p>Job title in Ukrainian: Vykhovatel</p> <p>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: completed secondary education (9 or 11 years of schooling)</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years at a <i>Pedagogical College</i> for students with 9 years of secondary education; 3 years for those with 11 years of secondary education. The regular length of studies for Bachelor degree programmes at pedagogical colleges is 4 years for full-time students and 5 years for part-time students and distant learning students.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>4 years (3 years for persons with the Junior Specialist diploma) study route "Education" at a <i>university</i></p>

Job title in Ukrainian: *Vykhovatel*
Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional

This study route can be followed by a 1 (or 1.5) year Specialist or Master Degree programme.

Award: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education

ECTS points: 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0112

ISCED 2011: 6

Main ECEC workplaces: Nursery/infant-toddler-centres (2 months – 6/7 years), early childhood education settings/kindergartens (3-6 (7) years, special kindergarten (2 – 7 (8) years), child development centre (5-6 (7) years).

Note: Higher education institutions are not required to provide employment for all graduates. Graduates are free to apply for a post of their choice, with the exception of those studying with the support of state funds or local budgets. These graduates are obliged to work at the proposed post in accordance with a procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 992, 1996). They sign an agreement with the administration of a higher educational institution to work in the state sector for at least three years on completion of their studies. Graduates who agree to work for at least three years in rural areas or towns are provided free housing, heating and electricity by the state within the established legal norms (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2011b). If graduates refuse and do not wish to take up the proposed employment, they must reimburse the full cost of their education to the state budget (Paragraph 2 of the Presidential Decree 1996).

Centre Heads and Pedagogical Advisers (Teacher Methodologists) follow the same study route as Early Childhood Teachers (see above, *Table 3*).

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

Early Childhood Teacher (*Vykhovatel*)

Competencies

Competencies to be acquired by Early Childhood Teachers are generally organised according to subject specific (professional) competencies and general competencies (generic competencies, transferable skills).

There are also other equally important, universal competencies that students learn to master during the IPS programmes. These apply to all levels of the teaching profession and include:

- learning to learn,
- mastering a foreign language and basic information technologies,
- communicating with children, parents and colleagues,
- being able to look for and use information independently,
- following the strategy of life-long learning,
- being able to reflect,
- taking into account the individuality of children,
- being able to organise materials and present them appropriately,
- determining the child's developmental level,
- establishing a stimulating and age-appropriate environment for the children without forcing or accelerating the learning process.

Graduates of the Bachelor's study route on early childhood education should be able to:

- analyse socially significant problems and processes and be able to use research methods in professional and social activities;
- organise their work on a scientific basis, using the newest methods;
- have a basic knowledge of employment relations,
- cooperate with colleagues and to work in a team,
- know the basics of pedagogical skills;

- reflect on their own experience and analyse personal capabilities,
- acquire new knowledge, using modern information technologies;
- implement the most appropriate teaching approaches in their daily work with children;
- improve their own personal and professional competencies and teaching skills;
- provide appropriate approaches for children with developmental difficulties, disadvantaged children or those who are experiencing or have experienced crisis and conflict situations.

Curriculum

The Bachelor study route comprises different educational blocks. The first is a general section aimed at the overall development of personality, the formation of values, leadership skills, self-knowledge, and a child study. The second block comprises general pedagogical knowledge and includes psychology and pedagogy. During this block a course on early childhood pedagogy begins which includes the intellectual development of the child and possibilities of influencing children's development.

Graduates of the Bachelor degree programme on early childhood education should have knowledge about:

- basic sciences in the field of humanities and social-economical sciences, as well as ethical and legal standards that govern man's relationship to society, the environment;
- the nature and social significance of their future profession;
- a holistic view of the processes and phenomena occurring in society and nature; the ability to use these principles when deciding appropriate educational objectives;
- scientific understanding of healthy lifestyles, the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle;
- cultures and laws of thinking.

Currently, the curricular guidelines for the IPS of prospective Early Childhood Teachers issued by the state are developed by researchers, methodologists³ and other experts. These may differ in format, approach and content. Pedagogical-didactic approaches include: lectures, workshops, debates, practical lessons, seminars and laboratory classes, dialogues, business simulations, conferences, collective, individual and group consultations, as well as various types of evaluation.

The main forms of organising the educational process are: training sessions, independent work of students, practical training, and assessment and examination measures.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

In Ukraine, core practitioners working in ECEC institutions need the full formal qualification as an Early Childhood Teacher. There are no alternative qualifying routes apart from the ones described above which allow for a more flexible approach or accept alternative entry requirements. Currently, men and women without a formal qualification are only permitted to work as Early Childhood Technical Assistants. Technical staff usually receive some form of on-the-job training while working in a kindergarten.

Centre Heads of early childhood education settings/kindergartens are required to complete a higher pedagogical qualification which may be gained at a pedagogical college or a pedagogical university.

³ Methodologists/Pedagogical Advisers work either at regional In-service Teacher Training Institutes or at local educational authorities.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

The form, duration and organisation of workplace-based learning in the IPS of ECEC core practitioners are defined in the curricular framework provided by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine (1993). Depending on the particular course of studies (Bachelor, Specialist, Master), students' workplace-based learning may focus on educational, technological, developmental, pedagogical, economic or research aspects of ECEC.

According to the curriculum, the fourth year of the study course comprises a year-long practical placement for all those studying to become an Early Childhood Teacher. First year students have summer field practice lasting one week. Students of the second and third years have workplace-based learning for three to four weeks. For this purpose, colleges and universities sign agreements with ECEC settings of all types of service providers. The educational and supervisory (methodical) management and implementation of the programme is ensured by an appropriate department or subject committee of the collaborating higher education institution. During workplace-based learning students perform tasks in different areas of ECEC.

There are different forms of students' self-assessment and external assessment which are used to evaluate the workplace-based learning: questionnaires, students' presentations of their work-placed based learning experiences at a final conference, and teachers' observations. External assessment is based on certain predetermined criteria. Currently, the assessment of students' work-placed based learning is not formalised.

During workplace-based learning students are expected to develop competencies and knowledge in following areas:

Table 4

Ukraine: Competencies and knowledge in workplace-based learning

<i>Underpinning values</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of different values • general cultural education, wide range of interests • understanding the nature and social significance of pedagogical professions • understanding the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and adopting them as their own values
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpersonal communication, emotional stability and tolerance • working in a team
<i>Information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • searching for and processing information from different sources to consider a specific issue
<i>Research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performing scientific research tasks based on analytical and synthetic approaches, scholarship, critical thinking • implementation of research results in the daily activities of the ECEC centre
<i>Self-education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting on one's own practice, self-organisation/management
<i>Organisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to plan, organise, coordinate, monitor and evaluate activities • capacity for cognitive flexibility, situational (immediate) problem-solving taking into account changed conditions and circumstances in order to reach a decision • ability to overcome stereotypical thinking
<i>Psycho-pedagogy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic knowledge of pedagogy and psychology and the ability to implement them • laws of personal development in different age stages
<i>Methodology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying basic philosophical, psychological, pedagogical and methodological knowledge and skills
<i>Inclusive education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to demonstrate understanding of inclusive values • knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts and theories of inclusive education

Mentoring support

There are two types of mentorship in early childhood education settings/kindergartens: (1) for newly-qualified teachers and (2) for all team members through a Pedagogical Mentor/ Teacher Methodologist (see *Section 8.3*). These tasks are included in the annual plan of the ECEC centre. Specific mentoring arrangements for students, who spend their practical placement in a kindergarten, are provided by the head of the host setting.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development is regulated by the Regulation on the Certification of Teaching Staff (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2010). In August 2001, the Ministry confirmed that all teachers are required to attend compulsory courses at specialised departments of teacher training institutions, institutes, and universities, or at advanced training and retraining institutes and at In-Service Teacher Training (INSETT) institutions at least once every five years. There is no clearly defined annual allocation of time that should be devoted to professional development. Considering the rapid pace of change nowadays, the time span of once every five years is no longer appropriate. Therefore, in the period between courses of professional development, regional meetings are arranged, usually every four months. These are included in the municipal (district/city) annual plan.

Paragraph 1.7 of the Regulation on the Certification of Teaching Staff (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2010) stipulates that teachers should be assessed and certificated once every five years or, if a teacher wishes to achieve a higher status more quickly, she/he can apply to be assessed out of turn, but not earlier than one year after the previous assessment. This procedure is called *re-certification*.

In order for a teacher to receive a **promotion** she/he should attend an In-Service Teacher Training Institution course and, following the course, give demonstration lessons before a committee of fellow teachers, school administrators and a representative from the local education authority. The committee takes into account all aspects of the teacher's professional activity, the certificate of attendance from the In-Service Teacher Training Institution course and the lessons observed. The committee then decides whether the candidate's work corresponds to the level of the category applied for and whether to grant the promotion.

In-Service Teacher Training education serves to raise the qualification and training and increase the specialisation of pedagogical staff. It is carried out by a variety of educational programmes and projects on issues of pedagogical skills, innovative technologies and interactive forms and methods of training, information technology, advances in the theory and practice of psychology, pedagogics, teaching methods. Courses may be also held through distance learning and the effective use of information and communications technology (Ministry of Education of Ukraine 1993).

Main objectives regarding formal CPD courses for all levels of the teaching profession:

- developing standards of postgraduate education oriented towards the modernisation of the professional development and training of teachers and school leaders;
- implementing modern technology in the professional development and training of educational, scientific and pedagogical staff in the educational system according to the requirements of innovative development in education;
- ensuring the proactive nature of the training of educational, scientific and pedagogical staff meeting the needs of education reform and the challenges of modern social development (Decree of the President of Ukraine 2013).

Teachers' professional development is **financed** through regional and municipal budgets. These local administrative bodies decide how many teachers from their areas should attend CPD courses in any one year. Local authorities pay the In-Service Teacher Training institution a lump sum per trainee. They also cover expenses if the trainee has to live away from home. If the local budget cannot afford to pay for training, they do not send teachers to an INSETT. In rare cases, where budgets are low, local administrations pay for training fees only and the trainees have to bear the remaining costs. The cost of attending seminars, workshops, conferences and other forms of professional development outside the state requirements has to be covered individually.

In all Ukrainian educational institutions, including kindergartens, CPD is considered an integral part of their professional work. However, CPD activities **do not take place during working hours** but after closing hours or during school holidays. Each teacher is expected to present a professional development plan focusing on a specific problem he/she would like to study. The local educational authorities evaluate the professional development plans of each institution, since these may influence their decisions about accreditation of the kindergarten or school.

Teachers appreciate the on-site activities provided by the INSETT staff in their kindergartens. This **kindergarten-based training** is very popular especially with teachers living in rural areas; it means they can benefit from the INSETT programme without having to leave their families. Moreover, the low cost of kindergarten-based in-service training is attractive for educational authorities and its development is encouraged. Also, in this model, kindergarten teams can ask the institute to design a programme which corresponds to a specific problem or to the latest local or governmental policy initiatives. Consequently, the training takes into account the teachers' interests and thus contributes towards improving the quality of professional development.

There are no problems regarding **participation** in professional development courses, since in most cases access depends entirely on the person's own wish. CPD activities are acknowledged in terms of **career advancement**. The INSETT institutes also train candidates for a certain job category and award them the relevant certificate. However, the institutes do not decide on promotion in the profession.

INSETT institutes regularly offer a range of modular courses designed together with experienced teachers. The main objective is to share their ideas and the outcomes with the teachers interested in the problem. Trainees thus have the possibility of choosing the modules which interest them most. The INSETT institute staff are encouraged to evaluate these modules and present the results in professional journals (or as part of a doctoral thesis). When experienced teachers design such modules, they are assessed and may be awarded a promotion. Short teacher training modules are called "thematic courses". INSETT institutes provide training courses of varying length and are free to determine the number of hours spent on each topic, provided all relevant subjects are covered.

There are also CPD formats specifically designed by INSETT for Early Childhood Teachers which can take place **on-site in the ECEC institution**. Sometimes courses are also organised for ECEC Technical Assistants.

In February-March of each year, the regional INSETT institute conducts a questionnaire among ECEC staff regarding **possible themes**. In May-June these themes are approved and as from September they are included in the INSETT programme. Currently, one of the prioritised topics is the role of the ECEC Teacher Assistant in kindergartens.

Requirements for Kindergarten Principals

The Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" (Ministry of Education of Ukraine 2001) sets out the requirements for the position of Kindergarten Principal/Head: The Centre Head has to be a citizen of Ukraine, have a qualification from a higher education institution not lower than the Specialist level, at least three years of relevant teaching experience, possess organisational skills, and have a stable physical and mental state which does not impede the performance of

professional duties. Successful candidates can be assigned as a head of kindergarten regardless of the type and provider of the institution. In most cases an experienced Pedagogical Mentor/Teacher Methodologist becomes a Centre Head.

However, the Law does not provide for specific qualification requirements for different kinds of teaching position (a decree, which had approved this, was repealed), only for job descriptions for each position. This means that every kindergarten has an annual work plan which provides for different positions and work tasks for teachers based on their experience, qualifications, etc. (consultations, seminars, round tables, workshops, etc.).

Three current reforms/trends/debates regarding the continuing professional development of staff in ECEC provision

Since independence in 1991, the Ministry of Education has paid a lot of attention to reforming the system of teacher education/training to accommodate the needs of a society marked by social, economic and cultural changes. In particular, in 2011 the State programme “Teacher” was developed (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2011b). It envisaged coordinated efforts to improve the quality of teacher training in Ukraine. The programme is currently being implemented.

Other reforms are related to the development of the new Law of Ukraine “On Education” issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in 2017, which will probably come into force in September 2017 (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2017). One of the main reforms foreseen by this Law is the *de-centralisation of the system of in-service training*. Until now, teachers (both from kindergartens and schools) were encouraged to improve their professional knowledge only through courses at the regional INSETT institutes, which were free of charge for them. The frequency of such in-service training was once every five years. According to the new Law, teachers should now attend a CPD course once a year, though currently there are no specifications in terms of days. 50% of CPD time should be based in regional INSETT institutes, and teachers should have free choice over the other half of the required CPD and costs may be covered through a voucher system which is still to be implemented. Although these changes are more articulated for school teachers because of the focus of the reforms, since the mentioned Law is the basic one, these changes will also be relevant for ECEC Teachers.

The new Law of Ukraine “On Education” envisages extending the introduction of the structural reforms to the ECEC system, e.g. by introducing new educational standards, which are currently under public debate.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

The main changes relating to ECEC staffing were caused by adopting the changes to the Law “On Preschool Education”, which introduced the concept of “inclusive education” as well as the position of Early Childhood Teacher Assistant in 2015.

This position is included in the list of pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical staff as approved by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (July 29, 2015, No. 531) and follows the staff norms of kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Science 20.05.2016, No. 544).

If there is at least one inclusive group in a kindergarten, an Early Childhood Teacher Assistant can be employed.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

In 2013, a comprehensive research study of the system of ECEC in Ukraine was conducted with funding support from the International Renaissance Foundation (Kyiv).

Comprehensive study of the early childhood education system in Ukraine

Source: International Renaissance Foundation 2013 (see *References*).

Background: The study was conducted by the Ukrainian charitable institution “Public Social Council” from 2012 to 2013 with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.

Aims: The study investigated the system of early childhood education in terms of governance, funding, quality assurance, implementation of curricula and parents’ engagement. Furthermore, staff provision, methodological support and research activities were analysed.

Procedure: Qualitative methods (expert interviews and focus group discussions) and document analysis were used. The study took place in Kyiv and Donetsk as well as in the Autonomous Region of Crimea; 129 persons participated and included:

- staff of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and Ministry of Education of the Republic of Crimea;
- experts of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine;
- heads of the departments at higher education institutions;
- representatives of local educational authorities;
- Centre Heads and Early Childhood Teachers of state and private provision;
- parents of children who attended ECEC provision.

Findings:

- Existing legislation on early childhood education does not meet current requirements and needs to be updated and revised.
- The current state funding system is not effective, caused partly by the lack of autonomy that preschools have in terms of entrepreneurship, both in their use of state funding and in seeking alternative financial resources.
- Preschools are neither funded according to their effectiveness, nor according to local needs and priorities.
- The process of budgeting is not transparent – neither for Centre Heads nor for local communities.
- The systems of state/community governance are in need of reform.
- Low salaries are a key reason for the low societal status of the early childhood teaching profession.
- The quality of IPS for prospective Early Childhood teachers is in need of improvement. Approaches are mainly instructional and didactic instead of focusing on the child, and teaching methods often date back to Soviet times.
- The large group size in the ECEC institutions makes it difficult to implement the required pedagogical standards and a child-centred approach to teaching and learning.
- More research is needed to provide evidence for reform and development.

Early Childhood Workforce Initiative - International Step by Step Association (ISSA) and R4D (Washington, DC)

Source: [R4D] Results for Development Institute 2017. Early Childhood Workforce Initiative of International Step by Step Association (ISSA) and R4D (Washington, DC). See *References*.

Background and Aims: An ongoing study on the Early Childhood Workforce is being conducted by the Results for Development Institute (R4D, Washington, DC) in partnership with the

Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation and the Institute for Educational Policy (Kyiv), with funding support from Open Society Foundations.

R4D and ISSA recently launched the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative (ECWI), which aims to mobilise countries and international partners to support and empower those working with families and children under age 8, as well as those who supervise and mentor practitioners.

The ECWI has three components:

- **Online portal:** A web platform that presents global, regional, and local workforce initiatives, disseminates relevant research and training packages, and creates a space for online joint learning activities, such as webinars.
- **New knowledge:** A series of country studies aim to document country experiences in strengthening and scaling up the early childhood workforce (more details below); thematic analyses across countries on four topics: competences and standards, training and professional development, monitoring and mentoring, and recognition of the profession.
- **Joint learning:** Regular face-to-face and virtual meetings aim to bring together participating countries and international partners to reflect on country studies, share lessons learned, and learn from innovative and promising practices.

Procedure: Through a series of country studies (e.g. in Peru, Ukraine), R4D is gathering and analysing information to formulate policy recommendations for strengthening and scaling up a quality early childhood workforce within specific contexts. For the country study in Ukraine, the research team carried out data collection between January and April 2017, which is being finalised at the time of writing. The study is using a mixed-methods approach, including:

- a review of the policy contexts and mapping of the Early Childhood Development system through desk review and validation through national actors;
- in-depth research on Early Childhood Teachers and Teacher Assistants, analysing their qualifications, training and professional development, working conditions, etc.;
- an estimation of the costs (recruitment, training, remuneration, ongoing support, etc.) of improving and scaling up this cadre of workers to meet expansion targets;
- an analysis of the major bottlenecks and opportunities for achieving quality and scale of this workforce through key informant interviews and focus group discussions;
- formulation of policy recommendations to support improvements in scale and quality.

Findings: Findings are expected to be published in Autumn 2017.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

In accordance with the Law on Education, the Accreditation Regulations (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2010) state that a teacher is subject to assessment and certification once every five years, the results of which determine the teacher category level and thus directly affect the teacher's salary.

As from January 1, 2017, official salary tariffs were changed (Resolution No 1037, Cabinet of Ministers 2016b). As a result, new salaries are based on the 1st tariff category established regarding the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons on 1 January 2017 which is 1,600 UAH (54.57€) per month.

A salary rise for teachers has also been approved (Resolution No 974, Cabinet of Ministers 2016a). As the result, the wage level of Early Childhood Teachers has been increased by two positions on the tariff scale, which comes into effect in September 2017. In some regions the salaries have already been increased (Resolution No 373, Cabinet of Ministers 2011b).

Premiums up to a maximum of 20% of the salary were given to teaching staff in ECEC institutions, after-school facilities, secondary, vocational schools, universities of I-II levels of accreditation, schools (Resolution No 78, Cabinet of Ministers 2001).

Pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical employees of schools and educational institutions receive a monthly retirement premium corresponding to a certain percentage of their salary, depending on the length of educational work: over 3 years – 10%; over 10 years – 20%; over 20 years – 30% (Order No 557, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2005).

Additional premiums may be paid to employees:

- a) up to 50% of the salary
 - for high achievements in work;
 - for performing particularly important work (for the period of its implementation);
 - for the complexity and intensity of work;
- b) for Honours of Ukraine: ‘public’ – 40%, ‘honoured’ – 20% of the salary⁴;
- c) for the sports titles ‘Honoured coach’, ‘Honoured Master of Sports’ – 20%; ‘International Master of Sports’ – 15%; ‘Master of Sports’ – 10% of the salary.

Premiums for sports and honorary titles are awarded to workers if they match the above profiles. If two or more titles have been awarded, allowances are paid for the highest rank. Eligibility/suitability for honorary titles or sporting profiles is decided by school leaders, educational institutions and research institutions;

- d) for the knowledge and use of a foreign language: one European – 10%; one eastern, Finno-Ugric or African – 15%; two or more languages – 25% of the salary.
Premiums are not paid to employees, who are professionally required to know foreign languages and can prove that with necessary documents.

Further bonuses for employees include:

- a) up to 50% of the salary
 - for substituting for absent employees;
 - for combining positions;
 - for the expansion of the service area or increasing the amount of work performed.

These types of payments are not paid to heads of educational institutions, and research institutions and their deputies;

- b) up to 40% of the hourly wage rate for night work from 10 pm to 6 am;
- c) for academic ranks, provided the employees match the profile of the existing academic status. If there are two or more titles, bonuses are paid for the highest rank: Professor – up to a maximum of 33% of the salary; associate professor, senior researcher – up to 25%.
- d) for academic degrees, paid to employees if their activities match the profile of existing scientific degrees. If there are two or more titles, premiums are paid for the highest academic degree: PhD – up to a maximum of 25% of the salary; Candidate of Sciences – up to a maximum of 15%.

Early Childhood and School Teachers’ wage rates are identical. While School Teachers are also paid for checking copybooks, classrooms, EC Teachers are not.

Rates without additional payments, bonuses are estimated as follows: for a newly-qualified teacher (tariff level 9) - 2,768 UAH (approx. 94.97€); higher teacher qualification category (tariff level 12) – 3,392 UAH (approx. 115.70€); with allowances, bonuses, etc., the salary may reach 4,500 UAH (approx. 153.50€).

⁴ In accordance with the Regulations on Honorary Titles of Ukraine, the honorary title ‘Honoured Teacher of Ukraine’ is awarded to teachers and other pedagogical staff of educational institutions of the general secondary education system for achieving significant success in teaching and educating children and students. Persons awarded this title should have a higher or vocational education. The honorary title ‘Public Teacher of Ukraine’ is the highest level of the ‘Honoured Teacher of Ukraine’ and is usually not granted earlier than ten years after the previous conferment of an honorary title. The awarding of honorary titles is set out in a decree of the President of Ukraine. Honorary titles can be awarded to citizens of Ukraine, foreigners and stateless persons.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

An Early Childhood Teacher usually works 30 hours per week with the children (whereas a School Teacher's workload is 23 hours per week). There is no information available about full-time and part-time employment.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

There are two types of mentorship in early childhood education institutions/kindergartens:

- (1) Newly-qualified ECEC teachers are supported during their first year of work by a mentor who is a qualified ECEC Teacher Methodologist. Support includes planning lessons, answering their questions, observing their practice and providing feedback.
- (2) A Pedagogical Adviser (Teacher Methodologist) supports all in-service teachers, e.g. by helping them to prepare lessons or to cope with developmental issues in certain children. The Pedagogical Advisers review literature and pass on knowledge about innovative approaches. They also make observations in the groups and provide feedback – this is one of the most important aspects of a mentor's work.

There is no additional payment provided for taking on the task of mentor.

8.4 Non-contact time

There is no official non-contact time for Early Childhood Teachers in Ukraine. Time spent for work 'without children', i.e. for planning, meetings with parents, participation in professional networks, is not remunerated.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

There are no current staff shortages in ECEC institutions in Ukraine. If a certain kindergarten has to be closed down because of a decreasing kindergarten population in the area, staff are offered another place of employment.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The social status of personnel working in the early childhood system is much lower than that of staff working in primary and secondary schools. There is no correlation between the quality of work and the allocated salary – the quality of work is measured only indirectly (according to the number of years of work, level of education, compulsory attestation). All this leads to a decreasing teachers' motivation.

The low social status of Early Childhood Teachers leads to the following problems:

- Students with a relatively low level of relevant knowledge who wish to get a higher education degree tend to enrol at pedagogical colleges/institutes because it is easier to complete these qualifying courses since the competition is not very high. However, after graduation, it is likely that they will not get a job because of their low grades.
- Moreover, some graduates with good degrees choose not to work in a kindergarten or work there for just a short time. One reason is the very low salaries of Early Childhood Teachers; thus graduates prefer to seek better paid jobs.
- The majority of Early Childhood Teachers are currently over 40 years of age or are already in pre-retirement age (as from about 55 years), which means that when they retire there will be a lack of staff in kindergartens.

The issue of initial professional education/training is also problematic. The majority of graduates who apply for work in ECEC institutions do not meet the expectations of directors and often find it difficult to work with parents. Explanations for this situation could be the following:

- study programmes are too focused on theory;
- dominance of traditional learning methods such as lectures, seminars;
- absence of the practice of applied research;
- lack of pedagogical themes during the practicum.

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UKRAINE

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Nickolas Kushnaruk
for his valuable contribution towards preparing these key contextual data for Ukraine
as well as Natalia Sofiy for reviewing the final version and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "Ukraine – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1174-1191.

Funded by:



Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

Ukraine has a bi-sectoral system of early childhood education and care. Nurseries (*dytyachi yasla*) and nursery-kindergartens (*yasla-sadky*), mainly for children between 2 months and 3 years, and kindergartens (*dytyachi sadky*) and school-kindergartens (*shkola-dytyachyy sadok*) for 3- to 6- or 7-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrayiny*). Home-based childcare settings fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (*Ministerstvo okhorony zdorov'ya Ukrayiny*); the same applies for health support childcare centres (*budynok dytyny*) for orphans or children with disabilities up to 4 years of age. Local authorities are responsible for the management of ECEC settings.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2001.

General objectives and legislative framework

The general operation of ECEC institutions is regulated by the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (1991), the Law of Ukraine “On Preschool Education” (2001), the Law of Ukraine “On Child Protection” (2001), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers (“On Approval of Licensing Conditions of the Educational Activities of Educational Institutions”, 2015), the Ministry of Education issues licenses for ECEC settings. The health support centres for under-threes are regulated by the “Standard provisions of childcare centres”.

The former Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports (Order 615, 2012, new version) set out the general objectives for the ECEC system relating to the provision now under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science:

- recognising the intrinsic value of early childhood and its special role in the development of the individual;
- preserving children's subcultures;
- creating favourable conditions for the individual development of the child's abilities;
- prioritising the child's need to live in the here-and-now over preparation for the future;
- respecting the child, taking into account the young child's individual personal experience;
- following a competency approach to personal development, including a balance of acquired knowledge, skills, motivation, interests, intentions, personal qualities and confident behaviour;
- prioritising social and moral development, developing children's ability to respect group rules, balancing personal interests with those of the group;
- supporting the development of a holistic, realistic world view.

In addition, as a key part of the ECEC settings in Ukraine, the involvement of parents in decision-making processes is considered crucial at every phase of the child's development.

According to the law "On Preschool Education" (2001), preschool education is a holistic process aimed at supporting the comprehensive development of preschool children according to their needs, aptitudes, abilities, individual qualities and cultural needs, including the development of ethical principles. The law also ensures – among other things - the child's right to free early childhood education, and determines curricular content.

Moreover, the law addresses the general framework for preschool provision, including the responsibility of local authorities as providers.

The ministerial document "Basic components of preschool education in Ukraine" (1998; 2013) sets out the national standards for early childhood education and care:

"Preschool education is an independent system, a mandatory part of education in Ukraine, which combines family and public education. The very first social environment for the child is a pre-school setting, which aims to ensure the harmonious development of the child, physical and mental health, the development of values relating to the natural and social environment, to themselves, the formation of mechanisms of social adaptation and creative implementation in the company of unfamiliar children and adults."

Sources: Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2013, 2015.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Early childhood education is an independent but integral part of the education system in Ukraine (Law "On Preschool Education", 2001, §1, Art. 4).

All children from age 2 months up to school entry are legally entitled to a free place in either a centre-based or a home-based setting.

For 5- to 6-year olds, it is stated that preschool education is compulsory. However, there is no obligation for the children to attend a centre-based setting. It could be a home-based setting or in the family's home. For younger children it is up to the parents whether they wish to enrol their child or not.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6, although for some children with special needs it may be delayed until age 7.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2001.

Main types of provision

According to the law "On Preschool Education" (2001, Art. 12) there are different types of pre-schools:

Nurseries (*yasla*) provide for children aged 2 months to 3 years. However, most exist as part of a kindergarten or nursery-kindergarten. They are open from 7:30 to 17:00 (state and municipal provision) or from 8:00 to 20:00 (private provision).

Nursery-kindergartens (*yasla-sadok*) provide for children aged 2 months to 6/7 years. Opening hours are also 7:30 to 17:00 (state and municipal settings) or from 8:00 to 20:00 (private settings).

Kindergartens (*dytyachyy sadok*) are for 3- to 6-/7-year olds, run by state, municipal and private providers. Opening hours are as above.

School-kindergartens (*shkola-dytyachyy sadok*) combine a preschool setting and a primary school and can be run by state, municipal and private providers. They are all Level I educational settings according to the Ukrainian Educational System, i.e., they cater for both preschool children and schoolchildren up to the 4th year of school. These educational settings provide a smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school, enabling children of different ages to interact on a daily basis. When analysing the specifics of ‘school-kindergartens’, scholars tend to emphasise the benefits of the continuity they provide for the work in preschool and primary education settings: the same facilities; the organisation of collective forms of work for pre-schoolers and schoolchildren; common organisational structures and pedagogical approaches; and common educational goals.

Health support childcare centres (*budynok dytyny*) are preschool educational settings for the social protection of orphans and children without parents’ care and those with disabilities up to 3 years of age (for healthy children) and up to 4 years of age (for children with disabilities). They operate on a longer daily basis, from 7:00/8:00 to 21:00/22:00.

Special nursery-kindergartens are for 2- to 6-/7-year olds who require support in their physical and (or) intellectual development or (and) need long-term care and rehabilitation according to their personal abilities. Special early childhood educational institutions of this kind are intended for children with hearing and sight impairments, speech and language disorders, learning and intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities. Residential sanatorium early childhood institutions are intended for children with early signs of tuberculosis, chronic non-specific respiratory diseases, cardiovascular, endocrine system and digestive diseases, and neuro-psychiatric diseases. State-run and municipal settings are open from 7:00 to 19:00. The sanatorium-type settings offer 24 hours of residential provision, including four meals a day.

Combined nursery-kindergartens (*yasla-sadok kombinovanoho typu*) are for the children aged 2 months to 6/7 years. They can comprise groups of general development, special groups, inclusive groups, sanatorium-type groups, family-type groups, walk-in and short-term-stay groups in various combinations. State-run and municipal settings are open from 7:00 to 19:00, private settings from 8:00 to 20:00.

Child development centres (*tseentr rozvytky dytyny*). These ECEC settings are intended for children with regular and special needs. They provide a broader scope of activities. According to the requirements of the “Basic components of pre-school education and the “Basic programme for pre-school children” these centres may offer:

- groups for children aged 2 months to 3 years to support their social adaptation to conditions of the ECEC setting;
- groups to prepare 5- to 6-/7-year olds for school;
- artistic/aesthetic, fitness or music groups for 3- to 6-/7-year olds;
- rehabilitation groups (provision of health, educational, psychological, medical and social support for children aged 2 to 7/8 years);
- groups of early support for children aged 2 months up to 2 years.

