



Key Data on  
**Early Childhood  
Education and Care  
in Europe**  
2019 Edition

*Eurydice Report*



Education and  
Training





Key Data on

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Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency  
Education and Youth Policy Analysis  
Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A7)  
BE-1049 Brussels  
Tel. +32 2 295 72 66  
E-mail: [eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu)  
Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>

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# CODES AND ABBREVIATIONS

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## Country codes

<b>EU/EU-28</b>	European Union	<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>BE</b>	Belgium	<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>BE fr</b>	Belgium – French Community	<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>BE de</b>	Belgium – German-speaking Community	<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>BE nl</b>	Belgium – Flemish Community	<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria	<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>CZ</b>	Czechia	<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>DE</b>	Germany	<b>UK-ENG</b>	England
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	<b>UK-WLS</b>	Wales
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	<b>UK-NIR</b>	Northern Ireland
<b>EL</b>	Greece	<b>UK-SCT</b>	Scotland
<b>ES</b>	Spain		
<b>FR</b>	France		
<b>HR</b>	Croatia	<b>EEA and candidate countries</b>	
<b>IT</b>	Italy	<b>AL</b>	Albania
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	<b>BA</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>LV</b>	Latvia	<b>CH</b>	Switzerland
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania	<b>IS</b>	Iceland
<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg	<b>LI</b>	Liechtenstein
<b>HU</b>	Hungary	<b>ME</b>	Montenegro
<b>MT</b>	Malta	<b>MK</b>	North Macedonia
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands	<b>NO</b>	Norway
<b>AT</b>	Austria	<b>RS</b>	Serbia
		<b>TR</b>	Turkey

## Statistics

(:) Data not available

(–) Not applicable or zero



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## TOWARDS HIGH QUALITY ECEC FOR EVERY CHILD IN EUROPE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) – the phase before primary education – is increasingly acknowledged as providing the foundations for lifelong learning and development. The European Pillar of Social Rights declares that 'children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality' <sup>(1)</sup>. In order to establish a shared understanding of what this means, the Council adopted a Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in May 2019 <sup>(2)</sup>.

This report, the second edition of *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, supports policy development by providing an up-to-date analysis of the ECEC systems in 38 European countries. This international comparative work is structured around the five quality dimensions emphasised in the Recommendation: governance, access, staff, educational guidelines as well as evaluation and monitoring. The findings reveal that there is still some way to go before the policies necessary to ensure quality in these key dimensions are firmly embedded in all European ECEC systems. Universal access, high quality and integration of ECEC services have not yet been achieved in many European countries.

In Europe, most children start primary education around age 6. Currently, 31 million children under this age live in the European Union and are potential users of ECEC. However, not all of them are able to access this provision. On average, 34 % or approximately 5 million children under age 3 attend ECEC. Only seven EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden) as well as Norway guarantee a place in publicly funded provision for each child from an early age (6 to 18 months). Accessibility is considerably better for older children. Almost half of European countries guarantee a place in ECEC from age 3, with a growing number of countries making attendance compulsory during the last year(s) of ECEC. Consequently, the Education and Training (ET 2020) benchmark <sup>(3)</sup> whereby at least 95 % of children should participate in early childhood education as of age 4 has now been reached.

Good quality ECEC for children under age 3 is not yet available in many European countries. Clear educational content for all children, delivered by highly qualified staff and supported by consistent policies is mostly found in the Nordic, Baltic and Balkan regions. These countries provide integrated ECEC services for all children under primary school age. Nevertheless, some of them still struggle to guarantee access for every child and have low participation rates.

The types of ECEC services and their quality differs according to children's age in most parts of Europe. Children in most Central and Southern European countries encounter changes as they move from childcare-type settings to education-focused pre-primary schools around age 3. However, the traditional division between the childcare and pre-primary education phase is blurring with many countries introducing educational guidelines or curricula for younger children.

This executive summary highlights some of the main findings of the report. It starts with the key policy measure to ensure access – the place guarantee – and then goes on to discuss affordability. The extent of the regulations on home-based provision (offered by childminders) across Europe is also

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<sup>(1)</sup> Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (OJ C428, 13.12.2017, p. 10-15). Signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4-14).

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2019.189.01.0004.01.ENG&toc=OJ.C:2019:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2019.189.01.0004.01.ENG&toc=OJ.C:2019:189:TOC)

<sup>(3)</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2-10.

briefly described. This section presents a new summary indicator on the degree of policy integration in Europe based on four characteristics: the structural organisation of ECEC, governance, staff qualification requirements and educational content. Attention is drawn to the different ways in which countries ensure ECEC quality as well as to the measures that enable a smooth transition to primary education.

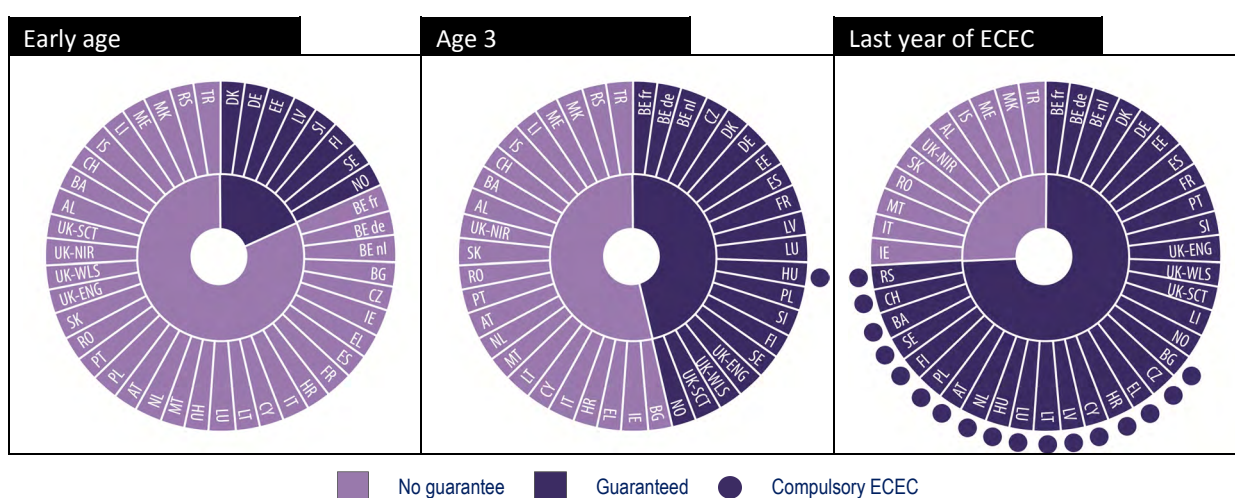
## ACCESS

### Place guarantee: two ways of ensuring the right to ECEC

Currently, in Europe, there are two approaches to ensuring universal access to ECEC. Some countries provide a legal entitlement to an ECEC place, while others make ECEC attendance compulsory. Each approach requires public authorities to commit to guaranteeing a place in ECEC. However, there are some fundamental differences. A legal entitlement means a child has a right to ECEC, but when it is compulsory, a child has a legal obligation to attend. The nature of the place guarantee therefore differs. Under the legal entitlement, public authorities have to guarantee a place for any child in the age-range covered whose parents request it. In contrast, in countries where ECEC is compulsory, public authorities must guarantee a sufficient number of places for all children in the age range covered by the legal obligation.

In Europe, there are significant differences in the age at which children have a guaranteed place in ECEC (see Figures 1 and B1). Only seven EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden) as well as Norway guarantee a place in ECEC for each child from an early age (6-18 months), often immediately after the end of childcare leave (see Figure B3). A place in publicly subsidised ECEC is guaranteed from the age of 3 or a little earlier in the three Communities of Belgium, as well as in Czechia, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland). Around a quarter of European education systems provide guaranteed places from age 4, 5 or 6 for the last 1-2 years of ECEC. Often, this provision is explicitly directed at preparation for primary education and is compulsory.

Figure 1: Place guarantee in ECEC, 2018/19



Source: Eurydice.

#### Explanatory note

For more information and country-specific notes, see Figure B3.

Most European countries guarantee between 20 and 29 ECEC hours a week (see Figure B2). Weekly opening hours are often aligned with that of primary schools and reflect the educational focus of the provision. Opening hours that cover parents' full-time working week are available only in a handful of countries (Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Slovenia and Norway).

A quarter of European education systems have no legal framework to ensure a place in ECEC. However, some of them still have high ECEC participation rates, usually from the age at which ECEC provision becomes part of the education system. For example, this is the case from age 3 in Malta and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), and from age 4 in the Netherlands. In Iceland, ECEC is widely available from age 2. Demand is nevertheless considered to be higher than supply during the last year before the start of primary education in the French Community of Belgium, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro and Turkey (see Figure B7).

Many European countries have recently been extending the right to ECEC. During the last five years, five countries (Czechia, Croatia, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden) have introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting primary education. The period of compulsory attendance has been extended from one to two years in Greece and one to three years in Hungary. Moreover, a legal entitlement to ECEC has been introduced or extended in Czechia, Poland and Portugal.

### **Affordability: increasingly ECEC is offered free of charge to families of pre-school children**

In Europe, most families have to pay fees for ECEC for the youngest group of children. The availability of ECEC free of charge increases noticeably at age 3 and this trend continues with each year of age, becoming almost universal across Europe during the last year before compulsory primary education starts (see Figure B4).

In order to ensure access, the provision of ECEC free of charge has to be accompanied by a place guarantee. Without the supporting legal framework that enforces the right to ECEC, this provision may be limited and waiting lists may be long with complex priority rules. However, currently only one European country – Latvia – guarantees a free public ECEC place for every child from as early as 1-and-a-half. In the remaining countries, most parents have to pay for ECEC in the earliest years. Average monthly fees (see Figure B5) are the highest in Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. For example, in Ireland, average monthly fees reach EUR 771. These countries rely on market-driven mechanisms to supply ECEC to children under age 3, although some subsidies for the most disadvantaged may be available.

Most countries have put in place policies to offer priority admission and fee reductions to vulnerable children and families (see Figure B6). Children living in poverty are the most commonly targeted group. Family income is a widespread criterion, often used in combination with family composition. As a separate criterion – although largely correlated with poverty – the children of single parents often benefit from targeted measures.

### **Home-based provision offers flexibility in childcare services in some countries**

Alongside centre-based ECEC, home-based ECEC is offered in most European countries. Typically, childminders provide care at their home for children under age 3 or even younger. They usually look after four to five children of this age (see Figure C9).

However, childminders form a significant part of ECEC services in only a few European countries (see Figure A3). France is the only European country where more young children are with childminders than in centre-based provision (*crèches*). In eight countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the

Netherlands, Finland, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Iceland), a significant proportion of children under age 3 are cared for by childminders <sup>(4)</sup>, but centre-based provision predominates.

Home-based ECEC has typically been more childcare- than education-oriented. It usually falls under the authorities responsible for family, children and social services (see Annex B). Fifteen education systems provide no educational guidelines for these services (see Figure D1c).

## POLICY INTEGRATION: THE WAY TO HIGH QUALITY ECEC

Early childhood education and care – provision for children before the start of compulsory primary education – has two aspects:

- Care (or childcare): service mainly intended to enable parents to work while the child's safety and care is ensured
- Early childhood education: services with an intentional educational component to support child development and prepare for primary education.

Historically, childcare was the focus for younger children whereas early childhood education was the approach for older children in the years preceding primary education. Currently, an integrated 'early childhood education and care' approach is becoming more prominent. Confronted with the evidence that policy integration seems to offer better opportunities for both resource management and children's outcomes in terms of their holistic development (Kaga, Bennett, and Moss, 2010; European Commission, 2013), European countries are increasingly integrating their ECEC policies and regulations. Figure 2 lists the core dimensions of ECEC policy for an integrated system from birth to the start of primary education.

**Figure 2: Dimensions of ECEC policy integration**

WHERE	HOW	WHO	WHAT
Setting	Ministry	Staff	Curriculum
Single setting until the start of primary education	Coherent governance under one authority	Highly qualified professionals for under- and over-3s	Educational activities during the entire ECEC phase

### Organisation of centre-based provision: unitary or separate settings

Looking from the child's point of view, the place where he or she attends ECEC is a central point of attachment and stability. Moving from one type of setting to another is a key transition period for both children and their families as it often means a change in group format/size, different staff, new rules and different types of activities. A period of adaptation is therefore essential for children. For these reasons, the setting structure is the key distinguishing factor when discussing the integration of the ECEC systems in this report <sup>(5)</sup>.

<sup>(4)</sup> The relative importance of home-based provision is based on national statistics and expert estimations. When data is available, home-based provision is considered significant if it constitutes at least 10 % of ECEC places.

<sup>(5)</sup> This approach is also used by the European Commission and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA, 2016).



In countries that have separate age-dependent settings, the dual authority model largely prevails. The responsibility for ECEC is thus divided between two different ministries (or top-level authorities). The ministry for education or another top-level education authority is responsible for the pre-primary education of children aged 3 and over, while the 'childcare-type' provision for children under age 3 falls under the remit of another ministry or authority, usually that dealing with children or family affairs. Countries with both unitary and separate settings (mixed) tend to follow the single authority model with integrated governance.

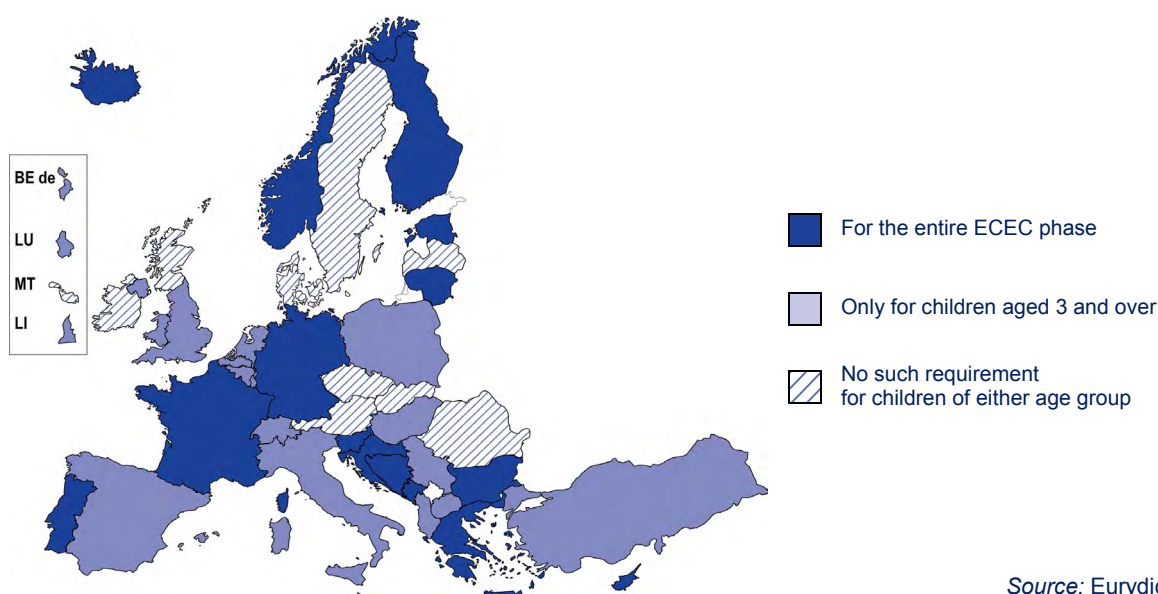
There are a few exceptions: Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta and Romania have separate settings for the different age groups, but the governance of the entire ECEC phase falls under a single authority. In Luxembourg and Malta, the responsibility for services for younger children was recently transferred to the Ministry of Education in order to ensure greater policy coherence (in 2012 and 2017 respectively). Italy is also in the process of bringing ECEC under responsibility of the Ministry of Education, although the regions are still the main regulators of provision for under-3s.

In most of the countries with integrated governance, it is the education authorities that are in control. Denmark, Germany and Ireland are the only countries where other authorities responsible for children's services or family affairs have control of the entire ECEC phase.

### Highly qualified staff for the whole ECEC phase

ECEC staff support children's development, ensure their health and well-being and guide them in their daily routines and activities. The kinds of experiences children have largely depends on the people who are in charge. Highly qualified staff – trained at the Bachelor's level or higher – are more likely to use appropriate pedagogical approaches, create stimulating learning environments as well as provide good care and support. A high minimum entry requirement for ECEC staff is also important for raising the status and pay of the professionals who play such a key role.

**Figure 4: Staff with a minimum of a Bachelor's level qualification (ISCED 6), 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

The Figure shows whether at least one staff member per group of children in centre-based ECEC must have a Bachelor's level (ISCED 6) qualification or higher related to ECEC (or education) according to top-level regulations. For more information and country-specific notes, see Figure C1.

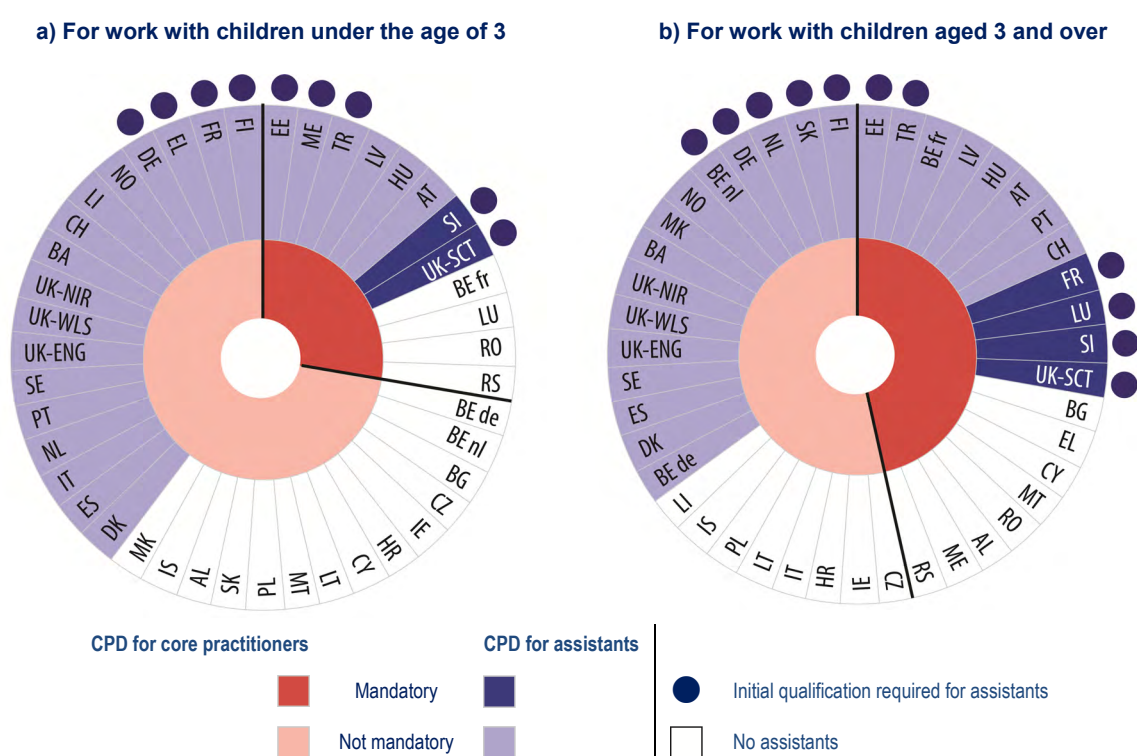


However, as shown in Figure 4, only one third of European education systems require that at least one of the team members caring for a group of children, regardless of age, is highly educated <sup>(7)</sup>.

In another third of the education systems, a high qualification level is considered essential during the second phase of ECEC (pre-primary education), but not during the first phase (childcare or early childhood educational development) <sup>(8)</sup>. Eight education systems have a lower qualification requirement (Czechia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom – Scotland). In Denmark and Sweden <sup>(9)</sup>, there are no top-level regulations on this matter.

Establishing the initial qualification requirements for staff working with children is only the starting point in ensuring a well-qualified workforce. Continuing professional development (CPD) is also crucial as it allows employees to upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their career.

**Figure 5: Mandatory CPD for all staff and initial qualification requirements for assistants, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

**'Mandatory':** CPD is compulsory and the minimum amount of time to be spent on it is specified. For a definition of 'core practitioner' and 'assistant', see the introduction to Chapter C. For more information and country-specific notes, see Figures C2 and C7. Where the top-level authority requires a minimum level of general education rather than a minimum initial vocational qualification to become an assistant in ECEC, the qualification is not shown. Assistants recruited for specific purposes such as to provide extra support for groups that have children with special needs, or for other local needs, are not taken into account.

<sup>(7)</sup> The minimum is at Bachelor's level (ISCED 6) in Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Norway. It is at Master's level (ISCED 7) in Portugal and Iceland. In France, it is at ISCED 6 in teams working with younger children and at ISCED 7 for those working with older ones. As of 2019/20, it will be at Bachelor's level for all core practitioners in Italy.

<sup>(8)</sup> This is the case in Belgium (all three Communities), Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Albania, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey.

<sup>(9)</sup> In Sweden, in order to work with 6-year-olds in pre-primary classes, staff need to be qualified at ISCED level 6 or 7.

Only a quarter of the education systems make CPD mandatory for core practitioners working with younger children, specifying its minimum duration over a defined period of time (see Figure 5). A few more, but still less than half of the education systems, require CPD for core practitioners working with older children. Mandatory CPD usually means that support is offered to staff to participate in these activities, for example, CPD is provided during working time and the costs of courses or travel are reimbursed. This is not always the case in education systems where CPD is only a professional duty or is optional.

For assistants, mandatory CPD is very rare. Luxembourg, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (Scotland) are the only European education systems where all assistants must undertake CPD. Luxembourg has ECEC assistants only for one year (*éducation précoce*). In Slovenia and the United Kingdom (Scotland), assistants must spend the same amount of time on CPD as core practitioners. In France, only assistants working with older children are required to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

In half of the education systems that employ assistants, this type of staff are not required to have an initial qualification related to their profession. Moreover, assistants rarely have any obligation to undertake CPD activities. Therefore, a considerable proportion of staff engaged in daily activities with children are without any formal training related to ECEC.

### **Educational guidelines: increasingly covering the entire ECEC phase**

It is becoming increasingly accepted that early years' provision is the foundation for learning throughout life. Consequently, the top-level authorities in all European countries have issued official guidelines to ensure that settings have an intentional educational component. The content of these guidelines vary but they generally include developmental or learning goals and age-appropriate activities, sometimes in the form of a standard curriculum. They are intended to help settings improve the quality of care and learning and ensure that high standards are found across all ECEC services. However, in around a third of all European countries<sup>(10)</sup> educational guidelines apply only to settings for children aged 3 and over (see Figure 6). In these countries, the split between 'childcare-type' provision and 'pre-primary education' remains.

Whether or not top-level educational guidelines exist is largely determined by the type of governing authority in control (see Figure A4). In almost all countries where a single authority is in charge of the whole ECEC phase, educational objectives or content are set for the whole age range (see Figure D1)<sup>(11)</sup>. In contrast, where dual authorities exist, educational guidelines tend to be lacking for settings with children under age 3. Where they do exist, they are set down in separate documents for younger and older children and issued by different authorities<sup>(12)</sup>. In such cases, it is crucial to ensure that a coordinated approach is used across the two phases of ECEC.

Increasingly, ECEC systems with dual authorities are introducing learning components in ECEC from the earliest age. Since the first edition of this report (2012/13), educational guidelines have been introduced for ECEC settings with younger children in Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. In addition, Italy and Portugal are planning to introduce such guidelines in the near future.

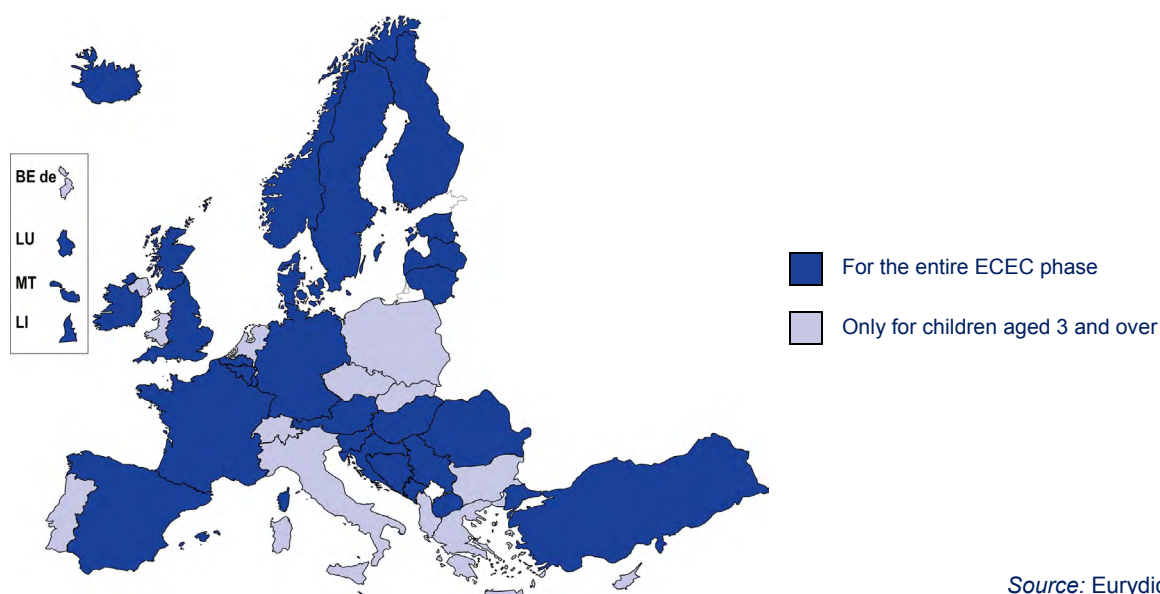
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<sup>(10)</sup> Belgium (German-speaking Community), Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland), Albania and Switzerland.

<sup>(11)</sup> Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway and Serbia.

<sup>(12)</sup> Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), France, Hungary, Liechtenstein and Turkey.

**Figure 6: Top-level educational guidelines, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

For more information and country-specific notes, see Figure D1a.

Educational guidelines, where they exist, establish a set of areas for children's learning and development that should be the focus of daily activities in centre-based provision. The learning areas highlighted in (almost) all countries which apply to the entire phase of ECEC are: emotional, personal and social development; physical development; artistic skills; language and communication skills; understanding of the world; cooperation skills; and health education. Other learning areas are less frequently mentioned and are more often targeted at older children. This is the case for instance with early foreign language learning and digital education (see Figure D3 and its annex).

Most of the countries that have top-level educational guidelines provide recommendations on pedagogical approaches and assessment methods. The pedagogical approaches recommended make substantial room for learning through play, and the key role of adults in encouraging children's thinking during play is often underlined. Finding the right balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities is stressed in most countries, while involving parents in children's learning is emphasised a little less often. All countries that provide guidelines on assessment refer to child observation, and in a majority, keeping written records of the results of observations is clearly mentioned. When they specify more detail on the form the observations should take, countries tend to favour continuous observation rather than regular short observations. Portfolios and self-assessment are less frequently recommended in the educational guidelines.

### **Degree of system and policy integration in ECEC across Europe**

European countries can be placed on a continuum from integrated to split systems according to four criteria linked to the quality dimensions previously discussed: settings (unitary or separate), authorities (single or dual), highly qualified staff throughout the entire ECEC phase (minimum ISCED level 6) and education guidelines applying to all settings. Figure 7 shows the degree of system and policy coherence from integrated (dark green) to split (red).

**Integrated** (dark green): coordinated and consistent policies throughout the entire ECEC phase. This is the case in Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro and

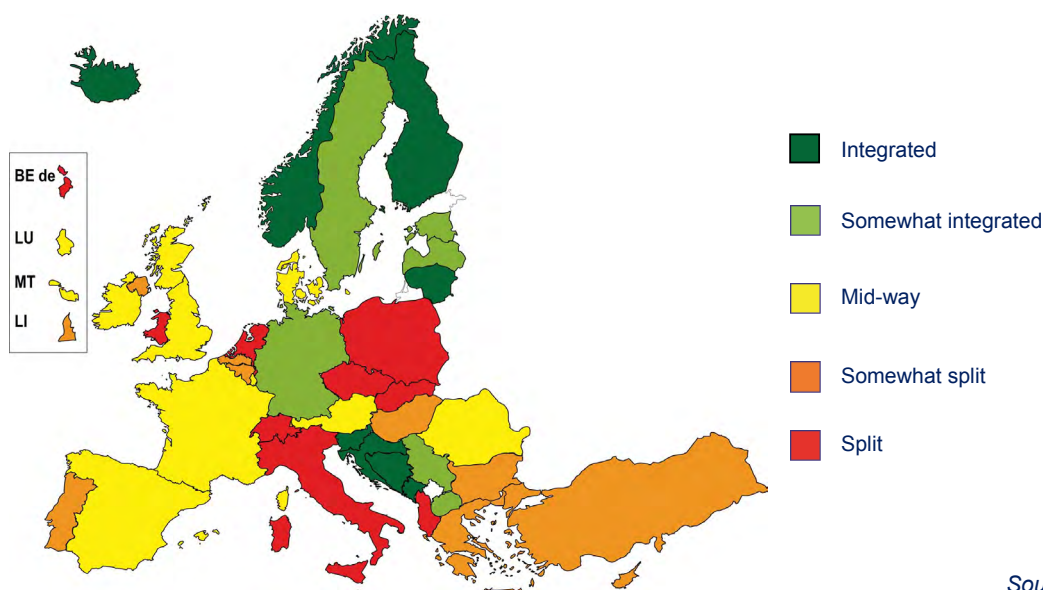
Norway. In these countries, children attend a unitary setting until the start of primary education<sup>(13)</sup>. The Ministry of Education is responsible for setting rules and regulations for the entire phase of ECEC. The curriculum, educational programme or guidelines apply from an early age and core practitioners must be highly qualified across the entire phase of ECEC.

**Somewhat integrated** (light green): most or all children attend unitary settings. ECEC falls under a single ministry and educational guidelines are available for the entire phase of ECEC. However, with respect to the degree of system integration for settings and qualification requirements, this category has two sub-groups:

- countries where all children attend a single setting, but where there is no top-level requirement for staff to be highly qualified across the entire phase of ECEC (Latvia, Sweden, North Macedonia and Serbia).
- countries where some children make a transition from a setting for younger to a setting for older children (mixed setting system), but core practitioners are highly qualified across the entire ECEC phase (Germany and Estonia).

**Mid-way** (yellow): a single ministry is responsible and education guidelines apply across the entire phase of ECEC. However, some or all children need to change settings and highly qualified core practitioners (at ISCED level 6) are not employed across the entire phase. France is an exception. It is included in this category despite highly qualified core practitioners for the whole ECEC phase because provision for younger and older children is managed by different ministries.

**Figure 7: Degree of ECEC system integration, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

#### **Explanatory note**

The Figure indicates the degree of integration according to whether the system has unitary settings, a single authority, highly qualified staff (at ISCED level 6) across the entire phase of ECEC, and educational guidelines applying to settings for both younger and older age groups. The breakdown by criteria is available in Annex A.

Dark green = all four criteria; red = none of the criteria.

**Somewhat split** (orange): in these countries, all children who start ECEC at a young age usually have to make the transition from a childcare-type setting to a pre-primary setting. Only one of the criteria applies across the whole phase. In Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Hungary,

<sup>(13)</sup> In Lithuania, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, some children may already move to the same site as the primary school for the last year of ECEC (pre-primary class).

Liechtenstein and Turkey, although educational guidelines are available for the entire ECEC phase, they are issued by different authorities for under- and over-3s, and core practitioners working with younger children do not have to be highly qualified. In contrast, in Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus and Portugal, educational guidelines are not available in settings for younger children, but core practitioners must be highly qualified across the entire ECEC phase.

**Split (red):** the typical split between childcare and early education is apparent in all areas: separate settings, different ministries responsible for younger and older children, higher qualification requirements for core practitioners in pre-primary education than in childcare settings for younger children (or lower level requirements in both phases), and no educational guidelines for younger children. Belgium (German-speaking Community), Czechia, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Wales), Albania and Switzerland belong to this category. Italy is integrating its centre-based ECEC services for under- and over-3s. Staff qualifications will be aligned throughout the entire ECEC phase from 2019/20.

This analysis of the degree of integration in ECEC suggests that children in Europe face quite different ECEC environments which lead to different early learning experiences. Only children in the Nordic, Baltic and Balkan regions encounter a somewhat or fully integrated ECEC system where they attend a single setting governed by one ministry and where highly qualified staff encourage their learning and development from the earliest age. Children in most other European regions encounter changes as they move from childcare-type settings to education-focused pre-primary settings and the quality of ECEC provision varies. However, the traditional division between the childcare and pre-primary education phases is blurring with many countries introducing educational guidelines for younger children. Moreover, ECEC governance is becoming increasingly integrated under one ministry or top-level authority. Conversely, the setting structure and staff qualifications have not changed much over recent years in Europe.

Access and quality seem to be fairly well aligned. Most countries that assure a place guarantee from an early age are somewhat or fully integrated with respect to the four key quality dimensions. In contrast, the split ECEC systems do not provide a place guarantee before ECEC becomes part of the education system (around age 3 or even later).

## EVALUATION OF ECEC SETTINGS: A WAY TO ENSURE QUALITY

One of the means by which top-level authorities seek to improve quality in ECEC is through the evaluation of individual settings. Evaluation can cover many aspects of ECEC, however, the two main dimensions of quality often emphasised in the ECEC context are: structural quality and process quality (European Commission, 2014; Slot et al., 2015).

- **Structural quality** refers to checking that settings are complying with the framework conditions for ECEC in areas such as health and safety, staff qualifications or group sizes. Structural quality can also include checking whether the pedagogical plan meets the standards set out in top-level educational guidelines.
- **Process quality** refers to how well the setting supports the learning process. The main areas evaluated are: how the curriculum is implemented (quality and variety of activities), the quality of interactions and relationships between staff and children – how practitioners encourage children's development – and how well children interact with each other.

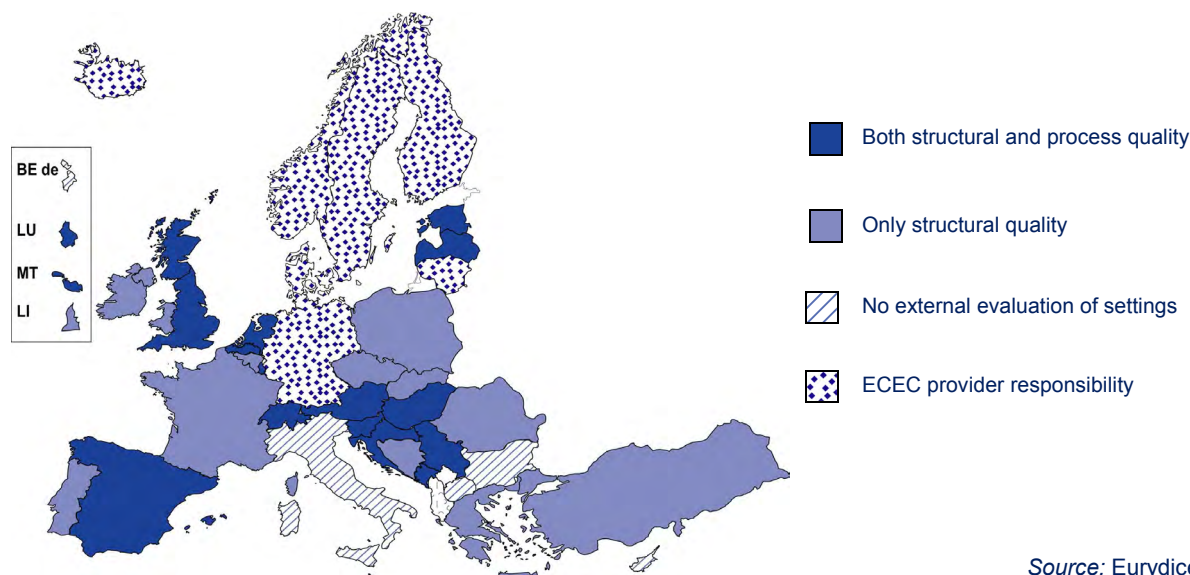
The external evaluation of ECEC settings for older children often addresses both structural and process quality (see Figure E1b). In contrast, only a third of European education systems have established evaluation systems which check that settings for younger children not only comply with standards but also support the learning process (see Figure 8). Almost half of countries have either no

provisions for the external evaluation of settings for children under age 3 or they evaluate only the structural quality. In the seven remaining countries with unitary settings (Germany, Lithuania and the Nordic countries), the arrangements for the evaluation of ECEC make it difficult to categorise them in one of the two categories. The top-level regulations place the duty on ECEC providers to evaluate the quality of their provision. These providers (local authorities/municipalities, NGOs or other private bodies) have a great deal of freedom in the approaches used.

Differences in the scope of external evaluation in ECEC settings are, in turn, often related to the type of body responsible for the external evaluation of settings (see Figure E2). When an educational inspectorate or another ministerial department responsible for educational evaluation at higher levels of education (such as primary education) carries out the external evaluation of ECEC settings, attention is usually paid to how well the setting supports the learning process (process quality). However, when the external evaluation of settings is assured by public bodies dealing with family, social affairs or youth, which are not responsible for evaluating schools at higher levels of education, it is more often focused on compliance with norms and standards (structural quality).

The evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings allows for the child's perspective to be taken into account. Gathering the views of children on their daily activities or on their interactions with peers and practitioners is an effective way to ensure that the interests of the child are at the centre of the evaluation and improvement process. The Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems<sup>(14)</sup> stresses the importance of giving children the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation process. Currently, participatory evaluation procedures that allow children to be heard only apply in 12 countries across Europe (see Figure E4). However, only a few education systems have established that the views of both younger and older children must be considered during this process<sup>(15)</sup>.

**Figure 8: Main focus of the external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings for children under the age of 3, 2018/19**



#### **Explanatory note**

For more information and country-specific notes, see Figure E1a.

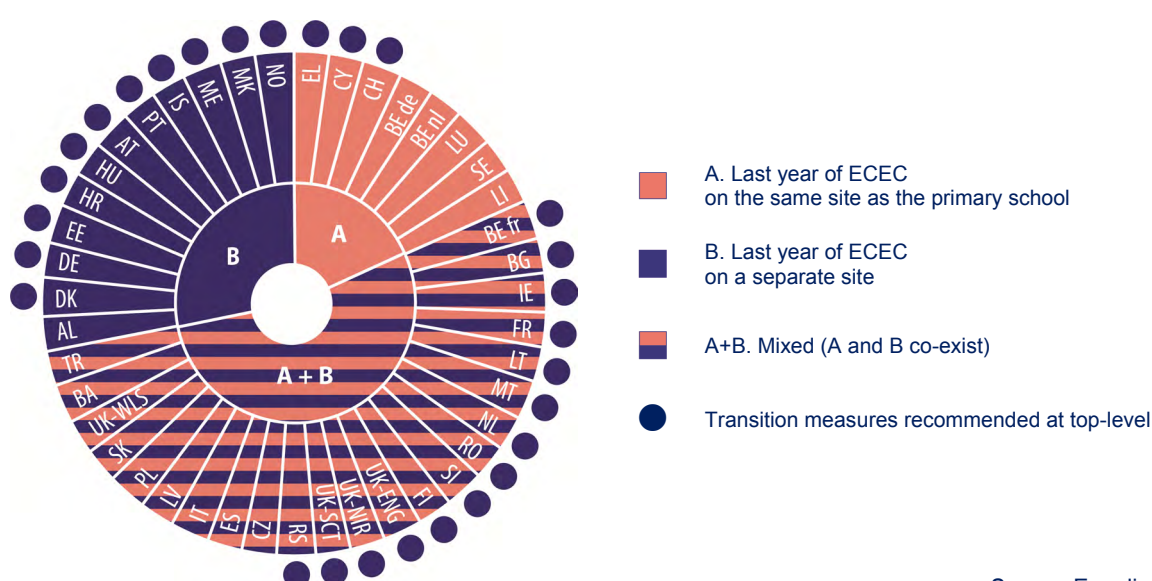
<sup>(14)</sup> OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4-14.

<sup>(15)</sup> Denmark, Spain (two Autonomous Communities: Cataluña and Comunidad Valenciana), Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (Scotland), Iceland and Norway.

## SUPPORTING THE NEXT STEP: TRANSITION TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

While the trend is towards integration and continuity throughout the whole ECEC phase, the end of the phase brings important changes for children. They generally move on to primary education at around age 6 in the majority of European countries, but it may be as early as age 4 or as late as age 7 (see Figure B3). During this transition period, children and their parents may experience difficulties due to the differences in the new environment. Primary schools often have different educational approaches, rules, daily timetables, and expectations. Children must also build new relationships with staff and peers (Balduzzi et al., 2019). It is therefore important to prepare children and their families for this transition and so mitigate any difficulties that arise.

**Figure 9: Top-level measures to facilitate children's transition to primary education and location of the last year of ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

The Figure does not take into account ECEC groups organised in primary schools in less populated areas. For more information and country-specific notes, see Figure D9 and Figure D10.

Attending a setting on the same site as the primary school during the last year of ECEC not only ensures that children are already familiar with the physical and social environment, but also offers opportunities for collaboration between ECEC and school staff. In eight education systems, all children attend the last year of ECEC on the same site as the primary school (see Figure 9). In the majority of the education systems, some children move to the site of the primary school at least one year before the start of primary education.

Whether a physical move for children is involved or not, a range of measures can be implemented at the ECEC setting level to establish continuity and cooperation with primary schools in order to promote a smooth transition. In two thirds of education systems, the educational guidelines recommend settings or local authorities to establish practices that facilitate the transition. This applies in countries where the end of the ECEC phase and primary education are provided on the same site, as well as in countries where the two phases take place on separate sites. The measures involve children, staff as well as parents. Helping children become familiar with the new environment can be achieved by organising visits to the primary school or by running joint projects involving children in both the ECEC setting and the primary school. The recommended collaborative practices between

ECEC and primary school staff to facilitate the transition also include passing on information on a child's achievements, becoming familiar with each other's environment, coordinating CPD activities or cooperating in the curriculum development for both education levels. Last but not least, meetings with parents are recommended to familiarise them with the new environment and provide information on how the school works.

The measures and initiatives implemented by ECEC settings are not always enough to ensure a smooth transition to primary education. The primary school therefore has an essential role in supporting this process. Some experts and policy-makers have been advocating a paradigm shift from making children ready for school to making schools ready for children (OECD, 2017). However, a number of European countries have policies based on the idea that a child is required to have attained a certain level of emotional, social, cognitive and physical development in order to be ready to start primary education. Readiness for school is an admission criteria for primary education in a third of education systems <sup>(16)</sup>, mostly in central Europe and the Balkans (see Figure D6). In these education systems, either ECEC or primary school staff may be responsible for deciding whether a child is mature enough to cope with the next step. A decision is often made on the basis of an assessment and/or observation of the child's development, with specialists sometimes being consulted. In the remaining countries, the concept of school readiness is less or not at all important since reaching the official age is the only condition for admission to primary education.

\*

European education systems are all looking for effective ways to increase access, affordability and the quality of ECEC provision. This *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care* report highlights some of the advances already made in countries and the direction of travel in others. It offers detailed supporting evidence and a wealth of examples of policies from all over Europe in key dimensions of ECEC – on governance, access, staff, educational guidelines as well as evaluation and monitoring. It therefore provides a solid foundation for future policy-making and research.

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<sup>(16)</sup> Belgium (Flemish and German-speaking Communities), Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Serbia.



# INTRODUCTION

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Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is becoming an essential part of European education policy. The mid-term stocktaking of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) concluded that 'today's need for flexibility and permeability between learning experiences requires policy coherence from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning' <sup>(1)</sup>. Since the early years are the most formative in a person's life, ECEC lays the foundation for successful lifelong learning.

EU leaders have recently established ECEC as one of the core social rights of European citizens. One of the 20 key principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that 'children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality' <sup>(2)</sup>. Moreover, it emphasises that 'children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities'. The call to move towards a European Education Area by 2025, however, recognised that there are deficiencies with respect to access, quality and affordability of ECEC <sup>(3)</sup>.

The Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care, adopted in May 2019 <sup>(4)</sup>, highlights the possible actions Member States could pursue when working towards these goals. It endorses the EU Quality Framework for ECEC, which was put forward as a proposal by experts from various European countries in 2014 <sup>(5)</sup>. This recommendation consolidates the concept of quality ECEC around five essential dimensions: access; workforce; curriculum; monitoring and evaluation; and governance and funding.

This new edition of *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe* (Key Data on ECEC) aims to feed into these processes by providing an overview of the current policies on ECEC in Europe. It is explicitly structured around the five dimensions of the EU Quality Framework for ECEC. While this report largely builds on the [2014 edition](#) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014), it offers some new insights into the inter-relatedness of certain core indicators, and includes an additional chapter on quality assurance. Providing clear international comparisons and a wealth of country examples, the report aims to serve as an inspiration for policy development. Comprehensive country-level data on various ECEC system characteristics are also intended to support academic research in the field, thus expanding our knowledge of the services provided for young children and their families in Europe.

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<sup>(1)</sup> COM/2015/0408 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017/C 428/09). It was signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

<sup>(3)</sup> COM/2017/0673 final.

<sup>(4)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4-14).

<sup>(5)</sup> Developed by the Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission.

## COVERAGE

### Definition of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Provision for children from birth through to compulsory primary education that falls within a national regulatory framework, i.e. which must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures.

The definition used in the report goes beyond the education programmes classified as ISCED level 0 (early childhood education), as it includes all registered ECEC services, not only those with a defined educational component. In many European countries, ECEC provision for children under age 3 does not qualify as 'early childhood educational development' (ISCED level 010), but it still offers an important service for children and their families.

The report covers:

- public, private and voluntary sectors – both publicly subsidised and self-financing private/voluntary sectors are within the scope
- centre-based as well as regulated home-based provision (offered in the provider's own home).

Only 'mainstream' provision, or the most common types of ECEC provision, are included. The report does not cover:

- settings which operate out of normal hours (e.g. breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday programmes)
- 'specialist' provision such as programmes delivered in hospitals, orphanages or other such institutions
- pilot, experimental or temporary ECEC provision
- 'open' early childhood education services organised for children with their families (e.g. playgroups, open kindergartens, mother/child centres).

The report covers 38 European countries (43 education systems), participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme. It includes the European Union's 28 Member States as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

## CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The report is structured in two parts: (1) international comparison and (2) national information sheets. Four transversal issues underlie the report's methodological approaches: child-centredness, system interdependence, partnerships with parents and inclusiveness.

**Child-centredness:** the analysis attempts to place the child at the centre of ECEC policies. One of the key explanatory factors used in the report – the degree of division in the ECEC system – is regarded from the child's perspective. The transition from a childcare-type setting (e.g. a nursery) to an education-type setting (e.g. a kindergarten or a pre-primary school) is considered to be an important change in a child's early life. Consequently, the setting structure and the age of transition (under- and over-3s) are the main bases of the categorisation used throughout the report. The demarcation of responsibilities for ECEC policy between ministries (governance) is of little importance to the child and therefore used as an explanatory factor less frequently.

**System interdependence:** the report attempts to analyse the ECEC system as a whole – both childcare and early education services. It shows the inter-connections between regulations and structural organisation, even when they cross the boundaries of ministerial responsibility. For example,

it discusses regulations on parental leave alongside access to settings, and affordability in terms of regulations on fee reductions alongside the place guarantee. The staff chapter addresses all types of staff – both core practitioners and assistants – providing a full picture of people that have daily and direct contact with children.

**Partnerships with parents:** parents are the most important partners in ECEC; their support is crucial if settings are to provide the optimum conditions for children's learning and development. The report looks at the role parents play in the governance and evaluation of settings as well as at the support they receive when their children are in ECEC.

**Inclusiveness:** the report primarily addresses the provision generally available to all children. However, some children need additional, targeted support measures in order to access and actively participate in mainstream ECEC activities. ECEC is considered as one of the best ways to increase equity and equality as well as to mitigate disadvantage in education <sup>(6)</sup>. The report therefore discusses the additional measures taken to support disadvantaged children. These include the criteria used in deciding whether to give fee reductions or priority access, as well as the targeted educational support measures available to some children.

## PART I: INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

The structure of the international comparative analysis is depicted graphically in Figure 10. The elements in the circle represent the chapters, while the text around highlights the transversal issues. The content and chapter structure is explicitly aligned with the broad areas of quality emphasised in the EU Quality Framework for ECEC.

|| **Figure 10: Chapters and underlying themes of the report**



<sup>(6)</sup> Participation in high quality ECEC is proven to be especially advantageous for children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups (Barnett, 2011; Burger 2010; Dumas and Lefranc, 2010; Guerin, 2014; Van Belle, 2016). The importance of ECEC for disadvantaged children was emphasised in the Communications from the Commission 'Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems' (COM(2006) 481 final) and 'Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow' (COM(2011) 66 final).

## **Chapter 1: Governance**

The chapter on governance describes the main structural elements of the ECEC systems in Europe: the organisation of centre-based settings, the prevalence of home-based and private self-financing provision, and the division of responsibilities for governance at the top level. The analysis shows that unitary settings exist in only a third of European countries. The more common approach is to provide separate settings for younger and older children (typically for those under or over 3 years old), but measures to facilitate children's transition between these settings are not common.

As well as centre-based settings, this chapter also examines home-based provision, showing that it is available in three quarters of European education systems and, in a few countries, forms a significant part of the total provision for younger children. The prevalence of private self-financing provision is also discussed.

## **Chapter 2: Access**

Availability, affordability and inclusiveness are the central themes of the first section of this chapter. The section starts by describing the key measure: the place guarantee – the age at which a place in ECEC is guaranteed for all children. A childcare gap indicator shows that families in the majority of European countries face a lengthy period without adequately paid childcare leave and no place guarantee in ECEC. The targeted measures available to the most vulnerable children during this period and the criteria for offering priority admission or fee reductions are also explained.

The availability of ECEC free of charge as well as the level of fees for children under 3 years of age are analysed. A summary indicator shows the demand for and supply of ECEC places at three points: at an early age, around age 3 and during the last year of ECEC.

The second section on participation is based on Eurostat data. It explains how the European benchmark on ECEC participation for children aged 4 and over has already been achieved. However, it also shows that the participation rates for children under 3 are still below 33 % in half of the EU countries. The average number of hours that children under- and over-3 spend in ECEC are also presented.

## **Chapter 3: Staff**

The first section focuses on the way core practitioners and assistants – the staff in daily direct contact with children – are trained for their work. It provides information on qualification requirements, support on entry to the profession, and obligations regarding continuing professional development. The analysis highlights a division between staff categories and staff working with different age groups: in contrast to core practitioners, assistants are usually hired without qualifications and they are not obliged to obtain any while in post. In order to provide a full picture of the different levels and types of staff, the section also addresses ECEC leaders as well as childminders in regulated home-based provision.

The second section provides some insight into the numbers of children staff have to manage: child/staff ratios and regulations on group sizes, as well as the maximum number of children under age 3 a childminder can take care of in regulated home-based provision.

## **Chapter 4: Educational guidelines**

The term 'educational guidelines' is used to include all the various steering documents, particularly curriculum documents, that may differ in status, detail and function, but still stress the educational aspects of ECEC. The chapter addresses the guidelines issued by top-level authorities, examining first the general framework before focussing on specific guidelines in two areas: the transition to primary school and support measures for children and parents.

The first section describes the nature and scope of the educational guidelines for centre-based and regulated home-based provision. It shows that educational guidelines have not yet been issued in all systems for settings for children under age 3. The section indicates where guidelines are binding and where settings are expected to develop their own curriculum. The areas of learning and development referred to in the educational guidelines are highlighted alongside the pedagogical approaches to be adopted.

The second section addresses the transition from ECEC to primary education. Age is the decisive factor for admission to primary school, although the opinion of parents is often taken into account. The structural features that facilitate transition are examined, starting with the alignment of the aims, principles and curricula for ECEC with those of primary education. Physical grouping in terms of bringing children in to primary school for the latter stages of ECEC is also discussed. Finally, a variety of measures taken at the setting level to facilitate children's transition to primary education are presented.

The last section on support measures shows where top-level regulations exist to improve children's language development. Due to increasing multilingualism in Europe, a distinction is made between the measures for those children that speak the language of instruction at home and those that use another home language. The support offered to parents is also addressed – examples of practices across Europe are given, including parenting programmes, home-learning guidance and home visits.

### **Chapter 5: Evaluation and Monitoring**

A new chapter in this edition of Key Data on ECEC explores the essential elements of quality assurance in centre-based ECEC provision. Looking through the prism of governance, it provides a typology of the approaches to external and internal evaluation of ECEC settings. It highlights that in a number of countries the external evaluation of ECEC settings focuses on checking compliance with regulations and not on the quality of teaching and learning. The chapter presents the ways in which parents and children are involved in evaluation and monitoring processes and shows that children are rarely consulted. Finally, it analyses the methods used to monitor performance and generate further improvements either in care and education practice in settings or in the ECEC system as a whole.

## **PART II: NATIONAL SYSTEM INFORMATION SHEETS**

National system information sheets at the end of the report provide a concise overview of the key features of each country's ECEC system. These national sheets include a visual representation of the principal elements of the ECEC structure in the form of a diagram, a description of the main types of ECEC provision, participation rates, the scope of the educational guidelines as well as a summary of current reforms.

### **AGE CATEGORIES**

Many European countries structure ECEC services according to the age of the children. Usually, the transition from the first phase to the second takes place when children are around 3 years old. In order to reflect the different regulations, a distinction between provision for children 'under 3 years' and for those aged '3 years and over' is often made. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2-and-a-half years or as late as 4 years of age <sup>(7)</sup>. National System Information Sheets at the end of the report identify which centre-based settings are

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<sup>(7)</sup> The transition happens at age 2-and-a-half in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) and at age 4 in Greece, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

considered to cater for those age groups in each country. The terms settings for 'younger' children and settings for 'older' children are used as a substitute in some cases.

Some indicators highlight a situation at particular age or some distinct time points. 'Early age', 'around age 3' and 'during the last year of ECEC' categories are used in the 'Access' chapter, while 'Staff' in some cases presents the regulations that apply to children aged 2 and 4 years.

The category 'early age' refers to the age of children at the end of their parents' childcare leave (see Figure B3). The 'last year of ECEC' refers to 5-year-olds in most education systems, but to 6-year-olds in eight countries <sup>(8)</sup> and 4-year-olds in Malta and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland). The 'last year of ECEC' coincides with the category 'age 3' in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) and shows identical data.

## SOURCES

The main sources of information are the Eurydice National Units, which have provided information on ECEC policy and practice. A few indicators are based on Eurostat data.

Information on policies and measures issued by top-level education authorities has been gathered by the Eurydice Network using questionnaires prepared by the Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit in the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission jointly with National Units in the Network. Official documents (regulations, recommendations, national strategies, action plans, etc.) that have been issued and/or are recognised by top-level authorities have been the prime sources of information for answering these questionnaires.

The reference year for all policy information is the 2018/19 school year.

The preparation and drafting of the report was coordinated by EACEA Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit. It was checked by all the Eurydice National Units. All contributors are acknowledged at the end of the report.

## MORE EURYDICE INFORMATION ON ECEC

This 2019 Edition of Key Data on ECEC builds upon several Eurydice publications on ECEC. It is an update and upgrade of the [2014 edition of Key Data on ECEC](#) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). The messages and interconnections between the topics were refined in line with the [Eurydice Brief](#) on the 2014 edition (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014).

Yearly data on six key elements of ECEC systems dating back to the 2014/15 school year is available through the Eurydice project on *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe*.

More detailed information by country is available on Eurydice website, in the descriptions of national information systems: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en)

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<sup>(8)</sup> Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden.

## GOVERNANCE

Good governance and coherent policies are essential if high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is to be made available to every child. As ECEC provision involves many stakeholders, it is crucial that policy makers create a regulatory framework that encourages an integrated approach and a high standard of service in settings across the sector.

The way ECEC is organised is also key. It may be centre-based provision offered in a single setting catering for all children, in separate settings for different age groups, or in regulated home-based provision. The benefits of integrated systems have been highlighted by the European Commission. In one of its recent Staff Working Documents it has stated that

'fully integrated systems seem to offer more coherence across early childhood education and care policy [...] as well as more resources allocated to younger children and their families. Unitary systems – by providing a more coherent framework for governance and funding across the early childhood education and care sector – lead to better quality and more equitable service provision and result in greater financial efficiency' <sup>(1)</sup>.

This chapter on governance starts with an analysis of demographic data for the 0-5 year old population covered by ECEC provision. It goes on to describe the way centre-based ECEC is delivered – either in a unitary setting or in two separate age-dependent settings. Information is also provided on the relative importance of regulated home-based provision for children under the age of 3, where such provision exists. The way ECEC is governed is subsequently analysed – showing whether the same authority is in charge of all types of provision or only certain types, and whether the governing authority is responsible for education or for other policy fields.

In countries where centre-based ECEC is delivered – fully or partly – in separate age-dependent settings, children usually move on to the next setting at around age 3. This chapter indicates where top-level recommendations exist to facilitate this structural transition from a childcare- to an education-type setting. It also analyses the possible involvement of parents' representatives in the governance of settings. Finally, the chapter provides information on the relative importance of the private self-financing sector of ECEC centre-based provision.

### MORE THAN 30 MILLION CHILDREN IN THE EU ARE IN THE ECEC AGE RANGE

In this report, ECEC refers to provision for children from birth through to primary education. In most European countries, compulsory primary education starts at the age of 6 <sup>(2)</sup>. On 1 January 2017, 31 million children were under 6 years old in the European Union. ECEC provision typically targets this age range, which represents 6.1 % of the EU-28 population.

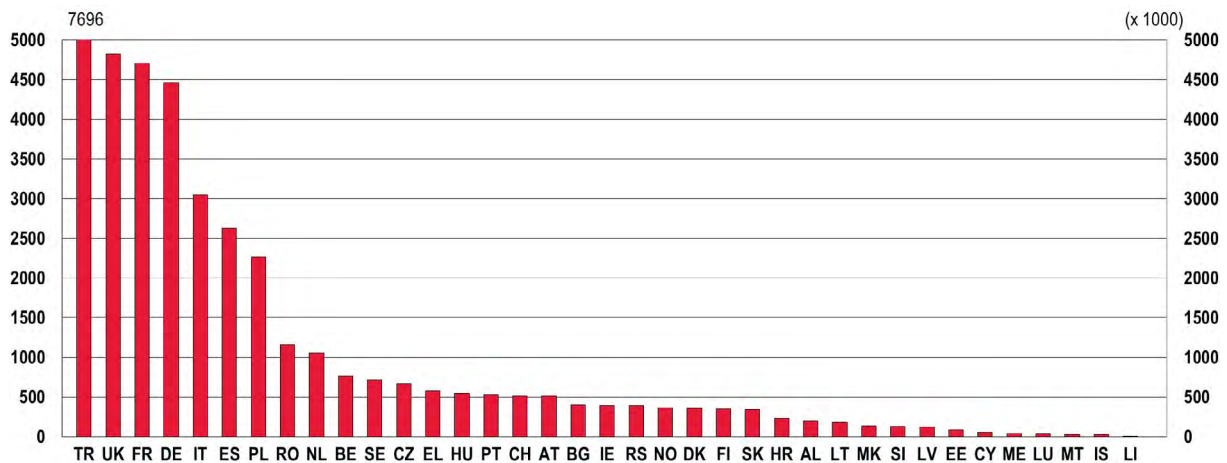
As shown in Figure A1, the number of children aged 0-5 varies quite a lot between countries. In Turkey, almost 8 million children fall into this category. In each of Germany, France and the United Kingdom, around 4.5 million children are within this age range. At the other end of the spectrum, there are fewer than 100 000 children aged 0-5 in seven less populated countries (Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Montenegro).

<sup>(1)</sup> Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document 'Proposal for a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems [COM(2018) 271 final]', of 22/05/2018, SWD(2018) 173 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> There are only a few exceptions. Compulsory primary education starts at age 4 in Northern Ireland, at age 5 in Malta and the three other jurisdictions of the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland). In eight other countries, primary education starts at the age of 7 (Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden) (see Figure B3).

The number of children aged 0-5 partly reflects the differences in the size of the total population in European countries. In the European Union (EU-28), the proportion of children aged 0-5 represents 6.1 % of the total population. However, this proportion varies significantly between countries, from 5.0 % (in Italy) to 9.6 % (in Turkey). Children aged 0-5 in Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal represent no more than 5.5 % of the total population. They account for at least 7.0 % in Ireland, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and Turkey.

**Figure A1: Population of children aged 0-5, in thousands, 1 January 2017**



#### Population of children aged 0-5

	EU-28	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL
Population aged 0-5 (in thousands)	31 183	764	399	665	360	4 466	85	398	581	2 625	4 708	234	3 047	57	126	180	38	550	27	1 054
% of total population	6.1	6.7	5.6	6.3	6.3	5.4	6.5	8.3	5.4	5.6	7.0	5.6	5.0	6.6	6.4	6.3	6.5	5.6	5.9	6.2
	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	
Population aged 0-5 (in thousands)	509	2 270	524	1 157	128	346	349	716	4 820	199	:	515	26	2	44	138	367	393	7 696	
% of total population	5.8	6.0	5.1	5.9	6.2	6.4	6.3	7.2	7.3	6.9	:	6.1	7.7	5.9	7.1	6.6	7.0	5.6	9.6	

Source: Eurostat Population Statistics [demo\_pjan] (last update: 08/11/2018).

#### Country-specific note

France: Provisional data.

## CENTRE-BASED ECEC PROVISION IS PROVIDED EITHER IN UNITARY SETTINGS OR IN SEPARATE SETTINGS WITH A TRANSITION AT AGE 3

There are two main models of centre-based ECEC provision, as described in Figure A2a.

- 1) **Separate settings** for different age groups with a childcare or an education focus:
  - a. younger children: usually up to the age of 3 (in childcare-type settings);
  - b. older children: usually for children from the age of 3 up until the start of primary education (in education-type settings).
- 2) **Unitary settings** for the whole age range, (usually for children from around age 1, or soon after childcare leave (see Figure B3) up until the start of primary education.

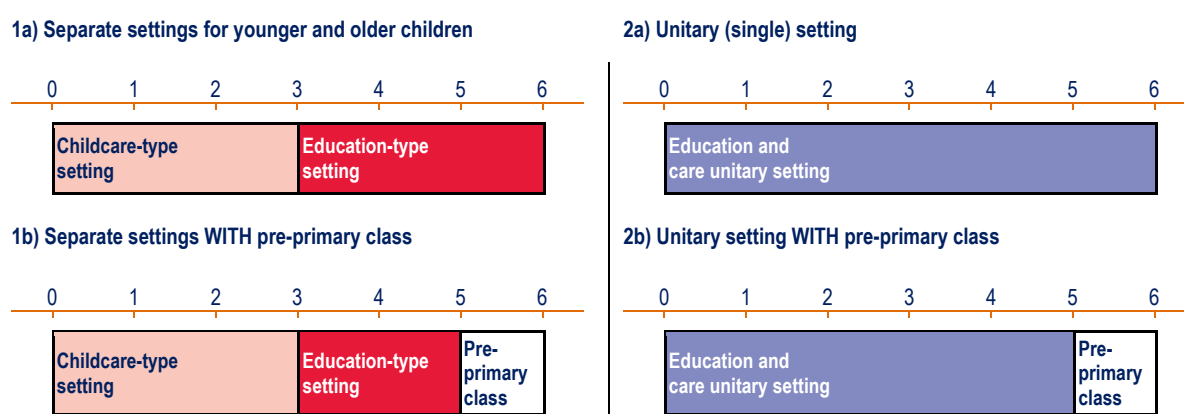
In a typical split system – where ECEC provision is organised in two different phases (see Figure 7) – children starting centre-based provision at an early age begin in a childcare-type setting (e.g. a nursery) before moving to an education-type setting (e.g. kindergarten or a pre-primary school).



Usually, the transition from one setting to the next takes place when children are around 3 years old, but it can also be at the age of 2 or 4 in some countries. The division reflects a split between 'childcare' services and 'early education' provision in some form of non-school setting that follows similar regulations to primary education and may even be based on the same site as the primary school. The first cycle usually falls outside the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011 <sup>(3)</sup>) as it does not meet the criteria of a learning environment <sup>(4)</sup>. Programmes providing mainly childcare (supervision, nutrition and health) are not covered by ISCED. The second cycle has clear educational priorities and is classified as pre-primary education (ISCED 020).

In a typical integrated system – where the whole of ECEC provision is delivered in a single setting – children stay in the same setting until they reach primary school age (or, in a few education systems, until they start a pre-primary class). These unitary settings usually provide programmes with a defined educational component. The provision is typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and to introduce young children to organised instruction outside of the family context.

**Figure A2a: Types of centre-based ECEC settings in Europe, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

These models show the typical length of the ECEC phase in Europe, i.e., 6 years, but the starting and ending ages, as well as the age of transition from a child-care type setting to an education-type setting in a Type 1 organisation vary between education systems. For information on the specific organisation of ECEC structures and ages for a specific education system, please see the National Information Sheets at the end of the report.

In addition, independently of the way ECEC provision is organised – unitary settings or separate settings – children in some countries must undertake a distinct educational programme in a pre-primary class, which aims to prepare them for primary education. This specific programme is compulsory and lasts one or two years (see the National Information Sheets).

Figure A2b shows the current model(s) of centre-based ECEC. In most European countries <sup>(5)</sup>, centre-based ECEC is provided in two separate types of age-dependent settings. In almost one third of

<sup>(3)</sup> See <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

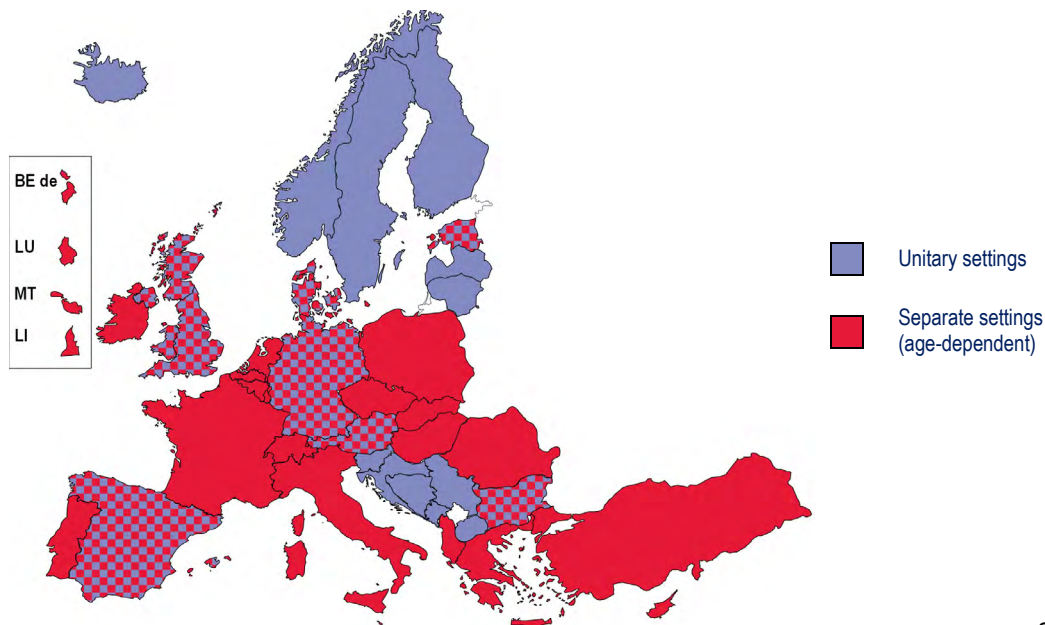
<sup>(4)</sup> This is the case in 14 out of the 22 education systems that have separate settings (see the National Information Sheets). The programmes for under-3s are classified as ISCED 010 in Belgium (Flemish Community), Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Romania, Liechtenstein and Turkey. In addition, in Portugal, the mapping is planned to be updated to classify the programmes for under-3s as ISCED 010.

<sup>(5)</sup> In Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Albania, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Turkey.

European countries, ECEC is provided in unitary settings. This is mainly the case in the Nordic countries as well as in several Baltic and Balkan countries <sup>(6)</sup>.

In seven countries, both unitary and separate settings co-exist (Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Austria and the United Kingdom). In most of these 'mixed' systems, all types of setting deliver educational-type programmes classified as ISCED 0.

**Figure A2b: Organisation of centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

In ECEC systems with separate settings, the transition between the two different types of setting usually takes place at the age of 3. It may happen at an earlier age (2-and-a-half in Belgium – French and Flemish Communities) or at a later age (4 in Greece, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). For information on the specific structure of ECEC and age ranges in each country, please see the National Information Sheets at the end of the report.

### Country-specific note

**Malta and Portugal:** The Figure shows the situation in the public sector. In the private sector, unitary settings also exist.

In 10 countries, children must attend a pre-primary class in the last 1-2 year(s) of ECEC before primary education. This specific ECEC phase provides a compulsory educational programme – distinct from the main pre-primary education programme (see National Information Sheets). It aims to smooth the transition from holistic and play-based early childhood education and care programmes to primary education that teaches fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy). To promote readiness for school, a stronger focus on reading literacy skills and individual learning as well as more diversified assessment methods are used in pre-primary classes in some countries in comparison with the earlier years of ECEC (see Figures D3 to D5). Pre-primary classes may be organised within centre-based ECEC settings or in primary schools (see Figure D9). They are more common in countries with unitary settings (Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). In education systems that organise ECEC in two separate phases, pre-primary classes are less common (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Luxembourg). Indeed, the entire second phase of ECEC from age 3 is often considered as preparation for primary education in education systems with separate settings.

<sup>(6)</sup> In Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway and Serbia.

## REGULATED HOME-BASED PROVISION IS WIDESPREAD IN ONLY A FEW EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Alongside the ECEC provision in centre-based settings, the legal framework for ECEC may also provide for regulated home-based ECEC services, which must conform to established rules and quality standards. While it might be possible to deliver such services either in the child's or the provider's home, this report refers only to the latter type of ECEC provision, i.e., services offered in the provider's own home.

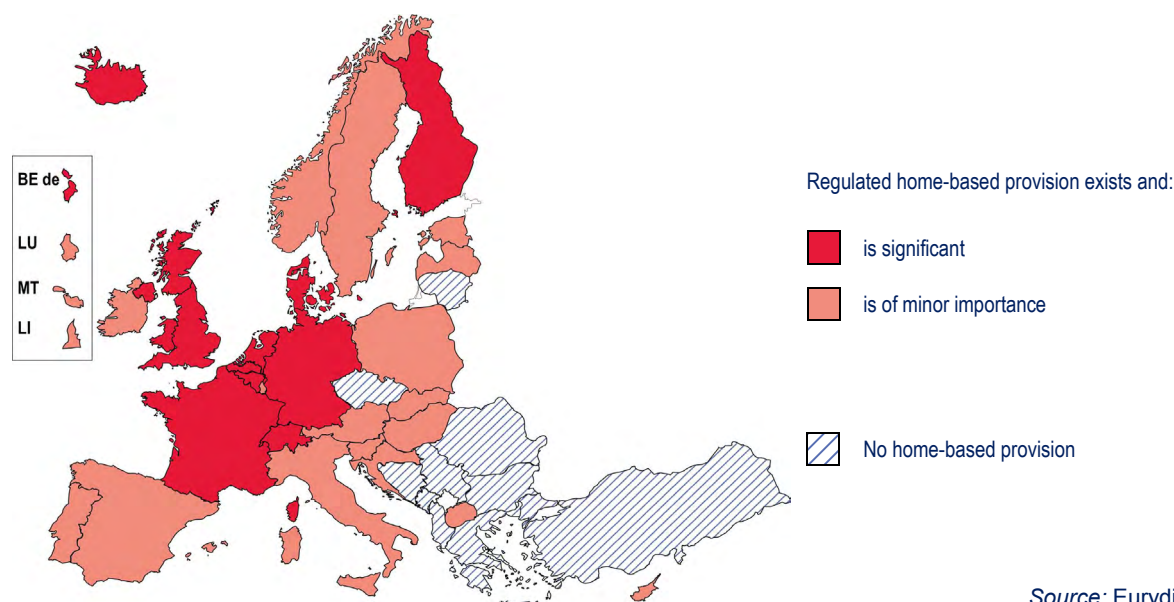
Home-based provision may constitute a significant part of ECEC provision or it may be of minor importance; this varies largely according to the age of the children. Typically, childminders provide care for younger children, as a home-type environment and small group care is often considered more suitable for infants. For older children, home-based provision is mainly used as out-of-hours care when the opening hours of centre-based settings are insufficient. For example,

In **Germany**, family day care for children under age 3 is considered equal to centre-based ECEC in law (Social Code Book, Child and Youth Act, SGB VIII § 24). For children of 3 years or older it is mainly used as an additional option if the opening hours of ECEC centres are not sufficient. The legal entitlement to an ECEC place from the age of 3 explicitly refers to centre-based ECEC.

Figure A3 therefore shows the importance of home-based provision for children under age 3. Children are looked after by childminders in three quarters of European education systems. However, regulated home-based provision represents a significant proportion of ECEC in only a few countries. France is the only European country where home-based provision is the main form of ECEC for under-3s.

In **France**, in 2016, there were 425 400 *assistant(e)s maternel(le)s* who offered places for 33.4 % of children under age 3 (see ONAPE, CNAF, 2018, p. 30). This constitutes 57 % of available ECEC places for under-3s.

**Figure A3: Regulated home-based provision for children under the age of 3, 2018/19**



### Explanatory note

Home-based provision is publicly regulated ECEC provision that is delivered in a provider's home. For more details, see the Glossary.

The relative importance of home-based provision is based on national statistics and expert estimations. When data is available, home-based provision is considered significant if it constitutes at least 10 % of ECEC places.

### Country-specific notes

**Czechia and Montenegro:** Legislation allows for home-based provision but it is very rare.

**Germany:** Varies across *Länder*, in some, home-based provision is less common.

**Spain:** Regulated home-based provision only exists in two Autonomous Communities: Comunidad de Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra.

In eight education systems, a significant proportion of children under age 3 are cared for by childminders, although home-based provision is not the main type of ECEC.

In **Belgium**, 3 out of 10 children under age 3 in ECEC are in home-based provision.

In **Denmark**, home-based provision (*dagpleje*) provides one third of ECEC places for under-3s. In 2017, 33.8 % of 0-2 year old children attending ECEC were in *dagpleje*.