Settings such as the *budynok dytyny*, the *yasla-sadok kombinovanoho typu* and the *tseentr rozvytky dytyny* play an important role in the system as a whole. They include various kinds of groups (compensatory types included), thus allowing for a better integration of children with special needs. All work is aimed at improving the health of children, their intellectual and social/moral development, helping them to master life experiences, thus gaining skills for further schooling. Pedagogical staff in these institutions work closely with speech therapists, psychologists, music teachers and physical education instructors, thus creating the best possible conditions for the physical and cognitive development of the child. If a child has specific disabilities that do not allow group participation in the same way as children without disabilities, it is up to the parents to decide if they would prefer to enrol their child in a special kindergarten. Some mainstream kindergartens have special groups for such children. Unfortunately, there is no data on the number of these ECEC settings in Ukraine.

Objectives are regulated by law (Resolution 1124 "On Approval of the Child Development Centre", 2009):

- ensuring the full development of pre-schoolers according to their abilities and individual mental and physical characteristics;
- providing early social adaptation of children to the conditions of a kindergarten and preparing them for school;
- providing comprehensive educational and psychological assistance to children requiring to improve their physical and (or) mental development;
- providing consultations and advice to families, involvement of parents in the education, training and rehabilitation of the child;
- interacting with civil organisations to promote comprehensive development of children requiring to improve their physical and (or) mental development;
- implementing experimental and innovative activities.

All of the above-mentioned types of ECEC provision are open from September 1st to May 31st. In cases of need, the educator may stay with a child after the official closing time, e.g. if the parents cannot pick the child up for some urgent reason. In such a case, the educator will make sure that the child is brought home safely. During the summer period – June, July, August –, all ECEC facilities provide summer camps where children can either stay 24/7 or where they can spend a day and then be taken back home. The camps include various educational and health care activities. These are not compulsory and work on a voluntary basis, depending on the wishes of the parents.

All in all, in 2015 there were 14,813 early childhood institutions in Ukraine.

Table 1

Ukraine: Number of ECEC institutions by type, 2015

Type	Number of Institutions
Nurseries	1
Nursery-Kindergartens	6,796
Kindergartens	4,903
Other ECEC facilities	3,113
Total	14,813

Sources: Cabinet of Ministers 2009.
Kuz, V.H. 2002.
Ministry of Health 2016.

Provider structures

Providers of ECEC institutions are – according to the Law on Preschool Education – the state, municipalities and private persons (the latter include home-based settings, see below). In reality (see Table 2), nearly all ECEC settings are funded by the state or the municipalities. The proportion of private or church-affiliated provision is negligible (1.2%). Within the current framework of decentralisation in Ukraine, there is a trend towards transferring state-run provision to the municipalities.

Table 2

Ukraine: Number and proportions of ECEC provision according types of providers, 2015

Provider	Number	Proportion, in %
Municipal and state-funded	14,636	98.8
Private and church affiliated	178	1.2
Total	14,813	

Recently, the Ministry of Health eased the restrictions for founding a preschool or a home-based setting (Law "On Approval of the sanitary regulations for preschools" 2016). Furthermore, since 2015, the providers of private preschool settings are legally exempted from taxes (Law "On Amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine on creating favourable conditions for the provision of educational services of preschool and secondary schools in private ownership"). Thus, there is a hope that these measures will increase the numbers of official registrations – especially of home-based settings.

Sources: State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2016.
Verkhovna Rada 2016.

Participation rates in regulated provision

During the last five years, both the number of ECEC institutions dropped (from 16,100 in 2011 to 14,813 in 2015) as well as the number of children enrolled (see *Table 3*). The overall participation rate (1-6 year olds) remained at 55% – disregarding a peak of 61% in 2013. However, compared to the EU countries, the attendance rate according to age-groups is rather low: Only just over one quarter of the 3- to 6-year olds attend a kindergarten and only 15% of the under-threes (*Table 4*).

Table 3

Ukraine: Numbers of preschool institutions and children (age 1 to 6) and attendance rate from 2011 to 2015

Year	Total number of Institutions	Total number of Children	Rate of attendance in all types of ECEC institutions, in %
2011	16,100	1,354,000	55
2012	16,400	1,204,000	57
2013	16,700	1,236,000	61
2014	15,000	1,077,000	55
2015	14,813	1,291,200	55

Table 4

Ukraine: Number of children enrolled in centre-based settings and attendance rate according to age-groups, 2015

Age-group	Number of children	Rate, %
1- to 3-year olds	200,926	15.5
3- and 4-year olds	399,795	30.9
5-year olds	326,486	25.5
6-year olds	329,288	25.4
7-year olds	38,396	3.0
Total	1,294,891	

Sources: Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2015.
State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

State educational institutions and establishments, organisations and enterprises of the system of education are mainly funded by budgets of the national economy and by state enterprises and organisations. The total expenditure of the consolidated budget on preschool education increased from 789,000,000 UAH (approx. 29 mill. €) in 2000 to 18,142,200,000 UAH (approx. 666 mill. €) in 2015.

The State provides comprehensive assistance to families for their children's education and is supposed to ensure accessible and free pre-school education in state and municipal kindergartens that comply with the state requirements regarding the content, level and length of optional and mandatory preschool education.

Within the current transition period towards increased decentralisation in Ukraine, state funding for a number of facilities, including ECEC settings, is being increasingly transferred to local budgets. Also, "District councils shall carry out the transfer of joint ownership of territorial communities of villages, towns and cities in the ownership of united territorial communities"*. This will also affect the provider structure of ECEC settings in Ukraine in the near future. During the transition phase in 2015, the budgets of villages, towns and cities of regional importance will finance expenditures provided for by Paragraph 20, Section VI BCU (Budget Code of Ukraine), namely for preschool educational institutions, cultural clubs (a phenomenon representing buildings for public gatherings and public events), recreation centres and libraries. This means that a centralised state system of funding is transitioning to a more local and decentralised form of budgeting.

Parents pay a fee for the children's meals in state and municipal preschool settings according to at least 60% of actual costs in urban areas and at least 40% in rural areas (Law 2628, §5, Art. 35). These costs may differ regionally. Children's meals cost between UAH 7.00 (0.26€) and UAH 10.00 (0.38€) per day in rural areas, an average of UAH 8.50 (0.32€).

Large families with three or more children only pay 50% of these amounts. The meals are free for orphans, for children in special educational settings and for children from families with less than the minimum income set by the government.

Table 5

Ukraine: Costs for parents in urban areas, 2016

Provider	Costs for parents*
State-funded	0.48-1.47€ per day
Municipal	0.48-1.47€ per day
Church-affiliated	Free
Private	73.26 –366.30€ per month and more

*There are also other costs to be paid by the parents which are not included in the table as they are not provided for by the law, but may sometimes be unavoidable (because of obsolete equipment, bad heating etc.)

The church-affiliated ECEC institutions do not receive any funding from the state budget. Private (for-profit) ECEC institutions are self-sustaining, i.e., costs are covered by the parents and the owner. Municipal ECEC institutions until now have been partially funded from the local municipal or district budgets. However, within the framework of decentralisation, the local budgets (those of the village and town/city councils) are to be entitled to allocate funds for ECEC settings in accordance with the Law "On Amendments to the Budget Code of Ukraine concerning the criteria for the formation and execution of budgets of united territorial communities.*

Additional sources of funding for ECEC establishments include the financial resources of the provider, donations of individuals or legal entities. Other sources of funding (e.g. by private businesses) are not prohibited by the Ukrainian Law.

Since Ukraine is currently experiencing a transition period of decentralisation, involving the merging of regions into territorial communities (*terytorial'na hromada*) with all the necessary adjustments, the finance structures of the entire community (*terytorial'na hromada*) will be subject to change.

Sources: Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 1994, 2002.
*Verkhovna Rada 2015.

Staff-child ratios

Children in ECEC settings are grouped according to four age-groups: (1) infants and toddlers, 1 to 3 years, (2) junior preschool age, 3 to 4 years, (3) middle preschool age, 4 to 5 years and (4) senior preschool age, 5 to 7 years. In purely arithmetical terms, the staff-child ratios would look something like this (see *Table 6*).

Table 6

Ukraine: Staff/child ratios, 2015

Institution	Number of Staff	Number of Children	Staff/child ratio ⁺
Nurseries	15	36	1 : 2.5
Nursery-kindergartens	236,936	996,823	1 : 23.7
Kindergartens	44,431	177,067	1 : 25
Other ECEC settings	27,531	117,281	1 : 23.4

⁺Own calculations

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2015.

Curricular frameworks

In 2011, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a *Common Framework for Early Education*. The goal of this social programme was the development of preschool education for the period until 2017. Although this framework is not mandatory, it nevertheless provides important guidelines for the curricular frameworks in both state-funded and private (for-profit) establishments.

Letter 1/9-152 of the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports "On the development of programs for preschool education" as of 28/02/13 sets out the curricular frameworks for the ECEC settings in Ukraine.

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" (Article 22), the curricular framework (educational programme) as the basic component of preschool education shall be a joint function of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, as a specially authorised central executive authority in the field of education, and the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences.

The concept of preschool education in Ukraine includes the following:

- supporting the comprehensive development of children on the basis of national culture and spirituality;
- ensuring the physical and mental health of children, identifying those in need of health support at an early age;
- imparting knowledge on upbringing, environmental culture, moral orientation in national and universal values, respect for other persons;
- creating favourable conditions for the development of moral self-assessment and relationships with others;
- introducing folk culture, art, traditions and rituals of the Ukrainian people, developing a respect for cultural heritage, customs and traditions of other nations;
- mastering the mother tongue; providing cognitive and other types of children's activities.

During 2004-2005 both the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health, with the assistance of UNICEF, developed, published and introduced a national programme for the development of early-age children in all regions of Ukraine. The programme (*The little seed*) covered the period from birth to 3 years, introducing main developmental domains, standards and indicators for the earliest years of childhood.

In 2014, a number of programmes for preschoolers were introduced. These include:

- “Treasure House of Morals” (*Skarbnytsia Morali*), highlighting components of values education;
- “Know yourself, take care of yourself” (*Pro Sebe Treba Znaty, Pro Sebe Treba Dbaty*), focusing on health, safety and the personality of the child;
- “Sunflower” (*Sonyashnyk*), outlining a holistic approach towards education for all ages, with one version specifically for 4- to 6-year olds;
- “Fairy-tale exercises” (*Kazkova Phizkultura*), focusing on the physical development of children. The approach is based on the child's mastering of eight main physical states: from supine-horizontal positions (prone, on hands and knees, sitting) to vertical functional-training (climbing, running, jumping).

Beside these, there are a number of other programmes focusing on different aspects of young children's development (e.g. play, creativity).

International relations led to a cooperative project in 1994, funded by the Open Society Foundation, between university teachers in Ukraine and in the USA. As a result of the innovative programme "First Steps" (Project USA 1996), a team of preschool pedagogues from the Dragomanov National Pedagogical University developed the programme "Step by Step in Ukraine" (2003).

Sources: Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2012, 2013.
UNESCO 2006.

Inclusion agenda

By ratifying the core international human rights treaties (the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), Ukraine undertook obligations to respect human rights, in particular the right to education of children with special educational needs. According to recent reports, 45% of 129,000 children with special educational needs integrated into mainstream schools are children with disabilities. In 2009, Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In October 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine approved the inclusive education development concept (Order 912). Another important document was the "Procedures for the organisation of inclusion in general educational institutions" – approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on August 15th, 2011. Based on the changed educational approaches they also adopted the new "Regulations on psychological, medical and pedagogical consultations."

In January 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science held the first regular meeting of a working group on early childhood education of children with special needs. Members decided to hold a series of nationwide web-seminars for parents and teachers with regard to working with preschool children with special needs.

In 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers in Ukraine issued Resolution 530 "On Amendments to the Regulations on preschools" as of 29 July 2015, agreeing on the creation of special and inclusive groups as part of preschools for children with special educational needs.

Based on the conclusion of the Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Commission (PMPC), inclusive ECEC settings can be opened at the request of parents in co-operation with the centre head,

who then decides to form inclusive education groups taking into account the specific educational needs of the children.

Table 7

Ukraine: Preschool institutions with inclusive groups, including children aged 3 years and older, 2015

Institutions with inclusive groups	Number of inclusive groups	Available places in inclusive groups	Number of children in inclusive groups
78	111	1,546	1,658

Sources: Kolupaeva, A.A. and L.A. Savchu 2011.
Krasniakov, Y. and V. Burda 2013.
Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2015.
[USSF] Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation 1999/2016.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

There is a State inspection system for educational settings, including preschool education. External monitoring is carried out at the regional and municipal level.

There are a number of legal frameworks which the executive levels have to adhere to (e.g. "On additional measures to improve the quality of education in Ukraine", Decree 244 of the President of Ukraine, 20.03.2008; "On monitoring the state of preschool education", Ministry of Education, Order 309, 2008; "On approval of the procedures for monitoring the quality of education", Cabinet of Ministers, Resolution 1283, 2011). These all concern the overall educational system including ECEC settings in Ukraine.

In 2014 a working group composed of researchers, early childhood advisers and co-ordinators was established to develop criteria for determining the level of child outcomes (Order 1255 of the Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine, 2014). This group focused on the evaluation of quality.

Important aspects of monitoring are:

- (1) To identify the quality of the practical implementation of the curricular framework for preschool education and obtain objective information about the quality of preschool education and to plan its development;
- (2) To study the achievement level of pre-schoolers according to the curricular framework;
- (3) To conduct an analysis to compare the actual results of preschool education with the state standards of preschool education and the educational programme;
- (4) To identify factors contributing to a better implementation of the preschool education programme;
- (5) To advise teachers and parents of pre-schoolers about ways of improving the quality of preschool education based on the monitoring results.

Thus, it becomes possible to gather information on all participants in the educational process (teachers, children, parents), particularly on the state of children's health, social security, living conditions and education, and on how well the goals of educational services have been met. Furthermore, monitoring enables an investigation of educational and methodological approaches, logistical capacities, regulatory provision, staffing, as well as the educational process itself (teaching and learning, creative, games etc.). All these findings can be used to improve the preschool system's overall quality.

Research

The “Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation”, established in 1999, was a logical continuation of the Step by Step project implemented by the International Renaissance Foundation during 1994-1999 with the support of the Open Society Institute (New York) and Children’s Resources International Ltd. (Washington D.C.). The Programme aimed to introduce democratic practices into the pre-school education system. Responding to the desire of parents, whose children were involved in the Step by Step project, and due to positive results of the evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine and the Boston Education Development Centre, in 1996 the programme was expanded to also encompass primary education. In 1996, the programme activities were expanded again to include children with special needs and children of national minorities in regular schools-

The mission of the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation is to promote educational reforms towards a child-centred and inclusive approach, encouraging the active involvement of families and communities through a number of activities: training sessions for educators, parents, and representatives of non-governmental organisations; initiating and conducting projects aimed at ensuring equal access to high-quality education for all children, including children with special needs.

Sources: Alekseyenko 1997.
Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports 2002, 2014.
Krutii, K.L. 2010.
USSF 1999, 2016.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave is granted to women on the basis of a medical assessment and lasts for 70 calendar days before childbirth and 56 calendar days after childbirth.

Parental leave can be taken not only by the mother or father of the child, but also by a grandfather, a grandmother, or other relatives who care for the child while the parents work (Article 179 of the Employment Code of Ukraine, 1971, amended 1973-2016). The Constitution of Ukraine (Art. 45) guarantees parental leave also for persons who are adopting a child or taking a child under guardianship (Document n0004323-14, 23.01.2014).

Since July 2014, parental leave payments and maternity payments have been combined into a single budget – UAH 41,280 (1,442.74€) to be paid as follows: a lump sum at birth (UAH 10,320; 360.68€) and a monthly payment of UAH 860 (30.06€) for 36 months. It is possible to draw this allowance even if the mother or other carer decides to work during these three years.

If the child was born up to and including June 30, 2014, the allowances are paid according to the order of birth, i.e., for the first child – UAH 30,960 (1,082.05€), the second child – UAH 61,920 (2,164.10€), for the third and subsequent children – UAH 123,840 (4,328.21€). If the child was born on July 1, 2014 or afterwards, the flat rate mentioned above of 1,442.74€ is paid regardless of the order of birth.

Source: Verkhovna Rada 1971, 1997, 2014.

Historical highlights and shifts

1917	The Central Council of Ukraine forms the General Secretariat of Education, renamed the Ministry of Education on January 9th, 1918, including a Department for Out-of-school Educa-
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	tion and Preschool Education.
1918	The Department of Out-of-school Education and Preschool Education raises the issue of universal compulsory preschool education of children. "Regulations of Kindergartens" noted that "all children from the age of 3 years old shall attend kindergartens" – these should be "free everywhere and be established at the expense of the rural and urban self-government."
1920	The basis of the Ukrainian System of National Education is the social care and education of children aged 3 to 15. Orphanages become the main child care establishment: kindergartens, schools, and out-of-school institutions have to merge into a "single social organism", i.e. an orphanage, even though not all children were parentless.
1955	3,713 regular preschools exist in the Ukraine, providing for 215,700 children.
1959	Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine "On measures for the Further Development of Childcare Facilities, Improving Education and Health Care for Children of Preschool Age." This and other documents plan the expansion of a network of ECEC settings and the improvement of their financial security. One of the major drawbacks of preschool education is defined as the absence of a single coherent system of education and care. A decision is made to combine nurseries and kindergartens into a single preschool establishment.
1960s	During the 1960s a stable growth takes place in the number of preschool institutions and the number of children attending. By the end of 1970, the total number of kindergartens in Ukraine was 16,500.
1980s	Expansion continues during the 1980s and also qualitative measures are taken. In 1987, 23,100 kindergartens exist in the Ukraine catering for 2.7 million children, representing 60.3% of the total population of preschool children (69.3% in urban areas, 40.5% in rural areas).
1992	24,500 kindergartens operate in Ukraine – the highest figure so far. The number of children covered by the system of public pre-school education reaches 2.2 million, representing 47% of the total population of preschool children. 268,000 teaching staff are involved, 97% of which are fully qualified.
1990s	During the 1990s considerable progress is made in the conceptual and legal framework of preschool education.
1993	Current views on preschool education are set out in the Concept for Preschool Education in Ukraine - a system of objectives and approaches in preschool education based on humanism, democracy, national culture and humanistic values.
1991-1993	For the first time in the history of Ukraine, alternative preschool education programmes were started: 'Ukrainian Preschoolers' (1991); 'The child in the preschool years' (1991); 'Baby' (1992); 'Child' (1993).
1996	A collaboration of university professors from Ukraine and the USA resulted in the Project 'First Steps.' A feature of the project was the organisation of the learning and play environment based on the children's interests.
1996	Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of 3 November 1993 on the State National Programme 'Education' ('Ukraine of the XXI Century')
1998	Standards of education at all levels of educational institutions are set out, for ECEC institutions in the "Basic components of preschool education in Ukraine".
2001	The Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" launches a new stage of development of early childhood education and care in Ukraine.
2001	The Law of Ukraine "On Child Protection" sets out the system of state and public measures to ensure a full life, comprehensive education and development of children as well as the protection of their rights.
2003	The Preschool Pedagogy team at the Dragomanov National Pedagogical University develop the programme 'Step by Step in Ukraine'.
2008	The policy paper "On additional measures to improve the quality of education in Ukraine" provides the theoretical basis for preschool education, defining functions, policies, principles, goals and objectives for modernisation up to 2016.

Sources: Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 1993.
Ulyukayeva, I.H. 2004.

Challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ukraine

Country expert assessment by Nickolas Kushnaruk

The Interagency Council on Early Childhood Education in Ukraine (created according to Order 1616 of the Ministry of Education and Science as of 22.11.2013) is a major body with a board of scientific representatives which meets regularly to discuss and take action on various challenges and issues arising in the preschool education field. Participating ministries and agencies are the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service of Ukraine, the State Institution "Institute of Hygiene and Medical Ecology of NAMN in Ukraine", the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, the Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine.

From a personal perspective, I will highlight four major challenges for the ECEC system in Ukraine – issues which are deeper and more diverse than they may seem to be at first glance.

(1) Enhancing knowledge and learning continuity between preschool and primary school education

There are many cases of children encountering problems when transitioning from preschool to primary school. Researchers in Ukraine already studied the problem (e.g.: A.M. Vynogradova, head of the department of primary education, L.V. Pysareva and K.K. Shakhova - Senior lecturers in the Humanitarian Education Department, Dnipro Regional Institute of Postgraduate Education) and discovered the lack of continuity of the purpose, content, teaching methods and training, as well as ever changing social requirements. This problem can be solved through establishing continuous educational programmes – from the pre-school level to the final school year, just as our colleagues in neighbouring countries have solved it.

(2) Developing a sustainable financing system for ECEC provision

Through the moves towards decentralisation of the financial system, this remains a largely unresolved issue. Until funding is stable and sustainable, it will be difficult to ensure a significant improvement of logistics, teaching and innovation in ECEC settings. A further issue is the move towards new principles of preschool education, in particular the 'money follows the child' principle. The financial challenge raises the issue of the availability of preschool education settings of different types. The State programme of targets for preschool education up to the year 2017 aims to deal with this issue. However, it should not be forgotten that the moves towards decentralisation will bring about many changes related to the financing of preschool settings – some will be assigned to local budgets as already mentioned above.

(3) Improving research-based and advisory support for preschool settings

Supporting settings-based quality improvement (e.g. through electronic aids, virtual laboratories, electronic databases, educational portals) will help to ensure continuing innovation in the pre-school education system. This depends to a large extent on the successful solution of the financing issue. Many preschool settings do already have IT support, as well as scientific and advisory support, but it is not yet common practice - particularly in settings in villages and small towns.

(4) Changing approaches to working with parents

Finally, an issue which has become a considerable challenge in our society is the need to fundamentally change the ways of co-operating with parents. We need to enhance their psychological and pedagogical readiness for parenting, and in this connection we need to pay more attention to preparing special programmes for parents and something like 'schools for parents'.

Sources: Cabinet Ministers of Ukraine 2011.
Kovshar, O. 2013.
Ohnevyyuk, V.O. 2006.

Demographic data

Total population

Over the past 20 years, the total population of Ukraine decreased steadily from 51,728,400 in 1995 to 47,280,800 in 2005 and 42,760,500 in 2016.

Children under age 6

The number of children under age 6 increased significantly in the last two years: from about 5% to nearly 8% of the total population. Also the numbers in the age-groups of the under-twos and under-fours rose considerably.

Table 8a

Ukraine: Number of children aged 0 – 6 years and proportion of total population, 2015

Age group	Number of children	Proportion of total population (42,759,661), in %
0 - 2 years	934,382	2.2
0 - 4 years	1,552,297	3.6
0 - 6 years	2,193,509	5.1

Table 8b

Ukraine: Number of children aged 0 – 6 years and proportion of total population, 2016

Age group	Number of children	Proportion of total population (42,590,879), %
0 - 2 years	1,343,111	3.2
0 - 4 years	2,301,004	5.4
0 - 6 years	3,246,428	7.6

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2016, 2015.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, children under age 6 were present in about 50% of Ukrainian households. This proportion has not changed much since 2010. Children living in one-person households almost always live with their mothers, although there is a small trend towards a greater number of children living with their fathers, increasing from 3% to 5% in the time span from 2010 to 2015.

Table 9a

Ukraine: Number of households with children, 2010, 2015

Year	Households with children (age not specified)	With child(ren) under 3 years, in %	With child(ren) aged 3 to 6 years, in %
2010	6,453,200	23.2	26.0
2015	5,751,800	24.2	30.0

Table 9b

Ukraine: Number of one-parent/no-parent households with children (age unknown), 2010, 2015

Year	One-parent households with children	With fathers, in %	With mothers, in %	Living with relatives or other persons, not specified, in %
2010	1,367,600	5.0	93.0	2.0
2015	1,149,300	3.1	95.4	1.8

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2010, 2015.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

There are no available national data on the employment rates of parents with children under age 6.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹

In 2014, approximately 27%* of the total population in Ukraine were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, slightly higher than the EU28 average of 25.8%.

There are no national data about the proportion of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

A study on poverty (2013) revealed that 65% of the participants considered themselves to be poor**. This suggests very clearly that pre-defined criteria such as that of 'relative poverty' do not always reflect the real situation in the country at question.

Sources: *Eurostat 2016.
**Osaulenko, O. 2016.

¹ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

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UNITED KINGDOM

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Denise Hevey

Professor emerita, University of Northampton, School of Education

Acknowledgements

This is a time of significant changes in ECEC policy across the UK which has made it difficult to present an accurate picture. Thanks are due in particular to the following people from each of the four nations for their helpful comments, references and advice that helped make each account as accurate as possible at the time of completion in July 2016:

Jenny Adair, Northern Ireland Childcare Partnership;

Marion Macleod, Children in Scotland;

Lynne Hill, Children in Wales; **Jane Newby**, University of South Wales;

Elaine Bachelor, University of Northampton.

Citation suggestion:

Hevey, D. 2018. "United Kingdom – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1192-1264.

Funded by:

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1. ECEC governance

Preamble

The UK, comprising England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, has a mixed economy in ECEC with the majority of provision for 0- to 5-year olds traditionally provided by the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector and an early start to compulsory schooling at 5 years (4 in Northern Ireland). However, more recently there has been an increase in state-funded provision for 3- to 5-year olds (and latterly for disadvantaged 2-year olds) in nursery and reception classes in primary schools, with almost all schools now adopting a 4+ admissions policy (September after the 4th birthday).

Politically the UK has been undergoing a period of gradual change over the last 30 years with increasing devolution of responsibilities to its four constituent nations. Governance of ECEC services is amongst the devolved matters. This has resulted in increasing divergence between education and social services policies and systems, including provision and regulation of services for young children and their families.

The picture of the ECEC workforce across the UK is confused and confusing. Devolution has resulted in increasing divergence in policies across the four nations, each leading to a different set of problems and anomalies. There remain, however, some common overarching features:

- (a) a mixed economy of care; reflecting in part the UK's modified neo-liberal political and economic position in championing business/ private enterprise and supporting social enterprise and voluntary organisations with state intervention for essential public services;
- (b) higher status accorded to education than to care; based partly on historical associations between caring/mothering as 'women's work' for which no qualifications were necessary;
- (c) qualified teachers (with QTS) enjoying significantly better pay, career structures, conditions of service and CPD entitlements than other workers due to the different status of education and care and strong unionisation of the teaching workforce combined with differential patterns of employment across the public /Local Authority and PVI sectors;
- (d) absence of unionisation amongst the non-teaching workforce; poorly paid and poorly qualified women working in relative isolation in small private and voluntary settings are less likely to join unions;
- (e) absence of men, particularly in work with the youngest children; largely due to (b) and its consequences;
- (f) national specification – whether statutory or through guidance – of minimum standards and curriculum, partly as a means of standardising provision across what is because of (a) a highly variable sector;
- (g) regulation and enforcement regimes through inspectorates that act as mechanisms of control, standardisation and accountability and provide information to justify public expenditure;
- (h) competence-based qualification requirements based on national standards and curriculum frameworks. Though these differ between the nations (strongly educational in England, based on generic social care models in Wales and Scotland) **they all determine a core practitioner requirement currently at level 4 EQF/level 3 ISCED** except in special circumstances;
- (i) despite stated aspirations towards graduate leadership, and progress in developing higher level qualifications, the minimum requirements for leadership of the majority of non-school ECEC settings remain at level 4 EQF/level 3 ISCED.

The rest of this report describes in detail the provision and governance of ECEC, workforce structures, qualification and competence requirements separately for each of the 4 nations.

However, where features are largely shared and to avoid repetition, some sections have been integrated.

1.1 England: ECEC governance

England is by far the largest of the 4 nations at 55.2 million (ONS 2017). Following the election of a new government in 2010, the Department for Children, Families and Schools previously responsible for ECEC ceased to exist and was renamed the Department for Education. This marked a significant shift in policy. The previous integrated policy framework entitled *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury 2003) that called for all children to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, have economic security and make a contribution to society, was abandoned along with ambitious targets for reform and development of an integrated children’s workforce. The flagship Sure Start programme, providing integrated Children’s Centres accessible to all in disadvantaged areas throughout the country, was also down-graded. Funding was reduced and the emphasis placed on targeted provision for the most disadvantaged/problematic families with a shift towards signposting rather than direct provision of services such as day care.

The incoming government placed greater emphasis on educational outcomes as well as the role of schools in providing ECEC services for children as young as two. It abolished the target for all non-school ECEC settings to be graduate-led and changed the relevant (level 6 EQF) qualification from the multi-professional Early Years Professional Status to an education-led Early Years Teacher Status with no mention of the term ‘play’ in their standards. However, though meeting the same entry requirements and going through similar assessment processes as the established teaching profession, the new Early Years Teachers were not to be given Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The implication of this has been that they are not recognised as teachers under the 1944 Education Act, cannot take charge of a nursery or reception class in a state-maintained school, and are not entitled to the same pay and conditions as other teachers. The incoming government also abolished the General Teaching Council for England, bringing standards for qualified teachers and for the new Early Years Teachers under the direct control of the Department of Education via an executive agency – the National Council for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

New standards were also developed for core practitioners with a strong educational emphasis and, as with EYTS, no mention of the term ‘play’. These standards form the basis of an Early Years Educator qualification at level 3 on the **Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)** - equivalent to level 4 EQF. The RQF regulates qualifications in England and is maintained by Ofqual – the Office for Qualifications and Examination Regulation – which, like *Ofsted*, is a non-ministerial government department. Ofqual sets out the code of practice for competing awarding bodies and approves and regulates vocational and academic qualifications and their assessment outside of Universities.

Play is still, however, strongly featured in the *Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE 2017), which sets out the statutory curriculum framework plus safeguarding and welfare requirements for all provision for children from birth to age five inclusive and regardless of setting.

In England, regulation and inspection of all services for children and young people, including early years, out-of-school and residential childcare as well as schools, is integrated under Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. This has enabled inspection frameworks gradually to be aligned and merged despite the remaining constraints of differing legal frameworks. Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department that reports directly to parliament via the Select Committee on Education. This gives it some degree of independence from ministerial/political oversight by the Department for Education. Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is legally required to provide an annual report on standards in schools and, since 2001, to report separately on standards and issues in early years services. Ofsted registers providers of early years education and childcare (other than schools) on either the Early Years Register (compulsory for provision that includes under-fives) or the Childcare Regis-

ter (compulsory for provision from 5 to 8 and optional for older age groups or activity clubs). Inspection, which was initially annual for early years providers, is now on a proportionate risk basis, so providers graded as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ may not be inspected for three to five years. Schools are inspected on a six-year cycle while inspection of those on the Childcare Register is limited to a 10% sample annually unless complaints or concerns are expressed.

Ofsted provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses in relation to the inspection framework but usually has stopped short of giving specific advice. This has been left to Local Authority (LA) advisory services. However, more recently the government has sought to reduce the responsibilities and budgets of LAs while at the same time encouraging more mutual support between schools and early years settings, for example, through Teaching Schools and system leadership roles (networks of national, local and specialist lead teachers recognized for specific expertise). It can be argued that, as well as giving greater autonomy at school level, recent policy changes have deliberately downgraded the role of LAs in order to provide more scope for direct central government influence.

1.2 Wales: ECEC governance

In 2016, Wales covered a population of circa 3.1 million (ONS 2017). The National Assembly for Wales (commonly known as the Welsh Assembly) was established in 1999 and has legislative and administrative powers covering all forms of health, education and social services for young children and their families. The system is multi-sectoral, with early childhood education under the auspices of the Welsh Government Department of Education and Skills whereas childminding, day nurseries and parent support are the responsibility of Health and Social Services and programmes to encourage parents back into employment come under the Department for Communities and Tackling Poverty. These divisions in central government are reflected in similar divisions of responsibility at Local Authority level. However, considerable changes are currently underway to early years services in Wales.