In **Germany**, family day care plays an important role in many *Länder*. In 2017, 121 033 children (5.3 % of under-3s or 14.1 % of those in ECEC) were enrolled in family day care in Germany. There is, however, a large variation across *Länder*. Whereas in North Rhine Westphalia 8.2 % of children under the age of 3 make use of childminders, it is just 1.3 % in Saxony-Anhalt and 2.1 % in Bavaria.

In the **Netherlands**, in September 2018, 46 750 children under age 3 were in home-based care (*gastouderopvang*). This constitutes 18 % of all children in ECEC in this age group.

In **Finland**, participation rates in home-based provision (*perhepäivähoito/ familjedagvård*) are gradually decreasing. However, it still forms an important part of provision for 1-year-olds (6.7 % of all the age group or 21 % of those in ECEC) and 2-year-olds (9.4 % of all the age group or 17 % of those in ECEC).

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, childminders care for 7-8 % of children aged 1-4, providing 16-22 % of all available places for children under age 3. Moreover, in the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland)**, the legal entitlement to ECEC for all children aged 3 and over applies to all forms of regulated ECEC provision, including home-based childminders.

In **Switzerland**, there are an estimated 8 200 to 9 600 regulated daycare families, which care for children of all ages (see *Bundesamt für Sozialversicherungen*, 2017).

In **Iceland**, home-based provision is significant for 1-year-olds – in 2016, 28.1 % of children of this age were in home-based provision (40 % of all ECEC places). The proportion drops significantly from age 2, when 95 % of children are in centre-based ECEC settings (Statistics Iceland, 2018a and 2018b).

Regulated home-based ECEC does not exist in 10 European countries, which are mostly clustered in central and southeast regions (Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Ireland is the only country with a large unregulated childminding sector, indicating a potentially large under-supply of regulated home-based provision.

## IN MOST COUNTRIES, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CENTRE-BASED ECEC PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 3 AND OVER

Analysing the portfolio of the authorities in charge of centre-based ECEC provision gives an insight into the way governments approach ECEC. A ministry of education may perceive ECEC more as a first educational stage, while a ministry in charge of family or social affairs may focus more on the childcare dimension (see Figure D1 on educational guidelines for ECEC).

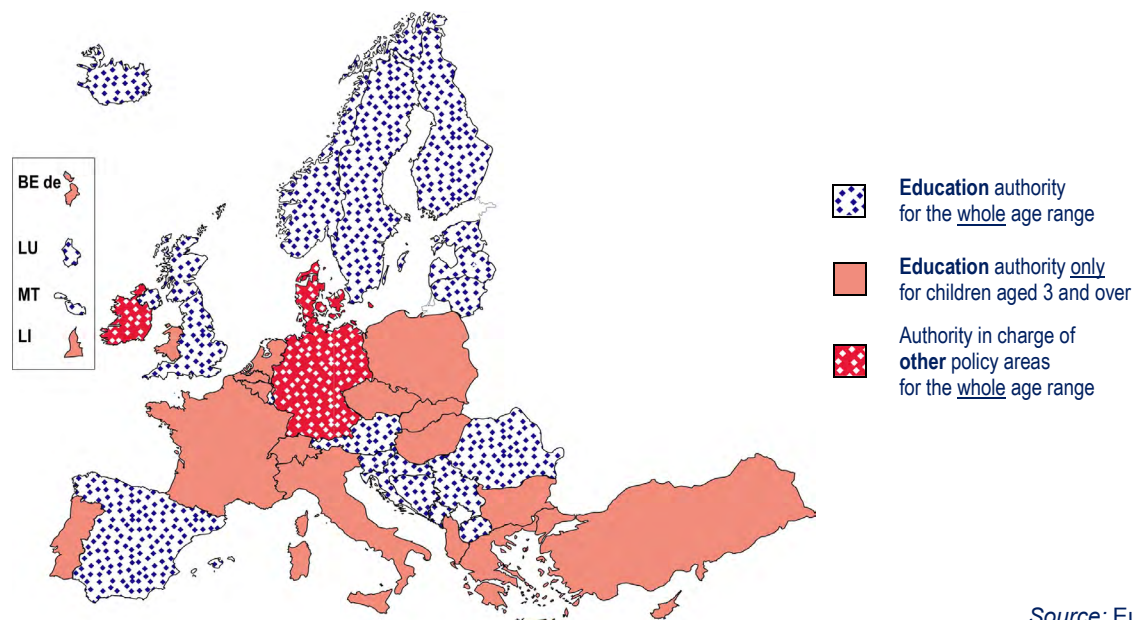
Figure A4 shows that in 21 education systems, the authority in charge of education has the main responsibility for all centre-based ECEC provision. In 18 of these, ECEC centre-based provision is delivered either in unitary settings only or in both unitary and separate age-dependent settings <sup>(7)</sup>. Of the countries where ECEC is provided in separate settings, only three grant the main responsibility for ECEC to the authority in charge of education for the entire ECEC phase (Luxembourg, Malta and Romania).

In almost half of the systems, the authority responsible for education is responsible for ECEC provision for children aged 3 and over while a different authority – generally the one in charge of social affairs – is responsible for provision for younger children. This is the most common pattern for countries where children starting ECEC at an early age move to a different type of centre-based

<sup>(7)</sup> In Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland and Scotland), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway and Serbia.

ECEC setting usually around the age of 3<sup>(8)</sup>. This is also the case in Bulgaria and the United Kingdom (Wales), where both unitary and age-dependent separate settings co-exist.

**Figure A4: Authorities responsible for governing centre-based ECEC provision, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

In cases where different authorities have responsibility for different aspects of provision, the Figure shows the education authority as being responsible, unless its role is extremely limited.

The list of responsible authorities is provided in Annex B.

The transition between two different types of setting usually takes place at the age of 3. It may happen at an earlier age (2-and-a-half in Belgium – French and Flemish Communities) or at the age of 4 (Greece, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein).

### **Country-specific notes**

**Germany, Spain and Switzerland:** The Figure represents the most common situation across regions.

**Estonia:** The Figure shows the situation for *koolieelne lasteasutus* (for children from the age of 1 to 7), in which most children spend the whole ECEC phase. The Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of *lapsehoiuteenus* (for children from birth to the age of 3).

**Italy:** For children under the age of 3 (*nido d'infanzia* and *servizi educativi integrativi*), the situation varies between regions. The Ministry of Education, University and Research plays a limited role (mainly educational aspects).

Finally, the education authority has no responsibility for ECEC provision in only three education systems: Denmark, Germany and Ireland. Authorities whose responsibilities include children's services or family affairs are in charge of the entire ECEC phase. This might be related to the overall philosophy towards early childhood education and care (e.g. German 'children's garden' – *Kindergarten* – approach). However, in Denmark, the responsibility for ECEC is being moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs depending on the government.

In two countries, the ministry of education shares some of its responsibility for ECEC provision with another ministry:

In **Romania**, the Ministry of Education is solely responsible for ECEC provision for older children (*grădiniță*). For children under the age of 3 (*creșă*), this responsibility is currently shared with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. As of 2019/20, the Ministry of Education will become solely responsible for all ECEC provision.

<sup>(8)</sup> In Belgium (all three Communities), Czechia, Greece, France, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Albania, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Turkey.

In **North Macedonia**, the responsibility for ECEC provision is shared between two ministries. Educational aspects are managed by the Ministry of Education and Science, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is in charge of care and organisational aspects.

In federal or decentralised states, the responsibility for ECEC provision may either be shared between different levels of government, e.g. both the central and the regional governments act as the top-level authority in different areas, or the responsibility may be fully devolved, with sometimes a minimum coordination role for the central level and/or minimum requirements set.

In **Germany**, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible at central level. However, core competences are in the hands of the *Länder*, which regulate ECEC within the framework set out by national legislation (for instance, the Social Code Book and the Child and Youth Act). In most *Länder*, the education department is in charge of ECEC. In some *Länder*, it is the social affairs department.

In **Spain**, the education department in each Autonomous Community is the sole top-level authority responsible for ECEC provision for younger children (*escuelas infantiles, primer ciclo*), except in Galicia where it shares the responsibility with the department for social affairs. ECEC provision for children aged 3 and over (*escuelas infantiles, segundo ciclo and colegios de educación infantil y primaria*) is subject to the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEVT) in terms of core curricula, objectives, and evaluation criteria. The Autonomous Communities establish the necessary regulations for implementing the central requirements in their territory. For the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, all centre-based ECEC provision falls under the responsibility of MEVT.

In **Austria**, centre-based ECEC provision is usually regulated by the administrations in charge of education at *Länder* level.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, ECEC provision is governed by 12 different responsible authorities: the entity of Republika Srpska, the 10 cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District. In all these systems, the ministry responsible for education is in charge.

In **Switzerland**, the cantons are responsible for governing ECEC provision and implementing the existing top-level requirements in their respective territories. These mainly concern certification and supervision of settings. In most cases, ECEC provision for children under the age of 4 (*Kindertagesstätte/crèche/nido d'infanzia*) are under the responsibility of the cantonal administrations in charge of family and social policy. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Social Affairs assumes a coordinating role and may adopt recommendations on early childhood care. ECEC provision for 4- and 5-year-olds (*Kindergarten/école enfantine/scuola dell'infanzia*) falls under the responsibility of the educational administrations of the cantons and the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education assumes a coordinating role.

In one country, which is neither a federal or decentralised state, ECEC centre-based provision for children under the age of 3 is almost fully devolved by the top-level authority to the regions:

In **Italy**, the regions are in charge of regulating ECEC public provision for children under the age of 3 (*nido d'infanzia and servizi educativi integrativi*). Depending on the region, the governing administration may be in charge of education or social affairs. In 2015, the legislation established an integrated system for educational services for children from age 0 to 6 (law n°107/2015) and regulated it in 2017 (decree n°65/2017). At the top-level, the Ministry of Education, University and Research is responsible for developing this integrated system.

Home-based provision usually falls under the authorities responsible for family, children and social services (see Figure A3 and Annex B). In countries with separate settings for younger and older children, childminding is typically governed by the same authorities as centre-based ECEC provision for under 3-year-olds. Nevertheless, education authorities are in charge of the entire ECEC sector, including home-based provision, in Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland and Scotland) and Norway.

## TOP-LEVEL AUTHORITIES SELDOM RECOMMEND MEASURES TO EASE THE TRANSITION BETWEEN CHILDCARE- AND EDUCATION-TYPE SETTINGS

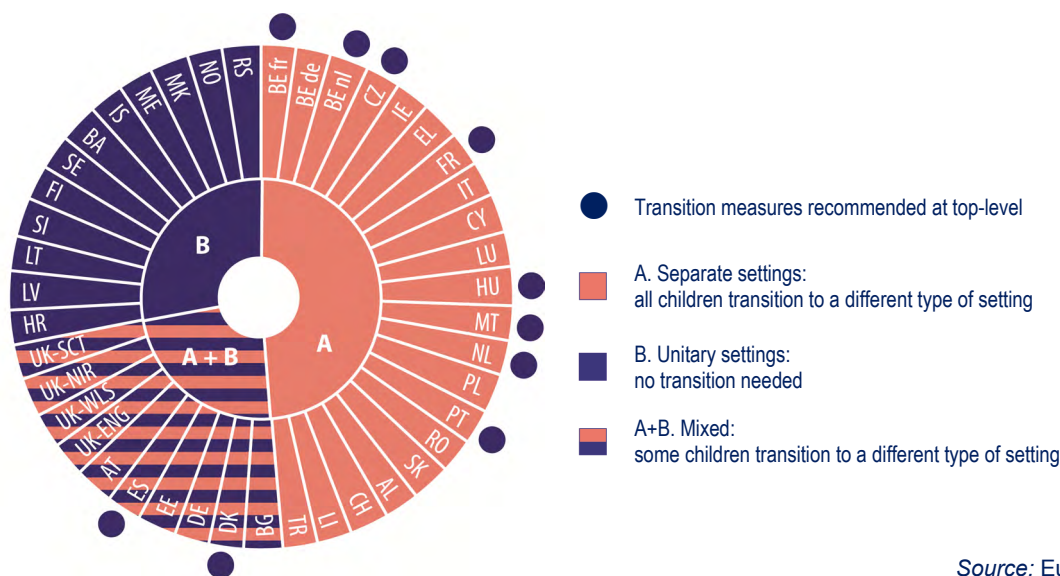
For a young child, any transition – from home-based provision to centre-based provision, from one setting to another, or from an ECEC setting to a school – is an important step for which they need to be carefully prepared to ensure a smooth transition.

Only seven of the 32 education systems where regulated home-based provision exists (see Figure A3), recommend measures to ease the transition between home-based and centre-based ECEC provision (Belgium – French and Flemish Communities, France, Malta, Slovenia, Finland and the United Kingdom – Scotland).

Depending on the structural organisation of ECEC provision, children may not have to change setting at all (see Figures A2a and A2b). By definition, no transition takes place in countries organising centre-based ECEC provision solely in unitary settings. This is the case in one third of European countries. In the remaining countries, at least some children may need to move from a childcare-type setting to an education-type setting.

Figure A5 focuses on the key structural transition point (usually around age 3) that occurs in three quarters of the education systems. In 21 systems, all children move to a different type of setting around this time. In a further 10 systems – where ECEC centre-based provision is mixed (unitary and age-dependent settings), only some children face a transition at this point. However, top-level recommendations on how this change should be addressed are made in only nine of the education systems where a structural transition occurs (Belgium – French and Flemish Communities, Czechia, Denmark, Spain, France, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal).

**Figure A5: Top-level measures recommended to facilitate children's transition between different types of centre-based ECEC settings around the age of 3, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

The Figure concerns children who start ECEC at an early age (below the age of 3). Only structural transitions between childcare- and education-type settings are considered; transitions between the same type of setting due to family decisions are not taken into account. ECEC groups organised within primary schools in less populated areas are also not taken into account.

The transition between two different types of setting usually takes place at the age of 3 but it may happen at an earlier age: 2-and-a-half in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) or at the age of 4 (Greece, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein).

### Country specific notes (Figure A5)

**Czechia:** Children may start nursery school (*mateřská škola*) between the ages of 2 and 5.

**Malta and Portugal:** The Figure shows the situation in the public sector. In the private sector, unitary settings also exist.

**Switzerland:** Cantonal regulations vary.

The recommended measures are intended to ease the transition and help children adapt to their new environment. They may include introducing the new environment to children before the official starting date with, for example, a visit to the new setting and a meeting with the new staff ahead of the change. Parents are also often involved in the transition. Some of the recommendations are intended to raise parents' awareness of the importance of this step for their child and encourage them to plan for the transition by, for example, organising meetings with the new staff who will be responsible for their child after the transition. Some measures specifically relate to the changeover period (e.g. gradually increasing the time spent in the new setting, increasing the number of staff during the reception phase, introducing children to their new pre-primary school or setting one or two days before the older children start the school year, encouraging parents to spend some time with their children in the setting during the first few days).

Here are a few examples of the actual measures recommended by the top-level authorities:

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, one of the three main pillars of the so-called Action Plan to ensure all Toddlers go to Pre-School <sup>(9)</sup> adopted in 2017 is providing a good quality transition experience from home or childcare – home-based or centre-based provision – to pre-primary education (*kleuteronderwijs*). In this context, a joint working group including the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Family and the Ministry of Education and Training has been set up. This pillar has four objectives: 1) structural continuity: cooperation between different services at regional and local level with special attention paid to socially vulnerable groups; 2) pedagogical continuity: alignment of pedagogical frameworks; 3) professional continuity: shared responsibility between all relevant professionals in supporting the transition for children and their parents and 4) continuity with home, neighbourhood and community – dialogue between professionals, parents, neighbourhood and community by developing the local partnerships and encouraging parents' involvement and participation.

In **France**, close collaboration at local level is recommended between services for infant care (*accueil du jeune enfant*) and pre-schools (*écoles maternelles*) in order to facilitate the transition for children at the age of 2 or 3. A joint local platform should be set up to facilitate exchanges between the families and staff of the infant care setting and the teachers of the pre-school in order to find the best way to support each individual child during the changeover ([Circular Letter 2012-202 of 18 December 2012](#), Article L. 214-5 of the Code for Social Action and Families).

In **Spain**, some educational administrations have issued measures to facilitate the adaptation of children entering the second cycle of ECEC (settings for children aged 3 years and over). During this 'adjustment' or 'welcome' period, measures are aimed at families and children to encourage children to feel safe and accepted. These measures are often included in the ECEC regulations. Some Autonomous Communities may even go a step further, for instance, Andalusia has issued a specific leaflet on this topic <sup>(10)</sup>.

In three of the countries with transition measures, the top-level authority does not recommend any specific measure but requires that measures be taken at local or setting level:

In **Czechia**, the [Framework Educational Programme for Pre-Primary Education](#) specifies that all children starting a nursery school (*mateřská škola*) should benefit from an individual adaptation regime. Each school defines its own adaptation measures in its school education programme.

In **Denmark**, the top-level authority does not recommend any specific measure but requires municipalities to provide guidelines for transition.

In the **Netherlands**, the [Decree on Basic Conditions for Quality Pre-school Education](#) mentions that settings have to develop a plan for a smooth transition to school (*kleuterklas*) at the age of 4.

In some countries, although no top-level recommendations exist, transition measures are usually organised at the level of the settings. This is for instance the case in Denmark, Germany and Italy.

<sup>(9)</sup> *Actieplan kleuterparticipatie*, available at <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/actieplan-kleuterparticipatie>

<sup>(10)</sup> *De la Escuela al Colegio: Actuaciones relacionadas con el tránsito entre el 1° y 2° ciclo de Educación Infantil*, available at [https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/orientaciones-transito-0-3-a-3-6\\_2-0-1.pdf](https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/orientaciones-transito-0-3-a-3-6_2-0-1.pdf)





Here are a few examples of parents' roles as representatives on the governing board of a setting:

In **France**, the school council in *écoles maternelles* (for older children) – which includes parents' representatives – approves school regulations proposed by the school head, proposes the weekly timetable – subject to the regional education director's final approval, takes part in the preparation of the school plan and subsequently adopts it. The school council also approves the organisation of complementary educational, sports and cultural activities and is responsible for consultation with the mayor for the use of the premises outside school hours. It is kept informed about meetings organised between teachers and parents, especially those at the start of the school year ([Education Code, Art. D411-2](#)).

In **Slovenia**, the councils of public kindergartens have representatives from staff and the municipality as well as three parent representatives. Their role is to adopt the development plan and the kindergarten's annual self-evaluation report, and to report on the implementation of the annual work plan. They also discuss reports on educational issues and school inspections, and matters submitted by the assembly of pre-school teachers, the parent council and representatives of workers' unions. If the number of applications exceeds the number of free places, the admission committee makes the final selection. The structure of the children's admissions committee and the admissions criteria are specified by the founding municipality at the suggestion of the kindergarten council. The kindergarten council is also responsible for appointing and dismissing the head teacher and for deciding on appeals regarding the rights, obligations and responsibilities of employees. Each kindergarten also has a parent council – with one parent representative per group of children – which mainly has a consultative role.

In some education systems, the top-level authority mentions the importance of parent participation without listing their areas of competence and/or the form participation should take. For instance:

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the legislation concerning childcare (for children from birth to age 3) stipulates that parents must be consulted with regard to the organisation of the setting without any further details. In *Kleuteronderwijs*, (for 3-5-year-olds), parents are never involved on the governing board. A school is obliged to establish a parents' council when at least 10 % of the parents and at least 3 parents so request. This parents' council supports the school council, which in turn offers advice to the school governing board.

In **Germany**, the federal regulations for all publically funded forms of ECEC state that parents have to be involved in all decisions made in the setting relating to central issues on the upbringing, education and care of their children. How this should happen in practical terms is delegated to the regulations within the law of the *Länder* (Social Code Book VIII, § 22a and 26).

In **Finland**, both the law and the national core curriculum emphasise parent participation in ECEC centres (*Päiväkoti/daghem*). However, the decision-making structures are a matter for local autonomy.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, parental involvement in ECEC settings and engagement in children's learning is promoted nationally as good practice and is well established across the sector. It is common for parents to be involved in many aspects of the life and work of settings. Practice is variable; however, parents are increasingly contributing to improvement and decision-making. Settings operating in the third/voluntary sector are most often managed by a committee of local parents who are responsible for all aspects of provision, including the employment and management of staff.

In some education systems, there is no obligation according to top-level regulations to have a governing board in all settings (Czechia). This applies to settings for younger children in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Greece, France, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Albania, and to settings for older children in Liechtenstein. Consequently, in these cases, there are no recommendations to have parents on governing bodies. In Italy, regions have the autonomy to decide on the nature of governance for ECEC settings for younger children.

The fact that there are no top-level regulations concerning parent involvement on governing bodies at setting level does not mean that parents do not play a role in the governance of the setting. Individual settings may still decide to invite parents to join their governing body or to participate in other ways. In addition, top-level regulations may require parents to be involved in other ways such as on parents' councils.

## PRIVATE SELF-FINANCING ECEC SETTINGS EXIST IN THREE QUARTERS OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Early childhood education and care may be provided by public or private bodies. Public settings are owned and operated by public authorities (usually by local authorities). They are not profit-driven but aim to provide a public service. In contrast, private ECEC settings may be owned and operated by businesses, which are profit-oriented, or by the voluntary (non-profit) sector which may include charitable organisations (churches, trade unions or other concerns).

Private settings may be self-financing – drawing their funds from private sources, usually from enrolment fees/tuition charges; or they may be publicly subsidised – receiving some funding from public authorities. In many countries, the distinction between public and publicly subsidised private provision is somewhat blurred. In order to receive public funding, these private settings are often bound by the same rules and regulations as public provision. For the users – children and families – there might be no visible difference in group sizes, staff qualifications, admission procedures and even fees. However, private self-financing ECEC settings that receive no funding from public authorities may operate under different rules with clear implications for access, affordability and quality.

Figure A7 shows the prevalence of private self-financing ECEC (that receives no public subsidy) in centre-based provision. The analysis is based on national statistics, national surveys and expert evaluations. As this is not survey data but a summary of records from various sources and a range of reference years, the situations are not directly comparable and should be seen as an indication only.

Three quarters of European education systems have private self-financing ECEC settings. However, this sector usually plays a minor role.

In **Bulgaria**, 98 licensed private kindergartens functioned in the 2017/18 school year. They enrolled 4 007 children or 1.8 % of all children in kindergartens.

In **Germany**, in 2017 around 3.4 % children attended private, for-profit ECEC settings.

The private self-financing sector constitutes a significant proportion of ECEC provision for children under the age of 3 in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Spain, Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (all four jurisdictions), Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. In some of these countries, publicly subsidised provision is only available for certain targeted groups.

The ECEC system in the **Netherlands** combines a demand-driven market structure for children under 4 with publicly financed arrangements for all children aged 4 and up. There is some publicly financed ECEC provision for disadvantaged children from age 2-and-a-half.

In the **United Kingdom**, publicly financed ECEC is available for all children from age 3 and for some targeted children from age 2.

In several countries, the private self-financing sector has a significant role in ECEC provision.

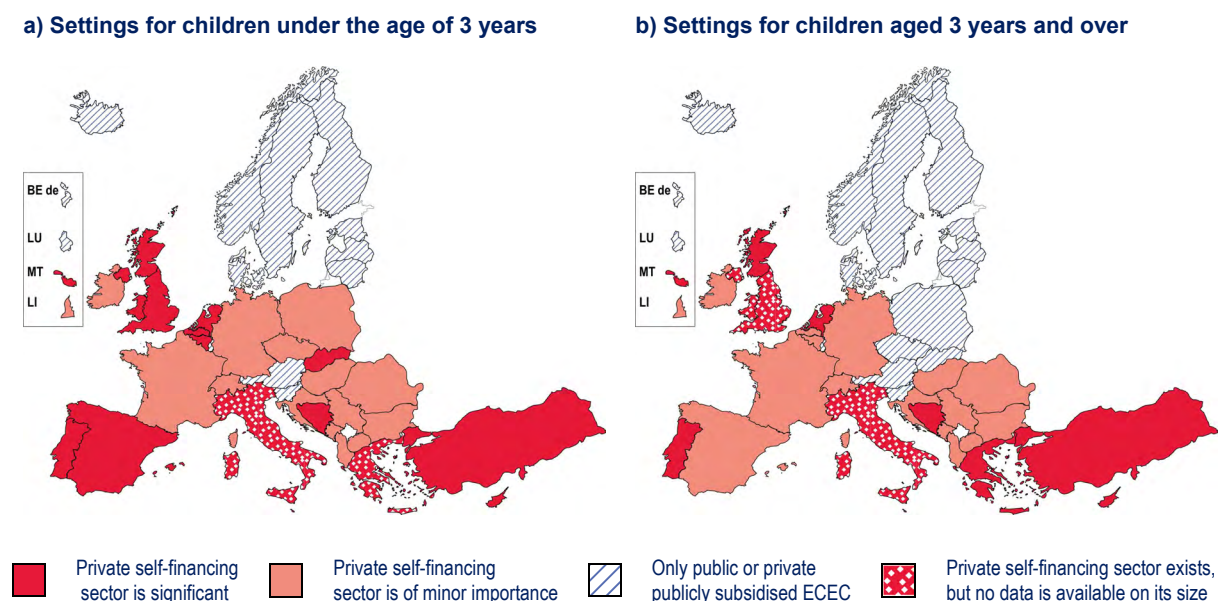
In **Cyprus**, 23 % of children between the ages of 3 years and 4 years and 8 months attend self-financing private kindergarten (*nipiagogeio*) in 2018/19. Pre-primary classes (*prodimotiki*) for children as of 4 years and 8 months is a publicly funded free-of-charge service.

In **Malta**, in 2016/17, 20 % of children attending centres for children under 3 years old did not use the publicly funded [Free Childcare Scheme](#). The share of pre-primary children enrolled in independent kindergarten centres amounted to 17 % (NSO, 2017).

In **Portugal**, 17.5 % of children aged under 3 attended private self-financing *creches* ([GEP/MTSSS, 2017](#)) and 16.9 % of children aged 3 and over attended private self-financing *jardins de infância* ([DGEEC, 2017](#)) in 2016.

According to the Statistics Agency of **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in the 2017/18 school year, 29.7 % of children attended self-financing private ECEC institutions.

**Figure A7: Significance of private self-financing centre-based ECEC provision, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

Public ECEC settings are owned and operated by public authorities at the top, regional or local level. They are not profit-driven but aim to provide a public service.

Private, publicly subsidised provision refers to settings that receive some or all their funding from public authorities (definition adapted from OECD 2017).

This Figure provides a generalised overview based on reports, surveys and expert estimates. When data is available, the private self-financing sector is considered significant if it constitutes at least 10 % of centre-based ECEC places.

The self-financing private sector is an important part of the provision for younger children, but plays only a minor role (or does not exist) for older children in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Spain and Slovakia.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, 10.9 % of the children who use childcare (*Groepsopvang*) are in non-subsidised settings or in settings with only a basic subsidy (Kind en Gezin, 2017). The proportion of children in self-financing *Kleuteronderwijs* is considerably lower.

In **Spain**, in 2016/17, 33.9 % of children under 3 years old – compared with only 3.7 % of children aged 3 and over – attended self-financing private settings.

A quarter of European education systems have no private self-financing ECEC settings. Centre-based ECEC provision is entirely public or publicly subsidised in the Baltic and Nordic countries, as well as in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Luxembourg, Austria and Slovenia. In addition, three countries (Czechia, Poland and Slovakia) have some self-financing provision for children under age 3, but all settings for children over age 3 are either public or publicly subsidised.

## SECTION I – STRUCTURES

Ensuring access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a primary concern of national and European Union decision-makers when developing policies for young children and their parents. The European Pillar of Social Rights <sup>(1)</sup> emphasises that children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. It further states that specific measures should be targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them improve their life chances.

According to the EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care <sup>(2)</sup>, access to quality provision for all children contributes to their healthy development and educational success. It also helps to reduce social inequalities and narrows the competence gap between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Equitable access is also essential to ensure that parents, especially women, have the flexibility to (re)integrate into the labour market.

Therefore, the Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems <sup>(3)</sup> invites member states to work towards ensuring that early childhood education and care services are accessible, affordable, and inclusive.

This chapter focuses mainly on general policies introduced by top-level authorities to make ECEC accessible and available for all children. However, it also highlights some of the specific policies (and their target groups), which are intended to fill the gap in provision when general measures are deemed insufficient to achieve full inclusion. These policies are discussed in the first section of the chapter, while the second section shows their outcomes, as reflected in the ECEC participation data.

The chapter starts by examining the two principal methods by which top-level authorities ensure that enough places are available for every child, i.e., providing a legal entitlement to ECEC or making attendance compulsory. A separate indicator highlights the link between childcare leave policies and the place guarantee in ECEC. The gap between the two is known as the childcare gap – a great majority of European countries have a gap of between 1 and 5 years, when parents are no longer eligible for childcare leave and yet their child has no guaranteed right to a place in ECEC.

Affordability is discussed in terms of the availability of free-of-charge ECEC and the level of fees in ECEC for the youngest children. Fee reductions and priority access are the two most common measures used to ensure inclusiveness in ECEC with respect to the most vulnerable – these are usually targeted at children living in poverty.

The section on structures ends by showing that in most European countries the demand for ECEC is not met for the children under age 3. However, the second section of this chapter shows that the European benchmark on ECEC participation for children aged 4 and over has already been achieved. On average in the EU-28, 95.3 % of children in this age group are now in ECEC.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017/C 428/09).

<sup>(2)</sup> This is part of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019).

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.

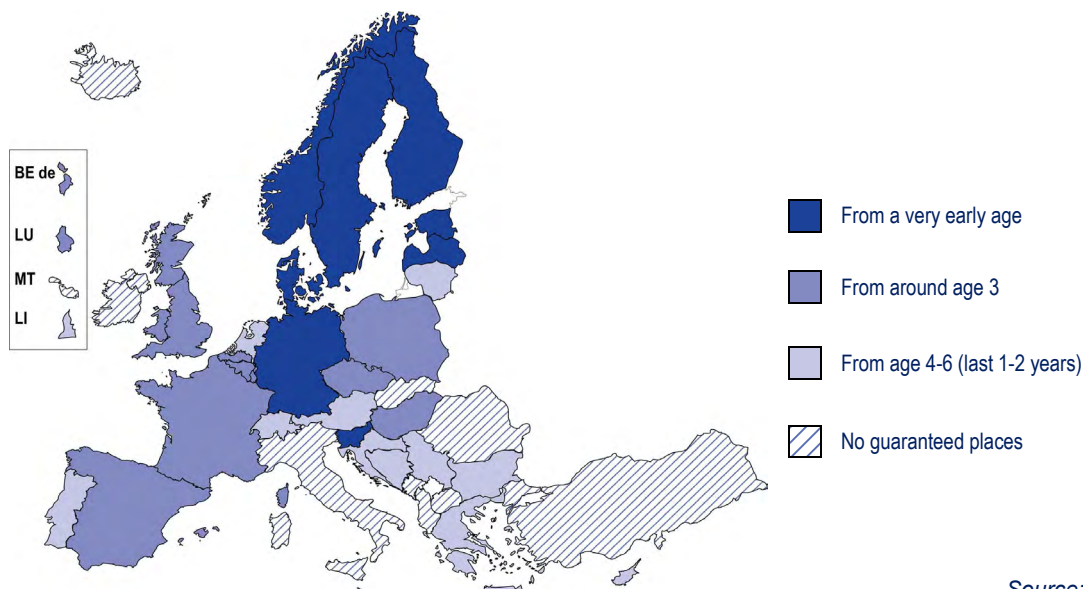
## ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS: A PLACE IS GUARANTEED FROM AN EARLY AGE IN ONLY A FEW COUNTRIES

Currently, in Europe, there are two approaches to guaranteeing universal access to ECEC. Some countries provide a legal entitlement to an ECEC place, while others make ECEC attendance compulsory. A **legal entitlement to ECEC** refers to a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children from a certain age living in a catchment area, whose parents, regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status, request a place for their child. **Compulsory ECEC** refers to the obligation for all children to attend ECEC settings when they reach a certain age. In either case, parents are guaranteed a place for their child.

A legal entitlement is a right of a child and his/her family. In countries with a legal entitlement, children may attend ECEC, but families may choose other options. In contrast, in countries with compulsory ECEC, children have to attend ECEC for a defined number of hours and may be asked to justify absences or face disciplinary measures. Often, a certificate of completion of a compulsory ECEC programme is required to enter primary education.

A universal legal entitlement to ECEC exists when every child of a certain age has an enforceable right to benefit from ECEC provision. An enforceable right means that public authorities must guarantee a place for each child of that age whose parents request it, regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status. It does not necessarily imply that provision is free, only that it is publicly subsidised and affordable. Moreover, the legal entitlement does not necessarily entail a duty to provide a first choice of setting, but the needs of families usually must be taken into account.

**Figure B1: Age from which a place in ECEC is guaranteed, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
Starting age (in years) of guaranteed ECEC place	2.5	3	2.5	5	3	0.5	1	1.5	-	4	3	3	6	-	4.7	1.5	6	3	3	-	5	5
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK- ENG	UK- WLS	UK- NIR	UK- SCT		AL	BA*	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Starting age (in years) of guaranteed ECEC place	3	4	-	0.9	-	0.8	1	3	3	-	3		-	5	4	-	4	-	-	1	5.5	-

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the earliest age from which a place in ECEC is guaranteed for all children. In the table, a legal entitlement is shown in black, while compulsory ECEC is marked in bold dark red.

**Country-specific notes**

**Greece:** Compulsory ECEC attendance is being gradually implemented until 2020/21.

**France:** ECEC attendance will become compulsory from age 3 on 1st September 2019 (final parliamentary discussion in progress).

**Cyprus:** 4.7 years correspond to 4 years 8 months.

**Slovenia:** 0.9 years correspond to 11 months.

**Finland:** 0.75 years correspond to 9 months.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Except in the Republic of Srpska, where ECEC is not compulsory, but all children attend a 3-month pre-primary programme nevertheless.

A targeted legal entitlement or targeted compulsory ECEC applies only to certain groups of children (e.g. disadvantaged learners, children of parents who are in employment, certain minorities, etc.) and is considered later in this chapter (see Figure B6).

Most European countries have committed themselves to guaranteeing an ECEC place for all children (see Figure B1), either by establishing a legal entitlement to participate in ECEC, or by making participation compulsory. However, there are significant differences in the age at which children qualify for a guaranteed ECEC place. Only eight European countries, namely Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and Norway, guarantee a place in ECEC for each child soon after its birth, often immediately after the end of childcare leave. The duty to provide these places usually falls on local government:

In **Denmark**, since 2001, the [Act on Day Care](#) <sup>(4)</sup> obliges municipalities to ensure ECEC provision for all children between the ages of 26 weeks and the start of primary school. Municipalities are sanctioned financially if they fail to comply and therefore all municipalities now meet the requirements. Parents may have to meet up to of 25 % of a setting's estimated gross operating expenditure.

**German law** <sup>(5)</sup> specifies that municipalities have to provide a childcare place either in centre-based or in home-based care for children from age 1, and in centre-based ECEC for children aged 3 years and older. If a place is not offered to a child, parents can take legal action.

In **Estonia**, the 2009 amendment to the [Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act](#) <sup>(6)</sup> states that a rural municipality or city government shall provide all children aged from 18 months to 7 years of age, whose parents so wish, with the opportunity to attend a pre-school institution in the catchment area.

In **Latvia**, [Education Law, Section 17](#) <sup>(7)</sup> stipulates that local governments have to ensure a place in a pre-school educational programme for every child from 18 months whose parents so wish.

In **Slovenia**, parents have a right to enrol their child in the pre-school education programme at a public or private kindergarten. The municipality in which the parents reside is responsible for ensuring the enrolment of pre-school children in their area ([Kindergarten Act – ZVrt](#), Articles 9 and 10) <sup>(8)</sup>. Any child who is not awarded a place in a public kindergarten and has been placed on the waiting list can be enrolled in a publicly subsidised private kindergarten or in home-based provision where the municipality must co-finance the costs.

In **Finland**, according to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care [\(540/2018\)](#) <sup>(9)</sup>, it is the municipalities' statutory duty to arrange the early childhood education and care for all children residing in the municipality.

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=206363>

<sup>(5)</sup> [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb\\_8/\\_24.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_8/_24.html)

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517062014005/consolide>

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/50759-izglitiba-likums>

<sup>(8)</sup> <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO447>

<sup>(9)</sup> <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/kumotut/1973/19730036>

In **Sweden**, according to the Education Act ([2010:800](#))<sup>(10)</sup> children from the age of 1 are legally entitled to ECEC. When parents apply for a place for their child in ECEC, the municipality must offer one within four months. Since 1995, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate has been able to take action against a municipality that does not offer a place within the time limit, for example by imposing a fine.

In **Norway**, since 2009 children who reach the age of 1 are, upon application, entitled to a place in a kindergarten in the municipality in which the child lives ([Kindergarten Act § 12](#))<sup>(11)</sup>.

A place in publicly subsidised ECEC is guaranteed from the age of 3 or a little earlier in the three Communities of Belgium, as well as in Czechia, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland). Normally, from this age, a place is guaranteed as a legal entitlement, except in Hungary where ECEC attendance is compulsory from age 3. In most of these countries, children are entitled to ECEC free of charge (see Figure B4). In ECEC systems with separate settings (see Figure A2), the legal entitlement often starts at around age 3, when children move from the 'childcare-type' ECEC setting into the education system.

In **Belgium**, from age 2-and-a-half (French and Flemish Communities) and from age 3 (German-speaking Community), ECEC becomes an integral part of the education system. In the Flemish Community, the legal entitlement is expressed in general terms as 'every pupil has a right to enrolment in a school' (Art. 37, §1, Decree on Elementary Education from 25 February 1997). The same law also refers to the first step in the education system as *kleuterondervijs* that starts at age 2-and-a-half and runs until the start of primary education. In the French Community, the rules of access to ECEC from age 2-and-a-half in *enseignement maternel* are specified in the decree voted on 13 July 1998<sup>(12)</sup>, common to primary education. In the German-speaking Community, according to the [Decree 31.08.1998/ART 25](#)<sup>(13)</sup>, *kindergartens* starting at age 3 fall under the *Einschreibepflicht der Gemeinschaftsschulen* that requires community schools to enrol each pupil.

In **Czechia**, the [561/2004, Education Act](#) § 34<sup>(14)</sup> specifies that pre-primary education is normally organised for children aged 3 to 6 years and at the earliest for children aged 2 years. A child under 3 years of age is not entitled to admission to nursery school. Children who reach at least 3 years of age prior to the beginning of the school year are preferentially admitted to a nursery school established by the municipality or by a union of municipalities. The municipality is obliged to ensure the pre-primary education for those children. According to the explanatory memorandum to the law, the Ombudsman and the administrative authorities regard this as a legal right.

In **Spain**, Article 15.2 of the Organic Law 2/2006 of Education ([BOE 04-05-2006](#)) states that the second cycle of ECEC (3 years and over) will be free. In order to meet the demands of families, educational administrations will guarantee sufficient places in public centre-based ECEC settings and will subsidise private settings<sup>(15)</sup>. The educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities include this right in their regulations. For example, in País Vasco it is described as follows: 'All pupils have the right to a free school place that guarantees their education in the following stages of teaching: second cycle of ECEC, primary education, compulsory secondary education' ([Article 2 of Decree 1/2018](#))<sup>(16)</sup>.

In **France**, [Law on Education, Article L113-1](#) states that 'every child at age 3 must be admitted to the *école maternelle* as close as possible to child's home, if their family so requests'<sup>(17)</sup>.

In **Luxembourg**, ECEC from age 3 is the first cycle of the nine years of basic education. The first cycle includes one year of *éducation précoce*, which is optional, and two years of *éducation préscolaire* that are compulsory. Every child living in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is entitled to basic education ([Law on Basic education, 6 February 2009](#))<sup>(18)</sup>.

<sup>(10)</sup> [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800\\_sfs-2010-800#K8](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800#K8)

<sup>(11)</sup> Children who turn 1-year-old no later than the end of August, are entitled to a place by August during the year in which they apply for a place. Children who turn 1-year-old in September, October or November are, upon application, entitled to a kindergarten place by the end of the month in which they have their first birthday.

<sup>(12)</sup> Décret portant organisation de l'enseignement maternel et primaire ordinaire et modifiant la réglementation de l'enseignement, article 2.

<sup>(13)</sup> <http://www.pdg.be/portaldata/4/resources/downloads/koordek/1998-08-31.pdf>

<sup>(14)</sup> <http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty-3/skolsky-zakon-ve-zneni-ucinnem-od-1-9-2018>

<sup>(15)</sup> <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2006/05/03/2/con>

<sup>(16)</sup> <https://www.euskadi.eus/bopv2/datos/2018/01/1800138a.pdf>

<sup>(17)</sup> [https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?sessionId=3B989D4730199E506394F3B458E2E171.tplqfr35s\\_1?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191&idArticle=LEGIARTI000027682617&dateTexte=20180515&categorieLien=id#LEGIARTI000027682617](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?sessionId=3B989D4730199E506394F3B458E2E171.tplqfr35s_1?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191&idArticle=LEGIARTI000027682617&dateTexte=20180515&categorieLien=id#LEGIARTI000027682617)



In some countries, the legal entitlement is attached to an ECEC programme rather than a place in an ECEC setting. School-type settings or pre-primary settings on the same site/administrational structure together with schools are the main providers of the ECEC programme. However, there are other types of provision (e.g. playgroups, childminders, etc.), in which children may enrol in an ECEC programme and claim their legal entitlement.

In **Poland**, children aged 3-5 years have a right to education in pre-schools (*przedszkola*), pre-school classes (*oddział przedszkolny*) in primary schools or in other forms of pre-school education ([art. 31 section 6 and 8 of the Act of 14 December 2016 'Law on School Education'](#))<sup>(19)</sup>. In pre-schools, pre-school classes in primary schools and pre-school centres (*punkty przedszkolne*) classes take place every day Monday to Friday. In pre-school units (*zespoły wychowania przedszkolnego*), they take place on selected weekdays (depending on the number of children and while observing a set minimum for the number of hours). Pre-school centres and pre-school units are legally referred to as 'other forms of pre-school education' (*inne formy wychowania przedszkolnego*).

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, local authorities are required<sup>(20)</sup> to secure free places offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year, and up to 52 weeks of the year, for every eligible (3- and 4-year-old) child in their area. The universal entitlement to free hours of ECEC can be accessed either through publicly funded *nursery schools* or *classes*, or through private and voluntary providers receiving public funding to deliver early education places. Private and voluntary providers include independent *schools*, *nurseries*, *playgroups/pre-schools*, and *childminders*.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, according to the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014, 47\(1\)](#): 'An education authority must [...] secure that the mandatory amount of early learning and childcare is made available for each [eligible pre-school child](#) belonging to its area'<sup>(21)</sup>. The exact number of hours is clarified in section 48(1): '600 hours in each year for which a child is an eligible pre-school child.' The entitlement can be claimed at most centre-based settings (*nurseries*, *child and family centres*, *childcare centres*, *playgroups*, *nursery schools*, *nursery classes within schools*, etc.) as well as in home-based provision.

Around a quarter of European education systems provide guaranteed places from age 4, 5 or 6 for the last 1-2 years of ECEC. Often, this provision is explicitly directed at preparation for school with a specific programme to smooth the transition to school education. In almost all of these countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland and Serbia), ECEC attendance is compulsory. Portugal and Liechtenstein are the only two European countries that provide a legal entitlement from age 4 for the last two years of ECEC without making attendance compulsory.

In **Portugal**, the change from a *creche* to a free-of-charge *jardim de infância* occurs at age 3. However, the legal entitlement starts at age 4 (expressed as universality of pre-school education in the [Law no. 65/2015](#), of 3 July, first amendment to Law no. 85/2009, of 27 August)<sup>(22)</sup>.

In **Liechtenstein**, the switch to the education-type settings *Kindergarten* is at the age 4. From this age, municipalities are obliged to provide enough places ([Law on schools, Art. 20](#))<sup>(23)</sup>.

Despite the legal framework that guarantees a place in ECEC for all children, in reality some municipalities may still struggle in some countries to balance supply with demand (see Figure B7). Moreover, many countries have introduced targeted measures to ensure the availability of ECEC for certain groups of children or families. This targeted legal entitlement and priority admission criteria are discussed later in the chapter (see Figure B6).

In contrast, a few education systems have achieved near universal provision without a supporting legal framework.

<sup>(18)</sup> <http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2009/02/06/n3/fo#io>

<sup>(19)</sup> <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170000059/U/D20170059Lj.pdf>

<sup>(20)</sup> See [Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 \(as substituted by section 1 of the Education Act 2011\)](#) and Department for Education (2018).

<sup>(21)</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/part/6>

<sup>(22)</sup> [http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Legislacao/lei\\_65\\_2015\\_3\\_julho.pdf](http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Legislacao/lei_65_2015_3_julho.pdf)

<sup>(23)</sup> <https://www.gesetze.li/konso/pdf/1972007000?version=8>

In **Italy** and **Malta**, a universal place guarantee is achieved in practice without a supporting legal framework. In both countries, the majority of ECEC centres for children from age 3 are combined with primary schools and are therefore considered as an integral part of the education system. As a result, more than 90 % of children aged 3 and over attend centre-based ECEC settings <sup>(24)</sup>.

In the **Netherlands**, where ECEC becomes compulsory from age 5, the near universal participation rate (96 %) is achieved by age 4 <sup>(25)</sup>, when children are eligible to start ECEC in school settings (*basisschool*). As there is a common curriculum for ages 4-12, this stage of ECEC is, in the Netherlands, generally considered to be the start of children's schooling.

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, although the right to ECEC is not enshrined in law, the Government has committed to funding a programme which aims to provide one year of non-compulsory pre-school education to every child in their immediate pre-school year (ages 3-4) whose family want it. A total of 99.9 % of pre-school age children were offered a funded pre-school education place in 2017/18 (Department of Education, 2018).

In **Iceland**, where the right to ECEC is widely described in laws and regulations without referring to a specific age or number of hours, the participation rates in ISCED 0 are very high from an early age. In 2016, 94.2 % of 2-year-olds attended centre-based pre-school centres (*leiksskóli*) <sup>(26)</sup>.

## MOST COUNTRIES GUARANTEE 20-29 HOURS OF ECEC

The type of ECEC guarantee – a legal right to a place or compulsory attendance – influences the way in which the number of guaranteed hours is prescribed. The *legal entitlement* defines the number of guaranteed publicly subsidised (or free-of-charge) ECEC hours that every family can claim. A child may use less hours of ECEC than the guarantee entitles to. In contrast, *compulsory ECEC* specifies the *minimum* number of ECEC hours that a child is required to attend. In both cases, the child may still benefit from additional (top-up) hours of ECEC that are not guaranteed for everyone.

The number of weekly, guaranteed or required hours of ECEC may reflect different policy goals. Three distinct categories can be defined.

1. Part-time (up to 20 hours per week) – with a focus on preparation for primary education (or a way of limiting costs for families).
2. School-time (from 20 to 29 ECEC hours per week) – with a focus on education.
3. Full-time (30 or more hours per week) – focus on family work-life balance challenges faced by working parents.

The legal entitlement to ECEC varies widely in terms of hours (see Figure B2 below), from more hours than a full working week (more than 40 hours) to just 10 hours per week. In contrast, children in European countries are never *required* to attend ECEC full-time – compulsory ECEC is usually a shorter programme with a maximum of 'school-time' hours. In Cyprus and Luxembourg, the weekly hours of compulsory ECEC are the highest (26 hours).

Countries that guarantee **part-time ECEC** often do so with a view to ensuring that children have some pre-primary education in preparation for school. Elsewhere, this free-of-charge provision is intended to reduce the costs of childcare. In a few countries, a short pre-primary programme is compulsory for children during the last year before starting primary education with the explicit aim of preparing children for school.

In **Croatia**, the pre-primary programme is compulsory for all children. For those already attending ECEC, the pre-primary programme is integrated within their existing provision. The pre-primary programme normally comprises a total of 250 hours and runs from 1st October to 31 May. However, where local circumstances make it difficult to run the full programme, a reduced programme may be offered with a minimum 150 hours.

<sup>(24)</sup> Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07].

<sup>(25)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(26)</sup> Ibid.

In the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland)**, the Government websites for parents/carers on the universal legal entitlement to free, part-time provision from the age of 3 are entitled 'Help paying for childcare', although the provision includes free early education alongside childcare.

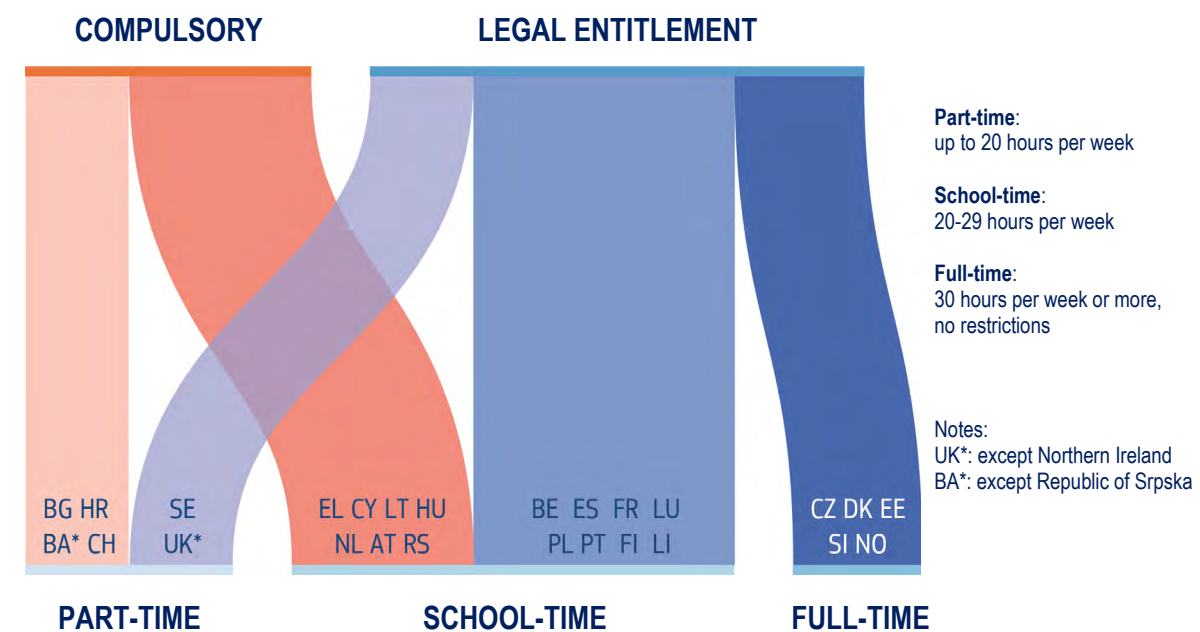
Most European countries guarantee 20 to 29 weekly ECEC hours, i.e. **school-time** hours. This time organisation typically reflects the situation in ECEC systems with separate settings (see Figure A2) where ECEC for children aged 3 and over is provided in a school-type establishment or even on the same site as the primary school (see Figure D9). Therefore, the organisation of the week is similar, with defined educational hours ('lessons' or educational activities) and breaks in between. Likewise, the pattern of the school year is adopted with a long summer holiday and breaks in each season.

In **Belgium**, children in pre-primary education receive 28 teaching periods (50 minutes) of education activities per week.

In **Liechtenstein**, the daily timetable in *Kindergarten* is (partly) regulated by the Ordinance on the Organisation of Public Schools (06/7/2004, [LGBI: 2004.154](#)) and explicitly aligned with primary schools<sup>(27)</sup>. *Kindergartens* offer a maximum of 28 lessons of 45 minutes. Education at *Kindergarten* cannot start before 8 a.m. Lunch break should be at least 75 minutes. There should be a break of at least 20 minutes in the morning and at least 15 minutes in the afternoon.

In **Austria**, the [law](#)<sup>(28)</sup> states that the last year of ECEC is compulsory in order to provide all children with the best opportunities for education and future working life, irrespective of socio-economic background. Children from the age of 5 have to attend a total of 20 hours of ECEC over at least four days per week.

**Figure B2: Weekly ECEC hours, by type of guarantee, 2018/19**



	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
Legal entitlement	23	23	23	-	32.5-60	⊗	⊗	Δ	-	50	25	24	-	-	-	⊗	-	26	-	-	-	-
Compulsory ECEC	-	-	-	15-17	20	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	(4-7)	-	26	⊗	20	26	20	-	⊗	20
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Legal entitlement	25	25	-	30-45	-	20	(15)	15-32	10-32	-	16		-	-	-	-	21	-	-	Δ	-	-
Compulsory ECEC	25	-	-	-	-	20	(15)	-	-	-	-		-	(4-5)	10-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	20

⊗ No top-level regulations    Δ No restrictions (full day)

Source: Eurydice.

<sup>(27)</sup> <https://www.gesetze.li/konso/pdf/2004154000?version=12>

<sup>(28)</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gov.at/eli/bqbl/l/2018/103/20181222>

### **Explanatory note (Figure B2)**

When the number of hours or the type of guarantee (legal entitlement/compulsory ECEC) varies by age, the earliest age threshold is shown in the figure. When the number of hours varies by region or by type of guarantee, the lowest number is taken into account. Where the table shows weekly hours in brackets, the number has been calculated by dividing the annual hours of entitlement indicated in regulations by 38 – the most common number of weeks in a school year.

### **Country-specific notes**

**Belgium:** 28 periods of 50 minutes.

**Bulgaria:** 5-year-olds: 15-22 hours; 6-year-olds: 17-24 hours.

**Denmark:** No central regulations, the municipalities define the hours. The Figure shows full-time as the typical opening hours are from 6.30 to 17.00 on weekdays.

**Germany:** Top-level legislation states that the extent of daily care is based on the child's individual need – 10 of the 16 *Länder* have specifications ranging from a guaranteed 4 hours a day up to 10 hours. The higher levels are in the eastern *Länder* (Schreyer and Oberhuemer, 2017).

**Netherlands:** No central regulations on exact hours, but compulsory ECEC for 5-year-olds takes place in primary schools with a considerable proportion of children enrolled in out-of-school care. The Figure therefore shows 'school-time'.

**Poland:** In pre-school units (*zespoły wychowania przedszkolnego*), the number of hours varies depending on the size of the group (with a minimum of 12 hours in exceptional cases). 25 hours are minimum free-of-charge provision. The majority of settings (*przedszkola*) work up to 50 hours a week (full time).

**Sweden:** 525 yearly hours were divided by a common length of school year (178 days) and then multiplied by 5 to reach a weekly figure.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS):** The lower end of the range indicates hours from age 3, the higher end indicates hours from the academic year after the child's 4th birthday (in a school reception class).

**United Kingdom (SCT):** From 2020/21, the universal free-of-charge entitlement will be increased to 1 140 yearly hours (~30 weekly hours).

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The number of yearly hours vary from 150 to 180 depending on canton. No compulsory ECEC in Republika Srpska, but all children attend a 3-month pre-primary programme nevertheless.

**Switzerland:** Cantonal regulations vary. In some cantons, the number of weekly hours exceeds 20.

The guarantee of **full-time ECEC** usually aims to relieve some work-life balance challenges faced by working parents. The services are arranged to cover the full-time working week and sometimes even some additional hours to make up for commuting time. In the countries that either guarantee full-time ECEC or impose no restrictions on the maximum number of hours a family can claim, education and care activities are typically blended. Although morning hours may be devoted to more demanding 'educational-type' activities, there is no clear-cut division between educational and care activities: children play, learn and relax throughout the day.

In countries where ECEC settings operate full-time, the place guarantee may not stipulate the number of hours assured. The guarantee in such cases implies that a child/family is entitled to access the full operational hours of ECEC settings.

In **Czechia**, nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) operate up to 60 hours per week.

In **Denmark**, there are no specific legislative demands regarding opening hours in ECEC except that it should be available every weekday. However, the [Act on Day Care](#) requires that the opening hours must take the purposes of ECEC into consideration and the opening hours must cover local needs for flexible childcare<sup>(29)</sup>. Opening hours are typically from 6.30 to 17.00 on weekdays.

In **Slovenia**, 98 % of children attend full-time kindergarten programmes, offering 6-9 hours per day (30-45 weekly hours). Half-day programmes (4-6 hours) and short programmes (240 to 720 hours per year) are also available.

For full-time working and studying parents, the ECEC guarantee of school-time hours or fewer may pose serious problems when balancing work and care. Therefore, countries that provide a guarantee of school-type hours often organise afternoon activities or the option of out-of-school' care for families to take up if needed. However, the before- and after-school-care is often administratively and organisationally distinct, with different staff, different groups of children or even a different location. In some countries, the out-of-school hours care may be offered by childminders or in settings that offer childcare for under-3s. This implies a divided day for children. Moreover, families may experience

<sup>(29)</sup> <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=206363>

accessibility barriers such as general lack of places or lack of provision for specific target groups (e.g. children with special (educational) needs), cost and the issues of quality (Eurofound, 2019).

In some countries, the compulsory ECEC school-time provision can be extended to become full-time as an option for a group of children in the same setting.

In **Greece**, 25 weekly hours are compulsory for 4- and 5-year-olds. There is an optional full-day programme with an extended timetable until 16:00 providing 20 additional weekly hours. Moreover, classes for children arriving before the start of regular activities are available.

In **Cyprus**, all-day optional public pre-primary schools function on a voluntary basis from October until May with four daily additional afternoon periods for rest, play and activities, five times a week until 3:05 or 4:00 p.m. The morning curriculum and school subjects remain the same according to the regulations of public pre-primary schools (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

In **Hungary**, children must attend 4 hours per day, but there is no maximum limit. The minimum opening hours of *óvoda* are 8 hours per day and the usual availability is 10 hours per day.

### MOST COUNTRIES HAVE A CHILDCARE GAP

The policies governing support for families with babies and young children are complex and are often interlinked. Therefore, when considering the differences in the starting age of the guaranteed place in ECEC, it is important to take into account another important family policy measure, namely the length of childcare leave.

The balance between these two policies varies considerably between European countries due to differing priorities and approaches to raising very young children. Some countries place the focus on care at home by parents and create incentives to encourage them to look after their own children for a longer period. In others, gender equality in the labour market is prioritised by adopting an institutional approach to childcare. Whatever the priority, ensuring synergy and continuity between these policies is very important.

In order to show the degree of separation between the policies, the **childcare gap** indicates the amount of time a child is not covered either by childcare leave or a guaranteed place in ECEC. This is the period when families with young children have to make difficult decisions about whether to stay at home, whether to try to get a place in a high-demand public ECEC facility, or whether and how to pay for an expensive, private ECEC setting. In families with several young children, a long childcare gap with under-developed public ECEC services may lead to one parent (usually the mother) being obliged to drop out of the labour market to take care of the child(ren) without adequate compensation.

Figure B3 shows the difference between the end of the maximum 'adequately compensated' childcare leave (later in text 'childcare leave') and the earliest start of the universal place guarantee in ECEC <sup>(30)</sup>. The European countries are listed according to the length of the childcare gap. At the left side, where no gap is indicated, are the countries with well-coordinated childcare leave and ECEC policies. Only seven countries, namely Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and Norway, have no childcare gap. All of these even have some overlap when parents are still entitled to some weeks of childcare leave, but a place in publicly subsidised ECEC provision is already guaranteed. The overlap appears if both the mother and, especially, the father take the maximum length of leave. Countries with no childcare gap grant long childcare leave (minimum 10 months) and have unitary ECEC systems providing a legal right to a subsidised, but not free place.

<sup>(30)</sup> The notion of adequate compensation implies that parents continue to receive a substantial part of their prior earnings during their leave and will not, therefore, face great financial hardship as a result of taking time off work to look after their children. In this report, leave is considered to be adequately compensated if parents receive at least 65 % of their previous earnings during this period. The total length of childcare leave takes into account all the different types of leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave) and is calculated from the child's birth until both parents return to work.

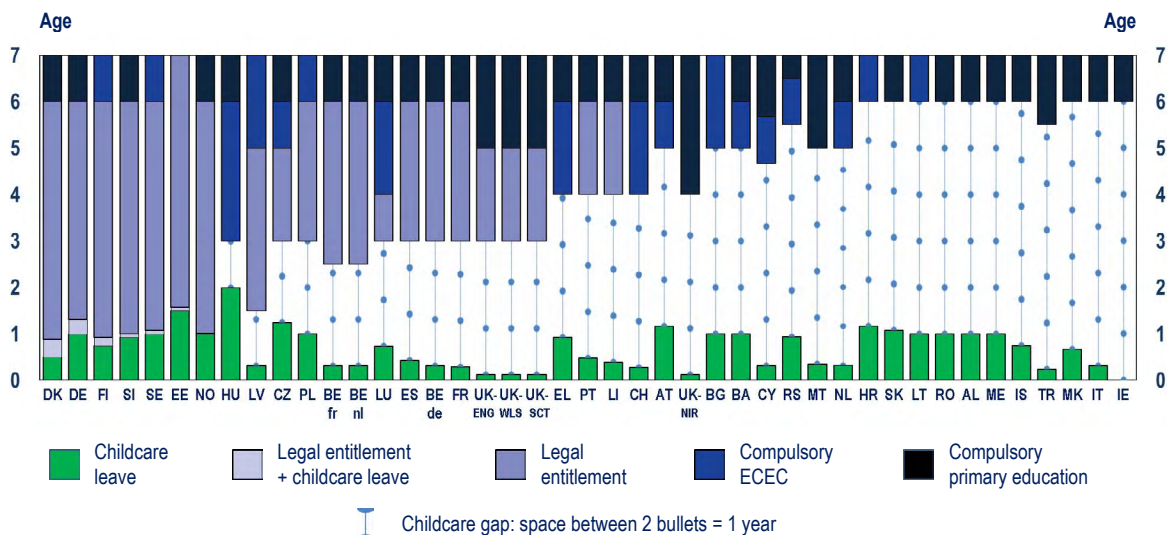
In **Sweden**, parents get 68 weeks of childcare leave in total, 55 weeks of which are adequately compensated (~80 % of the previous salary). The universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised ECEC starts at 52 weeks, when a child is 1 year old. The overlap when both childcare leave and ECEC are available provides families with a transition period and some flexibility.

When there is a childcare gap, it lasts for a minimum of one and maximum of six years. The difference between the adequately compensated childcare leave and the start of the legal entitlement is between one and two years in Czechia, Latvia, Poland and Hungary. All these countries, except Latvia, grant long, adequately paid childcare leave (1-2 years) and a guarantee to an ECEC place from age 3.

In **Czechia**, maternity leave lasts 22 weeks. The length of parental leave is indirectly proportional to the monthly amount. In 2019, parents can take 43 weeks of parental leave receiving an allowance of 69 % of the actual average monthly salary of 2018. The total length of childcare leave is 65 weeks (i.e. 1 year and 3 months). The guarantee to publicly subsidised ECEC starts only at age 3. During the childcare gap period, ECEC provision is undeveloped and fragmented. Parents often turn to informal or private childcare solutions. If capacity allows, some ECEC settings for children aged 3 and over may admit 2-year-olds.

In **Latvia**, the universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised ECEC starts at age 1-and-a-half. However, maternity leave with an allowance of 80 % of previous earnings is granted only for 16 weeks. Afterwards, a parental allowance with two options is available: until the child is 1 year old (32 weeks) with 60 % of the previous salary allowance; or until the child is 18 months (58 weeks) with 44 % of the previous salary allowance. Most parents choose to take care of their child at home or turn to informal childcare solutions (relatives, nannies).

**Figure B3: Childcare gap, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	
Total childcare leave	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.0	1.2	0.5	1.0	1.5	0.0	0.9	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.7	2.0	0.3	0.3	1.2	
Starting age	Legal entitlement	2.5	3	2.5	-	3	0.5	1	1.5	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	1.5	-	3	-	-	-	-
	Compulsory ECEC	-	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	4	-	-	6	-	4.7	5	6	4	3	-	5	5	
	Primary education	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	7	6	5.7	7	7	6	6	5	6	6	
Childcare gap	2.2	2.7	2.2	4.0	1.8	-	-	-	6.0	3.1	2.6	2.7	4.8	5.7	4.4	1.2	5.0	2.3	1.0	4.7	4.7	3.8	
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT	AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR		
Total childcare leave	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.7	0.4	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.2		
Starting age	Legal entitlement	3	4	-	0.9	-	0.8	1	3	3	-	3	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	-	-		
	Compulsory ECEC	6	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	5.5	-		
	Primary education	7	6	6	6	6	7	7	5	5	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6.5	5.5		
Childcare gap	2.0	3.5	5.0	-	4.9	-	-	2.9	2.9	3.9	2.9	5.0	4.0	3.7	5.3	3.6	5.0	5.3	-	4.6	5.3		

**Explanatory note**

The childcare gap is the difference between the maximum length of adequately compensated post-natal childcare leave and the earliest start of a universal place guarantee in ECEC (legal entitlement or compulsory ECEC). When there is no guaranteed place in ECEC, the gap is calculated until the start of compulsory primary education. The childcare leave was converted from weeks (see in the annexe) to months dividing the number of weeks by 52.1.

For a detailed breakdown of the total length of adequately compensated childcare leave (including post-natal maternity, paternity and parental leave), see Annex A.

**Country-specific notes**

**France:** ECEC attendance will become compulsory from age 3 on 1st September 2019 (final parliamentary discussion in progress).

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** ECEC is not compulsory in the Republic of Srpska, but all children attend a 3-month pre-primary programme nevertheless.

The childcare gap is between two and three years in Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg and most parts of the United Kingdom. These countries provide a relatively short period of childcare leave (6-22 weeks in most countries except Luxembourg, which grants 38 weeks).

In **Belgium**, a mother has a right to 14 weeks of post-natal maternity leave. The first month is paid at 82 %, while the rest is at a minimum of 75 % of the previous salary. Fathers have a right to paternity leave of 10 days (82 % allowance), which has to be taken before the child turns 4 months old. The earliest legal entitlement to publicly subsidised ECEC starts at age 2-and-a-half. During the childcare gap, subsidised ECEC is available and certain vulnerable groups have priority access.

In the remaining countries, the period with no adequately paid childcare leave and no entitlement to ECEC lasts longer than three years. From the legal rights point of view, nine European countries have a childcare gap of 5-6 years, namely Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey<sup>(31)</sup>. Most of the countries with a long childcare gap have either no guarantee to an ECEC place, or have only 1-2 years of compulsory ECEC before the start of primary education.

Figure B3 also shows that the legal entitlement is a more common measure than compulsory ECEC. A right to a place in ECEC is granted in 21 European education systems. Usually, the legal entitlement covers several years. ECEC is compulsory in 17 education systems. Compulsory ECEC is the measure that extends from the upper age limit and usually lasts 1 or 2 years. ECEC is compulsory for one year in 11 European countries and for 2 years in Bulgaria, Greece (phasing in), Latvia, Luxembourg and most cantons of Switzerland. Compulsory ECEC is the longest in Hungary where it lasts 3 years.

A few countries provide both a legal entitlement and compulsory ECEC (Czechia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Finland and Sweden). In these countries, children are entitled to a place in ECEC from age 3 or earlier, but ECEC becomes compulsory for all during the last 1-2 years before the start of primary education.

**Many countries have recently extended the universal place guarantee in ECEC**

During the last five years, there have been substantial changes in the legal framework that guarantees access to ECEC in several European Union countries. Five countries have introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting primary education, and two education systems have prolonged the period of mandatory attendance to 2-3 years. Moreover, three countries are extending the ages of the legal right to ECEC for every child.

<sup>(31)</sup> In Ireland, Italy and Iceland, the childcare gap is *de facto* shorter as publicly subsidised ECEC is universally available without a legal entitlement *de jure*. In Ireland, while there is no legal entitlement to ECEC, there is universal provision available to parents and children from the age of 2 years and 8 months, reducing the childcare gap *de facto* to 2.7 years. In Italy, the gap is 2.7 years until the child starts *scuole dell'infanzia*. In Iceland, the gap is 1.3 years until the child reaches age 2.

Attending the last year of ECEC has been made compulsory in Czechia (from the school year starting September 2017), Croatia (2014), Lithuania (2016), Finland (2015) and Sweden (2018). Two countries have made compulsory attendance longer than one year. In Hungary, ECEC has been compulsory for children from the age of 3 since September 2015. Greece is gradually lowering the starting age of compulsory pre-primary school attendance from age 5 to age 4 (between 2018-2021). Three countries are planning to introduce compulsory ECEC: from September 2019, it will be compulsory from age 3 in France (final parliamentary discussion in progress); in Belgium and Slovakia, legislation is in preparation to make the last year of ECEC before primary education compulsory from September 2020.

A legal entitlement to ECEC has been introduced or extended in Czechia, Poland and Portugal. These countries have imposed a statutory duty on ECEC providers in a catchment area to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children of a certain age whose parents require a place. Czechia and Poland have been gradually extending the entitlement to age 3 (fully implemented in Poland from 2017 and in Czechia from 2018). Portugal is still implementing the reform started in 2015 to establish universal pre-school education. The legal entitlement to ECEC currently starts at age 4 and is planned to be lowered to age 3 by 2020.

## **ECEC IS OFFERED FREE OF CHARGE MAINLY FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

Affordability is a very important factor in ensuring that the highest possible number of children have access to ECEC. This indicator examines the most robust measure taken to ensure that every family can afford to place their child in ECEC, i.e., all places are offered free of charge. Specific measures for children and families considered in need of targeted support are presented later in the chapter.

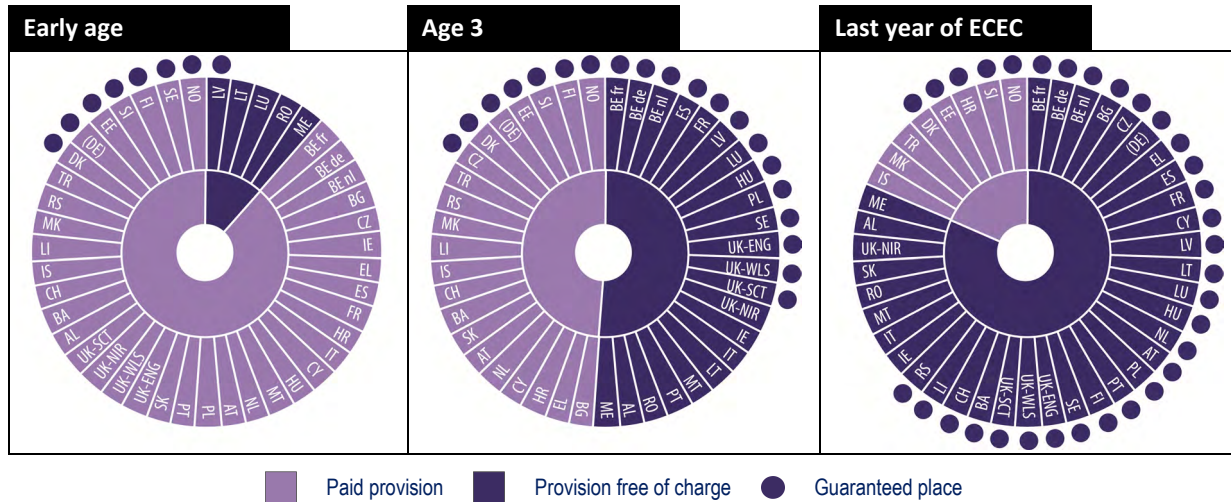
However, affordability must be discussed in relation to availability, since without a place guarantee, free ECEC in public settings may be limited and waiting lists may be long with complex priority rules. Therefore, Figure B4 shows the availability of free ECEC in relation to a guaranteed place for three broad age groups:

1. early age (under age 2);
2. around age 3 (more than age 2, less than age 4);
3. last year of ECEC (age 4, 5 or 6, which varies by education system).

In Europe, most families have to pay fees for ECEC for the youngest group of children. The availability of ECEC free of charge increases noticeably at age 3 and this trend continues with each year of age, becoming almost universal across Europe during the last year before compulsory primary education starts.



Figure B4: ECEC free of charge and guaranteed places, 2018/19



## Starting age of ECEC free of charge and the guaranteed number of hours per week

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
Age (years)	2.5	3	2.5	5	5	-	⊗	-	2.7	4	3	3	-	3	4.7	1.5	0	1	3	2.75	4	5
Weekly hours	23	23	23	15-24	32.5-60	-	⊗	-	15	25-50	25	24	-	25-50	26	⊗	20	20	Δ	30	⊗	20
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Age (years)	3	3	0.3	-	5	6	3	3	3	3	3		3	6	4	-	4	0	-	-	5.5	-
Weekly hours	25	25	40	-	Δ	20	(15)	15-32	10-32	12.5	16		20-30	(4-5)	10-20	-	21	30-45	-	-	20	-

⊗ No top-level regulations Δ No restrictions (full day)

Source: Eurydice.

## Explanatory note

This figure addresses universal free-of-charge ECEC. Targeted measures to offer fee reductions or exemptions are discussed in Figure B6.

In the figure, the country ISO code in brackets indicates that the situation varies across the country; the country is placed in the dominant category.

In the table, when the weekly hours are shown in brackets, the number has been calculated by dividing the annual hours indicated in regulations by 38 – the most common number of weeks in a school year.

Shading in the table indicates that there is no place guarantee for at least a part of the age range for which free ECEC provision is available.

## Country-specific notes

**Germany:** Berlin and Hamburg offer free ECEC for all children. In Rhineland-Palatania ECEC is free from the age of 2. Bremen, Niedersachsen and Hesse waive the fees from age 3. Brandenburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia offer free ECEC for all children during the year before starting primary education (*Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung*, 2018).

**Finland:** The Government has allocated funds to a pilot project of free-of-charge ECEC for 20 weekly hours for 5-year-olds. The pilot period is 2018-2020.

**United Kingdom (NIR):** Children aged 3-4 in Northern Ireland are in the final year of ECEC provision. Compulsory, full-time primary education begins at age 4.

Of the 43 education systems analysed, only five offer free public ECEC for at least some hours per week from the earliest years. Latvia is the only European country that guarantees a free public ECEC place from as early as 1-and-a-half.

In **Latvia**, if a place in an educational institution run by the local government is not offered and the child attends a pre-school educational programme in a private educational institution, the local government must cover some of the costs of the private service provider. The costs covered correspond to the average cost of a child on a pre-primary education programme at the local government educational institution ([Education Law, Section 17](#))<sup>(32)</sup>.