The regulation of services for young children in Wales to date has not been integrated under a single regulator as in England. Instead, Wales chose to keep separate regulation and inspection regimes with early education under ESTYN – the office of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales – and day nurseries and family day care under the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) that operates a different set of quality indicators. However, an Independent Review (Graham 2014) of arrangements, commissioned by the Welsh government, recommended that a Single Quality Framework under a new unified early years regulation and inspection system for children under 7 be established by 2016 and set out a staged approach to reaching that goal including, if necessary, the creation of a new integrated ECEC inspectorate. The Welsh government has considered the report of the Independent Review and work has already begun on an integrated inspection framework across ESTYN and CSSIW. This began its pilot phase from September 2015.

The Independent review also recommended the phased introduction of higher requirements for qualifications moving towards all workers qualified to level 3 (EQF 4, ISCED 3) or working towards such a qualification, level 5 (EQF 5) for leaders by 2020 and a competency based route to graduate status (level 6, EQF 6) by 2024. Rather than adopting the twin track model of teachers with EYTS or QTS as in England, the review recommended a new ‘early childhood specialist route to Qualified Teacher Status should be introduced, specialising in child development in the years from birth to seven and the Foundation Phase from 2017’ (Graham 2014, Independent Review panel report: 11). However, this recommendation has yet to be accepted.

Wales defines early years as the period from pre-birth to the end of the Foundation Phase. The statutory Foundation Phase curriculum framework covers 3 to 7 year olds in both maintained schools (i.e. primary and nursery schools) and non-maintained settings (pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries and Flying Start centres). (Flying Start offers early learning and care for disadvantaged children from two years old - see later).

In 2015, a statutory *Foundation Phase Profile* (Welsh Government 2016a) was introduced to ensure a nationally consistent baseline assessment during the reception year. This is part of the planned comprehensive *Early Years Development and Assessment Framework* across the birth to 7 years age range that is currently under development. The Foundation Phase Profile will also contribute evidence towards the new Early Years Outcomes Framework (Welsh Government 2016b) which it is hoped will provide a tool for results-based accountability that will help measure the effectiveness of local and national government policies across all aspects of children’s health, care, development, well-being and safety.

Standards and qualifications for teachers were until recently regulated through the General Teaching Council for Wales; however, a new Education Workforce Council with a broader remit is currently taking over the functions of the GTCW and is due to start registering learning support staff for the first time as well as teachers (those with Qualified Teacher Status) from 2016. Qualifications to work in early years settings other than schools are approved through the Care Council for Wales and are regulated by the recently established Qualifications Wales. They continue to relate to the national occupational standards set down by employers, workers and other stakeholders through Skills for Care and Development. The Care Council for Wales is also the registration body for qualified social workers, however, unlike in Scotland, there is currently no register of ECEC workers.

Unlike in England, an overarching integrated policy framework continues to be reflected in the annual children’s plan for Wales, entitled *Building Brighter Futures* (Welsh Government 2013), and in the new *Early Years Outcomes Framework* referred to earlier.

As an alternative to Sure Start (the government funded initiative that established children’s centres in the 20% most disadvantaged areas in England and Northern Ireland), the Welsh government supports its own Flying Start initiative. Flying Start is a multidisciplinary programme based primarily on the universal Health Visiting service that targets extra Health Visitors time and resources on families with children under 4 living in the 20% (soon to be increased to 25%) most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Wales. Centre-based day care, early learning and language development sessions may also be part of the offer along with parent/family support and home visiting services provided according to assessed need. Responsibility for Flying Start has recently been transferred to the Welsh Department for Education and Skills.

1.3 Scotland: ECEC governance

Scotland’s legal, educational and qualifications frameworks have long been distinct from those of England and Wales. It has its own elected parliament that operates within a budget settlement determined under an agreed formula with Westminster and makes its own laws with the exclusion of UK-wide reserved matters such as defence, macro-economic and foreign policy. The Scottish Government governs a population of around 5.4 million (ONS 2017). After a close run referendum on independence in 2014, the Scottish parliament has received further delegation of responsibilities to include, for the first time, limited tax raising powers.

The Scottish Government is currently funding 640 hours per year of early learning for 3- to 5-year olds and vulnerable 2-year olds. National responsibility for the early education and childcare system in Scotland remains split across the Department for Health and Social Services working in conjunction with local authorities. In turn, as in Wales, regulation and inspection of early years settings are also split. Under-threes and wrap around childcare in the private, voluntary and independent sector (the PVI sector accounts for 41% of provision for under-fives according to SSSC 2015) is regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate while the Scottish Social Services Council sets the Standard for Childhood Practice and registers all leaders/managers of settings as well as core practitioners and qualified support workers. National guidance for *Pre-birth to Three* was developed by Learning and Teaching Scotland in conjunction with health interests in 2010. In contrast the early learning element for 3- to 5- year olds,



wherever it occurs, comes under the *Early Years Framework* (Scottish Govt. 2009) and is inspected by the education inspectorate - Education Scotland - which also provides a range of training resources and good practice guidance. However, early learning provision in schools must be led by qualified teachers registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) – the body that sets the standards for entry and career progression for the whole of the teaching profession and approves Initial Teacher Education courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

These historically rooted divisions of responsibility are not conducive to the sorts of integrated, holistic approaches to early learning and childcare (ELC as it is called in Scotland) that are now considered most appropriate for young children and families and are reflected in the Scottish Government’s (2014) *Building the Ambition* document. It is therefore hardly surprising that recent reviews and policy developments have sought to overcome central divisions through a bewildering array of strategic groups and initiatives. A ‘Workforce and Quality Group’ has been given responsibility for implementation of agreed recommendations of the Early Years Workforce Review undertaken in 2015 (Siraj and Kingston 2015). A new ‘Early Learning and Childcare Strategic Forum’ is being established for stakeholder representation in addition to the existing ‘Early Years Task Force’, which initiated the ‘Early Years Collaborative’ in 2012. This brings together all 32 community planning partnerships from across Scotland and across health, social services, education and PVI sector interests and claims to be ‘...the world’s first multi-agency quality improvement programme to support the transformation in early years’ (Scottish Government 2016a). This methodology is intended to support, develop and evaluate small change projects that have the potential to be scaled up. Meanwhile a new ‘Early Learning and Childcare Census Advisory Group’ is overseeing more appropriate data collection (current systems report on schools and social services/care separately). A ‘Strategic Evidence Group’ will oversee research in the field while the Early Years Task Force has responsibility for prioritising and implementing policy changes. Moreover, the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland are working together on a joint outcomes and improvement oriented inspection framework and the new Scottish Council for Educational Leadership is scoping potential for including those with Childhood Practice Awards (endorsed by the SSSC) in their educational leadership training opportunities.

In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) accredits all qualifications and is the sole examination and awarding body for both academic and vocational awards outside of universities. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) at levels 1 to 8 (levels 1-5 EQF) in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are based on UK-wide national occupational standards. The SCQF has a total of 12 levels up to Ph.D. with a Bachelor’s Degree with Honours pitched at level 9 (level 6 EQF).

The outcomes of the recent Curriculum for Excellence (see UK Key Contextual Data, *Section Curriculum – Scotland*) review (Education Scotland 2016) are resulting in major revisions to the Scottish Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher certificates system while maintaining the strong tradition of a much broader education from 16 to 18 than in England. New National Group Awards allowing for both work-based and study based routes are likely to replace the original work-based SVQs and separate intermediate/ higher units. Negotiations with higher education have led to agreed principles for a graduate level qualification for work across the children’s sector aligned to the Standard for Childhood Practice. This provides a broad-based, multidisciplinary approach relevant to work with children of all ages and their families, and implementation is intended to lead to a substantial increase in the number of graduate-led settings in early learning and childcare. This new award also fits well with Scotland’s integrated policy framework for children entitled Getting it Right for Every Child – GIRFEC (Rose 2012), through which the well-being of individual children is intended to be the personal responsibility of named professionals in successive, multi-agency services starting with the health visitor and passing to the teacher. However, pilot implementation resulted in a number of challenges in relation to the sharing of information and the Scottish Supreme Court has now ruled that

minor amendments must be made to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 in order to comply fully with Article 8 of the EU Convention on Human Rights. Full implementation is expected to begin shortly (Scottish Government 2016b).

1.4 Northern Ireland: ECEC governance

With a population of over 1.86 million in 2016 (ONS 2017), the six counties of Northern Ireland form the smallest nation of the UK. It has a complex and often fraught history of both governance from Westminster and self-governance through an elected Assembly based in Stormont. Northern Ireland now has a devolved power sharing arrangement through a National Executive in which the main political parties representing the dominant protestant/unionist majority and the catholic/ republican minority have both been guaranteed ministerial appointments and influence. As with Scotland and Wales, the devolved powers of the Northern Ireland Assembly extend across education, health and social welfare. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) oversees all education services, including pre-school education and Sure Start. It delegates responsibility for administering early years grants and monitoring Sure Start to regional Childcare Partnerships.

The Sure Start programme provides a range of services for young children under 4 and their families including the Developmental Programmes for 2- to 3-year olds. Sure Start Children's Centres are currently being extended to the 25% most disadvantaged areas. Responsibility for Sure Start was originally transferred from the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) in 2006 along with the rest of early years services including childminding and childcare in order to co-locate responsibility within a single department.

A draft integrated *Early Years Strategy 0–6* was produced in 2010 but received a poor response on consultation. Childminding and childcare were then relocated back with Health and Social Service interests in 2012. In the following year, the Department of Education launched *Learning to Learn: A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning* (DENI 2013) that set out a strategy for 3- to 6-year olds from a narrower educational perspective with progress overseen by an Early Years Stakeholder Group representing providers as well as government interests.

Given that the compulsory school starting age is set at the September after a child's 4th birthday (the earliest in the UK), and the preponderance (62%) of school-based nursery class places for 3-year olds over funded places in the PVI sector (DENI 2013), early years provision outside of schools is largely restricted to day care 0–4, pre-school groups of mainly 3-year olds and wrap-around care. Funded places are available for all 3-year olds and for disadvantaged 2-year olds (proposed changes mean that target 2 year olds are likely to have separate provision in future). This is set at a minimum of 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks in Northern Ireland compared to 30 hours in England, since September 2017.

Staffing ratios for the PVI sector are broadly the same as in England at 1:8 for 3- to 4-year olds with a level 3 qualified leader, however this requirement is currently in a state of transition and new leaders are required to hold a level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Care, Learning and Development or the playwork equivalent in the case of Out-of-School care. Meanwhile at least advisory access to someone with a higher level 4–6 qualification is considered essential but, unlike in Scotland and Wales, this does not have to be a qualified teacher.

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) regulates qualifications and issues curricular guidance for pre-school groups (3 year olds) with funded early education places and separate curricular guidance for the Foundation Stage (4 and 5-year olds) in schools.

The pre-school version (CCEA 2014a) offers guidance on planning, observation, assessment and record keeping and wider issues such as equal opportunities as well as a curriculum

framework. This is broadly similar to other parts of the UK but an emphasis given upfront to the arts and creativity is distinctive.

The Foundation Stage (CCEA 2014b) builds on and extends the six areas above plus introduces Religious Education for the first time as agreed with the four main Christian Churches in Northern Ireland and incorporates ‘mutual understanding’ into Personal, Social and Emotional Development. These features reflect the unique history and issues of Northern Ireland.

There is a strong tradition of parent/ community run pre-school groups affiliated to Early Years - The Organisation for Young Children (formerly the Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroups Association, NIPPA) as well as of voluntary organisations operating in the most challenging areas. Because residential patterns have historically been split into predominantly protestant and catholic areas, community groups have tended to reflect that pattern, though services run by the big voluntary organisations have tried to stand out against replicating divisions in staff recruitment. In addition, churches of both persuasions have had a greater role in the provision of education at all levels than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Building on the previous policy for Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education, which sought to develop mutual understanding and respect between different communities, in 2015 the NI government adopted a policy of ‘Shared Education’ (DENI 2015). As well as continuing to fund and support integrated schools (which still account for only 7% of all school pupils) shared education includes support for sharing of facilities, teachers, staff and governor training, support for Irish medium schools, inter-school projects and inter-faith initiatives including in early years.

The first two years of compulsory schooling in Northern Ireland (4- and 5-year olds) come under the Foundation Stage while proposals in *Learning to Learn* (DENI 2013) suggested the Foundation Stage should be extended to incorporate 3 year olds in the funded pre-school year. This would be designed to ensure a smooth transition from a play-based environment to more formal learning. As in other parts of the UK, only qualified teachers with QTS are allowed to lead classes in maintained nursery and primary schools. Standards for teachers are determined by the General Teaching Council (Northern Ireland) which also regulates teacher registration, Initial Teacher Education and teacher’s Continuing Professional Development.

Regulation and inspection of early years services are split. Inspection of funded pre-school education, together with all other phases of education and the safeguarding of pupils within them, is vested in the Education and Training Inspectorate for Northern Ireland (ETINI). However, unlike Ofsted in England, the Education and Training Inspectorate is not responsible for the registration of pre-school groups or for wrap around care, day nurseries, childminders and other children’s services. These aspects of early years are deemed care and are registered and inspected on an annual basis by specialist Early Years Teams of social workers based with the five local Health and Social Care Trusts. The basis of the inspection focuses on suitability of the premises, equipment and persons and the standard of care offered – an approach reminiscent of that pertaining in England pre-2001 when Ofsted took over responsibility from 150 local authorities.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In all four nations, classes in maintained schools and nurseries must be led by a Level 6 teacher with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), whereas the staffing requirements in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Sector remain diverse, although there are moves to raise the basic requirements to Level 3. The following tables provide an overview of regular contact staff by

country, first in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector (*Section 2.1.1. to 2.1.4*) and then in the Maintained sector (schools) (*Section 2.1.5 to 2.1.6*).

Note from the editors: In other country reports, the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) in these tables are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at the end of this section). However, since job titles and qualification requirements are so highly variable in the UK, particularly in the PVI sectors of the four nations, a descriptor has been allocated only in those cases where a clear profile is visible.

2.1.1 England: regular contact staff in the PVI sector

Table 1

England: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care, children’s centres and out-of-school provision by staff type

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
Children’s Centre Manager <i>From 2014 onwards, also:</i> Early Years Teacher (EYTS)	Children’s Centre (0–5 plus parent support)	Senior Manager	Variable depending on qualification	Usually Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent with relevant professional qualification in Social Work (e.g. QQSW), Nursing (e.g. RGN) or Teaching (e.g. QTS or EYPS/EYTS) ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0112 ISCED 2011: 6
Nursery Manager or Person-in-Charge Playgroup or Pre-school Manager or Leader	Day Nurseries (0–5) *or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Mainly PVI sector Community***/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5) Children’s Centres	Setting Manager Play-group/pre-school manager or Curriculum Leader	0–5	**From 2014 onwards: Early Years Educator ECTS points: n/a ² EQF: level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 4
Group/Room Leader OR Early Years Educator (EYE)	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Qualified early years core practitioner able to work independently and supervise junior staff	0–5	Early Years Educator 2 years upper secondary education plus GCSEs in Maths & English ECTS points: n/a EQF: level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED: 3
Nursery Nurse OR Playgroup Worker OR	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Qualified early years core practitioner able to work independently	0–5	Early Years Educator 2 years upper secondary education plus GCSEs in Maths & English ECTS points: n/a

¹ UNESCO 2012, 2014

² n/a: not applicable

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ¹
Early Years Practitioner <i>OR</i> Early Years Educator (EYE)				EQF level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0112 ISCED 2011: 3
Nursery Assistant <i>OR</i> Playgroup Assistant <i>OR</i> Special Needs Assistant	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support) Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid assistant working under supervision.	Not applicable	None mandatory. But must hold RQF level 2 Certificate in Early Education and Care to count within required 50% ratio
Apprentice	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years (0–5)	Maths and English GCSE intermediate secondary RQF level 2 Working towards RQF level 3 (EQF 4) Early Years Educator award
Parent Volunteer	Children’s Centres (0-5 plus adult parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Assistant across all areas working under supervision	Not applicable	Not applicable ****Disclosure and Barring Service check required
Play Leader <i>OR</i> Play Worker <i>OR</i> Care Assistant	Out-of-school care facility (Before school breakfast club; after school club) 3/4/5 to 11. Holiday Play scheme (3/4/5–11)	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	Variable depending on qualification. Playwork 5–16	None mandatory. Up to the manager to decide. Commonly will hold NVQ level 2/3 or Diploma in Playwork (EQF 3 or 4)

Explanatory notes:

*In Day Nurseries that are part of chains, overall management responsibility may lie with a senior or area manager with day-to-day operation of the setting delegated to the local setting manager who may or may not have a substantial direct role with children. Proprietors of private nurseries are not required to hold any qualifications but must appoint a manager who does.

**Transitional arrangements apply to other relevant level 3 qualifications started before 2014.

***In community playgroups the management function for staff appointments, policy and budgets etc. is vested in a local community management committee with the Playgroup Leader having day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the group.

****The Disclosure and Barring Service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

2.1.2 Wales: regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

Early education and childcare services for children under eight outside of schools (i.e. day nurseries, childminders, pre-schools, playgroups and out-of-school/ holiday play schemes and Flying Start Centres) are regulated and inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) and are subject to the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales (Welsh Government, 2012). Staff ratio requirements are the same in Wales as in Eng-

land. Because ESTYN inspects the funded early learning component in all types of setting, some provision is subject to both forms of registration and inspection. The Care Council for Wales has overall responsibility for the development of the non-school ECEC workforce and provides a range of training resources for ECEC workers.

Table 2

Wales: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care, Flying Start programmes, and out-of-school provision by staff type

Job Title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
Flying Start Manager <i>Profile:</i> Health Care Professional	May or may not be based in Flying Start Centre. Responsibility extends over whole programme including home visiting and parent support. 0–4 plus adults	Senior Manager	Lifelong (health) plus birth to 3 development	Usually Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing plus relevant professional qualification in Health Visiting ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6
Flying Start Leader Nursery Manager/Person in charge OR Creche Manager OR Sessional Manager OR Playgroup/Pre-school Leader OR ***Cylch Meithrin Leader	Flying Start: day care and home visiting provision Day Nurseries (0–5) Mainly PVI sector **Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5) Playgroup/ pre-school manager or Curriculum Leader Welsh-speaking playgroup or pre-school (2/3–5)	Manager/ Leader * Setting Manager Setting manager Playgroup/ pre-school manager or Curriculum Leader	0–5	Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Management) ECTS points: n/a EQF level 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 5 Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development ECTS points: n/a EQF level 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
Deputy Manager OR Advanced Nursery Practitioner OR Room Leader	Day Nurseries (0–5) Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Senior practitioner with supervisory role	0–5	Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development ECTS points: n/a EQF level 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
Flying Start Practitioner Nursery Practitioner <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Flying start settings including home visiting Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support).	Core practitioner – able to work independently Core practitioner – able to work independently	Lifelong (health and parenting) plus birth to 3 development 0–5	To count within required ratios 100% of Flying Start, 100% of Foundation Phase (3-7) practitioners, 80% of other day nursery staff and 50% of sessional care staff must hold Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development

Job Title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
Sessional/ Play-group Practitioner	Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Core practitioner – able to work independently	0–5	ECTS points: n/a EQF level 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
Flying Start Family Support Worker	Family homes and within Flying Start centres	Practitioner working predominantly with families	Lifelong (health and parenting) plus birth to 3 development	Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development
Nursery Assistant	Day Nurseries (0–5)	Paid assistant working under supervision.	0–5	None mandatory but Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development needed to count in qualified ratios: 80% day care; 50% sessional care
Sessional or Play-group Assistant	Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid assistant working under supervision	0–5	
Creche Assistant	Under eights crèche facility	Paid assistant working under supervision	0–5	ECTS points: n/a EQF level 2 or 3 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 2 or 3
Cylch Meithrin Assistant		Paid assistant working under supervision	0–5	
Apprentice	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support) Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years (0–5)	None mandatory: Intermediate/GCSEs advised. Working towards Level 2 Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development
Parent Volunteer	Children’s Centres (0–5 plus adult parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Assistant across all areas working under supervision	Not applicable	Not applicable ****Disclosure and Barring Service check required
Senior Play Leader/ Person in charge. Play Worker	Out-of-school care facility (Before school breakfast club; after school club and holiday play schemes) 4/5–11	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	4–16	Manager/Leader: Level 3 Diploma in Playwork Playworkers: 50% must hold min. level 2 Diploma in Playwork ECTS points: n/a EQF level 3 or 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4

Explanatory notes:

*In Day Nurseries that are part of chains, overall management responsibility may lie with a senior or area manager with day-to-day operation of the setting delegated to the local setting manager who may or may not have a substantial direct role with children. Proprietors of private nurseries are not required to hold any qualifications but must appoint a manager who does.

**In Community Playgroups the management function for staff appointments, policy and budgets etc. is vested in a local community management committee with the Playgroup Leader having day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the group.

***Cylch Meithrin are Welsh-speaking playgroups offering total immersion in Welsh language

****The Disclosure and Barring Service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

2.1.3 Scotland: regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

In Scotland, both governance and inspection/regulatory regimes are split in complex ways (see section 1.3). Education Scotland inspects schools plus funded early learning and care across all types of setting, whereas the Care Inspectorate inspects other aspects of settings that are registered by the Scottish Social Services Council. A single unified awarding body, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, is responsible for all forms of vocational and academic qualifications, other than degrees and diplomas awarded by universities, and oversees the unique Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) with a system of levels from 1 to 12. Historical traditions have also resulted in broader based education up to the end of school with qualifications more like European school leaving or baccalaureate certificates rather than the narrow, more specialized ‘A’ levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Table 3

Scotland: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care, children’s centres and out-of-school provision by staff type

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level ³ /ISCED level
Children’s Centre Manager	Children’s Centre (0–5 plus adult support)	Senior Manager	Variable depending on qualification	Relevant professional qualification (Social Work, Nursing, Teaching, Child-care Practice) usually with Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922/0112 ISCED 2011: 6
Manager/ Lead Practitioner	Day Nurseries 0–5 LA or private, voluntary and community*** playgroups and pre-schools under partnership agreement (2/3–5)	*Setting manager Setting manager or lead practitioner	Children’s Services 0–12 or EY/playgroups training 3–5	Previous qualifications: ECTS points: n/a EQF level 4 or 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 or 5 Target qualification: BA Childhood Practice ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 6
Teacher <i>Profile:</i> (Pre-primary and) Primary School Professional	Local Authority or private and voluntary pre-school providers under partnership agreement. Usually supporting more than one setting.	Curriculum leader - full/part time within setting or external / ad-hoc	Primary 5–12	Bachelor’s degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS. May have post-graduate training in EY 3–5 ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
Group/ Room Leader	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support).	Qualified early years core practitioner able to work inde-	0–5	**SVQ 3 in children and young people’s services

³ See also European Commission 2017.

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level ³ /ISCED level
	Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	pendently and supervise junior staff		ECTS points: n/a EQF level 4 or 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 or 5
Nursery Nurse <i>OR</i> Playgroup Worker <i>OR</i> Early Years Practitioner	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Qualified early years core practitioner able to work independently	0–5	**SVQ 3 in children and young people’s services ECTS points: n/a EQF level 4 or 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 4 or 5
Nursery Assistant <i>OR</i> Playgroup Assistant <i>OR</i> Special Needs Assistant	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid assistant working under supervision.	0–12 or 0–5	Formerly SVQ 2. Future: National Certificate in Early Learning and Child-care (level 6 SCQF) ECTS points: n/a EQF level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
Apprentice	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Children’s Centres (0–5 plus parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Paid trainee working under supervision	0–12 core plus Early Years (0–5) options	Intermediate or higher school certificate or SVQ 2 (level 5 SCQF) Working towards SVQ level 3 in Children and Young People’s Services
Parent Volunteer	Children’s Centres (0–5 plus adult parent support). Community/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2/3–5)	Assistant across all areas working under supervision	Not applicable	Not applicable **** Police check via Disclosure Scotland only
Play Leader/ Play Worker/ Care Assistant	Out-of-school care facility (Before school breakfast club; after school club) 3/4/5–11/12 Holiday Play scheme 4/5–11/12	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	Variable depending on qualification. Playwork 5–16	None mandatory. Commonly will hold SVQ 2 or 3 in Playwork.

Explanatory notes:

*In Day Nurseries that are part of chains, overall management responsibility may lie with a senior or area manager with day-to-day operation of the setting delegated to the local setting manager who may or may not have a substantial direct role with children. Proprietors of private nurseries are not required to hold any qualifications but must appoint a manager who does.

**Historically Level 3 in related fields, e.g. Nursing, Play work or Social work, were accepted provided knowledge of the Early Years Curriculum could be demonstrated.

***In community playgroups the management function for staff appointments, policy and budgets etc. is vested in a local community management committee with the Playgroup Leader having day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the group.

****Disclosure Scotland provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

2.1.4 Northern Ireland: regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

In the private, voluntary/community and independent sector, the picture in Northern Ireland is a cross between England and Wales. Like England it has a network of Sure Start Children’s projects that come under the Department of Education; as in Wales the minimum requirement for leading a group is in transition from level 4 to level 5 EQF/ISCED, following the introduction of revised Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare (DHSSPS 2012). But again, similar to Wales, Northern Ireland still uses the Children’s Care, Learning and Development qualifications rather than taking the education-focused approach of the Early Years Educator standards in England.

2.1.5 England, Wales, Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools)

Given that the requirements for educational staff in schools derive from the same legislation and are broadly the same in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the following table applies to all three countries.

Table 4

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in nursery schools and in nursery and reception classes in primary schools by staff type

Job Title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
Head Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary School Professional	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Senior Manager (may have some direct teaching responsibilities depending on size of school)	Nursery 3–5 Primary 2/3 or 4–11	Bachelor’s degree with UK Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) plus normally National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) * ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7
Head of Nursery Unit/ Nursery OR Reception Class Teacher OR Primary Teacher (QTS)	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Teacher in charge of Nursery /reception unit or individual Class teacher/ group leader	Nursery 3–5 Primary 5–11	Bachelor’s degree with UK Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
Nursery Nurse OR Nursery Assistant OR Classroom Assistant OR Teaching Assistant OR Special Needs Assistant	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Qualified assistant to class teacher working under teacher’s direction	Early Years 0–5. Schools 5–16	England: from 2014 Early Years Educator plus GCSEs in Maths & English OR Certificate/ Diploma Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Wales & Northern Ireland: Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development

Job Title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
				ECTS points: n/a EQF level 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3
Classroom Assistant <i>OR</i> Teaching Assistant <i>OR</i> Special Needs Assistant	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Support worker assisting teacher. (May be assigned to particular child with SEN)	Early Years 0–5 Schools 5–16	England: None mandatory but may hold certificate in: Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools <i>OR</i> Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools Wales and Northern Ireland: None mandatory but may hold Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development
Apprentice	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years (0–5)	Maths and English GCSE secondary level Working towards level 3 award in relevant sector
Parent Volunteer	Nursery School (2/3–5) State or Independent sectors Primary School (2/3–11) State or Independent sectors	Usually allocated particular tasks such as hearing children read	Not applicable	Not applicable **Disclosure and Barring Service check only required
Play Leader / Play Worker	Out-of-school care facility (Before school breakfast club; after school club) 3/4/5–11 Holiday Play scheme 3/4/5–11	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	Variable depending on qualification. Playwork 5 to 16	No compulsory requirement – decision to employ lies with manager. Commonly will hold level 2 or 3 or Diploma in Playwork.

Explanatory notes:

*Head teachers are expected to hold or be working towards the National Professional Qualification for Headship prior to appointment or shortly afterwards. The NPQH is post-graduate in level but not sufficient in itself for the award of a second cycle degree.

**The Disclosure and Barring service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

2.1.6 Scotland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools)

Table 5

Scotland: Regular contact staff in nursery schools and in nursery and reception classes in primary schools by staff type

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
Head Teacher <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and/or Primary School Professional	Nursery School 2/3–5 Primary School 2/3–11	Senior Manager (may have some direct teaching responsibilities depending on size of school)	Nursery 3- and 4-year olds Primary 3 (if includes nursery classes) or 5- to 12-year olds	Bachelor's degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS. PLUS "Into Headship"* 60 credits (30 ECTS points) at post-graduate level ECTS points: 180/210 EQF level 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0113 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7
Primary (Early Years) Teacher	Nursery class in-Nursery school Nursery class in primary school 3–4 Combined Reception / Nursery Unit in primary schools 3–5	Class teacher <i>OR</i> Teacher in charge of Nursery/ Reception unit	3- and 4-year olds Combined unit 3-, 4- and 5-year olds	Bachelor's degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS. Note: no specific requirement for early years training ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6
Primary (Early Years) Teacher	Reception class in primary school 4½–5½ Primary class in primary school 5½–12	Class Teacher	From 4½–5½ years From 5½–12 years	Bachelor's degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS. ECTS points: 180 EQF level 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 6
Classroom Assistant <i>OR</i> Teaching Assistant <i>OR</i> Special Needs Assistant	Reception class in primary school 4½–5½ Primary class in primary school 5½–12	Assistant to class teacher	n/a	No formal qualifications required. Advised: SVQ 2 (Level 4 EQF/level 3 ISCED) in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools
Apprentice	Nursery class in nursery or primary school 3–4 Combined Reception / Nursery Unit	Trainee working under direction	n/a	Intermediate certificate/ National Award 2 or higher school certificate or SVQ2 Working towards

Job Title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main position/s	Main age range focus of IPS	Min. qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level
	3–5 Reception class 4½–5½ Primary class 4½–11			SVQ level 3 (EQF level 4) in Children and young people's services
Volunteer (usually parent)	Nursery class in nursery or primary school Combined Reception / Nursery Unit Reception class Primary class	Usually allocated particular tasks such as hearing children read	n/a	**Police check from Disclosure Scotland only

*Head teachers are expected to have completed the 'Into Headship' programme prior to appointment or shortly afterwards. This is post-graduate in level but not sufficient in itself for the award of a Bologna second cycle degree.

**Disclosure Scotland provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

Box 1

SEEPRO professional profile categories (adapted from Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0– 6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional** (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes focus on early childhood, usually broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

2.2.1 England: structural composition of ECEC workforce

Table 6

England: Full-day care and sessional care in PVI Sector and Children's Centres: all staff types

Staff categories	2013 / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education Bachelor's Degree with Honours (EQF/ISCED 6)	around 10–12% in sessional and full-day care: 20% in Children's Centres*
Staff with short cycle tertiary Diploma / Foundation Degree (EQF/ISCED 5)	around 5–7% in sessional and full-day care: 7% in Children's Centres.
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary, EQF/ISCED 4)	around 8–10% in sessional and full-day care: 8% in Children's Centres.
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, EQF 4/ISCED 3)	56–58% in full-day and sessional care: 48% in Children's Centres
Staff with non-specialist qualification	Not available
Unqualified Staff, i.e. non-core practitioners	13–16% in full-day and sessional care; 5% in Children's Centres**
Apprentices (working towards level 3)	3–6% in full and sessional day care;

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	3% in Children’s Centres.
Specialist support staff	No available figures. Mainly off site except in some Children’s Centres.
Volunteers	around 2- 3% across all full day care and 5% in sessional care.
Male staff	2–3%***
BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff or staff with background of migration	9–10% overall day care but up to 16% in Children’s Centres****

Explanatory notes:

*Disparity reflects former policy imperative for at least two graduate qualified staff in every Children’s Centre by 2015

**Unqualified in this context means less than the current minimum qualification requirement for core practitioners at RQF level 3. The statutory ratios allow up to 50% of staff in each group supervised by a core practitioner to hold a relevant RQF level 2 qualification and for the remainder to be unqualified/ hold unrelated qualifications.