<sup>(32)</sup> <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/50759-izqlitibas-likums>

In four other countries (Luxembourg, Lithuania, Romania and Montenegro), there is no legal guarantee to ensure the availability of free ECEC. Lithuania and Luxembourg offer free ECEC for 20 hours per week, while Romania and Montenegro fund free full-time places.

In **Luxembourg**, since 1st October 2017 children aged 1 to 4 may benefit from 20 hours of free child-care in the non-formal education sector (*service d'éducation et d'accueil*), complementing the free pre-school services (*éducation précoce et éducation préscolaire*) from age 3. The free 20-hours programme is administered through the voucher system.

In the remaining European countries, either all or some parents have to pay for ECEC in the earliest years, although the costs vary considerably between countries (see Figure B5). In some countries, fee-exemptions or free entitlement are available for certain target groups of children and families (see Figure B6).

From around age 3, almost half of European countries offer free ECEC for at least a few hours per week. In many countries, this is a period of transition when children change from a childcare-type to an education-type setting (see Figure A2). Most of these countries combine free ECEC with a place guarantee (Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary and Poland). The situation is similar in Italy and Malta where there is no explicit legal entitlement, but free places in pre-primary schools are provided as part of the general education service and participation rates are over 90 % even for 3-year olds. In contrast, in Portugal, where children move to a free-of-charge ECEC setting at age 3, there is still a considerable lack of places for this age group as the legal entitlement is available only for 4-year-olds.

In Ireland and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), a free pre-school education programme of 0-16 weekly hours is available for children from around age 3. The pre-school place allowance can be claimed for children in various settings, including those offered by childminders and those catering for younger children – thus providing continuity of care. There is, however, a requirement that those settings must offer the approved educational programme during the funded preschool education hours.

For the last year of ECEC, the distribution of free and fee-paying ECEC provision is reversed compared with the earliest years. Most European countries offer at least one year of free pre-primary education. The exceptions are Denmark, seven *Länder* in Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Iceland, Norway, North Macedonia and Turkey, where there is no free provision and parents have to contribute to costs across the entire phase of ECEC.

It is important to note that even when education and care activities are free for at least some hours each week, additional costs may apply. Parents usually have to pay for meals taken during the session (or they may bring in food for children). There are a few exceptions.

In **Finland**, every child attending free ECEC receives a free meal every day.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, children aged 4+ in the reception class of publicly funded schools receive a free school meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) policy. Parents of children in other settings pay for meals.

Fees for additional hours of provision are charged in most of the countries offering free ECEC for less than full-time hours. As discussed earlier (see Figure B2), in ECEC systems with school-type organisation, the after-school provision may differ administratively and organisationally. The additional hours may be provided either in the same setting or in other types of provision (e.g. home-based provision or childcare-type settings). In unitary settings (e.g. Finland and Sweden), the top-up hours may be taken and charged for (subject to local autonomy) in the same setting.

## ECEC FEES FOR CHILDREN UNDER 3 YEARS ARE LOWEST IN BALTIC AND BALKAN COUNTRIES

As discussed in the previous section, the best way to ensure affordability is to provide ECEC services free of charge. However, it is mainly during the last year or two of ECEC that children in Europe may attend ECEC at no cost to their families. Most families need to pay fees for the youngest children (see Figure B4). In such cases, the levels of fees and their regulation largely influence the accessibility to ECEC.

ECEC fees are regulated at top and/or local level in most European education systems, at least in the public and publicly subsidised sectors. Usually, countries set the fee ceiling as a specific figure, but sometimes the limit is expressed as a proportion of family income or ECEC costs.

In **Denmark**, parents' fees must not make up more than 25 % of a setting's estimated gross operating expenditure.

In **Hungary**, fees and meals in ECEC settings cannot exceed 25 % of net family income per person in centre-based settings and 50 % in home-based ones.

In **Finland**, fees depend on family size, income and time spent in ECEC, The fees cannot exceed EUR 289.

In **Norway**, since 2015, fees for a place in kindergarten are limited to 6 % of the household's income.

ECEC fees for children under age 3 vary greatly across European countries and across different types of provision. Figure B5 shows an overview of the level of fees in Europe grouping the countries in several large categories (very low, low, medium and high). The analysis is based on national statistics, national surveys and expert evaluations. As this is not survey data, but a summary of records from various sources and a range of reference years, the fees are not directly comparable. Figure B5 should be seen as an indication only.

Monthly ECEC fees for children under 3 years tend to be the lowest in the Baltic and Balkan countries, as well as Romania and Sweden. Moreover, in Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Montenegro, ECEC is entirely free; parents only have to pay for a child's meals. Very low fees (less than 100 PPS) for education and care activities are charged in Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta, Sweden, Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. It is important to note that in some of these countries, a small proportion of children from wealthy families may attend very expensive (fees higher than PPS 500) private ECEC. This might reflect the fact that even though the fees for ECEC are low in these countries, the demand for ECEC places for younger children often outweighs supply (according to Figure B7, Estonia, Malta and Sweden are the only countries with very low fees that provide enough supply to meet demand).

In **Malta**, around 80 % of the children attending *childcare centres* use the [Free Childcare Scheme](#) (NSO, 2017).

In **Sweden**, all children have a right to ECEC from age 1. The fees for one child in ECEC are capped at 3 % of family income with a ceiling of PPS 110. Families with lower incomes or more children in ECEC pay less or no charges at all.

Fees for full-time ECEC for children aged under 3 are low in several Nordic, Balkan and Central European countries. Specifically, fees vary between PPS 100 and PPS 250 in Czechia, Denmark, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Norway. The fees are medium high (between PPS 250 and PPS 500) in France, Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Cyprus and Austria.

Average monthly fees are the highest (more than PPS 500) in the countries which rely on market-mechanisms to supply ECEC for children under age 3. In Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, there are no regulations on fees and providers have autonomy in setting the price. Some public subsidies to offset the costs are available only for the most disadvantaged children. In Switzerland, although there are regulations on fees, the ceiling is exceptionally high – fees in public or publicly subsidised ECEC for children up to age 4 can reach more than PPS 1 400.

As already discussed, the most common policy measure to increase affordability is providing free/subsidised ECEC. In addition, countries may offer other policy measures when supporting families with ECEC costs. Tax relief is one of the most common instruments. For example,

In **Austria**, EUR 2 300 per year for childcare (up to the age of 10) is tax deductible, and further deductions are possible for single parents. Parents of children with disabilities receive an increased family allowance.

In the **United Kingdom**, there is a tax-free childcare allowance through which families receive £2 from the state for every £8 they pay for childcare, up to a value of £2 000 per child per year. Eligible families are those where parents are 'in work – or getting parental leave, sick leave or annual leave'; earning at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week; and have a taxable income of less than £100 000.

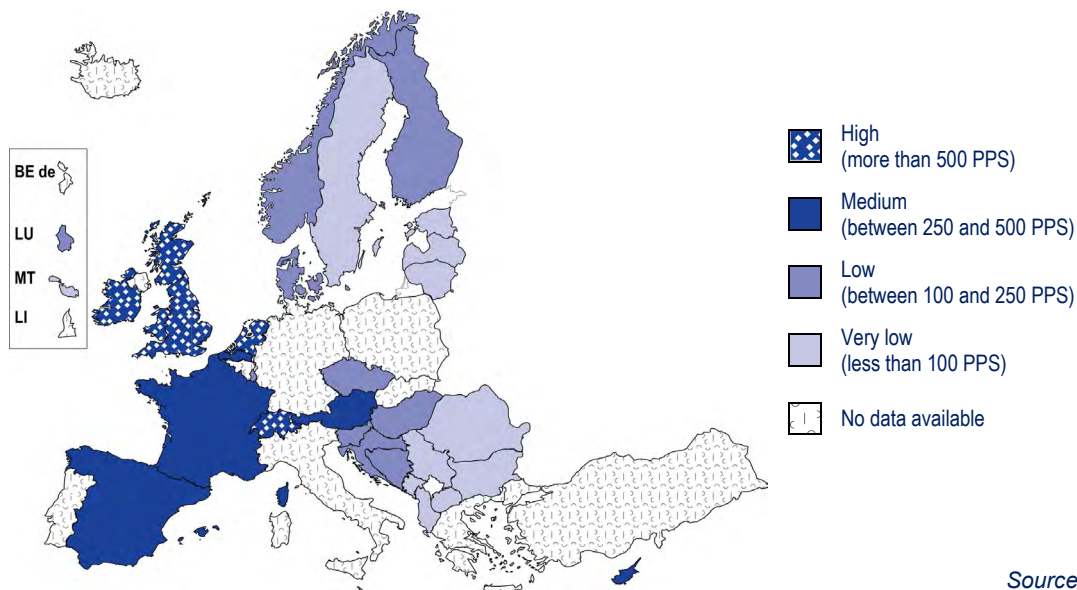
Some countries provide partial compensation for fees paid by families for private provision.

In some municipalities in **Lithuania**, parents whose child is not given a place in a public ECEC setting receive financial support of EUR 100 per month to partly cover the cost of an ECEC place in a private ECEC setting.

In **Portugal**, families with children in some private or cooperative pre-schools may receive a subsidy depending on household income.

In **Finland**, families can opt for private ECEC with the help of a private care allowance awarded by the state or for vouchers provided by many municipalities.

**Figure B5: Average monthly fees for ECEC for children under 3 years old, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Average monthly fees for ECEC for children under 3 years of age (PPS and national currency) as well as regulations regarding fees, 2018/19**

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY
PPS	:	:	258	37	138	213	:	54	683	:	65-361	121-274	129	:	112-503
National currency	:	:	285	36	2443	2100	:	41	771	:	59-328	133-301	617	:	100-450
Fees regulated	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	local	yes	no	no	yes	yes	local	local	no
	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	
PPS	no fees	no fees	198	0-156	(no fees)	511	90-398	:	:	no fees	191	:	0-233	0-110	
National currency	no fees	no fees	242	0-30000	(no fees)	572	100-440	:	:	no fees	155	:	0-289	0-1382	
Fees regulated	NA	local	yes	yes	NA	no	yes	local	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	
	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
PPS	1090	1032	:	715		44	135	0-1420	:	:	40-79	67	0-204	0-96	:
National currency	1067	1010	:	700		2600	130	0-2400	:	:	20-40	1840	0-2910	0-5590	:
Fees regulated	no	no	no	no		local	yes	local	local	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	:

**Explanatory note**

Fees regulated 'yes' indicates fees are regulated at top-level, 'local' indicates fees are regulated at local level, 'no' means fees are not regulated, 'NA' means there are no fees.

To facilitate international comparison, fees have been converted from national currencies into purchasing parity standards (PPS). PPS is an artificial common reference currency unit used to express the volume of economic aggregates for the purpose of spatial comparisons in such a way that price level differences between countries are eliminated. The PPS values are obtained by dividing the national currency units by the respective purchasing power parity (PPP). Eurostat 2017 data Purchasing power parities (EU28=1) [prc\_ppp\_ind] was used (last update: 23-04-2019).

When no data on actual averages exist, the estimates were calculated on full-time attendance (40 hours) if not stated otherwise. Weekly fees are converted to a notional monthly fee by multiplying by a factor of 4.345. Hence, the actual monthly fees can differ slightly. Range is indicated when average figures are not available. The range shows the minimum and maximum fees if not stated otherwise in the country specific notes.

Whenever possible, all ECEC sectors are taken into account. In countries where public ECEC dominates and a small percentage of children attend very expensive, private self-financing ECEC, only public fees are shown to reflect the most common situation. Meals and other expenses are taken into account, whenever possible. The countries with no fees for education and care are shown as 'very low' considering the fact that there might be some fees for meals.

When the table shows a range, the Figure is based on the highest value.

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE nl):** Excludes 20 % of private self-financing ECEC settings and settings receiving only the basic subsidy.

**Denmark:** Home-based provision (*dagpleje*) excluded.

**France:** The range in the table indicates the average fees paid in *crèches* (lower end) and the average fees paid for *assistant-e maternel-le* (higher end) by a family earning the average salary after direct and indirect subsidies are deducted. The Figure shows the value based on the dominant form of ECEC for children under age 3 (*assistant-e maternel-le*).

**Spain:** Public ECEC only. There is no regulation for the private sector.

**Croatia:** Estimation of most common costs. The monthly fees range from HRK 400 to HRK 720 in 80 % of local self-governance units.

**Luxembourg:** Average fees for 20 hours to complement free 20 hours.

**Hungary:** Average includes private provision.

**Netherlands:** Calculations based on the average fee per hour in 2018 (EUR 7.14) and the average monthly attendance hours (80.2).

**Austria:** Indicates minimum and maximum in some *Länder* for full-time attendance.

**Slovenia:** Public ECEC settings. Calculation is based on the average price of the public kindergarten programme and the share of parents by the scale of subsidised payment. Fees vary from 0 to EUR 350 (PPS 429).

**Finland:** Public ECEC only.

**United Kingdom (SCT):** Not-for-profit EUR 618.8, private self-financing EUR 737.8.

**Montenegro:** Table indicates the average prices for meals as there are no fees for ECEC.

## TARGETED MEASURES TO FACILITATE ECEC ACCESS FOCUS ON CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

Very few European countries guarantee universal access to free early childhood education for children from the earliest years. As summarised in Figure B4, fees for ECEC are charged for children aged under 3 in all but five of the EU-28 countries analysed. Merely eight countries guarantee a place in ECEC for all young children. Latvia is the only country that guarantees free public ECEC for all children from the age of 1-and-a-half. Instead of granting a right to free ECEC for all children, most other countries have put in place policies targeting certain children and families deemed to benefit the most from ECEC.

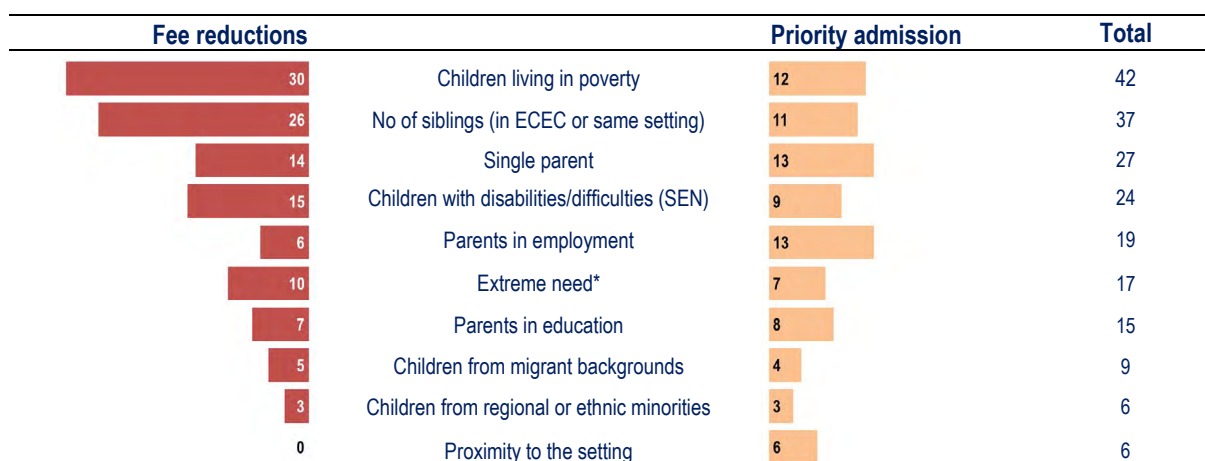
Figure B6 shows the groups that benefit from fee reductions and priority admission – the most common targeted measures for children under the age of 3. More countries apply targeted measures to increase affordability (fee reductions) than accessibility (priority admission). All countries, including those charging no fees for education and care activities, may still offer meals free of charge to certain vulnerable children. The indicator includes those criteria as 'fee reductions'. However, countries that have a universal ECEC place guarantee and/or countries where supply meets demand might not need targeted accessibility measures. Moreover, in many countries, priority admission rules are decided at local or even at setting level.

In general, similar criteria are used when offering fee reductions and priority admission. Children living in poverty are the most commonly targeted group. Family income is a widespread criterion, often used in combination with family composition. Recipients of certain welfare benefits might also be offered ECEC fee reductions and/or priority admission. As a separate criterion (although largely correlated with poverty), children of single parents often benefit from targeted measures.

The number of siblings – and especially siblings in ECEC – is another important factor for fee reductions and priority admission. Moreover, several education systems try to ease family life by giving explicit priority to the siblings of children who already attend the same ECEC setting.

Several countries have targeted measures for children that may need support in education and care, namely children with disabilities/difficulties (SEN), children from migrant backgrounds and those from regional or ethnic minorities. Croatia, Cyprus and Albania have specific measures facilitating access and/or affordability for Roma children.

**Figure B6: Range of criteria used when offering fee reductions or priority admission in centre-based settings for children under age 3, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

\* Extreme need: Children in foster care or those indicated by social services, children whose parents cannot provide the necessary care, homeless children of women in shelters fleeing violence at home, children who have lost a parent while in military service or in a terror attack or similar circumstances.

For each age range, the number on the bar indicates the number of education systems which feature the specific criteria in their top-level regulations. There are 43 education systems in total – information by country is available in the Annex A.

In many families with young children, both parents need to work, study or progress in their careers. Seeing ECEC as a tool to enable female employment, about a third of European countries give priority to children from families where both parents work or study. Some even offer fee reductions to facilitate work-life balance and increase the incentives to work or study.

Several countries explicitly target children in extreme need. This includes children in foster care (e.g. French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Hungary, Slovenia, the United Kingdom – England, and Serbia), children referred by social services (e.g. Slovenia and Serbia), children whose parents cannot provide the necessary care (e.g. Germany, Hungary and Portugal), children whose family members are disabled or ill (Greece), children who are homeless (Ireland), or children of women in shelters fleeing violence at home (Greece and Spain), etc.

Proximity to the setting is listed as an admission priority in six countries (Bulgaria, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Portugal and Romania).

In general, many targeted approaches are interlinked. Some countries use complex scales and rules.

The **Netherlands** offers fee reductions according to the summary indicator *children at higher risk of educational disadvantage*. This indicator takes into account the parents' level of education, country of origin, how long they have been in the Netherlands and whether they are in a debt restructuring programme.

In **Serbia**, priority access is reserved for children from vulnerable groups, namely children who are victims of violence; economically disadvantaged children and children without parental protection; children of single parents or whose parents are ill; children living in non-stimulating conditions; children with educational difficulties and their siblings; as well as children referred by the social care centres. After this group, other priorities (in order of importance) are: children of working parents and students, third child (and younger siblings) in a family, and siblings of children already enrolled in the same institution.

Many countries use sliding-fee scales:

**Slovenia** determines fees by ranking parents into nine wealth bracket groups according to income, property and family composition. The municipalities subsidise minimum 23 % of the price for all children.

In **Finland**, fees vary from EUR 0 to 289 depending on family size, income and time spent in ECEC. The lowest fee collected is EUR 27. In 2016, ca 20 % children in ECEC paid the highest fee and 18 % did not pay any fees (THL, 2017).

It is important to note that the fees and priority rules are often defined at local or institutional level. The criteria used usually correspond to those listed in the Figure B6. For example,

In **Croatia**, *dječji vrtić* fees are defined by local self-governance units. A study conducted by Dobrotić, Matković and Menger (2018) found 'that fees are reduced for children living in poverty, families with high number of siblings, single parents, parents in employment, children with disabled parents and for children with disabilities/difficulties (SEN)'.

Sometimes targeted ECEC measures are part of a broader programme.

In **Ireland**, the Community Childcare Subvention Resettlement (CCSR) programme provides free sessional and part-time ECEC for refugee children aged 0- 5 years to support their resettlement and integration into Irish society.

Some programmes or measures are available in all types of ECEC settings, while others might only apply to public or publicly subsidised establishments.

In **Belgium (French and Flemish Communities)**, priority rules depend on the type (size) of public subsidies. Settings receiving income-related subsidies on top of the basic subsidy should grant priority to children from families where childcare is necessary in the context of a work situation (retaining work, looking for work or undertaking vocational training), as well as to children from single-parent families, low-income families and foster children. Settings receiving an extra subsidy on top of the basic and income-related subsidies should also have a proactive admission policy that favours children from vulnerable families.

Several European countries have introduced distinct top-level targeted accessibility and or affordability programmes or regulations. The so-called targeted legal entitlement measures impose a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure (free or publicly subsidised) ECEC provision for children living in a catchment area who fall into certain categories. Two broad types of targeted legal entitlement measures may be distinguished:

1. **Access from an earlier age** to publicly funded ECEC.
2. **Access to additional hours** in publicly funded ECEC, which are free of charge or subject to reduced fees. These hours are in addition to those granted to all children (see Figure B2).

In some countries, children living in poverty or children with special needs may attend ECEC earlier:

In **France**, from age 3, all children are legally entitled to free pre-primary schools (*écoles maternelles*). These are accessible from age 2, particularly in socially disadvantaged areas.

In **Sweden**, all children have the right to ECEC from age 1 and the right for free ECEC for 15 hours per week from age 3. Children with special education needs may start free ECEC for 15 hours under age 1.

The parts of the **United Kingdom** that grant a certain number of free ECEC hours for all children from age 3 extend this entitlement to some children from age 2. In **England**, eligibility is based on mainly economic grounds, but there also some non-economic criteria

(e.g. special educational needs (SEN) or disability; child in care of local authority) <sup>(33)</sup>. In **Wales**, the Flying Start programme targets 2- and 3-year olds living in disadvantaged areas. **Scotland** extends the free ECEC entitlement to 2-year olds whose parents are on certain benefits as well as children who have been, or are currently being looked after (in foster care, with a guardian).

In **Norway**, all children have legal right to a place in ECEC from age 1. Moreover, from age 3 children from low income families have the right to 20 hours of free ECEC per week. The yearly income limit in 2018 was NOK 533 500.

Some education systems guarantee an ECEC place for the children of parents who are working or studying (in the case of two-parent families, both parents must be working or studying).

In **Malta**, the government provides the [Free Childcare Scheme](#) to parents/guardians who are in employment or are pursuing their education (Government of Malta, 2016). The targeted age group for this scheme is children from 3 months up to 3 years of age (until the child is eligible to enrol into public Kindergarten). The entitlement covers 110 % of the average working/studying hours plus 20 hours monthly to make up for commuting time.

In **Finland**, since August 2016, the universal entitlement to ECEC from 9 months has been limited to 20 hours a week. However, a child still has the legal right to full-time ECEC if the parents work or study full-time, or if it is considered to be in the child's best interest. Moreover, municipalities must also organise evening and night care according to local need. Many local authorities still offer ECEC without any limitation.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, all 3- and 4-year old children are entitled to 15 hours of free ECEC per week. In addition, most 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents are in employment are entitled to an additional 15 hours per week. This entitlement, known as the *Extended Entitlement*, was introduced under the [2016 Childcare Act](#) <sup>(34)</sup>. Since April 2019, local authorities in **Wales** have been piloting a similar offer of 30 hours of free ECEC to the children of working parents.

A few countries provide targeted pre-primary programmes one year before the start of primary education for those children who have not participated in ECEC.

In **Croatia**, a pre-primary programme is compulsory for all children. For children already attending ECEC, the pre-primary programme is integrated within their existing programme, while those not already in ECEC must attend other pre-primary provision. The compulsory pre-primary programme for children not in centre-based early childhood education and care is free of charge. This applies to about 30 % of the cohort (12 000 children in 2017/8 according to the statistics authority).

In **Slovenia**, from 2018/19, the top-level authorities provide finance for the kindergarten groups implementing short free-of-charge programmes (240 hours per year) for children who have not previously attended kindergarten and who turn 6 in the next calendar year.

## DEMAND FOR ECEC PLACES IS HIGHER THAN SUPPLY

The balance between the demand and supply of public ECEC places may serve as a measure of the success of the accessibility policies discussed in this chapter. However, it is important to note that this indicator should be considered in relation to statistics on participation rates. The demand for ECEC for very young children might be low due to cultural norms and traditional family values. Demand may also be affected by public perception of the quality of ECEC – families who perceive public ECEC provision to be of low quality may opt for other childcare arrangements and may therefore not even request a place.

Figure B7 presents an overview of the estimated balance between demand and supply in three age groups, i.e., very young children, those aged 3, and older children in their last year of ECEC. All types of public and publicly subsidised ECEC are taken into account. Publicly subsidised home-based provision, which is important in meeting demand in several countries (see Figure A6), is also included in the overall estimation. The ECEC system is evaluated as a whole, e.g. if demand is higher than supply only in one region for the age group considered, the country is marked in the category 'demand is higher than supply'.

<sup>(33)</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds?step-by-step-nav=f237ec8e-e82c-4ffa-8fba-2a88a739783b>

<sup>(34)</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/5/enacted>



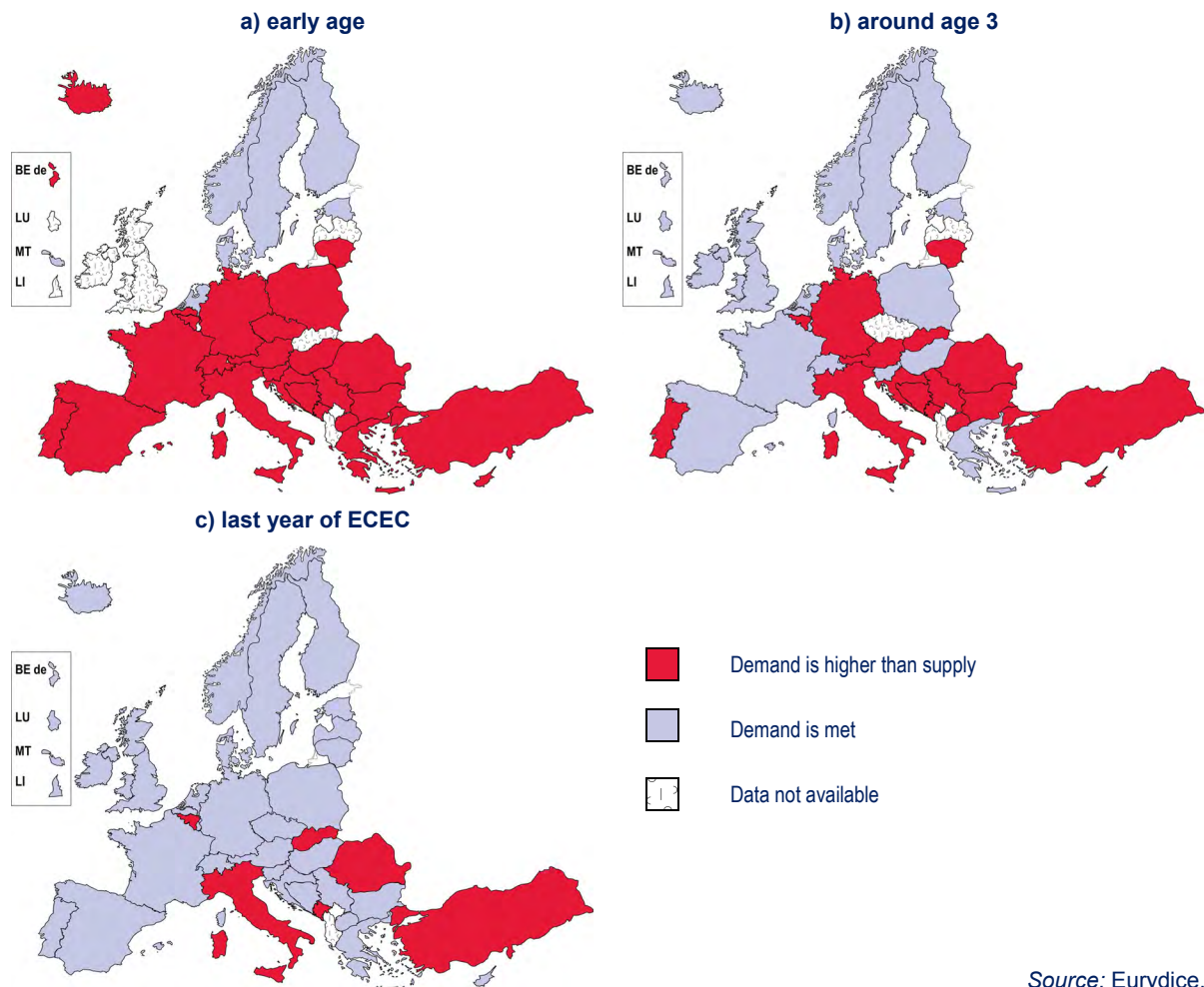
The demand for places in ECEC is met from the earliest age only in Denmark, Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Five of those countries guarantee a legal right to ECEC from an early age for all children (see Figure B1), while Malta has generous targeted childcare entitlements for working and studying parents. Only the Netherlands rely on a market-driven system for the youngest children.

Demand and supply are balanced from age 3 in more than half of the European education systems. The demand is usually met from the starting age of the legal entitlement or when ECEC becomes part of the education system.

In **France**, according to the survey from 2017, seven out of ten families who wished to enrol their child (aged 6 months to 1 year) in ECEC obtained a place (CNAF, 2018). In contrast, nearly all 3-year-olds attend ECEC (see the national sheet).

In **Spain**, demand is greater than supply in the first cycle of ECEC (less than 3 years) in most of the Autonomous Communities (for example in Andalucía, Comunidad Foral de Navarra, Illes Balears, Cantabria, Comunidad de Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and the City of Ceuta). In the second cycle of ECEC (3 years and over), demand and supply are balanced in all educational Administrations.

**Figure B7: Demand and supply of ECEC places, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

This figure provides a generalised overview based on reports, surveys and expert estimates. The indicator mainly concerns public and publicly subsidised ECEC, but some countries provided an overall assessment. Both centre-based and home-based provision are included. The ECEC system is evaluated as a whole, e.g. if demand is higher than supply only in one region for the age group considered, the country is marked in the category 'demand is higher than supply'.

### Country-specific notes (Figure B7)

**Czechia:** No exact data for 3- to 4-year-old children. According to the Czech School Inspectorate, most children whose parents had applied for a place were admitted to a nursery school (*materšská škola*). Only in some municipalities, is there a very small number of 3-year-old children who do not get a place by the beginning of the school year.

**Luxembourg:** Subsidises the ECEC sector for children under 3 years to such an extent that the supply of ECEC places for very young children almost meets the demand. No official data available.

In several countries, supply and demand are met during the last year of ECEC, but not at age 3 or earlier. Bulgaria and Portugal manage to provide enough ECEC places in all areas of the country during the last two years of ECEC, during which a place is guaranteed. Czechia, Germany, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia as well as Serbia satisfy the demand for ECEC places during the last year of ECEC, which is often legally guaranteed or compulsory. Some of these countries have introduced the ECEC place guarantee from an earlier age (see Figure A1), but do not manage to provide enough places for all children before the last year of ECEC. For example,

In **Germany**, despite the legal entitlement from age 1, in practice unmet demand for ECEC for children under the age of 3 was 12 % in 2017 (33 % enrolment rate vs. 45 % demanded enrolment). The unmet demand for ECEC places for children aged 3 years and over in 2017 was just 3 % (94 % enrolment rate vs. 97 % demand for places) (Alt et al. 2019). The demand is on average met only during the last year of ECEC.

There is unmet demand in some areas across the entire ECEC phase in Belgium (French Community), Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey.

In **Italy**, some areas have waiting lists for *servizi educativi* (for under-3s) and, to a lesser degree, for *scuole dell'infanzia* (for children aged 3 and over). The demand is higher in particular in Northern regions where employment rates are higher and both parents work. Due to the economic crisis and low birth rates, the demand for ECEC for under-3s is met in some other regions.

More than a third of education systems report more problems in meeting the demand in some areas. For example:

In **France**, the theoretical capacity of ECEC for under-3s in 7 departments ranges from 10 to 40 places per 100 children, while 20 departments offer 70 to 93 places per 100 children (ONAPE, CNAF, 2018, p. 30).

Apart from age and place of residence, there are some additional reasons for variations in the demand and supply of ECEC places. Some types of ECEC may be in higher demand than others. Public centre-based ECEC provision seems the most sought after type of ECEC. Often, home-based provision is offered when the demand for centre-based ECEC is unmet. Public subsidies are directed at private providers when there are not enough places in public ECEC. In some countries, private self-financing ECEC settings play a considerable role in meeting the demand (see Figure A7). Moreover, there may be some unmet demand for full-time ECEC places.

## SECTION II – PARTICIPATION

**34 % OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3 ATTEND CENTRE-BASED ECEC**

Early childhood education and care arrangements for younger children vary in different countries and it is difficult to provide meaningful international comparisons of participation rates. In half of the European countries analysed, family or social welfare authorities rather than education authorities are responsible for ECEC services for the under-3s (see Figure A4). In some of these countries, services for these children are not considered to be educational and are therefore not included in the ISCED classification scheme, nor in the education statistics which are the main source of international comparisons of ECEC participation rates.

Few European countries guarantee a place in ECEC from a very young age (see Figure B1). Most families with children under age 3 face a childcare gap, that is, a period of time when a child is not covered either by childcare leave or by a guaranteed place in ECEC (see Figure B3). Families with young children struggling to secure a place in subsidised ECEC may opt for informal arrangements, such as with babysitters, nannies, relatives or other adults. Home-based ECEC is widespread at this stage (see Figure A3); however, no internationally comparable statistics are available on how many children are taken care of by childminders.

Moreover, international comparisons are complicated due to differences in employment and childcare leave policies. Several countries either do not provide childcare leave or only compensate parents at an adequate rate (65 % of previous salary) for the few first weeks (see Annex to Figure B3). In contrast, some Nordic and Central European countries grant childcare leave of more than one year. As children do not normally attend ECEC during the childcare leave period, this reduces the ECEC participation rates of children under 3.

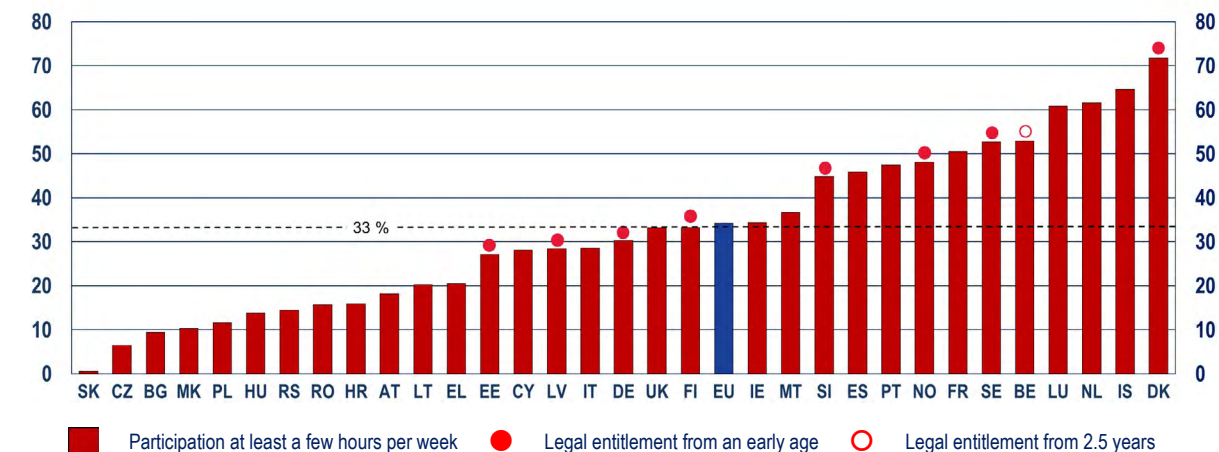
Comparable data on ECEC participation for this age group in European countries has, up to now, only been available via the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Readers should bear the above-mentioned cross-country comparability limitations in mind when looking at Figure B8, which shows the proportion of children under age 3 in 'formal care'. This includes early childhood educational development programmes (ISCED 010) as well as childcare provision that falls outside the ISCED classification scheme. Unfortunately, 'formal care' excludes home-based provision, which constitutes a significant portion of childcare provision in several countries (see Figure A3 and the National System Information Sheets).

The data reveals that on average, in the EU-28, every third child under age 3 attends some centre-based ECEC provision. In 2017, therefore, the 'Barcelona target' <sup>(35)</sup> that childcare should be provided for 33 % of children under 3 years old was finally reached. The EU-28 average stood at 34.2 %. Thirteen European Union countries (as well as Iceland and Norway) have reached the Barcelona target. Denmark stands out with a very high participation rate of under-3s in ECEC, reaching 72 %. The participation rates were around 60-65 % in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Iceland. Every other child under age 3 is enrolled in ECEC in Belgium, France, Portugal, Sweden and Norway. In Ireland, Spain, Malta, Slovenia, Finland and the United Kingdom, ECEC attendance rates of children under 3 range between 33 and 46 %. Germany with an attendance rate of 30 % is close to the target.

In contrast, ECEC participation among under-3s was especially low (less than 10 %) in Bulgaria, Czechia and Slovakia. The rates were between 10 and 20 % in Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Romania, North Macedonia and Serbia.

<sup>(35)</sup> SN 100/1/02 REV 1, Barcelona European Council, Presidency Conclusions, 2002.

**Figure B8: Participation rates in centre-based ECEC of children under age 3, (provisional) 2017**



EU	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL
34.2	52.9	9.4	6.5	71.7	30.3	27.1	34.4	20.5	45.8	50.5	15.9	28.6	28.1	28.4	20.3	60.8	13.8	36.6	61.6
AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
18.2	11.6	47.5	15.7	44.8	0.6	33.3	52.7	33.2		:	:	:	64.6	:	:	10.3	48.1	14.5	:

Source: Eurydice calculations based on Eurostat EU-SILC Survey [ilc\_caindformal] (last update: 23/05/2019).

**Explanatory note**

This indicator shows the percentage of children in 'formal care', which includes centre-based early childhood educational development programmes (ISCED 010) as well as childcare provision that falls outside the ISCED classification. Due to differences in methodology, national statistics may vary considerably. When available, national statistics on participation rates in ECEC are presented in the national sheets at the end of the report.

**Country-specific note**

Iceland: 2016 data.

Five countries that guarantee a place in ECEC from an early age (see Figure B1) have participation rates higher than 33 %. The rates are close to the target in the remaining three countries that provide a legal entitlement from age 1 or 1-and-a-half (Estonia, Latvia and Germany). Belgium, where French and Flemish Communities provide a place guarantee from the age of 2-and-a-half, also has very high participation rates among under-3s. Other policy measures discussed in Section I of this chapter might also be effective in achieving high participation rates. For example, Malta and Luxembourg have extensive free childcare schemes for children from an early age.

**95 PER CENT OF CHILDREN AGED 4 AND OVER ATTEND ECEC:  
THE EU BENCHMARK HAS BEEN ACHIEVED**

One of the general aims of ECEC is preparing children for primary education, and this becomes increasingly important in the educational process as children approach primary school age (see Chapter D). The European Commission has highlighted the importance of early entry into the education system and, in 2009, established an EU benchmark on pre-school participation. The Education and Training (ET 2020) benchmark stipulates that by 2020 at least 95 % of children between age 4 and the starting age of compulsory primary education, should be participating in early childhood education <sup>(36)</sup>. The starting age of compulsory primary education is generally around age 6 in Europe (see Figure B3), although there are a few exceptions. Children start compulsory primary school the earliest in Malta and the United Kingdom (from age 4-5). In eight countries, primary education starts at the age of 7 (Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden).

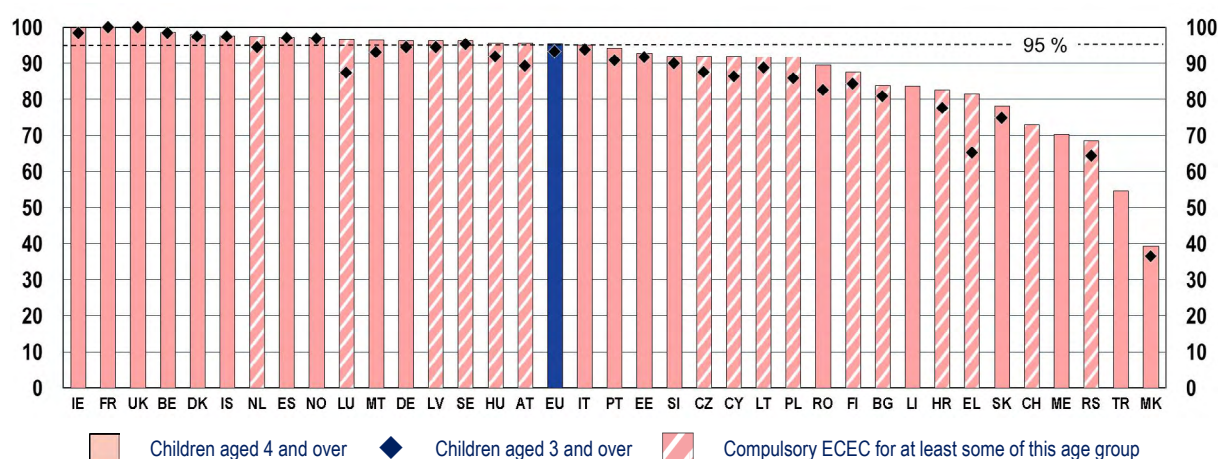
<sup>(36)</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

## SECTION II – PARTICIPATION

According to the most recent data, the Europe-wide benchmark for the 4 and over age group has already been achieved (see Figure B9). In 2017, on average in the EU-28, 95.4 % of children in this age group were attending ECEC. The participation rate is higher than the EU benchmark in 17 European countries (15 EU countries). The rates are very close to the target (higher than 90 %, but lower than 95 %) in seven additional EU countries.

Nevertheless, a few countries are lagging behind. Among the EU countries, the lowest participation rates among children aged 4 and over were in Slovakia (78.2 %), Greece (81.5 %) and Croatia (82.8 %).

**Figure B9: Participation rates in ECEC of children aged between 4 years old and the starting age of compulsory primary education, 2017**



	EU	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL
Aged 4 and over	95.4	98.7	83.9	92.0	98.0	96.4	92.9	100	81.5	97.4	100	82.8	95.1	92.0	96.3	91.9	96.6	95.6	96.5	97.6
Aged 3 and over	93.3	98.4	81.0	87.7	97.5	94.6	91.7	98.4	65.3	97.1	100	77.7	93.9	86.5	94.5	88.9	87.5	92.0	93.2	94.5
	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	
Aged 4 and over	95.6	91.9	94.2	89.6	92.1	78.2	87.8	96.3	100	:	:	73.1	97.7	83.7	70.4	39.5	97.3	68.6	54.7	
Aged 3 and over	89.3	86.0	90.9	82.6	90.0	74.9	84.4	95.4	100	:	:	:	97.4	:	:	36.5	96.9	64.4	:	

Source: Eurostat, UOE Statistics [educ\_uoe\_enra10] and [educ\_uoe\_enra21] (last updates: 07-05-2019 and 14-05-2019 respectively).

### Explanatory note

The indicator is calculated using data on pupils enrolled by age from UOE data collection and the population by age from demography data. The inconsistencies may result from using two different data sources, so in cases of the pupils' population exceeding the demography data for the given age group, the indicator is reset at 100 %.

Due to differences in methodology, national statistics may vary considerably. When available, national statistics on participation rates in ECEC are presented in the national sheets at the end of the report.

### Country-specific notes

**Belgium:** Excludes German-speaking Community.

**Luxembourg:** Pre-primary education (*éducation préscolaire*) is compulsory for children who have reached age 4 by the 1st of September, while the participation rate is calculated on the number of children who have reached this age by the 1st of January in the following year.

**Liechtenstein:** 2016 data for children aged 4 and over.

Among the countries analysed, the lowest ECEC participation rate of children between age 4 and the starting age of compulsory primary education was in North Macedonia (39.5 %) and Turkey (54.7 %).

Compulsory ECEC seems to be a feature in many of the countries that have not yet reached the benchmark. Ten of these have not yet reached the targeted 95 % participation rate for children aged 4 and over. Six of the countries that have introduced compulsory ECEC have already reached the EU benchmark on ECEC participation, although one of these – Austria – achieved the benchmark in 2017 for the first time.

The participation rates of children aged 3 and over largely mirror those of the 4 and over benchmark group (see Figure B9). The EU average participation rates for children aged 3 and over are 93.3 %. Most countries that reach the target for the children aged 4 and over also have very high participation rates for the 3 and over age group. There are a few exceptions: in Greece, the participation rates which include 3-year-olds are 16 percentage points lower than those of children aged 4 and over; in Luxembourg, Austria, Poland and Romania, the difference was approximately 6-9 percentage points.

## CHILDREN SPEND 30 HOURS OR MORE PER WEEK IN ECEC

The proportion of children attending ECEC reflects the overall accessibility and coverage of the ECEC network, but another important dimension to consider is the intensity of participation or, in other words, the number of weekly hours spent in ECEC. The length of time spent in ECEC each day has implications for children, parents, and, in the case of publicly subsidised services, public funding. A longer day enables parents to engage in gainful employment or education. However, there is an ongoing debate in the research community regarding the impact of long hours on children's socio-emotional wellbeing (Broekhuizen et al., 2018).

Figure B10 shows the average hours of attendance in ECEC for children under and over age 3. This indicator takes into account the average number of hours a child spends in any type of formal ECEC, including childcare at a daycare centre, education at pre-school as well as childcare at centre-based services outside school hours (before/after). Therefore, the average number of hours that children attend ECEC may be longer than the guaranteed or subsidised hours (see Figure B2).

On average, in the EU-28, in 2017, children under 3 years of age attended ECEC for 27.4 hours per week, while children over 3 years of age spent 29.5 hours per week in ECEC. The longer hours for children aged over 3 might be related to the fact that pre-primary education is free of charge for this age group, for at least some hours per week, in most European countries (see Figure B4).

On average, in Europe, there seems to be a strong link between the number of hours per week spent in ECEC for the two age groups analysed. In countries where the younger children spend fewer hours, the older age group also tends to spend fewer hours in ECEC. In countries where the younger children spend longer hours in ECEC, the older children also tend to spend longer hours. The correlation between the average number of weekly hours in ECEC for children under and over age 3 stood at 0.93. In most European countries, the difference in intensity of attendance between these age groups was less than 30 minutes per day.

In systems that provide the same structure for the entire age range – unitary settings – a strong alignment is natural. In Figure B10, all countries with only unitary settings cluster in the top-right corner, indicating more weekly hours of ECEC than the EU-28 average for both age groups.

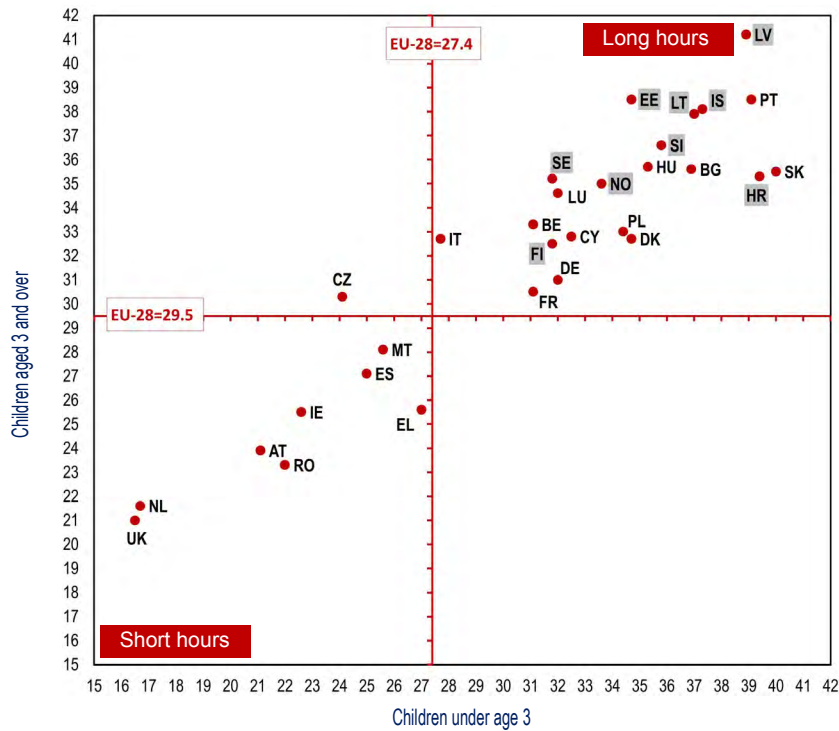
However, in ECEC systems with separate settings for the different age groups, the average weekly hours also seems to follow the same pattern. For example, in Malta, children under age 3 spend on average 26 hours per week in *childcare centres*. Similarly, children aged 3 years and over attend *kindergarten* on average for 28 hours per week. In Portugal, children under the age of 3 attend *creches*, while children aged 3 and over go to *jardim de infância*. Both age groups attend ECEC for an average of 39 hours per week.

Two countries stand out with shorter hours in ECEC. In the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, under-3s attend ECEC on average 17 hours per week (which is less than 4 hours per day), while children aged 3 years and over spend 21-22 weekly hours in formal care.

In contrast, in Latvia both younger and older children spend a comparatively long time in ECEC, reaching 39 weekly hours for children under age 3 and 41 hours for children aged 3 and over.

## SECTION II – PARTICIPATION

Figure B10: Average number of weekly hours in ECEC, (provisional) 2017

**Explanatory note**

Countries that have only unitary settings (see Figure A2b) are shaded.

The data is based on a typical (usual) week around the reference period, not affected by holidays or other special circumstances (e.g. illness).

2016 data for Iceland.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC Survey [ilc\_camnforg0] (last update: 30/04/2019).

	EU	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL
Under age 3	27.4	31.1	36.9	24.1	34.7	32.0	34.7	22.6	27.0	25.0	31.1	39.4	27.7	32.5	38.9	37.0	32.0	35.3	25.6	16.7
3 years and over	29.5	33.3	35.6	30.3	32.7	31.0	38.5	25.5	25.6	27.1	30.5	35.3	32.7	32.8	41.2	37.9	34.6	35.7	28.1	21.6
	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Under age 3	21.1	34.4	39.1	22.0	35.8	40.0	31.8	31.8	16.5		:	:	:	37.3	:	:	38.0	33.6	33.7	:
3 years and over	23.9	33.0	38.5	23.3	36.6	35.5	32.5	35.2	21.0		:	:	:	38.1	:	:	:	35.0	:	:

**Explanatory note**

This indicator shows the average number of hours per week children are in 'formal care', which includes pre-school or compulsory education, childcare in centre-based services outside school hours and childcare at day-care centres. Both publicly subsidised and self-financing private/voluntary sectors are within the scope. This excludes home-based care.





**SECTION I – QUALIFICATIONS AND CONTINUING EDUCATION**

In May 2019, European education ministers stressed the importance of increasing the level of professionalisation among the ECEC workforce. This investment in the workforce is crucial since there is a positive correlation between better-trained staff and a better quality service. Furthermore, the availability of highly qualified staff leads to higher quality staff-child interactions and therefore better developmental outcomes for children <sup>(1)</sup>.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the education, training and support for staff working in the sector. Looking first at centre-based staff, it examines the initial qualifications required for core practitioners and assistants. It then addresses the qualifications and experience needed to become the head of a setting. The section subsequently examines the situation in regulated home-based provision, exploring whether initial training or qualifications are needed by childminders. Once staff have qualified and been appointed to their first post in the sector, they may benefit from an induction period on entry to the profession. An indicator shows whether this induction is compulsory for centre-based staff. The section concludes with an exploration of the requirements for core practitioners and assistants to undergo continuing professional development (CPD).

The second section of this chapter deals with child-staff ratios and the maximum number of children per group, as regulated by the top-level authority. A first indicator focuses on ratios in centre-based provision while the second covers regulated home-based provision for children under the age of 3.

In this chapter, 'ECEC staff' only refers to those professionals who have daily, direct contact with children and whose duties involve education and/or care. They have the main responsibility for groups of children in an ECEC setting. Their duties usually include designing and delivering safe and developmentally appropriate activities in accordance with all relevant programmes/curricula.

The term 'ECEC staff' does not include the medical/healthcare staff providing support for children's physical development such as paediatricians, physiotherapists, psychomotor therapists, nutritionists, psychologists or speech therapists. Nor does it include staff who perform only domestic or maintenance roles, for example, preparing food and cleaning premises.

Staff qualifications in ECEC vary across Europe. Moreover, in many countries, teams of people share the responsibility for a group of children rather than having a single professional in charge of a whole group of children, as is often the case in primary schools. Some countries have set the same minimum qualification requirement for all staff members; others have varied job profiles and require different qualifications for different positions. In order to account for these different approaches, this report makes a distinction between two broad categories of staff: 'core practitioners' and 'assistants'.

A core practitioner is an individual who leads the practice for a group of children at the class- or playroom-level and works directly with children and their families. Core practitioners may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, pedagogical staff, pre-school, kindergarten or early childhood teachers.

An assistant is an individual that supports the core practitioner with a group of children or class on a daily basis. The qualification requirement for assistants is usually lower than for core practitioners. In some cases, this means no formal requirements, while in others the requirement is usually for non-tertiary vocational education and training or a short cycle of tertiary level qualification.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 6.

It is important to note that these role descriptions – core practitioners and assistants – are terms used for international comparisons and do not necessarily correspond to the actual titles or even the functions of ECEC staff. The main distinction between core practitioners and assistants lies in the minimum level of qualification required by top-level authorities. If, according to top-level regulations, at least one person per team must have a higher qualification level than other staff members working in the same group of children, this member of staff is considered in this report as a core practitioner and the others as assistants. If all team members are required to have the same qualification, they are all considered as core practitioners notwithstanding any higher professional grades available in a specific country.

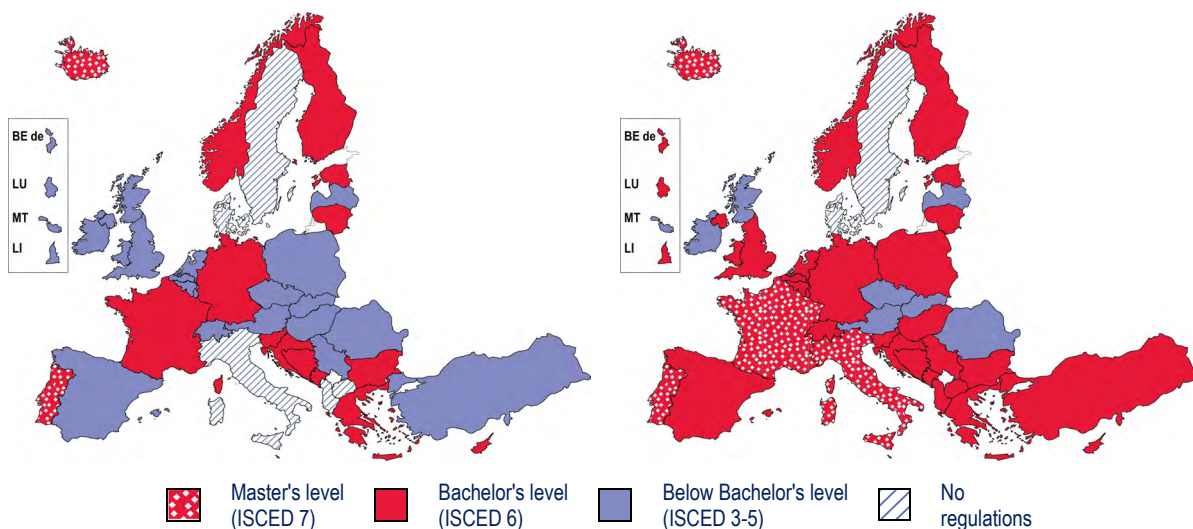
### QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PRACTITIONERS ARE USUALLY LOWER FOR WORKING WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN THAN OLDER ONES

The 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality ECEC systems acknowledged that 'in many countries the profession has a rather low profile and status'. It also stressed that, in order to fulfil their professional role in supporting children and their families, early childhood education and care staff require complex skills and competences, a deep knowledge and understanding of child development and an awareness of early childhood pedagogy <sup>(2)</sup>.

**Figure C1: Minimum qualification levels required in ECEC (or education) to become a core practitioner in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19**

a) Settings for children under the age of 3

b) Settings for children aged 3 and over



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the minimum levels of qualification required in ECEC (or education) according to top-level regulations. The qualifications and their duration in each education system are available in Annex A. Where the top-level authority requires only a minimum level of general education rather than a specific initial qualification related to ECEC or education to become a core practitioner, the country is shown as having no regulations.

**Country-specific notes**

**Estonia:** Figure C1a shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. The minimum qualification in *Lapsehoiuteenus* is below Bachelor's level.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 6.

**Italy:** The minimum qualification levels of core practitioners in settings for younger children are currently a matter for regional autonomy. However, as of 2019/20, the minimum qualification requirement for all core practitioners will be a Bachelor's level.

**Portugal:** No regulations on the minimum qualification level for core practitioners working with groups of children under age 1 (*berçário*).

**Sweden:** core practitioners in pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass* for 6-year olds) should either be qualified as 'pre-school teachers' (Bachelor's degree) or as 'teachers' (Master's degree).

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR):** Figure C1b shows the situation in *reception classes* in schools (4-year-olds). There are no regulations on minimum qualifications for *nursery classes* in schools (age 3).

Figure C1 provides information on the minimum qualification levels required. Only one third of European education systems require core practitioners working with a group of younger children (usually under age 3) to have a Bachelor's degree or higher level of qualification. In 13 countries, the minimum qualification level is a Bachelor's degree (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Norway). In two others, a Master's degree is required (Portugal and Iceland). Bulgaria, where only one core practitioner in two must be qualified in ECEC, figures as an exception:

In **Bulgaria**, each group of children under age 3 – be it in nurseries (*detska yasla*) or in nursery groups within kindergartens (*detska gradina*) – must be managed by two core practitioners who have at least a Bachelor's degree. However, only one of them must be a 'pedagogical specialist' (qualified in ECEC); the other is a nurse.

The proportion of education systems requiring core practitioners to have a Bachelor's degree or higher level of qualification in ECEC (or in education) is much higher for those working with older children. Three quarters of the education systems have such a requirement. In 29 of these, a Bachelor's degree is required. In four others, a Master's degree is the minimum requirement (France, Italy, Portugal and Iceland).

In eight education systems, the minimum qualification level required to work as a core practitioner in any centre-based ECEC provision, for either age group, is below Bachelor's level (Czechia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom – Scotland).

In two countries, the top-level authority does not regulate staff qualifications in ECEC:

In **Denmark**, the Daycare Act does not set up any minimum requirement in terms of initial education in ECEC. In 2018, 58 % of all ECEC staff had a Bachelor's degree in 'pedagogy'. This programme is the only existing programme qualifying for ECEC. (Source: Statistics Denmark).

In **Sweden**, where centre-based ECEC provision is organised in unitary settings (*förskolor*), the only requirement for staff is that at least one person per kindergarten is an 'educated pre-school teacher' with a Bachelor's degree who organises the educational activities. In 2017, 40.1 % of all staff employed in kindergartens had a Bachelor's degree qualifying them as 'pre-school teachers', 1.7 % had a Master's degree as 'Teacher', 19.5 % had secondary education for child care, 0.7 % had a degree for after-school teachers, 8.5 % had another type of pedagogical education and 29.6 % had no qualifications for working with children (source: [Skolverket's national statistics](#)).

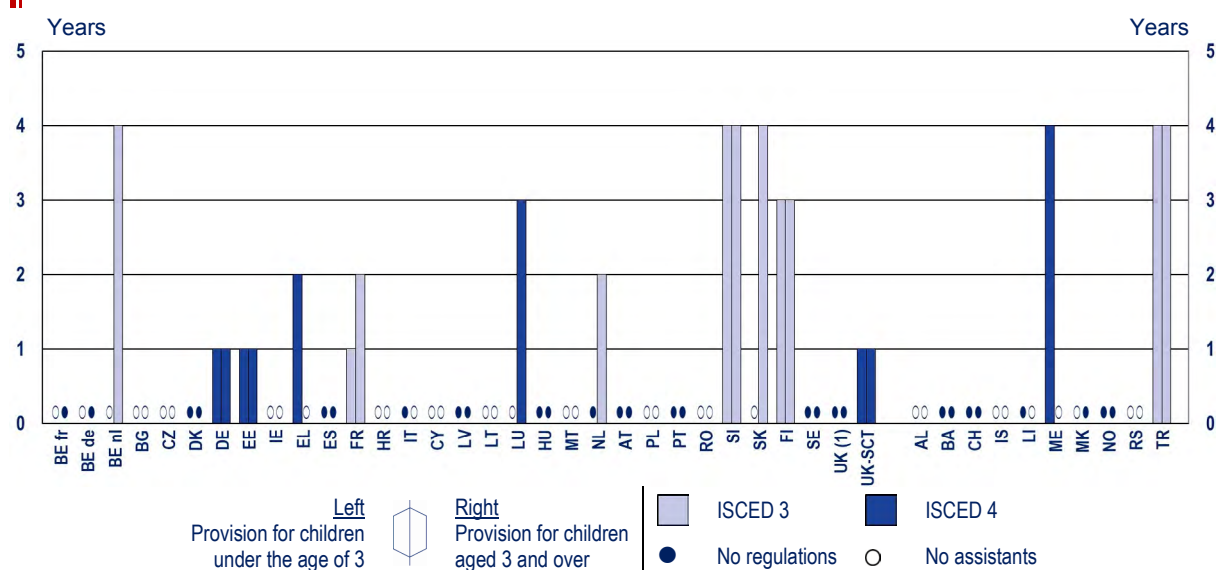
Staff qualification requirements tend correlate with the way centre-based ECEC provision is organised (see Figure A2). In most of the countries with unitary settings, or where both unitary and separate settings exist, core practitioners must be qualified at Bachelor's level or higher. In contrast, almost all countries with separate settings have higher requirements for staff working with older children in pre-primary settings than for those working with younger children. There are a few exceptions – in North Macedonia and Serbia, where all provision is made in unitary settings, the minimum qualification level for core practitioners taking care of younger children is lower than that for those working with older children. Three countries with separate settings depending on age – Greece, Cyprus and Portugal – have high requirements for staff in both phases of ECEC. High-level qualification requirements for core practitioners across the entire ECEC phase indicates an increasing level of integration in ECEC systems (see Figure 7).

## IN THE MAJORITY OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS ASSISTANTS MAY BE EMPLOYED WITHOUT AN INITIAL QUALIFICATION IN ECEC

To gain a complete picture of the qualifications of ECEC staff, it is necessary to look beyond the core practitioners. Whilst these are usually the main category of staff, in a majority of education systems they are supported in their work with children by a body of education and care assistants (see Figure C2). In some countries, assistants work both with younger and older children, but in four they only work with younger children (Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein and Montenegro), while in four others, they only work in settings for older children (Belgium, Luxembourg, Slovakia and North Macedonia).

In contrast, there are no assistants in 12 countries (Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Albania, Iceland and Serbia).

**Figure C2: Minimum qualification levels in ECEC (or education) and number of years' study required to become an assistant in centre-based ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

### Explanatory note

The Figure shows the minimum level of qualification in ECEC or education according to top-level regulations.

The number of years' study includes all those at the same ISCED level in general or vocational education. For instance, an ISCED level 3 qualification with 3 years in general education and 1 year in vocational training is shown as 4 years at ISCED level 3.

Where the top-level authority requires only a minimum level of general education rather than a specific initial vocational qualification in ECEC or education to become an assistant, the country is shown as having no regulations.

Assistants recruited to support children with special education needs are not included.

### Country-specific notes

**Germany:** Whether assistants are employed to work with either group of children depends on the *Land*. The number of years' study varies between one and three, according to the *Land*.

**Estonia:** For younger children, the Figure shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. There are no assistants in *Lapsehoiuteenus*.

**Italy:** The employment of assistants and qualification requirements in settings for younger children is a matter for regional autonomy.

**Luxembourg:** No assistants in pre-primary classes (*éducation préscolaire*).

**Portugal and Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Only a minimum qualification level in general education is required (ISCED 3) but not a specific qualification related to ECEC or education.

**Slovenia:** Assistants may also have a general education qualification at ISCED level 3. In this case, they must undertake a specific 1 136 hour training course after completion of the general qualification (4 years).

In the majority of the education systems with assistants, the top-level authority does not provide any regulations on the minimum initial vocational qualifications. However, 13 education systems do have regulations in this area. Most of these require at least an upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3) related to ECEC or education. This is the case in Belgium (Flemish Community) and Slovakia, where the assistants only work with older children, and in France, Slovenia, Finland and Turkey where they work with both age groups. In two education systems, the minimum qualification requirements vary according to the age of the children:

In **France**, the minimum qualification to work as an assistant with younger children (*accueil du jeune enfant*) is at ISCED level 3. It may be a one-year training course (*auxiliaire de puériculture*) or a two-year training course (*accompagnant éducatif petite enfance*). Assistants working with older children in *écoles maternelles* are municipal employees specialised in early childhood (*ATSEM: Agent Territorial Spécialisé des Écoles*) with a 2-year qualification at ISCED level 3.

In **Turkey**, assistants in day-care centres (*kreş*) have to undertake a one-year training course (2 368 hours including a practicum) after three years in general upper secondary education. This training is organised by the Ministry of National Education via public education centres or accredited private courses. Assistants working with older children in kindergartens (*Bağımsız Ana Okulu* and *Ana Sınıfları*) are qualified as 'ECEC Master Trainers' (*okul öncesi eğitimi ve bakımı usta öğreticisi*) with a 4-year vocational training qualification at ISCED level 3.

In the Netherlands, the qualification requirements do not apply to assistants working with younger children.

The **Netherlands** do not stipulate any minimum education requirements for assistants in settings for younger children (*Kinderdagverblijf*), but a 2-year vocational education course at upper secondary level is mandatory for assistants working with older children (*kleuterklas*).

Six education systems require a post-secondary non-tertiary education qualification (ISCED 4), namely Germany, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Montenegro.

## HEADS OF ECEC SETTINGS ARE USUALLY QUALIFIED AT BACHELOR'S LEVEL OR HIGHER

Good leadership is important if ECEC is to be of high quality. Heads of ECEC settings are faced with a wide range of tasks. They are not only required to organise educational provision, but they must also manage human and financial resources. In order to be able to meet all these challenges, heads should be both qualified at a higher level (see Figure C3) and have undertaken a specific training course for the position (see Figure C4).

All heads of ECEC settings must be qualified at Bachelor's level or higher in the majority of the European education systems. This is the case for three in five education systems in settings for younger children, and for four in five systems in settings for older children. In seven education systems, the minimum qualification level for heads is even higher, at Master's level. This applies to all heads in three education systems (Bulgaria, Romania and Iceland) but only to those managing settings for older children in four systems (France, Italy, Luxembourg and Malta).

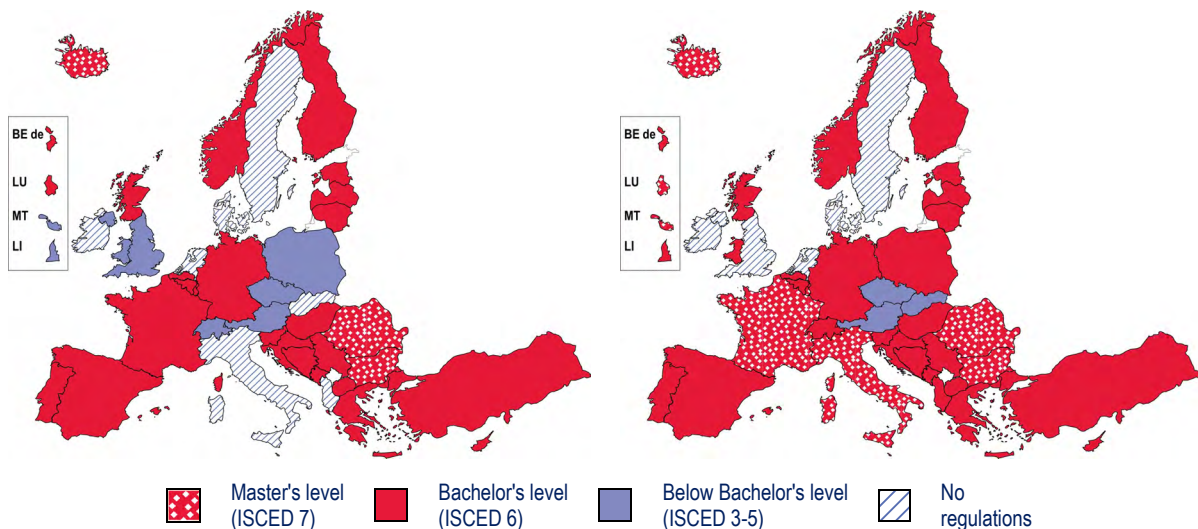
In seven education systems, the minimum requirement is at Bachelor's level (ISCED 6) or higher to work in settings for older children but it is not the case in settings for the younger age group. For heads in charge of a setting for younger children, the minimum level is a short-cycle tertiary qualification (ISCED 5) in Malta and Liechtenstein, and an upper secondary level qualification (ISCED 3) in Poland, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Switzerland. In Italy and Albania, the responsibility for setting the regulations for younger children is decentralised: in Italy, ECEC governance is at regional level for *nido d'infanzia* and in Albania, *çerdhe* is governed at local level (see Figure A4). These seven education systems all have separate settings for the different age groups.

In two other countries, the minimum qualification level required to become a head in settings is the same across the whole ECEC phase but it is below ISCED 6: in Austria, the minimum qualification level is ISCED 5, and in Czechia ISCED 3. In Slovakia, there are no minimum qualification requirements for heads in settings for younger children and the minimum is ISCED level 3 for older children.

**Figure C3: Minimum qualification levels to become a head of centre-based ECEC setting, 2018/19**

**a) Settings for children under the age of 3**

**b) Settings for children aged 3 and over**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the minimum qualification levels according to top-level regulations. The qualifications required do not necessarily relate to ECEC or education. See Annex A for the minimum duration of the qualification.

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE fr):** Figure C3a shows the situation in the public and the private publicly-funded sectors. In the private self-financing sector, the minimum requirement is at ISCED level 4.

**Belgium (BE nl):** Figure C3a shows the situation for settings with at least 18 places. For those with fewer places, the minimum qualification for heads is at ISCED level 3.

**Germany:** The Figure shows the situation in most *Länder*.

**Estonia:** Figure C3a shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. There are no regulations in *Lapsehoiuteenus*.

**Spain:** Figures C3a and C3b show the situation in the public sector. No minimum qualification level is required in the private sector, except in Principado de Asturias (same level as in the public sector).

**Italy:** Requirements for heads in settings for younger children are a matter for regional autonomy.

**Luxembourg:** Figure C3a shows the situation for settings with at least 40 places. For those with fewer children, the minimum qualification level is at ISCED level 4. In settings for older children, teachers elect a committee and its president. This individual has some management tasks but no hierarchical authority, as this is the responsibility of the regional director. Figure C3b shows the requirements for becoming a regional director.

**Portugal:** Priority should be given to ECEC teachers qualified at ISCED level 7.

Finally, in four education systems, there are no top-level regulations on minimum qualification levels for heads in any centre-based ECEC settings (Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden). Nor are there any for settings with older children in the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland) although, in practice, they are *qualified teachers* with a Bachelor's degree.

It is also interesting to compare the minimum qualification requirements for heads and core practitioners in countries where there are regulations on both. Indeed, previous experience as a core practitioner is a criteria for the recruitment of heads in several European education systems (see Figure C4). In addition, becoming a head may be a way for core practitioners to be promoted in some education systems. For settings with younger children, heads must have a higher level of qualification than core practitioners in almost half of the education systems. For settings with older children, the same minimum qualification level is required for both posts in two thirds of countries.

In some of the education systems where the pre-primary school or the ECEC setting for children aged 3 and over is on the same site as the primary school, the primary school head may also be in charge of pre-primary education. In this case, a degree in education rather than in ECEC might be a pre-requisite. This is for instance the case in Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Spain, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey.

### IN ONE THIRD OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, HEADS OF SETTINGS FOR OLDER CHILDREN MUST HAVE SPECIFIC TRAINING AND PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

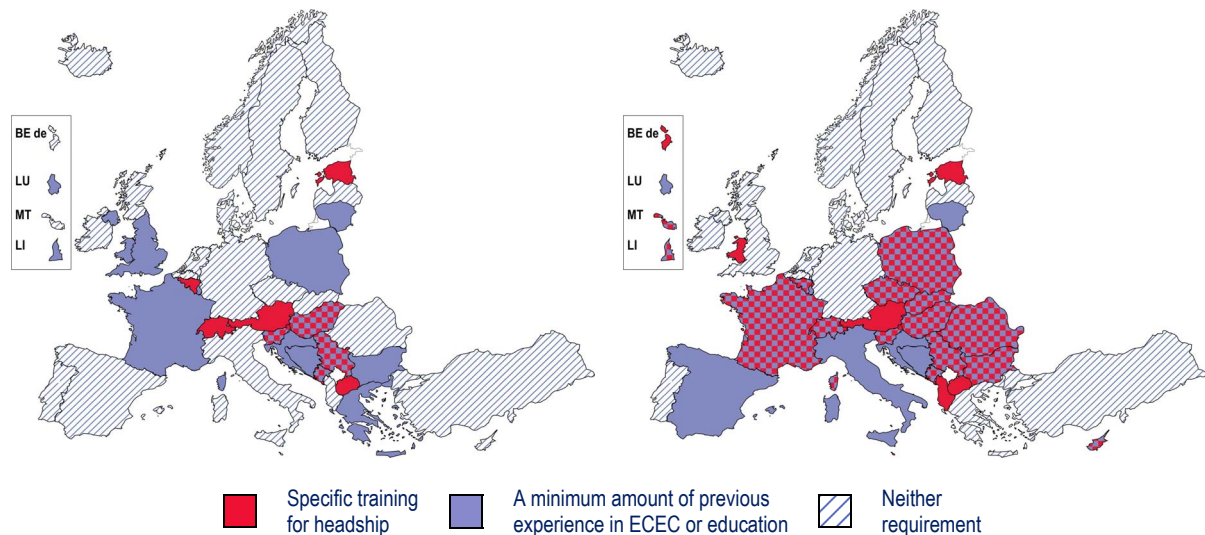
The workload of heads in ECEC settings usually involves many varied tasks such as planning and organising teaching and learning activities, coordinating the learning and development plan, managing finances and human resources, dealing with logistics, etc. In addition to the minimum qualification level (see Figure C3), other attributes may be required such as the completion of a specific training course for headship or previous experience in ECEC or education.

As shown in Figure C4, specific training is required for all ECEC heads, irrespective of the type of setting, in nine education systems (Belgium – French Community, Estonia, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). It is also required in 12 additional education systems but only for heads of settings with older children <sup>(3)</sup>. The minimum duration of this specific training varies between a couple of days to two years (see details in Annex A).

|| **Figure C4: Additional requirements to become a head of a centre-based ECEC setting, 2018/19**

a) Settings for children under the age of 3

b) Settings for children aged 3 and over



Source: Eurydice.