***This proportion has not changed over the last five years despite targeted recruitment initiatives.

****Strong regional variations reflect local BME population for e.g. rising to 38% of daycare staff in London.

Table 7

England: Proportions of staff in independent and maintained nursery schools and classes by category

Staff categories	2013 / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education Bachelor’s Degree with Honours (EQF/ISCED 6)*	35–44 % across nursery and primary schools including 14 - 16% with a post-graduate level 7 EQF award.
Staff with short cycle tertiary Diploma / Foundation Degree (EQF/ISCED 5)	5–7% across sector
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary, EQF/ISCED 4)	2–5% across sector
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, EQF4/ISCED 3)	43–37% in nursery schools and classes decreasing to 26% in primary schools with reception only
Staff with non-specialist qualification	Not available. Classed as unqualified**
Unqualified Staff	10–16% across sector
Apprentices	1–2% across sector
Specialist support staff	Not available. Mainly off-site.
Volunteers	7% in nursery schools rising to 18% in reception classes
Male staff	2% across all school-based provision for 2-5 year olds
BME (Black and ethnic Minority) staff or staff with background of migration	4% in reception classes rising to 17% in Nursery schools***

Explanatory notes:

*Only those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) may lead classes/units in maintained nursery and primary schools in the UK

**Unqualified in this context means less than the current minimum qualification requirement for core practitioners at RQF level 3. The statutory ratios allow up to 50% of staff in each group supervised by a core practitioner to hold a relevant RQF level 2 qualification and for the remainder to be unqualified/ hold unrelated qualifications.

***Nursery Schools in England are more likely to be located in disadvantaged areas with a high BME population. The overall proportion of BME staff in publicly funded schools is around 6% meaning that BME individuals are under-represented in the education workforce more generally.



2.2.2 Wales: structural composition of ECEC workforce

Table 8

Wales: Early years, childcare and play workforce including Foundation Phase in maintained primary/ nursery schools and Flying Start

Staff categories	2014 / Proportion of workforce
Staff with specialist higher education Bachelor's Degree with Honours (EQF/ISCED 6)	Top category is level 4/5 and above (including QTS).
Staff with short cycle tertiary Diploma / Foundation Degree (EQF/ISCED 5)	Large variation from 37% in maintained school Foundation Phase (teachers - supported by classroom assistants); 25% in Flying Start settings; 23% in funded partnership settings (Foundation Phase);
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary, EQF 4/ISCED 4)	18% Full day care; 12% in both sessional and out of school childcare.
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, EQF 4/ISCED 3)	62% and 67% in sessional and full-day care respectively; 66% in Flying Start centres; 59% in funded partnership settings (Foundation Phase); 40% in maintained schools (Foundation Phase); 61% in out of school childcare (mainly playwork, some childcare).
Staff with non-specialist qualification	Not available
Unqualified Staff (i.e. non-core practitioners with level 2 or less)	10% and 25% in full and sessional daycare respectively; 9.4% in Flying Start Centres; 14.9% in funded partnership settings (Foundation Phase); 16.5% in maintained schools (Foundation Phase).
Apprentices (working towards level 3)	Use of apprentices in Wales appears high. Average stated as two in full day care and six in sessional care per setting.
Specialist support staff	Not available.
Volunteers	average five volunteers per setting with highest number (up to 13) in primary schools and Local Authority funded/ Flying Start settings.
Male staff	No overall percentage available but those few men are concentrated in after-school and open-access play settings
BME staff or staff with background of migration	No accurate overall percentage available. Many settings have no BME staff. Workforce largely white British – exception small minority of staff of Asian origin in Flying Start

Explanatory notes: Percentages for crèches and open access play settings not given as number of settings is small (22 or less) and latter cater predominantly for older children.

The standard schools statistical data for Wales is not presented in a form that allows the identification of staff working with children in the Foundation Phase. The teaching population overall is 76% female - even more heavily gendered than in England. Some 85% of the teaching workforce describes themselves as white British and the ethnic identity of a further 12% is unknown/not given leaving only 3% of the overall teaching population self-declared as Asian, black or of mixed heritage. There are only 12 nursery schools in Wales all of whose Head Teachers are female as are 64% of primary school Heads. This represents a significantly lower

proportion of women than in the workforce. Put another way, only 24% of the teaching workforce are men and yet men occupy 36% of the Head Teachers posts in primary schools and 67% in secondary schools.

2.2.3 Scotland: structural composition of ECEC workforce

There are no generally available statistics that allow for easy disaggregation of data into early years and childcare workers by qualification, although the Educational Institute of Scotland – the largest teacher’s Trades Union - has been able to identify teachers in ELC (*Early Learning and Childcare*) in its most recent report (Dunlop et al. 2016). The key message from this report was that the number of teachers employed in ELC settings has dropped by 29% over the ten years to 2014 resulting in a current ratio of 1 teacher to every 84 children across ELC services including schools. As a consequence and contrary to stated government policy, around 14% of funded ELC settings (i.e. in which the pre-primary phase of the curriculum is delivered) do not have access to a qualified teacher for advice and support and a further 14% only on an ad hoc basis.

The following information is taken from the Scottish Social Services Council annual workforce data report (SSSC 2015). Overall in 2014 32,730 people were working in daycare of children in Scotland of which 39% were employed in the public sector, 40% in the private sector and 20% in the voluntary sector (volunteer numbers are not included). Overall (including childminders) non-residential children’s services accounted for 17% of the total care workforce. The average age of workers in daycare services was 36 but this was much lower in the private sector. As in England only 4% of daycare staff were male and, similar to Wales rather than England, only 1% of daycare employees self-declared as of BME origins (6% unknown)

2.2.4 Northern Ireland: structural composition of ECEC workforce

Again, the way that publicly available statistics are held does not make it easy to disaggregate data for difference sections of the early years workforce in Northern Ireland.

In the summary of the report of the Education and Training Inspectorate for 2012-14 (ETINI 2016, 3) the Chief Inspector concluded that the Northern Irish education system currently has ‘unacceptable variations and persistent shortcomings’ that applied across all phases.

According to Schools Census data 24,200 children attended funded pre-school places accounting for 92% of all three year olds. The majority (15,200) attended Nursery classes in primary schools with a further 8,700 in the private, voluntary and community sector, and a decreasing minority in reception classes. Ironically in nursery schools and classes the teacher: pupil ratio is worse at 1:25.6 than for other phases of education (1:15.1 at secondary level). This anomaly is an artefact of the required 1:13 staffing ratio when the second staff member is qualified at RQF level 3 (EQF level 4).

A survey carried out in 2011 found that on average there were only eight staff per facility in maintained settings and 82% of staff in the private, voluntary and community part of the childcare sector worked part-time (the reverse is true for teachers – DENI 2016). Just over half the staff (53%) were qualified at RQF level 3 and one third (31%) at level 2. A further 15% held higher level qualifications including 11% who were graduates.

The schools workforce overall is predominantly female (around 79%) and this trend is accentuated with younger age groups. Not one single male was working in a nursery school or class in Northern Ireland at the time of the survey.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial professional studies – Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

3.1.1 England, Wales and Northern Ireland: QTS qualifying routes

Initial Teacher Training/Education (ITT or ITE – both terms are in use) leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is broadly similar, and is mutually recognised, across all the nations of the UK though the precise detail of routes and professional standards varies. ITT for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are presented here as one table while Scotland is presented separately due to the differences in nomenclature for entry requirements and degrees.

Table 9

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Early Years/ Primary Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

Title: <i>Primary (Early Years) Teacher (3-7) with QTS status*</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements for all forms of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS): 12 years of schooling, school leaving certificate (A-levels/equivalent), intermediate school certificate passes (GCSE) in English, Maths and a science subject plus success in prescribed professional tests in English and Maths and rigorous interview.</p> <p>Professional studies: All study routes are conducted under the auspices of the relevant regulating authority for ITT*. All six routes lead to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) BEd or BA in Education: 3- or 4-year full-time undergraduate honours degree programme at HEI (Higher Education Institution) focusing primarily on education related subjects. Level 6 EQF 2) BA or BSc: 3 or 4-year full-time undergraduate honours degree programme at HEI focusing primarily on core curriculum subject. Level 6 EQF as precursor to routes 3,4,5, and 6 3) PGCE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Education/ Postgraduate Certificate of Education: One or 2 year full-time postgraduate course leading to QTS; postgraduate option includes some Master’s level 7 (EQF) work, professional option undergraduate level 6 only. 4) SCITT/ School Direct – school centred initial teacher training with QTS: Entrants must be graduates and undertake a one year programme based on two schools (not available in Wales) 5) Teach First – innovative two year salaried leadership development and teacher training programme run by charitable foundation in conjunction with partner HEIs for graduates with commitment to work in socially disadvantaged areas 6) Graduate Teacher Programme (Wales only): following agreed study/ training programme in conjunction with one of the 3 approved ITT centres while employed as an unqualified teacher in a school. <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Bachelor of Education (Hons) with QTS 2) Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Sciences (Hons) with QTS 3) PGCE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Education/ Postgraduate Certificate of Education 4) QTS only. Must be linked to HEI for optional Professional Graduate Certificate 5) PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate of Education after one year. Option of Master’s Degree in year two. 6) QTS only. Optional Professional Graduate Certificate <p>ECTS points: 180 or more, depending on route chosen EQF level: 6** or 7 ISCED-2013-F: 0112/0113 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7, depending on qualification route. BEd./BAEd = ISCED 655. Entry requirement for other routes = ISCED 650.</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Nursery class in Nursery school (2-, 3- and 4-year olds depending on school); Nursery class in primary school (2-, 3- and 4-year olds depending on school); Combined Reception / Nursery Unit in primary schools (3- to 5-year olds); Reception class in primary school (compulsory education, 4- to 5-year olds); Class leader, Lead teacher/ curriculum leader in children’s centre, Flying Start Centre or supporting private, voluntary and independent sector settings (0 to 5 years)</i></p>

Notes:

*Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is awarded by the National College for Teaching and Leadership in England, the Education Council for Wales and the General Teaching Council (Northern Ireland). QTS confers ‘License to Practice’ as a teacher in maintained schools and other provision. Education, training and assessment for the status is solely via approved providers of Initial Teacher Training (ITT).

**Almost all undergraduate degree programmes in the UK are now at Honours level which means they comply with full requirements for 180 ECTS points at EQF/ISCED level 6. Ordinary Degrees contain less than the full 60 ECTS points equivalent at level 6 and are only awarded as a fall-back in exceptional circumstances. Theoretically, an Ordinary Degree is still acceptable for QTS.

3.1.2 Scotland: QTS qualifying routes

In Scotland, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) regulates all aspects of IPS and subsequent stages of education and training for teachers, accredits university programmes leading to QTS, acts as a clearing house and oversees the induction year for probationary teachers at the point of provisional registration (on successful completion of their ITE programme). All teachers working in Scotland are required to register with the GTCS and the annual registration fee provides the regulator with an income. Once registered, teachers must adhere to the GTCS professional code of conduct. It has the power to investigate complaints/accusations of abuse and to remove a teacher from the register if found to be in serious breach of the code.

Those wishing to work with the early years/pre-primary 3–5 age group are advised to undertake the Primary Teacher (3–12) ITE. Further specialisation in early years is available through post-graduate in-service training such as the Froebel programme or a variety of Master’s level programmes.

Table 10

Scotland: Primary/Pre-Primary Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) – registered with GTCS

Title: <i>Qualified Primary Teacher with QTS (3–12)</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p>Entry requirements:*</p> <p>12 years of schooling, plus</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A National Qualification at SCQF level 6/7 (EQF level 3), for example Higher or Advanced Higher Award, one of which must be in English and A National Qualification Course Award at SCQF level 5 (EQF level 2), one of which must be Mathematics. <p>In addition all applicants must undergo a criminal conviction check and participate in an interview to confirm suitability.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <p>There are 3 main routes leading to the award of QTS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ** 4-year full-time combined undergraduate degree at University leading to a named award which <i>includes</i> QTS Level 6 EQF/ISCED ** 4-year full-time concurrent undergraduate degree leading to a named award <i>plus a separate</i> teaching qualification a one year (or equivalent part-time) Professional Graduate Diploma of Education following on from a successfully completed undergraduate degree programme. <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> *** ‘Master’ of Education / Primary Education or BA Hons in Education /Primary Education (QTS fully integrated) *** ‘Master’ of Education /Primary Education or BA Hons in Education /Primary Education <i>plus</i> QTS PGDE Professional Graduate Diploma in Education/ Primary Education <p>ECTS points: 180 or more, depending on route chosen EQF level: 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112/0113 ISCED 2011:: 6 or 7, depending on qualification route (Routes 1 and 2 = ISCED 655. The entry requirement for PGDE = ISCED 650)</p>

Title: <i>Qualified Primary Teacher with QTS (3–12)</i> Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Nursery class in Nursery school (3- and 4-year olds); Nursery class in primary school (3- and 4-year olds, depending on school); Combined Reception / Nursery Unit in primary schools (3- to 5-year olds); Reception class in primary school (5-year olds); Primary class in primary school (5- to 12-year olds); Early Years Teacher (regular within setting or external/ad-hoc) in Local Authority or private and voluntary pre-school providers under partnership agreement (Mainly 3 to 5 years).</i>

Notes:

*Each university sets its own entry requirements which are normally higher than the minimum because of competition for places.

**Scottish undergraduate degrees are traditionally 4 years (compared to 3 in England and Wales). This is normally explained as being related to the greater breadth (and hence less subject specialisation) in the school leaving certificate (Scottish Higher system).

***In Scotland, by convention the older universities name their undergraduate degrees 'Masters', although they are not at Master's level and only comply with Bologna First Cycle Degrees at EQF level 6.

3.2 Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)

3.2.1 England: initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)

Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) was introduced in England in 2014 as a replacement for the broader based Early Years Professional Status. It is awarded by the National Council for Teaching and Leadership (an executive agency of the Department for Education). EYTS does **NOT** confer QTS for employment in maintained schools throughout the UK. Those with EYTS may only be employed as unqualified teachers or support staff in maintained schools and are not subject to the same terms and conditions as teachers. However, those with EYTS may be employed as teachers in independent schools and also in the increasing number of state supported free schools and academies, as well as teachers/ leaders/ managers throughout the PVI sector. Education, training and assessment for the status takes place via approved providers of Initial Teacher Training (ITT).

Table 11

England: Early Years Teachers with EYTS

Title: <i>Early Years Teacher (0–5) with EYTS</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>Entry requirements: 12 years of schooling, school leaving certificate (A-levels/equivalent), intermediate school certificate passes (GCSE) in English, Maths and a science subject plus success in prescribed professional tests in English, Maths and Science.</p> <p>Professional studies: All routes to EYTS are conducted under the auspices of the National Council for Teaching and Leadership. Study is normally in association with a higher education institution although some routes are work-based.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) <i>Undergraduate Entry:</i> BA (Hons) ECS: 3 or 4-year full-time undergraduate Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies course with EYTS at a University/ Higher Education Institute (level 6 EQF: 180 ECTS points). (2) <i>Graduate Entry Mainstream:</i> One-year full-time postgraduate course at HEI leading to EYTS designed for graduates from any discipline with little or no experience of work with young children; postgraduate option includes some Master's level 7 (EQF) study, professional option includes undergraduate honours level 6 only. (3) <i>Graduate Employment-based:</i> For graduates with relevant or non-relevant degree plus experience: 9 -12 months part-time study at HEI leading to EYTS while employed in relevant role. (4) <i>School Direct (Early Years) Graduate entry:</i> training with a group of schools or nurseries leading to EYTS with expectation of employment once completed. (5) <i>Assessment only route:</i> For graduates with relevant degree and extensive relevant experience: 3 months in which to demonstrate and be assessed across all aspects of EYTS standards. <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) *Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies or equivalent (min 3 year honours degree) with EYTS

<p>Title: <i>Early Years Teacher (0–5) with EYTS</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>2) PGCEYE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Early Years Education with EYTS /Postgraduate Certificate of Early Years Education with EYTS 3) EYTS only. Optional Professional Graduate Certificate 4) EYTS only. Must be linked to HEI for optional Professional Graduate Certificate 5) EYTS only</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 or more, depending on chosen route EQF level: 6 or 7 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7, depending on route taken. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies = ISCED 655. Entry requirement for other routes = ISCED 650</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Nursery class, Nursery school (2-, 3- and 4 year olds depending on school); Nursery class in primary school (2-, 3- and 4-year olds depending on school; Working under the direction of lead teacher); Combined Reception / Nursery Unit in primary schools (3- to 5-year olds, Working under direction of unit head); Reception class in primary school (compulsory education, 4- to 5-year olds; Assistant to Class leader); Lead teacher in children’s centre or private, voluntary and independent sector settings including those registered as schools (2/3 to 5 or 0 to 5 years); Leader/Manager in smaller pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries (PVI sector, 2/3 to 5 or 0 to 5 years); Curriculum Leader in larger pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries (PVI sector, 2/3 to 5 or 0 to 5)</i></p>

Note:

*The undergraduate route to EYTS is linked to a BA degree that meets the subject benchmarking statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education related to Early Childhood Studies.

The Early Years Educator (see *Table 12*), introduced from 2014, is a RQF level 3 (EQF 4/ISCED 3) qualification that meets the prescribed standards and other requirements of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) but is awarded by a range of independent awarding bodies (such as CACHE, Edexcel and City and Guilds) that are regulated by Ofqual. Relevant study can be undertaken at a broad range of schools and Colleges of Further Education or in employment. Assessment practice must be consistent with the assessment principles set down by the Skills for Care and Development – the relevant sector skills body.

Table 12

England: Early Years Educator

<p>Title: <i>Early Years Educator</i> (core practitioner with various job titles) Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Minimum age 16. 10 years’ schooling and intermediate school leaving certificate (GCSE) in at least 5 subjects including Maths and English.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>RQF level 3 Certificate and Diploma in Childcare and Education.</i> Designed as two years full-time study in a school or college of further education with extensive placements. License to practice. 2. <i>RQF level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care or Level 3 Diploma for the Early Years Workforce</i> depending on options. May be studied part-time by those in employment. Equivalent to one – two years of full time study. License to practice. <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nested suite of awards building sufficient credit points for admission to HE and award of Level 3 Diploma encompassing EYE license to practice 2. Single award of Level 3 Diploma encompassing EYE license to practice. <p>ECTS points: not applicable EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Day nursery (0 to 4 years); Pre-school/playgroup (2/3 to 4 years), Children’s Centre (0 to 5 years)</i></p>

Notes:

Exact name of qualification depends on choice of Awarding Body and optional units which confer some degree of specialism around required core specified in qualification criteria by National Council for Teaching and Leadership.



There are no minimum qualification requirements for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery or primary schools; however, the above EYE award or its predecessors might be considered relevant and helpful, particularly for the nursery age group.

3.2.2 Wales and Northern Ireland: initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)

A level 5 Diploma has been developed for leaders and managers of practice that builds on, and provides a progression route from the established level 2 and 3 Certificate/ Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development. Currently it is only compulsory for those leading Flying Start programmes in Wales and for new leaders of all settings in Northern Ireland with established senior practitioners and leaders of all settings expected to follow over time.

Table 13

Wales and Northern Ireland: Lead practitioners/managers of early years services

<p>Title: Leadership for Children’s Care, Learning and Development 0–19 Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Minimum age 19. Other requirements at discretion of Approved Centre depending on experience.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full time education and training route: 1 - 2 years in Further and Higher Education College with extensive work placements. Maybe taken as part of wider Degree or Higher National Diploma programme. 2. Work-based route: Around 12- 18 months part-time study (in-service training and/or distance learning or day release) while in full time employment. <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland) plus other HE credit bearing awards. 2. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland) <p>ECTS points: Depends on route chosen</p> <p>EQF level: 5</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: Depends on route.</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Flying Start/ Sure Start Children’s Centre (0 to 4 years plus parent support); Flying Start Home Visiting programme; Family support programmes for parents with children 0-4 years.</p>

The Level 3 (EQF 4) Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development (*Table 14*) is the minimum requirement for counting as a qualified core practitioner in Wales and Northern Ireland. Relevant study can be undertaken at a broad range of schools and colleges or in employment.

Table 14

Wales and Northern Ireland: Early Years Services Practitioner (core practitioner)

<p>Title: Care, Learning and Development practitioner (various job titles) Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Minimum age 16. 10 years schooling. Other requirements at discretion of Approved Centre depending on experience.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full time education and training route: Two years in school or FE College as part of wider general/vocational education and training programme with work placements. 2. Work-based route: Around 12- 18 months part-time study (in-service training and/or distance learning or day release) while in full time employment. 3. Apprenticeship route: Normally 2 years of part time study and training as part of wider general or vocational education programme while employed as trainee.

Title: <i>Care, Learning and Development practitioner (various job titles)</i> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Awards: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) - maybe combined with additional qualifications such as GCSEs and ‘A’ levels or other academic credit-bearing award. 2. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) only 3. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) - combined with additional generic education and skills awards. ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0922 ISCED 2011: 3 Main ECEC workplaces: <i>Day nursery (0 to 4 years); Pre-school/playgroup (2/3 to 4 years); Flying Start Children’s Centre/ home visiting programme (0 to 4 years)</i>

As in England, there are currently no minimum qualification requirements for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery or primary schools in Wales and Northern Ireland, however the above CCLD award might be considered relevant and helpful, particularly for the nursery age group, as well as qualifications in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools which are not detailed here.

3.2.3 Scotland: initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)

Outside the schools sector, all childcare workers in Scotland are regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) which sets professional standards, registers suitably qualified workers and deals with complaints against individuals. There are three levels of registration: (1) Lead Practitioner/ Manager – graduate (SCQF level 9 EQF level 6) standard in Childhood Practice for leading any service for children and young people; (2) Core / independent Practitioner – SCQF level 7, EQF level 5; (3) Support worker – SCQF level 6, EQF level 4 – working under direction. Implementation of the new requirements will take some years, therefore the SSSC is currently dealing with legacy qualifications and allowing existing experienced managers/ leaders to register on the basis of the qualifications that were relevant when appointed.

Table 15

Scotland: Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner / Manager (Standard in Childhood Practice)

Title: <i>Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner / Manager</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
Minimum entry requirements Flexible depending on previous experience and qualifications and chosen route. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universities normally require 12 years education and Scottish Higher/ Advanced Higher Diplomas (SCQF 6/7; level 4 or 5 EQF) to include English and Maths 2. National agreements allow for Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (e.g. SVQ 4/ HNC/HND - Higher National Certificate/Diploma) in relation to Childhood Practice degree programmes. 3. SVQ 4 or equivalent vocational qualification (EQF level 5) 4. Undergraduate Degree (EQF/ISCED level 6) Professional studies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4-year full-time undergraduate degree leading to named award with eligibility for graduate registration 2. SVQ 4 (or equivalent) followed by 2–3 years full-/ part- time undergraduate degree leading to named award with eligibility for graduate registration 3. SVQ 4 followed by 3 to 4 years part-time study while continuing in employment, with eligibility for graduate registration

Title: <i>Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner / Manager</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p>4. Degree followed by graduate training programme in childhood practice</p> <p>Awards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. BA Childhood Practice/ BA Hons Childhood Practice 2. BA Childhood Practice/ BA Hons Childhood Practice 3. SCQF Level 9 Childhood Practice 4. Graduate Diploma Programme in Childhood Practice <p>ECTS points: 180 or more, depending on chosen route.</p> <p>EQF level: depends on route. BA Hons ECF/ISCED level 6; BA Ordinary and SCQF Level 9 are ECF/ISCED level 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: depends on route: 1, 2 and 3 are ISCED 550/650. Entry requirement for 4 is 650</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: <i>General/ Day Care Manager</i> in children’s centre or private and voluntary day nurseries (2/3–5 or 0–5 years); <i>Leader/Manager</i> in LA partnership pre-schools, voluntary and community playgroups and day nurseries (2/3–5 years); <i>Leader/ Manager</i> in out-of-school and holiday provision 5–12 years)</p>

Table 16

Scotland: Children’s and Young People’s Services Practitioner

Title: <i>Children’s and Young People’s Services Practitioner</i>
<p>Minimum entry requirements: For SVQ 3: None specified – at the discretion of local SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) approved centre (primarily a work-based qualification for existing employees)</p> <p>For Higher National Certificate (HNC): None specified – at the discretion of local SQA approved centre. Intermediate and higher certificates advised.</p> <p>Professional studies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scottish Vocational Qualification 3 in Children and Young People’s Services 2. Higher National Certificate in Children and Young People’s Services or similar* <p>Award: depends on the route chosen.</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4 or 5</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0922</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 4 or 5, depending on route chosen</p> <p>Main ECEC workplace: LA, Partnership and Private <i>Day Nurseries</i> (0–5); Private, voluntary and community/ partnership <i>pre-schools and playgroups</i> (2–5); <i>Out of School clubs</i> (before and after school and holidays; 5–12)</p>

Notes:

*precise name may vary depending on training provider and choice of options. HNCs are predominantly provided by Further and Higher Education Colleges for students continuing in full time education and training but with a significant component of work placements.

As in England and Wales, there are no minimum qualifications for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery/ primary schools in Scotland, though they may hold or achieve a variety of qualifications not detailed here.

3.3 Competence specifications and curricula in IPS

3.3.1 UK wide – competence specifications and curricula

It has become clear from the above that a variety of approaches to qualifications for work with young children has evolved across the UK, dependent largely on the different governance and inspection regimes. The competency and curriculum requirements in turn reflect those differences. One aspect that is a common thread running through education and training programmes at all levels across the UK is a requirement to incorporate the core or generic skills



essential for employment. These include amongst others: Communication; Application of number; Use of Information Technology; Problem solving; Working with others/ team work; Managing own learning/ learning to learn.

The profile and level of core skills required for any particular job/ subject area, and whether these are identified separately or embedded in other aspects, varies across the IPS programmes.

QTS competence specifications and curricula

Initial Teacher Training with QTS is delivered in three main educational phases: primary 3–11; middle 7–14 and secondary 11–19. Within the primary phase, some providers offer the opportunity to focus on lower primary/early years 3–7 (nursery, reception and Key stage 1) or upper primary (7–11). However, all ITT trainees are required to have a working knowledge of the key stages above and below in order to facilitate progression and to understand how key stages build on one another throughout the school curriculum to 19. Once qualified, a teacher with QTS may be deployed with any age range in the school system at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Although ITT is similar in nature and its outcomes mutually recognized across the UK, the competency requirements for Teachers with QTS have developed in divergent ways to reflect the educational and cultural context of each nation. For ease of comparison, and to reduce repetition, the relevant information for qualified teachers with QTS across the four nations will be presented before other types of qualification are considered.

The curriculum is not separately prescribed outside the competency specification but is devised locally by each approved provider of Initial Teacher Training to ensure the underpinning knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enable trainees to meet all aspects of the Teacher Standards. The relevant regulator may provide some indicative guidance. For example, supporting advice issued by NCTL suggests the curriculum content should include: the role of the teacher; planning and assessment to ensure pupil progress; national assessments and examinations; child development and learning; priorities, such as managing pupils' behaviour, early reading, and special educational needs and disability; assessing and evaluating teaching; the use of evidence and research to inform teaching (NCTL 2015, 16).

A variety of pedagogic methods may be used in ITT depending on the approved local ITT provider (normally a Higher Education Institution or schools consortium linked to an HE provider) and chosen route. These may range from lectures and seminars to practical workshops and laboratory classes, demonstrations, teaching observations and work-based learning. Increasingly ITT includes elements of distance learning and/or self-directed enquiry and problem solving. All ITT courses must include a minimum of around 50% placements/work-based learning as specified by the regulator.

An essential pedagogic/didactic feature of QTS (and also of EYTS) is building the capacity for reflection and self-awareness in order to learn from experience. The ideal of the reflective and reflexive practitioner is one who constantly reviews what they have done and the impact it has had on themselves and others (both children and adults) within a cycle of continuous improvement. This is closely related to the highest level of the key/core skill of learning to learn.

Competence specifications and curricula (non-QTS)

The main focus of the curriculum is a holistic approach to young children's health, development and learning from birth to 5 and how best to support this. The principles and values of child-centred practice are introduced along with opportunities to implement principles, theories and approaches in practice.

A variety of pedagogic methods may be used across all forms of qualification for work in education and children's services, depending on level, curriculum focus and chosen route. These may range from lectures and seminars to practical workshops and laboratory classes, demon-

strations, teaching/childcare observations, modelling, coaching and work-based learning. Increasingly all training includes elements of distance learning and/or self-directed enquiry and problem solving and in addition all learners are encouraged to be reflective and reflexive in relation to their learning experiences and to be able to self-evaluate their strengths, weaknesses and ongoing learning and development needs. All of the programmes must include a substantial component of placements/ work-based learning and assessment as specified by the relevant awarding body or regulator. For example, the Level 3 Diploma in Care, Learning and Development requires a minimum 700 hours of experience in real work settings as an employee or on placement, i.e. around 50% of all learning hours. Assessment methods include e.g. observation, reflective accounts, critical incident analyses, self and peer assessment, portfolios, learning contracts, case studies, projects and simulations/ virtual environments as well as critical analysis of information and evidence from reading or lectures, particularly at higher levels. However, the majority of assessment must be based on the trainee's experience and performance in work/ placement settings.

3.3.2 England – Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

Table 17

England: Competence Specifications for Primary (Early Years) Teacher (3–7) with QTS

Teachers' Standards (England)	
Standards	Criteria (abbreviated) Teachers must:
1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds demonstrate the positive attitudes, values and behaviour expected of pupils
2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be accountable for pupils' attainment, progress and outcomes be aware of pupils' capabilities and build on these guide pupils to reflect on their progress and emerging needs demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and how this impacts on teaching encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own work and study
3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have secure knowledge of relevant subject(s)/ curriculum areas, foster pupils' interest and address misunderstandings demonstrate critical understanding of developments in their subject/ curriculum area take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English (if teaching early reading) demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics* (if teaching early mathematics) demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate teaching strategies*
4. Plan and teach well-structured lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impart knowledge and understanding through effective lessons promote a love of learning and children's intellectual curiosity set homework/ out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend knowledge and understanding reflect on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum
5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> know when and how to differentiate teaching appropriately understand how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' learning, and how best to overcome these be aware of the physical, social and intellectual development of children

Teachers' Standards (England)	
Standards	Criteria (abbreviated) Teachers must:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages understand the needs of all pupils (including: SEN; high ability; English as an additional language; disabilities) and use distinctive teaching approaches to support them
6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> know how to assess relevant subjects/ curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements use formative and summative assessment to secure pupils' progress use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan lessons give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond
7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and promote good, courteous behaviour around the school, establish a framework for discipline using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary
8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support deploy support staff effectively take responsibility for improving teaching through CPD and advice and feedback from colleagues communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being
<p>Additional requirements for personal and professional conduct A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct throughout their career.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities 	

Notes: *Those two criteria with an asterisk are specific to teachers following an early years specialism (3–7), all other criteria are generic to all teachers regardless of age range.

Source: Department for Education 2013.

3.3.3 Wales – Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

In Wales, the professional standards and requirements for qualification as a teacher are now the responsibility of the new Education Workforce Council for Wales. As might be expected, given the curriculum requirements, supporting Welsh language development (whether

through Welsh as a second language, or through Welsh-medium teaching) is embedded in the competencies.