#### **Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the requirements set by top-level authorities. Only previous experience in ECEC or education is taken into account.

The duration of the specific training course and the minimum number of years' experience are available in Annex A.

#### **Country-specific notes**

**Germany:** The Figure shows the situation in most *Länder*. Some require a specific training for headship and/or a minimum amount of previous experience in ECEC.

**Estonia:** Figure C4a shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. There are no regulations in *Lapsehoiuteenus*.

<sup>(3)</sup> Belgium (German-speaking Community), Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Wales), Albania and Liechtenstein.



## STAFF

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**Spain:** Figures C4a and C4b show the situation in the public sector. Previous experience in ECEC is required to become a head in settings with younger children only in Comunidad de Madrid.

**France:** In settings for younger children, no previous experience is required for heads qualified at ISCED level 7 in medicine.

**Italy:** Requirements for heads in settings for younger children are a matter for regional autonomy. Figure C4b shows the situation in the public sector. There are no regulations in the private sector.

**Luxembourg:** In settings for older children, teachers elect a committee and its president. This individual has some management tasks but no hierarchical authority as this is the responsibility of the regional director. Figure C4b shows the requirement for becoming a regional director.

**Austria:** The minimum amount of previous experience is a matter for regional autonomy.

**Sweden:** A minimum half-year training for headship is required for heads of schools where pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*) are offered. This training will become compulsory for all heads of ECEC settings as of 2019/20.

**Switzerland:** The requirement for specific training for headship varies between cantons. For settings with younger children, specific training is required in half of the cantons, but is only recommended in the other half. For settings with older children, it is a requirement in most cantons.

The specific training for headship may lead to a full qualification. For instance:

In **Bulgaria**, heads of *detska gradina* (for older children) need to have a Master's degree in the Theory and Management of Education. This one-year qualification is intended to prepare professional managers in the education sector through theoretical and practical training in the different aspects of educational management (planning, organising, implementing and evaluating management activities at different levels, rights and responsibilities of the head, etc.).

In **Malta**, heads of kindergartens (for older children) must have a diploma of 90 ECTS at Master's level in Educational Leadership and Management, or a comparable professional qualification, as determined by the responsible authorities.

The specific programme can – at least in some education systems – be undertaken in the first years of employment. For instance:

In **Slovenia**, the training for ECEC headship consists of a 144-hour programme. It covers, among other things, theories of organisations and leadership, planning and decision-making, head teacher's skills, human resources and educational legislation. This programme may be completed prior to appointment as a head or within the first year in the post.

In **Serbia**, a head must undertake specific training within two years of taking the post. This training, first implemented in 2017, includes educational practices within the institution and the development of a portfolio as well as modules covering six main areas: management, planning, monitoring, cooperation with parents and the community, financial management and legal management. The training is designed to meet the needs of four different types of director: (1) directors of successful schools with the necessary experience in leadership; (2) directors of less successful schools and with less than six years of experience in leadership; (3) beginner directors and teachers who want to get a director's license; (4) directors who have a research degree in educational policy and leadership. The minimum duration is either 2 days for the first category, or 13 days for all others.

In two education systems, both options are available:

In **Czechia**, the heads of nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) usually for children from the age of 3, must be certified in School Management. This qualification is usually obtained through a specific in-service programme for education staff, in which case the new head must be qualified within 2 years. The curriculum covers four main areas in 100 lessons (75 hours): basics of legislation (30 lessons), labour law (25), school funding (25), school management and organisation of pedagogical process (20). Three days (15 hours) of practical training are also included. At the end, a final examination is organised in front of a commission. Alternatively, it is also possible to gain a certificate by undertaking a life-long learning course of 350 lessons (263 hours) at a higher education institution, ending with a defence of a thesis and a final examination in front of a commission. Finally, it is also possible to become a head with a Bachelor's degree in School Management.

In **Poland**, heads of *przedszkole* (for older children) must complete a higher education programme in management (at least one year) or a qualification course in education management (minimum 210 hours).

In some education systems, although heads are not required to undertake specific training, such programmes exist. This is, for instance, the case in Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England) and Norway.

In **Spain**, a 120-hour specific training for headship is available for heads of settings for older children. It is currently considered as an asset. As of 2019/20, it will be compulsory in order to participate in a merit-based competition for a headship in a public pre-primary (and primary) school.



Previous experience in ECEC or education is a requirement in two thirds of the education systems. All heads – regardless of children ages – must have this experience in 12 education systems <sup>(4)</sup>. In Greece and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), this is required only for heads of settings with younger children. In nine others, it is required only for those managing a setting for older children (Belgium – French Community, Czechia, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Switzerland). The minimum number of years of experience in ECEC or education varies between 2 years in Greece, France (in *écoles maternelles*), Lithuania, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and some cantons in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 13 years in Cyprus.

### CHILDMINDERS IN REGULATED HOME-BASE PROVISION MUST HAVE SOME FORM OF TRAINING IN MOST COUNTRIES

Three quarters of European education systems provide for regulated home-based ECEC services, which must follow certain pre-defined rules and quality standards (see Figure A3). In 12 education systems <sup>(5)</sup>, childminders offering this type of provision are required to undergo specific training (see Figure C5). The duration of this type of training ranges from less than 50 hours in some German *Länder*, Latvia and some Swiss cantons to 1 053 hours in the French Community of Belgium. It most often lies between 100 and 300 hours.

Here are three examples of how this specific training is organised:

In **Germany**, childminders have to qualify through a specific course for family day care, the content of which varies between *Länder*. However, several have adopted a curriculum developed by the German Youth Institute on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. This course corresponds to 300 hours of training (160 hours in its former version). In other *Länder*, trainees are only required to complete a course of 30 hours. In 2016, 51 % of childminders had completed specific training of at least 160 hours, 30 % had a professional background in ECEC, 15 % attended a qualification course of less than 160 hours and 3 % had no qualification (Source: Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte, 2017: *Fachkräftebarometer Frühe Bildung 2017*. Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte, München, p. 50).

In **France**, in order to start working, a childminder must justify that he/she has completed half of the 120-hour training organised at local level (*département*). The other half of the training must be completed within two years. The potential childminder must also be approved by the Department level authority. For this, he/she has to successfully pass a module of the national competition for working in ECEC (*CAP Accompagnant Éducatif Petite Enfance* at ISCED level 3). By completing the other modules of this training later on, a childminder may become an assistant in a centre-based ECEC setting.

In **Portugal**, childminders must either have dual certification, which combines on-the-job training with some short units of the National Qualification Catalogue in the area of support services for children and young people, or they must have successfully completed the short-term training units of the National Qualification Catalogue in the area of support services for children and young people.

A minimum qualification related to ECEC or education is required in nine education systems: an upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3) in Belgium (Flemish Community), the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland; and a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification (ISCED 4) in Estonia, Ireland, Hungary and Malta. Alternative ways of qualifying as a childminder exist in two countries:

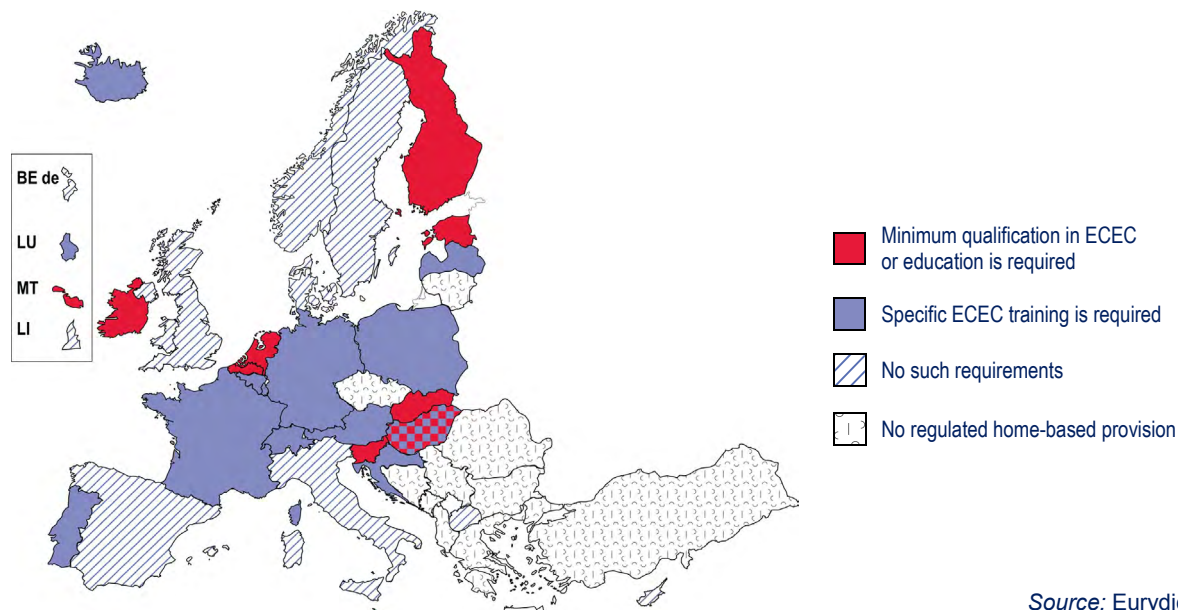
In **Slovakia**, childminders should have an ISCED level 3 qualification in ECEC, or have both a qualification in general education and have undertaken a specific 220-hour training course accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

In **Slovenia**, people who do not have a qualification in ECEC at ISCED 3, but do have another type of qualification at this level, may have their professional skills recognised through a specific assessment procedure for becoming a childminder.

<sup>(4)</sup> In Bulgaria, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Serbia.

<sup>(5)</sup> Belgium (French Community), Germany, France, Croatia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and Iceland.

**Figure C5: Minimum qualification levels and specific training required to become a childminder in regulated home-based provision, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Minimum level of qualification in ECEC (or education) and/or minimum duration of specific ECEC training**

	BE fr	BE nl	DE	EE	IE	FR	HR	LV	LU	HU
ISCED level		3		4	4					4
Specific ECEC training (min. duration in hours)	1 053		30-300			120	400	40	140	100
	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	CH	IS
Specific ECEC training (min. duration in hours)			60-300	160	800				25-60	varies
ISCED level	4	3				3	3	3		

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the minimum qualification level and specific training in ECEC according to top-level regulations.

Where the minimum qualification is only in general education rather than a specific initial vocational qualification in ECEC, it is not shown.

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE fr), Croatia, Cyprus, Portugal and North Macedonia:** A minimum qualification at ISCED level 3 is required but not necessarily related to ECEC or education.

**Belgium (BE nl):** The new Parliamentary Act on Childcare for Babies and Toddlers, which took effect in April 2014 requires all childminders to have a qualification in ECEC at ISCED level 3 by 2024.

**Spain:** Regulated home-based provision only exists in two Autonomous Communities. The Figure shows the minimum qualification level in Comunidad Foral de Navarra. In Comunidad de Madrid, childminders must at least be qualified at ISCED level 6.

**Croatia:** Childminders qualified in ECEC at a level higher than ISCED 3 undertake a shorter version of the specific training.

**Italy:** This type of provision is managed at regional level.

**Austria:** The Figure shows the situation in most *Länder*. The minimum duration varies between *Länder* but there are a few where no such requirements exist.

**Poland:** The number of hours of specific training may be reduced to 40 for childminders with certain qualifications (e.g. nursing, child psychology, social care).

**Finland:** Other suitable education may also be accepted.

**Switzerland:** The Figure shows the situation in the majority of cantons. The minimum duration of the specific training varies between cantons but there are a few where no such requirements exist.

**Iceland:** Childcare workers must undertake a course organised by the municipality but based on a standard curriculum and course material issued by the Ministry of Welfare. Courses vary in duration.

Finally, in one third of the education systems where regulated home-based provision exists, the top-level authority requires no minimum qualifications and no specific training to become a childminder (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Sweden, the United Kingdom – all

four jurisdictions, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia and Norway). However, in Denmark and Norway, childminders are permanently and regularly supervised.

In **Norway**, all childminders have to receive weekly guidance in their home from a kindergarten teacher/pedagogical leader (qualified at Bachelor's level) to learn best practice. The number of hours per week depends on the number of children in the home. For instance, a childminder taking care of three children normally has 3.75 hours guidance per week.

## AN INDUCTION PHASE IS COMPULSORY FOR ALL ECEC STAFF IN ONLY SEVEN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Entry to the profession is a key moment for ECEC staff, some of whom will be confronted with the reality and the challenges of the ECEC workplace for the first time. Even those who have benefitted from work placements during their initial education may need support when they start work as core practitioners or assistants.

A structured induction phase is a form of support at the start of the first contract as an ECEC staff member in a centre-based setting. During this phase, newly appointed ECEC staff carry out wholly or partially the tasks incumbent on other more experienced staff, and they are remunerated for their work. Induction has important formative and supportive elements; it usually includes training as well as personalised help and advice.

The provision of a compulsory induction period on entry to the profession is not as widespread in Europe in ECEC as in school education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p. 52). Figure C6 shows that only seven countries make it compulsory for all staff (Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). Six additional countries also make it compulsory but only for staff working with older children (Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Albania and Liechtenstein). Induction is more often compulsory for staff working with older children than for those working with younger ones. An explanation for this is that, in several education systems, staff working with older children are treated the same as school staff for whom an induction period is more common.

The induction period is also more often compulsory for core practitioners than for assistants. This may be problematic for assistants, especially when they are not required to have initial training in the field (see Figure C2). Only four countries require induction for assistants: Greece, Slovenia, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The induction period usually lasts one year. Its duration can be shorter: two months for some core practitioners and assistants in Slovenia and three months for assistants in Slovakia.

In **Slovenia**, the induction period lasts 10 months for core practitioners or 6 months for assistants recruited by the Ministry as trainees (*pripravništvo*) but only two months for core practitioners and assistants recruited directly by the ECEC setting.

The duration of induction is longer in a few education systems. It lasts two years in Greece, Hungary, Poland and in some Swiss cantons, and three years in France and Luxembourg.

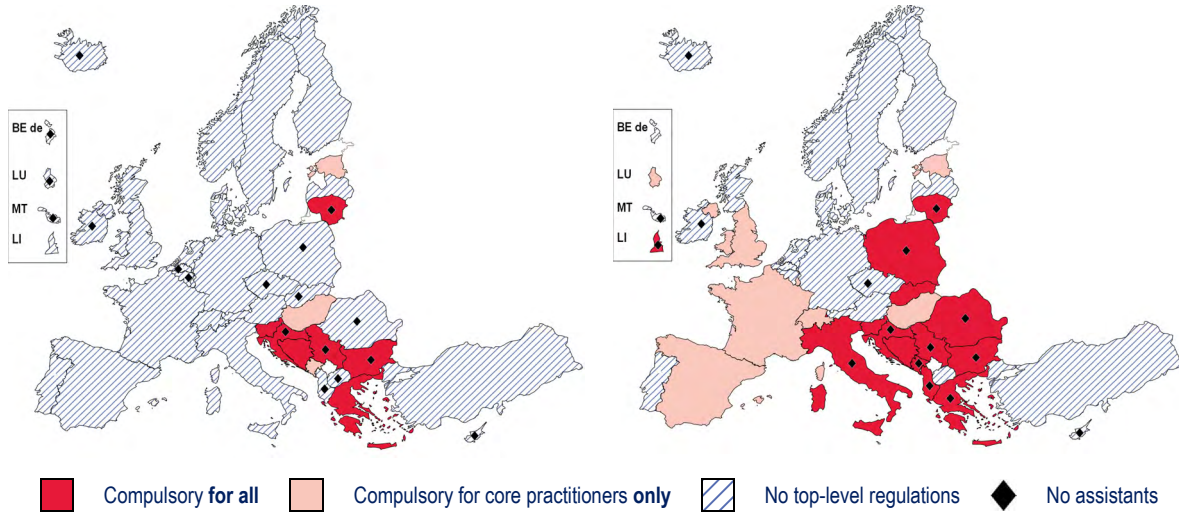
The organisation of this phase varies between countries. For instance:

The **Czech** School Inspectorate monitors and evaluates whether the nursery schools (*mateřské školy* for older children) provide targeted support for developing the educational competences of beginning teachers and whether they have an efficient adaptation programme. According to the Annual Report of the Czech School Inspectorate, most beginning teachers benefit from some type of support, including consultations with the school head and the management team (90.0 %), one-to-one peer classroom observations (73.5 %) or have access to a mentor (81.2 %).

**Figure C6: Status of the induction period for core practitioners and assistants entering the profession in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19**

**a) For children under the age of 3**

**b) For children aged 3 and over**



**Minimum duration of compulsory induction period (in years)**

		BG	EE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	LT	LU	HU	PL	RO	SI	SK	UK (1)	AL	BA	CH	LI	ME	RS
Core practitioners	< 3 years				●	●		●	1	●	2	●	●	0.17 or 0.83	●	●	●		●	●	1	1
	≥ 3 years	1	1	2	0.25-1	3	1	1	1	3	2	2	1		1	1	:	1	12/24	1		1
Assistants	< 3 years		●		●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	0.17 or 0.5	○	●	○	1	●	●	○	○
	≥ 3 years	○		○	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○		○	○	○		○	○	○	○

● No compulsory induction period ○ No assistants

Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the status of induction according to top-level regulations.

'Compulsory for all' either means that it is compulsory both for core practitioners and assistants or that it is compulsory for core practitioners where there are no assistants.

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE de):** A one-year induction period is recommended for core practitioners newly appointed to a setting for older children.

**Germany:** Whether assistants are employed to work with either group of children depends on the *Land*.

**Estonia:** Figure C6a shows the situation in *koolieelne lasteasutus*. In *lapsehoiuteenus*, there are no regulations on induction for core practitioners and there are no assistants.

**Spain:** The Figure shows the situation for the public sector. The minimum duration varies between 3 months and 1 year depending on the Autonomous Community. There are no top-level regulations concerning induction in the private sector.

**Luxembourg:** The Figure shows the situation for the public sector. There are no top-level regulations on induction in the private sector.

**Hungary:** The induction period for core practitioners working with children under the age of 3 (in *bölcsőde*) is compulsory only for core practitioners qualified in pedagogy (ISCED level 6).

**Albania:** The minimum duration of induction is not defined at top-level.

**Switzerland:** The minimum duration varies between cantons.

In **France**, the induction period for teachers in *écoles maternelles* (for older children) lasts three years and is organised at local level. It consists of an education counsellor visiting teachers new to the profession at least twice in the first year and once in the last two. In case of difficulties, additional visits are planned. The inspectorate also organises thematic groups for newcomers.

In **Italy**, induction for teachers in pre-primary and primary education consists of 180 days during the first year of employment. During this period, teachers must attend out-of-school training activities (organised by the regional school offices or by the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Research in Education) and laboratories. Activities are supervised by a school teacher. At the end of the school year, the new teacher has an interview with the Committee for the Evaluation of Teachers, which gives its opinion to the

school head. The latter decides whether to confirm the teacher in post. If not, the new teacher must re-take the induction period. If he/she does not successfully pass the induction period for a second time, he/she loses the chance to be confirmed in the post.

In **Poland**, child carers qualified at ISCED level 3 working with children under the age of 3 in *żłobek* or *klub dziecięcy* must undertake a 280-hour training course including 80 hours of practical training during which they work under the supervision of a qualified mentor. In pre-school settings (*przedszkole* or *oddział przedszkolny*) a newly employed teacher starts his/her career as a 'trainee teacher' (*nauczyciel stażysta*). The induction period lasts for 21 months during which he/she should prepare for the status of 'contract teacher' (*nauczyciel kontraktowy*). The trainee teacher has a mentor nominated by the school head, who provides support and advice, in particular on the individual professional development plan.

## ONLY FIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS HAVE MADE CPD MANDATORY FOR ALL STAFF

In the proposal for the Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, the expert working group of the European Commission states that 'on-going training can lead to the acquisition of new knowledge, the continuous improvement of educational practice and the deepening of pedagogical understanding'. For these reasons, continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities should be tailored to meet the needs of all staff (including assistants). The Expert Group also stated that participation in CPD should be seen as 'a requirement to stay in the profession' (European Commission, 2014, p. 32).

Top-level authorities have two main ways of emphasising the importance of CPD in the professional development of staff – they may consider CPD as mandatory or as a professional duty. In Figure C7, CPD is indicated as 'mandatory' only if there is also a specified minimum time requirement for CPD. It is shown as a professional duty when top-level authorities have made a statement to this effect, or if it is regarded as compulsory without a minimum amount of time being specified. Finally, if CPD is not specifically mentioned in regulations, it is considered 'optional'. This does not mean that there is no CPD provision for ECEC staff, but it places less emphasis on the role of CPD in ensuring a high quality workforce. In addition, under these circumstances, compared with the education systems where CPD is mandatory, there may be fewer opportunities or fewer incentives to participate, e.g., CPD might not be provided during working time, or staff might not be eligible to have the costs of courses or travel reimbursed.

Only a quarter of the education systems make CPD mandatory for core practitioners working with younger children, specifying its minimum duration over a defined period of time (see Figure C7). A few more, but still less than half of the education systems, require CPD for core practitioners working with older children.

For assistants, mandatory CPD is very rare. Luxembourg, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (Scotland) are the only European education systems where all assistants must undertake CPD activities. Luxembourg has assistants only for one year (*éducation précoce*). In France, only assistants working with older children are required to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

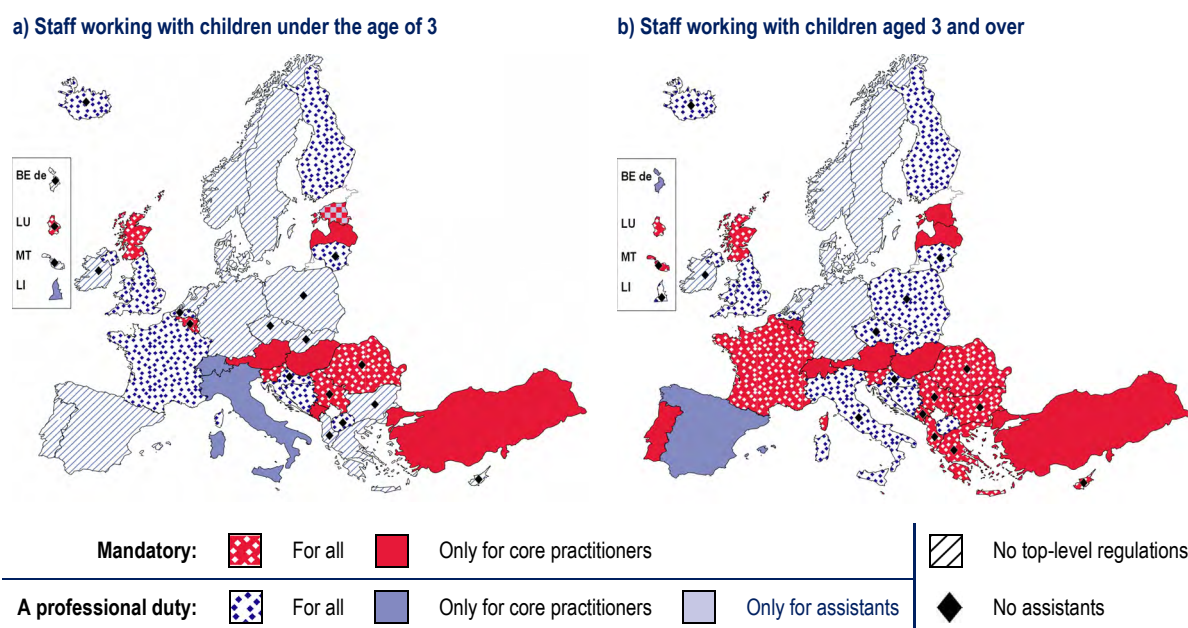
CPD is mandatory for all staff in only five education systems, namely Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, United Kingdom (Scotland) and Serbia. In three of these, the minimum duration of CPD is the same for all staff.

In **Slovenia**, all core practitioners and assistants must undertake 15 days of CPD activities over a period of three years.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, core practitioners and assistants need to undertake at least 60 hours per year of CPD activities.

In **Serbia**, all core practitioners must undertake at least 64 hours per year of CPD activities. No assistants are available in ECEC settings.

**Figure C7: Status of continuing professional development (CPD) for core practitioners and assistants working in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure shows the status of CPD according to top-level regulations.

**'Mandatory':** CPD is compulsory and the minimum amount of time to be spent on it is specified (data available in Annex A).

**'Professional duty':** CPD is described as such in the regulations, or it is deemed compulsory but the amount of time to be spent on it is not specified.

'Mandatory for core practitioners only' and 'a professional duty for core practitioners only' means that it is not the case for assistants.

**Country-specific notes**

**Germany:** The Figure represents the situation in most *Länder*. CPD is mandatory only in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia. Whether assistants are employed to work with either age group depends on the *Land*.

**Estonia:** Figure C7a shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. In *Lapsehoiuteenus*, there are no regulations on CPD for core practitioners and no assistants.

**Spain:** Figure C7a shows the situation in most of the Autonomous Communities. However, in some, such as Illes Balears, Comunidad de Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra, CPD is a professional duty for core practitioners.

**Luxembourg:** The situation for teachers in *éducation préscolaire* (for 4- and 5-year-olds) is the same as indicated in Figure C7b (for *éducation précoce*). However, there are no assistants in *éducation préscolaire*.

**Hungary:** CPD is mandatory only for core practitioners qualified at ISCED 6 or higher in pedagogy. For all others, it is optional.

In Luxembourg and Romania, CPD is mandatory for all staff, but the minimum duration varies according to the category of staff.

In **Luxembourg**, core practitioners must undertake on average the same minimum number of hours per year – 32 hours over a period of two years for those working with younger children, and 24 hours over three years for those working with older children. Educators working in *éducation précoce* for 3-year-olds together with teachers – and considered as assistants at this education level for the sake of the comparative analysis – must undertake at least 40 hours per year.

In **Romania**, where no assistants are available in ECEC settings, the minimum duration of CPD for core practitioners is different for those working in settings for younger children (90 hours per year) from those working with older children (90 ECTS over a period of five years).

In 10 education systems, CPD is a **professional duty** for all staff (Belgium – Flemish Community), Croatia, Lithuania, Finland, the United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Iceland and North Macedonia). In five additional countries (Czechia, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Liechtenstein), this applies only to staff working with older children. In France, CPD is a professional duty for staff working with younger children but mandatory for those working with older ones.

There is a stronger emphasis on the need for CPD among core practitioners than assistants, and for staff working with older children than for those working with younger children. The need for staff to undertake CPD activity is also not as much emphasised for ECEC staff compared to school staff. As a reference point, during the 2016/17 school year, CPD was **mandatory** for teachers in primary and general secondary education in 21 education systems (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p. 58) but only in 12 systems for all ECEC core practitioners. In addition, CPD was considered a **professional duty** for school teachers in 14 education systems, compared with 12 for ECEC.





## SECTION II – CHILD/STAFF RATIOS

### THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER STAFF MEMBER MORE THAN DOUBLES BETWEEN THE AGES OF 2 AND 4

Child/staff ratios and group sizes appropriate to children's ages are generally seen as essential if children's care and education is to be delivered effectively. However, they are also key factors in successfully managing and retaining staff and, consequently, crucial to the process quality in ECEC. Workload, in terms of the number of children per staff member, is particularly important. Moreover, low ratios and small group sizes help to ensure that every child gets enough one-to-one attention, which is important for children's social and emotional development, their physical well-being, and their overall learning. Individual interactions with adults help children feel safe and reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed – both for children and adults. However, employing more staff, and especially highly qualified staff, implies higher costs. Therefore, the regulations regarding ratios and group sizes are a compromise between these competing priorities.

The majority of European countries have introduced top-level regulations for centre-based ECEC on this issue. Although, in practice, the actual numbers of children may be lower than the stated maximums, the levels set by these regulations provide a useful indication of the standards operating across Europe.

Top-level authorities have different ways of ensuring that sufficient numbers of staff are available for the education and care of each child. Many countries regulate both the maximum number of children per group and per member of staff. When different types of staff are employed, countries may define the ratios accordingly, e.g., per core practitioner and assistant. In some countries, the maximum number of children per group is not specified, but the maximum number of children per staff member and/or core practitioner is defined. Yet others regulate the maximum number of children per group, leaving ECEC settings the freedom to determine which types of staff – core practitioners with or without assistants – and how many children to assign to the groups. The limits are usually formulated taking into account children's ages. As children get older and more independent, the maximum numbers are allowed to increase.

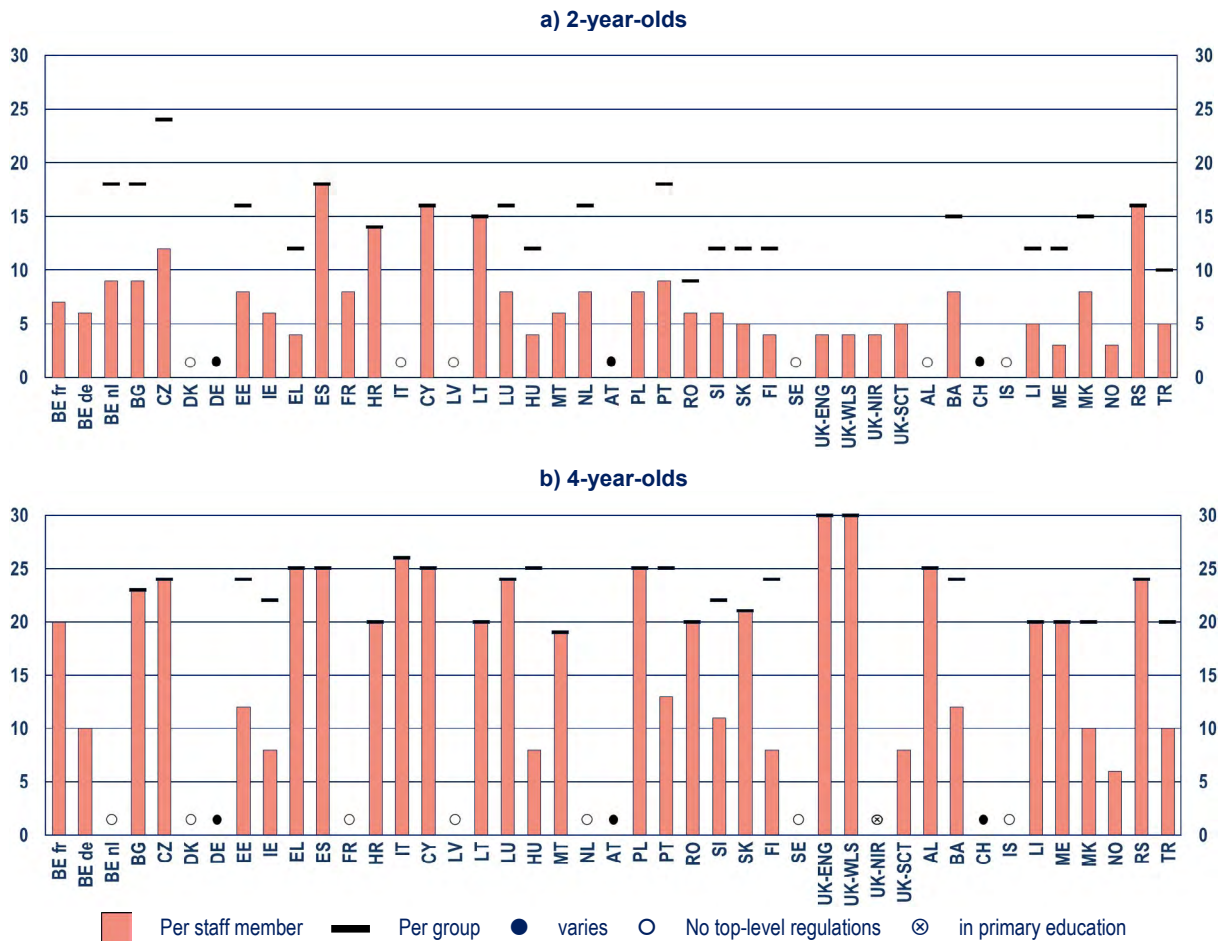
In order to provide an overview, Figure C8 shows the maximum number of children per staff member and per group for ages 2 and 4. These ages are significant in that they are in the middle of the two main stages of ECEC in split systems. Up to age 3, countries usually provide childcare-type provision or early childhood educational development (ISCED 010) programmes. From age 3, children attend pre-primary education (ISCED 020) programmes. Detailed tables with the data by age (from 0 to 5) are available in Annex A.

Not all education systems regulate both aspects shown in Figure C8 in their top-level regulations. In order to enable a comparison across education systems, the information gap has been filled by calculating the missing ratios (see explanation on the methodology in Annex A). This indicator is therefore a proxy to understand the way provision for each age group is staffed. More information on the methodology for this calculation is available in Annex A.

The maximum number of children per group is higher for children at age 4 than at age 2. In most education systems, the maximum group size increases from between 12 and 16 children at age 2 to between 23 and 25 children at age 4. The differences between European countries are significant. For 2-year-olds, the maximum number of children per group varies between 9 in Romania and 24 in Czechia. For 4-year olds, the maximum is set at 19 in Malta and 30 in the United Kingdom (England and Wales). Only one country has the same maximum group size for both ages.

In **Czechia**, the maximum number of children is set at 24 for all ECEC ages. However, the maximum number of staff per group varies according to children's ages and to the type of setting. In children's groups (*dětské skupiny*), three core practitioners are required in groups of 1-year-olds and two for all other age groups. In nursery schools (*mateřské školy*), one core practitioner is required for all age groups.

**Figure C8: Maximum number of children per group and per staff member in centre-based ECEC provision at ages 2 and 4, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure refers to the maximum number of children per group and per staff member present at the same time during the core hours of a working day, as defined in regulations/recommendations. It does not take into account the fact that groups may be age-heterogeneous.

Depending on the education system, regulations may specify the maximum number of children per assistant (where available), per core practitioner, per staff member (regardless of status) or per group. A specific methodology has been developed to convert the data available in the education systems to the format required for this Figure, i.e., the child/staff ratio and the maximum number of children per group (see Annex A).

Detailed information for all ages between 0 and 5 (including the maximum number of children per core practitioner) is available in Annex A.

Assistants recruited to support children with special education needs are not included.

**Country specific notes (Figure C8)**

**Czechia:** Figure C8a shows the situation in *dětské skupiny* and Figure C8b shows the situation in *mateřské školy*. For 2-year-olds already in *mateřské školy*, the situation is the same as for 4-year-olds. For 4-year-olds still in *dětské skupiny*, the situation is the same as for 2-year-olds.

**Germany, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland:** The situation varies between *Länder/cantons*. More information on the variations is available in Annex A.

**Estonia:** Figure C8a shows the situation in *koolieelne lasteasutus*. In *lapsehoiuteenus*, the maximum number of children per staff member is 5 and the maximum number per group is 10.

**Greece:** Figure C8a shows the situation for children aged under 30 months. Between 30 and 36 months, the maximum number of children per staff member is 13 and the maximum number per group is 25.

**France:** Figure C8a shows the situation in care-type settings (*accueil du jeune enfant*). For 4-year olds, the maximum group size is regulated at local level (*département*) according to local circumstances.

**Italy:** For 2-year olds, it is a matter for regional autonomy.

**Slovenia:** Depending on their circumstances, municipalities may raise the maximum number of children per group by two. This applies to more than half of the groups.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS):** Figure C8b shows the situation in *the reception class* of primary school.

The maximum child/staff ratio more than doubles between the ages of 2 and 4. Typically, teams of two or three staff members often work with groups of 2-year-olds. In contrast, one or two persons are in charge of a whole group of 4-year-olds.

At age 2, the maximum number of children per staff member varies between 3 (Montenegro and Norway) and 18 (Spain). In the majority of the education systems where top-level regulations exist, the maximum number of children per staff member ranges between 5 and 8.

The situation is quite different for 4-year olds. At this age, the maximum number of children per staff member is 20 or more in the majority of the education systems with regulations on this matter. The maximum number of children per staff member is below 10 in only five education systems (Ireland, Hungary, Finland, the United Kingdom – Scotland, and Norway).

The relationship between the maximum group size and the maximum number of children per staff member provides some insights into the way teams are structured in ECEC settings:

- When the maximum group size is higher than the maximum number of children per staff member, the regulations require at least two persons to be present at the same time in each group. This may mean teams with more than one highly qualified core practitioner, or it may mean teams which also include supporting assistants for whom the qualification requirements are lower or non-existent (see Figure C2).

In **Finland**, every third staff member must be an 'ECEC/kindergarten teacher' that either has a Bachelor's degree in education (including kindergarten teacher studies) or in applied sciences (in social studies, including studies in ECEC and social pedagogy). Two thirds are childcarers with a relevant vocational upper secondary qualification. New ECEC legislation was adopted in 2018. The reform aims to improve quality by raising the competences of personnel. As of 2030, two thirds of staff must have a Bachelor's degree and it must be a teacher degree for at least half of those.

- When the maximum group size is the same as the maximum number of children per staff member, one core practitioner is the sole person in charge of the entire group. This is rarely the case for younger children, but quite common in groups of 4-year-olds. In the majority of the education systems with regulations, only one core practitioner per group of 4-year-olds is required.

In the **United Kingdom (England and Wales)**, the maximum number of 4-year olds per group and per staff member is set at 30. This applies to the *reception class* of a primary school, where the staff member is a qualified teacher. However, there is also a requirement in Wales – in line with September 2018 guidance – for all publicly funded settings providing for 4-year-olds in the Foundation Phase – including *reception classes* – to work towards a 1:8 ratio.

Sometimes, the ECEC setting or the local authority has the autonomy to decide on ratios and group sizes. Consequently, there are no top-level regulations for the entire ECEC age range in Denmark, Latvia, Sweden and Iceland.



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In **Sweden**, where no top-level regulations on child/staff ratios exist, the average number of children per staff in unitary settings aged 1-6 (*förskola*) was 5.1:1 in the autumn 2017 (Skolverket Statistics).

In 2009, **Iceland** amended the existing regulation on pre-school settings (Regulation 655/2009). The minimum requirements on the child/teacher ratio were removed to provide more autonomy for pre-school heads to allow them to take into account the specific circumstances of pre-schools. The decision-making is supported by a formula to calculate the number of 'child equivalents' (*barngildi*), which takes into account children's ages, the number of children with special needs and the number of hours per week children are registered. In 2009, the child/teacher ratio was 6:1 in ISCED level 020. In 2016, it fell to 5.3:1 (Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_perp04]).

In Italy and Albania, there are no top-level regulations on group sizes or child/staff ratios for children under age 3 as this type of provision is managed at a lower level – the regional and local level respectively. In Belgium (Flemish Community), France and the Netherlands, the top-level authority regulates the ratios and group sizes for younger children, but does not do so for older children.

### CHILDMINDERS IN REGULATED HOME-BASED PROVISION USUALLY LOOK AFTER A MAXIMUM OF FOUR OR FIVE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 3

In almost all countries where regulated home-based provision exists, the maximum number of children per childminder is subject to control. Only a few countries, where home-based provision is very limited (see Figure A3), do not apply any top-level standards in this area (Italy, Latvia, Sweden and North Macedonia).

Regulations covering this field are often quite complex, as they attempt to take many factors into account. For example, the children may differ greatly in age: from completely dependent infants or toddlers to quite independent older children that need care for just a few hours after school. Therefore, regulations commonly include further age-related restrictions, in particular, applying stricter rules on the maximum number of younger children in the group.

Home-based care is a more widespread type of provision for younger than for older children (see the National Information Sheets). Figure C9 therefore shows the top-level regulations on the maximum number of children under age 3 per childminder. It ranges from three in Slovakia and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to eight in the Flemish Community of Belgium. The majority of countries set the maximum at either four or five children per childminder. This number normally includes the childminder's own children, if they are also being looked after. Some countries specify further rules.

In **Ireland**, the regulation states that there should not be more than five children under age 4 (including childminder's own children) at any given time, of which no more than two may be under 15 months old.

In **Croatia**, the maximum number of children aged under 14 per childminder is six. However, childminders can only take care of one child under age 1, which counts for two children. If childminders also take care of their own children under age 10, the total number of children they can take care of is reduced – by one for two of their own children or two as of three of their own children.

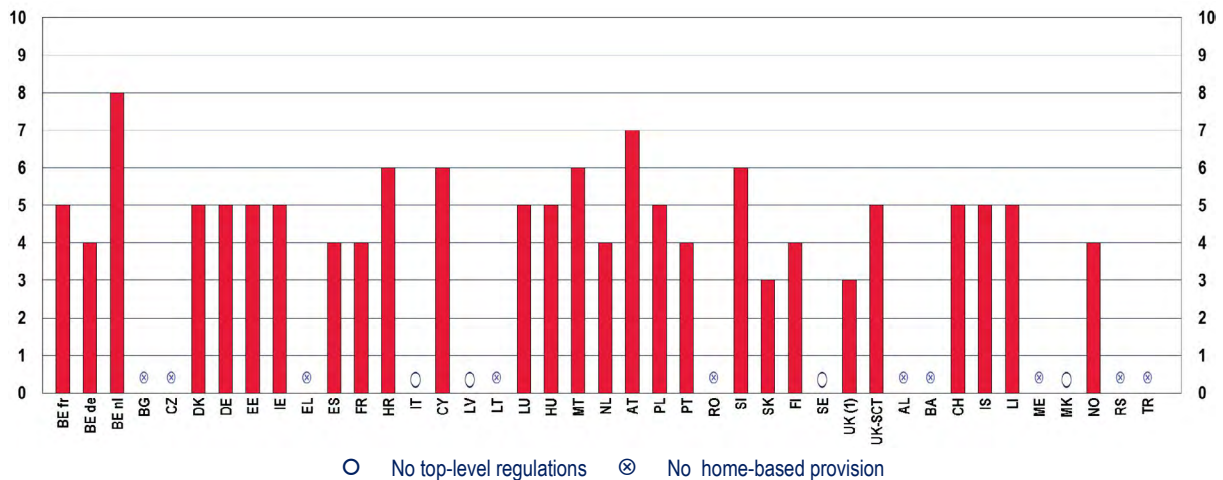
In **Cyprus**, a childminder can take care of up to six children but no more than three under the age of 2.

In **Luxembourg**, the maximum number per childminder is five children aged between 0 and 12. However, a childminder cannot care for more than two children under age 2.

In **Malta**, a childminder may care for up to six children (including their own children) but only one can be under 18 months.

In the **Netherlands**, the maximum number of children per childminder under the age of 4 is four, and maximum of two children can be under age 1.

**Figure C9: Maximum number of children under age 3 per childminder in regulated home-based provision, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure considers the maximum number of children that a childminder may care for at the same time (not full-time equivalents or the number of children registered) according to top-level regulations. Specific regulations for children with special needs are not considered.

The Figure does not show any of the more detailed specifications that may be included in legislation (e.g. further restrictions on children's ages).

**Country specific notes**

**Germany:** Data do not include childminder's own children.

**Italy:** The regions are responsible for these regulations. In general, the maximum number is between 3 and 6.

**Spain:** Regulated home-based provision only exists in two Autonomous Communities. The Figure shows the situation in Comunidad Foral de Navarra. No regulations in this area in Comunidad de Madrid.

**Austria:** The maximum number of children under age 3 varies between *Länder* from 4 to 7.

**Switzerland:** The Figure reflects the situation in most cantons.

**North Macedonia:** Regulated home-based provision as the main type of ECEC provision is mainly for children between 3 and 6 years.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, a childminder may care for a maximum of six children under the age of 8 at any one time; a maximum of three of these children may be under compulsory school age, and there should only be one child under the age of 1.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, a childminder may care for a maximum of ten children under the age of 12 and, of these, no more than six may be under the age of 8, no more than three may be under 5, and no more than two may be under 18 months of age.

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, the maximum number of children a childminder may care for is six children under the age of 12, of whom a maximum of three may be under compulsory school age, and no more than one child may be under the age of 1.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the recommended ratios are one childminder for three children under age 2 and one childminder for five children aged 3.

In **Iceland**, childminders in their first year of practice may not care for more than four children under the age of 6 (including their own children). For children under the age of 1, the maximum is 2. After one year of work, the childminder may add one child. The most common maximum number of children per childminder in regulated home-based provision is therefore five per adult. According to [Statistics Iceland](#), the average ratio was at 4.3:1 in 2017.

In **Liechtenstein**, childminders may only care for a maximum of five children (including their own children under age 16) with no more than three of them not belonging to the family. A maximum of two children aged under 18 months may be cared for at the same time. A child in this age range counts as 1.5.

In **Norway**, the regulations are more general. They state that the maximum number of children per childminder is five and that it must be reduced when the majority of children in the group are under the age of 3.



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In Slovenia, the regulations specify that the maximum number of children per childminder is six, without referring specifically to children's ages.

Finally, regulations may also offer a certain degree of flexibility, allowing childminders to look after one or two additional children. This mainly happens when there are specific family situations such as multiple births, or when there is a lack of adequate ECEC provision in a local community or region.

# EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

## SECTION I – GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and care in parallel with efforts to increase access and participation is crucial, as emphasised in the Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems<sup>(1)</sup>. Only high quality ECEC can provide the strong foundations in early learning and development that children need to successfully complete their education, particularly if they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to the NESSE 'Early Matters' symposium conclusions (2008), evidence shows that poor quality early childhood services may impair future educational performance.

This chapter focuses on the core processes taking place within ECEC. The way caring, teaching and learning is organised largely determines the quality of ECEC provision. Caring processes fulfil not only basic needs but they also enhance children's well-being, learning and development, as they involve intensive communication between children and staff. A well-balanced combination of care and education provides the ideal conditions for children's cognitive, social and physical development, helping them to develop self-confidence and build a positive self-image (Einarsdottir, 2015; Pramling, Doverborg and Samuelsson, 2017). The activities that children love – playing, running, jumping and climbing; listening to stories, drawing and doing craftwork; making music, singing and dancing; observing, exploring, cooking, gardening and picnicking, can be used to provide positive learning experiences (e.g. Klette, Drugli and Aandahl, 2018). Rich and varied activities – based on well-defined objectives that ensure progress towards the desired learning outcomes, foster communication between children and staff and encourage parent participation – are essential elements of high quality education and care (European Commission, 2014). To support practitioners in achieving this level of provision, most top-level authorities across Europe publish official educational guidelines.

The first section of this chapter examines which education systems have issued top-level guidelines that set out the educational component of ECEC; it also investigates whether ECEC settings develop their own pedagogical plans. The objectives, educational content and teaching approaches, as recommended in the top-level educational guidelines, are examined. This section concludes with an investigation into assessment practices in ECEC.

The second section focuses on measures to facilitate the transition between ECEC and primary education. It discusses admission to primary education and the decision-making process involved in this procedure. The chapter also discusses the measures to ensure pedagogical continuity between ECEC and primary education.

Finally, the chapter examines two types of targeted support measures in ECEC: it looks firstly at measures to develop children's language competences, both in the language of instruction and in the home language; and secondly it addresses the support available to parents of children in ECEC.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019).



## A THIRD OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS DO NOT PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR UNDER-3S

The importance of ECEC as the foundation of children's learning and development is increasingly acknowledged<sup>(2)</sup>. All education systems have set educational guidelines for this crucial stage. However, despite recent progress, educational guidelines continue to be more widespread for settings for children aged 3 and over than for the younger ones, and they are less common in home-based provision than centre-based settings.

Educational guidelines are official documents, which may or may not be mandatory, issued to steer or guide ECEC providers in the approaches to children's care and learning as well as the educational content offered. They may include:

- main aims and principles
- educational/pedagogical approaches
- developmental and learning goals
- learning areas, content or materials
- assessment methods.

In ECEC, the form of educational guidelines varies considerably between countries. They may be issued as framework plans, guidelines for practitioners, curricula or programmes of learning and development, reference framework of learning objectives (e.g. the core objectives of *vroegschoolse educatie* in the Netherlands), etc. In some countries (e.g. Belgium – Flemish Community, Bulgaria or Poland), educational guidelines are incorporated into legislation. Depending on how they are structured, educational guidelines allow varying degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied in ECEC settings.

There may be more than one document applicable to a particular phase within a country, but they all contribute to establishing the fundamental framework in which staff are required (or advised, where mandatory requirements do not exist) to develop their own practice to meet children's developmental needs.

In Europe, two thirds of education systems have issued educational guidelines which cover the entire ECEC phase (see Figure D1a). In the remaining third, the guidelines are only directed at settings for older children. The top-level educational framework is largely related to governance (see Figure A4). In almost all countries where the same authority is in charge of the whole ECEC phase, educational objectives or content are set for the whole age range. This occurs in all Nordic and Baltic countries, most Central European and Balkan countries, as well as in Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, Malta, and the United Kingdom (England and Scotland). The only exception is the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), where the Department of Education in the Northern Ireland Executive is (co)-responsible for the entire ECEC phase, but curricular guidance is established only for the pre-school education of 3- to 4-year-olds.

The situation is more varied in the split ECEC systems where only the settings for older children are under the responsibility of an educational authority (those for younger children are under a different authority). Only about a third of such education systems have established an educational framework for the whole age range, i.e. Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), France, Hungary, Liechtenstein and Turkey. The framework is set down in separate documents for younger and older children and issued by different authorities.

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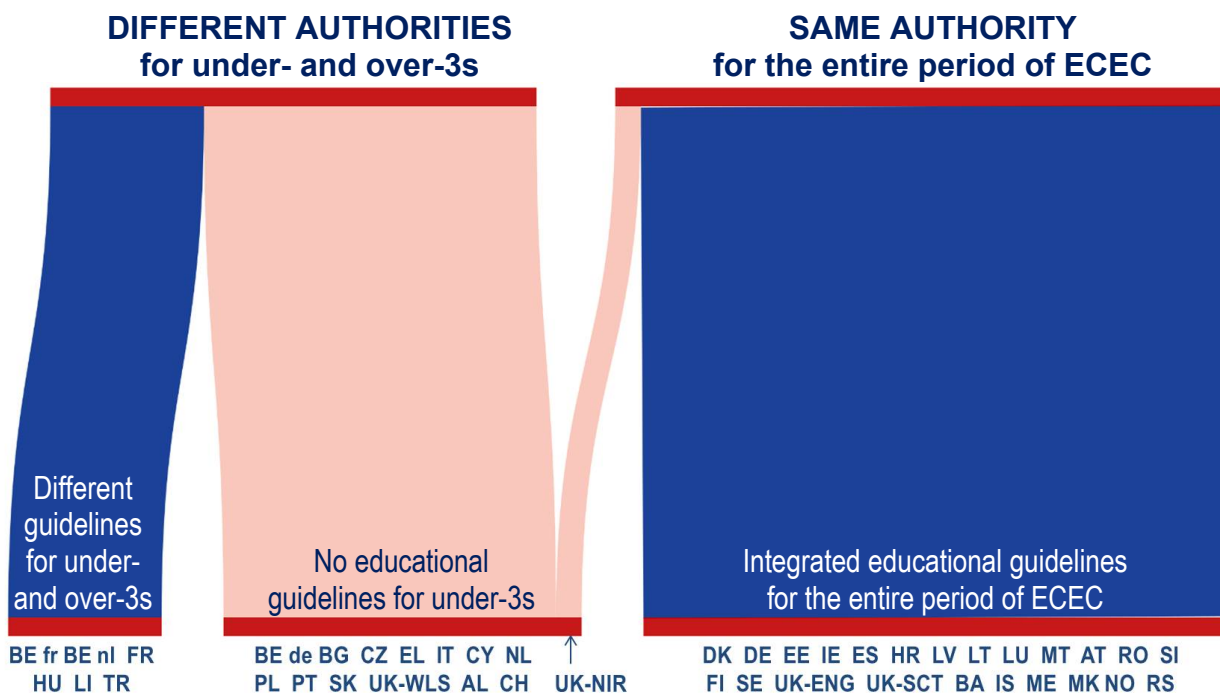
<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.



Top-level educational guidelines for younger children have become more widespread over recent years. Indeed, since 2013, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Luxembourg, and Liechtenstein have issued specific guidelines with an educational component for younger children for the first time.

Figure D1: Top-level educational guidelines for ECEC provision, 2018/19

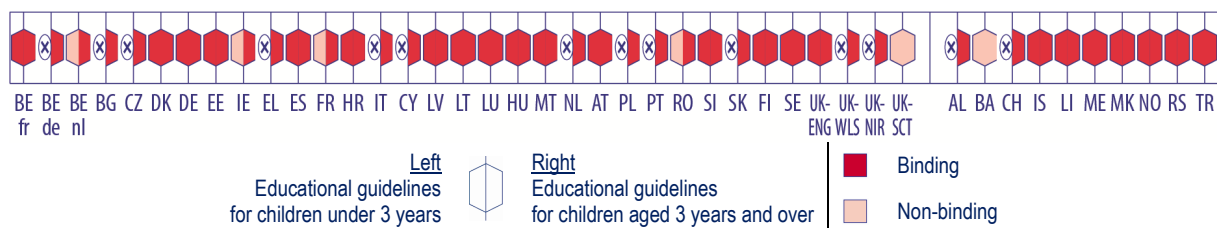
Figure D1a: Centre-based ECEC provision



Nevertheless, in 13 of the education systems where the top-level education authority is responsible only for centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over (see Figure A4), the top-level educational guidelines apply only to ECEC provision for older children (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, the United Kingdom – Wales, Albania and Switzerland). However, in Portugal, the guidelines for pre-primary school which were revised in 2016 now emphasise the need for common pedagogical approaches and principles for the whole phase before entering compulsory schooling and a set of educational guidelines for *creches* is in preparation. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, there are top-level educational guidelines for children from disadvantaged backgrounds aged 2-and-a-half to 4 enrolled in targeted early childhood education programmes (*voorschoolse educatie*), which reach around 45 000 children. Finally, in Italy, the Ministry of education is setting a commission in charge of drawing up the educational guidelines for the provision for younger children.

The status of the top-level educational guidelines for ECEC settings varies between countries and, in a few cases, within countries according to age range (see Figure D1b).

Figure D1b: Status of top-level educational guidelines for centre-based ECEC provision

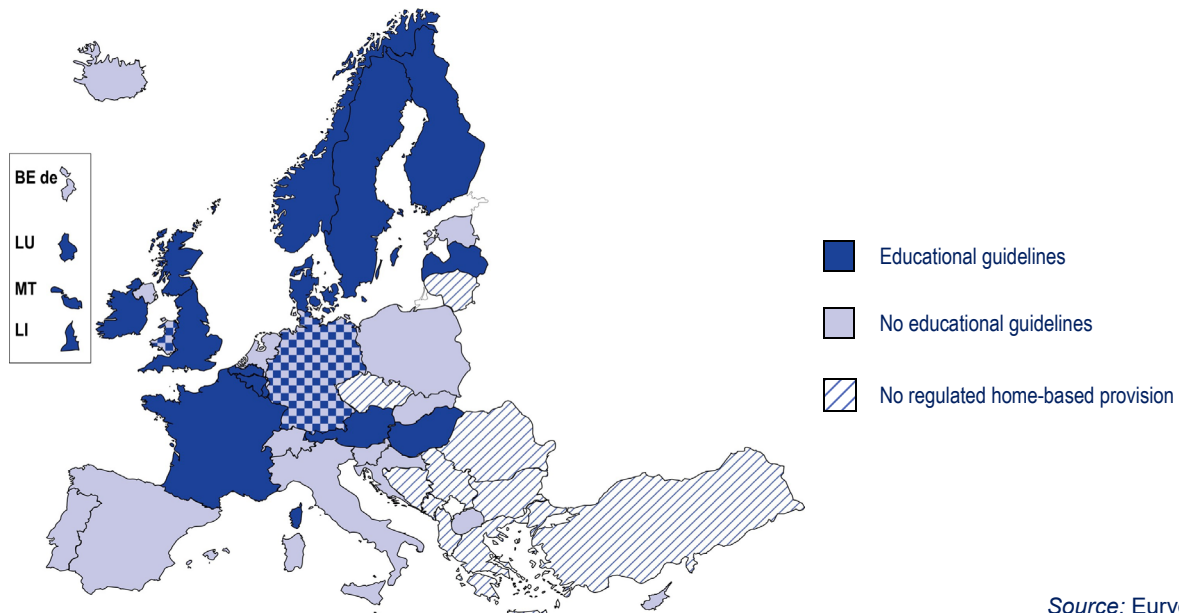


Source: Eurydice.

In the education systems with educational guidelines for both younger and older children, these guidelines are usually binding across the whole ECEC phase. In contrast, in Belgium (Flemish Community), France and Romania, the guidelines are only binding in settings for children aged 3 and over. This applies to Ireland too, but only to the centre-based settings under contractual agreement with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to provide free ECEC to older children. Moreover, in the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the educational guidelines are non-binding across the whole ECEC phase. In the countries where educational guidelines only apply to older children, they are all binding.

The top-level educational guidelines for centre-based settings apply to home-based settings in a majority of cases, i.e., 17 education systems (see Figure D1c). In Austria, there are specific guidelines that apply only to home-based settings. However, fifteen education systems have no education guidelines for this type of provision. In the remaining countries, there is no home-based provision.

**Figure D1c: Home-based provision**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note to D1a, D1b and D1c**

For a definition of 'educational guidelines', see Glossary.

See Annex C for the specific documents referred to as top-level educational guidelines in each country.

See National System Information Sheets for what 'under 3 years' and '3 years and over' correspond to in the context of each country.

For more information on the authority responsible for governing centre-based provision in each country, see Figure A4 and Annex B.

### **Country specific notes D1a, D1b and D1c**

**Belgium (BE fr):** For 3 years and over, the top-level educational guidelines only apply to public and private grant-aided schools, not to self-financing private schools.

**Belgium (BE nl):** For 3 years and over, the top-level educational guidelines only apply to schools recognised by the top-level educational authorities.

**Germany:** Whether the existing educational guidelines developed by the *Länder* for ECEC apply to childminders depends on the regulations of the *Länder* and the age of children.

**Ireland:** The curriculum framework designed for the whole ECEC phase (*Aistear*) is binding only for the centre-based settings under contractual agreement with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to provide free ECEC to older children.

**Netherlands:** Figure D1a shows the mainstream situation. For children under 3, top-level educational guidelines only apply to children from a disadvantaged background in *voorschoolse educatie* (aged 2-and-a-half to 4).

**Portugal:** There are no specific educational guidelines for settings for under-3s but the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-school Education, designed for ECEC settings for children age 3 and over, emphasise the need for common pedagogical approaches and principles for the whole phase before entering compulsory schooling.

**United Kingdom (WLS):** Only home-based settings in receipt of public funding to provide for children over 3 must follow the curriculum framework in place for children of this age.

## ECEC SETTINGS MUST DRAW UP THEIR OWN PEDAGOGICAL PLAN IN A MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES

In many European countries, the top-level guidelines for centre-based ECEC provision serve as a basis for the regional, local or setting level themselves to develop more detailed guidance, programmes or plans. Hence, in federal systems as well as in Italy, where significant regional autonomy exists, the *Länder*, the Autonomous Communities and the regions are responsible for providing more detailed education programmes for ECEC. In Finland, the responsibility for further elaborating the National Core Curriculum for ECEC lies with the ECEC provider at local level, i.e. the municipality. In several education systems, the top-level guidelines serve as a reference point for producing a pedagogical plan within each ECEC setting. The term pedagogical plan includes any curricula, or teaching related activity or work plan, programme, project or model (see Figure D2).

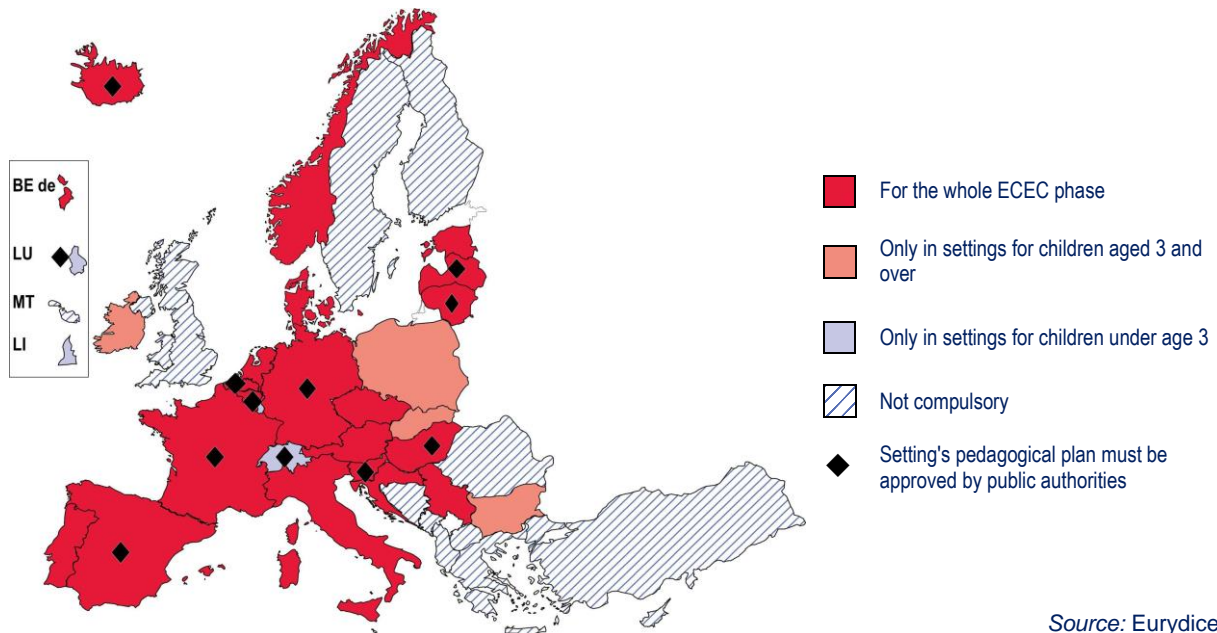
Formulating a pedagogical plan at the setting level allows provision to be adapted to the local context and the needs of children. It is also a way to ensure staff have a shared understanding of the pedagogical principles which should guide their work. This might be particularly useful when the top-level education guidelines are very broad and not differentiated by age group, or when there are no top-level educational guidelines for a given age range.

ECEC settings must draw up their own pedagogical plan in 28 education systems. In most systems, this applies to settings across the whole ECEC phase. However, there are a few exceptions. In Luxembourg, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, this applies only to settings for children under 3 years old. In Liechtenstein, *Kindergarten* (for children aged 4-5) must implement the national curricula and therefore they do not produce their own education programme. In contrast, broader guidelines are set for younger children and so these settings need to establish their own more focused pedagogical plan.

In Bulgaria, Ireland, Poland and Slovakia, the obligation to set their own programme or curriculum only applies to settings for children aged 3 years and over. To support their educational activities, ECEC settings for younger children in Ireland may implement a variety of curricula of their choice guided by the national framework *Aistear*. In contrast, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia have no top-level guidelines containing an educational component for younger children and settings do not have to develop their own pedagogical plans.

In twelve education systems, the curricula developed at setting level have to be approved by public authorities, which are often also in charge of accreditation, evaluation or improving the quality of ECEC settings (see Figure E2). In Germany, the approval of the setting's pedagogical plan by the regional or local Youth Welfare services is part of the accreditation procedure. In Switzerland, there are no top-level education guidelines applying to settings for under-3s. Therefore, in order to ensure that some pedagogical objectives and activities are set for younger children the majority of the cantons require day-care centres to draw up a pedagogical plan as a condition of accreditation. In France, Luxembourg and Hungary, the bodies in charge of evaluating the settings for children under 3 years also validate their pedagogical plan. In Lithuania and Iceland, the municipalities, which have responsibilities in ensuring the quality of ECEC settings, are in charge of approving the settings' programme for the whole ECEC phase. The inspectorate approves the plan or curricula drawn up by pre-primary schools in Spain, Hungary, as well as France, where it is used to identify the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of staff. In Latvia, the State Education Quality Centre approves the ECEC settings' curricula. In Slovenia, the annual work plan of the kindergarten has to be approved by the municipality.

**Figure D2: Obligation for centre-based ECEC settings to draw up their own pedagogical plan, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

#### **Explanatory note**

The term pedagogical plan includes any curricula, or teaching related activity or work plan, programme, project or model.

#### **Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE nl):** Every ECEC setting for children aged 3 years and over must follow a top-level approved curriculum. The school may – but is not obliged to – draw up its own curriculum which incorporates its developmental goals. In practice, most pre-primary schools follow a curriculum of the education umbrella organisation (*koepel*) to which they belong.

**Ireland:** The settings for children aged 3 years and over participating in the ECCE programme to provide free ECEC have not only to draw up their own curriculum but also to ensure that it is informed by the *Aistear Síolta* framework.

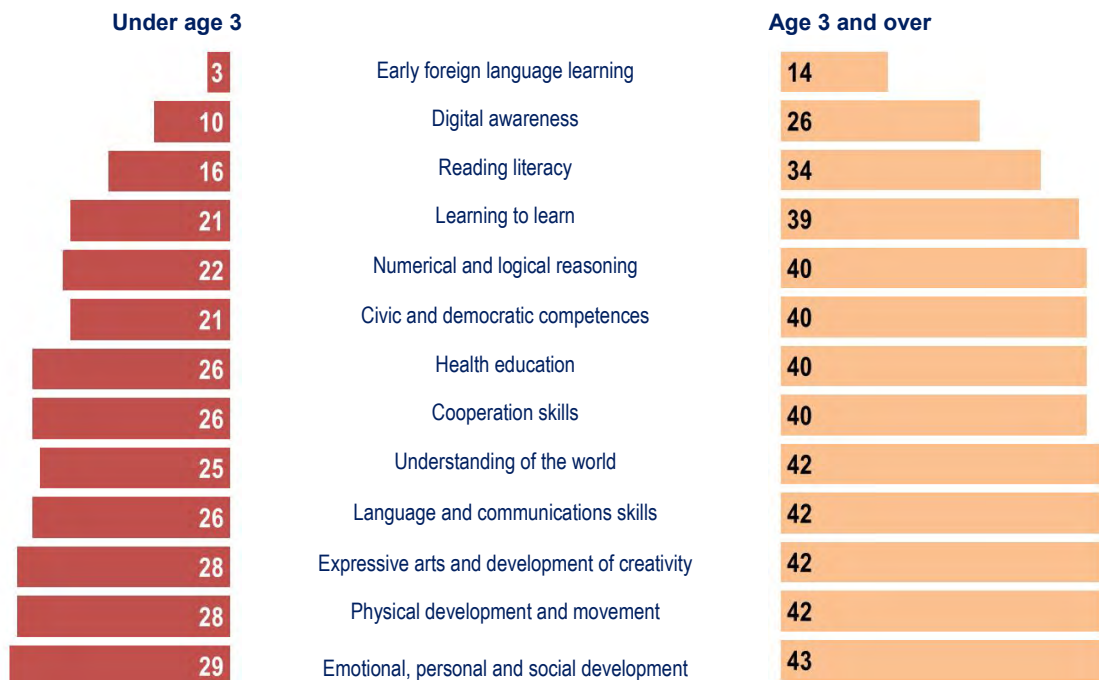
**Finland:** ECEC providers, i.e., municipalities for public settings and private service providers for publicly-subsidised private settings, are required to develop their own curricula which comply with National Curriculum requirements. They can decide to what extent they delegate this task to the individual settings they maintain.

## **SIMILAR CORE AREAS EXIST ACROSS EUROPE FOR THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN ECEC**

Top-level educational guidelines, where they exist, establish the areas of children's learning and development that should be the focus of daily activities in centre-based provision. The most common areas cited for centre-based ECEC settings, regardless of age are:

- emotional, personal and social development
- physical development
- artistic skills
- language and communication skills
- understanding of the world
- cooperation skills and
- health education.

**Figure D3: Areas of learning and development in ECEC settings, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

For each age range, the number on the bar indicates the number of education systems which feature the learning area in their top-level educational guidelines. There are 43 education systems in total – information by country is available in the Annex.

Four areas of learning and development are more often targeted at older children:

- 'learning to learn' and 'civic and democratic competences' – two transversal competences of the EU framework of Key competences <sup>(3)</sup>
- 'numerical reasoning' and 'reading literacy' – two topics more strongly associated with formal learning.

It is also interesting to note that in seven education systems (Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Iceland and Norway) the educational guidelines do not specify 'reading literacy' as a learning area for ECEC, although they all set objectives related to children's language and communication skills. This might reflect a lower emphasis on the emergent literacy skills such as the understanding that print carries meaning or experimenting with sounds and words, which can be developed during the ECEC phase (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011). In Sweden and Serbia, 'reading literacy' only applies to children attending pre-primary classes 1 year before the start of primary education (see national sheets concerning pre-primary classes).

Of the learning areas investigated here, early foreign language learning and digital education are the two least frequently mentioned in top-level educational guidelines, and are more often targeted at older children. Foreign languages are specified in 14 education systems, usually in relation to older children. Digital education is included in the educational guidelines of 26 education systems. In 10 of these digital awareness is promoted from an early age. In Lithuania, it only applies to the compulsory pre-primary one-year programme.

<sup>(3)</sup> Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December on key competences for lifelong learning, OJ L 394, 30.12.2006.



Across the countries concerned, two different but complementary perspectives of digital education can be found: (1) the pedagogical use of digital technologies to support and enhance learning and (2) teaching and the development of children's digital competences.

In some education systems (e.g. Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Cyprus and Sweden) top-level educational guidelines emphasise the pedagogical use of digital technologies to support the learning process without specifying the digital competences to be developed. The recommended activities include, for instance, reading digital books, exploring nature and science with digital devices such as webcams and GPS, experiencing and producing art using digital forms of expression, or playing games on computers.

In other education systems, top-level guidelines specify the digital competences that children should start developing during ECEC, encompassing the most basic competences set in the Digcomp 2.0 Framework (Carretero et al., 2017). While the problem-solving competence is only mentioned in the United Kingdom's (Scotland), *Curriculum for Excellence*, the four other global competences of the Framework (Communication, Digital content creation, Information and data literacy, and Safety) are each addressed in several education systems. For instance, the communication competence is included in the national curricula for pre-primary school in France by recommending that children contact each other using digital tools. Information and data literacy are, for example, referred to in the top-level guidelines for pre-school in Lithuania, which recommend 'children using ICT-based educational material to collect and assess information'. Creating and editing digital information is also addressed, for instance, in the ECEC curriculum in all the German-speaking Cantons of Switzerland, which set as competences to be acquired: filing and finding documents; turning on/off devices and programmes, and making use of basic functions. Finally, a safe, careful and responsible use of digital technologies is emphasised, for instance, in Norway.

According to the **Norwegian** Framework Plan for *Kindergartens* (UDIR, 2017), 'staff shall be actively involved with children when using digital tools. Digital tools must be used with care and not become a dominant practice. *Kindergartens* shall exercise sound digital judgement and help the children develop an early ethical understanding of digital media.'

In addition to digital education as such, it is important to mention that digital technologies are also addressed during ECEC as a necessary component for the development of children's understanding of the world and as an acknowledgment of the importance of these technologies in their daily life and more broadly in society.

Finally, not many countries have identified learning or development areas other than those already mentioned. Poland and Serbia, however, indicate that their educational guidelines emphasise the importance of nature and ecology.

## BALANCED PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN ECEC

The countries that have top-level educational guidelines usually recommend certain pedagogical approaches to ECEC settings. However, this is not the case for older children in Belgium (Flemish Community) nor in the Netherlands, where the guidelines applying to these settings are rather more objective-oriented, focusing on development goals, attainment targets or core objectives.

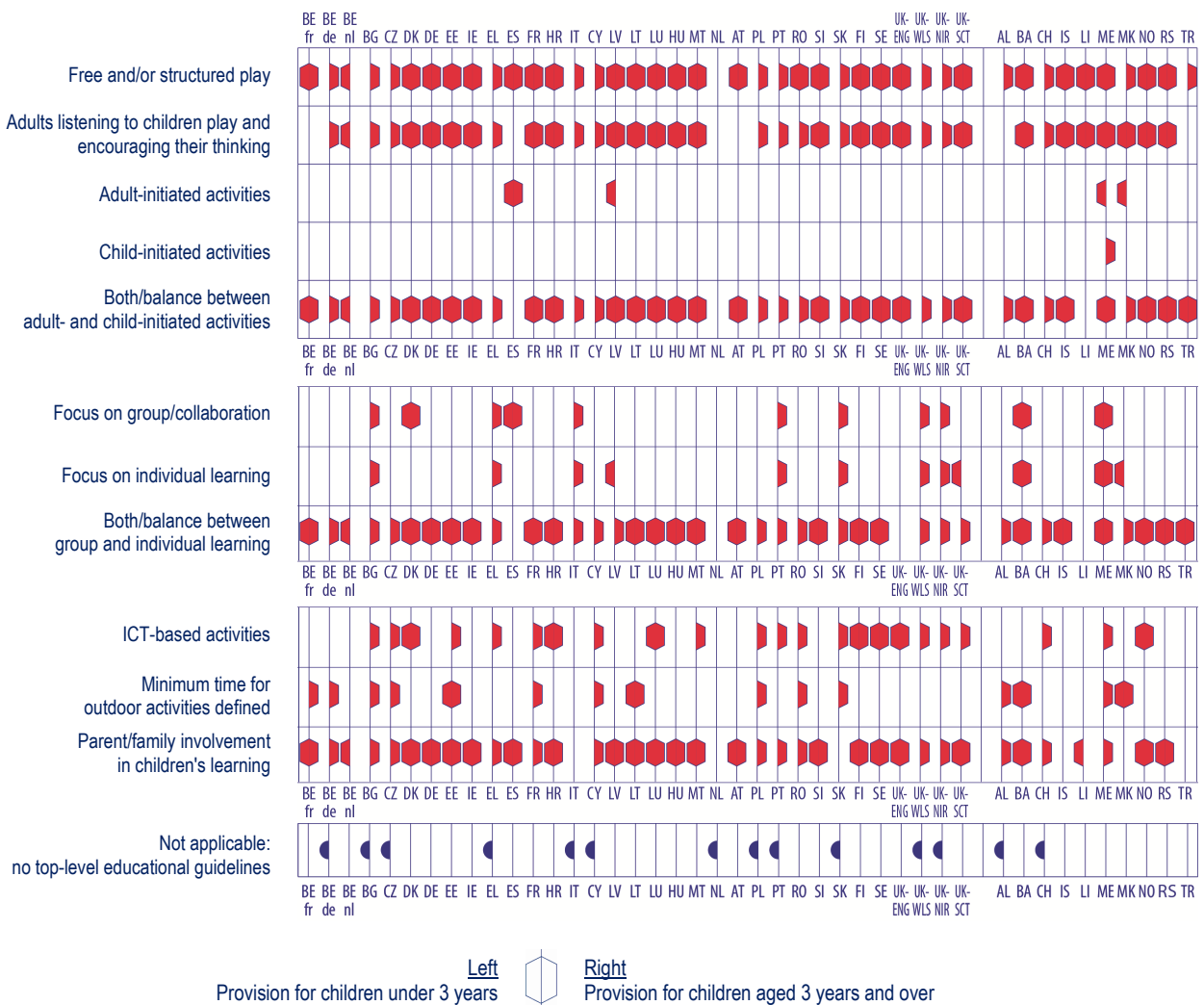
In the education systems that do address pedagogy in their educational guidelines, some common approaches are recommended for the whole ECEC phase. This is the case of learning through play, which is a crucial element in the early development stage<sup>(4)</sup>. Both free and structured play are referred to in the top-level educational guidelines of most countries. For instance, according to the

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<sup>(4)</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019).