Table 18

Wales: Competence specifications: Early Years/ Primary Teachers with QTS

Professional Values and Attributes	
<p>Valuing and respecting children and young people e.g. through fair, respectful, supportive and constructive relationships with children; active involvement in their progress, development and well-being; celebrating their contributions including to community</p> <p>Valuing and respecting parents/ carers e.g. building positive relationships between home and school; active involvement of parents in children’s progress and well-being</p> <p>Having high expectations e.g. of children in order to improve outcomes; of Welsh language development</p> <p>Appreciating e.g. the diverse needs of children; the contribution of support staff and other professionals</p> <p>Continuing to learn e.g. through active involvement in professional networks and contributing to school/professional community; reflection on practice and taking responsibility for own learning and continuing development</p>	
Professional Knowledge	<p>Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their professional duties and responsibilities and relevant statutory frameworks • relevant Welsh educational policies and curricula • factors affecting children’s learning • key phases above and below the currently taught age group • own subject/curriculum areas and related pedagogy • own role in improving literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. • ICT to support teaching, learning and wider professional role • the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for Wales to meet diverse needs of learners • how to seek information, advice and support including procedures on safeguarding • a range of strategies to promote good behaviour and create a purposeful learning environment • UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and Children and Young People’s Participation Standards for Wales and how to apply them • curriculum expectations for Welsh-medium provision and/or Welsh as Second Language
Professional skills: Planning and target setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set challenging teaching and learning objectives that are guided by informed expectations of individual learners • Use teaching and learning objectives to plan lessons and show how learners’ knowledge, skills and understanding will be assessed • Personalise learning in order to address individual needs • Identify resources to support learning that will stimulate and motivate all learners • Work effectively as a team member and collaborate with colleagues • Plan for support staff to appropriately support learning and ensure they understand their roles • Plan appropriate opportunities for children to learn beyond the classroom • Manage and prioritise time effectively • Instigate and maintain effective communication with children, young people, and their parents/carers
Professional skills: Monitoring and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of monitoring, formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate learners’ progress and improve own teaching • Meet the assessment requirements for relevant subjects/curriculum areas including those for public examinations and qualifications • Use monitoring and assessment to support learners including those with a range of additional needs • Involve learners in target setting and evaluating their performance • Monitor and record progress and achievements taking account of learner’s views • Provide learners with accurate and constructive feedback including action plans for improvement



Professional Values and Attributes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide colleagues, parents and carers with timely, accurate and constructive feedback on learners’ attainment, progress and areas for development
Professional skills: Teaching and managing learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain effective learning environments where all learners feel safe, secure and confident • Teach the required skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to the needs of the learner making use of relevant national guidance • Make effective personalised provision by taking account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion • Challenge instances of prejudice, stereotyping, bullying and harassment • Teach clearly structured lessons to meet the intended learning objectives • Build on the varying experiences, achievements and interests of learners • Manage teaching and learning time effectively • Manage the physical learning environment, equipment, materials, texts and other resources safely and effectively • Employ appropriate teaching strategies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop capacity to work collaboratively and independently; secure positive behaviour; promote the well-being of children; promote good progress and outcomes for learners • Use ICT effectively in teaching and learning • Provide out-of- school study/activities which consolidate and extend work carried out in school • Work co-operatively and collaboratively with colleagues • Promote learners’ understanding of the bilingual nature of Wales and develop their bilingual skills as appropriate

Note: Standards site in transition from GTCW to Education Workforce Council - EWC. Code of conduct below applies to all types of education professionals in Wales. <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/>

3.3.4 Scotland – Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

In Scotland, professional standards for qualified teachers are regulated through the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Since 2012, four sets of standards apply: (1) for registration as a teacher; (2) for career-long professional development; (3) for middle management; and (4) for headship. The standards are generic, with allowance for some differentiation by primary and secondary phases of education where relevant. However, pre-primary (i.e. early years) is not treated as a separate phase. The professional values of a teacher run throughout the full suite of standards and these are supported by a code of conduct.

The following table lists the standard for provisional and full registration with the GTCS applied at the end of the ITT programme and on successful completion of the probationary year respectively. The level of performance expected is differentiated through use of differential criteria at the two stages. Further details can be found in the relevant documentation (see *References* and *Acronyms*).

Table 19

Scotland: Competence specifications for Primary Teachers with QTS

1. Professional values and personal commitment
<p>Social Justice <i>e.g.:</i> Committing to the principles of democracy and social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices in relation to: age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation</p> <p>Integrity <i>e.g.:</i> Critically examining personal and professional attitudes and beliefs and challenging assumptions and professional practice</p> <p>Trust and Respect</p>

<p><i>e.g.</i>: Acting and behaving in ways that develop a culture of trust and respect through, for example, being trusting and respectful of others within the school, and with all those involved in influencing the lives of learners in and beyond the learning community</p> <p>Professional Commitment</p> <p><i>e.g.</i>: Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice</p>	
<p>2. Professional knowledge and understanding</p>	
<p>Curriculum</p>	<p>Have knowledge and understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nature of the curriculum and its development the relevant area(s) of pre-school, primary or secondary curriculum planning coherent and progressive teaching programmes contexts for learning to fulfil their responsibilities in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and interdisciplinary learning the principles of assessment, recording and reporting
<p>Education systems and professional responsibilities</p>	<p>Have knowledge and understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice the schools and learning communities in which they teach and their own professional responsibilities within them
<p>Pedagogical theories and practice</p>	<p>Have knowledge and understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> relevant educational principles and pedagogical theories to inform professional practices the importance of research and engagement in professional enquiry
<p>3. Professional Skills and Abilities</p>	
<p>Teaching and learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan coherent, progressive and stimulating teaching programmes which match learners’ needs and abilities Communicate effectively and interact productively with learners, individually and collectively Employ a range of teaching strategies and resources to meet the needs and abilities of learners Have high expectations of all learners Work effectively in partnership in order to promote learning and well-being
<p>Classroom organisation and management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a safe, caring and purposeful learning environment Develop positive relationships and positive behaviour strategies
<p>Professional reflection and communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and critically engage with professional literature, educational research and policies Engage in reflective practice to develop and advance career-long professional learning and expertise

Note: Please note these standards have been abbreviated.

Source: General Teaching Council for Scotland 2012.

3.3.5 Northern Ireland – Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

The competence specification for Pre-primary / Primary Teachers set down by the GTCNI (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland), is given below in a somewhat abbreviated form for ease of comparison. For the exact wording, please see Department of Education (Northern Ireland)/General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland 2010.

Table 20

Northern Ireland: Competence specifications for Pre-Primary Teachers (3-8) and Primary Teachers (5-11) with QTS

<p>General Teaching Council (NI) – Code of Values and Professional Practice</p>	
<p>Professional Values and commitments</p>	<p>Teachers should demonstrate that they understand and uphold the core values and commitments enshrined in the Council’s Code of Values and Professional Practice.</p> <p>The core values of the profession are:-</p>

	<p>Trust, honesty, respect, fairness, integrity, tolerance, commitment, equality and service</p> <p>Commitments are to:-</p> <p>Learners e.g. to maintain professional relationships that respect pupils as persons; respect each pupils’ uniqueness, individuality and specific needs; motivate and inspire to help realize potential</p> <p>Colleagues and others e.g. work with others to create a professional community; promote collegiality; cooperate with external agencies; ensure respectful, trusting relationships with parents/ carers; respect confidentiality unless legal requirement to disclose</p> <p>The Profession e.g. as reflective practitioners, contribute to review of policies and practices; assume responsibility for own ongoing professional development need</p>
Professional knowledge and understanding: educational policies and contexts	<p>Teachers will have developed knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contemporary debates about the nature and purposes of education and the social and policy contexts in which the aims of education are defined significant features of pupils’ cultures, languages and faiths and how to address the implications for learning arising from these their responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, the most common special needs and strategies to address these strategies for communicating effectively with pupils, parents, colleagues and personnel from relevant child and school support agencies how to use technology effectively, both to aid pupil learning and to support their professional role the interrelationship between schools and the communities they serve, and potential for mutual development and well-being the statutory framework pertaining to education and schooling and their specific responsibilities emanating from it
Professional knowledge and understanding: curriculum	<p>Teachers will have developed a knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum development processes, including planning, implementation and evaluation how the learning area/subject(s) they teach contribute to the Northern Ireland Curriculum* the curriculum requirements in preceding and subsequent key stages
Professional knowledge and understanding: methods	<p>Teachers will have developed knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> relevant learning area/subject(s), including strategies and initiatives to improve, literacy, numeracy and thinking skills sufficient linguistic and pedagogical expertise to teach the curriculum in Irish medium and other bilingual contexts factors that promote and hinder effective learning and the need to provide for the holistic development of the child a range of strategies to promote and maintain positive behaviour, including an acknowledgement of pupil voice
Professional Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> set learning objectives taking account of what pupils know, understand and can do, and the Northern Ireland Curriculum requirements plan and evaluate lessons that enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to meet learning objectives deploy, organise and guide the work of other adults to support pupils’ learning plan for out-of-school learning, including school visits and field work manage their time and workload effectively and efficiently and maintain a work/life balance create and maintain a safe, interactive and challenging learning environment use a range of strategies and resources, including eLearning, to enable learning and maintain pace within lessons employ strategies that motivate and meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special and additional educational and language needs promote a standard of behaviour that enables all pupils to learn, pre-empting and dealing with inappropriate behaviour
Professional Skills: assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor pupils’ progress and give constructive feedback to help pupils reflect on and improve their learning select from a range of assessment strategies to evaluate pupils’ learning, and use this information in their planning



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess pupils’ attainment against relevant benchmarking data and understand the relationship between assessment and target setting
Wider professional role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep curricular, subject and pedagogical knowledge up-to-date through reflection, self-study and collaboration with colleagues • contribute to the life of the school, collaborating with teaching and support staff, parents and external agencies • liaise with parents or carers on their child’s progress and achievements

Source: Department of Education (Northern Ireland)/ General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland 2010.

3.4 ECEC competence specifications and IPS curricula (PVI sector)

3.4.1 England

Early Years Teacher curricular areas (non-QTS)

As with QTS, the curriculum is devised by local approved providers of Initial Teacher Training to provide the underpinning knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to support these detailed competence specifications. The core of the curriculum is based around children’s development, learning, health and well-being in the context of family, culture and services (the ecological context), the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and the teaching of early literacy and numeracy. The supporting advice issued by NCTL provides the same list of core content as for Qualified Teacher Status, however the emphasis on ecological context expressed in wider documentation related to EYTS is distinctive, as is Standard 7 on safeguarding and promoting welfare. Early Years Teachers with EYTS specialise in the Early Years Foundation Stage from 0 to 5 covering babies and toddlers as well as pre-primary education and care and are required to have a working knowledge of Key Stage 1, the phase above, in order to facilitate progression. They must also understand how the other key stages build on one another throughout the whole of the National Curriculum to 18.

3.4.2 Wales and Northern Ireland

Children’s Care, Learning and Development: Level 5 and Level 3 competence specifications

Recent changes in Wales mean that the required qualification for leadership/ management in Flying Start Programmes – provision that is targeted at the most disadvantaged children and families – is higher (at level 5) than that for leading/managing day nurseries, play groups and other settings (remains at core practitioner level 3) in less disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, the volume of credit is not equivalent to that of a Diploma in Higher Education or a Foundation Degree in the Qualifications Wales Framework/Regulated Qualifications Framework (England and Northern Ireland), and therefore does not fulfil all the requirements for level 5. Currently, discussions are also in progress over the development of graduate (level 6) degree programmes that meet requirements set down by CCSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales) for leader/manager roles.

Recent policy changes in Northern Ireland mean that the qualification requirement for all new leaders/managers in childcare or Sure Start settings has been increased to level 5. However a two-year transitional period has been allowed for new managers to achieve this. Current leaders are also being encouraged to upgrade their qualifications from level 3 to 5 over time.

Table 21

Wales (also available in Northern Ireland): Minimum competence specifications for Leader/Manager in Flying Start Children’s Centre programme

Title: Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland) 0 to 19

Level 5 in Qualifications for Wales and Regulated Qualifications (England and NI) Frameworks - Minimum 90 credits (equivalent to one year full time study and work experience; not sufficient for full level 5 EQF under Bolo-

gna agreement)	
Structure: Minimum of 64 credits from mandatory core, 12 from Group B and 14 from Group B and/or C	
Entry Requirements; Must be over 19. Others at discretion of local approved centre.	
Mandatory core: Group A	<p>In a health and social care or children and young people’s setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional practice in children's care, learning and development • Support children's care, learning and development in the early years • Understand children and young person's development • Lead practice that supports positive outcomes for child and young person development • Develop and implement policies and procedures to support the safeguarding of children and young people • Develop health and safety and risk management policies, procedures and practices • Work in partnership • Use and develop systems that promote communication • Promote professional development • Champion equality, diversity and inclusion • Lead and manage a team • Develop professional supervision practice
Option Group B (Management)	<p>In a health and social care or children and young people’s setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and evaluate operational plans for own area of responsibility • Manage physical resources • Develop procedures and practice to respond to concerns and complaints • Recruitment and selection • Facilitate the development of effective group practice • Facilitate coaching and mentoring of practitioners • Manage induction • Facilitate change • Manage an inter-professional team • Manage finance within own area of responsibility • Manage quality • Appraise staff performance • Manage disciplinary processes
Option Group C (specialist/ advanced practice) selected examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support others to promote children’s mathematical development and problem solving skills in an early years setting • Support others to promote children’s knowledge and understanding of the world in an early years setting • Support others to promote children’s communication in an early years setting • Leading provision for babies and young children • Develop provision for family support • Support others to promote children’s physical development in an early years setting • Promote creativity and creative learning in young children • Lead support for disabled children and young people and their carers • Support the use of assistive technology

Explanatory notes: Not all units are of equal size/credit value.

Source: CACHE n.d. -a

Although individuals with a wide range of qualifications may work in provision that includes young children under 8 in Wales and Northern Ireland, such as out-of-school and holiday play schemes, these are not recognised as core practitioners in the ECEC sector so alternative qualifications are not detailed here.



Table 22

Wales and Northern Ireland: Minimum competency requirements for core practitioner/senior practitioner/setting manager

<p>Title: Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) Age range: 0–19</p> <p>Level 3 in Qualifications for Wales and Regulated Qualifications (England and NI) Framework (RQF): 65 credits equivalent to one year of full time study plus placement experience Structure: 16 mandatory units plus minimum of 16 credits from 5-6 optional units</p>	
<p>Entry requirements. None other than minimum age 16 years. Rest at discretion of local approved centre.</p>	
<p>Generic health and social care</p>	<p>In settings for health and social care for children and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote communication • Engage in personal development • Promote equality and inclusion • Principles for implementing duty of care *
<p>Children and Young People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand child and young person development * • Promote child and young person development • Understand how to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people * • Support children’s and young people’s health and safety • Develop positive relationships with children, young people and others involved in their care • Working together for the benefit of children and young people • Understand how to support positive outcomes for children and young people *
<p>Early Learning and Child-care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context and principles for early years provision • Promote learning and development in the early years • Promote children’s welfare and wellbeing in the early years • Professional practice in early years settings • Support children’s speech, language and communication
<p>Selected Option Units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with babies and young children to promote their development and learning • Care for the physical and nutritional needs of babies and young children • Lead and manage a community based early years setting • Promote young children’s physical activity and movement skills • Promote creativity and creative learning in young children • Work with parents to meet their children’s needs • Work with parents, families and carers to support their children’s speech, language and communication development • Engage fathers in their children’s early learning • Promote children in early years settings acquiring a new language through immersion 	

Note: Not all units are of equal credit value.

*Units marked with an asterisk are knowledge only. All others must be demonstrated in practice.

Source: CACHE n.d. –b

Curricular areas

The curricular areas for the level 3 and 5 diplomas in Children’s Care Learning and Development are determined by the need to underpin the competency requirements. However, as these qualifications are embedded within the wider Children and Young People’s Services Sector, the focus is much broader than education. A substantial mandatory core in both qualifications covers the development health and well-being of children from birth to 19 in the context of their families and social circumstances and is underpinned by a children’s rights approach.



3.4.3 Scotland

Children and Young People (0-16): Competence specification for Lead Practitioner/Manager

The SSSC standard for Lead Practitioner/Manager also acts as the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement recognized by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland for BA degrees in Childhood Practice.

Table 23

Scotland: Competence specification for Lead Practitioner/Manager in Childhood Practice

<p>Role: Manager / Lead Childhood Practitioner - graduate level 9 SCQF (EQF level 6) leading to registration with Scottish Social Services Council at Lead Practitioner level Title: The Standard for Childhood Practice Programmes in Scotland</p>	
<p>Professional values and personal commitment</p>	
<p>Commitment to: inclusion, diversity, social justice, anti-discrimination, and protecting and caring for children. Valuing self and others: taking responsibility for own professional learning and development and that of the workers for whom they are responsible. Valuing parents and communities: respect and show commitment to the parents and carers, families, communities, and other agencies and partnerships with whom they work.</p>	
<p>Professional knowledge and understanding</p>	
<p>Children and childhood</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners have:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad and balanced knowledge and understanding of children and childhoods which underpins their practice.
<p>Frameworks and programmes</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners have:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical understanding of the content of relevant organisational frameworks and statements of principles for supporting and enabling play, learning opportunities and experiences, • critical understanding of the theories and principles required to analyse and critically evaluate the programmes provided, • broad, integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope and nature of relevant organisational frameworks.
<p>Systems and professional responsibilities</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners have critical understanding of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principal features of local, national and international systems, and of policies, practices, and relevant legal requirements relevant to the service, • breadth of the service and the professional roles and responsibilities of Early Years and Childcare workers, • contribution of other professionals to the service and to other children's services, • principles, theories and concepts of leadership and management practice relevant for their role.
<p>Evidence informed practice</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners have:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and understanding needed to support evidence informed practice. <p>E.g. access and apply relevant research; engage in systematic evaluation; use relevant research methods; analyse and evaluate evidence.</p>
<p>Professional skills and attributes</p>	
<p>Supporting play, learning opportunities and experiences</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners coordinate, lead and support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of environments that are safe, secure, caring and nurturing, and inclusive. • development of positive and caring relationships with each child and family. • provision of balanced and flexible programmes that support play and learning opportunities and encourage children to be healthy, active and achieving. • tracking of children's progress and the planning and management of transitions. • engage in professional reflection for continuing improvement.
<p>Communication, collaboration and partnership</p>	<p>Managers/lead practitioners lead and support:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teamwork and collaboration.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with parents and carers, families and communities. • collaboration with other agencies and other children's services to build capacity and develop services.
Leadership and management	<p>Managers/lead practitioners take responsibility for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their own personal learning and professional development needs. • the learning and professional development needs of workers for whom they are responsible and for supporting students. • delivery and ongoing development of a high quality service for each child and family. • the business management of the services they provide.

Note: These standards have been abbreviated.

Source: Scottish Social Services Council 2016.

The content of awards from universities is not prescribed but must cover the areas set out in the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland (see above).

Children and Young People (0-16): Competence specifications/ minimum qualification requirements for Core Practitioners

In Scotland, education, training and qualifications are currently undergoing considerable revision as a result of the Curriculum for Excellence initiative (Education Scotland 2016). New National Group Awards for Early Education and Childcare were introduced from August 2015. However, as no one has actually been awarded the new qualifications yet, the competence specification that appears on the Scottish Social Services Council website as acceptable for registration is still SVQ level 3/4. This is based on the National Occupational Standards of Skills for Care and Development – the industry organisation relevant to the whole of the care sector including adult social care. The mandatory core of the qualification, though expressed in terms related to children and young people, is focused on the generic skills and knowledge for work across the care sector to facilitate mobility.

Table 24

Scotland: Children and Young People (0-16): Competency specification for core practitioner

<p>Role: Core Practitioner Level 7 SQCF (EQF level 5) (Meets requirements for registration with Scottish Social Services Council)</p> <p>Title: Scottish Vocational Qualification in Social Services (Children and Young People 0-16)</p>	
<p>Structure: Based on National Occupational Standards (Skills for Care and Development) Four mandatory/core units plus four optional units</p> <p>Minimum entry requirements: None specified (at discretion of local SQA approved centre). Current employment in a relevant childcare provider expected.</p>	
Mandatory Units	
Promote effective communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish understanding about children’s communication • Support children to interact through communication • Communicate effectively about difficult, complex and sensitive issues with children and key people • Communicate using records and reports
Promote health, safety and security in the work setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain health, safety and security in the work setting • Promote health and safety in the work setting • Minimise risks arising from emergencies
Develop your practice through reflection and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on your own practice • Take action to enhance your practice
Promote the safeguarding of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain your understanding and awareness of harm, abuse and safeguarding • Implement practices that help to safeguard children and young people

	<p>from harm or abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships that promote the safeguarding of children and young people • Promote rights and inclusion with children and young people • Work in ways that promote the wellbeing of children and young people • Support children and young people to keep themselves safe
<p>Option units for work in early learning and childcare include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the development of children and young people* • Promote the health and physical development of children* • Promote children's wellbeing and resilience* • Implement frameworks for early education through the development of curriculum planning • Assess children's progress according to relevant curriculum frameworks • Implement positive environments for babies and children • Promote the care of babies and children • Promote children's early learning in the school environment • Engage with families in ways that encourage them to be involved with their children's learning and development • Use information and communication technology to promote children's early learning • Promote the care, learning and development of children with additional support needs in early education settings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote literacy, numeracy and language development for children's early learning • Promote the acquisition of a new language by children through immersion in an early years setting 	
<p>Once registered with the SSC, all workers must follow the Code of Practice below:</p> <p>Social service workers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers • Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers • Promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm • Respect the rights of service users whilst seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people • Uphold public trust and confidence in social services • Be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. 	

Notes: Please note these standards have been abbreviated.

Source: SQA- Scottish Qualification Authority n.d. –a

IPS curricular areas and approaches - SVQ

All those preparing for SVQs in the care sector cover the same core requirements, regardless of age band or setting. However, the rest of the curriculum depends on the chosen option modules that match the employment setting.

As SVQs are primarily designed for those already in relevant employment, the methods employed would be primarily through working under direction with modelling, observation and mentoring support from an experienced and qualified co-worker. This is normally supplemented by distance learning/ self-study or day/ block release to colleges for the underpinning knowledge, theory and methods.

Early Education and Childcare Practitioner (0-12) – new qualification

The new SQA Group Award National Certificate in Early Education and Childcare shows considerable difference in structure to the SVQ, with an exclusive focus on the work with young children and early years specialist units as part of the mandatory requirements. It is designed to be able to be differentiated for employees studying part-time as well as 16- to 18-year olds in full time education and training. This new qualification will eventually replace the existing SVQ. It has already been endorsed by the SSSC as acceptable for registration as a support worker. The core/ generic skills and knowledge for employment in the care sector are embedded in the units rather than expressed separately.



Table 25

Scotland: Early Education and Childcare Practitioner (new qualification under development)

<p>Role: Core practitioner/ support worker Level 6 Higher SCQF (Level 4 EQF) (Meets requirements for registration with Scottish Social Services Council)</p> <p>Title: Group Award: Scottish National Certificate in Early Education and Childcare</p> <p>Minimum entry requirements: none specified (at discretion of local SQA approved centre) but relevant intermediate level achievement recommended as precursor.</p> <p>Structure: Seven mandatory units (54 SCQF credits) plus a further three optional units</p>	
Mandatory Units	Outcome standards
Child Development birth to 12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the development of children from 0-12 years. Explain the main influences on children’s development. Evaluate the impact of influencing factors on the development of children.
Developmental theory in early education and childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate methods for studying development in children aged 0-12 years. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories relating to child development aged 0-12 years. Relate theories of child development to practice in early education and childcare settings.
Holistic approaches to child health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the basic health needs of children from 0-12 years. Explain the contribution of agencies, professionals and carers in maintaining and promoting child health. Evaluate the main influencing factors which affect the health of children.
Play in early education and child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse a play environment in an early education and childcare setting. Evaluate the importance of play to the developing child. Explain how you would set up different types of play in an early education and childcare setting.
Play in practice (double weighted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a play environment within an early education and childcare setting. Support different types of play within an early education and childcare setting. Evaluate how play supports the care, learning and development of the child. Explain the role of the adult in supporting play within an early education and childcare setting.
Developing an understanding of working with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the principles and values that underpin working with children. Explain child-centred practice. Evaluate the skills and qualities necessary for working in an early education and childcare setting. Evaluate the importance of ‘reflective practice’ in an early education and childcare setting.
Developing an understanding of working with children: workplace experience. (Double weighted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working under supervision, demonstrate the principles and values that underpin working with children. Working under supervision, support child-centred practice. Working under supervision, demonstrate skills and qualities necessary for working in an early education and childcare setting. Work effectively as a reflective practitioner.
<p>Optional units include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiential Approaches to Early Education and Childcare Partnerships in Early Education and Childcare Creative and Aesthetic Experiences for Children Supporting the Care and Feeding of Babies Supporting Language, Literacy and Numeracy in an Educational Setting Supporting ICT in an Early Education and Childcare Setting Supporting a Curriculum in an Early Education and Childcare Setting Supporting Children with Additional Support Needs 	

Note: These standards have been abbreviated.

Source: SQA- Scottish Qualification Authority n.d. –b

3.5 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

UK-wide

The majority of entrants make the choice of a career in ECEC at 16 to 18 years while still in full-time education and training. Of these a minority will go into work-based apprenticeship schemes while the majority stay on at school or college gaining work experience through practice placements. Those who achieve better grades in the level 3 Diploma (SVQ 3 in Scotland), often combined with other accredited studies, may then apply for higher education in a relevant subject area or on an integrated professional education and training course.

Other entrants follow more traditional academic studies (GCSEs and 'A' Levels, or Scottish Highers) before choosing a career in primary teaching on leaving school (B.Ed./BA Education) or choosing to study/work with the 0–7 age group (e.g. BA Early Childhood Studies or BA Childhood Practice in Scotland).

Increasingly, the expectation is that direct entrants into employment are willing to become qualified at level 3 within two or three years of appointment. It is possible for 16-/17-year olds to opt to go straight into employment as unqualified staff or on apprenticeship schemes, and employers may provide in-house work-based training programmes beyond induction with a pathway starting from level 2 Certificates and Diplomas (or SVQs in Scotland) and building up to level 3 or higher supported by day release to a college or distance learning resources. Others enter the ECEC workforce as mature adults after having had their own children and may go straight into work-based training at level 3.

The UK education, higher education and training sectors have become much more diversified and flexible in recent years. For level 3 (EQF level 4) qualified core practitioners, progression to and through higher education is possible via work-based and distance routes. Further and higher education institutions offer the level 5 (EQF 5) Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development or Higher National Certificates/ Diplomas and Foundation Degrees (level 5) that in turn can be 'topped up' to a Bachelor's degree and full level 6 graduate status with an additional 12 to 18 months of work and study.

3.5.1 Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualifications frameworks

Horizontal Mobility: In Wales and Scotland, permeability across the non-school workforce is encouraged through a shared code of ethics and values in care and qualification structures that have a mandatory common core for children and young peoples' and wider care services. Transfer between roles is thus possible through the addition of a few specific units. In England there is less transferability into and within the education sector because of the strongly educational focus of qualifications and the strict division between teachers with QTS and support staff roles.

Vertical mobility: the extended version of the RQF level 3 Diploma in Children's Care Learning and Development in Wales and Northern Ireland, and the EYE qualification in England have been rated by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) in order to create the credits which are necessary for entry to Higher Education. However, vocationally oriented credits alone may not be sufficient in relation to the competitive requirements for entrance to some universities. Hence 16- to 19-year olds in full-time education and training in schools and colleges are often advised to combine their vocational qualification with some additional academic studies. In the case of mature students with extensive practice experience, universities often exercise more discretion over entry requirements.

The relevant regulator controls the number of places for all forms of Initial Teacher Training in the nations of the UK and entry can be highly competitive. The range of full-time and part-time routes through ITT (leading to QTS) ensures that progression is possible by work-based routes. However, standard higher education fees (currently around 12,000€ per annum) are applicable

for those requiring a degree. Although loans are available for first degrees, Higher Education Institution fees may still be prohibitive to many given the low pay characteristic of the sector.

3.5.2 Options for career changers

The ITT graduate entry routes for QTS provide opportunities for career change for graduates. However the requirements for Maths and English (and Science in England) GCSE (level 2) at a minimum of grade B in England (grade C in Wales) together with English and Maths skills tests still apply.

For those at RQF/SVQ level 3 with related qualifications in playwork, health care or social care, career change is facilitated through the mandatory common core structure for the care sector that applies in Wales and Scotland. However in England, the distinctively educational approach of the new EYE makes transferability more difficult. Alternatively, individuals may use any existing RQF level 3 qualifications to apply for an undergraduate degree as a mature student.

At any stage of the education and training system Accreditation of Prior Accredited or Experiential Learning (APL /APEL, sometimes referred to as RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning) is theoretically possible. However, it has proved extremely difficult to operationalise in practice as credit is usually transferred by matching learning outcomes to modules/units. What is commonly found is that the variation of content in modules and levels across different awarding bodies or Higher Education institutions makes an exact match impossible, meaning that it is easier for the individual to follow the whole programme rather than to try selectively to fill in apparent gaps. The exception to this is through recognition agreements with particular institutions or Awarding Bodies based on academic transcripts and mapping. These may allow, for example, an ITT collaborative provider to give the equivalent of 60 ECTS points credit (first year of University, RQF level 4 studies) for a range of specified vocationally related qualifications.

4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based learning is an essential component of all education and training programmes that lead to recognised qualifications for ECEC at EQF levels 4 to 6 across the UK. As all recognised qualifications for core practitioners and teachers are competence-based (interpreted as the effective implementation of skills and knowledge in action) rather than just knowledge-based, evidence for assessment must include demonstration of the competences claimed in an appropriate work environment. This is achieved through real work in the case of employees, or practice placements for trainees.

4.1 Regulation/guidance, duration and structure of work-based learning in IPS

The precise requirements for work-based learning are set down by the relevant awarding or regulating body and vary with sector, qualification and chosen route. In level 3 Diploma programmes placement/work experience must account for roughly half of the learning time and for those studying for the level 5 Diploma in Leadership in Children’s Care, Learning and Development this must include experience within a leadership role, albeit limited in extent.

ITT programmes must include a minimum of 24 weeks (120 days) of work experience, up to two weeks of which may be counted from before the main training programme begins. Experience of at least two different settings and ages/phases of the curriculum is also required.

4.2 ECTS points allocation for IPS

Whether or not ECTS points are allocated specifically to work-place learning within higher education programmes is dependent on the structure of the individual modules that make up the validated course specification which in turn depends on the policy of the Higher Education institution. In some cases designated placement modules carrying a given number of points are part of the course specification. In others time spent in placement is integrated into the module specifications for different curricular/ subject areas.

4.3 Skills and competencies developed in IPS through workplace-based learning

In judging core/key skills, the UK system allows for the distinction between whether and where particular skills are taught, developed and assessed. In a fully competence-based qualification system, ideally all types and areas of skills and competencies defined in the specification should be developed through practice and assessed in the workplace, regardless of how they were originally taught. However, the methods of assessment may take many forms and simulation/ alternative methods may be permitted under some circumstances (for example, in demonstrating aspects of competencies associated with child abuse/ protection or dealing with a difficult parent that might not occur in the course of everyday practice as a trainee).

Although teaching methods and techniques can be taught in the classroom and demonstrated through observation of video clips, it is widely recognised that their effective implementation in real group settings with children cannot be achieved without practice in a real-world setting. This is particularly true of managing children's behaviour and group/classroom management. Co-teaching or observation and coaching by an experienced practitioner are usually considered the most effective. However, pairing trainees to support each other is also used and can result in effective learning for both participants when combined with debriefing with an experienced teacher or tutor.

Similarly, learning to work with and supervise/mentor less well-qualified colleagues or to handle parents' concerns are skills that, although they may be simulated and rehearsed through role play, most students/trainees develop or hone through direct experience in the workplace at a later stage.

4.4 Forms of student self-evaluation and external evaluation

Although the expected level of explanation varies with the level of qualification, for all ECEC trainees judging competence is not just about observing that a task has been carried out meeting certain criteria but ascertaining the reasoning and theory underpinning a trainee's actions. It is hence generally recognised that sound underpinning knowledge and understanding is essential to enable trainees to respond effectively in the unpredictable situations that are characteristic of work in ECEC. In England and Scotland, vocationally oriented degrees for those working with young children (such as BA Hons Early Childhood Studies or BA in Childhood Practice respectively) already allow for a mix of academic/theoretical knowledge and practical/practice-based credit, and similar developments are anticipated in Wales under an EU Social Fund initiative called '*Progress for Success*' (Welsh Government 2017).

Assessment items within the overall assessment strategy may include:

- Essays and assignments and written or oral examinations are used to test knowledge and understanding of relevant theories and procedures outside of the workplace.
- Child observations, including those undertaken as part of routine workplace records, are used by tutors to test understanding of stages of development and the ability to apply this in deciding the next steps in promoting development for a particular child.

- Work-based projects and assignments require students to plan and implement activities in order to promote a particular aspect of children’s development. These are normally designed to fit within the wider curriculum plans/schedules of the workplace.
- Reflective logs and diaries while in work/on placement are used to help students identify and cope with the emotional impact of incidents that may arise in ECEC as well as to improve on their own learning and performance.
- Building on the above, students may be asked formally to evaluate/rate their own performance as part of professional dialogue with and grading by supervisors/mentors or tutors.
- Case studies may be used to demonstrate analytic and problem solving skills that draw on underpinning theory and knowledge that has not been adequately tested through a period of work-based learning.
- Research activities may be used to develop the trainee’s capacity to make use of evidence in support of teaching and commitment to continuous improvement.
- In some cases unseen written examinations or multiple choice tests may be used to assess aspects of knowledge.

All of these methods and more may contribute to the portfolio of evidence that students/trainees/employees accumulate in relation to the skills and competencies specified.

Self-evaluation on a formative basis is a feature of many assessment strategies as it is considered to be an effective means of encouraging self-reflection and the development of reflective practice. To be valid, any evidence from the work place must be substantiated through the signature of the supervisor/mentor assigned to the student or by a visiting tutor.

In the case of ITT (including Early Years Teacher Status in England), although appropriately qualified and trained supervisors/mentors validate the work-based evidence of trainees and undertake their own observations, their judgements must be moderated through joint observations carried out with a visiting tutor/representative of the ITT provider who may carry out their own separate observations in addition. Independent external evaluation is also a requirement for effective quality assurance. Specifically, External Moderators with no connection to the ITT provider must themselves carry out a number of sample observations of trainees to confirm the accuracy of judgements made jointly by the supervising teacher and the visiting tutor/representative of the ITT provider.

For the level 3 diplomas (EQF 4), the majority of judgements are made by the staff of local ECEC centres in which trainees/employees are based and/or by visiting tutors from the school or Further Education institution that has overall responsibility for their training programme. The judgements made by individual assessors are quality assured by an internal moderator who reports, via approved assessment centre arrangements, to the independent External Moderator representing the relevant awarding body.

4.5 Training/qualifying courses for mentors/supervisors

Supervisors/mentors must themselves be qualified at a relevant level and undergo specific training for the role provided by the ITT provider or Approved Assessment Centre. The form and length of training is not usually prescribed and the outcome of training is rarely formally assessed. However, an annual training and update event for mentors is considered good practice and some training providers offer modules in mentoring that can be counted towards related awards or Continuing Professional Development requirements.

The effectiveness of supervisor/mentor training can be evaluated during the moderation process by considering the consistency of application of procedures and judgements made by supervisors/mentors. In the case of ITT, representatives of the approved ITT provider must undertake regular visits to moderate and to carry out direct observations themselves as part of quality assurance.



4.6 Designated roles, time allocations and remuneration of mentors/supervisors

Mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres usually have specified roles in relation to students/trainees/junior employees that notionally require some remittance of their time to perform. These arrangements are formalised in guidance to ITT providers in which supervisors/mentors sign an agreement and payments are made by the ITT provider to facilitate their release. However, whereas regular formal hours of release from teaching may be achieved in a school, the reality for most small scale ECEC settings is that the manager/group leader (who is often the only person in the setting sufficiently well qualified to act as supervisor/mentor) simply has to fit supervision into their already busy schedule and this may take them away from direct work with children.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Throughout the UK, the only ECEC staff that have fully regulated CPD frameworks, prescribed CPD opportunities and standardised terms and conditions of service are teachers with QTS in maintained schools. This is partly because teachers with QTS must all be registered with the relevant nation’s General Teaching Council (or now in England the National Council for Teaching and Leadership) that sets down the standards for their training and continuing development and support needs, and partly because the teaching profession is well established and strongly unionised. As registration of other types of ECEC staff progresses, for example in Scotland through the Social Services Council for Scotland (SSSC), so specification of initial standards and provision for CPD are also developing. It is also the case that regulatory and inspection authorities in all four nations are increasingly developing online training and CPD opportunities and/or best practice guidance as well as providing information about approved training and CPD opportunities elsewhere.

Current government policies across the UK, to a greater or lesser extent, have been to devolve budgets and decision-making down to school level. In England, this has probably gone furthest in terms of so-called Free Schools and Academies, which are not strictly bound by the national curriculum and can make their own decisions on appropriate qualifications for staff and may not be bound by national pay agreements. But more generally, the traditional role of local authorities as providers of in-service training and curriculum updates has diminished and all schools now control their own training/CPD budgets and are free to buy into services from whatever source as they see fit.

Table 26 attempts to encompass England, Wales and Northern Ireland while *Table 27* covers the same features for Scotland.

Table 26

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Features of CPD by role/qualification type

Issue	Teacher in maintained nursery or primary school with QTS, level 6 EQF	Group/ Flying Start Leader/ Children’s Centre manager with EYTS (RQF/EQF level 6 England); Diploma in leadership of CCLD (EQF level 5 Wales)	Core practitioner RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) with EYE (England); CCLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)
Regulatory frame-	Newly Qualified/ probation-	NCTL and CCW (<i>Care</i>	Regulatory standards

Issue	Teacher in maintained nursery or primary school with QTS, level 6 EQF	Group/ Flying Start Leader/ Children's Centre manager with EYTS (RQF/EQF level 6 England); Diploma in leadership of CCLD (EQF level 5 Wales)	Core practitioner RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) with EYE (England); CCLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)
works for CPD	ary teacher year on 90% workload for support and CPD plus 4/5 days to attend ongoing professional development with ITT provider. Specialist qualifications and/or standards for senior teachers and leadership and management.	<i>Council for Wales</i>) advise but do not require days for CPD. Regulatory standards require all staff to keep up to date with basic requirements.	require all staff to keep up to date with basic requirements.
Main forms of CPD	In-house whole school days; One-off training days and short courses; Longer modules and specialist or management awards. Postgraduate certificates and/or Master's Degrees	One-off training days and short courses, distance learning packages Minority: management or postgraduate certificate/diploma or Master's modules for graduates. Top-up from level 5 to Bachelor's Degree	One-off training days or short courses; distance learning packages Minority: Advanced certificate/ Diploma awards or Foundation Degrees (mainly self-funded).
Costs: Who pays?	Individual school budget (includes element for staff CPD) Some specialist courses funded/ provided by central government or regulators	Employers Individuals Occasional LA subsidy	Employers Individuals Occasional LA subsidy. Student loans for undergraduate degrees
Leave and CPD entitlement	Max. 190 teaching days per year (38 weeks) plus 5 non-teaching days	Statutory minimum leave entitlement 25 days	Statutory minimum leave entitlement 25 days
Obligatory activities	Participation in school planning or CPD on 5 non-teaching days Evidence of CPD required at annual appraisal and performance review	None specified	None specified
Access problems	Supply teacher costs for additional days set against limited school budgets – prioritisation	Small employers lack resources. Costs prohibitive to low paid individuals. Cover arrangements often problematic for key personnel	Time out of setting*; lack of resources; cover arrangements often problematic; geography/distance. Costs prohibitive for low paid individuals
Main providers of CPD	Approved providers of ITT; Higher Education Institutions; Lead schools in network; Local Authorities; Government agencies.	Further and higher education institutions; Local Authorities; Distance Learning packages.	Employers; Membership organisations (e.g. for playgroups) Further Education institutions; Local Authorities
Recognition/ advancement	CPD often linked to specialist, lead teacher or management responsibilities with	None – up to individual employers	None – up to individual employers

Issue	Teacher in maintained nursery or primary school with QTS, level 6 EQF	Group/ Flying Start Leader/ Children’s Centre manager with EYTS (RQF/EQF level 6 England); Diploma in leadership of CCLD (EQF level 5 Wales)	Core practitioner RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) with EYE (England); CCLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)
	pay scale advancement or special responsibility allowances		
Special provision for Heads of ECEC	For unit/phase management – optional senior teacher awards set down by regulator. For whole school management compulsory NPQH ** (England and Wales)	None required beyond qualifications listed above	None required for pre-school group/ day nursery managers
Specialist modules	Specialist teacher modules in range of curriculum subjects plus SEN, specified by relevant regulator	Optional specialist short course/ modules may be available (e.g. SEN)	Optional specialist short courses/ modules may be available (e.g. SEN,)

Explanatory Notes:

**Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Survey* for Wales (BMG Research 2014) reported the following problems from employers: timing of training takes staff out of setting (61%); cover arrangements problematic (49%); lack of resources (55% - nil budget or 1,200€ or less); Geography/distance (33%)

**NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship is the qualification for all head teachers or aspiring head teachers in England and Wales.

Table 27

Scotland: Features of CPD by role/qualification type

Issue	Teacher QTS	Leader/ Manager Childhood Practice	Core Childhood Practitioner
Regulatory frameworks for CPD	1. Standards set down by GTCS; 2. Career Prof. Development; 3. Middle Management; 4. Headship	Continuous Learner Framework set down by SSSC	Standards set down by SSSC: for progression routes
Main forms of CPD	2 & 3: Guidance and resources from Education Scotland*; LA training days & short courses. 4: Flexible Route via LAs or Scottish Qualification for Headship via Universities	Guidance and resources from SSSC (workforce solutions); LA training days and short courses; college/ university courses.	Guidance and resources from SSSC (workforce solutions) LA training days and short courses; approved college/ university courses in leadership and management
Leave and CPD entitlement	National agreement: 35 days per year leave rising to 40 after 5 years of service. CPD: 5 required school planning/ development days plus additional 5 obligatory CPD days.	28 days per year statutory minimum No obligatory CPD entitlement	28 days per year statutory minimum No obligatory CPD entitlement. ***
Obligatory activities	None specific: linked to annual performance appraisal and review	None (code of practice advises must keep up to date)	None
Costs: Who pays?	Employer/ School	Employer or individual	Employer or individual
Access problems	School priorities (budgets include CPD element and supply teacher cover)	Cover difficulties Setting budget constraints;	Cover difficulties; setting budget constraints;

Issue	Teacher QTS	Leader/ Manager Childhood Practice	Core Childhood Practitioner
		Individual low pay; HEI fees	individual low pay; HEI fees
Main providers of CPD	Education Scotland Local Authorities University providers of ITT	Scottish Social Services Council; Education Scotland; Local Authorities; Providers of BA Childhood Practice; Children in Scotland**	Scottish Social Services Council; Education Scotland; Local Authorities; Colleges of Further Education; Children in Scotland; commercial training providers
Recognition/ advancement	Senior Teacher scales; Head teachers' qualification supports application for headship.	None	None automatic; lead/manager practitioner registration supports applications for new role
Special provision for Heads of ECEC	'Into Headship' programme - generic to schools	Generic to childhood sector	Generic leader/manager registration required
Specialist modules for others	Froebel Early Years course for generic teachers; SEN and subject specialist modules.	SEN, interagency and early years specialist modules	SEN, interagency and early years additional modules

*Education Scotland is the national body responsible for inspection and quality improvement across all types/ phases of education. Some of its remit will pass to the new Scottish College for Educational Leadership (schools and early years settings) which will provide CPD learning opportunities directly and signpost other endorsed courses.

**Children in Scotland is a membership organisation for representatives of children and young people's services across the private, public and voluntary sectors.

***The Scottish government published principles for CPD in 2016.

Recent research into CPD across the UK

England: What is the difference between IPS and CPD?

This was the question raised by the England component of a previous comparative study of CPD in ECEC across Europe undertaken by the current author (see Oberhuemer et al. 2012). The issue hinged on definitions of 'professional' and the lack of consistency of recognition for a graduate professional qualification across the whole of the ECEC system as a prerequisite for leadership of groups or services. The requirement for a specified graduate qualification (QTS) only applied to the maintained school sector in England and not to the PVI sector which was the majority provider of ECEC places. In the PVI sector a variety of RQF level 3 or higher qualifications were deemed sufficient to be registered as the leader/person in charge. The picture was further confused by the way that CPD opportunities were advertised across the internet to include anything from one-off training days and basic Paediatric First Aid to part-time Foundation Degrees. When key stakeholders (including regulators, national membership organisations, local authorities etc.) were asked to define CPD, they seemed equally confused about its meaning and purpose. Some saw it as solely work-/role-related development, others counted anything that enhanced the individual's personal development, and a few defined CPD in terms of both its personal and role-related benefits. The conclusion was that until there was a standard requirement for Initial Professional Development at core practitioner and leader/manager levels across the sector, defining what could count as CPD and/or requiring workers to undertake a certain amount of CPD would prove meaningless.

One might argue that the situation has been somewhat clarified by the recent development of the Level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) as the only accepted core practitioner qualification, and the minimum for leadership/management, for the PVI sector. However, the accompanying creation of an Early Years Teacher without QTS alongside the existing Early Years/Primary

Teachers with QTS and the absence of a standard Classroom/Teaching Assistant qualification for schools, means that the problem is not yet fully resolved (see Hevey 2011).

Wales: Characteristics of CPD

According to the workforce survey commissioned by the Care Council for Wales (BMG 2014), the most popular form of CPD (57% of all staff), particularly in the PVI sector, was training provided by relevant membership organisations, such as the Pre-school Learning Alliance. 46% of all staff had accessed Local Authority training in relation to the Foundation Phase but this figure was inflated by the 93% of staff in maintained schools who had done so. A further 46% had participated in other forms of Local Authority training with e-learning much less likely to be used (23%). Sharing of best practice with colleagues inside (57%) and outside (32%) the immediate setting was also very popular.

The priorities of different types of settings in Wales regarding the subject matter of CPD were very different. When asked to identify three, additional literacy and numeracy training stood out as by far the most important priorities for Foundation Phase in maintained schools (73%) whereas in all other types of setting training priorities were wider spread and more evenly balanced. The most important for Flying Start were working children with special needs and understanding children's speech and language development (41%) reflecting their focus on younger, disadvantaged children and improving language development as a pre-cursor to early literacy.

Scotland: What makes for effective CPD?

A team from the University of Strathclyde were commissioned to investigate the development needs of the early years workforce and in particular, the effectiveness of CPD for those working with under threes, in the wake of the introduction of the Standard for Childhood Practice (2007) and the Early Years Framework in 2008. Their conclusions included that:

- the CPD needs of those working with under 3s and the needs for specific support in working with parents were inadequately met;
- CPD was dominated by short term, one off courses provided in house or by local authorities (LAs);
- There were few opportunities for inter-agency training though those that were available were well received;
- That private and voluntary sector employees were less likely to have access to CPD than those working for LAs (lack of day release and affordability were recurring issues).

In the course of their literature review they noted that 'Short one-off sessions are unlikely to foster deep learning whereas the promotion of shared learning and collaborative inquiry practices appear more effective' (Condie and Seagrave 2009, 5). Unfortunately these were (and remain) the commonest form of CPD throughout the UK.

Northern Ireland

No recent research specific to CPD noted.

Reforms, trends, debates in relation to CPD

Wales

Amongst the most influential documents has been the *Report of the Independent Stock-take of the Foundation Phase* undertaken by Prof. Iram Siraj from University College London's Institute of Education (Siraj 2014). The process included a review of research, consultation with stakeholders, visits to outstanding settings, focus groups with staff from both maintained and partnership settings and a series of questionnaires.

The Final Report includes a chapter on how well the principles of the Foundation Phase have been embedded in ITT and CPD as well as numerous recommendations relating to the necessity for ongoing CPD training for school support staff and for those delivering the Foundation Phase outside schools (partnership settings) as well as for teachers. The Welsh Government has accepted many, but not all, of the recommendations and has incorporated these into its action plan.

In addition, draft Principles for Continuing Professional Development have recently been agreed through consultation across the Early Years and Childcare sector and were published by the Care Council for Wales in 2016.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

6.1 England: recent policy reforms

England is waiting for the government to publish a new workforce development plan for the ECEC sector. This was originally promised by Spring 2016, however, the recent referendum result and ensuing disarray in the government means that major policy decisions and plans are not likely to be forthcoming until the new Prime Minister and cabinet have had time to establish policy priorities. (In September 2017 this situation had remained unchanged.)

The new workforce plan will need to take account of the considerable policy shift (referred to in *Section 1*) away from the integrated principles of *Every Child Matters* and back to an emphasis in early years on school readiness and educational outcomes. The changes in qualifications from the broad-based Early Years Professional Status to the overtly teaching-oriented Early Years Teacher Status (EQF level 6) and Early Years Educator (EQF level 4) reflect this shift. The overall direction of wider early years and family policy has also shifted from progressive universalism to a compensatory model, in line with an underpinning ideology in which state services are targeted at those considered in need of intervention. Whether the final version of the plan will incorporate more radical proposals for extending to maintained schools the freedoms of academies/ free schools in relation to employment policies, in particular removing the requirement for teaching staff to hold QTS, remains to be seen. However, it is generally expected that any ITT provision is likely to become schools-based (currently a minority) rather than based with Higher Education providers.

The one policy change that bucks the trend against universalism is the Westminster government's commitment (also adopted by the other nations of the UK) to double the entitlement to free ECEC from 15 to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks. The commitment was made weeks before the general election in 2015, so cynics would argue that this was a populist, vote-winning measure. In addition, it is based primarily on economic arguments that value the full participation of women in the workforce linked to the anti-poverty strategy rather than evidence that more means better in terms of outcomes for children.

6.2 Wales: recent policy reforms

Wales is currently in the middle of a number of major policy changes that significantly impact on ECEC services and workforce. Under the *New Deal for the Education Workforce*, which builds on recommendations of the Furlong (2015) and Donaldson (2015) Reports, both teachers and support staff will have a 'structured entitlement' to ongoing professional and leadership development. For teachers this will include access to new Master's degree (level 7 EQF) in

Continuing Educational Practice or in Educational Leadership dependent on their chosen route as a senior specialist practitioner or potential head teacher (see Welsh Government 2015).

In relation to the childcare workforce, the EU Social Fund project *Progress for Success* covering west Wales and the valleys that is currently underway has three strands for improving qualification levels and professionalisation of the ECEC workforce:

- Strand 1 will fund existing practitioners with no or low levels of qualification to achieve level 3 in early years and/or play work.
- Strand 2 is designed to improve the assessment infrastructure through providing qualified assessor training at level 3.
- Strand 3 aspires to fund selected practitioners through a new suite of qualifications in childhood practice (developed by the Care Council for Wales in 2016) from level 4 to level 6 EQF or graduate equivalent (see Welsh Government 2017).

6.3 Scotland: recent policy reforms

As referred to in *Section 1*, Scotland is in the process of registering ECEC workers under the Scottish Social Services Council, with specified qualifications linked to different levels of registration that reflect different levels of responsibility. This, theoretically at least, requires a commitment from all those workers, and their employers, to SSSC Codes of Practice. Scotland will thus become the first nation of the UK to have a fully regulated workforce.

Scotland has also begun to implement some of the recommendations of an independent review of the ECEC workforce (Siraj and Kingston 2015) that should have lasting effects. These include:

- In service training for workers to meet the specific needs of 2-, 3- and 4-year olds;
- A clearer definition of Early Learning and Childcare, better access to training and improved careers guidance in schools to recognise the increasingly rigorous knowledge and skills and growing professionalism of the sector.
- A standard early years progress assessment tool as part of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education.
- The SSSC and the new Scottish College for Educational Leadership to work together to ensure appropriate leadership training.
- The Care Inspectorate for Scotland to undertake a review of its inspection methodology to include a focus on promoting early learning and development and to work more closely with Education Scotland (the education inspectorate).

The Scottish government had already made a commitment to doubling the funded ELC entitlement and to an additional graduate qualified staff member in all settings in disadvantaged areas. But although the additional changes above may incrementally produce a shift in the way ELC is valued in Scotland, the government rejected the more radical options. For example: a single unified inspection body for ELC provision, or compulsory training for Head Teachers of primary schools in the principles of early years pedagogy, or standards and qualifications for ELC work that are different from the generic standards for work in children and young people's services or a specialist Early Years 0-6 training option within ITT, or tackling the divisions in working conditions between teachers with QTS and the rest of the ELC workforce and developing an ELC career structure and national pay scale.

6.4 Northern Ireland: recent policy reforms

The publication of the Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare for Children under 12 (DHSSPP 2012) was highly significant for the workforce in that it raised the bar for the minimum qualification for leading a setting from level 3 to level 5. This also applied to stand alone School Age Childcare (which in Northern Ireland starts from age 4). For the first time, a clear

distinction was made identifying Playwork qualifications as the most relevant for out-of-school care. When the original target of April 2016 for all leaders to be qualified, or at least registered on a course leading to qualification at level 5, was not met, additional guidance was issued through the Childcare Partnerships that allowed for further flexibility during the transition phase. Meanwhile the Regional Workforce Training Group on behalf of the Childcare Partnerships carried out a thorough analysis of the reasons why the original target had not been met, identified market failures in the provision of training courses and provided a number of funding support options for the Childcare Partnerships to discuss with government. These were presented in a position paper that provides a comprehensive workforce strategy for the Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce. Once finalised, this document will be critical to the future of childcare in Northern Ireland through to 2025. It clearly sets out the vision and objectives of the childcare strategy that workforce development is designed to support and links the whole to wider government policy.

7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

Professionalisation and what it means to be a professional have been major topics for debate across the UK in recent years, partly triggered by the 2006 Workforce Development Plan in England which introduced the standards for Early Years Professional Status and the target for a Graduate Leader in every setting. Edited texts have been published on the subject of professionalisation of the ECEC workforce in the UK (e.g. Miller and Cable 2011). But most research articles published in peer reviewed academic journals take the form of ‘think pieces’ about professional identity or of policy analysis and there has been little empirical research other than small scale, interpretivist studies. The exception tends to be the few large scale surveys and/or longitudinal studies that are government funded, such as the workforce surveys or the evaluation of the introduction of Early Years Professional Status in England (Hadfield et al. 2012).

Examples of all the types of study mentioned have been selected from across the four nations of the UK to give an indication of the current scope of research.

7.1 Research in England

Childcare and early years providers survey 2013.

Source: Brind, R., S. McGinigal, J. Lewis, and S. Ghezelaya with H. Ransom, J. Robson, C. Street, and Z. Renton. 2014 (see *References* for further details)⁴.

Purpose: Eleventh in biannual series of workforce surveys dating back to 1998 in order to monitor number of ECEC settings, places and attendance, delivery of the funded free entitlement to ECEC, staffing, qualifications and provider finances.

Methodology: Computer assisted telephone interviews with representatives of 10,271 settings across England of which 7,578 were ECEC group or Out of School Care providers, 902 were childminders and 1,791 were school-based. Results were weighted to give appropriate national estimates. The interviews took place in Autumn 2013 coinciding with the extension of the free entitlement to disadvantaged two year olds.

Key Findings (not referred to elsewhere in this report):

⁴ NB: information from this survey has been used to inform other sections of this report

- The number of full-day care providers has continued to increase, but more slowly, and now (2013) stands at 17,900 whereas part-time/sessional provider numbers and childminders are declining.
- Full-day care places have increased overall by 10% and there has been a sharp rise (42%) in part-time places in disadvantaged areas (possibly linked to the new two year old offer).
- Day care staffing increased by 6%, qualification levels have shown significant improvement since 2008 (from 61% to 84% holding level 3 RQF) and pay also increased more than average in the economy but from a very low base.
- Around half of all providers had maintained static fees but 21% of settings were now operating at a loss as a result.
- The proportion of voluntary/community run not-for-profit sessional providers (the traditional pre-school play group model) declined from 80% in 2009 to 62% in 2013 and those remaining were concentrated in the more advantaged areas.
- The number of Out-of-school care schemes has continued to increase significantly as schools have tried to provide wrap-around care options for working parents in line with government policy.
- Turnover rates remained stable at around 10-12% but the number of full day-care settings with active vacancies increased from 18% to 24% and amongst sessional providers the number had doubled (from 8% to 17%) – the highest proportion of vacancies was for core practitioners and basic posts.

Graduate leaders in early childhood education and care settings: the practitioner perspective

Source: Davis, G. 2014 (see *References* for further details).

Background: In England, since 2006 the government has promoted a professionalisation agenda for the early years workforce that originally included a target of graduate leadership via the achievement of a multi-disciplinary Early Years Professional Status (later replaced in 2013 by a more education oriented Early Years Teacher Status). Some have expressed concerns about the introduction of graduate leadership as potentially having a negative impact on the largely non-graduate workforce. Others that it has done little to improve the status of the ‘profession’ since terms and roles were poorly defined or understood.

Purpose: Part of wider three-year study into understandings, perceptions and impact of Early Years Professional Status in one English local authority area.

Methodology: A mixed methods design explored views from the practitioners’ perspective including a survey of 35 Early Years Professionals and 17 staff who worked with them and in-depth focus groups with EYPs.

Findings: The graduate leadership role was considered by all to be important for children and parents. Early Years Professionals (EYPS) valued the skills and knowledge they had gained through higher level training and showed greater reflective self-awareness in relation to their practice than beforehand. They also particularly valued the additional CPD opportunities provided locally post-qualification - sensing achievement of EYPS as a new starting point - and had grown further in confidence. However EYPs reported that their roles as curriculum leaders and change agents were not well understood by teachers or parents or the wider public and there was confusion over managerial status or lack of it. In particular, those EYPs who were not the managers of settings faced challenges in implementing changes they judged necessary to improve outcomes for children. Many made comparisons with the role of teacher as one that was well understood and respected. The early childhood workforce in general still had lower status and the nurturing/ caring aspects of ECEC roles were not easily measured or hence, valued by others outside the sector. EYPs continued to value the contribution that less qualified staff made recognizing that, because some did not have the aptitude for higher level study or leadership roles, this did not detract from them being excellent practitioners. The author concluded that, despite being imposed from the top down, EYPS had had a positive impact on the

ECEC workforce and ‘provided them with confidence, credibility and a greater awareness of their role, starting a positive spiral of leadership within settings’ (Davis 2014, 159). Concern was expressed that those aspects that were positively valued were not lost in the change-over to Early Years Teacher Status.

7.2 Research in Wales

Early years, childcare and play workforce survey 2014

Source: BMG Research⁵ - CCW commissioned report: Available from www.ccwales.org.uk/edrms/152594

Purpose: to produce an overview of the ‘landscape’ of early years services and to estimate levels of staff qualifications and training needs and in particular, the prevalence of Welsh language skills and practice.

Methodology: on-line questionnaire with link sent to all types of ECEC settings, out of school care and play work settings that could provide an email address. A total of 641 settings responded from across Wales with playgroups and Flying Start over represented and primary schools significantly under represented. The overall results were un-weighted and some cells were very small so some caution in interpretation is necessary.

Findings: Roughly eight out of ten respondents were part of membership organisations/ networks – higher in the private and voluntary sectors. 70% reported providing a bilingual environment, mainly through incidental use of Welsh but 15% of settings provided Welsh language immersion. Overall (including schools), the majority of staff (75%) were qualified to at least level 3 and around half settings were graduate led.

Roughly 25% of staff across all types of early years settings were currently working towards the next level of relevant qualification, the highest proportion (27%) being in Flying Start (for which qualification requirements had recently been increased) and the lowest (8%) in Foundation Phase in maintained schools. Schools had the highest proportion of graduates and largely level 3 qualified assistants but progression from classroom assistant to teacher with QTS was not easy. In contrast, in the childcare sector the Care Council for Wales was seeking ways to support and enable progression for staff in Flying Start centres.

Around three quarters of all early years, childcare and playwork settings in Wales had a training plan, just under half of which included individualised plans for each member of staff – good practice that was particularly prevalent in full daycare (70%) and Flying Start (61%) settings. In the case of maintained schools, training plans were likely to be made on a whole school basis rather than for the Foundation Phase staff as a separate entity.

Findings that were specific to CPD are included in *Section 6*.

Parent Training Support for Nursery Staff in Wales

Source: Bywater, T.J., J.M. Hutchings, N. Gridley, and K. Jones. 2011 (see *References* for further details).

Background: Little specific additional training has been given to nursery staff working in disadvantaged areas which have become designated Flying Start Centres where it has been estimated that up to 20% of children have conduct disorders. Structured evidence-based parenting programmes, such as the “Incredible Years Toddler Parent programme”, have previously been shown to be an effective way of improving child/parent relationships and treating conduct disorders in young children. It was decided to carry out a feasibility study using the Incredible Years to support Flying Start nursery staff in dealing with children with conduct disorder.

⁵ Information from this survey has been used to inform the Wales dimension of other sections.

Objectives: To establish whether training using the Incredible Years Parenting programme would prove satisfying to staff, increase staff confidence and competence and decrease stress levels when dealing with challenging behaviours and result in improvements in children's behaviour; to provide effective CPD in managing challenging behaviour and encouraging positive relationships for Nursery Staff in Flying Start provision.

Methodology: Non-randomised trial of the Incredible Years parenting programme as training for 13 experienced nursery staff from across two Flying Start centres. Baseline assessment of children's behaviour was carried out by parents and nursery workers on 28 children before training began. Staff self-reported stress and feelings of competence were also assessed using standardized tests. Both children and staff were reassessed four months later after staff had participated in the training programme. Staff and the children they worked with were paired for statistical analysis.

Findings: Nursery staff recorded a statistically significant improvement in children's behaviour at nursery, verified by the ratings of teachers. The staff members' feelings of stress decreased and their confidence and feelings of competence increased. However there was no change in the children's behaviour at home. The researchers concluded that the intervention had been highly successful but that the parents could also benefit from the programme and that this would help to ensure consistency in how children's behaviour was managed at home and in nursery.

7.3 Research in Scotland

Professionalisation through academicisation in Scotland

Source: Wingrave, M. and M. McMahon. 2015 (see *References* for further details).

Background: In Scotland, the Early Years Framework 2008 marked the beginning of professionalization of the ECEC workforce including a requirement for all group leaders to meet the Standard for Childhood Practice, the relevant subject benchmark statement for degree level qualifications in Scotland (QAA 2007). The Childhood Practice Award set at graduate equivalent level is achievable through a variety of work-based and study routes. The implementation of the CPA, and its links to registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (as opposed to educational bodies) have major implications for the workforce and are part of system-wide reforms. Education Scotland (the education inspectorate) had already started to report improvements in outcomes for children in its 2012 report *Making a Difference*

Purpose: to explore ECEC practitioners' views about the changes taking place in Scotland

Methodology: Small scale in depth study involving eight experienced ECEC practitioners, all participants in the first year of a BA in Childhood Practice, split into two discussion groups that each met twice. Each session was recorded and transcripts with identified themes provided to participants before the second session to allow for challenge and reconfiguration as well as elaboration on emergent themes.