Framework Plan for *Kindergarten* in Norway (UDIR 2017), 'Play shall be a key focus in *kindergarten*, and the inherent value of play shall be acknowledged. Kindertartens shall make good provision for play, friendship and children's own culture. Play shall be an arena for children's development and learning and for social and linguistic interaction. *Kindertartens* shall inspire and make room for different kinds of play both outdoors and indoors'.

**Figure D4: Pedagogical approaches in ECEC settings, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure reflects the content of the top-level educational guidelines. Pedagogical approaches limited to pre-primary classes (see national sheets and the glossary) are not indicated. See Annex D for the specific documents referred to as top-level educational guidelines in each country.

**Country-specific notes**

**Ireland:** The top-level educational guidelines only refer to free play (and not to structured play) across the whole ECEC phase.

**Malta and North Macedonia:** The top-level educational guidelines for settings for younger children only refer to free play, not to structured play.

**Portugal:** There are no specific educational guidelines for settings for under-3s but the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-school Education, designed for ECEC settings for children age 3 and over, emphasise the need for common pedagogical approaches and principles for the whole phase before entering compulsory schooling.

**Sweden:** A stronger focus on adult-initiated activities starts in pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*) for 6-year olds.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** ICT-based activities start in pre-primary classes.

**Turkey:** The top-level educational guidelines for settings for younger children only refer to structured play, not to free play.



Moreover, the key role of adults in listening to children play and encouraging their thinking is also often underlined <sup>(5)</sup>. In addition to play, most countries recommend finding the right balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, as well as between group and individual activities. In Sweden, a stronger focus on adult-initiated activities starts in the compulsory pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*) which take place one year before primary education.

Involving parents or families in children's learning is another crucial element which is also often recommended to settings. However, it is not mentioned in the top-level educational guidelines for either age group in ECEC in Iceland, North Macedonia or Turkey; while in France, Romania and Montenegro, it is recommended only in relation to older children.

About half of the education systems studied recommend ICT-based activities, also usually in relation to older children. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, ICT-based activities start only when children aged 5 move into compulsory pre-primary classes.

Finally, a minority of education systems indicate a minimum time for outdoor activities. Fifteen education systems do so for older children but only four for the younger ones. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of emphasis on outdoor activities or nature as a learning environment, but it may reflect that daily and weekly routines are flexible in some countries, and can be adapted to children's individual needs. Alternatively, it may reflect the fact that educational guidelines are formulated differently. In Croatia, for instance, a minimum time is set for health and physical activities rather than specifically outdoor activities.

## **OBSERVATION IS THE KEY METHOD FOR ASSESSING CHILDREN IN ECEC**

European countries generally see ECEC as a level of education in which each child should be recognised as an active learner, and practitioners should be responsive to their individual interests, needs and learning potential. In order to offer this child-centred approach, it is crucial that the planning of daily activities is informed by a sound knowledge of each child's individual development and educational progress, acquired through the assessment process. Effective assessment is essential for creating optimum conditions for learning, for supporting and challenging children in their learning, and for ensuring that provision is adapted to the needs of all.

In most countries, the educational guidelines for ECEC provide recommendations on assessment methods to be used by settings. However, this is an area of autonomy for settings in some education systems so there are no such recommendations in Belgium (Flemish Community) for the whole phase, Belgium (German-speaking Community), the Netherlands and Albania for older children as well as Belgium (French Community), Romania and Serbia for settings for younger children. Moreover, in 14 education systems, there are no top-level educational guidelines for settings for younger children (see Figure D1) and therefore, no guidelines on assessment.

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<sup>(5)</sup> Research findings highlight that young children's learning processes are highly dependent on the social environment, on stable and trusting interaction with other children and adults, as well as on having free and unconditional space and time for play and free expression. Play in an educational and caring context is an important part of children's daily life during which they are able to make autonomous choices.







A **portfolio** is a means of gathering samples of children's learning, and aims to record evidence of achievement across time.

In **Ireland**, for instance, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework recommends that documenting children's learning be guided by the use of individual and group learning portfolios based on children's emergent and current interests. The learning portfolios record the content of children's learning and development under four interconnected themes: Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communicating and Exploring, and Thinking.

Half of education systems recommend that ECEC settings make use of portfolios of drawings, pictures or other types of work. Several other countries such as Germany and Sweden, which do not specifically refer to portfolios, require ECEC settings to support the development of knowledge and understanding of the child's learning and development through systematic documentation.

Assessing children in relation to given norms, standards or thresholds is not a widespread practice in Europe. Twelve systems recommend observing children using a **checklist**, usually in conjunction with other methods. For instance, in France, two new tools have been in use since 2016 to help teachers report the results of their observations of children against the expected levels of achievement in several core areas of learning at pre-primary level <sup>(6)</sup>. In most cases, the observation based on a checklist is only one of the methods recommended, although it is the only one specified in the top-level educational guidelines for ECEC in Latvia.

Five countries provide ECEC settings with **standardised tests** or guidelines to assess children in ECEC but the focus of these may differ. For instance, in Bulgaria and North Macedonia, there are standardised tests or guidelines for each of the main areas of learning and development in ECEC. In Denmark, the scope of the tests is more specific. In order to ensure that all children receive adequate support in their language development, a form assessing vocabulary and the ability to create sentences must be filled in by staff and parents when children are 3 years old, or 2 years old if the local authorities decide as such.

**Self-assessment** is adopted in ten countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and the United Kingdom – Scotland), as well as in Luxembourg for pre-primary classes. This method of assessment takes into account and prioritises the child's own experiences and views. It also encourages children to take an active part in learning: they become aware of what they have learned and achieved, and they come to understand the difficulties they have and what could be done to overcome them. This helps children to construct a positive idea of themselves as learners.

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<sup>(6)</sup> [http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin\\_officiel.html?cid\\_bo=97298%20](http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=97298%20)  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid97131/suivi-et-evaluation-a-l-ecole-maternelle.html>.

# EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

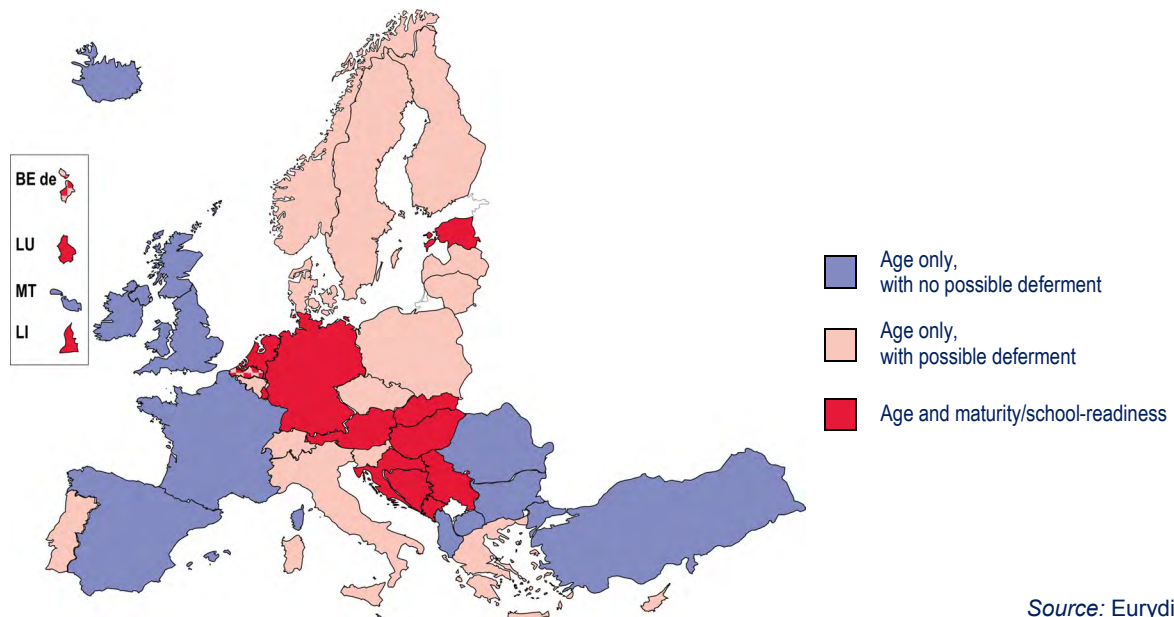
## SECTION II – TRANSITIONS

### AGE IS THE MAIN CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

In Europe, the official starting age for primary education varies between 4 in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) to 7 in Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden. However, criteria other than age may be applied for admission to the first year of compulsory primary education and, if a child does not meet the necessary conditions, entry may be deferred.

In 29 education systems, reaching the **official age** is the only condition for the admission of children to the first year of primary education. It should be noted that only the mainstream situation is reflected here; deferment for health reasons, or different provisions made for children with special educational needs (SEN) or for children from migrant backgrounds are not considered here. In the case of 14 education systems where age is the only condition (Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain, France, Malta, Romania, the United Kingdom – all four systems, Albania, Iceland, North Macedonia and Turkey), deferment is not permitted. In the other 15 education systems where reaching the official starting age is the only entry condition, deferment is nevertheless possible at the request of parents or at the suggestion of the ECEC setting, where they consider that a child is not ready to start primary education.

**Figure D6: Criteria for admission to the first year of primary education, 2018/19**



#### Explanatory note

The Figure does not take into consideration deferment of entry to primary education for health reasons or for children with recognised SEN or for children from migrant backgrounds recently arrived in the country.

#### Country-specific note

**Belgium (BE de, BE nl):** School readiness is systematically assessed only with regard to children who have not attended the final year of pre-primary education for a sufficient period of time.



**Readiness for school** is considered in addition to age in 14 education systems. This condition may be applied to all children or only to those in specific circumstances. This criterion is based on the concept that a child must have attained a certain level of development and be deemed ready for school. This means that a child should be emotionally, mentally, psychologically and physically mature enough to cope with the demands of primary education. He/she is also expected to have acquired working and learning habits as well as certain basic cognitive skills.

All children are checked for their readiness for school before admission to primary education in eleven central and (south)-eastern countries (Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Serbia). In addition, children's language skills are included in the admission criteria in Germany and Austria.

In two cases, school readiness is considered only when children have not attended ECEC for a sufficient length of time. In Belgium (German-speaking Community), a child who has not attended kindergarten will be assessed by the centre for health and development of children and teenagers. In Belgium (Flemish Community), children who do not have a satisfactory attendance record in Dutch-speaking pre-primary education during the preceding year are assessed by the class council of the primary school.

## **PARENTS HAVE A DECISION-MAKING ROLE IN DEFERRING ADMISSION TO PRIMARY EDUCATION IN HALF OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

Primary school admission can be postponed in a majority of education systems. These include systems where school readiness is a condition of entry as well as others where reaching the official school age is normally the only criterion (see Figure D6). In 14 education systems, school readiness is checked for children before they enrol in primary education. Where they are deemed not to be ready, they are normally kept in pre-primary education. In the other 15 education systems, when there are indications that a child is not ready to start primary education, a request for the deferment of admission can be made by parents or proposed by other parties. The final decision on admission (or deferment), which may be informed by results of an assessment of the child's development carried out through a specific procedure involving specialists, is usually taken by parents, educational institutions or educational authorities, or a combination of these.

In almost all the countries where children normally start primary school when they reach the official age but deferment is possible, parents play a key role in the decision-making process. This is also the case in one country where school readiness is a condition for entry (Slovakia). In Italy, Czechia, Poland, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, the question of deferment only arises at the request of parents or if they consent to a request being made. In Slovenia and Switzerland, both parents and other parties may propose postponement. The final decision is made in Czechia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Poland by the primary school where the child is to be enrolled, in Italy by the ECEC setting, and in Sweden and Switzerland by the local school authority. In Finland, the competent authority for decision-making is the local education authority, which can delegate the final decision on deferment to the primary school. In Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Norway, either the ECEC setting, the parents, or a specialised service may suggest deferment but the final decision cannot be made without parental consent. In Germany, where deferment may also be proposed by other parties, either the parents or the head of the primary school makes the final decision, depending on *Länder* regulations.

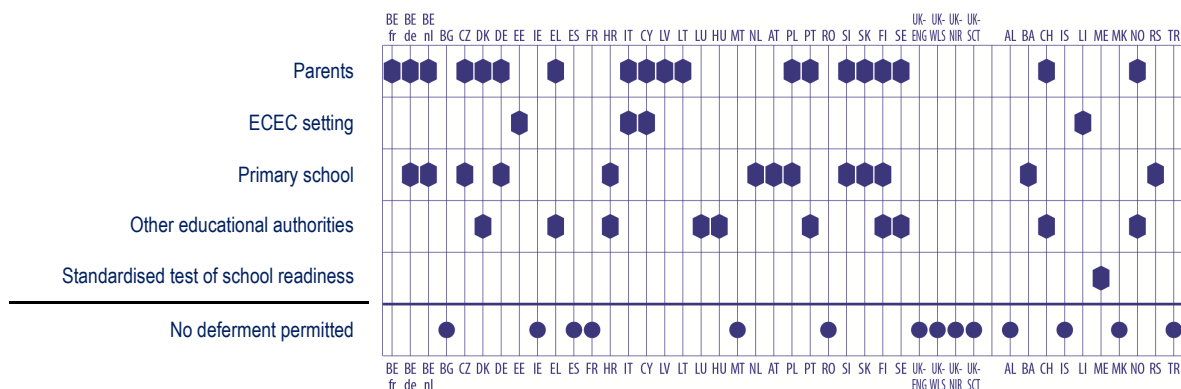
In several education systems where school readiness is an admission criterion, parents are not key decision-makers in the deferment process.

In four countries, staff of the ECEC setting play an important role in the deferment of a child's admission to primary school. In Estonia, Luxembourg, Hungary and Liechtenstein, the ECEC setting decides whether a child is ready to start primary education (ISCED 1). In Estonia, the ECEC setting issues a school readiness card describing the child's level of development, which parents must show to the primary school. In Hungary, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, parents may still contest the decision made by the staff in the ECEC setting and specialists will be consulted. In Luxembourg, the regional director for education takes the final decision on deferment, while in Hungary, it is the official expert committee of the school.

Primary school assessment is the main determinant of school readiness in five other countries: Croatia, the Netherlands, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. In Croatia, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, the primary school in which the child is to be enrolled is responsible for deciding on the child's readiness for school on the basis of an assessment which is part of the enrolment process. In Croatia, if the result of the examination by the primary school is negative, the county office for education takes the final decision.

In Montenegro, the assessment of a child's readiness is organised by educational authorities at county level. The results of a national standardised test of school readiness determine whether a child may start primary school.

**Figure D7: Decision-making in determining and deferring a child's admission to the first year of primary education, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

This Figure focuses on the parties who have a decision-making role in determining deferring a child's admission to primary education: those who may request deferment, those who take the final decision as well as those whose approval is needed. The figure does not consider the parties who only have a consultative role, such as specialists or parents in many countries. The Figure does not take into consideration deferment of entry to primary education for health reasons, for children with recognised SEN, or for children from migrant backgrounds recently arrived in the country

**Country-specific notes**

**Belgium (BE de, BE nl):** Primary schools may take the decision on deferring admission without parental consent only with respect to children who have not attended pre-primary education for a sufficient period of time.

**Germany:** Children who are about to start school are examined by a paediatrician (school-entry test) in order to check their readiness for school. The results of the test are indicative; parents or the head of the primary school take the final decision depending on *Länder* regulations.

**Finland:** The competent authorities for decision-making are the local education authorities. They can decide to delegate the final decision on deferment to the primary schools they maintain.



## THE SAME EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK COVERS BOTH ECEC AND HIGHER LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN NINE COUNTRIES

The transition from ECEC to primary education is a phase which has been the focus of a good deal of attention across Europe. Many ECEC systems have introduced structural measures to ensure a smooth transition to primary education. In order to increase ECEC participation rates and promote school readiness, a period of ECEC is now compulsory in over a third of European countries (see Figure B3). Ten of these countries have introduced a specific pre-primary programme that lasts one or two years (see national sheets).

Aligning the top-level educational guidelines for ECEC and primary education is another measure that can help pave the way for a smoother transition between the two levels of education. A majority of countries report that educational guidelines for ECEC and primary education issued at the top-level have been aligned (see Figure D8). Some countries have done this by ensuring that the guidelines reflect a vertical progression in learning between the two levels. Others have converged the learning content, through for example, the key competences to be developed, the learning areas to be taught, the main principles to be pursued or the pedagogical approaches to be implemented.

In **France**, the curricula for the settings for older children and those for the first three years of primary education have been developed according to a single framework (*Charte des programmes* <sup>(7)</sup>) setting the common principles that learning must be inclusive, help pupils better understand the world and adopt rational approaches, as well as foster critical thinking and democratic ideals.

In **Austria**, the Ministry of Education published guidelines in 2016 <sup>(8)</sup> for promoting a common conceptual educational framework for *kindergarten* and primary school. A holistic and competence-oriented understanding of development and learning, individualisation, differentiation and empowerment should be the basis for successful learning in both levels.

In **Portugal**, the structure of the content areas, domains and subdomains of the Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education are aligned with syllabus subjects for the 1st cycle of primary education.

In **Slovenia**, the *kindergarten* and school curricula were developed as part of the same curricular reform (1996-1999) with the principle that education programmes have to be consistent and aligned vertically and horizontally. Similar subject areas (i.e. languages, art, environment, mathematics) are covered in both frameworks, especially for the first three-year cycle of basic school (offering integrated primary and lower secondary education).

In **Finland**, the national curricula for ECEC, pre-primary education and primary education are aligned and complement each other with the aim of building a continuous learning path for the child. According to these three curricula, local providers are required to ensure alignment, coordination and cooperation in the development of their local level curricula from ECEC to primary education.

In **Norway**, both the Framework Plan for ECEC and the Core Curriculum for schools emphasise the importance of linguistic, social and cultural competences.

In **Montenegro**, when developing primary school programmes, vertical progression is observed, in terms of the fields of activities in pre-school education: physical education, music education, languages, mathematics, environment, and visual arts.

In **Serbia**, the goals of ECEC and primary education are aligned. For instance, they both mention developing confidence in oneself and others; encouraging independence and individual responsibility; developing intellectual capacities in accordance with development needs; developing social and moral values; developing motor skills; encouraging creativity; and developing awareness of the importance of protecting and preserving the natural and social environment.

In order to support continuity and progression in children's learning between levels, the same top-level educational guidelines cover both ECEC (although usually only the second or compulsory stage of ECEC) and higher levels of education in nine countries. However, they may cover one or more stages

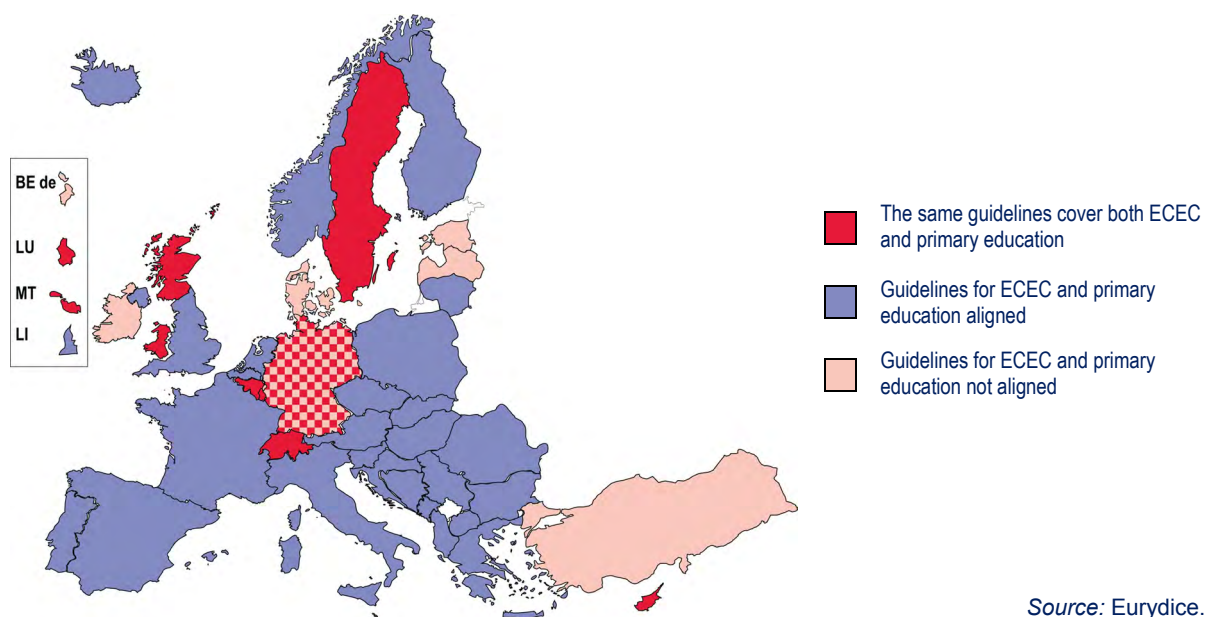
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<sup>(7)</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid75495/le-conseil-superieur-des-programmes.html>

<sup>(8)</sup> 'Individualisierung und differenzierte Förderung in der Schuleingangsphase'  
<http://www.charlotte-buehler-institut.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Individualisierung-BMB-final-2016-.pdf>

of primary and secondary education, depending on the country. In the United Kingdom (Wales), the guidelines span both the end of ECEC and the first years of primary school. In Cyprus, they cover ECEC provision for children aged 3 and over as well as primary education. In Luxembourg and Sweden, they apply to the compulsory part of ECEC and the whole period of primary education. In Germany, in some *Länder* (e.g. Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia), the educational guidelines cover both ECEC and primary education, complementing a separate curriculum for primary education. In Belgium (French Community), the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Switzerland, a single set of guidelines covers the last years of ECEC, primary education and a part or the whole of secondary education. In Malta, a framework of learning outcomes covers the whole of ECEC, primary and secondary education.

**Figure D8: Alignment of top-level educational guidelines for ECEC and primary education, 2018/19**



### **Country-specific note**

**Germany:** The Common Framework of the *Länder* for ECEC as well as a common resolution of the Standing Conferences of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Ministers of Family and Youth affairs of the *Länder* recommend shared educational content and pedagogical methods between ECEC and school. In several *Länder*, the educational guidelines/framework plans cover both ECEC and primary education. In others, the guidelines for ECEC are separate.

Finally, in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, and Turkey, the top-level educational guidelines for ECEC are separate from those of primary education and are not aligned. However, in Ireland, CPD is available to support teachers in using the principles and themes of the curriculum framework for ECEC (*Aistear*) to inform their teaching in the early years of primary education.

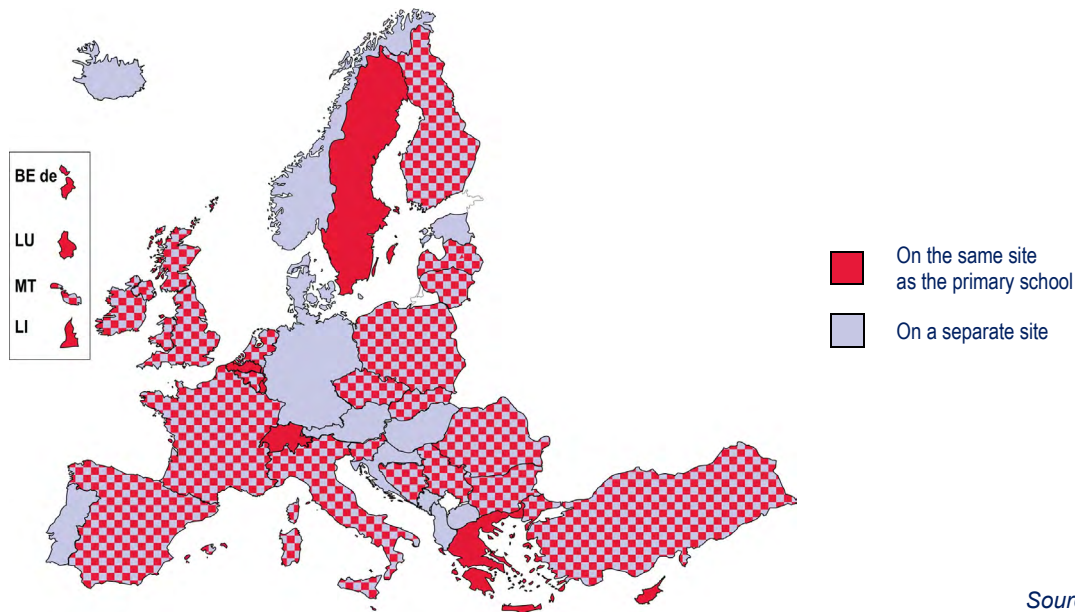
## **IN THE MAJORITY OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS, SOME CHILDREN UNDERTAKE THE LAST YEAR OF ECEC ON THE SAME SITE AS THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Transition to primary education may be easier for children who have already spent part of their ECEC phase on the same site as the primary school. Not only are they already familiar with the site but the collaboration between ECEC staff and school staff may also make the transition easier.

Figure D9 shows where the last year of ECEC is delivered. It may either be on the same site as the primary school – be it with the same headship or a different one – or in a separate site. In the majority

of education systems, some children spend their last year of ECEC on the same site as the primary school while others stay in the ECEC setting. In eight education systems, all children are on the school site for their last year of ECEC (Belgium – German-speaking and Flemish Communities, Greece, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). However, in 12 others, children only move to the site of the primary school at the start of primary education (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Norway).

**Figure D9: Location of the last year of ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

The Figure does not take into account ECEC groups organised in primary schools in less populated areas.

The age at which children start an ECEC programme on the same site as the primary school varies. In Slovenia, some children may undertake the whole ECEC phase in schools.

In 22 education systems, the transition to the site of the primary school happens when some or all children move from a childcare-type setting to an education-type setting (see Figure A2), usually at age 3. All children undertake the ECEC programme for older children on the same site as the primary school in seven education systems (Belgium – German-speaking and Flemish Communities, Greece, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). Only some children do so in 16 additional education systems, (Belgium – French Community, Czechia, Ireland, Italy, Spain, France, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the United Kingdom – all four jurisdictions, and Turkey).

Finally, 10 countries organise a specific compulsory programme to prepare children for primary education during the last one or two years of ECEC (see National Information Sheets). In Cyprus and Luxembourg<sup>(9)</sup>, children are on the same site as the pre-primary school before entering these pre-primary classes. In Sweden, where the earlier period of ECEC is provided in ECEC settings (*förskola*), the pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*) attended by children from the age of 6 are located on the same site as the primary school. In six additional countries, only some of the pre-primary classes are organised on the same site (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). In Croatia, children only move into school when they start primary education.

<sup>(9)</sup> In Luxembourg, most children have already attended a one-year optional programme (*éducation précoce*) on the same site as the primary schools. For the minority of those who make a direct transition from provision for younger children (*service d'éducation et d'accueil*) to pre-primary classes (*éducation préscolaire*), the transition to the site of the primary school only happens when they move into pre-primary classes.







Passing on information about a child's achievements during ECEC to the primary school is the second most common transition measure. It is emphasised by 17 education systems, with some of them giving specific instructions on the type and format of the child-focused information to be provided to the next teacher. The information given on standard forms may include school readiness (Estonia), a summary of children achievements (France), a progress report (Malta and the United Kingdom – England), portfolios containing documentation on children's development and results from language tests (Austria) or individual learning plans (Finland). Finland, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) and Iceland emphasise the need for ECEC staff to pass on all the information necessary for a successful adaptation to primary education.

Eleven education systems (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Switzerland and Norway) mention that ECEC settings should organise meetings to allow parents to familiarise themselves with the learning environment of the primary school.

In addition to recommending measures to ECEC settings, Finland, Iceland and Norway also underline the responsibilities of local level authorities in establishing effective strategies and practices to ensure a smooth transition from ECEC to primary education. In Denmark, Ireland, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Serbia, the top-level educational guidelines state the importance of ECEC settings in promoting a smooth transition to primary education, without mentioning any specific type of measure. This is also the case in the Netherlands for the early childhood education programmes targeting children from disadvantaged backgrounds (*voorschoolse educatie*). In all these countries, the practical transition measures to be implemented are left to the discretion of the setting. In countries where there are no top-level guidelines on the matter, local authorities or settings might also decide to introduce transition measures. In Czechia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports issued a call in 2018 for nursery schools to apply for grants to fund measures to facilitate transition to primary education.

# EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

## SECTION III – SUPPORT MEASURES

### THE MOST COMMON FORM OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN ECEC IS SPEECH THERAPY

The ability to communicate effectively is essential if children are to complete their education successfully. Language and communication is therefore one of the main areas of children's learning and development covered in ECEC educational guidelines (see Figure D3). Moreover, most European countries have top-level recommendations for language support to improve individual children's language development. Figure D11 shows two main approaches to language support. It is offered to children who:

- a) have additional needs in speech, language and communication in the language of instruction regardless of their home language
- b) speak other language(s) at home and need to improve their skills in the language of instruction.

Most of the language support measures referred to in top-level guidelines fall into the first category, with many countries recommending or requiring ECEC settings to address these additional needs by providing speech therapy or other kinds of specialist support on an individual basis.

In **Portugal**, speech therapy may be provided under the National System for Early Intervention. It is targeted at children 0-6 years who are at risk of poor outcomes in their education and who need additional support in order to achieve their full potential.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland)**, language support is provided under the Flying Start (Wales) and Sure Start (Northern Ireland) programmes for children under 3 and is targeted specifically at disadvantaged children. Hence in Wales, speech and language therapists may be part of the Flying Start team in local authorities where there are additional needs in speech, language and communication.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, under the top-level educational guidelines for additional support for learning, speech and language delay are identified as an area of need that entitles children to additional support.

Other types of measure to address speech, language and communication needs in the language of instruction may be small group remedial activities or individualised learning programmes.

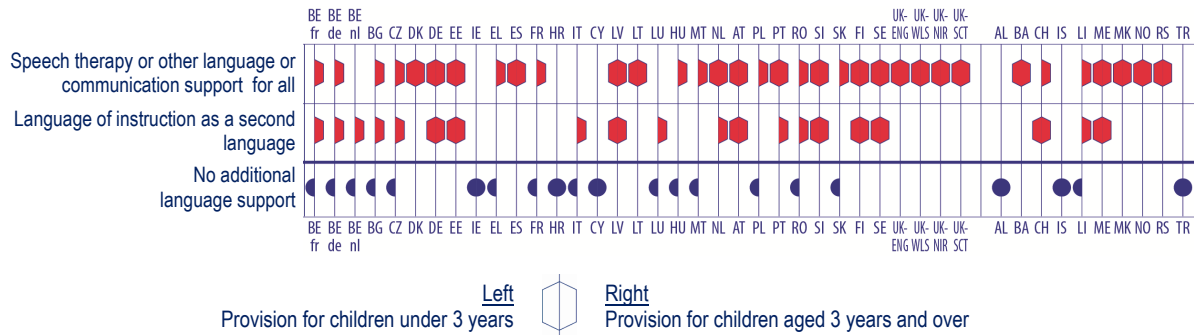
For instance, in **France**, support for children experiencing language learning difficulties in pre-primary school is provided by pre-primary teachers outside the core timetable through small group activities involving play or discovering the written word.

In **Latvia**, the needs of children who are late in developing speaking skills in their home language are addressed through an adapted primary school preparatory programme, which takes place during the last two years of ECEC.

The second approach to providing language support, i.e., to children for whom the language of instruction is not the home language is taken in around half of the education systems. The measures recommended by top-level authorities include preparatory classes (e.g. in Belgium – French Community), the teaching of the language of instruction as a second language in additional classes (e.g. Liechtenstein and Portugal), and the use of specific assessment tools.

For example, in **Austria**, in the context of an increased focus on early language skills since 2005, the Federal Government has introduced specific instruments for language assessment in kindergartens. The assessment in German language proficiency (*Sprachstandsfeststellung*) identifies the potential language support needs of all children 15 months prior to starting primary school in order to make sure that children get specific support. With the new 2018-22 agreement between the Federal Government and the *Länder* on pre-primary education, a new standardised language assessment instrument will be used nationwide from 2019/20.

**Figure D11: Approaches to language support in ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

Language support refers to additional structured activities outside the normal education programme that are intended to improve individual children's language development. The Figure includes any support specified by top-level authorities in their educational guidelines or other regulations or recommendations, national programmes or any funding they provide to schools to implement such activities. Bilingual education programmes provided exclusively in the state languages of a country are out of the scope of this indicator.

Both types of approaches can also be incorporated into comprehensive programmes for language support.

In **Germany**, there is a federal programme available (*Sprach-Kitas* – ECEC Centres Promoting Children's Language Development, 2016-2019) – which aims to improve children's language skills in the language of instruction. Currently up to 3 500 ECEC centres have access to an additional specialist coordinator that supports the ECEC team in embedding language education into everyday pedagogical practice; the participating ECEC centres also receive professional counselling from external support systems like the *Fachberatung* (professional counselling system). The programme also involves collaboration with parents and covers refugee children who have been forced to flee their home countries.

Although many European countries indicate that language support should be available for the entire period of ECEC, some countries specifically target children over the age of 3 (e.g. Belgium – Flemish Community, Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Romania). There is no additional language support specified by top-level authorities for either age group in Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus, Albania, Iceland and Turkey. In several other countries, language support to children for whom the language of instruction is not the home language is not specified. However, settings in these countries may still provide language support as a result of decisions taken at setting or municipal level. For example:

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, although no specific additional support is indicated, the pedagogical framework for childcare (under 3 years of age) mentions that practitioners should address children in a language that is adjusted to their level, but which is also enriching and respects the child's home language.

In **Lithuania**, top-level regulations or recommendations do not refer to support for children who speak another language at home. However, settings have to produce their own curriculum, which can include language support.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, as specified in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017), 'For children whose home language is not English, [...] providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS: ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year 1.'

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, it is recognised that children who are learners of two or more languages are not necessarily disadvantaged by this. Support is provided on the basis of need, to address individual barriers to learning and support all children to thrive.

In **Iceland**, laws and regulations do not specifically refer to language support in pre-schools. However, it is common practice that pre-schools and/or municipalities form their own policy on welcoming and supporting children with Icelandic as a second language.

## A MINORITY OF COUNTRIES PROVIDE TEACHING IN HOME LANGUAGES IN ECEC

UNESCO has been advocating home language (or mother tongue) teaching in pre-primary and primary education since 1953 <sup>(10)</sup>. Welcoming and valuing all children's home language forms part of the recommendations to Member States made in the Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems <sup>(11)</sup>. However, top-level education authorities recommend home language teaching in ECEC in a minority of education systems.

Home language teaching refers to measures to improve children's skills in their home language where it is not the main language used in the ECEC and school context.

Two main types of language support are offered: (a) support for regional or minority languages and (b) support for languages spoken by children from migrant backgrounds (see Figure D12).

In the first, home language teaching is provided in the regional or minority languages in the country. The objective is to promote the cultural identity of these ethnic or national minorities. This type of support can be found in several central and eastern European countries (Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Romania and Montenegro) as well as in the United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland). For example,

The **Estonian** Ministry of Education and Research provides financial support for Sunday schools that provide home language teaching in seventeen different ethnic minority languages for children from 3 to 18 years.

In **Poland**, at the request of parents, school heads in public settings are obliged to organise national or ethnic minority language learning (e.g. Lithuanian, German, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Kashubian) for children aged 3 and over.

**Slovenia** provides bilingual settings in the areas inhabited by Italian and Hungarian minorities. In the area where the Italian minority lives, ECEC is provided either in settings where the language of instruction is Slovenian and children learn Italian as a second language, or vice versa. In the areas inhabited by the Hungarian minority, teaching is provided in both Slovenian and Hungarian. The educational authorities have issued a Supplement to the Curriculum for working in ethnically mixed areas. Bilingual settings are entitled to receive extra funds for specific CPD. Moreover, these settings may benefit from such advantages as smaller group sizes, extra staff or a higher level of education among staff.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, some ECEC settings are Welsh-medium settings. In settings where English is the main medium of instruction, young children's Welsh language skills are developed from age 3 through the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning in the Foundation Phase curriculum.

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, children may attend Irish-medium pre-school settings.

**Montenegro** has pre-school activities in Albanian in certain areas. In addition, Roma speaking staff are employed to foster language development among Roma children.

The second type of home language provision is for the languages of children from migrant backgrounds. Hence, in Spain, Portugal and Switzerland, home language teaching is provided in the languages for which there is an agreement with the countries of origin or with the immigrant communities. In Spain and Portugal, the bilateral agreements referred to have been made within the framework of the 1977 Council Directive.

**Spain** has bilateral agreements with several countries, for example with Portugal <sup>(12)</sup>, to promote knowledge of their respective languages to students from these countries in order to safeguard their identity and culture. For example, the Autonomous Community of Extremadura <sup>(13)</sup> is running the 'Programme of Portuguese Language and Culture' in ECEC and primary schools. The programme is an integral part of all school activities. Other activities include student exchanges, study visits, cultural weeks, etc.

<sup>(10)</sup> See: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000212270>

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/educacion/mc/bilinguismo/lc-portuguesa.html>

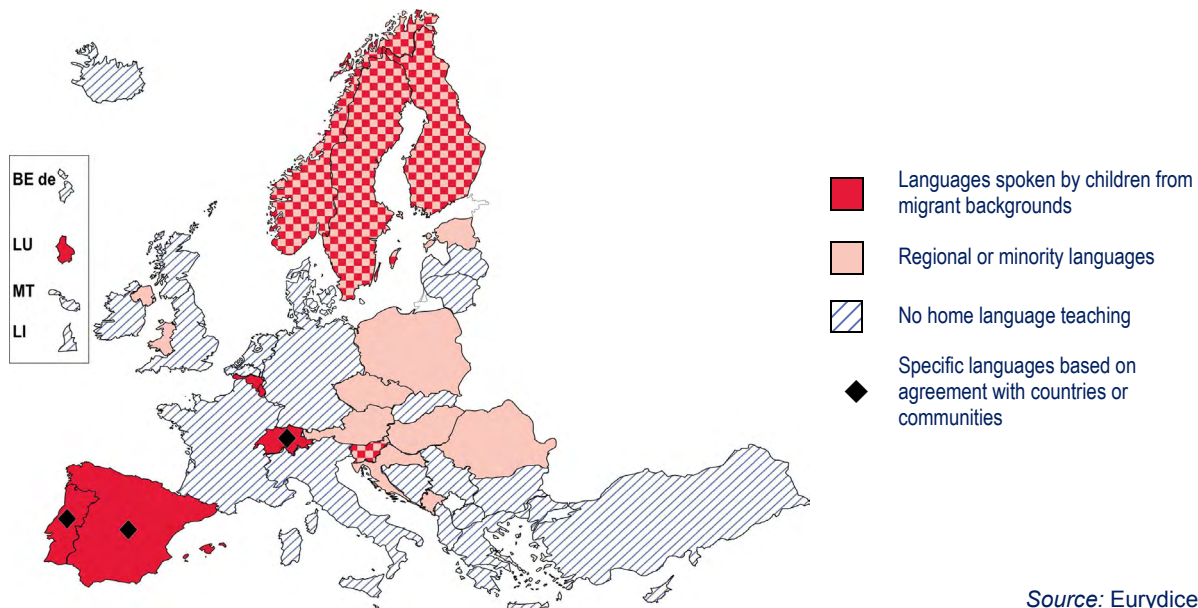
<sup>(13)</sup> [http://www.educarex.es/pub/cont/com/0004/documentos/Ins\\_24\\_2013.pdf](http://www.educarex.es/pub/cont/com/0004/documentos/Ins_24_2013.pdf)

**Portugal** has a bilateral agreement with Romania to offer classes in the Romanian language and culture for children aged 3 and over from a Romanian background; the aim is to develop their identity and cultural awareness. These classes are open to all children.

**In Switzerland**, for children from migrant backgrounds, the cantons support courses in home languages and culture provided by the countries of origin and the various language communities.

Moreover, in six education systems, the top-level regulations and recommendations advocate home language teaching for all children from migrant backgrounds, irrespective of their origin. This approach can be found in Belgium (French Community), Luxembourg, Slovenia, and three Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden and Norway).

**Figure D12: Support for home language teaching in ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

The Figure reflects the content of top-level educational guidelines and other top-level regulations and recommendations. For a definition of regional or minority languages and home language, see the Glossary. The teaching of regional or minority languages applies only to the settings for older children (around age 3 and over), except in Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and Norway where it applies to the whole ECEC phase. Home language teaching for children from migrant backgrounds applies to the whole ECEC phase, except in Portugal and Switzerland where it applies only to the settings for older children.

### **Country-specific note**

**Austria:** Home language teaching in minority languages applies to the provinces of Burgenland and Carinthia.

In some cases, both approaches to home language teaching are supported, i.e., providing a support framework for the languages of children from migrant backgrounds as well as giving additional funding for specific minority languages.

For instance in **Sweden**, the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) stipulates that 'Pre-schools shall contribute to giving children whose home language other than Swedish the opportunity to develop both the Swedish language and their home language' <sup>(14)</sup>. In addition, special minority rights protection is given to Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in so-called 'administrative areas' (*förvaltningsområden*). This gives individuals the right to use Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in their dealings with the authorities and also the right to pre-school partly or completely in the minority language. The municipalities within the administrative areas are allocated government funding for the additional costs.

According to the top-level regulations or recommendations of the countries concerned, three different purposes of home language teaching for children from migrant backgrounds can be identified (see Figure D13).

<sup>(14)</sup> [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800\\_sfs-2010-800#K8](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800#K8)

**Figure D13: The main purposes of home language teaching**

Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3
Facilitate the teaching of the dominant language, which, in this context, is the language of instruction	Support migrant children's language/culture maintenance and literacy acquisition	Foster bilingualism and plurilingualism among all children

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, Figure II.2.2

The first goal is to help children improve their skills in the language of instruction. Proficiency in the home language is considered to have a positive impact on the learner's cognitive skills in general, including on their ability to learn and to master the language of instruction.

In **Luxembourg** in pre-primary education (*éducation précoce, éducation préscolaire*), the concept of plurilingual education for children aged 3-6 explicitly gives room to the home language as a basis for learning new languages.

The second purpose is to promote migrant children's home language skills and cultural identity. Ultimately, this focus on home language learning is intended to help these children build a multicultural identity, and consequently facilitate their integration. Home language competency may also be seen as a way to recognise the diversity of linguistic capital and the value of cultural heritage.

For instance, in **Belgium (French Community)**, in new guidelines on language development for children introduced in 2018/19 <sup>(15)</sup>, the authority in charge of ECEC for children under 3 recommends ECEC staff to use books and songs in other languages and to encourage parents who have not mastered French to talk to their children in their home language. The purpose is to promote the culture of origin and cultural identity, valuing each language and facilitating the learning of the language of instruction.

The multilingualism educational programme introduced in **Luxembourg** in October 2017 for children aged 1 to 4 in non-formal education (*service d'éducation et d'accueil*) recommends that all children are encouraged to express themselves in their own language, in order that they develop a strong sense of identity.

The third purpose of home language teaching is to foster plurilingualism among all learners.

In **Luxembourg**, multilingualism is considered an asset to be used to foster language acquisition and openness towards diversity.

In **Finland**, all languages spoken in ECEC settings should be valued and used; they all pertain to the common culture. The curriculum promotes plurilingualism and aims to develop children's' language awareness.

In **Norway**, according to the Framework Plan, kindergarten staff should help ensure that linguistic diversity is enriching for all children and they should encourage multilingual children to use their home language.

## ONLY A QUARTER OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES OFFER HOME LEARNING GUIDANCE

Parent participation in their children's education is essential; therefore, parents are the most important partners in delivering high-quality ECEC, according to the 'Proposal for the key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014). The Proposal also states that the 'family should be fully involved in all aspects of education and care for their child' and that ECEC services should support the learning and care provided by families (European Commission, 2014, p. 8).

Most European countries emphasise the importance of partnership with parents and encourage settings to include specific measures in their planning. Moreover, many countries recommend the

<sup>(15)</sup> [Accompagner le développement du langage du jeune enfant en milieu d'accueil.](#)

types of support that settings should provide to parents. Figure D14 shows how many top-level authorities specify the following support measures for parents in ECEC:

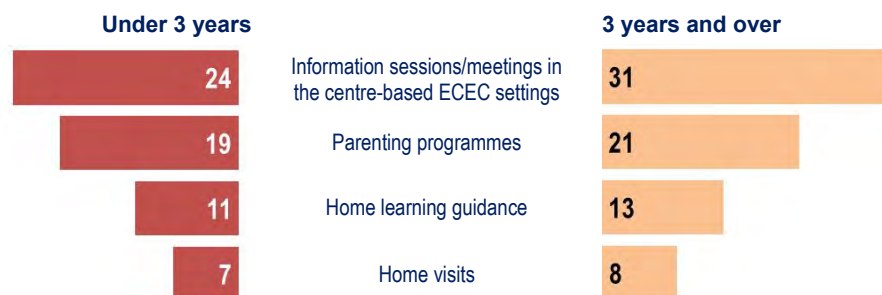
- a) Information sessions and parent-teacher meetings in the ECEC setting.
- b) Parenting programmes which offer formal classes to help families create a home environment that supports children as learners. The classes cover a variety of topics relating to children's education and development (for example, encouraging speech/language development, maintaining discipline, building self-esteem, and understanding challenging behaviour).
- c) Home learning guidance which helps parents encourage their children's learning at home by providing information and ideas on how to help their children with curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
- d) Home visits.

A range of measures is required to respond to the needs of different types of families, and families with children of different ages. Many education systems therefore have a comprehensive approach to parenting support, which incorporates several of these measures.

In **Germany**, according to federal law, parents are entitled to be supported and advised by the Child and Youth Welfare Services on matters of child rearing and family education (§§ 1, 16 SGB VIII). The National Initiative on Prevention and Early Intervention (*Bundesinitiative Frühe Hilfen*) promotes the sustainable implementation of early intervention services at the municipal level. The main idea is to support parents' educational competencies through preventive programmes in order to reduce the risks for children and to strengthen families. Service provision is very heterogeneous and comprises universal as well as targeted programmes. The most common services are: welcome letters from municipalities; welcoming home visits; parenting courses; parent-child-groups/baby and toddler groups; prevention projects addressing pupil needs; professionals supporting families on a voluntary basis; counselling services for parents; educational support by multi-professional teams (*Erziehungshilfen*).

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, '[Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support](#)' acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be successful. It sets out a range of possible parent support measures and the overall principles that parenting support is about working with parents to reduce risks; strengthening parenting capacity; developing and building resilience; and sustaining positive change with the overarching aim of improving outcomes for children.

**Figure D14: Support measures for parents with children in ECEC, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

#### **Explanatory note**

The Figure includes any support specified by top-level authorities in their educational guidelines, other regulations or recommendations, or national programmes. For each age range, the number on the bar indicates the number of European education systems (43 in total) offering each support measure. Information by country is available in the Annex.

The most common form of support for parents with children in ECEC settings is through **information sessions and parent-staff meetings**, which should form the basis of a regular dialogue between families and ECEC practitioners. Parents receive information on their child's progress and development, and parents may be given advice on how to support their child's education. Some countries specify the frequency or format of such meetings, for example:



In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, according to the Decree of 31 August 1998, Article 97, the role of each member of the teaching staff includes communication with parents, including participation in parent consultations.

In **Bulgaria**, the Pre-school and School Educational Act determines that parents have a right to receive information, support and counselling at the kindergarten or school on issues related to the education, school guidance and personal development of their child at least once a year.

In **Czechia**, according to the curriculum, teachers should regularly inform parents about their children's achievements and progress. Nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) should also support family education and provide guidance. However, the ways this should be done are not prescribed. According to the Annual Report of the Czech School Inspectorate most schools organise meetings with parents. Individual consultations with parents also take place.

In **France**, the 15/10/2013 Circular on cooperation between pre-primary schools and parents recommends ways to ensure that parents' rights to information are guaranteed in practice. It emphasises the need to use a language accessible to all parents, including those with special needs or those who are not proficient in the written language. The circular also suggests having special rooms for meetings with parents within schools.

In **Austria**, *Elternabende* (parents' evenings) are required twice a year by law in most *Länder*. However, many ECEC services offer meetings and guidance more often than the law requires.

In **North Macedonia**, three types of information sessions are organised with parents in ECEC settings: (1) group meetings with parents, (2) workshops and (3) open days.

In the countries which have no specific recommendations on the forms of support that should be provided to parents, informal meetings between staff and parents are also common practice.

**Parenting programmes** cover a variety of topics related to children's education and development and have similar objectives to those set for guidance on home learning. However, whereas parenting programmes involve parents attending formal courses, home-learning guidance is usually provided in a written format – usually online. Top-level authorities support or organise parenting programmes in half of the education systems.

In **Germany**, some programmes take place at home (e.g. Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters; Parents as Teachers); some other programmes take place in ECEC settings (e.g. *Sprache macht stark!* invites parents to join language education sessions in ECEC centres).

In **Estonia**, within the framework of the Strategy for Children and Families and its associated development plan, parenting programmes have been operating since 2012 covering topics such as child health and development, bullying in ECEC settings, and children's and parents' rights. Some training courses are provided within ECEC settings. Since 2017, the National Institute for Health Development has offered a parenting programme – The Incredible Years – that aims to strengthen parenting skills and foster parent involvement in children's education. It also seeks to improve children's academic, social and emotional skills as well as reduce behavioural problems.

In **Spain**, Family Schools and Parent Schools (*Escuela de Familias, Escuela de Padres*) aim to provide information, resources, psycho-social and pedagogical support to families. In addition, they are a meeting point where parents can share, with other families or with specialists, their strategies to ensure the well-being of their children. Usually, learning is non-formal: conferences, meetings, workshops, etc. Family Schools are organised by public administrations (Autonomous Communities, city councils or schools) or by private organisations (parents' associations or enterprises).

**Home-learning guidance** is provided by top-level authorities or included in their educational guidelines in a quarter of European countries. With the aim of boosting children's language development, cognitive development and academic achievement, home learning is sometimes referred to as the 'home curriculum' (OECD, 2012). The guidance aims to inspire parents to offer their children all kinds of learning experiences at home, both implicit and explicit, e.g. by involving children in routine activities (making grocery lists, shopping, preparing meals, getting dressed, making phone calls, etc.) and to stimulate children further by talking about these activities. Often, top-level authorities set up websites or provide printed information for parents on the education of their children.



## EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

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The **Irish** Curriculum Framework for ECEC contains information not only for ECEC practitioners but also for parents. The information is intended to help parents 'plan and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences enabling children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners'.

In **France**, since 1999, the ministry responsible for the family provides financial support for a range of actions and tools developed at regional or local level which aim to help practitioners listen to, support, and share their experience with parents <sup>(16)</sup>, including by developing their confidence in their educational role. Moreover, a national parenting support plan adopted in June 2018, *Draw me a Parent*, invites ECEC settings to set their own policy regarding support for parents and to develop related projects. Warning parents and professionals against, for example, overexposure of children to touch screens also features among the objectives of the plan.

The **Lithuanian** Ministry of Education and Science provides a [page for parents](#) on their website. Guidance materials for parents are also available, e.g. '[Your child – a pre-schooler](#)', '[Second language at an early age](#)' and '[Your child – in pre-primary](#)'. These publications are intended to help parents better understand their child, help them develop their knowledge and track their child's development. There is also a [portal with resources](#) for teachers and parents of children in ECEC.

In **Austria**, a [website for parental education](#) is maintained by the federal chancellery.

**Home visits** involving ECEC staff (teachers or specialists) are recommended in only a few European education systems. These visits are mostly intended to support families from disadvantaged backgrounds, but they are also often available for parents of children with learning difficulties. The purpose of such visits is twofold: 1) providing advice to parents and 2) learning more about a child's family environment to better understand its needs.

In **Romania**, home visits may be carried out in specific circumstances: when parents are not in regular contact with the ECEC setting/staff, when specific support measures are being considered, when a child has difficulties in adapting to a new ECEC setting and/or communicating with staff or other children, etc. Although not explicitly recommended in top-level policy documents, home visits are a common practice.

In **Slovenia** and **Slovakia**, home visits are mostly targeted at Roma families with a view to creating links with the Roma community and promoting the importance of using ECEC services.

Where no central recommendations exist, local authorities and/or ECEC services are free to choose their own ways of cooperating with and providing assistance to families. For example:

In **Italy**, in keeping with the principle of schools' organisational autonomy, central guidelines may not set down which measures should be implemented. In addition to regularly held mandatory class councils with parent representatives to discuss children's overall development and the work being carried out by ECEC teachers, many schools also organise individual and/or group meetings with parents.

In the **Netherlands**, the decree on basic conditions for quality pre-school education mentions that ECEC providers should design parental involvement activities. The inspectorate of educational programmes monitors ECEC settings in this respect.

In **Poland**, pre-school settings traditionally organise regular meetings for parents, however, this is not regulated by law.

It is important to note that ECEC settings are not the only providers of support.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, the psycho-medical-social centres (PSM) organise counselling and parenting programmes.

In **Austria**, different bodies (mostly non-governmental organisations) run centrally financed education projects for parents.

In **Finland**, participation of and cooperation with parents is emphasised in regulations and guidelines for ECEC and pre-primary education. However, municipal child health clinics monitor the wellbeing of the whole family and support parenting.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, within the framework of the [National Parenting Strategy](#) launched in 2012, all parents, regardless of whether their children are enrolled in ECEC services, benefit from support through parenting clubs and courses, and have access to books, toys and web-based resources to encourage development through play.

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<sup>(16)</sup> [Réseaux d'Ecoute, d'Appui et d'Accompagnement des Parents](#).  
[http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Parents\\_eleves/04/6/SoutienParentalite-FicheREAAP\\_159046.pdf](http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Parents_eleves/04/6/SoutienParentalite-FicheREAAP_159046.pdf)

## EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Evaluation and monitoring systems are designed to achieve, maintain or develop high quality provision in ECEC by identifying strengths and weaknesses, which can then be built upon or remedied. The Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems <sup>(1)</sup> identifies evaluation and monitoring as one of the five dimensions crucial for ensuring high quality ECEC. Evaluation and monitoring can focus on any level of administration or provision: individual settings, local level, or the entire ECEC system; it can be carried out internally by the settings themselves or externally by outside evaluators who are not directly involved in the activities of the setting being evaluated. Within the overall framework of improving the quality of education, monitoring and evaluation involves many different processes and procedures. For example, checking whether regulations are being followed, or whether the processes in place to support and guarantee children's wellbeing and development are of high quality. In this chapter the term evaluation is used when referring to individual settings, while monitoring refers to the ECEC system as a whole.

Evaluation and monitoring systems in Europe are very diverse in the sense that the actors involved, their mission and the freedom they have to fulfil their tasks varies substantially between countries. This chapter aims to shed light on the processes and procedures used in ECEC monitoring and evaluation systems across Europe while, at the same time, taking into consideration related aspects of governance.

The chapter maps the approaches used in the external evaluation of ECEC settings by looking at their scope and the types of body responsible. It then offers a typology of the ways in which internal evaluation of centre-based settings, where it exists, is regulated by public authorities. The involvement of parents and children in evaluation and monitoring processes is also explored. Finally, the chapter examines the uses made of the results of the evaluations of ECEC settings or of other analyses that help provide a picture of the ECEC system as a whole thus leading to further improvements.

### SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING IS OFTEN A FOCUS FOR THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF SETTINGS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

One of the means used to ensure and develop quality in ECEC is the evaluation of individual settings. The external evaluation of settings is a quality control process which seeks to:

- evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting
- report on the quality of the provision
- suggest ways to improve practice.

Two main dimensions of quality are often emphasised in the ECEC context: structural quality and process quality (European Commission, 2014, Slot et al., 2015).

**Structural quality**, which refers to the framework conditions supporting the day-to-day practice within settings, is evaluated through checking compliance at the setting level with ECEC system regulations or guidelines on:

- health and safety
- staff qualifications
- group sizes or child/staff ratios.

In some cases the pedagogical plan is also checked to ensure it meets the standards set out in top-level educational guidelines.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.

**Process quality** refers to the how well the setting supports the learning process. The main areas evaluated are:

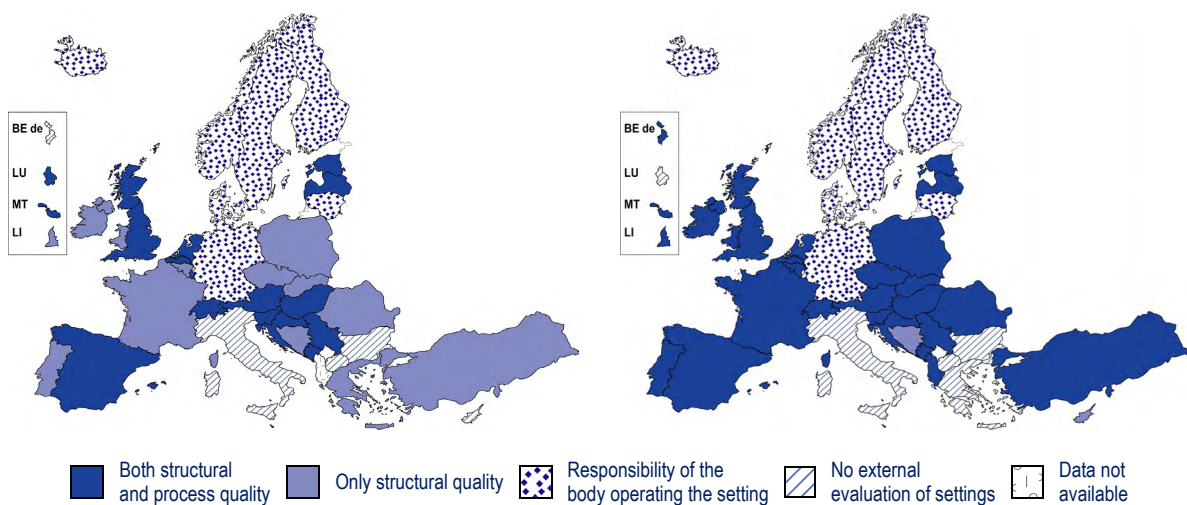
- how the curriculum is implemented (the quality and variety of activities)
- the quality of interactions and relationships between staff and children (how practitioners encourage children's development)
- how well children interact with each other.

By analysing the top-level guidelines, Figure E1 identifies whether the scope of the external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings primarily focuses on structural quality or whether it also extends to process quality. Both structural quality and process quality are needed to generate high quality provision and build effective ECEC systems (European Commission, 2014).

**Figure E1: Main focus of external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19**

**a) Settings for children under the age of 3 years**

**b) Settings for children aged 3 years and over**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure reflects the content of top-level educational guidelines and other top-level regulations and recommendations. External evaluation of settings: a quality control process carried out by individuals or teams who report to a local, regional or top-level education authority and who are not directly involved in the activities of the setting being evaluated, which seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on the quality of the provision and suggest ways to improve practice. **Structural quality** refers to the framework conditions supporting the day-to-day practice within the settings and is evaluated through checking compliance at setting level with ECEC system regulations and standards. **Process quality** refers to how well the setting supports the learning process.

Responsibility of the body operating the setting: refers to countries where the top-level regulations do not focus so much on settings but rather on the duty of providers to evaluate the quality of their provision, i.e., local authorities (municipalities), NGOs or other private bodies. These providers have a great deal of freedom to set up the processes and procedures for evaluating their own ECEC settings and aggregated information is limited.

**Country-specific notes**

**Bulgaria:** Following the adoption of a law on the inspection of *kindergarten* and schools in 2016, an inspection system is being implemented. Inspectors will focus both on education processes and compliance with regulations according to a set of common criteria that will be published. The first 80 *kindergarten* and schools were inspected during the period February-June 2019.

**France:** Central regulations allow for the external evaluation of pre-primary schools. These evaluations are under the control of local educational authorities and are not systematic. The evaluation system is traditionally focused on individual school staff.

**Italy:** There is no external evaluation but the regional school offices check that some ECEC settings for older children (*scuole dell'infanzia paritarie*) are in compliance with regulations when they undertake the renewal of their accreditation every three years.

**Austria:** The focus of the external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings, carried out by provincial inspectors within the framework of individual *Länder* laws, varies. A new agreement between the Federal Government and the *Länder* (2018-2022) <sup>(2)</sup> specify that the *Länder* have the duty to ascertain that ECEC settings for children aged 3 and over fulfil their obligation with respect to language support.

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bqbl/I/2018/103/20181222>

A first finding is that in several of the countries with (somewhat or fully) integrated ECEC system (Germany, Lithuania and the Nordic countries, see Figure 7), the top-level educational guidelines and other regulations and recommendations do not focus so much on settings but rather on the duty of providers to evaluate the quality of their provision. In these countries, local authorities (municipalities), NGOs or other private bodies have a great deal of freedom to set up the processes and procedures for evaluating their own ECEC settings. Consequently, aggregated information about the external evaluation of ECEC centre-based settings is limited in these countries.

In **Germany**, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating quality lies with the local authorities or other bodies operating ECEC settings. To obtain their operating license, individual ECEC providers have to explain in their service plan how they will evaluate and develop quality provision in the ECEC setting (SGB VIII §45 Abs.3).

In **Denmark**, according to the Act on Day-Care the municipalities are responsible for carrying out evaluations in ECEC and thereby ensuring that content and pedagogical activities are carried out in accordance with the law.

In **Lithuania**, according to Article 37 of the Law on Education, the quality of education is the responsibility of the education provider and the institution exercising the rights and duties of the owner. Each municipality develops its own regulations and procedures.

In **Finland**, the municipalities have a statutory duty to evaluate their own provision but the evaluation structures and procedures are matters for municipal autonomy. The purpose of evaluation is to support educational development and improve conditions for learning. The curriculum documents produced by the municipality must also explain how the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care in the different ECEC services is to be implemented in settings, and how settings will be monitored, evaluated and improved.

In **Sweden**, according to the Curriculum for the Pre-school, one of the tasks of the municipality is to continuously evaluate and monitor pre-schools. The principal organiser of a pre-school – the municipality or operator of an independent pre-school – is responsible for its quality and results.

In **Iceland**, according to Regulation no. 893/2009, educational committees in municipalities are responsible for evaluating and monitoring ECEC in their district.

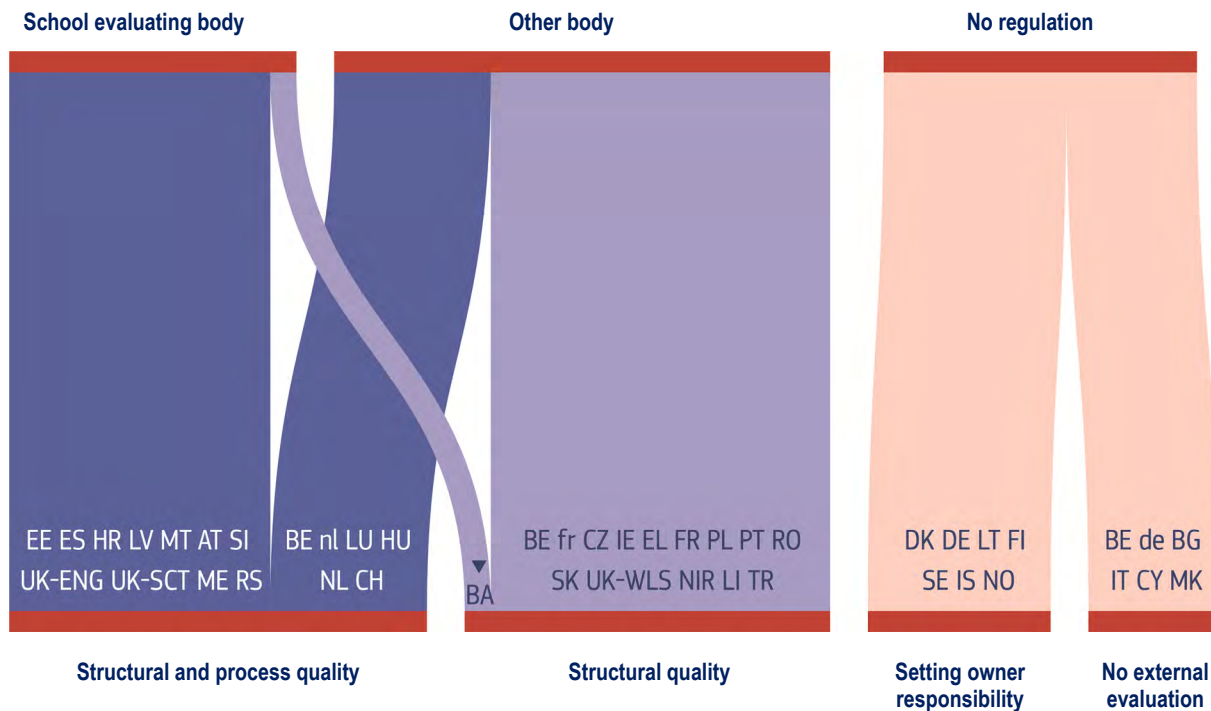
In **Norway**, according to the Kindergarten Act, municipalities are responsible for the development and supervision of ECEC settings and for ensuring that they are run according to the Framework Plan and the Kindergarten Act.

In these countries, although the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of ECEC lies at the local level, there might nevertheless be some situations where top-level authorities are involved in the evaluation of settings. Top-level agencies dealing with the quality of ECEC may undertake visits to some ECEC settings to evaluate a specific aspect of provision with a view to making a judgement about the quality of this provision across the entire ECEC system. The performance of the individual setting is not a primary concern. There might also be mechanisms to ensure that local authorities are performing their quality assurance duties. For instance, in Germany, the Local Youth Welfare Offices have a legal obligation to check that ECEC providers have put evaluation instruments and measures in place. Some of these countries also have risk assessment arrangements to ensure that when serious issues are detected in a particular setting, a national/regional agency intervenes to help ensure that problems are addressed. For instance, in Germany, in the case of complaints, the Local Youth Welfare Services intervene. Likewise in Sweden, if anyone, for example parents, report grievances to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, the Inspectorate investigates these matters and makes a decision on what the setting must do to improve.

Where top-level regulations set a framework for the external evaluation of ECEC settings, differences in the scope of these evaluations can be observed according to age range (see Figure E1). For older children, the external evaluation of ECEC settings usually focuses on both structural and process quality. In contrast, for younger children, the main focus of the external evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings is on structural quality in 14 education systems, while in 16 other education systems the external evaluation also covers process quality.

Differences in the scope of external evaluation in ECEC settings are, in turn, often related to the type of body responsible for the external evaluation of settings (see Figure E2). When an educational inspectorate or another ministerial department responsible for educational evaluation at higher levels of education (such as primary education) carries out the external evaluation of ECEC settings, attention is usually paid to how well the setting supports the learning process (process quality). However, when the external evaluation of settings is assured by public bodies dealing with family, social affairs or youth, which are not responsible for evaluating schools at higher levels of education, it is more often concerned with compliance with norms and standards (structural quality).

**Figure E2: External evaluation of centre-based ECEC settings for children under the age of 3: types of evaluation body and main focus, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

#### **Explanatory note**

See explanatory note to Figure E1. Setting owner responsibility: refers to countries where the top-level regulations do not focus so much on settings but rather on the duty of providers to evaluate the quality of their provision, i.e., local authorities (municipalities), NGOs or other private bodies.

#### **Country-specific notes**

**Netherlands:** The municipal health services are primary responsible for carrying out the external evaluation of centre-based settings for younger children. However, when they report shortcomings concerning the targeted programs within a centre-based settings for children with a disadvantaged background, the Inspectorate for Education must do a follow-up inspection.

**Austria:** See country specific note to Figure E1.

**Albania:** No information available.

Hence, in 13 education systems where the external evaluation of settings for younger children focuses mostly on structural quality (see Figure E2), it is carried out by bodies other than those responsible for educational evaluation. These bodies can be the ministry or another top-level body responsible for family, childhood or social affairs (Belgium – French Community, Czechia, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Liechtenstein and Turkey); inspection services for the care sector (the United Kingdom – Wales), regional health and social care bodies (the United Kingdom – Northern Ireland), regional social advisors (Greece), local authorities (Poland), or local child protection services (France).

In Czechia, France, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, top-level authorities do not set the frequency of external evaluations for settings for younger children. It is either left to the body responsible for evaluation to decide, or it happens only under specific circumstances such as when complaints are received. For instance in Slovakia, the external evaluation of ECEC settings for children under 3 years is carried out on the basis of an annual evaluation plan prepared by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, as well as in special circumstances such as when complaints are received. In contrast, in Belgium (French Community), Ireland, Greece, Portugal, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), Liechtenstein and Turkey, the settings for younger children are evaluated regularly (from every six months to every three years).

In **Belgium (French Community)**, daycare settings' coordinators from the Birth and Childhood Office evaluate the education and care plan of each ECEC setting every three years in relation to the pedagogical principles established in the quality framework *Code de qualité de l'Accueil*.

In **Ireland**, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) inspects ECEC providers every three years in relation to a Quality Regulatory Framework <sup>(3)</sup> which includes evaluating compliance with the regulations which promote the care, safety, learning and development of a child.

Interestingly, in five education systems, even though the external evaluation of the settings for younger children is carried out by the inspectorate or body in charge of social affairs or youth (not education) it does focus on how well the setting supports the learning process.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, as part of their inspection visits, inspectors evaluate the pedagogical quality of ECEC settings based on a common guideline that specifies six main dimensions <sup>(4)</sup>. The inspection visits take place every three years. In special circumstances such as complaints, more frequent inspection visits are possible.

In **Luxembourg**, the regional agents for Young People visit the centre-based settings for younger children (*service d'éducation et d'accueil*) on average twice a year to advise on whether the pedagogical practices and plans fulfil the fundamental pedagogical objectives for young children established by the 2016 Curriculum Framework on Non-Formal Education for Children and Youth.

In **Hungary**, local government offices carry out legal compliance checks every two years. The Hungarian Association of Nurseries is asked to supply information on the education provided in ECEC settings for younger children. The list of topics covered is published on their website <sup>(5)</sup>.

In the **Netherlands**, the municipal health services inspect centre-based settings for younger children every year using an assessment instrument for the observation of pedagogical practice in the field <sup>(6)</sup> co-designed with the Dutch Youth Institute.

In **Switzerland**, in Solothurn Canton for instance, the external evaluators have to use the Handbook on Cantonal Guidelines for the Authorisation and Supervision of Daycare Centres <sup>(7)</sup>, which requires settings to be evaluated against two main frameworks of pedagogical principles, i.e. the Orientation Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care in Switzerland <sup>(8)</sup> and the quality standards of Kita <sup>(9)</sup>.

As stated above, when inspection or other bodies in charge of evaluating primary school education also carry out the evaluation of ECEC settings for younger children, they usually focus on both structural and process quality. The only exception is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the bodies responsible for educational evaluation check compliance with requirements/standards within ECEC settings twice a year. In Spain, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), Montenegro and Serbia, the external evaluation of ECEC settings for younger children operates according to a cyclical model in which all settings are evaluated at regular intervals specified by top-level authorities. In Estonia, external evaluation is performed each year in approximately 10 % of pre-school institutions, based on the thematic priorities established for that year (e.g. special educational

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework>

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.kindengezin.be/img/monitoringsinstrument-korte-voorstelling.pdf>

<sup>(5)</sup> [http://www.magyarbolcsodek.hu/tagoknak/modszertani\\_feladatok](http://www.magyarbolcsodek.hu/tagoknak/modszertani_feladatok)

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.nji.nl/nl/Producten-en-diensten/Publicaties/Publicaties-Veldinstrument-observatie-pedagogische-praktijk>

<sup>(7)</sup> [https://www.so.ch/fileadmin/internet/ddi/ddi-aso/13\\_2\\_Familie\\_Generationen/KITA/2016\\_03\\_08\\_Handbuch\\_KITA\\_v1.pdf](https://www.so.ch/fileadmin/internet/ddi/ddi-aso/13_2_Familie_Generationen/KITA/2016_03_08_Handbuch_KITA_v1.pdf)

<sup>(8)</sup> <https://www.unesco.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FRÜHKINDLICHE-BILDUNG-2.pdf>

<sup>(9)</sup> <https://www.quali-kita.ch>

needs or the learning environment); evaluations are also carried out as a result of complaints. In Croatia, an inspection team is sent to an ECEC setting when there is a suspicion that the institution is not operating in accordance with the law; it must examine whether the settings' practices are in accordance with the pedagogical standards set by top-level authorities.

For older children, the external evaluation of ECEC settings is often the responsibility of the bodies that evaluate higher levels of education. This evaluation generally covers process quality. In some countries (e.g. Ireland), more specific evaluation bodies evaluate particular aspects of compliance alongside the inspectorate which evaluates educational content. The regularity and level of standardisation of these evaluations varies across countries. They usually operate according to a set frequency and on the basis of an evaluation framework. In Belgium (French Community) and Poland, however, the criteria by which the ECEC settings are to be evaluated and selected are determined annually by the inspectorate and the Minister responsible for education respectively. In France, the evaluation system is traditionally focused on individual staff but some external evaluations of pre-primary schools are carried out. There is no standardised protocol for the external evaluation of pre-primary schools, beyond indicators provided by the ministry responsible for education. Legislation in preparation entitled 'For a School of Trust' will introduce a range of important measures in the area of evaluation.

### **A THIRD OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS HAVE NO REGULATIONS ON THE INTERNAL EVALUATION OF ECEC SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 3**

Alongside evaluation by external bodies, internal evaluation performed by staff members of the setting is another cornerstone of quality assurance and improvement. The internal evaluation of settings is a quality control process which seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on overall quality, and suggest ways to improve practice or provision. Evaluation outcomes may include, for example, a self-evaluation report, an annual activity report, a development plan or a revised pedagogical plan. Not all European countries have regulations or recommendations on internal evaluation of ECEC settings (see Figure E3). This applies particularly to the settings for younger children in countries with separate settings for the two age groups (see Figure A2): Belgium (German-speaking Community), Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, France, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Liechtenstein. Moreover, there are no top-level recommendations or requirements for settings to carry out any internal evaluation during the whole ECEC phase in Italy, Austria and North Macedonia. In Austria, arrangements for the internal evaluation of settings are up to each *Land*.

Figure E3 addresses the internal evaluation of ECEC settings across Europe through top-level regulations. The three categories distinguished here (loose, moderate or strong) are based on the degree of obligation, the frequency specified, and the stated expected outcome of internal evaluations. The requirement for settings to develop their own strategy for internal evaluation is also taken into account. No definite correlation between these categories is inferred with respect to improvements in the quality of the setting. For instance, a strongly regulated internal evaluation can translate into an over-formalised process which consists in the simple approval of a report by the members of a governing body and will have little effect on improving the quality of the setting.

In eight education systems, a framework for the internal evaluation of ECEC settings exists but it can be considered as rather 'loose' (Germany, Ireland, Croatia and the Netherlands for the whole phase; Portugal and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) for the settings for younger children). In these education systems, internal evaluation is not compulsory but is recommended. ECEC settings have, in general, a good deal of autonomy in how they carry out this task as there is no defined frequency or expected outcome. In two of these countries, the situation differs slightly, as in Ireland and Croatia a standardised self-evaluation process is offered to ECEC settings.



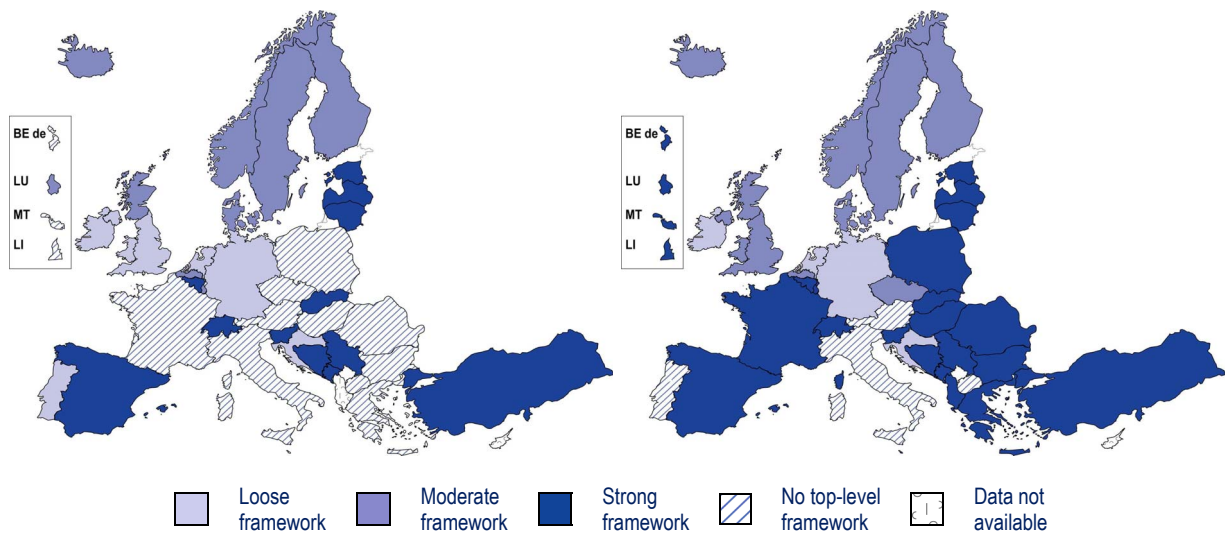
In **Ireland**, the Quality Assurance Process (QAP) is designed to provide a structured, supportive framework for early childhood settings that wish to assess their practice against the Siolta standards of quality. The instrument used is a self-evaluation form based on the Siolta framework; it is completed by the setting and is accompanied by a 'quality portfolio' providing evidence to support the information supplied in the self-evaluation.

In **Croatia**, since 2012/13, the National Centre for the External Evaluation of Education publishes an annual call for ECEC settings that want to carry out self-evaluation according to the standardised process set down in the Handbook for the Self-evaluation of Early Childhood and Pre-school Education Institutions. The process includes a self-evaluation report and the implementation of a development plan produced with the support of the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education.

**Figure E3: Top-level framework for the internal evaluation of ECEC settings, 2018/19**

**a) Settings for children under the age of 3 years**

**b) Settings for children aged 3 years and over**



Loose framework:	Moderate framework:	Strong framework:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– recommended</li> <li>– no defined frequency</li> <li>– no defined outcome</li> <li>– no requirement to develop own strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– compulsory</li> <li>– no specific frequency but must be regular or continual</li> <li>– requirement for settings to develop own strategy</li> <li>– outcomes not always defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– compulsory</li> <li>– specific frequency of between one and three years</li> <li>– defined outcome</li> <li>– no requirement to develop own strategy</li> </ul>

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The internal evaluation of settings is a quality control process which seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on overall quality, and suggest ways to improve practice or provision. It is performed primarily by the setting's own staff. Depending on countries, the framework for the internal evaluation of ECEC settings may refer to top-level educational guidelines or other regulations and recommendations.

**Country-specific note**

**Austria:** Arrangements for the internal evaluation of settings are up to each *Land*. For instance, the *Land* of Upper Austria has produced a self-evaluation instrument 'Pedagogical Quality Characteristics' <sup>(10)</sup>.

In the majority of education systems, the top-level framework for internal evaluation can be considered as 'strong'. Internal evaluation is compulsory and has to be carried out at regular intervals, ranging from annually to every three years. Top-level authorities define the main outcome of internal evaluation, which can be the production of a self-evaluation report, an annual activity report, a development plan or a revision of the setting's pedagogical plan. Internal evaluation is strongly framed across the whole ECEC phase in Belgium (French Community), Spain, the three Baltic countries, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Switzerland, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. ECEC falls

<sup>(10)</sup> <https://www.ooe-kindernet.at/1989.htm>

under the same authority for the whole age range in a majority of these countries (see Figure A4), namely Spain, the three Baltic countries, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

In **Estonia**, a development plan must be prepared by each pre-school institution at least every 3 years.

In **Lithuania**, the head of an educational institution must provide an annual activity report for the municipal council.

In **Latvia**, every two years, education institutions must send their internal evaluation report to their founder (local government), which will evaluate the institution on this basis.

Four European education systems where different authorities are responsible for the provision for under and over 3s have strong evaluation framework in both phases (Belgium – French Community), Slovakia, Switzerland and Turkey). However, the regulations for internal evaluation may differ as they are regulated by distinct authorities. For instance,

In **Belgium (French Community)**, in order to renew their quality certificate, ECEC settings for younger children need to evaluate the implementation of their improvement plan every three years and, together with the daycare settings' coordinator from the Birth and Childhood Office, revise their education and care plan and produce a new plan for improving quality. In pre-primary schools, the *conseil de participation* evaluates the pre-primary school's achievements every year in relation to the school plan which must be revised accordingly.

In several countries with separate settings for younger and older children (see Figure A2), 'strong' top-level frameworks for internal evaluation apply only to ECEC settings for older children.

In **Greece**, according to Presidential Decree 79, article 10 (Official Government Gazette nr.109, vol. A, 01-08-2017), the teaching board of a pre-primary school must evaluate its educational work at the end of every year and must draft proposals for improvement in the next school year. According to new legislation adopted in 2018 (Official Government Gazette 102, vol. A, 12-06-2018) and 2019 (Official Government Gazette 16, vol.2, 11-01-2019, art 2 par.6), a new framework, which comes into force from the 2019-20 school year will define the thematic areas of evaluation and provide templates for the reporting process.

In **France**, pre-primary school staff must self-evaluate their school plan and revise it accordingly.

In **Luxembourg**, pre-primary schools (providing *éducation précoce et préscolaire*) regularly assess the quality of teaching and learning in various areas with respect to the objectives set in the school development plan. On this basis, an extensive evaluation of the school development plan is made every three years in preparation for the new version.

In **Malta**, an internal evaluation of the *Kindergarten* is carried out annually and leads to a new development plan.

In **Poland**, the pre-school head prepares a new supervision plan which is presented to the teachers' council at the beginning of each school year. This plan takes into consideration the results of the previous plan and the priorities established by the Minister of Education.

A small group of countries fall into the 'moderate' category, where internal evaluation is compulsory but settings are responsible for developing their own strategy. Usually, top-level regulations put the emphasis on the need to carry out regular or continual internal evaluation, but do not define the exact intervals. Furthermore, the outcomes or use made of the internal evaluation results is also left to the ECEC settings to determine in Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). In contrast, in the United Kingdom (Scotland), Iceland and Norway, the findings and improvements to be made must be stated in reports or development plans. In Luxembourg, the results of the internal evaluation of settings for younger children must be used to revise the setting's pedagogical plan.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, according to the Reference Framework for Educational Quality of the inspectorate, schools (including *kleuteronderwijs*) are expected to develop their quality assurance procedures from a well-founded vision translated into educational practice, and to evaluate this practice on a cyclical basis and in systematic and reliable way, starting with their results and the impact on pupils. This is intended to guarantee and improve the quality of educational practice. Internal evaluation in settings for younger children must be carried out within a 5 year period.

In **Czechia**, the nursery school evaluates its work systematically, comprehensively and regularly, according to a pre-prepared plan. The evaluation tools, methods and techniques are chosen by each nursery school and described in the school's curriculum documents.

In **Denmark**, according to the Act on Day-Care, the head of an ECEC setting is responsible for establishing a culture of evaluation in the setting with the purpose of developing and improving the pedagogical learning environment. He/she must also carry out an evaluation at least every second year.

In **Finland**, regular evaluation at local level is a statutory duty for providers according to the Act on ECEC. The National Core Curriculum further elaborates on the duty to evaluate both at provider (municipality or private service providers) and unit level. The local curriculum must describe how the national Core Curriculum for early childhood education and care is to be implemented, and it must also explain how it will be monitored and evaluated within ECEC settings. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) published national guidelines and recommendations in autumn 2018 <sup>(11)</sup>, which aim to support ECEC settings in carrying out systematic and goal-oriented self-evaluation.

In **Sweden**, according to the curriculum for the pre-school, the head must systematically and continually plan, monitor, evaluate and improve pre-school provision.

In the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**, ECEC settings for older children are expected to be continually evaluating their performance according to the inspection frameworks. In Northern Ireland, for instance, according to the inspection framework, settings are expected to develop a culture of self-evaluation in which staff can demonstrate clear evidence of improvement based on actions taken as a result of self-evaluation.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, according to the quality framework – *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: Quality Action Plan* – ECEC settings for older children are expected to develop a robust self-evaluation process. The inspectorate's guide for ECEC emphasises that rather than a one-off activity which is done in preparation for inspection, self-evaluation is a dynamic process which should go on throughout the year. Self-evaluation forms part of the evidence for the inspections, which may request to see the development plan of the setting.

In **Iceland**, pre-schools must outline their internal evaluation procedures in their own curriculum. They are required to issue a report along with an improvement plan; both have to be made public.

In **Norway**, all kindergartens must evaluate, on a regular basis, their pedagogical practices in the light of their own plans, the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan. In its annual plan, each kindergarten must explain how it will evaluate its own pedagogical practices.

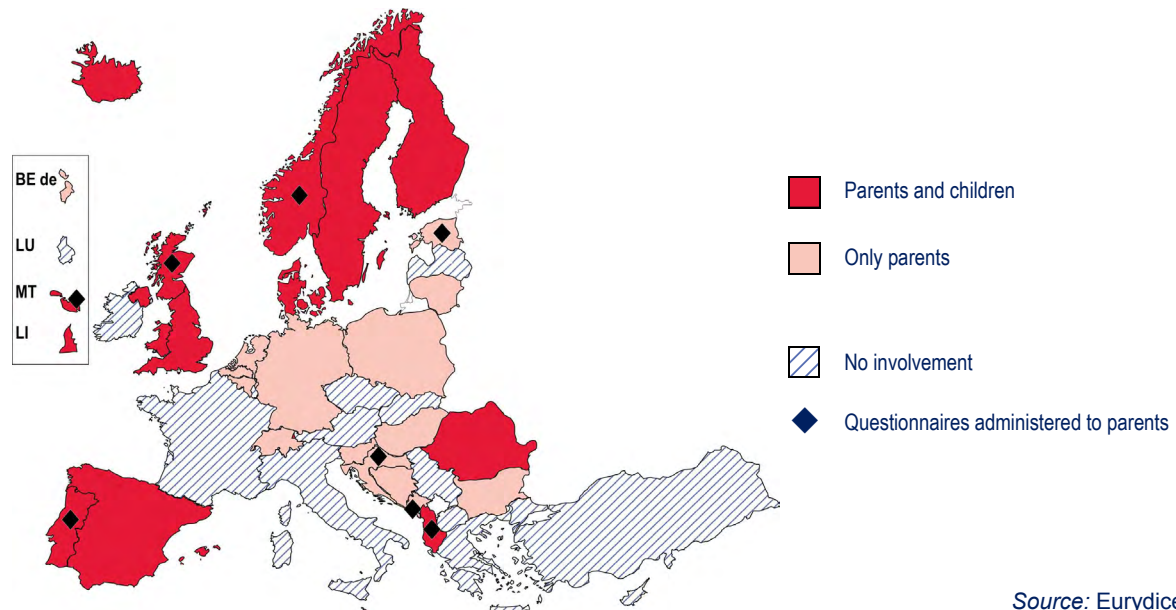
## CHILDREN RARELY PARTICIPATE IN SETTING EVALUATION

Taking into account the views of various stakeholders on how to improve quality is seen as highly beneficial to ECEC provision. The evaluation of settings – both external and internal – offers opportunities for involving parents and children. This indicator focuses on the content of top-level regulations and does not consider standard practices among external evaluators or in settings.

Figure E4 shows that parents are involved in the evaluation of settings much more often than children. Thirty education systems have guidelines for involving parents in the evaluation of ECEC settings. In contrast, only fifteen education systems have guidelines that refer to children's participation in the process. Moreover, it is more common to involve both parents and children in ECEC settings for older children. Parents participate in the evaluation of settings for younger children in seventeen education systems, which is about half the number of that for older children. The views of younger children are considered in only the Nordic countries, two Autonomous Communities in Spain (*Cataluña and Comunidad Valenciana*), and in one part of the United Kingdom (Scotland). Little or no guidance on how this should be implemented is provided, leaving considerable autonomy to the evaluators in the design of instruments and processes. All the countries that have top-level regulations or recommendations for involving children also involve parents.

<sup>(11)</sup> <https://karvi.fi/en/publication/varhaiskasvatuksen-laadun-arvioinnin-perusteet-ja-suositukset-2/>

**Figure E4: Involvement of parents and children in the evaluation of ECEC centre-based settings, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

**Involvement of parents and children in the evaluation of ECEC centre-based settings, according to age range**

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	
< 3 years	Children						●					●											
	Parents			●			●	●	●			●		●					●				●
≥ 3 years	Children						●					●									●		
	Parents	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●		●					●	●	●	●	
		AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK (1)	UK-SCT												
< 3 years	Children							●	●		●		(:)			●				●			
	Parents					●		●	●	●	●		(:)	●		●		●		●			
≥ 3 years	Children			●	●			●	●	●	●		●			●	●			●			
	Parents		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●			●			

Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

**Explanatory notes**

The Figure reflects the content of top-level educational guidelines and other top-level regulations and recommendations. It considers the involvement of parents and children in internal and/or external evaluation of settings.

Only the standardised questionnaires administered either by external evaluators of ECEC settings or by top-level authorities with a view to supporting the evaluation of ECEC settings are considered.

**Country-specific notes**

**Germany:** The *Länder* regulations on how parents should be involved differ. For instance, in Bavaria, ECEC providers are required to assess parent satisfaction on a regular basis. This is a precondition for funding.

**Spain:** Applies to children and parents across the whole age range in Cataluña and Comunidad Valenciana; and to children and parents in settings for those aged 3 and over in Andalucía.

**Slovenia:** Although there are no top-level regulations or recommendations on taking children's views into account in the evaluation of the kindergarten, this practice is recommended in an optional internal evaluation tool developed by the National School for Leadership.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR):** Information on the involvement of parents in the internal evaluation of ECEC settings for younger children applies only to England.

In a number of countries, the views of parents are expressed through their representatives on a formal body at the setting level which has the right to participate in the internal evaluation process. This applies to the whole ECEC age range in Estonia, Spain (some Autonomous Communities), Lithuania, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. This is also the case in nine systems in settings for older children: Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta,

Poland, Romania, Albania and some cantons in Switzerland. The ways in which parents participate in the internal evaluation process as members of this formal body vary between countries, ranging from discussing and approving the evaluation report to contributing to the development of the internal evaluation process.

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, parents are part of the pedagogical council which checks whether and to what degree the structures, methods and results of the *Kindergarten* are consistent with the objectives stated in the *Kindergarten* plan.

In **Spain**, the School Board, which includes parents, evaluates the overall running of the school as well as school achievements in relation to the school development plan and annual general programme.

In **Lithuania**, the council of the ECEC setting determines the scope as well as the methods used for internal evaluation, and analyses its results.

In **Slovenia**, parents as members of the *kindergarten* council adopt its internal evaluation report.

In Belgium (Flemish Community), the United Kingdom (all parts) and Liechtenstein, top-level guidelines require or recommend parental involvement in the internal evaluation of settings, without specifying the ways in which this is to be achieved. In Belgium (Flemish Community), and the United Kingdom (England), inspectors are expected to check whether parents have had the opportunity to contribute to the internal evaluation of settings.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, inspectors carry out guided interviews with practitioners to check if the settings for children under the age of 3 respect the legislation on seeking and taking into account parent's opinions on the quality of the service as part of their internal evaluation.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, the Early Years Inspection Handbook (2018) specifies that inspectors should check whether the setting takes account of parents' views. Wherever possible, inspectors themselves are also expected to seek the views of parents during inspection.

Other ways of involving parents in evaluating the quality of education and care in their child's ECEC setting, or understanding their views on the service provided, include carrying out interviews, surveys or focus groups at the setting level. Such methods are recommended, for instance in Spain, for the whole ECEC phase, or in Hungary, Malta, Poland and Portugal for older children.

In a few countries, questionnaires have been designed at the top-level to support ECEC settings in involving parents' in their internal evaluation. In Estonia and Norway, top-level authorities themselves regularly administer questionnaires to parents and provide feedback to ECEC settings on their individual results in order to support the internal quality assurance process. In Croatia, the self-evaluation process set up by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (see p. 127), which involves representatives of parents in a group established for this purpose, includes a provision for parents to complete standardised questionnaires.

Parents' opinions can also be collected as part of the procedures set for the external evaluation of ECEC settings. Standardised questionnaires are administered to parents in Montenegro and the United Kingdom (Scotland) over the whole ECEC phase, as well as in Malta, Portugal and Albania in the last years of ECEC. In the Netherlands, parents are involved in the inspections of settings for younger children carried out by the Municipal Health Service through a consultation with the parents' committee. In Romania, some indicators of the framework used by the inspectorate to evaluate the ECEC settings for older children (National Specific Quality Standards for Preschool Education) focus on parents' opinions.

By means of standardised questionnaires, parents are consulted on a variety of topics. The primary questions concern cooperation and communication with parents, safety issues, the quality of children's learning and care, and overall satisfaction. Other areas are also addressed, such as child well-being (Malta, the United Kingdom – Scotland, and Norway), adapting to children's needs or supporting

transitions (the United Kingdom – Scotland, and Norway), outdoor activities (Portugal and Norway) and staff (Croatia).

Several Nordic countries delegate the responsibility for involving parents to the local level. In Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, the regulations state that parents must have the opportunity to evaluate their child's ECEC setting, leaving it to the local authorities or the settings to decide how this should be done.

In **Denmark**, according to the Daycare Act, parents must be involved in the development, evaluation and follow up of the setting's curriculum.

In **Finland**, the national core curriculum makes several references to parent participation in evaluation: they should be involved in the development and evaluation of, for instance, the municipality's curriculum, the operational culture and the activities of the ECEC setting.

In **Sweden**, according to the Curriculum for the Pre-school, the head of the pre-school is responsible for providing the child's guardian with opportunities to participate in the work on quality.

In **Norway**, The Framework Plan (UDIR 2017, p. 37) states that: '*Kindergartens are pedagogical organisations that must be planned and evaluated. The children and their parents are entitled to participate in these processes.*'

In six countries, taking into consideration children's views is enshrined either in regulations or in the curriculum.

In **Denmark**, according to the Day-Care Act and the strengthened curriculum, the environment should be evaluated from a child's perspective, and the children's experiences of their environment should be taken into account.

In **Spain**, three Autonomous Communities – Andalucía for the second cycle of ECEC, Cataluña and Comunidad Valenciana for the whole phase – have introduced regulations to involve children in the evaluation of ECEC settings. For example, in Comunidad Valenciana (Decree 39/2008, 4 April, article 19), the settings (for internal evaluation) and the education Inspectorate (for external evaluation) must each create instruments by which children's views can be gathered.

In **Finland**, as stated in the ECEC Act, ECEC providers have a statutory duty to ensure that children and their parents have an opportunity to participate in the planning and evaluation of their ECEC setting.

In **Sweden**, according to the Curriculum for the Pre-school, one of the tasks of the municipality is to continually evaluate and monitor pre-schools. Children are to be included in the evaluation and monitoring process and they must be allowed to influence it.

In **Iceland**, Article 18 of the Preschool Act no. 90/2008 underlines the principle of children's participation. Focus groups involving 5- and 6-year olds are part of the external evaluation process.

In **Norway**, according to the Framework Plan for Kindergartens (UDIR, 2017) 'children shall be able to actively participate in planning and assessing the kindergarten's activities on a regular basis. All children shall have a say in what is happening in the kindergarten.' Instruments or procedures for the involvement of children are to be decided locally.

In six other countries, considering children's views is required by the top-level guidelines or frameworks for the external evaluation of ECEC settings.

In **Malta**, the external evaluation of settings for older children should include focus groups and interviews with learners as well as informal discussions during lesson observations.

In **Portugal**, the inspection handbook for pre-school settings (*jardins de infância*) includes a section covering the topics on which inspectors should seek the views of children. These include their preferred activities, their freedom to choose play activities and their interactions with education staff.

In **Romania**, some indicators of the framework used for the external evaluation of ECEC settings for older children (National Specific Quality Standards for Pre-school Education) require the evaluator to pay attention to the opinion of pre-school children.

In the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**, in accordance with the school inspection frameworks in place, the views of children aged 3 and over can contribute to the external evaluation of nursery/primary schools.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate's inspection methodology includes speaking with children of all ages about their views of the service. Service documentation on how children have been consulted on an ongoing basis is also considered as part of the scrutiny process. Moreover, according to the framework for internal evaluation for the early

learning and childcare sector, an effective use of the views of children, parents/carers and families to improve the life and work of the setting is considered as a highly effective practice.

In **Albania**, the guidelines Inspection and Evaluation of the Kindergarten refers to taking into consideration children's views on the kindergarten climate, ethics and child care.

In **Liechtenstein**, the central education authority provides guidelines for quality assurance and improvement in the education system, which includes taking children's views into account in the external evaluation of *Kindergarten*.

## A MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES MONITOR THE WIDER ECEC SYSTEM ON THE BASIS OF FINDINGS AT SETTING LEVEL

The findings from the evaluation of individual ECEC settings may be used to help the settings improve their own practice, but they may also be used to monitor and evaluate the whole ECEC system. Aggregating and reporting the findings at local, regional or top level is a common method of carrying out system-wide evaluation.

Almost two thirds of education systems have some form of mechanism to ensure that the results from the evaluation of ECEC settings are collected and used in this way (see Figure E5). The reports may be specific to ECEC or they may cover other levels of education as well. For instance, in Portugal, the Inspectorate uses the aggregated findings to prepare overview reports on the settings for older children (*jardim de infância*). In the Netherlands, the findings of the local evaluations carried out by the municipal health services are reported annually in the report on the state of education prepared by the inspectorate.

The focus of the reports varies. In Spain, Slovenia and Sweden, for example, the activities of the evaluation body are the main focus. In other countries (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Malta, the United Kingdom and Slovakia), the reports prepared by the inspectorate provide a general overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the education system, including ECEC.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, the inspectorate in charge of evaluating the ECEC settings for older children prepares an annual report entitled the Education Mirror (*De Onderwijsspiegel*). This report contains an overview of the results of the inspection visits in the preceding school year and one or more thematic reviews conducted by the inspectorate.

In **Slovenia**, the chief inspector must report to the minister at least once a year on the work of the School Inspectorate. The report must include information on the number of inspections carried out in individual kindergartens and schools, as well as information on any infringements observed and sanctions imposed, including the response made to any sanctions previously imposed. It must also provide an overall assessment of compliance with legislative requirements as well as the protection of the rights of children in kindergartens and schools.

In **Sweden**, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate makes a yearly report to the Government on its investigations into complaints made against ECEC settings.

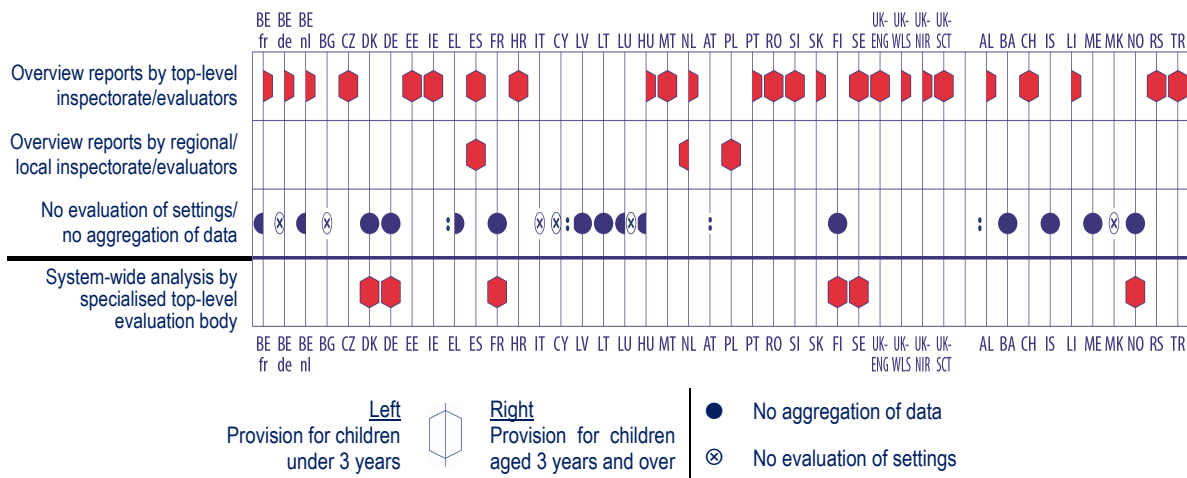
In the **United Kingdom (England)**, Ofsted, the school inspection body, publishes overviews of its findings from individual schools and settings in its annual report, along with research reports on the early years. These contribute towards improving the overall quality of education and can be used in reporting to policymakers on the effectiveness of the system.

Although these aggregated reports usually provide a national overview, they may also focus on a smaller territorial area, for example, that of federated or devolved authorities, or regional/local government areas, depending on the level at which the external evaluators operate.

In **Poland**, the regional authority drafts a report on the ECEC settings for younger children in its region on the basis of the external evaluation reports forwarded by local providers, which is then submitted to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The reports focus on structural and organisational aspects (e.g. number of staff, number of clusters of settings, level of public financing).

In **Switzerland**, the reports deal with the individual cantons.

**Figure E5: Monitoring of the ECEC system: use of aggregated findings from the evaluation of centre-based settings and other system-wide analysis, 2018/19**



Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

The system-wide analysis by a 'top-level specialised evaluation body' refers to a top-level, often national body, primarily dedicated to system-wide or ECEC-wide evaluation rather than to the evaluation of individual settings or staff.

### Country-specific notes

**Bulgaria:** See country specific note to Figure E1.

**Germany:** A specialised top-level body only applies to the *Land* of Berlin.

**Spain:** Top-level reports are compiled in the Autonomous Communities of Andalucía, Illes Balears, Cataluña, Comunidad de Castilla y León, Galicia and Ciudad de Ceuta. Local reports are prepared in Illes Balears, Cataluña and the City of Melilla.

**Austria:** The use of results of the external evaluation of ECEC settings is up to each *Land*.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR):** For children aged 3 and over, the figure represents provision in publicly funded nursery schools and primary schools only.

Although the internal evaluation reports of individual settings are sent to top-level authorities in a few countries (e.g. Ireland, Spain in some Autonomous Communities, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Liechtenstein), they are usually not processed to produce broader reports on the ECEC system. However, in Estonia, the external evaluation department of the Ministry for Education and Research aggregates the data from the internal evaluations carried out at least every three years by the pre-school institutions. In Croatia, the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education published a report in 2017 aggregating the findings of the self-evaluation process which has been available to ECEC settings since 2012/13 (Majcen et al., 2017). Furthermore, in Liechtenstein, the *Kindergarten* internal evaluation reports are shared and discussed within the umbrella organisation for child care services.

Producing reports from aggregated results are only one way of monitoring the ECEC system. Some countries have departments within their ministry responsible for education, specialised in producing national statistics and thematic reports on the ECEC system. National surveys as well as commissioned research projects may also constitute important sources of information.

In **Switzerland**, the Confederation and the cantons jointly commission the Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education to produce a national report on the entire system, including kindergarten, every four years.

Finally, some countries have established national bodies specialising in evaluating the quality of the education system as a whole, including the ECEC sector (see Figure E5). These bodies might be involved in evaluating individual ECEC settings, as in Sweden, but their main focus is the education system. These bodies process a great deal of data that originates from different (local and central) levels of authority and are responsible for disseminating data and analyses.



In **Denmark**, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) systematically collects, analyses and disseminates knowledge about daycare. It carries out programme evaluation as well as national evaluations on specific themes, such as quality management, children's perspectives, evaluation culture in daycare, parental cooperation, organisation of learning environments, or transitions from daycare to school. These evaluations involve samples of daycare settings with the primary purpose of delivering information about the state of ECEC at national level. In 2018/19, the EVA is focusing on evaluating the current implementation of a revised and strengthened curriculum in ECEC throughout the municipalities.

In **Germany**, the only *Land* that carries out a systematic and centralised evaluation of the ECEC system is Berlin. The responsible body is the Institute for Quality Improvement in Early Childhood Provision.

In **France**, the General Inspectorate is in charge of monitoring at system level the implementation of educational policy and the quality of teaching and learning. It carries out thematic studies which involve sample-based visits and field observations of educational institutions. In 2017, it published a thematic report on pre-primary schools (Leloup et al., 2017). Moreover, the educational statistic service (DEPP) produces and publishes system level data and studies.

In **Sweden**, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate is the state authority that is responsible for monitoring and producing quality audits of the school sector, including ECEC. In 2015/17, the Inspectorate was given a three-year task by the Government to monitor and evaluate the pedagogical quality of the pre-schools through a special audit. The final report was published in 2018 (*Skolinspektionen*, 2018).

In **Finland**, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent government agency responsible for the national evaluation of education. Its task is to implement external evaluations in ECEC based on the national evaluation plan approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture and to support ECEC providers on issues related to quality management. The purpose of evaluation in ECEC is to: promote the conditions conducive to children's well-being, development, and learning; ensure the spirit of the law is adhered to; produce information for developing early childhood education locally; and to serve as a basis for political decision making. In 2018/19, the ongoing evaluation project is focusing on the implementation of the national core curriculum for ECEC.

In **Norway**, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for promoting quality improvement in the ECEC system. The Directorate collects and publishes knowledge, data and statistics to be used in quality improvement.



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# GLOSSARY

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**Accreditation of ECEC settings:** is a process of assessing whether settings intending to provide ECEC comply with the regulations in force, i.e. a certain set of rules and minimum standards.

**Adequately compensated childcare leave:** post-natal maternity, paternity and parental leave for which parents receive at least 65 % of their previous earnings. Where a flat rate payment is made, it is considered adequate compensation if it constitutes 65 % of the average wage in the country.

**Assistant:** an individual that supports the core practitioner(s) with a group of children or class on a daily basis. Assistants usually have to meet lower qualification requirements than core practitioners, which may range from no formal requirements to, for instance, vocational education and training (adapted from OECD, 2017). In the report, only assistants considered as essential staff members for all groups of children are taken into account. Assistants employed to meet specific needs (e.g. to provide extra support for groups that have children with special needs) or local circumstances are not considered.

**Centre-based provision:** publicly regulated ECEC provision provided outside the home. The services provided are most commonly referred to as nurseries, daycare centres, crèches and kindergartens (adapted from OECD, 2012).

**Child/staff ratio:** the number of children per full-time member of staff. This can be a maximum (regulated) number, which indicates the maximum number of children that one full-time member of staff is allowed to be responsible for; or it can be an average: the average number of children a full-time staff member can be responsible for (adapted from OECD, 2017).

**Childcare leave:** childcare leave is the accumulated length of three possible types of leave: maternity, paternity and parental (see also **adequately compensated childcare leave**).

**Children at risk of disadvantage:** children who are at risk of poor outcomes in their well-being, development and education due to disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors (adapted from OECD, 2000).

**Children from migrant backgrounds** refers here to newly arrived/first generation, second generation and returning migrant children. Their legal status may vary (asylum seeker, refugee, unaccompanied minor, irregular migrant, etc.), as may their length of stay in the host country (e.g. short- or long-term), and they may have different reasons for having migrated (e.g. for seeking protection, for economic reasons, etc.). They may or may not have the right to participate in the formal education system of the host country.

**Children with special (educational) needs (SEN):** those children for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically, or emotionally disadvantaged. Often they will be children for whom additional public or private resources (personnel, material or financial) have been provided to support their education (adapted from OECD, 2017).

**Compulsory ECEC** refers to the obligation for children to attend ECEC.

**Continuing professional development (CPD):** the formal in-service training undertaken that allows ECEC staff members to broaden, develop and update their knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout their career. It includes both subject-based and pedagogical training. Different formats are offered such as courses, seminars, peer observation and support from practitioner networks. In certain cases, continuing professional development activities may lead to supplementary qualifications.

**Core practitioner:** an individual who leads practice for a group of children at the class- or playroom-level and works directly with children and their families. Core practitioners may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, pedagogical staff, pre-school, kindergarten or early childhood teachers (adapted from OECD, 2017). In small settings, core practitioners may also be head of the setting while still working with children.

**Early childhood education and care (ECEC):** provision for children from birth through to primary education that falls within a national regulatory framework, i.e., it has to comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures.

**Educational guidelines:** official documents issued to steer or guide ECEC providers in the content of and approach to children's care and learning. They may include main principles, values, guidelines, developmental and learning goals or learning areas, educational/pedagogical approaches, learning materials and assessment methods. Such documents may be national curriculum frameworks or criteria for developing local curricula; they might be expressed as practical guidelines for ECEC practitioners, be incorporated into legislation as part of an ECEC programme, published as a reference framework of educational/care standards, care and education plans, etc. Depending on how formal or binding they are, educational guidelines allow varying degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied in ECEC settings. There may be more than one document applicable to ECEC within a country, but they all contribute to establishing the fundamental framework in which ECEC staff are required (or advised, where mandatory requirements do not exist) to develop their own practice to meet children's learning and developmental needs.

**Evaluation standards:** a benchmark, level of performance or norm against which the measurable aspect of an area is evaluated.

**External evaluation of settings:** a quality control process which seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on the quality of the provision and suggest ways to improve practice. In contrast to **internal evaluation**, it is carried out by individuals or teams who report to a local, regional or top-level education authority and who are not directly involved in the activities of the setting being evaluated.

**Focus group:** interviews in which a group staff or stakeholders from ECEC settings are asked about their perspectives on ECEC quality.

**Free of charge** means that no payment is expected for normal educational and care activities. However, a fee may be still be payable for meals taken during the session, transport to the setting, additional hours of provision and/or extra activities (e.g. English tuition, swimming).

**Free play:** spontaneous and unstructured play that is an active process with no set goal and has unlimited possibilities. It is imaginative, creative, intrinsically motivated and brings together what the child knows, feels and understands. Some examples of free play include playing with blocks, drawing or painting on blank paper, inventing games to play or running around in a playground.

**Guided interview:** interview of individuals structured around a set of pre-determined questions.

**Head of centre-based ECEC setting:** the person with chief responsibility for the administrative, managerial and/or pedagogical leadership at the ECEC centre. As part of the leadership role, centre heads may be responsible for the monitoring of children, the supervision of other staff, contact with parents and guardians, and/or the planning, preparation and carrying out of the pedagogical work in the centre. Centre heads may also spend part of their time working with the children (adapted from OECD, 2017).

**Home language** is the language mostly spoken at home by children. It differs from the main language used in the ECEC setting. In most cases, the home language is also children's mother tongue.

**Home learning guidance** refers to fostering a child's learning at home by providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children with curriculum-related activities. ECEC services can inspire parents to offer their children all kinds of learning experiences at home, both implicit and explicit, e.g. by involving children in daily routines (meals, phone calls, making grocery lists, getting dressed, etc.) and enriching these routines by getting children to engage in activity-related discussions.

**Home-based provision:** publicly regulated ECEC provision that is delivered in a provider's home. Regulations usually require providers to meet minimum health, safety, and nutrition standards. Home-based provision excludes care which occurs in the child's own home (e.g. live-in and live-out nannies and babysitters), even where such provision must comply with basic quality standards (e.g. accreditation of staff).

**Induction:** a structured support phase provided for newly qualified ECEC staff at the start of their first contract as an ECEC staff member in a centre-based setting. During induction, ECEC staff new to the profession carry out wholly or partially the tasks incumbent on experienced ECEC staff, and are remunerated for their activity. Normally, induction includes training and evaluation, and a mentor providing personal, social and professional support is appointed to help them within a structured system. The phase lasts at least several months, and can occur during the probationary period.

**Initial education:** any formal initial education or training that prepares ECEC staff for working with children. It usually includes general education and professional training.

**Internal evaluation of settings:** a quality control process which seeks to evaluate or monitor the performance of the setting, report on overall quality, and suggest ways to improve practice or provision. In contrast to **external evaluation**, it is performed primarily by staff members of the setting.

**Language support:** additional structured activities outside the normal education programme that are intended to improve individual children's language development.

**Legal entitlement to ECEC** refers to a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for children living in a catchment area whose parents want it. The legal entitlement means that a child has an enforceable right to benefit from ECEC provision.

**Maternity leave:** a period of paid absence from work, to which a woman is legally entitled immediately before and after childbirth. Part of the leave used up before the birth is called pre-natal leave and part thereafter is termed post-natal leave.

**Evaluation framework:** document(s) issued by top-level authorities which establish the main purpose, content, procedures and use of results of monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation frameworks vary in their form and use. The document(s) that form the framework may include one or more approaches to monitoring and evaluation (e.g. inspection, accreditation, self-evaluation, etc.).

**Monitoring of the ECEC system:** a process involving the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in order to check ECEC system performance in relation to goals and standards and to identify any improvements needed. Monitoring may focus on structural data (e.g. tracking children's participation rates or staff-child ratios), or information concerning service development and delivery (e.g. children's progress, curriculum implementation, or staffing issues). Monitoring can be applied at various levels of the ECEC system: at local, regional or system level.

**Narrative assessment:** descriptions of the development of a child through narratives/stories. Narrative assessment is a more inclusive approach to assessing child development, as it involves not only professionals but also the children's work; it can also include inputs or feedback from parents. It is a combination or package of what a child has done and learned, such as examples of drawings and exercises, feedback from staff, and staff planning or examples of practice. Portfolios or storybooks of children's development are well-known examples of narrative assessment practices (OECD, 2015).

**National tests:** standardised tests/examinations set by top-level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility. Standardised tests/examinations are any form of test that requires all test takers to (a) answer the same questions (or questions selected from a common bank of questions) and (b) is scored in a standard or consistent way. National tests are to be distinguished from standardised guidelines and other tools designed to assist teachers in undertaking forms of pupil assessment other than national testing.

**Observation grid:** tool to report observed evidence of a range of practices within a setting with the purpose of evaluating its quality.

**Out-of-school care:** supplementary provision to complete the full day in addition to guaranteed or compulsory ECEC hours. Out-of-school care services can take place before and after the regular hours, during lunch breaks and in public school holidays. It may be referred to as 'after-school' care.

**Parental leave** is paid time off work to care for a child, keeping workers' social security rights intact.

**Parenting programmes** refer to formal parenting classes to help families establish home environments that support children as learners. Parents attend formal courses covering a variety of topics related to children's education and development (for example, speech/language development, effective discipline, building self-esteem, understanding challenging behaviour).

**Paternity leave** is an entitlement to absence from work that may be taken by the biological father or mother's partner immediately after the childbirth or during the first year(s) of a child's life.

**Pedagogical plan:** a plan established within an ECEC setting that outlines its curriculum, learning activities and pedagogical approaches. The plan allows provision to be adapted to the local context and the needs of children.

**Place guarantee in ECEC:** a child may be guaranteed a place in ECEC as a **legal entitlement**, as part of compulsory pre-school education provision or as part of a non-statutory commitment to pre-school provision. The place guarantee may be universal, applying to all children from a particular age, or it may be targeted at certain disadvantaged groups.

**Preparatory classes:** are separate lessons or designated hours for newly arrived migrant children in which they are given intensive language teaching. Children may attend preparatory classes for some lessons only (while participating in mainstream activities during the rest of the school day) or for the entire school day, usually for a limited period before being fully integrated into mainstream groups with other children. Depending on the country, the classes may also be called 'introductory', 'transition' or 'reception' classes.

**Pre-primary classes:** a specific compulsory ECEC phase during the last 1-2 years of ISCED 020, which provides an educational programme that is distinct from the main ISCED 020 programme. Pre-primary classes may be organised within centre-based ECEC settings or in primary schools.

**Private ECEC settings** may be owned and operated by businesses, which are profit-oriented, or by the voluntary (non-profit) sector which may include charitable organisations (church, trade unions, or other concerns). They often operate under license and may be required to meet basic minimum standards of care. Private settings may be publicly subsidised or not:

**Self-financing (non-subsidised):** drawing their funds from private sources, usually from enrolment fees/tuition charges. Private self-financing ECEC settings receive no funding from public authorities.

**Publicly subsidised:** a setting that receives some or all its funding from public authorities (adapted from OECD 2017).

**Professional duty:** a task described as such in working regulations/contracts/legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession.

**Public ECEC settings** are owned and operated by public authorities at top, regional or local level. They are not profit-driven but aim to provide a public service.

**Quality framework:** an official policy document issued by top-level authorities to ensure a common understanding of quality across several or all of the important areas of ECEC (staff, pedagogical content, accessibility, governance and funding) and to support the improvement of quality through appropriate policies at national, regional, local or setting level. A quality framework may contain guidelines, goals or standards on quality; it also defines the main principles underpinning the monitoring and evaluation system in assuring and further developing the quality of ECEC.

**Rating scales:** tool to report observed evidence of a range of practices within a setting with the purpose of evaluating its quality against a set of pre-determined standards. (<http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>)

**Refugees** are persons whose applications for asylum have been recognised by the host country and who therefore have the right to receive legal protection and other assistance.

**Regional or minority language:** a language that is 'traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; it is different from the state language(s) of that state' (Council of Europe, 1992). As a general rule, these are languages of populations that have their ethnic roots in the areas concerned or have been settled in the regions concerned for generations. Minority/regional languages can have the status of an official language, but by definition this status will be limited to the area in which they are spoken.

**School-readiness:** the definition of school readiness varies as there is still much debate on what it means to be 'ready' for school. Here, it implies that a child possesses the motivation, cognitive and socio-emotional abilities that are required to learn and succeed in school.

**Specific training for headship:** depending on the circumstances, the specific training may be provided either prior to the application or recruitment procedures for headship, or during the year or two immediately after taking up the post. Its aim is to equip future heads in ECEC with the skills required to carry out their new duties. It is not to be confused with initial education of ECEC staff nor continuing professional development.

**Steering documents:** different kinds of official documents containing regulations, guidelines, and/or recommendations for education institutions.

**Structured play,** also known as goal-oriented play, it is an activity with a learning objective. Structured or goal-oriented play involves following rules or instructions to reach a particular goal. Structured play usually involves cognitive or physical activities. Some examples of structured play include: following directions to assemble a toy, model airplane or Lego theme set, organised sports, such as football, card games or board games involving rules.

**Survey:** data gathering method relying on a standardised questionnaire administered to a target-group.

**Tax relief:** a scheme or incentive which allows an individual or businesses to reduce their tax liability. Examples of tax relief include the allowable deduction of certain expenses such as ECEC fees from taxable income, or the availability of tax credits to offset the costs of education and care.

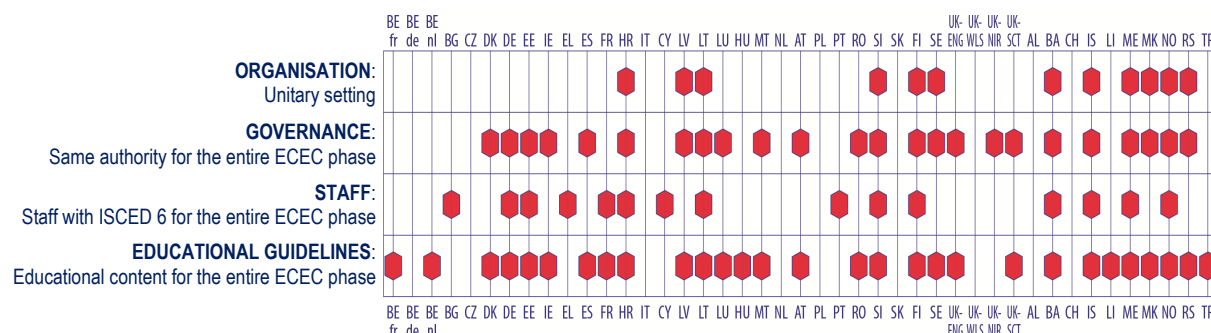
**Top-level authority:** the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Switzerland, the *Communautés*, *Länder*, *Comunidades Autónomas*, devolved administrations and cantons respectively are responsible for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, and for the areas of responsibility shared with the national (state) level both are considered to be top-level authorities.

**Top-level regulations/recommendations** refer to the regulations/recommendations issued by the top-level authority.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX A: ADDITIONAL DATA TO FIGURES

### Criteria for measuring the degree of integration in ECEC systems, 2018/19 (Data for Figure 7)



Source: Eurydice.

#### Explanatory note

Staff: at least one staff member per group of children (regardless of age group) must have a qualification at ISCED level 6 or higher.

For further information and definitions, see Figure A2 (organisation), Figure A4 (governance), Figure 4 and Figure C1 (staff) as well as Figure D1 and Annex C (educational guidelines).

### Length of adequately compensated post-natal maternity, paternity and parental leave (in weeks), 2018/19 (Data for Figure B3)

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
Maternity leave	14	14	14	52	22	14	8	20	0	12	16	13	26	12	16	16	8	12	24	18	16	9
Paternity leave	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Parental leave	0	0	0	0	43	32	60	62	0	36	0	0	35	4	0	0	44	26	80	0	0	52
TOTAL	16	16	16	52	65	46	68	82	0	48	22	15	61	16	16	16	52	38	104	18	17	61
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT	AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	
Maternity leave	20	21	9	11	28	13	13	6	6	6	6	0	52	14	13	20	52	35	15	48	12	
Paternity leave	0	4	0	4	28	9	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	15	1	0	
Parental leave	32	0	43	37	0	26	30	0	0	0	0	52	0	0	13	0	0	0	23	0	0	
TOTAL	52	25	52	52	56	48	56	6	6	6	6	52	52	14	39	20	52	35	53	49	12	

#### Explanatory note

The length of leave is counted from the child's perspective. Leave that coincides, i.e. when both parents may take leave simultaneously are viewed as one. The leave is considered adequately compensated if the parents receive a minimum of 65 % of their previous earnings. Where there is a flat rate, the payment is considered adequately compensated if it constitutes 65 % of the average salary in the country. The data is based on the most common situation, i.e., with one child in a two-parent family. Special circumstances such as birth complications, prolonged hospitalisation, children with health problems, etc. are not taken into account. If several options exist, the option that provides the longest leave (65 % compensation) is presented.

**Maternity leave:** a period of paid absence from work to which a woman is legally entitled immediately before and after childbirth. The part of the leave used up before the birth is called pre-natal leave and the part after is termed post-natal leave. Only post-natal leave is considered in the table.

**Paternity leave** is an entitlement to absence from work that may be taken by the biological father or mother's partner. Usually, this leave should be taken immediately after the birth and simultaneously with the mother. However, the paternity leave is shown in the table only if it may be taken after the maternity leave and thus prolongs the overall childcare leave.

**Parental leave** provides paid time off work to care for the child, keeping workers' social security rights intact.

#### Country-specific notes

**Germany:** The maximum length of adequately paid parental leave is 60 weeks (14 months) if both parents take at least 8 weeks (2 months) of leave.

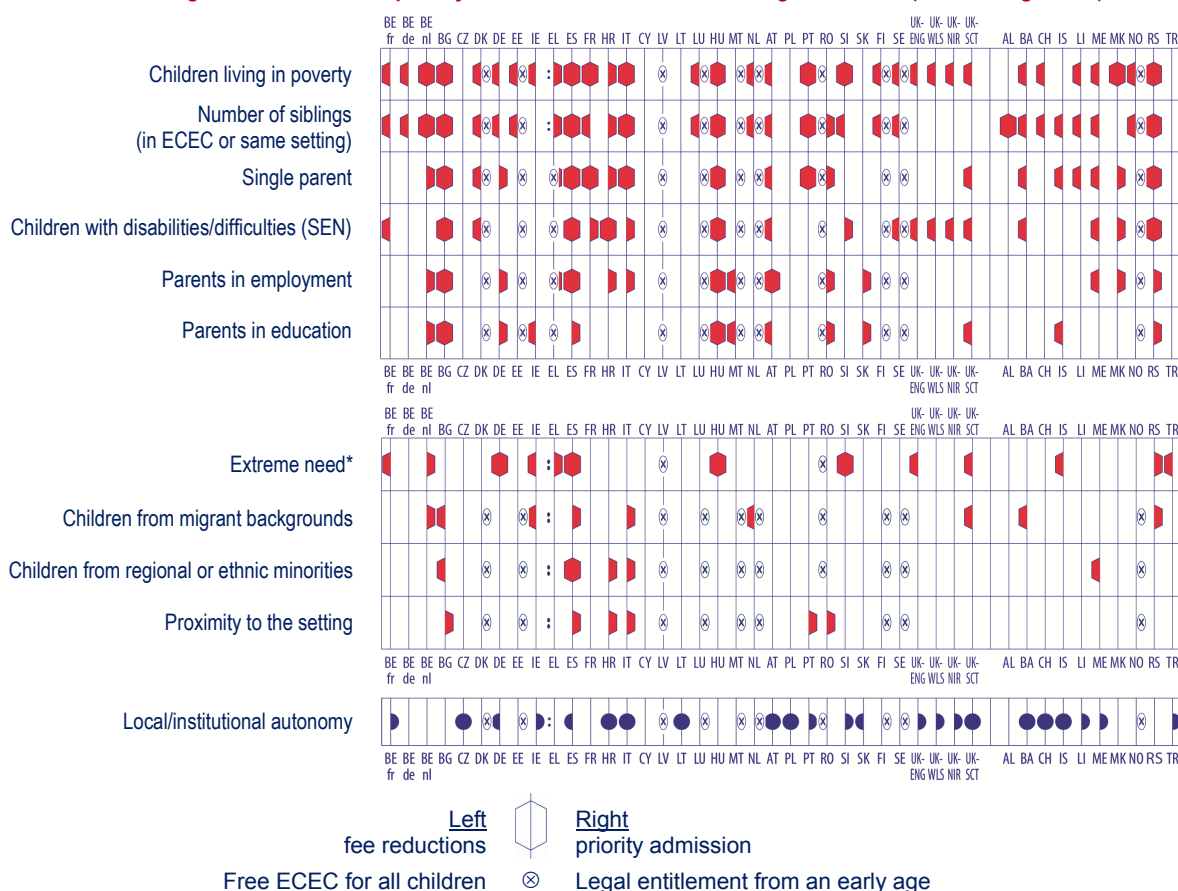
**Greece:** The Figure shows the public sector. 9 weeks maternity leave and 36 weeks parental leave in the private sector.

**Netherlands:** As of 2020, paternity leave will be extended to a maximum of 5 weeks with 70 % pay.

**Austria:** Income-related childcare allowance if both parents take the leave (maximum 52 weeks per one parent).

**Finland:** The table shows the absolute maximum, which is a less typical situation when the father takes all his leave after the parental allowance. 78 % of fathers use up to 18 days together with the mother while only 38 % use up to 54 days of paternity leave after the parental allowance period (see THL, 2018).

**Criteria for offering fee reductions and priority admission for children under age 3, 2018/19 (Data for Figure B6)**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The figure shows criteria as defined in top-level regulations/recommendations. Not applicable (⊗) is used to indicate countries on the left that have free ECEC for all under-3s, and on the right, countries that provide a legal entitlement from an early age. However, some countries that have free ECEC indicate criteria for offering subsidies for meals. Similarly, some countries offering a legal entitlement from an early age still have higher demand than supply and therefore indicate criteria for priority access. In many countries, the criteria apply to public and publicly subsidised settings only.

\* **Extreme need:** children in foster care or those referred by social services, children whose parents cannot provide the necessary care, homeless children or those of women in shelters fleeing violence at home, children who have lost a parent while in military service or in a terror attack or similar circumstances.

**Minimum qualification levels and duration in years required in ECEC (or education) to become a core practitioner in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19 (Data for Figure C1)**

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL
< 3 years	ISCED level	3	3	3	6	3	○	6	6	4	6	5	6	6	○	6	5	6	4	4	4	3
	Duration	4	3	4	4	3	○	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	○	3	2	3	3	2	1	3
≥ 3 years	ISCED level	6	6	6	6	3	○	6	6	4	6	6	7	6	7	6	5	6	6	6	4	6
	Duration	3	3	3	4	4	○	3	3	2	4	4	2	3	5	3	2	3	3	3	2	4
		AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK (1)	UK-SCT											
< 3 years	ISCED level	5	3	7	3	6	3	6	○	3	5	○	6	3	7	3	6	○	6	3	3	3
	Duration	2	3	1.5	4	3	4	3	○	4	1	○	3	3	2	3	3	○	3	4	4	4
≥ 3 years	ISCED level	5	6	7	3	6	3	6	○	6	5	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration	2	3	1.5	4	3	4	3	○	3	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4

○ No minimum requirements

Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR



**Explanatory note**

The table shows the minimum qualification levels required in ECEC or education according to top-level regulations. The minimum duration shows only the years of study undertaken at the same ISCED level as the designated qualification. They are still counted if they are at the same level but spent in general education and the eventual qualification is vocational. For instance:

- An ISCED level 3 qualification with 3 years in general education and 1 year in vocational training is shown as 4 years at ISCED level 3.
- An ISCED level 7 qualification with 3 previous years for a Bachelor's degree (ISCED level 6) and 2 for a Master's degree (ISCED level 7) is shown as 2 years at ISCED level 7.

Where the top-level authority requires only a minimum level of general education rather than a specific initial vocational qualification in ECEC or education to become a core practitioner, the country is shown as having no regulations.

**Country-specific notes**

**Estonia:** For younger children, the table shows the situation for core practitioners working in *koolieelne lastasutus*. In *lapsehoiuteenus*, the minimum is a one-year qualification at ISCED level 4.

**Italy:** The minimum qualifications of core practitioners in settings for younger children are currently a matter for regional autonomy. However, as of 2019/20, the top-level authority will require all core practitioners to have a qualification at Bachelor's or higher level.

**Luxembourg:** In *services d'éducation et d'accueil* (for younger children), the country is gradually implementing ISCED level 4 as the minimum qualification level. In 2001, the proportion of core practitioners working in this type of setting with a qualification in general education at ISCED level 3 and a specific training of 118 hours was 50 %. It fell to 20 % in 2013 and to 10 % in 2018.

**Portugal:** No regulations on the minimum qualification level for core practitioners working with groups of children under age 1 (*berçário*).

**Sweden:** core practitioners in pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass* for 6-year-olds) should either be qualified as 'pre-school teachers' (ISCED 6) or as 'teachers' (ISCED 7).

**United Kingdom (ENG):** For older children, the table shows the situation in *reception classes* in schools (4-year-olds). There are no regulations on minimum qualifications for *nursery classes* in schools (age 3).

**Minimum qualification levels, duration of study and specific training for headship, and years of previous experience required to become a head of centre-based ECEC setting, 2018/19 (Data for Figures C3 and C4)**

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES
< 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	6	6	6	7	3	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	4	4
	Duration of specific training	120 h						1 y			
	Duration of previous experience				5					2	
≥ 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	6	6	6	7	3	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	3	1	4	3	3	3	4	4
	Duration of specific training	120 h	1 y		1 y	75 h		1 y			
	Duration of previous experience	5			5	3					5
	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
< 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
	Duration of specific training							120 h			160 h
	Duration of previous experience	3	5				2	3	5		
≥ 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	7	6	7	6	6	7	6	7	6	5
	Duration of study for qualification	2	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	3	2
	Duration of specific training	150 h			104 h			2 y	90 ECTS		160 h
	Duration of previous experience	2	5	7	13		2	5	5	10	
	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT
< 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	3	6	7	6	6	6	3	3	5	6
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	3
	Duration of specific training				144 h						
	Duration of previous experience	3			5			2	2	2	
≥ 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	6	6	7	6	3	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	3
	Duration of specific training	210 h		90 h	144 h	160 h					
	Duration of previous experience	5		8	5	5					

○ No minimum requirements : data not available

Source: Eurydice.

□ (Continued:) Minimum qualification levels, duration of study and specific training for headship, and years of previous experience required to become a head of centre-based ECEC setting, 2018/19 (Data for Figures C3 and C4)

		AL	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
< 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	○	6	3	7	5	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration of study for qualification	○	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	4
	Duration of specific training			1 y			176 h	40 h		2–13 d	
	Duration of previous experience		2-3			5	5			10	
≥ 3 years	Qualification ISCED level	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
	Duration of study for qualification	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	4
	Duration of specific training	1 m		1 y		15 ECTS	176 h	40 h		2–13 d	
	Duration of previous experience		2-3	3-5		3	5			10	

○ No minimum requirements : data not available

Source: Eurydice.

### Explanatory note

The minimum duration of the specific training for headship is indicative only as it is not expressed in units that are comparable. It may be expressed in hours (h), days (d), months (m), years (y) or credits (European Credit Transfer System – ECTS).

When the specific training for headship is a whole qualification or part of one, its minimum duration is also included in the duration of study for the qualification.

### Country-specific notes

**Belgium (BE fr):** For heads in settings for younger children, the table shows the minimum qualification in the public and private publicly-funded sectors. In the private self-financing sector, the minimum requirement is a one-year qualification at ISCED level 4.

**Belgium (BE nl):** For settings for younger children with fewer than 18 places, heads only need a four-year qualification at ISCED level 3.

**Germany:** For the minimum previous experience, the table shows the situation in most *Länder*. Some *Länder* allow alternative ways for qualifying as a head.

**Estonia:** For settings with younger children, the table shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. There are no regulations in *Lapsehoiuteenus*.

**Spain:** The table shows the situation in the public sector. No minimum qualification level is required in the private sector, except in the Autonomous Community of Principado de Asturias (same level as in the public sector). Previous experience in ECEC is required to become a head in settings with younger children only in Comunidad de Madrid but its minimum duration is not specified.

**France:** In settings for younger children, no previous experience is required for heads qualified at ISCED level 7 in medicine.

**Italy:** Requirements for heads in settings for younger children are a matter for regional autonomy. There are no regulations in the private sector concerning the minimum previous experience for heads in settings for older children.

**Luxembourg:** In settings for younger children with fewer than 40 places, heads only need a 3-year qualification at ISCED level 4. In settings for older children, teachers elect a committee and its president. This individual has some management tasks but no hierarchical authority, as this is the responsibility of the regional director. The table shows the requirements for becoming a regional director.

**Austria:** The minimum duration of the specific training for headship varies across *Länder*. The table provides an average. In *Länder* where a minimum number of years' previous experience is required, it is usually 2 years.

**Portugal:** Priority should be given to ECEC teachers with a 1-and-a-half-year qualification at ISCED level 7.

**Sweden:** A minimum half-year training for headship is required for heads of schools where pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*) are offered. This training will become compulsory for all heads of ECEC settings as of 2019/20.

**United Kingdom (WLS):** The guidance for the National Professional Qualification for Headship does not specify a minimum duration.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The minimum number of years' previous experience varies depending on the educational authority.

**Switzerland:** The requirements for specific training for heads varies between cantons. For settings with younger children, specific training is required in half of the cantons, but is only recommended in the other half. For settings with older children, it is a requirement in most cantons.

**Serbia:** The minimum duration of the specific training for headship depends on the profile of the candidate. Heads qualified at Master's level only need 8 years' experience.

□ **Minimum duration of mandatory continuing professional development (CPD) for core practitioners and assistants working in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19 (Data for Figure C7)**

	Core practitioners		Assistants	
	<3 years	≥ 3 years	<3 years	≥ 3 years
BE fr	3 days per year		○	●
BG	●	48 hours over 4 years	○	
EE	32 hours per year		●	
EL	●	24 hours per year	●	○
FR	●	18 hours per year	●	2 days over 5 years
CY	●	10 hours per year	○	
LV	36 hours over 3 years		●	
LU	32 hours over 2 years	24 hours over 3 years	○	40 hours per year
HU	120 hours over 7 years		●	
MT	●	40 hours per year	○	
AT	16 hours per year		●	
PT	●	25 hours per year	●	●
RO	90 hours per year	90 ECTS over 5 years	○	
SI	15 days over 3 years			
UK-SCT	60 hours over 5 years			
AL	●	3 days per year	○	○
CH	●	60 hours per year	●	
ME	24 hours over 5 years		●	○
RS	64 hours per year		○	
TR	10 hours per year	varies	●	

● CPD not mandatory ○ no assistants

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The table shows the minimum duration of mandatory CPD according to top-level regulations.

**Mandatory:** CPD is compulsory and the minimum amount of time to be spent on it is specified.

The minimum duration is expressed as a number of hours or days over a specific number of years. This information can therefore not be compared and is only indicative.

**Country-specific notes**

**Germany:** CPD is mandatory only in two *Länder* (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia).

**Estonia:** The table shows the situation in *Koolieelne lasteasutus*. In *Lapsehoiuteenus*, there are no regulations on CPD for core practitioners and no assistants.

**Luxembourg:** The situation for teachers in *éducation préscolaire* (for 4- and 5-year-olds) is the same as for core practitioners in *éducation précoce*. However, there are no assistants in *éducation préscolaire*.

**Hungary:** CPD is compulsory only for core practitioners qualified at ISCED level 6 or higher in pedagogy. For all others, it is optional.

**Switzerland:** The minimum mandatory number of hours varies between cantons. Data indicated in the table is an average.

**Turkey:** CPD for core practitioners working with older children (in *bağımsız ana okulu* and *ana sınıfları*) is organised as a two-week training seminar each year in June and September. Its minimum duration in terms of hours varies significantly.

Maximum number of children per staff member, core practitioner and per group in centre-based ECEC provision at ages 2 and 4, 2018/19 (Data for Figure C8)

Ages		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT
0	sm	7	6	9	9	○	●	4-8	○	3	4	8	5	5	●	6	○	6	6	4	3	3	4-5
	cp	7	6	9	9	○	●	4-8	○	3	6	8	●	5	●	6	○	6	6	6	3	6	8-10
	gp	●	●	18	18	○	●	●/8-15	○	●	12	8	●	5	●	6	○	6	12	12	●	12	8-10
1	sm	7	6	9	9	8	●	4-8	8	5	4	13	5	8	●	6	●	10	6	4	5	5	4-8
	cp	7	6	9	9	8	●	4-8	16	5	6	13	●	8	●	6	●	10	6	6	5	16	8-15
	gp	●	●	18	18	24	●	●/8-15	16	●	12	13	●	8	●	6	●	10	12	12	●	16	8-15
2	sm	7	6	9	9	12	●	4-8	8	6	4	18	8	14	●	16	●	15	8	4	6	8	4-8
	cp	7	6	9	9	12	●	4-8	16	6	6	18	●	14	●	16	●	15	8	6	6	16	8-15
	gp	●	●	18	18	24	●	●/8-15	16	●	12	18	●	14	●	16	●	15	16	12	●	16	8-15
3	sm	20	10	●	23	24	●	9-20	12	8	13	25	●	18	26	25	●	20	10	8	14	8	10-13
	cp	20	19	●	23	24	●	9-20	24	8	25	25	●	18	26	25	●	20	20	12	14	16	20-25
	gp	●	●	●	23	24	●	●/15-28	24	22	25	25	●	18	26	25	●	20	20	25	14	16	20-25
4	sm	20	10	●	23	24	●	9-20	12	8	25	25	●	20	26	25	●	20	24	8	19	●	10-13
	cp	20	19	●	23	24	●	9-20	24	8	25	25	●	20	26	25	●	20	24	12	19	●	20-25
	gp	●	●	●	23	24	●	●/15-28	24	22	25	25	●	20	26	25	●	20	24	25	19	●	20-25
5	sm	20	10	●	23	24	●	9-20	12	8	25	25	●	23	26	25	●	20	24	8	○	●	10-13
	cp	20	19	●	23	24	●	9-20	24	8	25	25	●	23	26	25	●	20	24	12	○	●	20-25
	gp	●	●	●	23	24	●	●/15-28	24	22	25	25	●	23	26	25	●	20	24	25	○	●	20-25
0	sm	5	5	4	6	5	4	○	3	3	3	3	●	3	3-6	●	3	3	4	○	7	5	
	cp	5	10	4	12	5	12	○	●	●	●	●	●	6	●	●	8	6	4	○	7	10	
	gp	●	10	7	12	12	12	○	●	●	●	●	●	6	12	●	8	12	8	○	7	10	
1	sm	8	7	5	6	5	4	●	3	3	3	3	●	6	3-6	●	3	3	6	3	12	5	
	cp	8	14	5	12	5	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	12	●	●	8	6	6	7	12	10	
	gp	●	14	9	12	12	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	12	12	●	8	12	12	●	12	10	
2	sm	8	9	6	6	5	4	●	4	4	4	5	●	8	4-8	●	5	3	8	3	16	5	
	cp	8	18	6	12	5	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	15	●	●	12	6	8	7	16	10	
	gp	●	18	9	12	12	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	15	12	●	12	12	15	●	16	10	
3	sm	25	13	20	9	20	8	●	13	13	13	8	●	25	11	4-8	●	5	14	9	6	20	10
	cp	25	25	20	17	20	24	●	26	26	26	●	●	25	21	●	●	12	14	18	14	20	20
	gp	25	25	20	17	20	24	●	26	26	26	●	●	25	21	12	●	12	14	18	●	20	20
4	sm	25	13	20	11	21	8	●	30	30	○	8	●	25	12	22-26	●	20	20	10	6	24	10
	cp	25	25	20	22	21	24	●	30	30	○	●	●	25	24	22-26	●	20	20	20	14	24	20
	gp	25	25	20	22	21	24	●	30	30	○	●	●	25	24	22-26	●	20	20	20	●	24	20
5	sm	25	13	20	11	22	8	●	○	○	○	○	●	25	13	22-26	●	20	25	13	6	26	10
	cp	25	25	20	22	22	24	●	○	○	○	○	●	25	25	22-26	●	20	25	25	14	26	20
	gp	25	25	20	22	22	24	●	○	○	○	○	●	25	25	22-26	●	20	25	25	●	26	20

● no regulations ○ no ECEC provision for this age group  
 sm per staff member cp per core practitioner gp per group of children

**Explanatory note**

The table refers to the maximum number of children per group and per staff member and core practitioner present at the same time during the core hours of a working day as defined in regulations/recommendations. It does not take into account the fact that groups may be age-heterogeneous.

Depending on the education system, regulations may specify the maximum number of children per assistant (where available), per core practitioner, per staff member (regardless of status) or per group.

In education systems where the maximum group size is indicated, but either the maximum number of children per staff or per core practitioner is not specified, the information has been calculated according to the following methodology:

- When an assistant is required in each group of children:
  - the maximum number of children per staff corresponds to the maximum number of children per group divided by two (one core practitioner + one assistant). It is divided by more than two when the regulations state that more than one core practitioner or assistant should be present at the same time in each group of children.

- the maximum number of children per core practitioner corresponds to the maximum number of children per group. It is divided by two or more when the regulations state that two or more core practitioners should be present at the same time in each group of children
- When there is no requirement to have an assistant in each setting for older children – as in Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities) – or across the whole ECEC phase – in Spain and Switzerland –, the maximum number of children per staff is the same as the maximum number of children per core practitioner.

Assistants recruited to support children with special education needs are not included.

**Country-specific notes**

**Czechia:** For age 2, the table shows the situation in *dětské skupiny*. For those already in *mateřské školy*, the situation is the same as for 3-year-olds. For ages 3 to 5, the table shows the situation in *mateřské školy*. For children in the same age range still in *dětské skupiny*, the situation is the same as for 2-year-olds.

**Germany, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland:** The table shows the variations in the regulations across *Länder/cantons*.

**Estonia:** The table shows the situation in *koolieelne lasteasutus* (for children from the age of 1 to 7). In *lapsehoiuteenus*, the maximum number of staff members and core practitioners per group of children is 5 for all age groups with a maximum of 10 children per group.

**Greece:** For 2-year-olds, the table shows the situation for children aged under 30 months. Over this age, the situation is the same as for 3-year-olds.

**France:** For 2-year-olds, the table shows the situation in care-type settings (*accueil du jeune enfant*). For 4-year-olds, the maximum group size is regulated at local level (*département*) according to local circumstances.

**Croatia:** For children in the 'age 1' category, the table shows the situation for children aged between 12 and 18 months. Between 18 and 24 months, the maximum number of children is 12.

**Italy:** *Nido d'infanzia*, for 0-, 1- and 2-year-olds is managed at regional level.

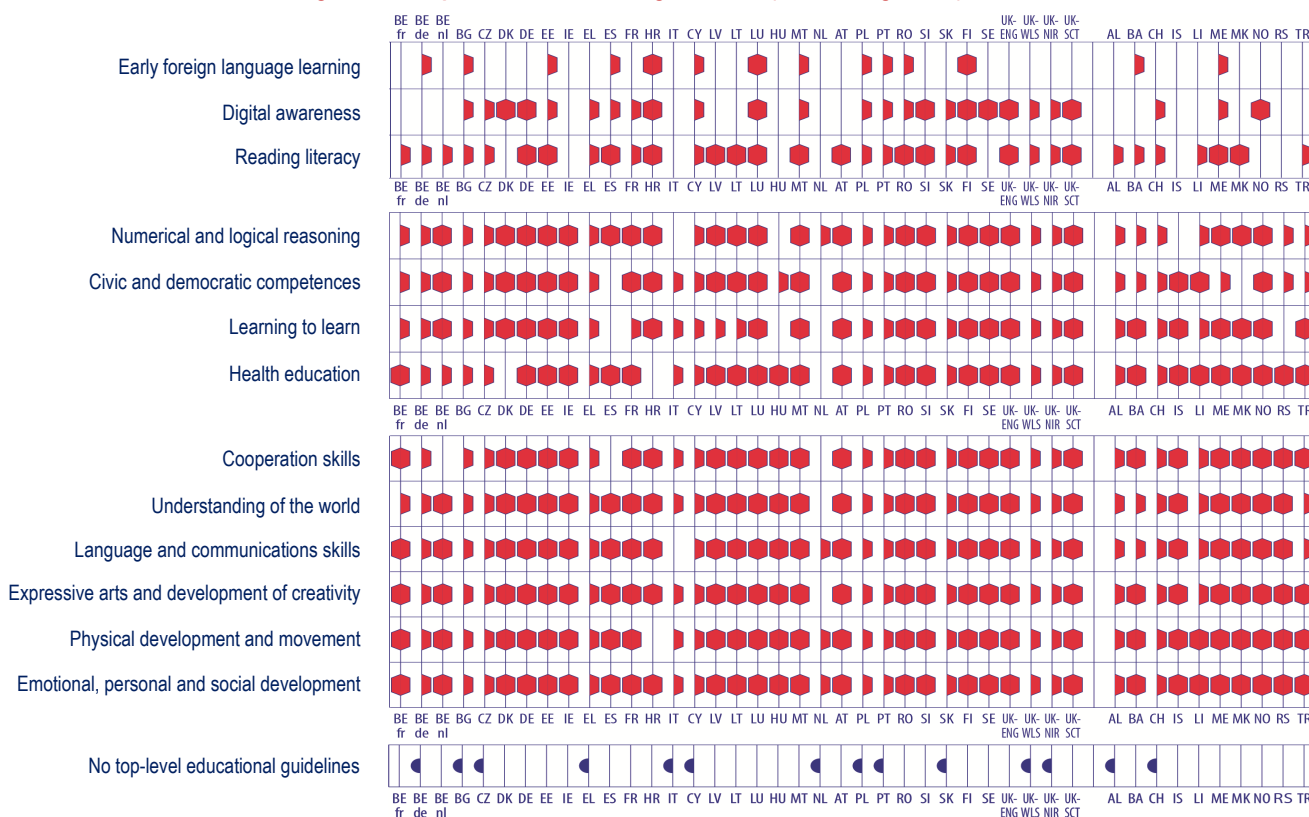
Source: Eurydice.

**Slovenia:** Depending on their circumstances, municipalities may raise the maximum number of children per group by two. This applies to more than half of the groups.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS):** For 3-year-olds, the table shows the situation in *nursery classes* or *nursery schools*. For 4-year-olds it shows the situation in *the reception class* of primary school. In Wales, in line with guidance issued in 2018, there is a requirement to work towards delivering a child/staff ratio of 8:1 for both age groups.