Findings: the thematic analysis split initially into two strands: benefits and concerns. Self-reported benefits centred on enhanced credibility and feelings of self-worth in addition to the knowledge gained. Taking a degree gave them the confidence to challenge practice and enabled them to justify professional views. However, despite recognizing better articulation with the wider children and young people's workforce, there were lingering issues around comparative status, pay and conditions in relation to qualified teachers.

Concerns centred on the importance of care versus the demands of the curriculum in driving ECEC provision and the broader future of the ECEC workforce. The introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence from 3 to 18 effectively acknowledged ECEC as part of a continuous curriculum within the education system. However, there were concerns about the lack of recognition for, and valuing of care functions as integral to early learning and to socialization and about

the curriculum focus on developing maths and literacy, for which they did not feel adequately prepared. This raised issues about whether the Standard for Childhood Practice itself needs to be different for ECEC workers and to include more on pedagogical practices in supporting children’s learning. A further concern was about the lack of an agreed career structure in line with qualifications and experience and the poor pay and conditions of service in ECEC which mitigated against recruiting and retaining the best candidates. The authors concluded that rectification of these issues would be a significant contribution to establishing a mature, stable and professionalized workforce.

7.4 Research in Northern Ireland

Strategies, systems and services in Northern Ireland

Source: Mcmillan, D. J. and B. McConnell. 2015 (see *References* for further details).

Background: Education in Northern Ireland has a particular distinctiveness and ECEC policy development has not always followed the lead of England. It is largely still a two-tier, split system of variable quality voluntary and private sector childcare staffed by vocationally trained, poorly paid individuals and graduate teacher led statutory early education provision. Attempts at a more integrated approach to ECEC policy development foundered after the draft Early Years (0–6) Strategy was rejected on consultation and the Department for Education reverted to a more easily manageable Learning to Learn strategy focusing on 3- to 6-year olds.

Purpose: To explore issues of language and power in the NI government policy document *Learning to Learn: a framework for early years education and learning*

Methodology: Critical discourse analysis (after Ozga 2000) using a framework of context, texts and consequences to generate a text analysis protocol.

Findings: The article describes the source of the policy as rooted in the previous attempt at an integrated strategy which had generated huge interest and around 2,000 consultation responses, many in support of the principles and vision but not its focus on largely educational interventions rather than the more holistic approach recognizing learning as beginning pre-birth that was apparent in the government’s own commissioned evidence paper. The ‘right’s-based, inclusive language’ (Mcmillan and McConnell 2015, 249) adopted by the 2013 framework reflected the advisory role of the early years stakeholder group and demonstrated awareness of wider global policies such as the UNCRC. Despite claims of egalitarianism special mention was given in the document, perhaps for political reasons, to Irish medium provision, although this accounted in reality for only a very small proportion of provision.

The Learning to Learn framework was intentionally realigned with the Department of Education’s core objectives of raising standards and reducing underachievement in education. The school readiness agenda is, hence, central and only tempered somewhat by reference to the importance of the home learning environment and supporting parents. Care is notable by its absence and reference to the care/ nurturing function only appears once in the document.

Ministerial endorsement refers to a two strand approach with the second strand being cooperation with other departments and agencies to address wider family issues but the targets are vague and represent a considerable watering down from the previous strategy’s ambition of integrated education and care within a framework of wider family support. On workforce issues, the Learning to Learn policy exhorts the PVI sector to make the best use of the expertise of qualified teachers (Early Years specialists in advisory roles), reinforcing the ‘dominant discourse that statutory is best’. However, the article identifies a ‘deafening silence’ on the issue of raising workforce qualifications. The benefits of CPD are recognized but it is proposed that this is achieved through outstanding settings (mainly from the statutory sector) leading regional networks and making use of the Excellence in Early Education Fund.

The authors conclude that the recession has directly constrained government policy and prevented further expansion of early years provision or the pursuit of graduate leadership as a goal. In addition, the political and social context in which ‘segregated education is the norm’ and legislative changes require cross-party agreement, fosters insularity from global perspectives and mitigates against more radical change.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The state-maintained school sectors across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have broadly comparable national agreements with the relevant long-established Teachers’ Unions concerning the terms and conditions, remuneration and career structures for qualified **Primary Teachers (Early Years) with QTS**. The starting salary for a newly qualified teacher in England and Wales in 2016 was around £23,000 (25,661€) with an additional weighting payable in London as the most expensive area. This is just under the median national wage for all workers of around £26,000 (29,008€). Incremental increases on an annual basis within each pay scale are almost automatic, though subject to satisfactory performance appraisal. Career structures allow for progression to higher pay scales on promotion and/or achievement of additional specialist or leadership and management awards. Senior teacher rates start at around £35,000 (39,050€) while the pay for head teachers is based on the size of the school with a minimum salary of around £44,000 (49,091€) for even the smallest village school.

Those classified as support staff, including Classroom/Teaching Assistants and Early Years Teachers with EYTS earn considerably less, even if they also hold a relevant graduate level 6 qualification. There are no nationally agreed pay scales and considerable variation across Local Authorities. The current government’s policy is to encourage the establishment of Free Schools and Academies (state maintained but outside of Local Authority control), so increasingly pay and conditions are at the discretion of the individual school. According to the National Careers Service website, a full-time Teaching Assistant working 30-40 hours per week can expect to earn between £13,000 and £18,000 (14,504€ and 20,082€). per annum, with some experienced Higher Level Teaching Assistants (a specialist level 5 qualification) eligible to earn slightly more, depending on the school.

Similarly, there are no agreed terms and conditions for ECEC staff in the PVI sector which historically has not been unionised. A recent study relating pay to quality ratings cites evidence from the Low Pay Commission that the national minimum wage (£6.70 - 7.47€ from 21 years of age in 2015) is de facto the average wage payable to childcare workers. ‘Simon et al. (2015) drew from the Labour Force Survey and estimated that childcare workers were paid on average £6.60 (7.36€) per hour or £10,324 (11,518€) per annum in 2012-14. Pay is particularly low for childcare workers employed in the private sector - £5.60 (6.24€) per hour compared with £7.80 (8.70€) per hour outside the private sector.’ (Maughan et al. 2016, 6).

The particularly low average pay rate in the PVI sector is partly due to high turnover and a high proportion of young workers and apprentices under 21 for whom the national minimum wage is less than normal. More experienced core practitioners are more likely to have supervisory responsibilities and hence to earn slightly more. Nevertheless, these levels of pay are not enough to support a family. As a result, staff with families are often in the position of claiming in-work benefits through the Working Tax Credit system (soon to be changed to Universal Credit). Across the PVI sector there is no systematic career structure or provision for annual increments or additional payments for achieving higher level qualifications and graduate sta-

tus. In 2015, the average salary for a graduate leader or manager of a small-medium sized day nursery outside of London was around £16,000 – 22,000 (17,851-24,545€), i.e. considerably less than a newly qualified teacher responsible for a single class.

Employers and nursery owners in the PVI sector argue that they cannot afford to pay more given that the government effectively restricts a large part of their income of PVI settings through the low hourly funding rate for provision of the free part-time ECEC entitlement for all 3- and 4-year olds and an increasing number of 2-year olds. In addition day nurseries and pre-schools are under pressure from government and the public to keep fees low so as to keep costs down for working parents.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Working hours are variable but most full time ECEC workers work for 36 – 40 hours per week. Shift work is particularly prevalent in day nurseries in order to accommodate opening from 8.00 to 18.00 for 48-50 weeks per annum. In contrast, many preschools and playgroups operate sessions within school hours of roughly 9:00–12:00 and 13:00–15:30/15:45 in school terms only (38 weeks per annum). As a result, part-time working is more common in sessional care.

In the maintained schools sector the maximum hours worked by teachers are determined by national agreement as 1,260 per annum, but not all of these need be on school premises. The majority of teachers are full time and teachers are paid 52 weeks per year. In contrast, Classroom/Teaching Assistants are more likely to be part time and often on hourly contracts that apply to term times only.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

All registered childcare settings across the UK are obliged by the relevant standards/framework to provide new staff with a basic induction programme covering areas such as health and safety and to allocate a supervisor/mentor to monitor and appraise their performance and identify additional training needs. Often this can be an informal arrangement with no specified time allowances for mentoring and support activities. How much is offered beyond this basic minimum is up to the local provider to decide.

The exception is for newly qualified/probationary teachers for whom national agreements specify reduced workloads, supervision and support arrangements during their first year while the probationer works to achieve the practising teacher's standards leading to full registration. During this year the probationer also remains attached to an ITT provider for further training and development opportunities.

8.4 Non-contact time

In the case of qualified teachers, national agreements specify a maximum number of contact hours per week and that all staff must be allowed at least 10 hours from this for preparation and marking. Other specified activities are by negotiation with the head teacher but there is a clear expectation of remission from teaching in order to fulfil them.

Such allowances are not standardised in the PVI sector and staff are often expected to write up observations and reports during quieter periods when children might be asleep or supervised by another or participating in a larger group activity such as listening to a story. Supervisory staff may be allowed some time for their supervision and administrative work at the discretion of the setting manager who themselves may be involved in direct childcare in order to maintain statutory ratios. However, standards require that such activities must not take senior staff away from direct involvement with children too frequently.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

Teaching as a profession is relatively stable and the mainly female pre-primary/primary workforce have good maternity leave arrangements that enable qualified teachers to return to work, should they wish. Teacher recruitment is controlled by central government for each nation through restricting the number of Initial Teacher Training places on the basis of forecast births. Incentives are offered for specialist shortage subjects at secondary levels (e.g. Maths and Physics) but primary teacher recruitment has remained buoyant. However, wastage through drop out, career change and stress has increased in recent years and some areas (particularly the more rural and/or disadvantaged) have experienced shortages.

High turnover has long been recognised as a problem in the PVI sector. This is partly due to the preponderance of young staff but failure to retain the more experienced and better qualified is often related to low pay and poor career prospects. On an anecdotal level, many mature students say that they cannot afford to stay in childcare in the long term and would be better off stacking shelves in a supermarket or using their degrees as a ticket to graduate level pay elsewhere.

Historically, staff shortages in the PVI sector have not been a major problem except in urban areas with high living costs but many employers are starting to face recruitment problems and have been warning of an impending recruitment crisis (see *Section 9*).

Forecasts of the care needs of a growing ageing population suggest that competition for diminishing numbers of school leavers across the social care and childcare sectors will become fierce within the next few years. In addition, recent changes to government policy (also adopted in Scotland and Wales) promise a doubling of the free childcare entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds of full time working parents from 15 to 30 hours by 2017 (2020 in Scotland). If this is to be implemented, a significant expansion in the numbers of ECEC places/sessions and hence staff will be necessary. (For example, an existing school/ECEC setting typically offering 5 x 3 hour sessions on a mornings or afternoon basis will have to either halve the number of children or double the number of available sessions in order to provide 30 hours for each child). Staff shortages are therefore likely to become acute.

Targeted recruitment strategies sponsored by government in order to increase the proportion of male staff in childcare have been unsuccessful (see *Section 2*). Similar efforts to recruit additional workers from the Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) population have been marginally more successful but the proportion remains low except in areas with high ethnic minority communities.

Over the past five years government subsidies for higher level education and training programmes for experienced childcare workers have been largely withdrawn so, although free training to level 3 for 16- to 19-year olds continues, many mature students are finding fees a barrier to progression to levels 5 and 6. With the withdrawal of a specific target for graduate leadership to be backed up by regulatory change, there is also less incentive for employers to fund higher level training. (The situation in Scotland is slightly different where the Standard for Childhood Practice is linked to registration at leader/manager level and in Wales in relation to special provision for level 5 leadership of Flying Start Centres).

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The variations in governance, training and qualifications for the ECEC workforce across the UK have been shown to be both confused in terms of internal logic and confusing for those look-

ing in from the outside. Despite some attempts towards integration of services and governance, by different means in the four nations, the separate interests of the wider health, care and education interests have prevailed especially in inspection and regulation systems. The general acceptance by all four governments of the importance of early years to later health and developmental outcomes has resulted in greater investment in ECEC services but the level of investment has still not been sufficient to address some of the major issues in the workforce or in viability of services. In fact, some of the progress that had been made towards achieving a graduate-led workforce has been undermined by withdrawal of funding support for in-service higher education and cuts to Local Authority training budgets, both of which have had negative effects, particularly on training opportunities for mature, experienced ECEC staff. The neo-liberal approach of leaving it all to employers and individuals to fund simply does not work in a situation in which a high proportion of settings are small scale and struggling to survive financially and in which the workforce is extremely low paid.

The main workforce challenges are similar across all four nations of the UK and in many ways are interconnected.

9.1 Impending staffing crisis

Employers are starting to warn about a looming crisis in recruitment, staff shortages and availability of suitably qualified staff. This is partly due to low status, low pay and poor career prospects across the private, voluntary and independent ECEC sector and has been exacerbated by competition for staff with the wider care sector because of the ageing population with its attendant demands for support. The uptake of training places for ECEC qualifications at level 3 (EQF level 4) and at graduate level 6 (EQF level 6) in England has also been affected by more stringent entry requirements for EYE and EYTS. In response to a question about future staffing during a session of parliament's Public Accounts Committee one provider commented: 'I don't know where they are going to come from because entry into childcare courses has plummeted' (House of Commons 2016, 5).

The impending ECEC staffing crisis has been brought to a head by the policy commitment to double the entitlement to free ECEC for 3- to 4-year olds from roughly 15 hours to 30 hours or more from 2017, depending on the nation. Given that many settings offer predominantly part-time places (e.g. morning or afternoon sessions), doubling the entitlement has required a major expansion in the number of places which has inevitably increased demand for qualified staff. A survey by the National Day Nurseries Association concluded that recruitment and retention of staff were already '... heading towards crisis point' (House of Commons 2016, 3).

9.2 Impending funding crisis

There has been an ongoing argument between the PVI sector and governments that current rates of funding for the free entitlement are insufficient to cover the costs of providing high quality ECEC places which have to be cross-subsidised through fees for additional hours. The funding rate is currently the subject of a government consultation across the sector.

The fact that such funding concerns are justified was supported by an in-depth analysis of the English government's official cost projections for the commitment to extend the entitlement to around 30 hours. In a recent report, the Institute for Public Policy Research expressed concern that '... the government will significantly underfund the planned extension, and that this will result in a poorly-delivered policy with negative outcomes for children and families and for the sustainability of the sector' (Cory 2015, 3). The report went on to suggest that it would be more cost effective in terms of achieving the government's stated ambitions for children and families to extend the existing entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds to 48 weeks in order to cover holidays or to universalise the entitlement for 2-year olds that is currently restricted to the 40% most disadvantaged.

Recent surveys of members of the two largest provider associations – the National Day Nurseries Association (largely private sector) and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (largely voluntary and community sector) indicated that only 45% and 30% respectively were likely to offer the extended entitlement despite the fact that some groups feared being put out of business if they did not. Although this evidence is drawn from England, there is no reason to believe that similar issues will not be raised by the extension of the free entitlement in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

9.3 Disparities in pay and conditions

There remain huge disparities in terms of status, pay and terms and conditions of service between those in maintained nursery/primary schools who hold QTS and the rest of the workforce, whether graduate or not. Governments across the UK have refused to address this issue and have maintained the position that rates of pay and terms and conditions of service of ECEC workers are up to individual employers to decide provided they comply with the legislative frameworks of employment rights and the minimum wage (now living wage).

In England, the government rejected the recommendation in Professor Nutbrown's review of the ECEC Qualifications to create a new qualified teacher role for those working across the 0–7 age range including in schools (Nutbrown 2012). Although the standards and entry requirements for graduate Early Years Teacher Status (0–5) were deliberately aligned with those of Pre-primary/Primary teachers, the new award did not confer QTS, hence precluding those with EYTS the from being employed as a qualified teacher in maintained schools and hence from appropriate salary scales. If QTS and its associated pay, terms and conditions were to be extended to graduates working across the early years sector, this of course would lead to a large increase in costs, a major part of which would fall back on the respective government in relation to funding the free entitlement.

A similar stance was taken by the Scottish government in response to the recommendation in Siraj's Workforce Review for a specialist early years path through the existing ITT system leading to QTS (Siraj and Kingston 2015).

9.4 Failure to achieve full integration of education and care

In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, responsibility for regulation and inspection of ECEC services remains spread across different departments and inspectorates and under-threes are not considered within the curriculum framework. The overall policies in Wales and Scotland reflect a strongly integrated approach despite structural barriers but training and provision remains segregated between education/schools and other forms of ECEC services, and qualifications for work in the latter are integrated into the wider care sector framework. A key issue for Wales and Scotland is whether future training for core practitioners and leaders, designed to be more or less generic for children and young people's services, is fit-for-purpose in ECEC settings in which promoting young children's development requires specialist knowledge and skills and in which school readiness is increasingly an expected outcome.

In contrast England has integrated regulation and inspection under Ofsted (previously solely an education inspectorate), governance is integrated under the single Department for Education and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum framework covers all children from birth to five inclusive. However, changes in government policy have meant pre-school provision is becoming increasingly schoolified and standards and qualifications more educational in their orientation with the crucial word 'play' removed completely. The issue here concerns whether the new forms of early years training (EYE and EYTS) are fit-for-purpose in meeting the holistic needs of the child through play and care routines and in supporting the wider functions of ECEC services in child protection, healthy lifestyles and family and parenting support.

9.5 Absence of a long-term ECEC policy strategy (England in particular)

ECEC policy remains politically contentious in England and strategy is subject to the whims of each newly elected government. Extensive examples have already been given of how the coalition government from 2010 overturned the previous government's workforce strategy, abandoned the graduate leadership target and took qualifications down a more narrowly education-focused path. Actions such as raising the entry requirements for EYE and EYTS qualifications or not granting QTS to Early Years Teachers with EYTS, and initiatives such as the extension of the free entitlement, do not appear to have been thought through in terms of the impact on recruitment and shortages of qualified staff. A new Early Years workforce development plan for England was promised for spring 2016 but now seems a low priority amongst the post-Brexit turmoil. In the hope of influencing future decisions, the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years – a major membership organisation that developed out of the National Childminding Association and now has much wider membership – has launched its own workforce plan (PACEY 2016) calling for a government commitment to support and incentivise all workers to achieve RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) as the minimum accepted qualification and for the restoration of a Graduate Leadership Fund to support progression to higher levels.

The workforce strategy vacuum is not just about short-term uncertainty. Being subject in the longer term to fundamental reversals in policy direction regarding the nature and structure of the workforce, it undermines confidence, wastes the talents of the existing workforce and, in the absence of a comprehensive career structure, perpetuates the view that working with young children requires fewer skills than working with older children and reduces the likelihood of the brightest and best considering a career in early years in the future.

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Acronyms and definitions

UK wide

- BME:** Black or Minority Ethnic is the term most usually used in the collection of workforce statistics to represent staff who self-declare as being of non-white British heritage or those with a background of migration.
- Childminder:** someone who cares for children from birth to five in their own home for more than 2 hours a day and for reward. May also be funded to provide ECEC for 2-/3- to 5-year olds.
- Children's Centre:** focus of a wide range of provision for children, often including daycare, and parent support in a particular neighbourhood. Mainly associated with the Sure Start initiative in disadvantaged areas in England and Northern Ireland (or Flying Start in Wales).
- Day Nursery:** provider of full day care for groups of children under five, normally while parents work or study. Mainly private for-profit but also can be community-based or managed by a voluntary organisation. Usually from 18 months but some accept babies under one.
- ITT/ITE:** Initial Teacher Training or Initial Teacher Education are the terms used for the regulated training of teachers leading to Qualified Teacher Status.
- LA:** Around 150 Local Authorities distribute funding and provide local administrative services and support to local services, including children's services, throughout the UK. They are partly financed by national government grants and partly through local taxation based on private properties and business rates.
- ONS:** the Office for National Statistics is responsible for collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics about the UK's economy, society and population.
- Nanny:** someone employed by parents to care for one or more children in the child's own home.

Nursery School: state maintained or independent/ private provider of pre-school education for children from 2/3 to 5.

Nursery Class: class for 2/3/4 year olds that is part of a primary school.

Out-of-School Care/ clubs: Provision for school aged children (4/5 and over) before and/or after the school day begins, usually but not always on school premises.

Pre-School: provider of mainly part-time ECEC for groups of children from 2/3 to five. Often these are parent or community run and rely partly on parent volunteers.

PVI: the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector encompasses all types of providers of ECEC services outside of maintained schools. Private provision mainly includes day nurseries and childminders that are operated as private enterprises on a for-profit basis. This includes both privately owned single day nurseries and company owned chains of nurseries. Voluntary (sometimes known as voluntary and community) encompasses not-for-profit parent-run pre-school playgroups, community day nurseries and those operated by large voluntary organisations such as Action for Children. Independent refers to the independent schools sector that have nursery schools, classes or day nurseries attached.

QTS: Qualified Teacher Status is the qualification prescribed under the 1944 Education Act for all teachers in maintained schools and classes. Teachers with QTS must be registered and regulated by the relevant General Teaching Council (or equivalent) in each of the four nations. Standards, assessment, education and training requirements and the number of training places are also set down nationally.

England

CACHE: Council for Awards in Childcare and Education. <https://www.cache.org.uk/>

DBS: The Disclosure and Barring Service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

EYE: the Early Years Educator qualification at level 3 RQF (level 4 EQF) is based on standards set down by the National College for School Leadership for all those working in ECEC other than Qualified Teachers and those holding graduate Early Years Teacher Status. It replaces all other previously accepted qualifications at this level in England and is strongly education focused. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria>

EYFS: the Early Years Foundation Stage in England is the statutory framework that applies to all Ofsted registered providers for children from birth to 5 inclusive including childminders, nurseries and reception classes in schools. It sets out the minimum standards for health and safety as well as all aspect of children's development and learning <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework/>

EYTS: Early Years Teacher Status is a professional graduate qualification at level 6 EQF in England only. It is primarily education focused though aimed at all those who work with young children 0-5., i.e. until the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is not recognised as equivalent to QTS for the purpose of employment in maintained schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-teachers-standards>

NCTL: the National College for Teaching and Leadership is the body that registers and regulates teachers and Initial Teacher Training in England www.nationalcollege.org.uk

Ofqual: the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

Ofsted: the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills regulates and inspects schools, and children's services including Early Years. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

RQF: the Regulated Qualifications Framework recently replaced the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework providing a single simple system showing the level and size of all qualifications approved by Ofqual for use in schools and colleges across England. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461298/RQF_Bookcase.pdf

Wales

CCW: the Care Council for Wales registers all care provision including early years settings other than schools and determines appropriate qualifications for employment at different levels
<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/early-years-and-childcare-worker/>

CSSIW: the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales inspects all registered care provision including early years settings other than schools. www.cssiw.org.uk/?lan=en/

ESTYN is the Educational Inspectorate in Wales covering all schools and funded early education provision wherever it occurs. <http://www.estyn.gov.wales>

EWC: the Education Workforce Council for Wales is in the process of taking over the regulatory functions of the General Teaching Council for Wales. It's remit covers standards, registration, initial training and CPD of teachers in schools and further education, learning support staff and, from April 2017, youth workers. <http://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/>

Flying Start: is part of the Welsh Government's early years strategy aimed at children under 4 living in disadvantaged areas. It provides an enhanced health visiting service, parenting programmes, centre-based part-time ECEC and access to speech and language support. <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/flyingstart/?lang=en>

GTCW: the regulatory functions of the General Teaching Council for Wales with regard to qualified teachers are currently being taken over by the new Education Workforce Council (see above).

Qualifications Wales is the new regulator for qualifications, examinations and assessments in schools and colleges in Wales and maintains the Welsh Qualifications Framework (broadly equivalent to Ofqual in England). <http://qualificationswales.org/?lang=en>

Scotland

CIS: the Care Inspectorate for Scotland inspects (but does not register) all types of care provision including early years settings other than schools. <http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/about-us>

Disclosure Scotland: provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children in Scotland and liaises with the DBS in England. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.
<https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk>

Education Scotland is the education inspectorate responsible for all phases of education in schools and early years settings. <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>

ELC: the term Early Learning and Care is used in Scotland instead of Early Childhood Education and Care.

GTCS: the General Teaching Council (Scotland) is the registration and regulatory body for the teaching profession <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/about-gtcs/about-us.aspx>

SCQF: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework sets out all the regulated qualifications available to schools and colleges in Scotland across 8 different levels and illustrates the interface with higher education awards from level 9 (EQF level 6; Honours graduate) to 12 (level 8 EQF or Ph.D.)
<http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/>

SQA: the Scottish Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is the body that regulates and awards all forms of vocational and academic qualifications in Scotland other than those offered by universities and maintains the SCQF. <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html>

SSSC: the Scottish Social Services Council is the registration and regulatory body for social work, care provision and care professionals, including early years services other than schools.
<http://www.sssc.uk.com>

Northern Ireland

CCEA : the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is responsible for advising government and producing guidelines on the curriculum, approving qualifications and monitoring the standards of awards and also acts as an Awarding Body in its own right for a range of awards outside of Universities. <http://ccea.org.uk>

Childcare Partnerships: the five regional Childcare Partnerships bring together representatives from across the statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors in order to support parents,

providers and employers in providing and gaining access to high quality affordable childcare. Policy responsibilities include workforce strategy for the early years, childcare and playwork workforce and quality improvement. <http://www.childcarepartnerships-ni.org>

DENI: the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) has devolved responsibility for all forms of educational provision, including funded pre-school education and Sure Start to local authorities. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>

Early Years (formerly NIPPA – the Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroups Association) is the largest membership organisation representing preschools, nurseries and other groups from the voluntary, community and independent sector in Northern Ireland. <http://www.early-years.org>

ETINI: the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland inspects all phases of education wherever these are delivered including Pre-school and Foundation Stage <http://www.etini.gov.uk>

NI Direct is the Northern Ireland government website that explains how services are organised, regulated and inspected <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/early-years-teams>



THE UNITED KINGDOM

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by
Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer

The authors would like to thank Liz Brooker
for reviewing the text and providing additional information.

Citation suggestion:

Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2018. "United Kingdom – Key Contextual Data". In *Early Childhood Workforce Profiles in 30 Countries with Key Contextual Data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich. www.seepro.eu/ISBN-publication.pdf, 1265-1284.

Funded by:

Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all Sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the Sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The systems of early childhood education and care in the constituent countries of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – always varied in terms of detail, but overall were essentially similar. However, in the context of devolution and the establishment of regional parliaments in Scotland and Wales in 1998, which are also responsible for educational policy, increasing divergence has become observable – particularly in Scotland.

England

Overall responsibility for the planning and monitoring of ECEC provision for children up to the start of compulsory schooling at age 5 (in reality, often age 4), lies with the *Department for Education*. Despite this unifying attempt, two sub-sectors of early childhood education and care still remain, each with different service providers, funding conditions and staffing requirements: (1) the state-maintained sector and (2) the considerably larger private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector with a high proportion of private for-profit providers. Responsibilities are shared between central government, local authorities and service providers in the non-state sector. The *Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills* (Ofsted), which is not officially affiliated to a specific Department, is responsible for regulating and inspecting all types of ECEC provision, including home-based settings.

At the local level the municipalities, or local authorities, have the duty to ensure that there are sufficient places in ECEC settings available to meet local demand. They are also responsible for ensuring that providers comply with national standards.

Wales

Early childhood education and care in Wales is regulated by two ministerial departments, i.e. it functions as a split-sector system. The *Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales* (CSSIW) is responsible for compliance to the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for Children up to the age of 12 years (2016), which cover home-based family day care settings and private centre-based settings. Responsibility for state-maintained and for approved private preschool educational institutions for 3- and 4-year olds lies with the Welsh Government's *Department for Education and Skills* - DfES. *Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales* (Estyn) is responsible for the inspection of preschool settings and for the initial and continuing professional development of ECEC staff.

Scotland

Early childhood education and care in Scotland comes under the auspices of different ministerial departments, i.e. it is not a unitary system. Overall responsibility for education lies with the *Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning*, whereas the *Minister for Children and Young People* is responsible for early education and childcare, and the *Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages* is responsible for the national Curriculum for Excellence for 3- to 18-year olds. ECEC provision for under 3-year olds is run by private, mainly for-profit organisations, whereas early education for 3- and 4-year olds is mostly state-maintained. In 2008, *The Scottish Early Years Framework* was introduced to strengthen co-operation and partnerships between pro-

viders, local authorities and families. *Education Scotland* is the inspection agency responsible for supervising educational institutions and curriculum development. Local authorities are responsible for the organisation and staffing of preschool settings and receive subsidies from the government and tax authorities.

Northern Ireland

Responsibility for different aspects of early childhood education and care was traditionally shared among a number of departments/ministries (Education; Health; Employment and Social Affairs). The *Department of Education* continues to be responsible for state-maintained preschool institutions for 2- to 4-year olds. Since April 2015, the previous Education and Library Boards have been replaced at the local level by an *Education Authority*, which supervises both centre-based and home-based private childcare facilities. Catholic ECEC settings come under the auspices of the *Council for Catholic Maintained Schools - CCMS*.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016
Naumann, I. et al. 2013.
Welsh Government 2016.

General objectives and legislative frameworks

The overarching legislative frameworks for all constituent countries can be seen as The Human Rights Act (1998), The Equal Opportunity Act (2010) and The Data Protection Act (1998). The 1989 Children Act set out the regulatory framework for all ECEC settings in the UK. Additionally, more specific legislation relates to early childhood education and care in each country.

England

The 2016 *Childcare Act* regulates childcare for children aged 3 and 4 with working parents, and for the 40% 'most disadvantaged' 2-year olds. Since September 2017, 30 hours of free ECEC provision have been offered to all families in this category. Three main goals are foregrounded: providing every child with the best start in life; supporting working parents; and closing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. The *Children Act 2004* provides a legislative framework for ECEC primarily at the local level. Reforms set out in the *Children and Families Act 2014* make provisions for families and also children with special educational needs or disabilities. All local authorities are required to report annually on how they are meeting the needs of working parents in terms of ECEC provision.

Wales

Improving the learning of the Welsh language alongside English across the education system, starting in the early years, was the main goal of the 2010 Welsh-medium Education Strategy. In 2013 this was combined with other guiding educational objectives in an Early Years and Childcare Plan (*Building a Brighter Future*). Staffing regulations are included in *The Education (Wales) Act 2014*. Co-operation between the local authorities and relevant social partners is regulated through the *Education (Wales) Measure 2011*.

Scotland

In terms of childcare provision, *The Children (Scotland) Act 1995* marked a significant step in ECEC regulation, setting out the duties and powers available to local authorities to support children and their families and to intervene when the child's welfare requires it. Early education provision is guided by the *Education (Scotland) Act 1996*, which regulates the funding of early education institutions. Alongside making provision for children's rights, *The Children and Young People (Scotland)*

Act 2014 sets down further regulations for the provision of early years services. It also provides a framework for creating a more integrated approach towards (childcare) provision for under 3-year olds and (education) provision for 3- and 4-year olds.

Northern Ireland

The main goals of early education are defined in a government document published by the Department of Education in 2013 called *Learning to Learn: a Framework for Early Years Education and Learning*. All children should have the chance to realise their individual potential through high quality education and learning experiences in the early years. This includes providing equitable access to high quality ECEC; supporting personal, social and emotional development; promoting positive learning dispositions; enhancing language, cognitive and physical development in young children; providing positive early learning experiences, minimising barriers to learning and reducing the impact of social exclusion; and encouraging and supporting parents in their role as first and ongoing educators.