**United Kingdom (NIR):** For 3-year-olds, the table shows the situation in *nursery classes* or *nursery schools*.

□ Areas of learning and development in ECEC settings, 2018/19 (Data for Figure D3)



Left Provision for children under 3 years      Right Provision for children aged 3 years and over

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure reflects the content of top-level educational guidelines. Areas of learning and development limited to pre-primary classes (see national sheets and the glossary) are not indicated. See Annex C for the specific documents referred to as top-level educational guidelines in each country.

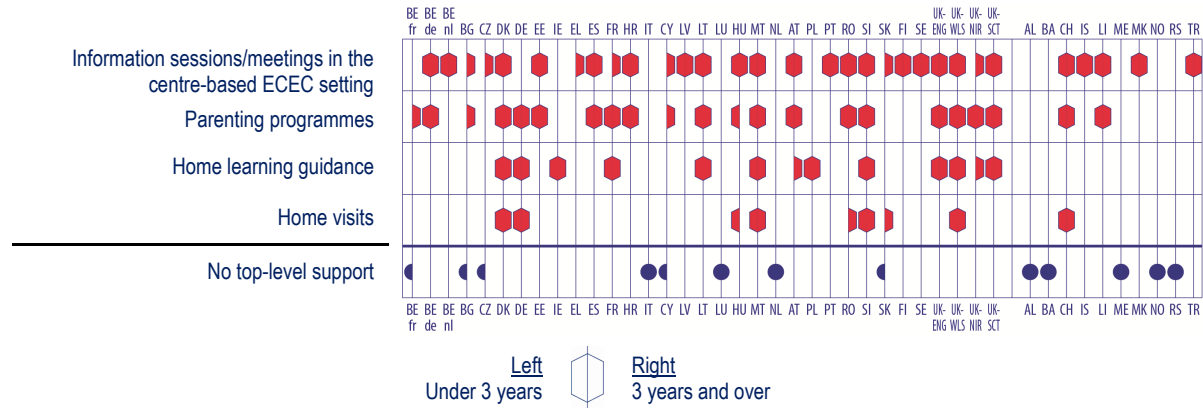
**Country specific note**

**Lithuania:** Digital awareness becomes a learning area in pre-primary classes.

**Portugal:** There are no specific educational guidelines for settings for under-3s but the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-school Education, designed for ECEC settings for children aged 3 and over, emphasise the need for common pedagogical approaches and principles for the whole phase prior to compulsory schooling.

**Sweden and Serbia:** Reading literacy becomes a learning area in pre-primary classes.

**Support for parents with children in ECEC, 2018/19 (Data for Figure D14)**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The Figure reflects the content of top-level educational guidelines and other top-level regulations and recommendations. Some support measures may not apply in all settings.

**ANNEX B: AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNING ECEC PROVISION**

Country	Responsible authority	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision	Website
		● Responsible authority		□ Provision not available		
BE fr	Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Continuing Education	●		□	●	<a href="http://gouvernement.cfwb.be/competences-de-la-federation-wallonie-bruxelles/enfance">http://gouvernement.cfwb.be/competences-de-la-federation-wallonie-bruxelles/enfance</a> ; <a href="http://www.one.be/">http://www.one.be/</a>
	Ministry of Education		●	□		<a href="http://www.enseignement.be">www.enseignement.be</a>
BE de	Department for Family and Social Matters, Ministry of the German-speaking Community	●		□	●	<a href="http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/">http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/</a>
	Education Department, Ministry of the German-speaking Community		●	□		<a href="http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/">http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/</a>
BE nl	Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Health and Family	●		□	●	<a href="https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/vlaams-minister-van-welzijn-volksgezondheid-en-gezin">https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/vlaams-minister-van-welzijn-volksgezondheid-en-gezin</a>
	Flemish Ministry of Education and Training		●	□		<a href="https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/">https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/</a>
BG	Ministry of Health	●			□	<a href="http://www.mh.government.bg">www.mh.government.bg</a> <a href="http://www.mon.bg">www.mon.bg</a>
	Ministry of Education and Science		●	●	□	<a href="http://www.mon.bg">www.mon.bg</a>

Country	Responsible authority	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision	Website
CZ	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	●				<a href="http://www.mpsv.cz">www.mpsv.cz</a>
	Ministry of Industry and Trade		●			<a href="http://www.mpo.cz">www.mpo.cz</a>
	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports		●			<a href="http://www.msmt.cz">www.msmt.cz</a>
DK	Ministry for Children and Social Affairs	●	●			<a href="http://socialministeriet.dk/">http://socialministeriet.dk/</a>
	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	●	●			<a href="https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj">https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj</a>
DE	Ministry of Social Affairs	●				<a href="http://www.sm.ee/en">http://www.sm.ee/en</a>
	Ministry of Education and Research	●	●			<a href="https://www.hm.ee/en">https://www.hm.ee/en</a>
IE	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	●	●			<a href="http://www.dcyra.gov.ie">www.dcyra.gov.ie</a>
	Department of Education and Skills	●	●			
EL	Ministry of Interior and Social Security and Social Solidarity (jointly)	●				<a href="http://www.ypes.gr/">http://www.ypes.gr/</a> <a href="http://www.yeka.gr/">http://www.yeka.gr/</a>
	Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs	●				<a href="http://www.minedu.gov.gr">www.minedu.gov.gr</a>
ES	Social Policy Administrations	●				<a href="http://www.comunidad.madrid/servicios/asuntos-sociales">http://www.comunidad.madrid/servicios/asuntos-sociales</a> <a href="http://www.navarra.es/home_es/Gobierno+de+Navarra/Presidencia+Derechos+Sociales/">http://www.navarra.es/home_es/Gobierno+de+Navarra/Presidencia+Derechos+Sociales/</a>
	Educational Administrations of the Autonomous Communities	●				<a href="http://www.educacionfp.gob.es/contenidos/in/comunidad-es-autonomas.html">http://www.educacionfp.gob.es/contenidos/in/comunidad-es-autonomas.html</a>
	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training together with the Educational Administrations of the Autonomous Communities	●				<a href="http://www.educacionfp.gob.es/portada.html">http://www.educacionfp.gob.es/portada.html</a>
	Ministry of Education		●			<a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr/">https://www.education.gouv.fr/</a>
FR	Ministry for Solidarity and Health	●				<a href="https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/affaires-sociales">https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/affaires-sociales</a>
	Ministry of Education		●			<a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr/">https://www.education.gouv.fr/</a>
HR	Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy	●				<a href="https://mdomsp.gov.hr/">https://mdomsp.gov.hr/</a>
	Ministry of Science and Education	●	●			<a href="https://mzo.hr/">https://mzo.hr/</a>
IT	Regional administrations in charge of education or social affairs	●				(-)
	Ministry of Education, University and Research	●				<a href="http://www.miur.gov.it/">http://www.miur.gov.it/</a>
CY	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	●				<a href="http://www.mlsi.gov.cy">www.mlsi.gov.cy</a>
	Ministry of Education and Culture	●	●			<a href="http://www.moe.gov.cy">www.moe.gov.cy</a>
LV	Ministry of Education and Science	●				<a href="http://www.izm.gov.lv/">http://www.izm.gov.lv/</a>
	Ministry of Welfare (jointly)					<a href="https://www.lm.gov.lv/">https://www.lm.gov.lv/</a>
LT	Ministry of Education and Science	●	●			<a href="http://www.izm.gov.lv/">http://www.izm.gov.lv/</a>
	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	●	●			<a href="http://www.smm.lt">http://www.smm.lt</a>
LU	Ministry of Education, Children and Youth	●	●			<a href="http://www.men.public.lu/fr">http://www.men.public.lu/fr</a>
HU	State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources	●				<a href="http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources">http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources</a>
	State Secretariat for Education, Ministry of Human Capacities		●			<a href="http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources">http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources</a>
MT	Ministry for Education and Employment	●	●			<a href="https://education.gov.mt">https://education.gov.mt</a>

● Responsible authority  Provision not available

## Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019

Country	Responsible authority	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision	Website
● Responsible authority <input type="checkbox"/> Provision not available						
NL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-employment">https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-employment</a>
	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science		●	<input type="checkbox"/>		<a href="https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science">https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science</a>
AT	Mainly Social Administrations of the <i>Länder</i>			<input type="checkbox"/>	●	(-)+
	Educational Administrations of the <i>Länder</i>	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>		(-)
PL	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.mpips.gov.pl/">https://www.mpips.gov.pl/</a>
	Ministry of Education		●	<input type="checkbox"/>		<a href="https://men.gov.pl/">https://men.gov.pl/</a>
PT	Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="http://www.seg-social.pt/inicio">http://www.seg-social.pt/inicio</a>
	Ministry of Education		●	<input type="checkbox"/>		<a href="http://www.dge.mec.pt/">http://www.dge.mec.pt/</a>
RO	Ministry of Education	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="https://www.edu.ro/">https://www.edu.ro/</a>
	Ministry of Health			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.ms.ro/">http://www.ms.ro/</a>
	Ministry of Labour and Social Justice ( <i>jointly</i> )			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.mmuncii.ro">http://www.mmuncii.ro</a>
	Ministry of Education		●	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="https://www.edu.ro/">https://www.edu.ro/</a>
SI	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="http://www.mizs.gov.si/si/">http://www.mizs.gov.si/si/</a>
SK	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.employment.gov.sk/">https://www.employment.gov.sk/</a>
	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport		●	<input type="checkbox"/>		<a href="https://www.minedu.sk/">https://www.minedu.sk/</a>
FI	Ministry of Education and Culture	●	●	●	●	<a href="http://minedu.fi">http://minedu.fi</a>
SE	Ministry of Education and Research	●	●	●	●	<a href="http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-education-and-research/">http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-education-and-research/</a>
UK-ENG	Department for Education	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education</a>
UK-WLS	Minister for Health and Social Services Welsh Government	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://gov.wales/?lang=en">https://gov.wales/?lang=en</a>
	Minister for Education, Welsh Government		●	<input type="checkbox"/>		<a href="https://gov.wales/?lang=en">https://gov.wales/?lang=en</a>
UK-NIR	Department of Education, Northern Ireland Executive	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/">https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/</a>
	Department of Health, Northern Ireland Executive	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/">https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/</a>
UK-SCT	Early Learning and Childcare Directorate, Scottish Government	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	<a href="https://beta.gov.scot/policies/early-education-and-care/early-learning-and-childcare">https://beta.gov.scot/policies/early-education-and-care/early-learning-and-childcare</a>
AL	Ministry of Health and Social Protection	●		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.shendetesia.gov.al">http://www.shendetesia.gov.al</a>
	Ministry of Education, Sports		●	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.arsimi.gov.al">www.arsimi.gov.al</a>
BA	Federal Ministry of Education and Science and its cantons	●	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.fmon.gov.ba/Link/Index">http://www.fmon.gov.ba/Link/Index</a>
	Ministry of Education and Culture Republika Srpska	●	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.vladars.net/eng/vlada/ministries/MEC/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.vladars.net/eng/vlada/ministries/MEC/Pages/default.aspx</a> In web
	Department for Education Brčko District Government	●	●	●	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="http://www.bdcentral.net/index.php/sr/odjeljenja-vlade-brko-dsitrikta-bih/obrazovanje">http://www.bdcentral.net/index.php/sr/odjeljenja-vlade-brko-dsitrikta-bih/obrazovanje</a>



Country	Responsible authority	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision	Website
● Responsible authority <span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #d9e1f2;"></span> Provision not available						
CH	Mainly Social Affairs Administrations in the cantons	●			●	<a href="http://www.sodk.ch/fr/liens/cantons-et-communes/">http://www.sodk.ch/fr/liens/cantons-et-communes/</a>
	Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Social Affairs	●				<a href="http://www.sodk.ch">http://www.sodk.ch</a>
	Education Administrations in the cantons		●			<a href="http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11589.php">http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11589.php</a>
	Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education		●			<a href="http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11553.php">http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11553.php</a>
IS	Ministry of Welfare				●	<a href="https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-welfare/">https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-welfare/</a>
	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	●	●			<a href="https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-education-science-and-culture/">https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-education-science-and-culture/</a>
LI	Ministry for Social Affairs	●			●	<a href="https://www.llv.li/#/11915/amt-fur-soziale-dienste">https://www.llv.li/#/11915/amt-fur-soziale-dienste</a>
	Ministry for Home Affairs, Education and Environment		●			<a href="https://www.llv.li/#/11631/schulamt">https://www.llv.li/#/11631/schulamt</a>
ME	Ministry of Education	●	●			<a href="http://www.mps.gov.me/ministarstvo">http://www.mps.gov.me/ministarstvo</a>
MK	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy				●	<a href="http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/detski-gradinki-ns_article-fizicka-koi-vrshat-domashno-zgrizuvanje-na-deca-od-preducilishna-voznost.nsp">http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/detski-gradinki-ns_article-fizicka-koi-vrshat-domashno-zgrizuvanje-na-deca-od-preducilishna-voznost.nsp</a>
	Ministry of Education and Sciences Ministry of Labour and Social Policy ( <i>jointly</i> )	●	●			<a href="http://www.mon.gov.mk/">http://www.mon.gov.mk/</a> <a href="http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/">http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/</a>
NO	Ministry of Education and Research	●	●		●	<a href="https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/id586/">https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/id586/</a>
RS	Ministry of Education Science and Technological Development	●	●	●		<a href="http://www.mpn.gov.rs/">http://www.mpn.gov.rs/</a>
TR	Ministry of Family and Social Policies	●				<a href="http://www.aile.gov.tr">www.aile.gov.tr</a>
	Ministry of National Education		●			<a href="http://www.meb.gov.tr">www.meb.gov.tr</a>

Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

The information on home-based provision mainly refers to provision for children under the age of 3.

### **Country-specific notes**

**Czechia:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is in charge of *dětská skupina* (for 1- to 5-year-olds), while the Ministry of Industry and Trade is in charge of *zařízení pro péči o děti do 3 let* (for 0- to 2-year-olds). The legislation allows home-based provision but it is very rare.

**Germany:** In some *Länder*, home-based provision does not exist (e.g: Rhineland-Palatinate).

**Estonia:** For children under the age of 3, the Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of *lapsehoiuteenus*, while the Ministry of Education and Research is in charge of *koolieelne lasteasutus*.

**Spain:** Regulated home-based provision only exists in two Autonomous Communities: Comunidad de Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for centre-based provision for children under the age of 3 in the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Centre-based provision for younger children is managed jointly with the Social Policy Administration in the Autonomous Community of Galicia.

**Italy:** Except for some financial and educational aspects centrally regulated, the regions are responsible for centre-based ECEC provision for children under the age of 3 as well as for regulated home-based provision.

**Montenegro:** The legislation allows for home-based provision but it is very rare.

**ANNEX C: TOP-LEVEL EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ECEC PROVISION**

Country	Top-level Educational Guidelines	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Age range for which the guidelines apply</li> <li>□ Provision not available</li> </ul>					
BE fr	<a href="#">Code de Qualité de l'Accueil</a>	●		□	●
	<a href="#">Core skills: Socles de Compétences</a>		●	□	
BE de	<a href="#">Decree on basic elementary education</a>		●	□	
	<a href="#">Decree on the assignment to the school authorities and the school staff as well as the general pedagogical and organizational provisions for the regular and special schools</a>		●	□	
BE nl	<a href="#">A pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers</a>	●		□	●
	<a href="#">The developmental goals and attainment targets of regular elementary education</a>		●	□	
	<a href="#">Decision of the Flemish Government on determining the developmental goals and attainment targets of regular elementary education</a>		●	□	
BG	<a href="#">Pre-school and School Educational Act</a>		●	●	□
	<a href="#">Regulation N 5 for pre-school education</a>		●	●	□
CZ	<a href="#">Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education</a>		●	□	□
DK	<a href="#">Ministerial Order on Pedagogical Learning Objectives and Six Learning Objectives</a>	●	●	□	●
DE	<a href="#">Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in Child Care Centres</a>	●	●	□	
EE	<a href="#">The national curriculum for preschool child care institutions</a>	●	●	□	
IE	<a href="#">Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</a>	●	●	□	●
EL	<a href="#">Cross Curriculum Single Program Study Framework</a>		●	□	□
	<a href="#">Pre-primary Education Teachers' Guide</a>		●	□	□
ES	<a href="#">Royal Decree 1630/2006, of December 29, which establishes the minimum teachings of the second cycle of ECEC</a>		●	□	
	<a href="#">Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education, modified by Organic Law 8/2103, of December 9. Consolidated text. Latest modification. December 6, 2018</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Decrees approved by the Autonomous Communities that develop the curriculum of the first and second cycle of ECEC</a>	●	●	□	
FR	<a href="#">National framework for early childhood care</a>	●		□	●
	<a href="#">Pre-elementary education: an single cycle, fundamental for the success of all</a>		●	□	
HR	<a href="#">National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education and Care</a>	●	●		□
	<a href="#">Amendments to the National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education and Care, Chapter 5.2. Preschool programme curriculum</a>			●	□
IT	<a href="#">National guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and for the first cycle of education</a>		●	□	
CY	<a href="#">Preschool Education Curriculum</a>		●	●	
LV	<a href="#">Regulations on guidelines for state pre-primary education</a>	●	●	●	●
LT	<a href="#">The Law on Education of Republic of Lithuania</a>	●	●	●	□
	<a href="#">Outline of Criteria for Preschool Education Curricula</a>	●	●	●	□
	<a href="#">Methodological recommendations for development of preschool curriculum</a>	●	●	●	□
	<a href="#">A description of the achievements of pre-school children</a>	●	●	●	□
	<a href="#">General Curriculum of pre-primary education</a>			●	□

Country	Top-level Educational Guidelines	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision
● Age range for which the guidelines apply		□ Provision not available			
LU	<a href="#">Curriculum Framework for Non-formal Education for Children and Youth</a>	●			●
	<a href="#">Curriculum Framework for pre-school education (éducation précoce)</a>		●		
	<a href="#">Curriculum Framework for fundamental education - cycle 1 (pre-primary education) (covers 4-6)</a>			●	
HU	<a href="#">National core programme of education and care in crèches</a>	●		□	●
	<a href="#">National Core Programme of Kindergarten Education</a>		●	□	
MT	<a href="#">A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012</a>	●	●	□	●
	<a href="#">Kinder 1 - Scholastic Year 218/19 - Learning Outcomes Programmes Kindergarten Level 1 and 2 - Kindergarten Level 3</a>		●	□	
NL	<a href="#">Core objectives of voorschoolse educatie</a>	●		□	
	<a href="#">Core objectives for primary education</a>		●	□	
AT	<a href="#">Children's last year before school. Guidelines for home care and day care parents.</a>			□	●
	<a href="#">Statewide Framework Curriculum for ECEC Services in Austria</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Module for the last year in early childhood services</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Language promotion for the transition from kindergarten to primary school 3 and over</a>	●	●	□	
PL	<a href="#">Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 14 February 217 on core curricula for pre-school education and core curricula for general education for primary school including for pupils with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, general education for stage I sectoral vocational school, general education for special school preparing for employment and general education for post-secondary schools</a>		●	□	
PT	<a href="#">Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education</a>		●	□	
RO	<a href="#">Fundamental Developmental and Learning Standards</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Curriculum for early childhood Curriculum for early childhood education from 3 to 6/7 years</a>		●	□	
SI	<a href="#">Kindergarten Curriculum</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for Roma children</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Supplement to the Curriculum for working in the bilingual areas</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Instructions regarding the Kindergarten Curriculum with adapted implementation and additional professional support for SEN children</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Guidelines for the counselling service in kindergarten</a>	●	●	□	
	<a href="#">Guidelines for the integration of immigrant children in kindergartens and schools</a>	●	●	□	
SK	<a href="#">State educational Programme for Pre-Primary Education in Kindergartens</a>		●	□	
FI	<a href="#">National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care</a>	●	●	●	●
	<a href="#">National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education</a>			●	
SE	<a href="#">Education Act</a>	●	●	●	●
	<a href="#">Curriculum for the Pre-school</a>	●	●	●	●
	<a href="#">Curriculum for the elementary school, pre-school class and after-school centres</a>			●	
UK-ENG	<a href="#">Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage</a>	●	●	□	●
UK-WLS	<a href="#">Foundation Phase Framework</a>		●	□	●
UK-NIR	<a href="#">Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education</a>		●	□	
UK-SCT	<a href="#">Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families</a>	●		□	●
	<a href="#">Curriculum for Excellence</a>		●	□	
	<a href="#">Building the Ambition</a>	●	●	□	

Country	Top-level Educational Guidelines	Children < 3 years	Children ≥ 3 years	Pre-primary classes	Home-based provision
● Age range for which the guidelines apply <input type="checkbox"/> Provision not available					
AL	<a href="#">Curriculum Framework of Preschool Education</a>		●		
BA	<a href="#">Guidelines for the implementation of common core curricula defined on learning outcomes</a>	●	●	●	
CH	<a href="#">German speaking Cantons: Curriculum 21 [Lehrplan 21]</a> <a href="#">French speaking Cantons: Curriculum romand</a> <a href="#">Italian speaking Canton: Curriculum for compulsory education</a>		●		
IS	<a href="#">The Icelandic national curriculum guide for pre-schools</a>	●	●		
LI	<a href="#">Guidelines of the Office for social affairs for Approval and Quality assurance of extra-familias child care services</a>	●			●
	<a href="#">National Curricula for Kindergarten, Primary and lower Secondary Education (Compulsory education)</a>		●		
ME	<a href="#">Program of care and educational work with children under the age of 3 for children from to 3 year</a>	●			
	<a href="#">Program for activity areas in preschool education (from the age of 3 to the age of 6)</a>		●		
	<a href="#">Three-hour preschool education program</a>		●		
	<a href="#">Shorter program for working with children before entering school</a>		●		
	<a href="#">Program concept of transitioning from kindergarten to primary school</a>		●		
MK	<a href="#">Standards for Early learning and development</a>	●	●		
	<a href="#">Amendment of the Regulation for the Standards and Norms for the Implementation of the Services in the ECEC Institutions</a>	●	●		
NO	<a href="#">Framework Plan for Kindergartens - contents and tasks</a>	●	●		●
RS	<a href="#">Bylaw on general foundations of preschool programme</a>	●	●	●	
TR	<a href="#">The Regulation for the Establishment and Operation of the Private Crèches, Day-care Centers and Child Clubs</a>	●			
	<a href="#">Educational Program for ECEC</a>		●		

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

The information on home-based provision only refers to provision for children under the age of 3.

**Country-specific notes**

**Netherlands:** The Core objectives of *voorschoolse educatie* only apply to ECEC centre-based settings providing *voorschoolse educatie*.

**United Kingdom (WLS):** Only home-based settings in receipt of public funding to provide for children over 3 must follow the curriculum framework in place for children of this age.

# NATIONAL SYSTEM INFORMATION SHEETS

## Diagram

The diagrams represent the structure of mainstream ECEC provision in each country. Separate provision outside mainstream ECEC for children with special educational needs is not included.

Only the main structures where a child spends the main part of the day are depicted. 'Out-of-school' care or supplementary ECEC provision to complete the full day are not presented in the diagram. For example, when a child has to follow a compulsory ECEC programme in a centre-based setting for a half-day, but may attend home-based ECEC in the afternoon, only the centre-based provision is shown in the diagram.

The diagram is structured around the age of children scale. These ages are notional and give an indication of the official age at which children might begin different types of ECEC.

The first thin line indicates the theoretical length of 'adequately compensated' childcare leave, i.e. parents receive at least 65 % of their previous earnings during this period <sup>(1)</sup>. Childcare leave is the accumulated length of three possible types of leave: maternity, paternity and parental (see Annex to Figure B3).

The next line(s) show the range of official ages at which children become eligible for admission to different settings or types of ECEC provision. For most countries, the national term for the ECEC setting is shown on the diagram. However, in some countries, the type of provision is considered to be more appropriate, and so these terms are given instead. All terms are provided in the official national language(s) of the country. Centre-based settings are indicated in blue, while home based-settings are in pink. Involvement of the education authorities (e.g. the Ministry of Education) is marked by a lower intensity of the respective colours.

When applicable, underlining indicates the level of education as defined in the [2011 International Standard Classification of Education](#) (ISCED): dashes for ISCED 010 and dots for ISCED 020. Special symbols indicate the starting age of any legal entitlement to ECEC provision and the availability of

free-of-charge provision for at least some hours per week. The beginning of compulsory education is also indicated.

When appropriate, the thin vertical lines within the setting represent the division between different types of provision, cycles or key stages. The line may also indicate the start of a distinct programme, e.g. pre-primary classes.

After each diagram, a shaded paragraph aims to help the reader identify which centre-based settings are being referred to in the report when describing provision either for children 'under 3 years' or for those aged '3 years and over'. In some education systems, settings may cater largely for one of these age groups but may admit children who are slightly younger or older. The terms settings for 'younger' children and settings for 'older' children are used as a substitute in some cases.

## Organisation

A short description of the main types of ECEC is provided in the Organisation section. It also specifies which authorities are responsible for which types of settings. Additional information on non-mainstream provision is provided as appropriate.

## Participation rates

In order to enable international comparisons, participation rates in ISCED 0 and ISCED 1 by age are shown using Eurostat data. When the same age group is enrolled in ISCED 010 and ISCED 020, the tables display the distinction. When available, national data on participation rates for under-3s or national data showing participation by type of provision and/or setting is also included, specifying the reference year and source. Differences between rates provided by different sources might be due to disparities in the methodology used.

## Educational guidelines

A short standardised description of coverage of educational guidelines and their status is provided (see Annex C for the specific documents referred to as top-level educational guidelines in each country).

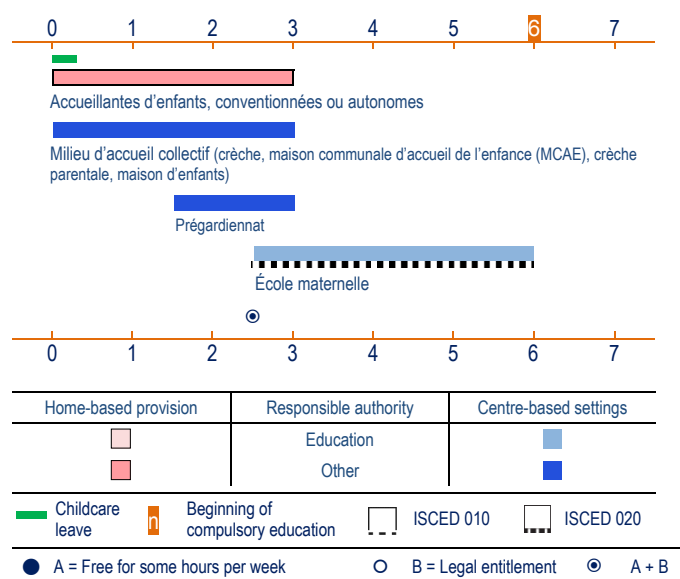
<sup>(1)</sup> Where there is a flat rate payment, it is considered adequate compensation if it constitutes 65 % of the average wage in the country.

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## Belgium – French Community

Reference year 2018/19

### Diagram



In this report, with respect to Belgium (French Community), the category 'under 3 years' refers to children in a range of settings in the *milieu d'accueil collectif* as well as in the *prégardiennat*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in the *école maternelle*.

### Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Under 3
Accueillantes d'enfants, conventionnées ou autonomes	46%
Milieu d'accueil collectif (crèche, prégardiennat, maison communale d'accueil de l'enfance (MCAE), crèche parentale, maison d'enfants)	

Source: ONE, 2016, p. 19.

(%) Reference year 2016	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
École maternelle	47.9	97.3	97.6	96.0	2.2

Source: Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0*	(-)	52.8	97.9	98.6	97.9	3.5	0.1
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.8	95.0	98.3

\* Data for Belgium (except the German-speaking Community).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

### Organisation

Children from birth to 3 years may attend different types of centre-based settings (*milieu d'accueil collectif*), including *crèche*, *maison communale d'accueil de l'enfance* (MCAE) or *maison d'enfants*. In addition, *prégardiennat* is available for children between 18 and 36 months. There is also a system of regulated home-based care, which is delivered by child-minders (*accueillantes d'enfants*) who either work independently (*accueillantes d'enfants autonomes*) or are affiliated to specific child-minding organisations (*accueillantes d'enfants conventionnées*). Home-based and centre-based care for younger children falls under the responsibility of the organisation ONE (*Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance*), which is under the authority of the Minister of Culture, Childhood and Continuing education. From age 2-and-a-half, children are legally entitled to early childhood education free of charge in the *école maternelle*. This area falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education. Primary education starts at age 6.

### Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

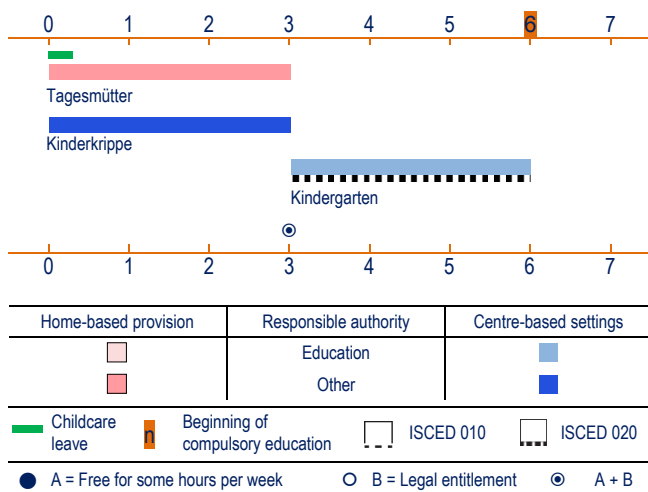
### Current reforms

In March 2019, the Belgian federal parliament passed a law to lower the starting age of compulsory education from 6 to 5 years, including one year of ECEC. The law will come into force in September 2020.

## Belgium – German-speaking Community

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Belgium (German-speaking Community), the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *Kinderkrippe*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Kindergarten*.

## Organisation

Up to the age of 3, children mostly attend regulated home-based care, which is provided by child-minders (*Tagesmütter*) who either work independently (*Selbstständige Tagesmütter*) or are affiliated to a specific child-minding organisation (*Tagesmütterdienst* – TMD). There is also a centre-based setting known as *Kinderkrippe*. ECEC for younger children falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Family, Health and Social Affairs. From age 3, children are legally entitled to early childhood education free of charge in *Kindergarten*. This area falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## Current reforms

From 2022, *Kindergarten* will admit children aged 2-and-a-half.

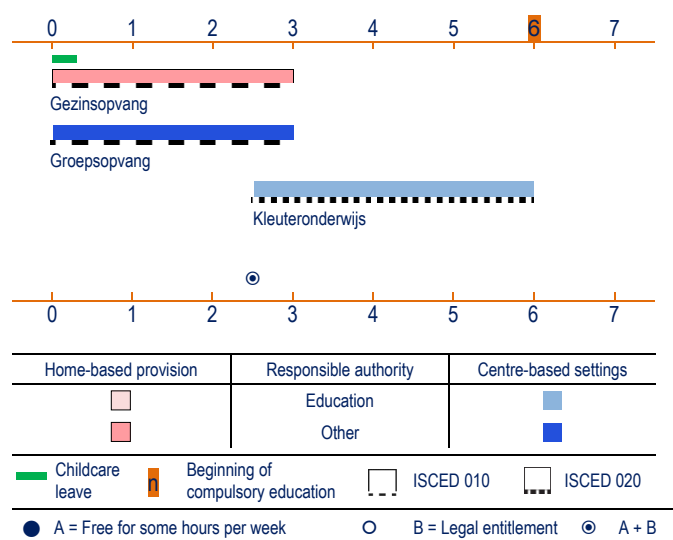
In March 2019, the Belgian federal parliament passed a law to lower the starting age of compulsory education from 6 to 5 years, including one year of ECEC. The law will come into force in September 2020.



## Belgium – Flemish Community

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Belgium (Flemish Community), the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *Groepsopvang*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Kleuteronderwijs*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Under 1 year	1 year-olds	2 year-olds
Gezinsopvang and groepsopvang	51.5	67.7	58.7

Source: Kind en Gezin (2017, p. 115)

(%) Reference year 2017/18	2 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	6 year-olds
Kleuteronderwijs	(*)	98.6	98.9	99.0	(-)

Note: (\*) The participation rates of 2 year-olds not applicable as children may start only from age 2 years and a half.

Source: AGODI (Agency for Education Services of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training), unpublished.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0*	(-)	52.8	97.9	98.6	97.9	3.5	0.1
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.8	95.0	98.3

\* Data for Belgium (except the German-speaking Community).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Formal childcare for children from birth until age 3 may be centre-based (*groepsopvang*) or home-based (*gezinsopvang*). These provisions are administered by the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health and Family and the agency *Kind en Gezin*.

Children are legally entitled to pre-primary education (*kleuteronderwijs*) free of charge from age 2-and-a-half. This provision falls under the responsibility of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. The guidelines are only binding for centre-based settings for children aged 3 years and over.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for children under 3 years cover both centre-based (*groepsopvang*) and home-based provision (*gezinsopvang*).

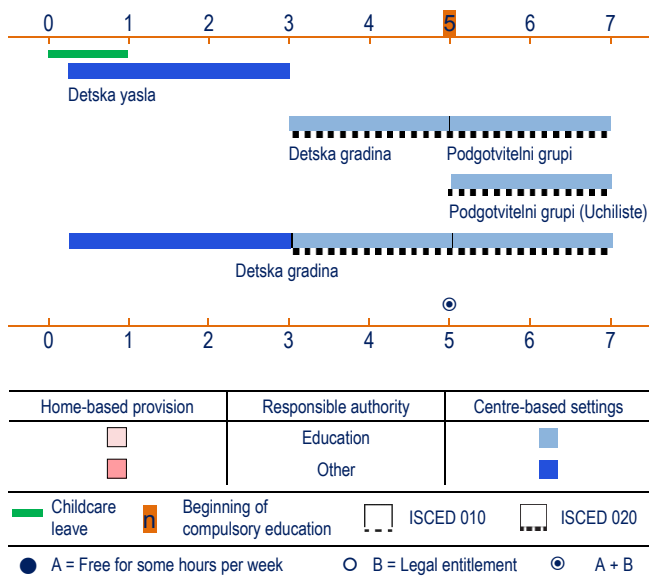
## Current reforms

In March 2019, the Belgian federal parliament passed a law to lower the starting age of compulsory education from 6 to 5 years, including one year of ECEC. The law will come into force in September 2020.

## Bulgaria

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Bulgaria, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *detska yasla* and groups for under-3s in *detska gradina*. The category '3 years and over' refers to children of this age in *detska gradina* and *podgotvitelni grupi*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year (end of) 2017	Under 3	3-6	5-6
Detska yasla	16.6	(-)	(-)
Detska gradina and podgotvitelni grupi	(-)	78.4	91

Source: National statistical Institute [BG] (2018) and Infostat (2018a, 2018b).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	12.7	71.8	75.7	84.2	85.4	0.9
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.1	6.3	92.6

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Children aged between 3 months and 3 years may attend centre-based settings known as *detska yasla*, falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. From age 3, early childhood education is available in *detska gradina*, where the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the education process. Children may also attend, as from 10 months, *detska gradina* with nursery groups. These groups are under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The last two years of pre-primary education (i.e. between the ages 5 and 7), known as preparatory groups (*podgotvitelni grupi*), are compulsory and children may attend them either in *detska gradina* or in primary school (*uchiliste*).

In addition to the separate settings for younger and older children, some *detska gradina* include nursery groups. The provision in these settings is structured according to the above phases (i.e. up to 3 years, between 3 and 5 years, and between 5 and 7 years of age).

Primary education starts at age 7. A child who is ready for school may start at the age of 6 if the parents so wish.

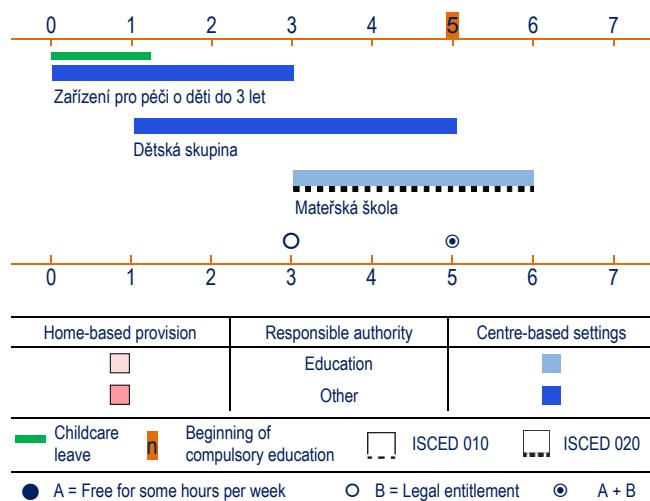
## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

## Czechia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Czechia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *dětská skupina*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *mateřská škola*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Mateřská škola	39.9	82.1	91.5	95.2	18.7

Source: MŠMT, 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	17.4	79.1	88.4	95.6	47.6	1.9
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	48.5	95.1

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

From 2020/21, it will be explicitly stated in the Education Act, that education in nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) is provided for children from the school year following their 2nd birthday. Some special conditions will apply for children under 3 years.

## Organisation

ECEC for younger children is fragmented and characterised by low participation rates. A children's group (*dětská skupina*) was introduced in 2014 and the number of participating children is gradually increasing. Although it is designed for children from one year of age until the start of compulsory schooling (6 years), there are few 5-year-olds attending; children aged 1 or 2 predominate. Children's groups are regulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Settings for children under 3 years of age (*zařízení pro péči o děti do 3 let*) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. These settings are excluded from the scope of this report as there is little information on them.

Nursery schools (*mateřské školy*), which fall under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, provide pre-primary education (ISCED 020) for children usually aged between 3 and 6, at the earliest for 2 year-olds. It is the most common form of ECEC for children in this age group. Nursery schools are mostly established by municipalities and other public authorities, but private schools also exist.

Preparatory classes (*přípravné třídy*) are intended for children for whom primary education is postponed. They are organised in basic schools (*základní školy*).

From age 3, children are legally entitled to a place in public *mateřské školy*. The last year of ECEC is compulsory and free of charge in public nursery schools. Under certain conditions, home schooling is possible.

Primary education starts at age 6.

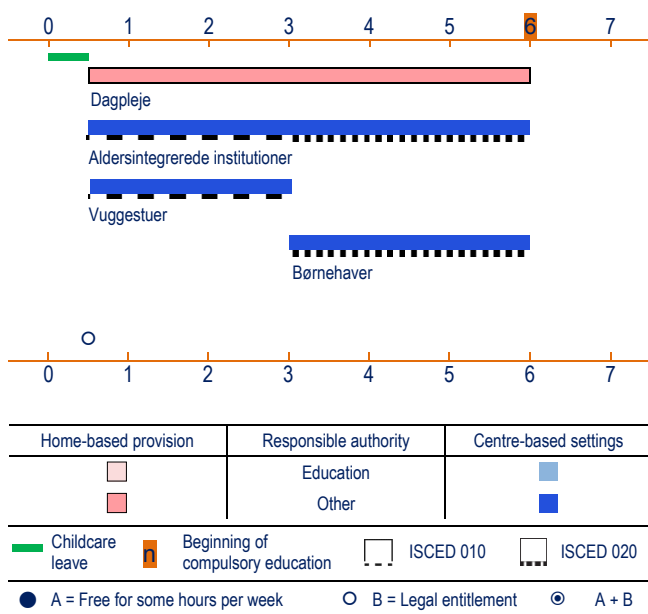
## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to nursery schools (*mateřské školy*). The guidelines are binding.

## Denmark

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Denmark, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *vuggestuer* and groups for under-3s in *aldersintegrerede institutioner*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *børnehaver* and groups for children of this age in *aldersintegrerede institutioner*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 010	39.1	87.4	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.0
ISCED 020	0.2	1.4	96.1	97.7	96.1	6.3	0.0
ISCED 0	39.3	88.8	96.5	98.0	96.9	6.5	0.1
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	1.2	92.9	99.4

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The ECEC system consists of public and private daycare centres (*daginstitutioner*), which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs and can be established either as age-integrated settings for children up to age 6 (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*), or separate settings for children under or over age 3 (*vuggestuer* and *børnehaver*, respectively). In addition to centre-based ECEC provision, there is also a system of regulated home-based provision (*dagpleje*) most of which is publicly funded.

From 26 weeks (6 months), children are legally entitled to publicly subsidised ECEC provision.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

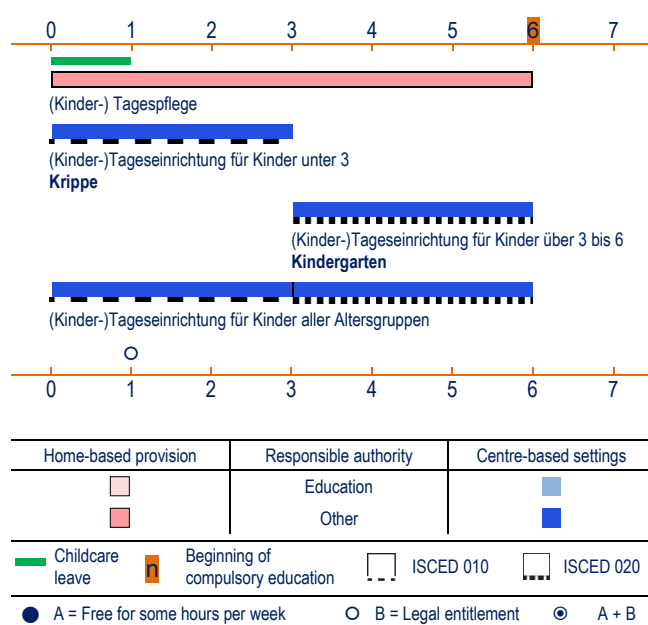
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Germany

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Germany, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *Krippen* and groups for under-3s in *Tageseinrichtung für Kinder aller Altersgruppen*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *Kindergarten* and groups for children of this age in *Tageseinrichtung für Kinder aller Altersgruppen*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
(Kinder-) Tagespflege	0.7	7.6	7.2	1.3	0.4	0.2
(Kinder-) Tageseinrichtung	1.6	29.0	54.7	88.0	94.1	97.0
Total	2.2	36.6	61.9	89.3	94.5	97.3

Source: Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2018).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	23.1	66.1	91.2	95.1	97.4	35.7	0.6
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.3	63.1	98.4

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The ECEC system is highly decentralised and comprises several different types of setting. Childcare centres (*Tageseinrichtung*) provide for either younger or older children separately (in *Krippen* and *Kindergarten*, respectively) or operate as one setting for the entire ECEC phase. In addition to centre-based ECEC provision, there is also a system of regulated and publicly subsidised home-based care (*Tagespflege*), which mainly caters for younger children (between 0 and 3), but may also deliver part-time provision for older children.

Prior to the beginning of primary education, some *Länder* provide pre-primary classes (*Vorklasse*). However, this provision only covers a very small proportion of children and is therefore not covered in the report.

At the federal/national level, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible for ECEC in both home-based and centre-based provision. At *Länder* level, it can be either the ministry in charge of family affairs or education.

Children are legally entitled to a publicly subsidised childcare place from age 1. In some *Länder*, some hours or certain years of ECEC are free of charge.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

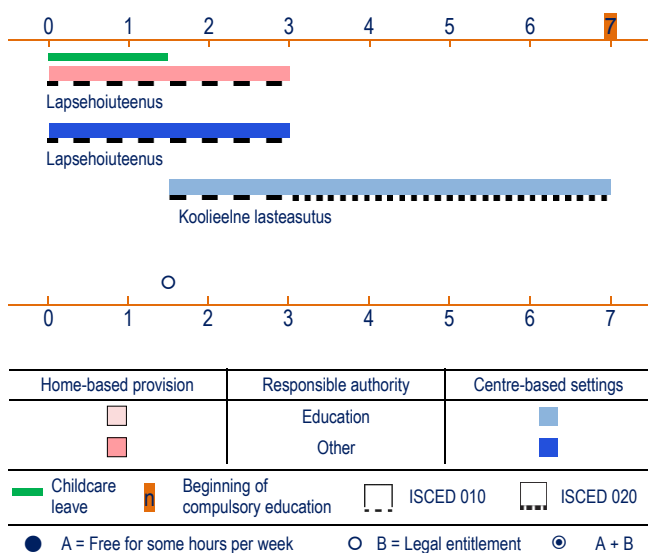
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings can also apply to home-based provision. This depends on the regulations of the *Länder*.

## Estonia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Estonia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to all those in *lapsehoiuteenus* and children of this age in *koolieelne lasteasutus*. The category '3 years and over' refers to children of this age group in *koolieelne lasteasutus*.

## Participation rates

(% Reference year 2017/18)	Age							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lapsehoiuteenus	3	10	10	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Koolieelne lasteasutus	0.2	55	77	91	92	90	92	2

Source: EHIS, 2018, Republic of Estonia Ministry of Social Affairs 2017.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	6.2	65.8	87.9	91.8	93.3	92.3	20.5
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	1.1	76.1

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The majority of children who participate in ECEC attend unitary child-care institutions (*koolieelne lasteasutus*). These fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. In addition, there is also a system of childcare services (*lapsehoiuteenus*) available for children up to primary school age, although catering mainly for younger children (under-3s). These services can either be centre- or home-based; they fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

According to the Pre-school Child Care Institutions Act, all children aged between 18 months and 7 years are legally entitled to an ECEC place. Parent contribution is capped at 20 % of the minimum wage, low income families are exempted.

Primary education starts at age 7.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

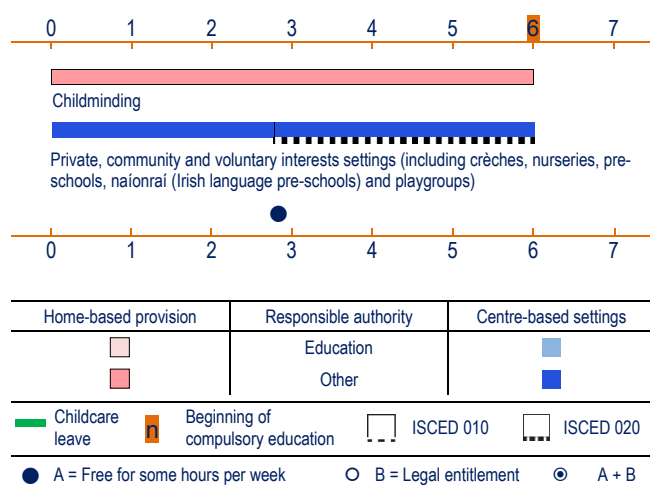
## Current reforms

The new Early Childhood Education Act is in preparation. It aims to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and care for all children between 18 months and 7 years and will establish an integrated approach instead of the two parallel systems (Pre-school Child Care Institutions Act and Social Welfare Act) that exist today.

## Ireland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Ireland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to a diverse range of private, community and voluntary provision. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in the *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme* (ISCED 0).

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016/17	Less than 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Early years sector	6%	17%	30%	94%	76%	20%

Source: Pobal (2017) and CIS (2018).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	4.1	14.9	92.1	73.2	0.7	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	0.4	28.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

'First 5', the strategy to support babies, young children and their families was announced in 2018 <sup>(2)</sup>. This ten-year strategy aims to deliver a broader range of options for parents to balance working and caring, a new model of parenting support, new developments →

## Organisation

There is home-based and centre-based provision available for children under the age of 6.

From the age of 2 years and 8 months, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides 15 hours per week free of charge for 38 weeks of the year. Since September 2018, all children are entitled to two full academic years or 76 weeks.

From age 4, children may be enrolled in infant classes in primary schools which are formally regarded as primary education (ISCED 1). While primary education starts at age 4, schooling only becomes compulsory when children reach age 6. Most children start primary school at age 4 or 5.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has the main responsibility for the statutory framework and binding rules relating to childcare. DCYA works in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to curriculum development and oversight.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase but are binding only for centre-based settings for children aged 3 years and over.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

→ in child health, reform of the Early Learning and Care (ELC) system, including a new funding model, and a package of measures to tackle early childhood poverty. The implementation plan for the first phase was published in May 2019 <sup>(3)</sup>.

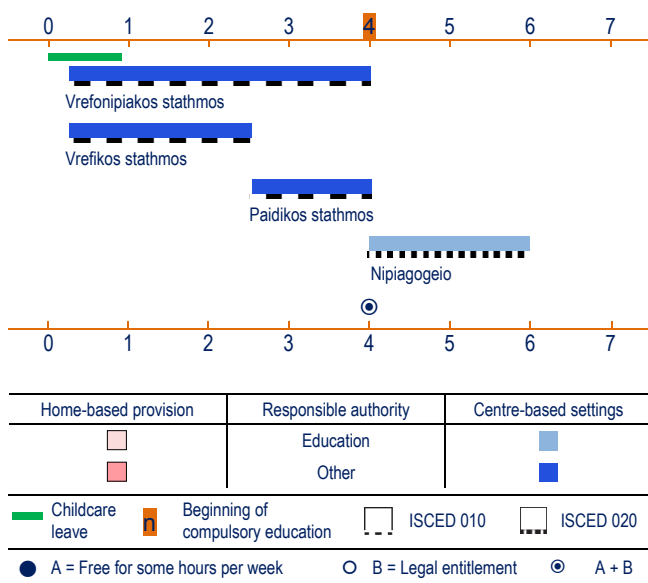
<sup>(2)</sup> [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/19112018\\_4966\\_DCYA\\_EarlyYears\\_Booklet\\_A4\\_v22\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/19112018_4966_DCYA_EarlyYears_Booklet_A4_v22_WEB.pdf)

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20190522First5ImplementationPlan22May2019.pdf>

## Greece

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Greece, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *vrefikos stathmos*, *vrefonipiakos stathmos* and *paidikos stathmos*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *nipiagogeio*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
State <i>nipiagogeio</i>	57%	89%
Private <i>nipiagogeio</i>		10%
Municipal and private <i>paidikos stathmos</i> with voucher	20%	
Municipal <i>paidikos stathmos</i> without voucher	8%	
Private <i>paidikos stathmos</i> without voucher	10%	
Total	95%	99%

Source: The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 010	2.3	13.8	30.4	18.4	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 020	(-)	(-)	(-)	52.1	92.0	3.1	(-)
ISCED 0	2.3	13.8	30.4	70.5	92.0	3.1	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	93.5	96.2

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

There are different forms of ECEC available for children under the age of 4: infant centres (*vrefonipiakos stathmos*) for children aged 2 months to 4 years, daycare centres (*vrefikos stathmos*) for children aged 2 months to 2-and-a-half years, as well as child centres (*paidikos stathmos*) for children from 2-and-a-half to 4 years old. The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity are responsible for the provision for under-4s.

Children aged 4 and 5 attend pre-primary school (*nipiagogeio*), which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Since 2018/19, the start of compulsory education (pre-primary school/*nipiagogeio*) has been lowered from age 5 to 4 and this will be gradually implemented over a period of three years.

ISCED 1 (*dimotiko*) starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

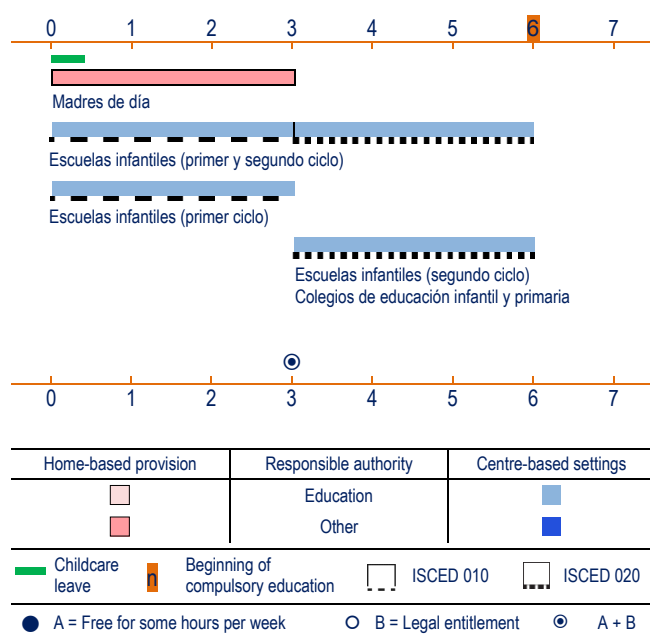
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to pre-primary schools (*nipiagogeia*). The guidelines are binding.



## Spain

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Spain, the category 'under 3 years' refers to children in *escuelas infantiles (primer ciclo)*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *escuelas infantiles (segundo ciclo)* and in *colegios de educación infantil y primaria*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016/17	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Escuelas Infantiles	10.9	38.4	58.7	(-)	(-)	(-)
Colegios de Educación Infantil y Primaria*	(-)	(-)	(-)	96.3	97.7	97.1

Source: Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2019.

\* Includes students enrolled in the second cycle in *escuelas infantiles (segundo ciclo)*

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 010	24.9	58.7	0.1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 020	0.0	0.0	96.2	97.7	96.8	0.8	(-)
ISCED 0	24.9	58.7	96.3	97.7	96.8	0.8	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.3	97.3	97.8

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Pre-primary education is divided into two cycles (under 3 years and 3 and over), which can be provided either in separate settings or in combined settings for both cycles (*escuelas infantiles*).

The first cycle of ECEC is under the responsibility of the departments in charge of education in the Autonomous Communities, except for the Autonomous Community of Galicia, where the responsibility falls also on the Department of Social Policy.

The second cycle of ECEC is under the responsibility of the departments of education in the Autonomous Communities.

The cities of Ceuta and Melilla are centrally managed: both the first and second cycles of ECEC are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Home-based provision exists in two Autonomous Communities: Comunidad de Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra.

From age 3, children are legally entitled to pre-primary education free of charge.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

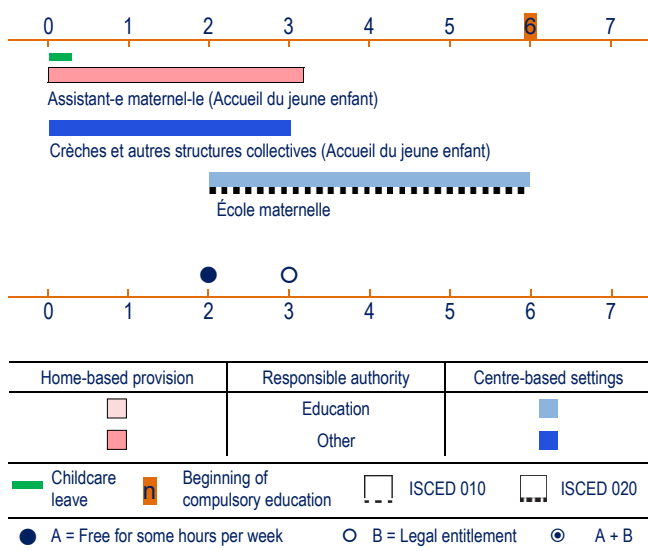
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## France

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to France, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *accueil du jeune enfant*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in the *école maternelle*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Under 3
Assistant-e maternel-le	33.4
Crèches et autres structures collectives	18.5
École maternelle	4.1
Total	56.0

The table shows the places offered (theoretical capacity). Source: ONAPE, CNAF, 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	12.4	99.6	100.0	100.0	1.3*	0.3*
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.7	99.6	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

\* Only special cases, e.g. handicapped children.

## Organisation

The ECEC system includes various types of provision, especially for the younger group of children. Childminders (*assistant-es maternel-les*) provide most of the ECEC for this group but centre-based *crèches* and other group settings (e.g. *jardins d'enfant*) are also available. Infant care (*accueil du jeune enfant*) is regulated by the Ministry of Health and Solidarity.

From age 3, children are legally entitled to be admitted to pre-primary schools (*écoles maternelles*) free of charge. Some of *écoles maternelles* are accessible from age 2, particularly in socially disadvantaged areas. These pre-primary schools are coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. The guidelines are only binding for centre-based settings for children aged 3 years and over.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Current reforms

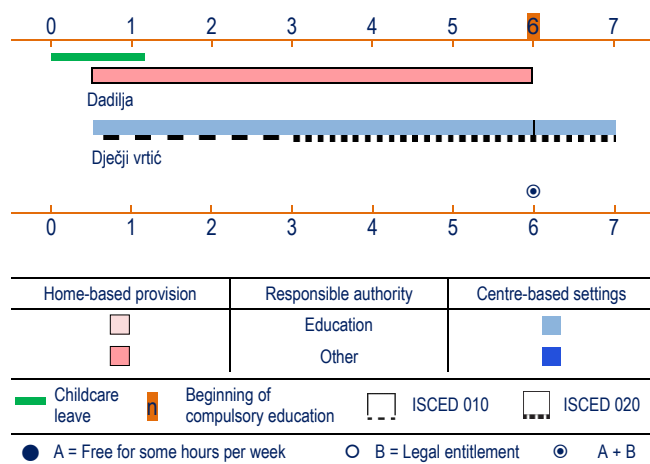
From 2019 September education will be compulsory from age 3 (final parliamentary discussion in progress). The national parenthood support strategy for the period 2018-2022 aims to reinforce support for parents needing childcare and to develop projects with parents. The new poverty plan <sup>(4)</sup> starting from 2019 includes several measures for *crèches*, including targeted funding, family approaches and mobilisation of local stakeholders.

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/affaires-sociales/lutte-contre-l-exclusion/lutte-pauvrete-gouv-fr/>

## Croatia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Croatia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *jaslice* groups in *dječji vrtić*. The category '3 years and over' refers to the groups for children of this age in *dječji vrtić*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
Total	0.4	25.6	42.7	61.8	69.6	71.7	81.6	3.0

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Social Statistics Directorate, 2018.

Note: Calculations were made based on the estimated population by age on 31.12.2017. The participation rate for 6 year-olds includes children who attend regular kindergarten programmes and children who attend obligatory pre-primary programmes (one year prior to starting school).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 010	11.8	34.2	6.4	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 020	0.0	6.6	54.9	67.5	75.9	83.4	2.6
ISCED 0	11.8	40.8	61.3	67.5	75.9	83.4	2.6
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.3	20.7	94.9

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

There is a unitary system of ECEC providing education and care for children from 6 months up until their enrolment in primary education. ECEC is delivered in centre-based settings known as *dječji vrtić*, which fall under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Education. The groups for younger children (up to age 3) are called *jaslice* (nursery). A few children attend home-based provision (*dadilja*), which falls under the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy.

All children are obliged to participate in a pre-primary programme for one year prior to starting school. In scarcely populated areas, pre-primary classes for children who did not attend kindergarten earlier may be organised within primary schools.

The start of primary education (ISCED 1) depends on the child's birthday. Children born in January-March start primary school in the calendar year in which they turn 6, the rest in the calendar year they turn 7.

In addition to the *dječji vrtić* represented in the diagram, children can also participate in other pre-primary and pre-school programmes provided in other legally recognised institutions – in primary schools, playgroups in libraries, or in other health, social, cultural and sports organisations. These settings must be accredited by the Ministry of Science and Education, and their provision focuses on various short-duration programmes.

## Educational guidelines

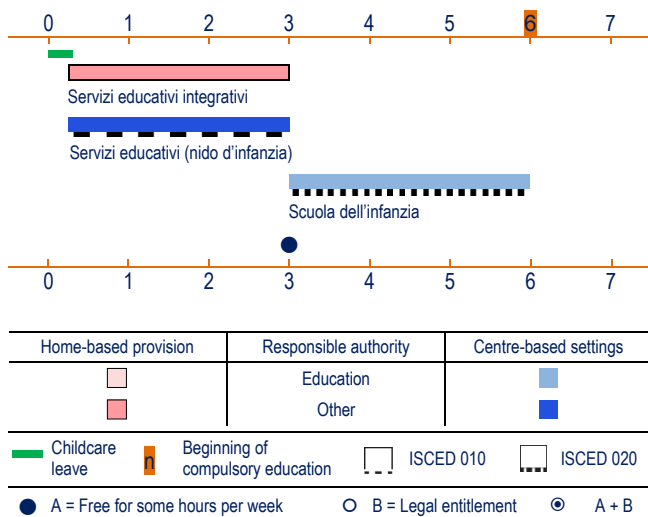
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory education provided in centre-based settings.

## Italy

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Italy, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *nido d'infanzia*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *scuola dell'infanzia*.

## Participation rates

2016 December	Under 3
Nidi d'infanzia	21.6 %
Servizi educativi integrativi	2.2 %
Scuola dell'infanzia (early enrolments)	5.3 %
Sezione primavera*	1.6 %

Source: Istituto degli Innocenti, 2018, Table 2, p. 25. \*Ministry of Education, unpublished, indicative, reference year 2015.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0	(-)	15.5	91.3	94.5	87.8	1.2	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	7.9	96.1	97.1

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Educational services (*servizi educativi*) for children under the age of 3 are mostly centre-based (*nido d'infanzia*). A tiny proportion of children attend home-based provision and playgroups (*servizi educativi integrativi*). ECEC for under-3s is managed by regional and local authorities, according to their own regulations. At regional level, the responsible authorities for the 0-3 level may be the educational or the social administration. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the promotion and the development of the newly introduced '0-6 integrated system' as well as for the direct allocation of funds to local authorities.

Settings for children between 3 and 6 years (*scuola dell'infanzia*) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, they provide full-time and free-of-charge provision.

In order to meet the demand of families, some pre-primary schools (*scuole dell'infanzia*) are able to accommodate children aged 24 to 36 months in a special 'spring section' (*sezione primavera*). In addition, and under specific conditions, children who reach 3 years of age by April can be admitted to the main groups in *scuole dell'infanzia*.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

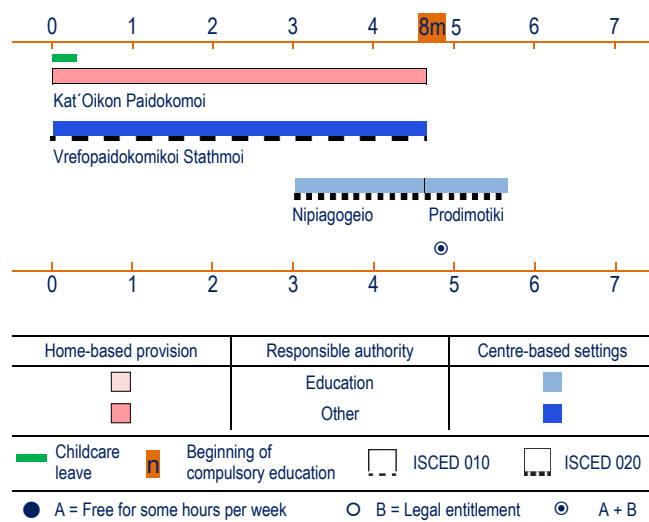
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## Cyprus

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Cyprus, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *vrefopaidokomikoi stathmoi*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *nipiagogeio* (including *prodimotiki*).

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 010	7.3	24.6	26.1	12.5	1.2	0.1	(-)
ISCED 020	3.1	21.6	48.8	76.1	93.6	4.6	0.2
ISCED 0	10.3	46.3	74.9	88.5	94.9	4.8	0.2
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.7	92.4	97.6

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Children aged between 0 and 4 years 8 months may attend day nurseries (*vrefopaidokomikoi stathmoi*) or home-based care (*kat'Oikon Paidokomoi*). These operate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

From age 3, children may also attend kindergarten (*nipiagogia*), which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture. This means that children aged between 3 and 4 years and 8 months may attend either a kindergarten or a day care centre.

Pre-primary classes (*prodimotiki*), which take place in *nipiagogia*, are compulsory and free of charge for children aged between 4 years and 8 months and 5 years and 8 months. Primary education starts at age 5 years and 8 months.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## Current reforms

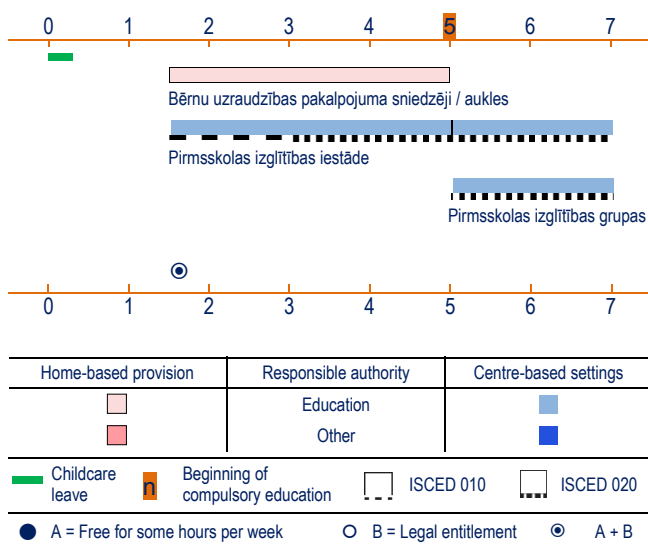
The starting age of compulsory primary education will be gradually raised to 6 years. In 2019-2020, the compulsory primary class starting age will be raised by two months (to 5 years and 10 months), and by a further two months in 2020-2021.

The starting age of compulsory ECEC will remain the same (4 years and 8 months).

## Latvia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Latvia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for children of this age in *pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for children of this age in *pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes* and *pirmsskolas izglītības grupas*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0	8.1	71.1	89.5	93.6	97.2	94.0	8.1
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	4.1	90.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

The new curriculum for children from 18 months to high school is being prepared for 2019/20. In pre-school education, there is an emphasis on general skills building and in-depth learning. It includes clearly worded, achievable goals that children can understand, and meaningful tasks to help them develop their learning skills. The curriculum also offers opportunities for providing feedback and helping children reflect on their learning.

## Organisation

All children are legally entitled to an ECEC place free of charge from the age of 18 months. Parental leave is paid at a rate of 44 % of the previous salary until this age.

Pre-school educational institutions (*pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes*) cater for children from the age of 18 months to age 7. In addition, pre-school education groups (*pirmsskolas izglītības grupas*) are organised in schools (*skolas*). This provision falls under the responsibility of the Ministry for Education and Science.

Subsidised home-based provision (*bērnu uzraudzības pakalpojuma sniedzēji / aukles*) is available from the age of 18 months. The Ministry for Education and Science is responsible for the register of providers and methodological support (content). The Ministry of Welfare supervises and controls providers' compliance with the regulations.

The pre-primary programme (*pirmsskolas izglītības programma*) is compulsory from age 5 and can be delivered both in *pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes* and *pirmsskolas izglītības grupas*.

Primary education starts at age 7.

## Educational guidelines

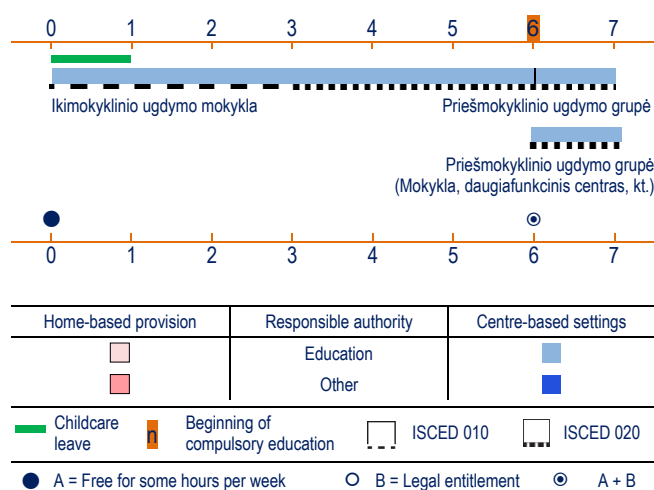
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Lithuania

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Lithuania, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *lopšelis* (nursery) groups in *ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokykla*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *darželis* (kindergarten) groups in *ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokykla* and to children attending *priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupė*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2018	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokykla	0.21	15.6	66.9	82.9	86.0	88.3	62.6	0.4
Mokykla, daugiafunkcinis centras*	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.003	0.003	1.2	34.5	99.6
Total	0.2	15.6	66.9	82.9	86.0	89.4	97.1	100

Source: Centre of Information Technologies in Education, 2018.

\*ISCED 0 and ISCED 1

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	6.5	62.4	80.1	85.5	89.5	97.0	0.7
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	3.7	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The majority of children who participate in ECEC attend unitary pre-primary settings (*ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokykla*, also commonly referred as *lopšelis-darželis, vaikų darželis*) until the beginning of compulsory primary education at age 7. The groups for under-3s are called *lopšelis* (nursery), while older children attend *darželis* (kindergarten) groups.

The year that precedes the beginning of primary education is compulsory. The pre-primary groups (*priešmokyklinio ugdymo grupės*) may be held either in ECEC settings (*ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokykla*) or in schools (*mokykla*). In areas with low numbers of children, *darželis* (kindergarten) groups for children aged 3 and over can be provided in schools, multi-functional centres (*daugiafunkcinis centras*) or other establishments.

ECEC falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Local authorities co-fund and implement ECEC programmes. It is free of charge for a minimum of 20 hours per week, in some municipalities full-time.

Primary education starts at age 7.

## Educational guidelines

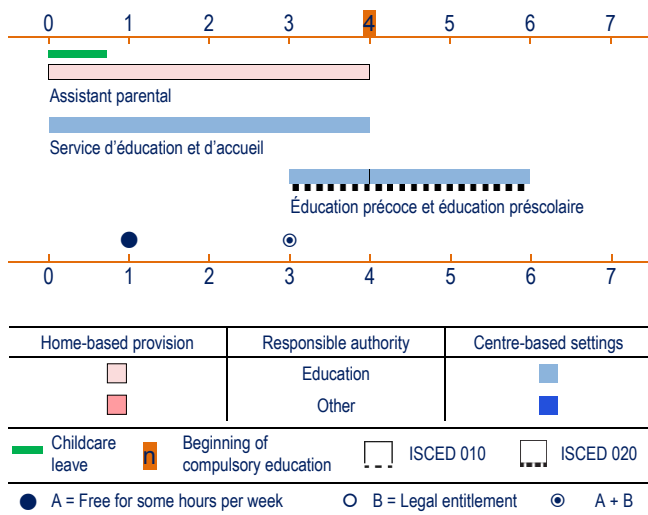
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory education provided in centre-based settings.

## Luxembourg

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Luxembourg, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in the *service d'éducation et d'accueil*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *éducation précoce* and *éducation préscolaire*. Information on pre-primary classes refers to *éducation préscolaire*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference Jan 2018	0-2	3-6
<i>Service d'éducation et d'accueil, éducation précoce et éducation préscolaire</i> (centre-based ECEC)	55 %	65 %

Source: unpublished calculations.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	3.8	69.7	95.1	92.7	5.8	0.2
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	5.5	90.7	97.6

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

From an early age children may attend centre-based provision known as *service d'éducation et d'accueil*, which is delivered in *crèches* or *foyer de jour*. Twenty hours per week are provided free of charge from the age of 1 in these centre-based settings.

In addition, there is also a system of regulated home-based care delivered by child-minders (*assistants parentaux*).

From age 3, children are legally entitled to pre-primary education which forms the first cycle of basic education delivered in primary schools. The first cycle includes one year of *éducation précoce*, which is optional (children may also attend *service d'éducation et d'accueil* till age 4). The following two years of *éducation préscolaire* are compulsory.

In addition to the provision presented in the diagram, parents of older children (aged 3 and above) can also benefit from a part-time offer of non-formal education services (*service d'éducation et d'accueil pour les enfants scolarisés*) complementing the provision to which children are entitled.

The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth is responsible for the entire phase of ECEC.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.

Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory education provided in centre-based settings.

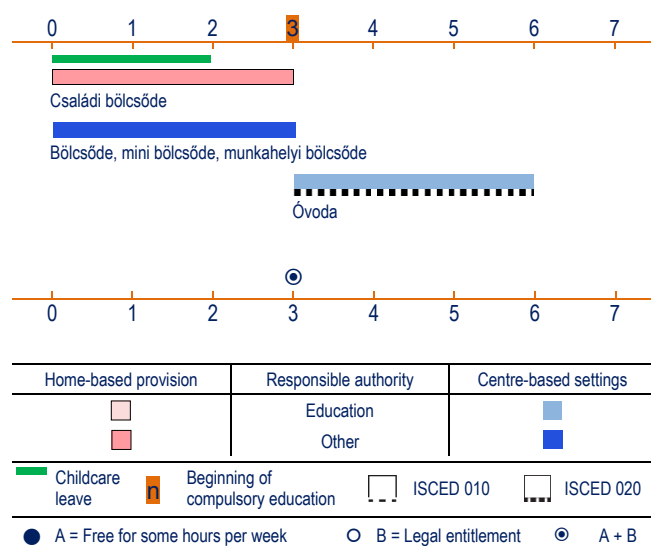
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.



## Hungary

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Hungary, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *bölcsőde*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *óvoda*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
outside ISCED	0.2	6.2	27.2	14.0	0.2	(-)	(-)
ISCED 0 ( <i>óvoda</i> )	(-)	(-)	13.7	85.0	95.6	95.5	61.2
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	30.5
Total	0.2	6.2	40.9	99.0	95.8	95.5	91.7

Source: Calculations based on UOE enrolment data and population data (forthcoming).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 010	0.9	13.7	1.1	0.5	0.1	(-)	(-)
ISCED 020	(-)	(-)	83.9	95.1	95.4	61.2	3.6
ISCED 0	0.9	13.7	85.0	95.6	95.5	61.2	3.6
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	30.5	91.3

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Children under the age of 3 may attend centre-based nurseries (*bölcsőde*, *mini bölcsőde*, *munkahelyi bölcsőde*) or home-based family nursery (*családi bölcsőde*). This new form of home-based provision replaced the previous *családi napközi* in 2017.

From age 3, 20 weekly hours of ECEC in *óvoda* are compulsory. *Óvoda* are free of charge with no restrictions (usually open 10 hours per day). Children who reach age 3 within the next six months may also be admitted to *óvoda*.

ECEC falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Human Capacities, within which provision for under 3s is under the State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs, while *óvoda* is regarded as a part of the educational sector and falls under the State Secretariat for Education.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

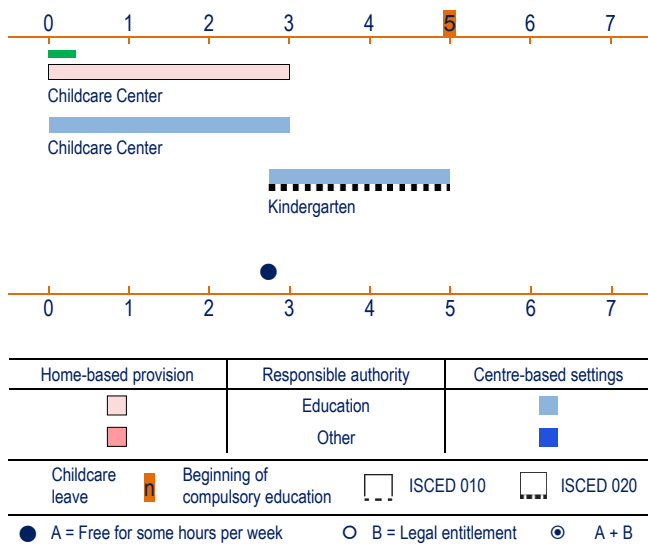
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Malta

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Malta, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *Childcare Centers*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Kindergarten*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016/17	Under 3
Free childcare scheme	23.3
Paid childcare	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.4</b>

Source: Calculations based on NSO (2017) and Eurostat [demo\_pjan]. There might be some discrepancies as childcare data from 31 March 2017, population data 1 January 2017.

(%) Reference year 2016/17	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds
Free childcare scheme	1.3	17.0	38.3	14.4

Source: Ibid.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	18.7	89.7	96.3	1.2	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.2	97.0	99.3	98.8

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Children up to age 3 can attend *Childcare Centres*, the vast majority of which are centre-based. Government provides the 'Free childcare scheme' <sup>(5)</sup> from 3 months to parents/guardians who are in employment or are pursuing their education (targeted legal entitlement).

*Kindergarten* accepts children from 2 years and 9 months until they start compulsory primary education at age 5. *Kindergarten* is free of charge for all children in state and church establishments. The proportion of pre-primary children enrolled in state and independent *kindergarten centres* is 72 % and 17 %, respectively; the remaining attend church schools (NSO, 2017). State kindergartens are integrated within state primary schools. Independent and church kindergartens may be standalone settings and some of them may be integrated within childcare centres.

All types of ECEC provision fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for Education and Employment.

Children are enrolled in primary education during the year they reach their fifth birthday.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

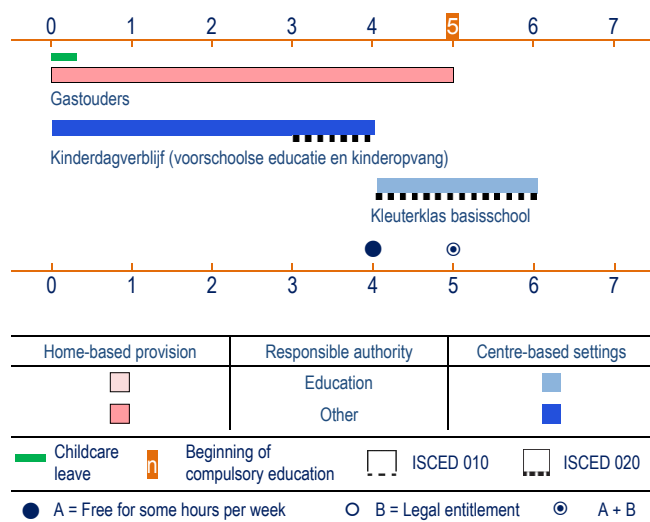
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

<sup>(5)</sup> <https://education.gov.mt/en/pages/free-childcare.aspx>

## Netherlands

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to the Netherlands, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *kinderdagverblijf*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *kleuterklas basisschool*.

## Organisation

Up until the age of 4, children can attend centre-based private provision (*kinderdagverblijf*) or regulated home-based care delivered by child-minders (*gastouders*). This provision comes under the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Children from a disadvantaged background aged 2-and-a-half to 4 are offered support through targeted early childhood education programmes (*voorschoolse educatie*), which reach around 45 000 children.

The last two years of pre-primary education (*kleuterklas*) for 4- and 5-year-olds are offered free of charge in schools (*basisschool*). This provision comes under the remit of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Primary education (ISCED 1) starts at age 6, education is compulsory from age 5.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	(-)	88.1	96.1	99.0	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	99.6	99.8

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

In 2020, paternity leave will be extended to a maximum of five weeks (70 % pay).

Higher investment and a better financial distribution system is envisaged for improving education opportunities for disadvantaged children. The Dutch Cabinet is adding 170 million euros to the budget. The investment is mainly meant to benefit ECEC programmes and is used to improve the quality and increase the intensity (from 10 to 16 hours a week for children from age 2-and-a-half up to 4) <sup>(6)</sup>.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

For children under 3, top-level educational guidelines only apply to children from a disadvantaged background in *voorschoolse educatie* (aged 2-and-a-half to 4).

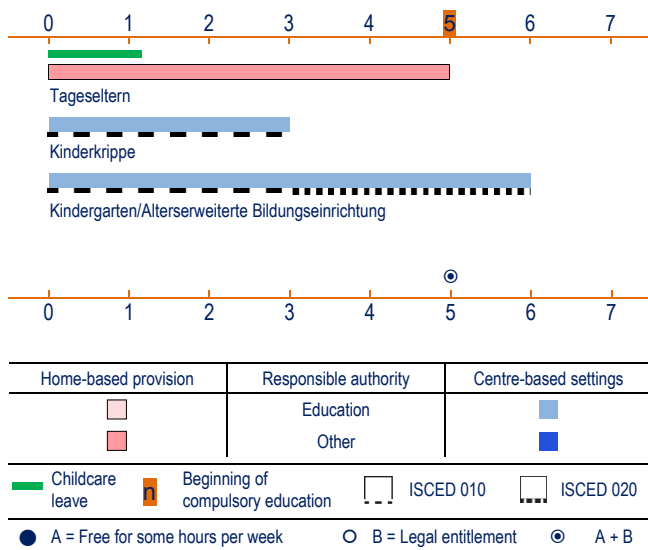
There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2018/04/26/kabinet-gaat-geld-voor-onderwijsachterstanden-beter-verdelen>

## Austria

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Austria, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *Kinderkrippen* and groups for under-3s in *Alterserweiterte Bildungseinrichtung*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *Kindergarten* and groups for children of this age in *Alterserweiterte Bildungseinrichtung*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Tageseltern (*)	0.5	3.1	3.8	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.7
Kinderkrippe	1.8	18.7	25.9	3.0	0.3	0.2	0.03
Kindergarten	0.04	0.3	16.0	70.7	85.0	87.6	1.6
Alterserweiterte Bildungseinrichtung	0.7	4.6	10.6	12.5	10.8	9.7	1.0

Note: (\*) Tageseltern might include children that also use other centre-based ECEC provisions.

Source: Statistik Austria, 2017.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 010	7.3	34.8	11.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	(-)
ISCED 020	0.1	5.7	65.1	93.2	97.6	41.7	2.3
ISCED 0	7.4	40.5	76.5	93.5	97.8	41.7	2.3
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	57.2	96.3

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Up to the age of 3, early childhood care is provided in centre-based settings *Kinderkrippen*. In addition, there is also a system of regulated home-based care (*Tageseltern*). From age 3 (and sometimes even slightly earlier), children may attend *Kindergarten*. In addition to these main structures, some children attend age-extended groups (*Alterserweiterte Bildungseinrichtung*) for children between 1 and 6 years, which are mostly provided in *Kindergartens*.

One year prior to the beginning of primary education (ISCED 1), attendance at *Kindergarten* is compulsory and free of charge.

Governance of the ECEC system is highly decentralised, the main responsibility lies within the *Bundesländer*. In most *Bundesländer*, educational authorities formulate policies for centre-based ECEC provision.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

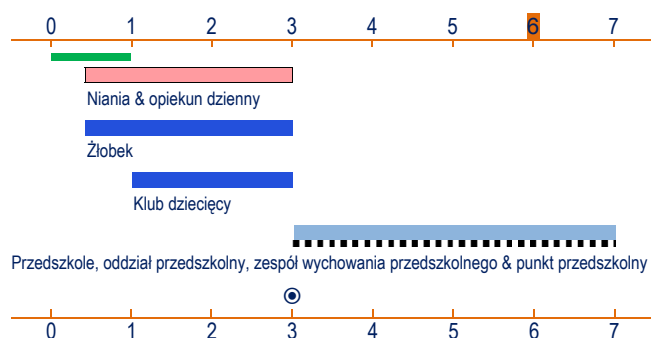
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

For home-based provision, separate educational guidelines are provided by top-level authorities.

## Poland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



Home-based provision	Responsible authority	Centre-based settings
Childcare leave	Education	Blue square
Beginning of compulsory education	Other	Dark blue square
ISCED 010		
ISCED 020		
● A = Free for some hours per week	○ B = Legal entitlement	⊙ A + B

In this report, with respect to Poland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *żłobek* & *klub dziecięcy*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *przedszkole*, *zespół wychowania przedszkolnego* & *punkt przedszkolny* and *oddział przedszkolny*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds
Żłobek, klub dziecięcy as well as niania & opiekun dzienny	2 %	43 %	52 %

Source: Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (PL), 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017/18	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Przedszkole	6.7	69.2	77.1	77.2	63.2
Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej	0.6	5.9	9.4	15.7	32.2
Zespół wychowania przedszkolnego & punkt przedszkolny	0.5	1.3	2.9	2.1	0.6
Total	7.8	76.4	89.4	95.0	96.1

Source: School Education Information System (System Informacji Oświatowej, SIO).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	7.1	67.1	84.6	92.5	79.9	1.3
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	18.3	94.5

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Children aged under 3 years may attend centre-based settings *żłobek* and *klub dziecięcy*. *Żłobek* is available for 10 hours a day for children aged 20 weeks to 3 years, while *klub dziecięcy* is usually available for 5 hours a day but only for children from age 1. In addition, home-based provision (*niania* and *opiekun dzienny*) is available, although not widespread. ECEC for children under 3 is supervised by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

Every child from age 3 is legally entitled to at least 25 hours a week free of charge. This provision falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. Children aged 3-6 years may be enrolled in *przedszkole* and in pre-school class (*oddział przedszkolny*) in primary schools. In order to tackle the shortage of ECEC places, provision on selected week days is offered in settings called *zespół wychowania przedszkolnego* and *punkt przedszkolny*. One year of pre-primary education is compulsory for 6-year-olds.

Primary education starts at age 7, although parents can choose to send their child at the age of 6, provided that he/she has attended pre-school education for at least one year or has a favourable report from appropriate counselling services.

## Educational guidelines

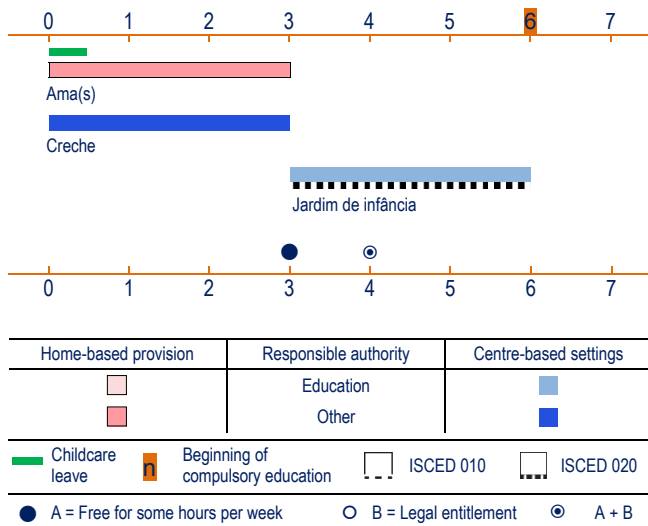
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## Portugal

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Portugal, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *creches*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *jardins de infância*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Amas	0.8	1.5	1.5	0.1	(-)	(-)
Creche	19.0	38.7	51.7	3.2	0.3	(-)
Jardim de infância	(-)	(-)	(-)	83.6	92.8	95.2
Total	19.8	40.2	53.2	86.9	93.1	95.2

Note: mainland only (Madeira and the Azores are excluded). Sources: GEP/MTSSS (2016) and DGEEC (2018).

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	(-)	83.4	92.7	95.4	9.9	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.2	86.4	98.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Up to the age of 3, early childhood care is provided in centre-based settings known as *creches*. There is also a system of regulated home-based provision, which is ensured by nannies (*amas*) who either work independently or as a part of formal groups known as *creche familiar*. Home-based and centre-based care for younger children falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security.

From age 3, children may attend centre-based *jardins de infância*, which are free of charge for 25 hours a week for all children in public and private non-profit sectors. This free place is legally guaranteed for all children from age 4. This area falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Some private self-financed and private publicly subsidised settings may include both *creche* and *jardim de infância* in the same building.

In addition to the provision represented in the diagram, there is also a travelling pre-school education system (*educação pré-escolar itinerante*), aimed at children between 3 and 5 years living in rural areas.

Compulsory primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

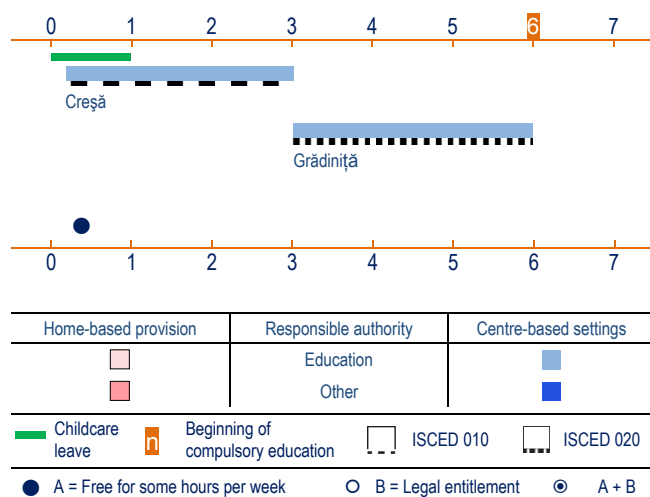
## Current reforms

Educational guidelines for *creches* are planned to be drawn up. These programmes will be classified as ISCED 010.

## Romania

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Romania, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *creșă*. The information for children aged '3 years and over' refers to *grădiniță*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2014/15	Less than 1 year	1- year- olds	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds
Creșă	0.1	2.1	5.5	1.4	(-)	(-)	(-)
Grădiniță	(-)	(-)	10.6	81.2	88.9	95.2	14.4

Source: NIS, 2016.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 010	1.4	6.0	1.3	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 020	(-)	14.3	68.1	89.2	90.0	14.2	(-)
ISCED 0	1.4	20.3	69.4	89.2	90.0	14.2	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	83.0	88.8

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Up to the age of 3, children are provided early childhood care in centre-based settings known as *creșă*. From age 3 years (sometimes even from age 2) up to 6 years, children may attend a centre-based *grădiniță*.

ECEC is free of charge, even full-time.

The Ministry of National Education is entirely responsible for the ECEC of children aged 3 and over in *grădiniță*. However, for children under 3 years, it shares responsibility with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice and public local authorities.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. The guidelines are only binding for centre-based settings for children aged 3 years and over

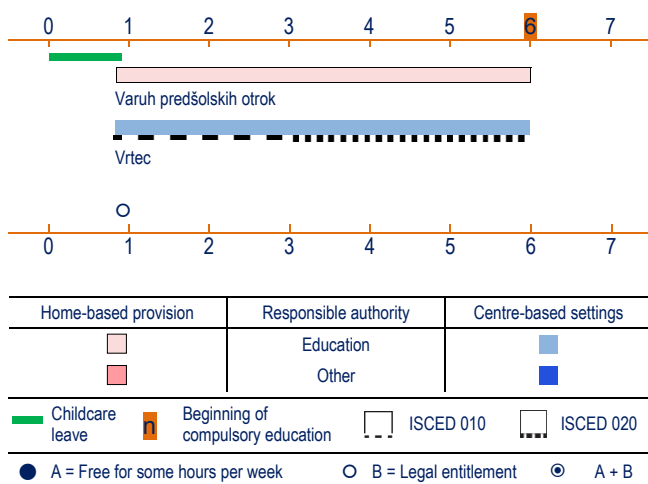
## Current reforms

From 2019/20, the Ministry of National Education will become the responsible body for the entire ECEC phase, including the provision for children under age 3. The fees for *creșă* are being standardised.

## Slovenia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Slovenia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for this age in *vrtec*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for children of this age in *vrtec*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	Less than 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Vrtec	0.11	50.3	76.7	87.1	91.8	94.1	9.1

Source: Statistical Office RS, 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	24.0	74.0	85.6	90.5	93.6	8.2	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.2	89.3	98.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

There is a unitary ECEC system providing education and care for children from 11 months until the start of primary education. The vast majority of children attend centre-based settings known as *vrtec*. There is also regulated home-based provision (*varuh predšolskih otrok*), which only involves a very small proportion of children.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for the entire ECEC sector.

From age 11 months, children are legally entitled to a publicly subsidised ECEC place.

## Educational guidelines

The *Kindergarten Curriculum* is the core national steering document that applies to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. It defines goals, fundamental principles, as well as areas of activities. Other steering documents include: guidelines and supplements to the *Kindergarten Curriculum* that cover children with special needs, education in ethnically mixed areas, work with Roma children, the integration of migrant children and the provision of counselling services. They are binding for all public and 100 % publicly subsidised centre-based settings.

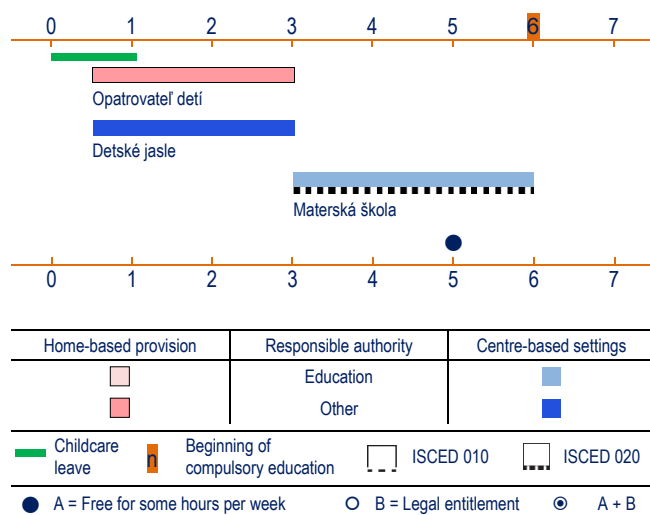
There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.



## Slovakia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Slovakia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *zariadenia starostlivosti o deti do troch rokov veku dieťaťa*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *materská škola*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
Materská škola	15.3	67.9	78.6	84.1	33.5	0.8

Source: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information (SCSTI) and Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	14.9	68.1	78.5	77.8	41.0	3.4
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	50.5	90.9

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The ECEC system for children under 3 is currently being developed. Young children may attend nurseries (*detské jasle*, officially called *zariadenia starostlivosti o deti do troch rokov veku dieťaťa*) or they may stay with childminders (*opatrovateľ detí*). This provision is governed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Between 3 and 6 years, children attend centre-based *materské školy*, which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. If capacity permits, 2-year-olds might on occasion be accepted into *materská škola*.

Public *materské školy* provide full-time education and care for children one year before compulsory school attendance free of charge. The fees in private *materské školy* for the last year are reduced by the amount of the state contribution.

Participation rates for children one year before compulsory school reach 92 %.

Primary education starts on the 1st of September after the child has reached age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

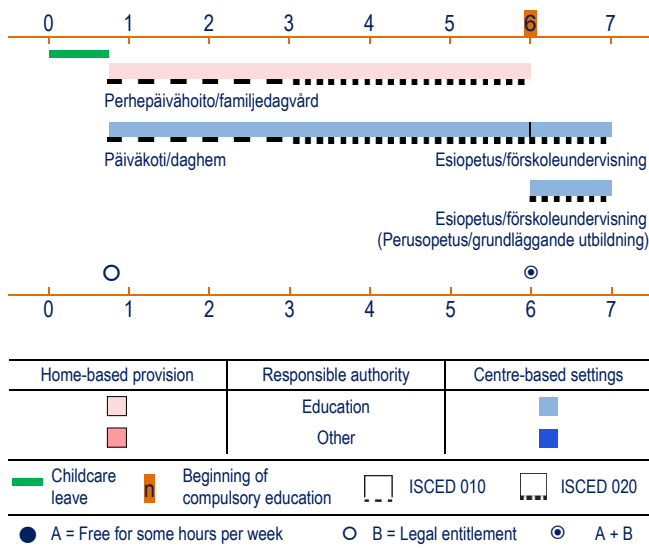
## Current reforms

The necessary legislation is being prepared to make the last year of ECEC before primary education compulsory from September 2020.

## Finland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Finland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for under-3s in *päiväkoti/daghem*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for this age in both the *päiväkoti/daghem* and *Esiopetus/förskoleundervisning*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Perhepäivähoito/familjedagvård (public)	0.3	6.7	9.4	9.0	7.3	5.3	1.2
Päiväkoti/daghem (public)	0.4	18.9	39.9	53.6	61.2	67.4	65.0
Children receiving private day care allowance or vouchers	0.2	5.7	10.0	10.9	11.2	11.2	8.4
Esiopetus/förskoleundervisning (total)							99.6
Total	0.9	31.2	58.8	73.5	79.7	84.0	ca 99

Source: National Institute for Health and Welfare, SOTKA-database.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	16.4	58.8	73.5	79.7	85.0	98.2	0.9
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.4	96.3

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

New ECEC legislation was adopted in 2018. The reform aims to improve quality in ECEC by raising the competences of personnel. As of 2030, two thirds of staff in centre-based settings must have a relevant Bachelor's degree and at least half must have graduated in education. →

## Organisation

Children are legally entitled to a publicly subsidised ECEC place from the end of the parental leave period (ca. 9 months). ECEC falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The majority of children attend ECEC centres (*päiväkoti/daghem*), for children under 7 years old. Regulated home-based provision (*perhepäivähoito/familjedagvård*) can be delivered by individual childminders or by two or three childminders working together.

The year that precedes the beginning of primary education is compulsory. The compulsory pre-primary programme may be organised either in ECEC centres (*päiväkoti/daghem*) or in schools providing basic education (*perusopetus/grundläggande utbildning*).

Basic education (ISCED 1) starts in August of the year in which the child turns 7.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding. Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory pre-primary education provided in centre-based settings and schools. Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

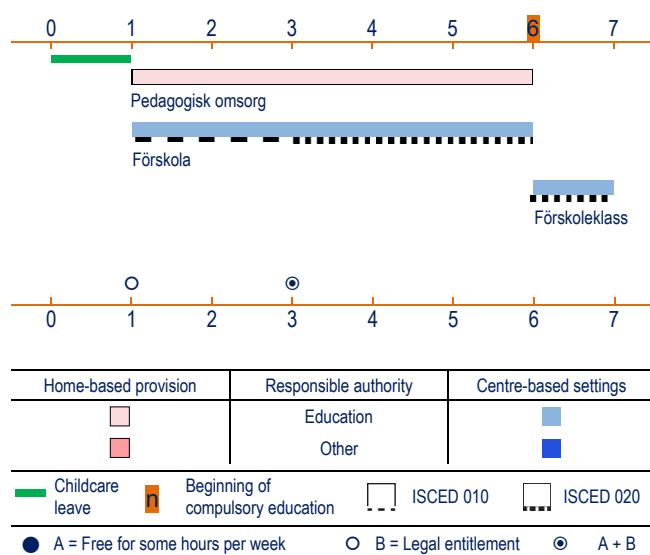
→ The creation of a comprehensive national databank on ECEC has strengthened its evidence base. In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched an experiment providing ECEC free of charge for 5-year-olds (20 hours per week). It will examine the impact of this provision on enrolment rates and will consider any implications for starting compulsory pre-primary education at the age of 5. The new Government Programme from June 2019 mentions several policy measures aiming to develop ECEC provision (<sup>7</sup>).

(<sup>7</sup>) <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rimne/government-programme>

## Sweden

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Sweden, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for under-3s in *förskola*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for this age in both the *förskola* and *förskoleklass*.

## Participation rates

2017 (%)	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
Förskola	48.6	89.2	92.7	94.3	94.5	1.1	0.2
Pedagogisk omsorg	1.1	2.0	2.1	1.9	1.7	(-)	(-)
Förskoleklass	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.6	97.1	0.9
Total	49.7	91.2	94.8	96.2	96.8	98.2	1.1

Source: Skolverket, 2018.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	23.7	88.2	92.8	94.3	95.2	98.4	1.7
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.9	99.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The ECEC system consists of unitary centres (*förskola*), aimed at children aged between 1 and 6 years. Between 6 and 7, children attend compulsory pre-primary classes (*förskoleklass*). *Förskoleklass* is usually closely associated with the school the pupils will attend. In addition, there is also a system known as pedagogical care (*pedagogisk omsorg*), which is run by registered child minders and can be organised in various ways (i.e. either within childminders' homes or elsewhere). In addition to the provision represented in the diagram, many local authorities also offer ECEC services in open pre-schools (*öppen förskola*), where parents (or childminders) come along with their children whenever they wish. All the above provision falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research.

From age 1, children are entitled to publicly subsidised ECEC provision and, from age 3, they are entitled to provision that is free of charge for at least 15 hours per week. Children whose parents are working or studying have the right to a publicly subsidised place in an after-school recreation centre (*fritidshem*).

Primary education starts at age 7.

## Educational guidelines

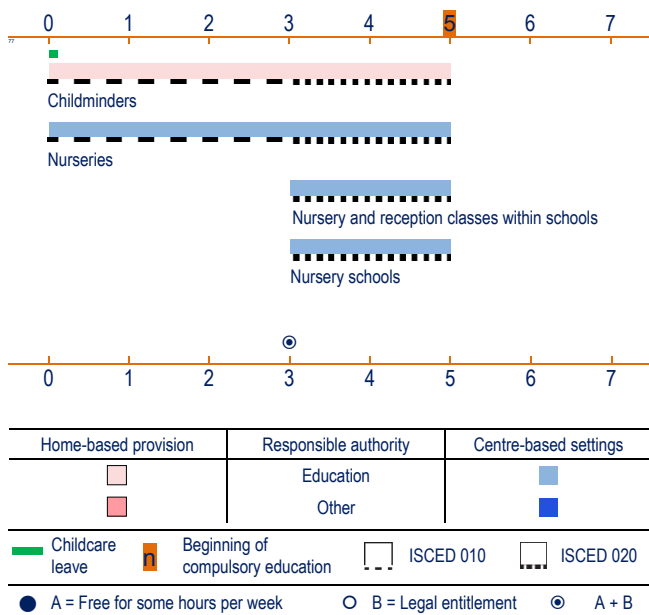
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase and to home-based provision. The guidelines are binding only for centre-based settings.

Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory education provided in centre-based settings.

## United Kingdom – England

Reference year 2018/19

### Diagram



In this report, with respect to England, the category 'under 3 years' refers to private and voluntary *nurseries*. The category '3 years and over' refers to publicly funded *nursery schools* and *nursery and reception classes* in publicly funded *schools*. Private and voluntary provision for children aged 3+ is also widely available but may not be covered in the report.

### Participation rates

Percentage of eligible 3- and 4-year-old children benefitting from funded early education places by type of provider.

(%) Reference year 2018 (January)	3-year-olds	4-year-olds
Nurseries and childminders	58	19
Nursery and reception classes within schools	28	72
Nursery schools	4	1
Independent schools	2	2

Source: Department for Education, 2018b.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0*	0.7	52.8	100.0	100.0	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	3.1	97.0	97.9	98.2

\* Data for the United Kingdom (all parts).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

### Organisation

The entire ECEC phase falls under the responsibility of the Department for Education.

Younger children may attend private and voluntary *nurseries* (also known as *day nurseries* or *daycare*) or be looked after by *childminders*.

From age 3, all children are legally entitled to 15 hours per week of ECEC provision free of charge. Children of working parents are entitled to 30 hours per week. Disadvantaged 2-year-olds are also entitled to 15 hours of ECEC free of charge. These hours may be provided in a publicly funded setting (*school* or *nursery school*) or with a registered private or voluntary provider including *childminders*. Private and voluntary *nurseries* may be either unitary (catering for ages 0-5) or separate (catering for part of the age range). *Nurseries* providing sessional care (not full daycare) for children from 3 may also be known as *pre-schools*.

From the academic year after their 4th birthday, all children are entitled to a full-time (~32 hours) place at a publicly funded school (in the *reception class*).

Primary education (Year 1) starts at age 5.

### Educational guidelines

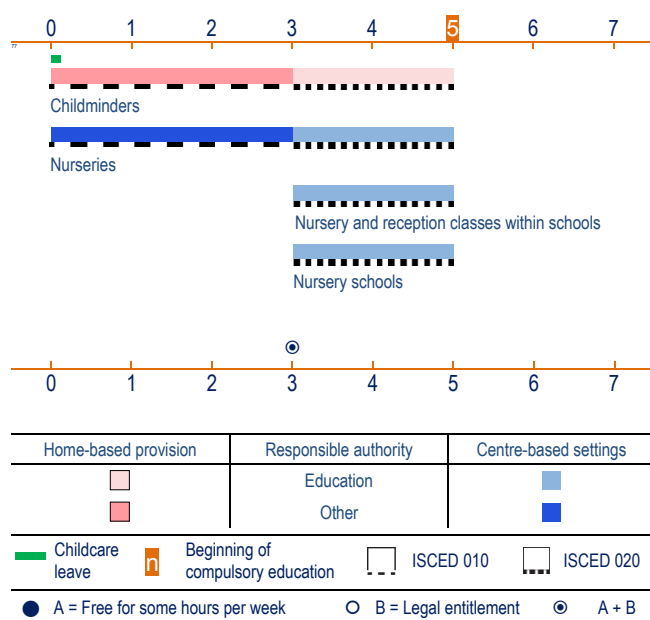
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## United Kingdom – Wales

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Wales, the category 'under 3 years' refers to private and voluntary *nurseries*. The category '3 years and over' refers to publicly funded *nursery schools* and *nursery and reception classes* in publicly funded *schools*. Private and voluntary provision for children aged 3+ is also widely available but may not be covered in the report.

## Participation rates

(%)	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
Reference year 2017							
ISCED 0*	0.7	52.8	100.0	100.0	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	3.1	97.0	97.9	98.2

\* Data for the United Kingdom (all parts).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Current reforms

Taking Wales Forward, the five-year Programme for Government 2016-2021, includes the objective of increasing the offer of funded early years education and childcare from 10 to 30 hours per week, and from 38 to 48 weeks of the year for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds. The offer has been being piloted in all local authorities in Wales since April 2019.

## Organisation

The entire ECEC phase falls under the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The responsibility for children aged 3 years and over falls under the portfolio of the Minister for Education, while the responsibility for children aged under 3 falls under the portfolio of the Minister for Health and Social Services.

Younger children may attend private and voluntary *nurseries* (also known as *day nurseries* or *daycare*) or be looked after by *childminders*.

From age 3, all children are legally entitled to 10 hours per week of ECEC provision free of charge for 38 weeks of the year. These hours may be provided in a publicly funded setting (*school* or *nursery school*) or with a registered private or voluntary provider including *childminders*. Private and voluntary *nurseries* may be either unitary (catering for ages 0-5) or separate (catering for part of the age range). *Nurseries* providing sessional care (not full daycare) for children from age 3 may also be known as *pre-schools*. Disadvantaged 2-year-olds are entitled to 12.5 hours per week of ECEC provision free of charge.

From the academic year after their 4th birthday, all children are entitled to a full-time (~32 hours) place at a publicly funded *school* (in the *reception class*).

Primary education (Year 1) starts at age 5.

## Educational guidelines

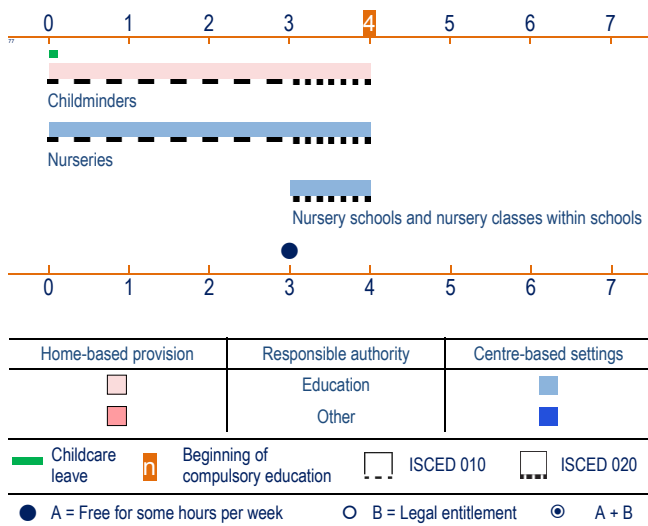
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision for children over 3, where the provider is in receipt of public funding for these children.

## United Kingdom – Northern Ireland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Northern Ireland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to private and voluntary *nurseries*. The category '3 years and over' refers to publicly funded *nursery schools* and *nursery classes in schools*. Private and voluntary provision for children aged 3+ is also widely available but may not be covered in the report.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0*	0.7	52.8	100.0	100.0	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	3.1	97.0	97.9	98.2

\* Data for the United Kingdom (all parts).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The entire ECEC phase falls under the responsibility of the Department of Education in the Northern Ireland Executive, although the Department of Health also has some responsibilities for provision for children under 3.

Younger children may attend private and voluntary *nurseries* (also known as *day nurseries* or *daycare*) or be looked after by *childminders*.

From age 3, children may attend a publicly funded setting (*school* or *nursery school*) or a registered provider in the private or voluntary sector, such as a *childminder*. Private and voluntary providers may be either unitary (catering for ages 0-4) or separate (catering for part of the age range). *Nurseries* providing sessional care (not full daycare) for children from 3 may also be known as *pre-schools*.

Under the Pre-school Education Programme, the Department of Education (DE) provides funding for 12.5 weekly hours of ECEC for 38 weeks of the year. The government aims to offer this to all children aged 3 years and over, though it is not a legal entitlement. All centre-based ECEC providers shown in the diagram may provide this allocation.

Primary education (Year 1) starts at age 4.

## Educational guidelines

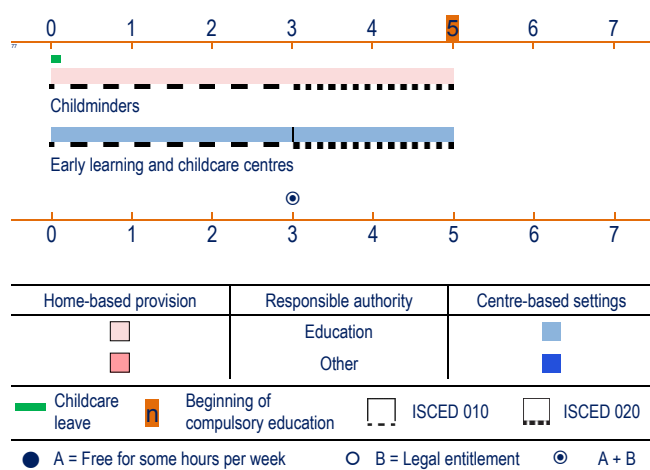
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## United Kingdom – Scotland

Reference year 2018/19

### Diagram



The category 'under 3 years' in figures of this report for Scotland refers to provision for children of this age in any type of *early learning and childcare (ELC) centres*. The category '3 years and over' refers to provision for children of this age in any type of ELC centres.

### Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Less than 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Childminders	1.4	6.7	8.1	7.0	6.6	5.2
Centre-based ELC	4.1	25.2	41.3	85.3	93.4	5.6
Total	5.5	31.9	49.4	92.3	100	10.8

Source: Care Inspectorate (2018) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) population/census data. Note: The participation rates might be overestimated due to multiple registrations.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0*	0.7	52.8	100.0	100.0	(-)	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1*	(-)	(-)	(-)	3.1	97.0	97.9	98.2

\* Data for the United Kingdom (all parts).

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

### Current reforms

Free school meals in ELC will be a universal entitlement from August 2020. From 2020/21, the universal free-of-charge entitlement will be increased to 1 140 yearly hours (~30 weekly hours). The data collected on this sector is being developed alongside this change in the entitlement.

### Organisation

*Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)* is available in centre-based settings and with home-based *childminders*. Each of the 32 local authorities in Scotland has a substantial level of autonomy to create flexible provision that meets local need and the needs of families and individual children. There is a variety of different types of centre-based settings (*nurseries, child and family centres, childcare centres, playgroups, nursery schools, nursery classes within schools, etc.*) catering for various age groups.

Universal funded entitlement for 600 yearly hours of ECEC (~16 weekly hours) begins at age 3. Approximately 25 % of 2-year-old children are also eligible for the free-of-charge ELC entitlement. This can be claimed in most centre-based as well as home-based settings.

ECEC policy is determined by a Directorate for Early Learning and Childcare. All ECEC settings have to consider policies and guidance implemented through independent bodies responsible for regulating ECEC settings (Care Inspectorate, Scottish Social Services Council and Education Scotland). The Scottish Government also issues guidance to local authorities in relation to provision of free-of-charge early learning and childcare.

Primary education starts at age 5.

### Educational guidelines

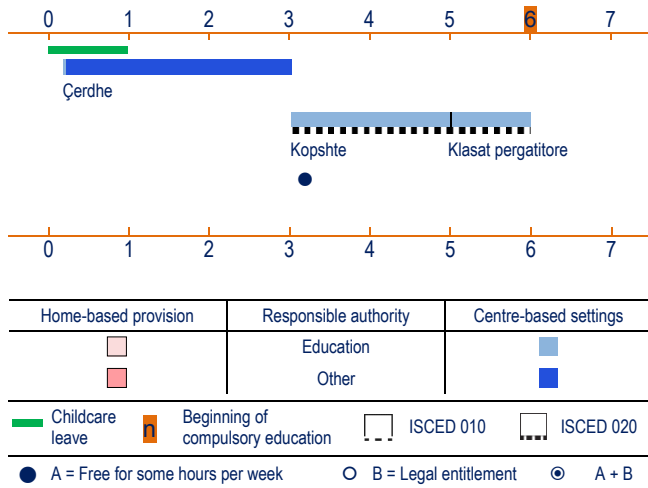
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are non-binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Albania

Reference year 2018/19

### Diagram



In this report, with respect to Albania, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *çerdhe*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *kopshte*.

### Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	3-5-year-olds
Kopshte	80.3

Source: Data provided by the Department of Statistics in the Ministry of Education Sports and Youth.

No Eurostat data.

### Organisation

Up to the age of 3, children are provided early childhood care in centre-based settings known as *çerdhe*. From age 3 years up to 6 years, children may attend a centre-based *kopshte* free of charge. From age 5, preparatory classes (*klasat per gatitore*) which aim to help children to get ready for primary education, are available.

*Çerdhe* fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Standards, teaching staff and curricula in *kopshte* are regulated by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. The infrastructure of *çerdhe* and *kopshte* are under the responsibility of local governance units.

Primary education starts at age 6.

### Educational guidelines

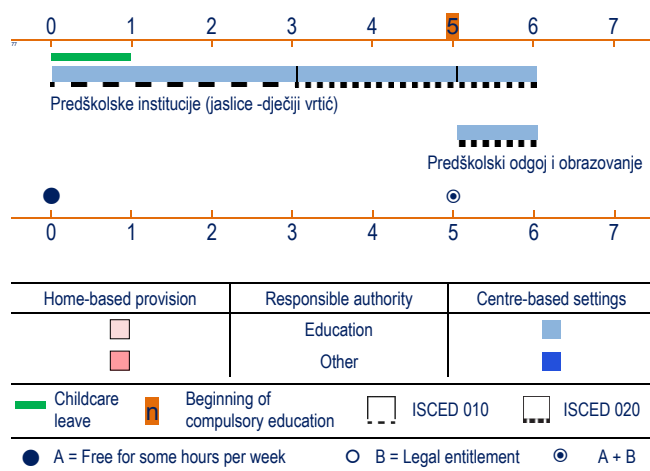
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *predškolske institucije, jaslice* groups. The category '3 years and over' refers to children of this age in *predškolske institucije, dječiji vrtić* groups as well as *predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje*.

## Participation rates

2017/18 (%)	Under 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Predškolske institucije	0.1	4.1	9.5	14.7	17.3	19.4	7.8

Source: BHAS, 2018.

No Eurostat data.

## Organisation

The ECEC system provides education and care for children from birth to 6 years. Usually, ECEC institutions (*predškolske institucije*) combine *jaslice* (nursery) groups for under-3s and *dječiji vrtić* (kindergarten) groups for children from the age of 3 until their enrolment in primary school. However, some *predškolske institucije* have only groups for older children (3-5-year-olds).

The ECEC falls under the overall responsibility of 12 responsible ministries of education: one for the entity Republic of Srpska, one for each of the 10 cantons in Federation of BiH and one for the Brčko District.

From the age of 5, ECEC is compulsory in the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District for up to 5 hours per week. The compulsory ECEC programme lasts 150-180 hours depending on the canton and entity. It may be organised in schools (*predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje*) and ECEC institutions (*predškolske institucije*). In the Republic of Srpska, ECEC is not compulsory, but it is fully implemented for 10 hours per week during the period March to June before the child starts primary education.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are non-binding.

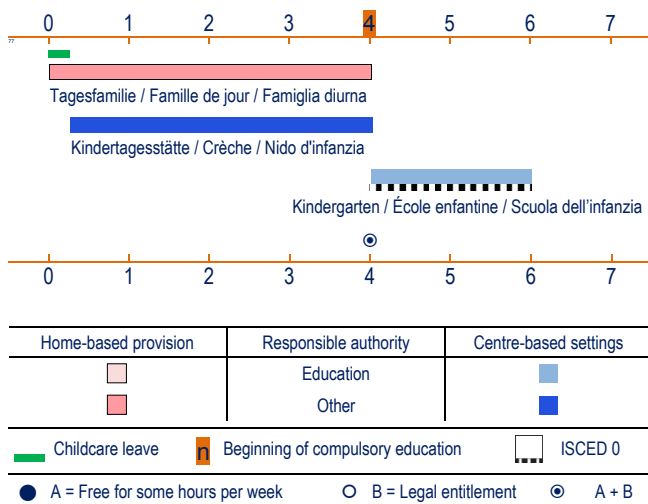
## Current reforms

The Platform for the Development of Pre-school Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2017-2022 aims to increase coverage, particularly with respect to the last year before the start of primary school. It also aims to ensure quality and regular funding, as well as strengthening inclusion and raising awareness of the importance of ECEC.

## Switzerland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Switzerland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *Kindertagesstätte/crèche/nido d'infanzia*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Kindergarten/école enfantine/scuola dell'infanzia*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0	(-)	(-)	2.4	48.1	97.8	53.5	1.2
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.5	46.3	98.6

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

Note: ISCED 0 refers only to ISCED 020.

## Current reforms

From 1 July 2018, the Confederation will support cantons and municipalities that are expanding their subsidies for childcare in order to reduce the costs of caring for parents with an amount of total 100 million Swiss Francs.

In 2018, the Confederation and the cantons agreed on five objectives for the integration of refugees and provisionally admitted persons (integration agenda). One of the goals is that 80 % of children from asylum-seeker families, who come to Switzerland under the age of 4, should be able to communicate in the local language when starting compulsory school.

## Organisation

Due to its federal structure the ECEC system in Switzerland is highly decentralised and differs across the 26 cantons. There are, however, some characteristics common to the whole system.

Centre-based ECEC (*Kindertagesstätte/crèche/nido d'infanzia*) is available for children from 3-and-a-half months up to age 4 (the start of compulsory education). There is also home-based ECEC (*Tagesfamilie/famille de jour/famiglia diurna*). The majority of settings for the youngest children fall under the responsibility of the cantonal ministries of social affairs, while in some cantons they are under the responsibility of the cantonal ministry of education.

For children up to age 4 there is no legal entitlement, except in the canton Basel-Stadt.

From the beginning of compulsory education, which in most cantons starts at age 4 (in a few at age 5 or 6), children must attend pre-primary institutions (*Kindergarten/Ecoles enfantines/Scuole dell'infanzia*), which fall under the responsibility of cantonal ministers of education. Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

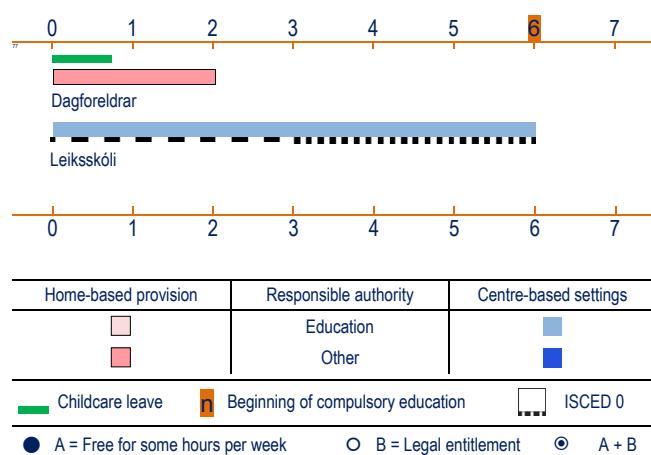
There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

There are, however, non-binding guidelines and orientation frameworks for centre-based and home-based settings for children under age 3 from private associations.

## Iceland

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Iceland, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for this age in *leiksskóli*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for this age in *leiksskóli*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Dagforeldrar	4.3	28.1	0.3	0.1	(-)	(-)
Leiksskóli	2	45	95	97	98	96

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2018a and 2018b.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	23.5	94.6	96.9	97.5	97.8	0.2	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	0.1	98.6	98.5

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Up to age 6, children can attend pre-school centres (*leiksskóli*), which fall under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Education. There is also a system of regulated and publicly subsidised home-based provision (*dagforeldrar*) aimed at the youngest children (from birth up to age 2), which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare.

Some children attend the last year of ECEC in primary schools, which is called '0 grade for 5-year-olds' (*5 ára bekkur*). As this is not common, it is not shown in the diagram.

Although there is no legal entitlement to ECEC enshrined in law, many municipalities commit politically to providing a place in *leiksskóli* by age 2.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

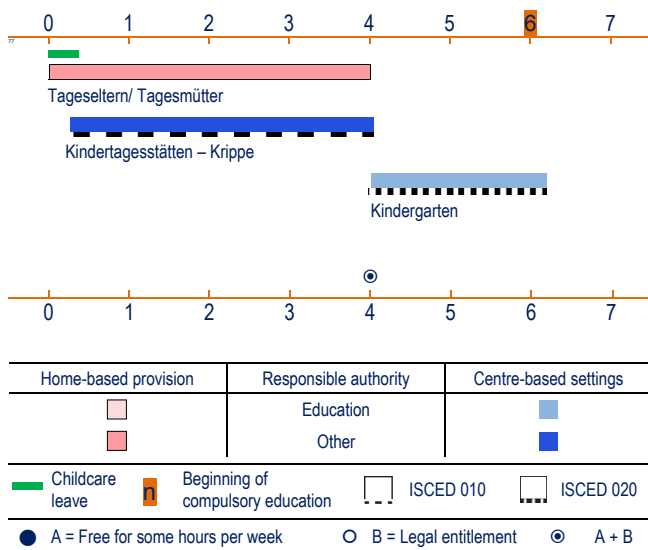
Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

## Liechtenstein

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Liechtenstein, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *Kindertagesstätte – Krippe*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Kindergarten*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2016	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- olds	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0	(-)	(-)	0.8	50.8	99.7	54.5	1.9
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	47.2	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

From the age of 4 months up to 4 years, children are provided early childhood education and care in centre-based settings known as *Kindertagesstätte/ Kinderkrippe*. There are also home-based day care parents/mothers (*Tageseltern/Tagesmütter*) available, but not very common.

From age 4, children are legally entitled to provision free of charge delivered in *Kindergarten*.

In addition to the main settings represented in the diagram, parents may also benefit from additional childcare services provided within day-care centres or in *Kindergarten (Tagesstrukturen)*. These services generally last 2-4 hours a day and are intended for older children who attend ~21 weekly hours of ECEC free of charge in *Kindergartens*. In addition, 'short-time' care services (*Hütendienste*) and playgroups (*Spielgruppen*) are offered for younger children.

*Kindergartens* fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for Home Affairs, Education and Environment. All other types of provision are under the responsibility of the Ministry for Social Affairs.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

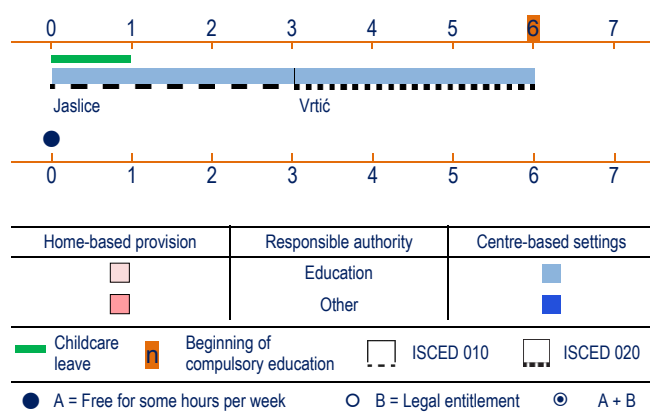
## Current reforms

A new, performance-based financing model for childcare services is being developed by a national working group (*Kita-Finanzierung*) for 2019.

## Montenegro

Reference year 2018/19

### Diagram



In this report, with respect to Montenegro, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *jaslice* groups. The category '3 years and over' refers to *vrtić* groups.

### Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	Under 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Jaslice-vrtić	1.0	23.2	47.0	61.1	64.4	78.9	6.5

Source: Calculations by Statistical Office of Montenegro.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	(-)	41.3	52.0	64.7	74.6	5.4	0.1
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	1.5	91.4	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

### Organisation

ECEC is delivered in centre-based pre-school settings (*predškolsko vaspitanje i obrazovanje - jaslice i vrtić*). Programmes for children under age 3 are called *jaslice*, while children aged 3 to 6 attend *vrtić* groups. ECEC is part of the education system and falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. ECEC is offered in full-day, half-day or three hour per day educational programmes. All ECEC is free of charge, even full-day programmes, although parents may be required to pay for meals and additional activities (e.g. visits to museums, theatre).

The legal basis for home-based ECEC has been established, although this type of provision is not yet in place.

Primary education starts at age 6.

### Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. The guidelines are binding.

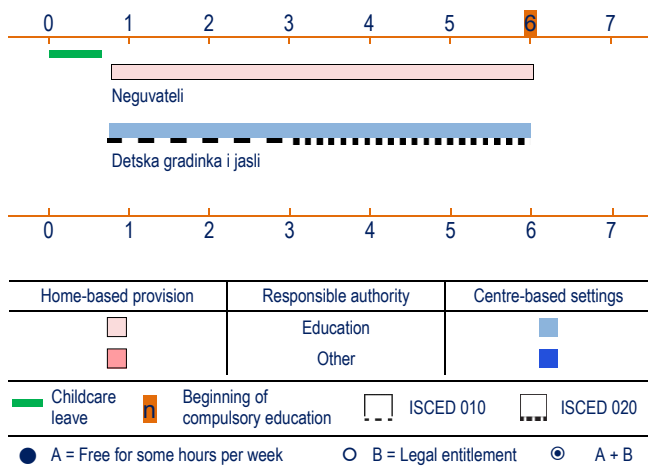
### Current reforms

The Strategy for Early and Pre-school Education in Montenegro (2016-2020) aims to increase participation in ECEC, improving the infrastructure, building new premises, renovating existing ones and adapting alternative buildings. The expansion of services is being achieved by increasing interactive services, introducing innovative and flexible educational programmes (3-hour free of charge educational programme), and developing programmes requiring the active participation of parents.

## North Macedonia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to North Macedonia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *jasli* groups in *detska gradinka*. The category '3 years and over' refers to *detska gradinka*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 1 year	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Detska gradinka							
public	5.6	16.1	26.0	32.0	32.5	36.7	2.3
private	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.2
TOTAL	5.8	16.7	26.7	32.5	33.4	37.4	2.5

Source: internal records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	6.1	19.8	30.3	33.5	41.7	15.5	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	4.0	93.5	94.1

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

ECEC is part of the education system; its aim is to provide care and education to children from the age of 8 months until they enter primary education. Children may attend centre-based *detska gradinka*, which include nursery groups (*jasli*) for the youngest children. There are also home-based *neguvатели* (*fizički lica koi vršat domašno zgrizuvanje na deca od predučilišna vozrast* and a service provided by *agencii za davanje usluga za chuvanje i nega na deca*).

In addition to the provision shown in the diagram, a small number of children aged 3-5 attend *centar za ran detski razvoj* (public and private).

The educational part of the activities falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, whereas the care and organisation of the work of the pre-school institutions falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with the municipalities. The experts from the Bureau for Development of Education are also included in the work of the commissions responsible for the creation of the educational programmes (guidelines) for pre-school institutions.

Primary education starts at age 6.

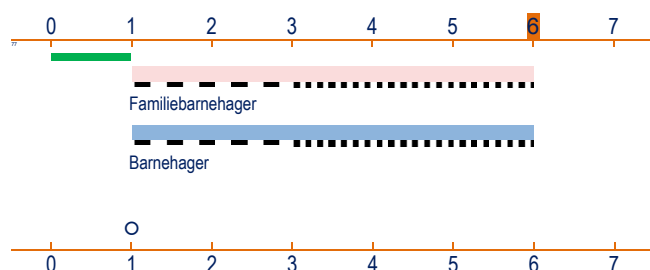
## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

## Norway

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



Home-based provision	Responsible authority	Centre-based settings
	Education	
	Other	

	Childcare leave		Beginning of compulsory education		ISCED 010		ISCED 020
	A = Free for some hours per week		B = Legal entitlement		A + B		

In this report, with respect to Norway, the category 'under 3 years' refers to groups for this age in *barnehager*. The category '3 years and over' refers to groups for this age in *barnehager*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017/18	Under 1	1-year-olds	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
Familiebarnehager	0.3	2.4	2.1	0.8	0.7	0.6	0
Barnehager	3.6	69.7	90.8	95.3	96.5	97.0	0.5
Total	3.9	72.1	92.9	96.1	97.3	97.6	0.5

Source: calculations based on BASIL and SSB.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	38.0	92.3	95.9	97.2	97.5	0.5	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	99.2	99.1

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uae\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

The majority of children attend unitary centres (*barnehager*), which are under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. In addition, there are also family kindergartens (*familiebarnehager*) that provide early childhood education and care in a home-based environment. Both centre-based and home-based ECEC is regulated by the Kindergarten Act.

From age 1, children are legally entitled to publicly subsidised provision<sup>(8)</sup>. No household pays more than 6% of their income for a place in kindergarten. Moreover, from age 3, children from low-income families are legally entitled to 20 weekly hours of ECEC free of charge.

Primary education starts at age 6.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

## Current reform

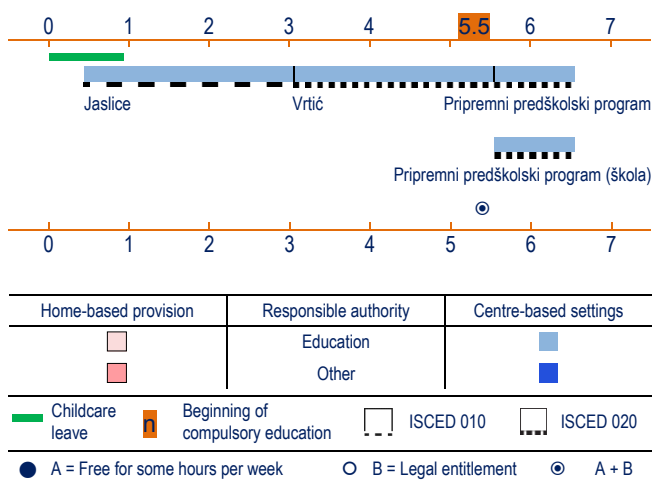
A law on staff-child-ratio has set down 1:3 for children under 3 years and 1:6 for children 3-5 years old. This came into force in August 2018. In August 2018, new regulations on the number of children per member of pedagogical staff (core practitioners) working in *barnehager* came into force: A minimum of one pedagogue/core practitioner per 7 children below the age of 3; and a minimum of one pedagogue/core practitioner per 14 children aged 3-5 years.

<sup>(8)</sup> Children who turn 1 year of age no later than the end of August are entitled to a place by August during the year in which they apply. Children who turn 1 in September, October or November are, upon application, entitled to a kindergarten place by the end of the month in which they have their 1st birthday.

## Serbia

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Serbia, the category 'under 3 years' refers to those in *jaslice*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *vrtić* and those attending *pripremni predškolski program (škola)*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Under 3	3 to 5.5	5.5 to 6.5
Jaslice	25.0	(-)	(-)
Vrtić	(-)	61.8	(-)
Pripremni predškolski program	(-)	(-)	98.2

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019.

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds	7-year-olds
ISCED 0	14.8	39.3	51.5	55.2	57.1	78.8	1.8
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	14.7	97.3

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

ECEC is intended for children from 6 months to 6-and-a-half years of age, when they start their primary education. ECEC has three levels based on age: *jaslice* (nursery) for children from 6 months to 3 years of age, *vrtić* (kindergarten) for children from 3 to 5-and-a-half years of age and a *pripremni predškolski program* (pre-school preparatory programme), which lasts nine months and takes place either in ECEC settings (*vrtić*) or in schools (*škola*).

Nursery and kindergarten are optional and subject to parental decision. The programme consists of general half-day or whole-day long educational activities and optional specialised programmes, as determined by the interests of children and their parents, ECEC institutional capacities and resources provided by local authorities.

The pre-school preparatory programme is mandatory for all children. It lasts at least nine months, for 4 hours per day. Children admitted to this programme must not be younger than 5-and-a-half or older than 6-and-a-half years of age at the beginning of the school year they are about to attend.

The entire phase of ECEC falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

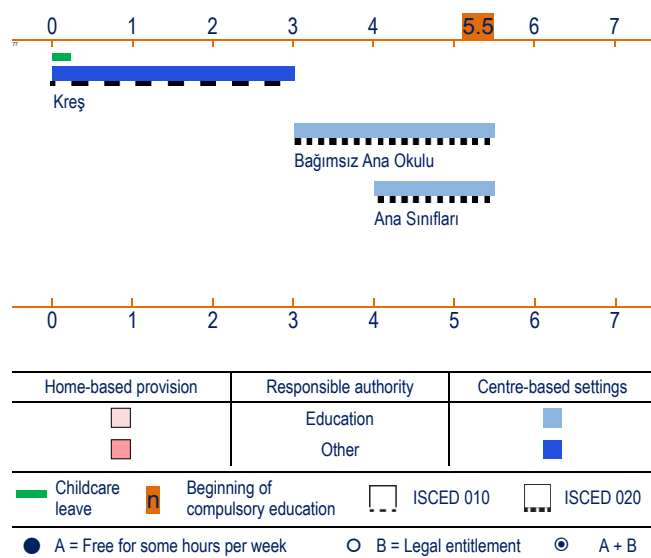
Furthermore, top-level authorities provide different educational guidelines for the period of compulsory education provided in centre-based settings.



## Turkey

Reference year 2018/19

## Diagram



In this report, with respect to Turkey, the category 'under 3 years' refers to *Kreş*. The category '3 years and over' refers to those in *Bağımsız Ana Okulu* and *Ana Sınıfları*.

## Participation rates

(%) Reference year 2017	Less than 2 years	2- year- olds	3- year- old s	4- year- olds	5- year- olds	6- year- olds	7- year- olds
ISCED 0	(-)	0.8	10.1	36.6	58.9	(-)	(-)
ISCED 1	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	14.5	95.2	100.0

Source: Eurostat, UOE [educ\_uoe\_enrp07] (last update 23-05-2019).

## Organisation

Up to age 3, children can attend crèches and day-care centres (*Kreş*), which fall under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. From age 3 to 5-and-a-half years, children attend *Bağımsız Ana Okulu*. In addition, children aged between 4 and 5-and-a-half can also attend *Ana Sınıfları* in primary schools. Both *Bağımsız Ana Okulu* and *Ana Sınıfları* fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education – the General Directorate of Basic Education.

Primary education starts at age 5-and-a-half.

## Educational guidelines

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase, but differ for each age group. Both sets of guidelines are binding.



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---

## EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH POLICY ANALYSIS

Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A7)

B-1049 Brussels

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>)

### Authors

Akvilė Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister (coordinator)

Marie-Pascale Balcon and Isabelle de Coster

### Layout and graphics

Patrice Brel

### Cover

Virginia Giovannelli

### Production coordinator

Gisèle De Lel

## EURYDICE NATIONAL UNITS

---

### ALBANIA

---

Eurydice Unit  
European Integration and Projects Department  
Ministry of Education and Sport  
Rruga e Durrësit, Nr. 23  
1001 Tiranë  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### AUSTRIA

---

Eurydice-Informationsstelle  
Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und  
Forschung  
Abt. Bildungsentwicklung und –monitoring  
Minoritenplatz 5  
1010 Wien  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### BELGIUM

---

Unité Eurydice de la Communauté française  
Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles  
Direction des relations internationales  
Boulevard Léopold II, 44 – Bureau 6A/008  
1080 Bruxelles  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

Eurydice Vlaanderen  
Departement Onderwijs en Vorming/  
Afdeling Strategische Beleidsondersteuning  
Hendrik Consciencegebouw 7C10  
Koning Albert II-laan 15  
1210 Brussel

Contribution of the Unit: Sanne Noël (coordination);  
internal experts:

- Christele Van Nieuwenhuyzen (Kind en Gezin)
- Marie-Hélène Sabbe (Flemish Ministry of Education)
- Liesbeth Hens (Flemish Ministry of Education)
- Véronique Adriaens (Flemish Ministry of Education)
- Sara de Meerleer (Flemish Ministry of Education)
- Bart Maes (Flemish Education Inspection)

Eurydice-Informationsstelle der Deutschsprachigen  
Gemeinschaft  
Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft  
Fachbereich Ausbildung und Unterrichtsorganisation  
Gospertstraße 1  
4700 Eupen  
Contribution of the Unit: Julia Cremer, Désirée Simon,  
Ruth de Sy, Catherine Reinertz and Clara Jacquemart

---

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

---

Ministry of Civil Affairs  
Education Sector  
Trg BiH 3  
71000 Sarajevo  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### BULGARIA

---

Eurydice Unit  
Human Resource Development Centre  
Education Research and Planning Unit  
15, Graf Ignatiev Str.  
1000 Sofia  
Contribution of the Unit: Marianna Sabeva Nesheva-  
Karastoyanova (expert)

---

### CROATIA

---

Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes  
Frankopanska 26  
10000 Zagreb  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### CYPRUS

---

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
Kimonos and Thoukydidou  
1434 Nicosia  
Contribution of the Unit: Christiana Haperi;  
experts: Andri Gavrielidou (primary education, Ministry of  
Education and Culture) and Irene Papatheodoulou (Ministry  
of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance)

---

### CZECHIA

---

Eurydice Unit  
Centre for International Cooperation in Education  
Dům zahraniční spolupráce  
Na Poříčí 1035/4  
110 00 Praha 1  
Contribution of the Unit: Petra Prchlíková and Helena  
Pavlíková; experts from outside the Unit: Irena Borkovcová  
(Czech School Inspectorate), Jaroslava Vatalová (Ministry  
of Education, Youth and Sports), Lucie Hetflejšová (Ministry  
of Labour and Social Affairs), and Hana Splančová and  
Andrea Moučková (National Institute for Education,  
Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing  
Education of Teachers)

---

### DENMARK

---

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Higher Education and Science  
Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education  
Bredgade 43  
1260 København K  
Contribution of the Unit: The Ministry for Children and  
Social Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education and  
Science

---

### ESTONIA

---

Eurydice Unit  
Analysis Department  
Ministry of Education and Research  
Munga 18  
50088 Tartu  
Contribution of the Unit: Tiina Peterson (expert)

---

### FINLAND

---

Eurydice Unit  
Finnish National Agency for Education  
P.O. Box 380  
00531 Helsinki  
Contribution of the Unit: Petra Packalén and  
Timo Kumpulainen

---

**FRANCE**

Unité française d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse (MENJ)  
Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation (MESRI)  
Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance (DEPP)  
Mission aux relations européennes et internationales (MIREI)  
61-65, rue Dutot  
75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Contribution of the Unit: Anne Gaudry-Lachet;  
experts: Danielle Boyer and Gilles Petreault

**GERMANY**

Eurydice-Informationsstelle des Bundes  
Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e. V. (DLR)  
Heinrich-Konen Str. 1  
53227 Bonn  
Contribution of the Unit: Nicole Klinkhammer (Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V) and Linda Dieke (Eurydice National Unit (Bund) at DLR Project Management Agency)  
Eurydice-Informationsstelle der Länder im Sekretariat der Kultusministerkonferenz  
Taubenstraße 10  
10117 Berlin

**GREECE**

Eurydice Unit  
Directorate of European and International Affairs  
Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs  
37 Andrea Papandreou Str. (Office 2172)  
15180 Maroussi (Attiki)  
Contribution of the Unit: Anastasia Ladopoulou and Evangelia Panta (experts)

**HUNGARY**

Hungarian Eurydice Unit  
Educational Authority  
19-21 Maros Str.  
1122 Budapest  
Contribution of the Unit: Zsófia Nagy (kisgyermekkorai referens; Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma: Család- és Ifjúságügyért Felelős Államtitkárság); Balázs Török (expert)

**ICELAND**

Eurydice Unit  
The Directorate of Education  
Víkurbær 3  
203 Kópavogur  
Contribution of the Unit: Hulda Skogland and Þorbjörn Kristjánsson

**IRELAND**

Eurydice Unit  
Department of Education and Skills  
International Section  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1 – DO1 RC96  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

**ITALY**

Unità italiana di Eurydice  
Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE)  
Agenzia Erasmus+  
Via C. Lombroso 6/15  
50134 Firenze  
Contribution of the Unit: Erika Bartolini;  
expert: Maria Rosa Silvestro (Dirigente tecnico, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca)

**LATVIA**

Eurydice Unit  
State Education Development Agency  
Valņu street 1 (5<sup>th</sup> floor)  
1050 Riga  
Contribution of the Unit: Agrita Miesniece

**LIECHTENSTEIN**

Informationsstelle Eurydice  
Schulamts des Fürstentums Liechtenstein  
Austrasse 79  
Postfach 684  
9490 Vaduz  
Contribution of the Unit: Eurydice National Information Centre

**LITHUANIA**

Eurydice Unit  
National Agency for School Evaluation of the Republic of Lithuania  
Geležinio Vilko Street 12  
03163 Vilnius  
Contribution of the Unit: Regina Sabaliauskienė and Laimutė Jankauskienė. (external experts)

**LUXEMBOURG**

Unité nationale d'Eurydice  
ANEFORÉ ASBL  
eduPôle Walferdange  
Bâtiment 03 - étage 01  
Route de Diekirch  
7220 Walferdange  
Contribution of the Unit: Patrick Hierthes (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Service des relations internationales); Claude Sevenig (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Service des relations internationales); Flore Schank (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Service de l'enseignement fondamental); Jean Schram (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Service de l'enseignement fondamental); Gilles Hirt (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Service de Coordination de la recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologiques – SCRIPT); Claudia Schroeder (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse / Département de l'enfance et de la jeunesse / Service de l'éducation et de l'accueil)

**MALTA**

Eurydice National Unit  
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability  
Ministry for Education and Employment  
Great Siege Road  
Floriana VLT 2000  
Contribution of the Unit: Joanne Bugeja and Grazio Grixti (experts) ; special thanks to Dr Jacqueline Vanhear (Director for Quality Assurance MEDE)

---

### MONTENEGRO

Eurydice Unit  
 Vaka Djurovica bb  
 81000 Podgorica  
 Contribution of the Unit: National Unit of Montenegro

---

### NETHERLANDS

Eurydice Nederland  
 Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap  
 Directie Internationaal Beleid  
 Rijnstraat 50  
 2500 BJ Den Haag  
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### NORTH MACEDONIA

National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility  
 Boulevard Kuzman Josifovski Pitu, No. 17  
 1000 Skopje  
 Contribution of the Unit: experts: Vera Dimitrievska, Katerina Mitevska Petrusavska and Sabina Pacariz

---

### NORWAY

Eurydice Unit  
 Ministry of Education and Research  
 Kirkegata 18  
 P.O. Box 8119 Dep.  
 0032 Oslo  
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### POLAND

Polish Eurydice Unit  
 Foundation for the Development of the Education System  
 Aleje Jerozolimskie 142A  
 02-305 Warszawa  
 Contribution of the Unit: Magdalena Górowska-Fells; national expert: Aleksander Tynelski (Ministry of National Education)

---

### PORTUGAL

Unidade Portuguesa da Rede Eurydice (UPRE)  
 Ministério da Educação e Ciência  
 Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação  
 Av. 24 de Julho, 134  
 1399-054 Lisboa  
 Contribution of the Unit: Isabel Almeida; outside the Unit: Clara Barata (expert, University of Coimbra); General Directorate for Education and General Inspectorate for Education (Ministry of Education); Office for Strategy and Planning (Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security)

---

### ROMANIA

Eurydice Unit  
 National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training  
 Universitatea Politehnică București  
 Biblioteca Centrală  
 Splaiul Independenței, nr. 313  
 Sector 6  
 060042 București  
 Contribution of the Unit: Veronica – Gabriela Chirea in cooperation with expert Viorela Preda (Ministry of National Education)

---

### SERBIA

Eurydice Unit Serbia  
 Foundation Tempus  
 Ruze Jovanovic 27a  
 11000 Belgrade  
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### SLOVAKIA

Eurydice Unit  
 Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation  
 Krížkova 9  
 811 04 Bratislava  
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

---

### SLOVENIA

Eurydice Unit  
 Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
 Education Development Office  
 Masarykova 16  
 1000 Ljubljana  
 Contribution of the Unit: Barbara Kresal Sterniša; expert: Nada Požar Matijašič (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport)

---

### SPAIN

Eurydice España-REDIE  
 Centro Nacional de Innovación e Investigación Educativa (CNIIE)  
 Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional  
 c/ Torrelaguna, 58  
 28027 Madrid  
 Contribution of the Unit: Fátima Rodríguez Gómez, Patricia Díaz-Caneja Sela, Roberto Domingo de la Riva and Elena Vázquez Aguilar (**Eurydice España-REDIE**); Manuel Sáez Fernández, Manuel Barrionuevo Martín and Ezequiel Gómez Gallardo (Consejería de Educación y Deporte de la Junta de **Andalucía**); Gonzalo Herrera Larrondo (Dirección de la Inspección De Educación. Departamento de Educación, Cultura y Deporte del Gobierno de **Aragón**); Rubén Daniel Gallo Acosta (Viceconsejería de Educación y Universidades. Consejería de Educación y Universidades del Gobierno de **Canarias**); Emilia Samperio Hurtado (Unidad Técnica de Innovación Educativa. Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deporte del Gobierno de **Cantabria**); Carmelo Irigoyen del Amo and Mariemma González Martín (Direcciones Generales de Política Educativa Escolar y de Innovación y Equidad Educativa. Consejería de Educación de la Junta de **Castilla y León**); María Isabel Rodríguez Martín (Servicio de Ordenación Académica, Documentación y Evaluación. Viceconsejería de Educación, Universidades e Investigación. Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deportes de **Castilla-La Mancha**); Mercè Esteve and Jesús Moral (DG Ed. Infantil i Primària. Consell Superior d'Avaluació. Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de **Cataluña**); Milagrosa Pérez Granados and Raquel Élez-Villaruel (Dirección Provincial de Educación y Formación Profesional de **Ceuta**. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional); Dirección General de Política Educativa (Conselleria d'Educació, Investigació i Esport de la Generalitat de la **Comunidad Valenciana**); Eugenia López Cáceres (Servicio de Coordinación Educativa. Consejería de Educación y Empleo de la Junta de **Extremadura**); Manuel Vila López (Subdirección General de Ordenación e Innovación Educativa y Formación del Profesorado. Conselleria de Educación, Universidade e Formación Profesional de la Xunta de **Galicia**); Francisca Más, Mateu Tomàs, Assumpció Sempere and Antoni Bauzá (Institut per a l'Educació de la Primera Infància. Direcció General d'Innovació i Comunitat Educativa. Conselleria d'Educació i Universitat del Govern de les **Iles Balears**); Miguel Heredia Zapata (Dirección Provincial de Educación y Formación Profesional de **Melilla**. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional); Belén Izpura Zabalza, Andoni Albeniz Bratos, Eduardo Angulo Álvarez and Manuel Sada Allo (Servicios de Ordenación, Orientación e Igualdad de Oportunidades, de Inspección Educativa y de Tecnologías Educativas y Sistemas de Información. Departamento de Educación del Gobierno de **Navarra**)

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**SWEDEN**

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Eurydice Unit  
Universitets- och högskolerådet/  
The Swedish Council for Higher Education  
Box 450 93  
104 30 Stockholm  
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

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**SWITZERLAND**

---

Eurydice Unit  
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)  
Speichergasse 6  
3001 Bern  
Contribution of the Unit: Alexander Gerlings

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Social Affairs  
(SODK)  
Speichergasse 6  
3001 Bern  
Contribution: Veronika Neruda

---

**TURKEY**

---

Eurydice Unit  
MEB, Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı (SGB)  
Eurydice Türkiye Birimi, Merkez Bina 4. Kat  
B-Blok Bakanlıklar  
06648 Ankara  
Contribution of the Unit: Osman Yıldırım Uğur;  
expert: Prof. Dr. Kemal Sinan Özmen

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**UNITED KINGDOM**

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Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland  
National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)  
The Mere, Upton Park  
Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ  
Contribution of the Unit: Sigrid Boyd, Rachel Mills and  
Sharon O'Donnell (NFER Associate)

Eurydice Unit Scotland  
Learning Directorate  
Scottish Government  
2-C North  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ  
Contribution of the Unit: Gary Walsh, Siân Neill,  
Alison Cumming, Euan Carmichael, Scott Sutherland,  
Katherine Tierney, Liz Levy and Louise Scott







## Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) – the phase before primary education – is increasingly acknowledged as providing the foundations for lifelong learning and development. This second edition of Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe charts the progress made in the key quality areas identified in the Council Recommendation on High Quality ECEC Systems. It provides policymakers, researchers and parents with ready access to international comparative data and a wealth of country examples relating to the ECEC policies currently in place in Europe.

The first part of the report provides indicators on the key quality areas of access, staff, educational guidelines as well as evaluation and monitoring. Cross-cutting these key areas, the report offers a child-centred approach with special attention being paid to the inter-relatedness of policies in different areas. The importance of inclusiveness in education is also stressed as high quality ECEC is considered one of the best ways to increase equity and equality in society. The second part of the report gives the national picture with information sheets highlighting the key features of each ECEC system, including a diagram of its structure.

The report's scope is very wide, covering centre-based and regulated home-based provision in both the public and private sectors in the 38 European countries (43 education systems) participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme. It includes the 28 Member States of the European Union as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

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The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