Relevant legislation includes the *Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995*, which sets out duties of the local authorities regarding childcare, and the *Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2014*, which was the basis for replacing the previous five regional Education and Library Boards through the Education Authority (see above).

Sources: Department of Education 2013.
EPIC 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Legal entitlement is regulated differently in each of the four constituent countries. There is no universal ECEC entitlement for children younger than 3 years of age. 3- and 4-year olds are entitled to between 10 and 30 hours of free education. Details are shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1

United Kingdom: Legal entitlement to an 'education' place in ECEC provision, 2015

England	15 free hours/week for 38 weeks/year for all 3- and 4-year olds (570 hours per year). Since 2013, 2-year olds in areas of high disadvantage are also eligible. As from September 2017, the free early education entitlement has been extended to 30 hours per week for 3- and 4-year olds with working parents.
Wales	10 free hours/week for 3- and 4-year olds. Free part-time provision for 36,000 2-year olds in disadvantaged areas (<i>Flying Start</i> programme).
Scotland	600 free hours/year for 3- and 4-year olds, also for 2-year olds with workless parents. Since August 2015, extended to all 2-year olds who are entitled to free meals.
N. Ireland	12.5 free hours/week during school terms in the year preceding school entry (i.e. for 3-year olds).

Attending an ECEC setting is not compulsory in the UK. Statutory schooling begins at 5 in England, Wales and Scotland and at 4 in Northern Ireland.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.
Family and Childcare Trust 2015.

Main types of provision

England

Day nurseries accept children from the age of 3 months up to 5 years. The majority are privately run, but there are also some state-maintained nurseries. They are generally open for at least six hours a day, and most are open full-day and all the year round.

Nursery schools/classes provide for 3- and 4-year olds (and disadvantaged 2-year olds) and can be state-maintained or private. They are usually open for 38 weeks per year and for six hours daily, but where there are wrap-around facilities, opening hours may be extended to ten hours (8:00 to 18:00).

Preschools (formerly playgroups) may be run by churches or community organisations but usually offer only half-day care, for 2- to 4-year olds

Reception classes in primary schools are the first class of compulsory schooling. By law, children must start statutory education full-time at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. However, many children in reception classes are only 4 years old (62% in 2015, see Table 3).** As part of the school system, they follow the school year and are thus open for 38 weeks annually.

Children's centres were introduced in 1997/1998 within the Sure Start initiative as an integrated service model combining education for young children and a variety of support facilities for parents. Most are organised by both public and private, non-profit organisations. This innovative form of provision, which has inspired several other European countries to establish similar centres (e.g. Germany, particularly in North-Rhine Westphalia), has been suffering under radical cuts to the social budget, particularly since the Conservative government came to power in 2015.

Child minders (family day carers) provide daycare for many children under the age of 3, and extended day care for school-age children. They are subject to the same regulatory and inspection framework as centre-based providers. The DfE reports that over 46,000 childminders were registered in 2016.

Table 2

England: Number of ECEC providers according to type of provision, 2016*

Type of provision	Number of providers
Full day care	15,800
Nursery schools	400
Primary schools with nursery and reception class/es	9,300
Primary schools with reception but no nursery class/es	8,200
Childminders	46,600

Wales

As in England, a variety of settings are available which differ according to age and provider. For the youngest these are **day nurseries** (age-range varies) in the voluntary, private and independent sector or **registered childminders**. 3- and 4-year olds may attend a publicly funded or private-independent **nursery school** or **nursery class**. From age 4, children may attend a full time **reception class** in primary school before statutory schooling begins at age 5. Most of the state-maintained settings are accessible during school term-times only, i.e. 38 weeks/year, and are open for roughly six hours daily, whereas day nurseries are mostly open full day and around the year.

Scotland

ECEC provision for under 3-year olds (e.g. **nurseries, playgroups, family centres, childminders**) is mainly run by private organisations, whereas early education for 3- and 4-year olds is mostly state-maintained. **Nursery classes** for 3- and 4-year olds are usually located in primary schools, and there are some stand-alone **nursery schools**. Most of the state-maintained settings are part-time,

open either mornings or afternoons, and, like schools, for 38 weeks/year. Most of the private sector settings align opening times to the needs of families. **Family/children's centres** are multi-purpose service centres for children and their families, including ECEC.

Northern Ireland

As in Scotland, ECEC provision for under 3-year olds (**day nurseries, preschools/playgroups, childminders**) is run by private agencies. Disadvantaged 2-year olds have the possibility of attending an ECEC setting attached to the government funded Sure Start programme. In the year preceding statutory schooling, which begins at age 4, children can be enrolled in public or private **nursery schools, nursery units in primary schools, private nurseries** or **voluntary playgroups**. Nursery schools are open for 38 weeks/year for at least 2.5 hours daily. Privately-run provision is usually open full day all the year round. Some nursery units in primary schools have an opening hours' option of 4.5 hours per day.

Sources: ***Department for Education 2015b.
 *Department for Education 2017b.
 **Estyn 2016.
 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
 Eurydice 2016.
 Moss, P. and J. Bennett 2010.
 Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall, and E. Lloyd 2013.

Provider structures

England

The majority of ECEC provision for 2- and 3-year olds in England is located in the private, voluntary and independent sector (see *Table 3*). In the state-maintained sector, publicly funded nursery classes and nursery schools for 3- and 4-year olds and primary schools may now also accept (disadvantaged) 2-year olds.

Table 3

England: Relative share of children in ECEC provision according to age and provider type, 2016*

Provider type	2-year olds	3-year olds	4-year olds	3- and 4-year olds
Private for-profit/private non-profit (voluntary)	84	60	19	38
Private-independent schools	1	2	2	2
State-maintained nursery schools	4	4	1	3
State-maintained nursery classes in primary schools	7	31	13	22
Reception classes in primary schools			63	33
Direct grant schools			1	1
Private family day care / childminder	4	2		1
Total	100	100	100	100

Wales

As in England, the majority of ECEC providers for children under age 4 in Wales are in the private, voluntary and independent sector, including home-based childminding services. Publicly funded provision (**nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes in schools**) provide places for 3- to 4-year olds and 4- to 5-year olds. Welsh-medium settings are usually run by a private organisation (*Mudiad Meithrin*), which also organises parent-child groups for children from birth up to compulsory school age.

Scotland

The main providers of ECEC settings for under 3-year olds are private/voluntary, whereas provision for 3- and 4-year olds (nursery schools, nursery classes and family/children's centres) is mainly publicly funded. More recently, some local authorities have been co-operating with and sometimes subsidising private providers. A number of nurseries are attached to private-independent schools. Employers may also provide a company nursery/kindergarten for the children of employees.

Table 4

Scotland: Number of local authority and partnership settings and number/share of children in each, 2016**

	Number of settings	Number of children	Under 2 years	2-year olds	3-year olds	4-year olds
Local authority	1,563	73,267	792 (1%) [†]	5,256 (9%)	29,384 (100%)	57,063 (98%)
Partnership	961	23,694				
Total	2,514	96,961	96,961			

[†]Percentage of the age-group in the population

Northern Ireland

There is no publicly funded ECEC provision for under-3-year olds in Northern Ireland. Nurseries and childminders (or nannies) in the private sector have to be registered and are inspected annually by one of the five regional *Health and Social Care Trusts*. Free provision for 3-year olds may be provided in the complete range of privately-run or publicly funded ECEC settings (see *Main forms of provision*). 4-year olds are in statutory schooling.

Sources: *Department for Education 2015a, 5.
Department for Education 2017a.
Eurydice 2016.
**Scottish Government 2017.

Participation rates in regulated provision

According to own calculations based on 2015 Eurostat data, over 96% of 3- to under 5-year olds in the UK were attending some form of ECEC provision, whereas the proportion of under 3-year olds was 15%.

Table 5

United Kingdom: Enrolment rates and number of children in institutional provision, according to age-groups, 2015*

Age-groups	number	Share in %
Under 2-year olds	1,595	0.1
2-year olds	357,329	43.7
Under 3-year olds	358,924	15.0[†]
3-year olds	797,999	96.7
4-year olds	780,905	96.1
3- to under 5-year olds	1,578,904	96.4[†]
0- to under 5-year olds	1,937,828	48.2[†]

[†]own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015

Source: *Eurostat 2017g, 2017h.

Financing and costs for parents

The UK central government has a *Statement of Funding Policy* for all policy areas in England and for the regional parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Funding is transferred as a block grant and the regional parliaments decide on their own budget priorities.

In terms of early childhood education and care, the local authorities have a duty to fund the weekly hours of free entitlement set down by law. Parents have to pay for any additional hours spent in the setting, usually at a reduced rate (see *Table 6*).

Table 6

United Kingdom: Average parental fees¹ per month, 2014/15*

England	Full day in <i>nurseries</i> : between 906€ and 1,144€. If making use of free entitlement, between 542€ and 700€ in order to stock up to full day.
Wales	Full day in <i>nurseries</i> : 843€. If making use of free entitlement, 627€ for an additional 27.5 hours/week.
Scotland	Full day in <i>nursery schools</i> : 866€ (including meals). If making use of free entitlement, 520€ for an additional 27.5 hours/week.
N. Ireland	Full day in <i>nurseries</i> : 638€. If making use of free entitlement, 439€ for an additional 27.5 hours/week.

England

The *Education Funding Agency* in the Department for Education is responsible for the funding of education for children aged 3 to 19 years. Since 2011, local authorities have to apply a special formula for calculating the subsidies for ECEC providers. Relevant statutory guidance was published in 2014 (*Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*).

Wales

State-maintained ECEC provision is funded over the education budget of the Welsh government. Privately-run provision is not granted direct subsidies. 2- and 3-year olds may participate in state-funded initiatives (e.g. *Flying Start* or *Nurturing Children* or *Supporting Parents*) free of charge. Since 2015/16, an additional 300 GBP (342€) is allocated to both state-maintained and non-maintained providers for every 3- and 4-year old from a low income family through the Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant (EYPDG). To be eligible, learners must be receiving Foundation Phase early education for a minimum of ten hours per week in an approved setting (see *Curricular Frameworks*).

Scotland

Local authorities are responsible for 97% of education expenditure in Scotland. In 2013/14, 7% of the local authorities' budget was allocated to early childhood education. Local authorities also take over the costs of private provision if this is needed to satisfy the demand in a particular region.

Northern Ireland

The majority of funding comes from the education budget of the government of Northern Ireland. Grant-aided schools receive direct funding from the Department of Education. Government subsidies are not granted for privately-run provision.

¹ The amounts in Euro refer to the artificial common reference currency unit PPS (Purchase Power Standard) used in the European Union to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of cross national comparisons. (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014, p 156)

Sources: *European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2014.
Eurydice 2016.

Staff-child ratios

England

Binding staff-child ratios are included in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014*. These are:

Under 2-year olds: 1 staff member (note: not 'one qualified member of staff') for 3 children

2-year olds: 1 : 4

3-year olds and older: 1 : 8, and if a qualified member of staff is present, then 1 : 13

4- and 5-year olds: Class size in reception classes in schools is limited to 30 children (1 qualified teacher, 1 qualified teaching assistant).

Home-based settings: 1 : 6

An exception is made for pre-school groups of 3- to 5-year olds allowing for a ratio of 2:26 during core/ school hours if the group is led by a teacher with EYTS or QTS plus a level 3 EQF qualified assistant.

Wales

There are no binding requirements regarding staff-child ratios. The following are recommended regulations:

Under 1-year olds: 1 : 3 (maximum group size 11)

1-year olds: 1 : 3 (maximum group size 12)

2-year olds: 1 : 4 (maximum group size 12)

3-year olds: 1 : 8 (maximum group size 26)

4-year olds: 1 : 8 (maximum group size 30)

5- to 7-year olds: 1 : 15 (maximum group size 30)

Home-based settings: 1 : 6

Scotland

National Care Standards regulate group size which varies according to the number of adults in the group.

The following are recommended regulations for staff-child ratios:

Under one-year olds: 1 staff member for 3 children

1-year olds: 1 : 3

2-year olds: 1 : 5

3-year olds: 1 : 8

4-year olds: 1 : 8

In part-time settings, 1 staff member may be responsible for 10 children.

Home-based settings: 1 : 6

Northern Ireland

The recommended staff-child ratio in full-time state-maintained provision is 2 members of staff for 26 children. One of these must be a qualified teacher, the other a qualified teaching assistant. Private provision has to comply with the legal requirement of 1 staff member for 8 children, and if necessary ensure the support of a suitably qualified member of staff. The groups of 3-year olds in

the year preceding statutory schooling at age 4 must comprise at least 8 children, the assumption being that a certain size of group is necessary for effective learning. The staff-child-ratio for children under 1 year and 1 year olds is 1:3, for 2 year olds 1:4, for 3 year olds 1:8 and the recommended ratio for home-based settings is 1 : 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

England

Both public and private ECEC settings are obliged to work according to the curricular framework *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* for children from birth to 5, last revised in 2014. The statutory framework includes the requirements that service providers have to comply with in order to guarantee the well-being and safety of the children. 17 learning goals are embedded in three general areas of learning (communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development), especially for children under 3 years and four specific ones (literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design), mostly for older children. Recommended modes of learning are both adult-led and child-initiated. Particular emphasis is placed on play and exploration, active learning, and creative and critical thinking.

Wales

In Wales, the curricular framework for 3- to 7-year olds is called the *Foundation Phase*, last revised in 2015. It applies to all ECEC settings, whether maintained or non-maintained. It includes seven areas of learning: personal and social development; well-being and cultural diversity; language and communication skills; mathematical development; the Welsh language; knowledge of the world; physical and creative development. Learning goals and outcomes are defined for each of these areas.

The *Flying Start* initiative aims to provide under 4-year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds with a better transition to the Foundation Phase. *Flying Start* focuses not only on educational aspects but also on supporting parents and health issues.

Scotland

The Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence* is the educational framework for children aged 3 to 18 years, regardless of the setting. The first stage of the Curriculum encompasses pre-primary education and the first two years of primary school. Principles for early education within the Curriculum for Excellence are set out in a government document *Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning in the Early Years* (2007). The main modes of learning outlined are: spontaneous and purposeful play; investigating and exploring; events and life experiences; focused learning and teaching. Experiences and outcomes in eight curricular areas are emphasized for the age range 3-15: expressive arts; health and well-being; languages (including literacy, English and a foreign language); mathematics (including numeracy); religious and moral education; sciences; social studies; technologies.

Some local authorities have been developing their own educational frameworks based on the above to cover the age-range birth to 5, thus taking into account the proposed integrated concept of ECEC set out in *The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

Northern Ireland

All ECEC settings (both centre-based and home-based) which include 3- and 4-year olds are obliged to follow the *Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education 2006*. An emphasis is placed on each child having the opportunity to develop his or her individual potential. Six areas of learning are foregrounded: the arts; personal, social and emotional development; physical development and movement; language development; early mathematical experiences; the world around us. It is aimed that the government framework *Learning to Learn: A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning*, published by the Department of Education in 2013, should be fully realised by 2016. The *Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds* ensures access for the most disadvantaged 2-year olds.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have traditionally been included in mainstream provision as far as possible. Special education institutions exist for those children who cannot be given the necessary support in regular provision.

Population with a background of migration

In 2016, 14% of the total population in the UK were born abroad. Nearly 9% of the total population and 7.5% of the child population under 5 years of age had non-British nationality. Around half (56.4%) of the population with non-British nationality and 62% of the child population under 5 came from one of the EU28 countries.*

In 2016, the five most common countries of birth were Poland, India, Pakistan, Republic of Ireland and Romania. 6% of persons with non-British nationality came from EU countries and 4% from non-EU countries, 2% of the latter from Asia***.

England

According to the *Children and Families Act 2014*, local authorities (education and health units) have a duty to ensure that each child with SEND can attend maintained provision, i.e. in the case of children below school age, maintained nursery provision. Each setting must provide each child the special educational provision which his or her particular needs demand and ensure that the child can engage in the general activities of the setting together with children who do not have special educational needs. Guidance published by the Department for Education and the Department of Health in 2015 (*Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*) recommends a four-step procedure: assessing, planning, acting and evaluating. Each maintained setting has a *Special Educational Needs Coordinator, SENCO* whose task is to sensitise and support the centre staff for this work and to co-operate closely with parents and external specialists.

For children whose home language is not English, the Statutory Framework for the EYFS**** requires providers to “take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.” Providers are also expected to ensure that children have opportunities to reach a good standard in the English language during the EYFS. Practitioners are expected to assess children’s skills in English.

Wales

In June 2015, a *Draft Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Bill* set out proposals for a new legislative system for supporting children and young people, aged 0-25, who have additional learning needs. One of the proposals is to create an individual developmental plan for each child. Maintained settings have a duty to provide a centre-specific plan for providing for children with additional learning needs and to employ an appropriate co-ordinator. Children with additional learning needs have priority when allocating places.

There are currently 39 special education institutions in Wales for children up to age 16.

Scotland

Under the *Education (Additional Support for Learning), Scotland, Acts 2004/2009*, local authorities have a duty to ensure that each child with special learning needs is provided with an individual support plan. A number of special education institutions exist, often attached to regular maintained provision. Sometimes these provide possibilities for overnight stays. In 2016, a total of 10,860 (11%) of children in local authority and partnership ECEC settings were registered as having special needs**.

In 2016, a total of 8,380 (9%) of children in local authority and partnership settings were registered as having a family language other than English**. The local authorities provide English courses for children with a background of migration.

Northern Ireland

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005, SENDO emphasizes that these children should be included in mainstream provision. Each child receives an annually reviewed *Statement of special educational needs*, which entitles him or her to the appropriate support.

Settings which include Traveller children or children from Roma families are provided with additional subsidies from the Department of Education.

Sources: ****Department for Education. 2017c, 9.
*Eurostat 2017f.
Eurydice 2016.
***ONS 2017.
**Scottish Government 2017.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

England

Each child's progress is recorded according to the seven learning areas in the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* curricular framework. Two assessments are obligatory: one for 2-year olds and one at the end of the reception class in primary school. A Baseline Assessment for 4- to 5-year olds at the beginning of reception is currently being commissioned. The assessment of 2-year olds is seen as a way of noticing potential developmental needs in order to provide additional support. ECEC providers are obliged to inform parents in a short written report about the progress of their 2- to 3-year old children (particularly in the areas communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development). The report may also be passed on to the reception class teacher when the child starts school. The assessment instrument *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)*, that follows the regulations of the Standards and Testing Agency, must be completed at the latest at the end of June of the year in which the child has his or her fifth birthday. It provides an overview of the child's abilities and skills, his or her progress related to specific learning goals and an assessment of his or her 'school readiness'. All providers who receive state subsidies have been obliged to complete the EYFSP. However, as from September 2016

the profile is no longer compulsory. According to the Education Act, the assessments should be sent to the local authorities who then pass them on to the Department for Education. Plans are in place for introducing alternative forms of assessment in reception classes as from 2017.

The EYFSP is also the regulatory and quality framework for the providers of learning, development and care arrangements for children between birth and the end of the year in which they turn 5. Provider evaluations and staff assessments are carried out by Ofsted. Between April and August 2015, Ofsted* conducted 11,272 inspections, 4,393 in centre-based settings and 6,519 in the home-based provision of registered childminders. In 9,556 cases, a 'full inspection' took place. This involves an assessment of the overall quality of provision, of leadership qualities, of children's well-being and of the attention given to individual children's needs. Roughly two-thirds of the settings were judged to be 'good', whereas only between 15% and 21% were considered to be 'excellent'.

England has a long tradition of longitudinal studies focusing on children's development over time and on the effects of early childhood settings on children's later school achievements. Two of these studies – the EPPE (EPPSE) project (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/research/featured-research/effective-pre-school-primary-secondary-education-project>) and the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) (<http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk>) and their influence on early childhood policies in England (and Wales), as well as follow-up studies – are presented in detail in Melhuish (2016)**.

Wales

Child-related assessment is included in the ten-year plan of the Welsh government *Building a Brighter Future* (2013). An assessment framework for children from birth to 7 (*Early Years Development and Assessment Framework, EYDAF*) has been drawn up for use in all types of provision. Since September 2015, an *Early Years Outcomes Framework* provides a general framework of progress indicators. An observation-based measure (*Foundation Phase Profile*) helps staff to assess the progress of 3- to 7-year olds on an ongoing basis. Most staff complete an assessment of children at the end of their time in ECEC provision, although they are not obliged to by law.

Since 2015, the National Curriculum requires a baseline assessment of children within six weeks of starting school, and again at the end of the first year in school.

Inspections are carried out by Estyn, *Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales*. In 2015, only nine of the 645 ECEC settings were judged to be 'excellent', and 86% were considered to be 'good'.

Scotland

Children's individual progress is assessed, discussed with parents and taken into account when planning the next educational steps. An increasing number of staff provide written reports for parents and the primary school teacher. A number of local authorities have developed their own assessment procedures.

Northern Ireland

There is no obligation for staff to assess children's progress during their time in ECEC provision before entering statutory schooling. However, both child-related assessment and informing parents of progress are included as recommendations in the curricular framework.

Sources: Estyn 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
**Melhuish 2016.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M. J. Neuman 2010.
*Ofsted 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Maternity leave is granted for 52 weeks and may start 11 weeks before the expected birth date. Two weeks after birth are compulsory. Six weeks are paid at 90% of average income, and either a weekly lump sum of GBP140.98 [160€] is paid for an additional 33 weeks or 90% of the weekly gross income, whichever is the lower. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid. The requirement for payment of allowances is a 26-week period of continuous employment before the 15th week preceding birth.

Fathers may take one or two weeks of **Paternity leave** paid with a weekly lump sum of GBP140.98 [160€] or 90% of average weekly income if this is lower. These two weeks must be taken within 56 days after the child's birth.

Each parent is entitled to 18 weeks unpaid **parental leave** per child. However, these cannot be taken in one block. Not more than four weeks may be taken in any one year unless the parent's employer agrees to an alternative arrangement. This leave can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday.

In 2010, 77% of mothers returned to work after 12 to 18 months following birth. In 2010, 50% of fathers took the two-week entitlement, only 16% took a longer leave. No more recent information about the take-up of leaves is available.

Sources: O'Brien, M. and A. Koslowski 2017.
OECD 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1816	Robert Owen opens one of the first ECEC settings for the workers employed in his cotton mills in New Lanark, Scotland, including children as young as 18 months.
1870/1872	Elementary Education Act (England): 5 years is established as school starting age.
1911	Rachel and Margaret Macmillan found an open day nursery school in London (Deptford), providing for physical, educational and social needs of 2- to 8- or 9-year olds. Subsequent but limited expansion of nursery provision.
1914-1918	Expansion of day nurseries during WWI, but numbers fall again afterwards (only 108 settings by 1938).
1939 – 1945	Further expansion in England and Wales during WWII, with numbers increasing from 194 (1941) to 1,559 (1944).
1944	Education Act (England) requires that local authorities provide early education for 3- to 5-year olds. After the war the requirement is changed to provide only for children in exceptional circumstances.
Post 1944	Gradual expansion of ECEC provision.
1960s	Increasing admission of 4-year olds into reception classes in primary schools; start of the parent-led voluntary playgroup movement.
1989	Children Act (England) emphasizes a targeted approach, i.e. ECEC provision only for families 'in need'; in Scotland, a duty is also placed on local authorities in 1995 to provide for families in need.
1980s	Rapid growth of private for-profit provision as maternal employment increases.
1997	The New Labour government initiates policy initiatives to increase equality of opportunity and reduce child poverty: early childhood education and care becomes a government priority for the first time.
1998	<i>Sure Start</i> is introduced – a targeted intervention programme for children under age 4 and their families, aimed at better co-ordination of services; extended in 2000 to reach more children living in poverty; introduction of entitlement to free part-time early edu-

	cation for 4-year olds.
2000	Introduction of first curricular framework for work with 3- to 5-year olds (Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage).
2003	First official recommendations for work with the under-threes (Birth to Three Matters).
2004	Expansion of (Sure Start) Children’s Centres in England (32); entitlement to free part-time early education extended to 3-year olds; introduction of 10-year childcare strategy Every Child Matters.
2006	First-ever Childcare Act setting out plans for a combined curricular framework for work with 0- to 5-year olds.
2008	England: Introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – curricular and structural standards for all approved settings for under 5-year olds.
2008	Scotland: Introduction of a Common Framework with the local authorities (Getting it Right for Every Child) – a strategic 10-point programme to ensure all children the best start in life.
2010	Scotland: Curriculum for Excellence for 3- to 18-year olds introduced.
2012	EYFS revised and shortened, mainly for providers (EYFS Statutory Framework)
2013/2014	In England: entitlement to free part-time early education extended to 2-year olds, first to 20% and then to 40% of the most disadvantaged families.
2017	In England: 15 hours of free provision extended to 30 hours for families whose parents work more than 16 hours

Sources: Moss, P. and J. Bennett 2010.
Naumann, I., C. McLean, A. Koslowski, K. Tisdall and E. Lloyd. 2013.
Oberhuemer, P, I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neumann 2010.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in the United Kingdom

Country expert assessment by Liz Brooker

As this report has shown, the four nations of the UK now find themselves differently positioned with regard to ECEC, as well as with regard to political, economic, social and cultural matters in general. Nevertheless it remains the case that England, with over 55 million of the UK’s total population of 65 million, faces the most complex and significant challenges, which are reported in this section. Whereas all four nations, in common with others in the EU area, are struggling to meet the issues arising from funding constraints and rapidly changing professional roles and training, English ECEC finds itself in particularly challenging circumstances as a result of fundamental changes in ideology and policy on the part of successive governments.

1. Early childhood policy in the years from 1997-2010 was a key priority of the then Labour government, which invested in long-term and large-scale research projects (e.g. Sylva et al 2010, Mathers et al 2014) aimed at identifying the most ‘effective’ forms of provision in terms of young children’s experiences and outcomes. The focus of these research projects became one of ‘quality’ and their findings were clear: children under 5 years of age benefited most from properly funded provision which combined education and care, which was led by trained teachers and which offered a balance of free play and adult-led activities. Legislation during these years resulted in a steady increase in teacher-led provision and a steady focus on children’s experience. In the years since 2010, Conservative-led governments have reversed the focus on ECEC as a benefit for children, and have aimed instead to create services which allow parents to work. This change of direction is described in recent research reports, notably from the Sutton Trust (Waldfoegel and Stewart 2017) as a shift from quality to quantity: children aged 3 and 4 whose parents are working are now entitled to 30 hours of free ‘childcare’ a

week, to enable their parents to move into employment (children with a non-working parent are offered only 15 hours). But the nature of this ‘childcare’ no longer resembles the high-quality education and care standards set during the previous regime. The requirement for a teacher to be present in a non-school setting has been removed, and there is a move to allow nursery and reception classes in schools to be led by non-teachers. The Sutton Trust concludes that these moves are sharply increasing the inequality between more and less privileged groups of children, as the children of poorer working parents increasingly spend longer hours in poor-quality provision.

2. Government funding for the 30-hours free provision has been independently evaluated as well below the level required to create new places in existing settings, or to encourage the creation of new (PVI) settings. With the launch of the scheme in September 2017, it was reported that many existing settings had chosen not to offer the expanded provision, and in consequence that many parents were unable to find a place for their child.
3. Frequent changes to the IPS of those working in ECEC (documented in the accompanying ECEC Workforce Profile) have failed to remedy the failings and shortages they were designed to address. The latest shift, from Early Years Professional Status to Early Years Teacher Status (without QTS) was intended to supply more ‘teachers’ without providing them with the same pay and conditions as Primary Teachers with an Early Years specialism. The intention was to expand the well-qualified workforce, but more cheaply than with a qualified-teacher workforce. However, the take-up of training for the new EYT status was slow, and has declined year on year, so that currently only 600 of the planned 2500 training places have been taken up, and many HEI providers are closing their courses. ECEC in England is set to fall way below the proposed standards of qualification in the next few years.

Sources: Mathers, S. et al. 2014.
Sylva, K. 2010.
Waldfogel, J. and K. Stewart 2017.

Demographic data

Population

In the year 2016 there were well over 65 million persons (65,648,100) resident in the United Kingdom. Over the past 20 years, the total population has risen continuously (1995: 57,943,472; 2005: 60,182,050).

The following national statistics of the total population shows the population of the constituent countries over time (*Table 7*).

Table 7

United Kingdom: Overall population and population of constituent countries 1995-2016*

	1995	2005	2016
United Kingdom	58,024,800	60,413,300	65,648,100
England	48,383,500	50,606,000	55,258,100
Wales	2,888,500	2,969,300	3,113,200
Scotland	5,103,700	5,110,200	5,404,700
Northern Ireland	1,649,100	1,727,700	1,862,100

Children under age 5

Since compulsory schooling begins at age 5 in Great Britain (at age 4 in Northern Ireland), some data in the following sections will refer to children up to age 5 only (and not up to age 6, as in most other countries).

In 2014, 3.8% of the total population in the UK were children under 3 years of age. Children up to school entry age accounted for 6.3%. This represents a higher proportion of young children than the EU average, and has done for the past 20 years.

Table 8

United Kingdom: Relative share of children under 5 years of age compared with the total population, 2016

	Number of children
Under 1-year olds	780,408
1-year olds	782,977
2-year olds	797,540
Total under 3-year olds	2,360,925
3-year olds	822,208
4-year olds	817,245
Total 3- to under 5-year olds	1,652,772
Total 0- to under 5-year olds	4,013,697

Table 9

United Kingdom: Children under 5 years of age – share in total population compared with EU states, 1995 to 2016, in %⁺⁺

	1995	Ø EU15 ²	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	3.9	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.1
3- to under 5-year olds	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.1
0- to under 5-year olds	6.6	5.7	5.7	5.2	6.1	5.1

⁺⁺own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Sources: Eurostat 2017a.
*ONS 2017.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, three-quarters (75.8%) of households with children under age 6 in the United Kingdom were couple households. Single households with under-6-year olds accounted for 11.4% of all households. These were almost exclusively single mother households (10.5%).

Table 11

United Kingdom: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households, in per cent*
All households	7,629,800	
Couple households	5,783,400	75.8

² The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

Household type	Total households	Total households, in per cent*
Other household type	975,500	12.8
Single households, total	871,000	11.4
Single households, women	801,800	10.5
Single households, men	69,200	0.9

* own calculations

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

The labour force participation rates of men and women (15-64 years) in the United Kingdom in 2015 were 77.6% and 72.7% respectively. In 2015, 62.5% of all women and 90.5% of all men with children under age 6 were employed. In both cases, the employment rates are above the EU28 average.

Table 12

United Kingdom: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015

		Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
United Kingdom	2005	56.3	89.3
	2010	58.2	87.6
	2015	62.3	90.5
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

Sources: Eurostat 2017b, 2017c.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

In 2015, nearly one third (31.6%) of children under the age of 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This was significantly higher than the EU average (24.7%) for the same age group. This

³ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(ARPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(ARPE))

share is the third highest among the EU28 countries. 23.5% of the total population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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Imprint

Editors:

Dr. Inge Schreyer,
Senior researcher, State Institute of Early Childhood Research,
Winzererstr.9, 80797 Munich, Germany

Pamela Oberhuemer,
Freelance researcher and consultant for the State Institute of Early Childhood Research,
Winzererstr.9, 80797 Munich, Germany

Phone: +49-89-99825-1940

Email: inge.schreyer@ifp.bayern.de
pamela@oberhuemer.com

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Munich, July 2018

ISBN 978-3-00-060262-7

