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Commission



Structural Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2016



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This publication is based on a chapter in the Eurydice report [Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2016](#). The report, which was published in November 2016, provides background information to the [Education and Training Monitor 2016](#). It examines education structures, policies and reforms in five key areas:

1. Early childhood education and care
2. Achievement in basic skills
3. Early leaving from education and training
4. Higher education
5. Graduate employability

The following chapter is re-printed as a separate publication to draw attention to the specific policy area of early childhood education and care and to reach those who are interested in policy issues in this field.

The information covers 40 European education and training systems. It has been collected through a questionnaire completed by national experts and representatives of the [Eurydice Network](#).

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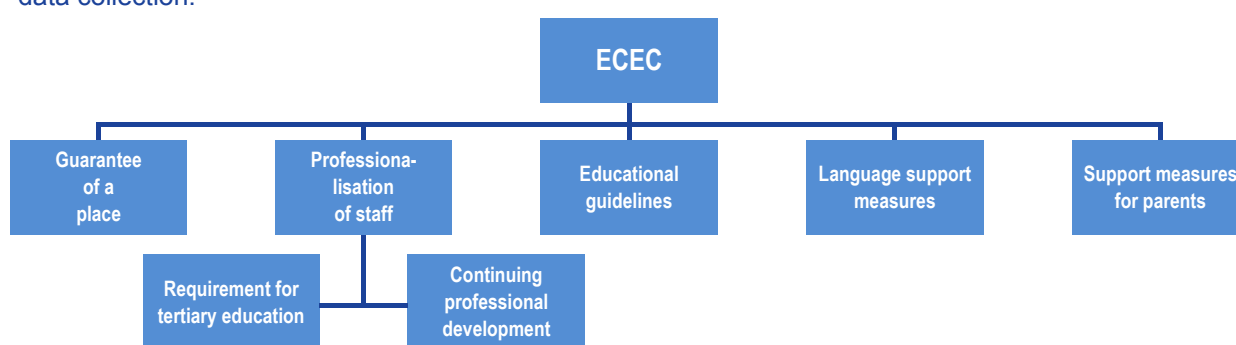
INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education can positively influence children's development⁽¹⁾. The European Commission therefore wants all young children to be able to access and benefit from high quality education and care⁽²⁾. Reliable information on early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems in Europe is essential in order to understand what challenges are facing European countries, what we can learn from each other, and what new solutions might be developed to meet the needs of the youngest members of society.

The structural indicators in this chapter provide an overview of key developments in ECEC systems. The choice of indicators was underpinned by two key European documents: the 2011 Commission Communication on ECEC⁽³⁾ and the 'Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014) produced by the ECEC thematic working group under the auspices of the European Commission. In addition, the selection drew on the extensive analysis of the research literature carried out for earlier publications, which helped to identify the main elements of ECEC provision that contribute to providing children with the best possible start in life (for an overview, see EACEA/Eurydice, 2009; OECD, 2012).

The 'Proposal for key principles' referred to above (European Commission, 2014) identified five main aspects of quality in early childhood education and care: access, workforce, curriculum, evaluation/monitoring and governance/funding. Seeing children as active participants in their own learning, the proposal highlights that parents⁽⁴⁾ are the most important partners and their participation is essential if high-quality ECEC is to be delivered. It also stresses that determining what constitutes high-quality ECEC should be a dynamic, continuous and democratic process.

However, considering the vast range of possible system-level information and having in mind the limitations of scope and time, only several essential and robust indicators have been chosen for yearly monitoring. The diagram below indicates the ECEC structural indicators covered in the 2016 Eurydice data collection:



More detailed information on these and other ECEC areas can be found in the Eurydice report *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014a), the main findings of which are summarised in the Eurydice Brief (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014b). More detailed information about the ECEC systems in each country can be found in *Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe: National Information Sheets 2014/15* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

⁽¹⁾ COM (2006) 481: Communication from the Commission to the Council AND to the European Parliament – Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems.

⁽²⁾ COM (2011) 66 final: Communication from the European Commission (2011) – Early childhood education and care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow.

⁽³⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

⁽⁴⁾ The term 'parent' in this report includes mothers, fathers, foster carers, adoptive parents, step-parents and grandparents.

The definition of **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** used in this report is

provision for children from birth through to primary education that is subject to a national regulatory framework, i.e., it must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures. It includes public, private and voluntary sectors. Only centre-based provision is considered.

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 old' and provision for 'children of 3 years and over' is often made in this chapter. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2½ years or as late as 4 years of age. National System Information Sheets specify when children move from one phase of ECEC to the next in each country (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Some European countries have several types of ECEC provision. The indicators show if a certain measure is available in the main type of ECEC provision for each age group.

1. ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS: LEGAL ENTITLEMENT AND/OR COMPULSORY ECEC

In light of the research revealing the numerous benefits of participating in ECEC (Del Boca, 2010; Heckman et al., 2010; Almond and Currie, 2011; Felfe and Lalive, 2011; and Havnes and Mogstad, 2011), there is an aspiration in the European Union countries that ECEC should be available to and affordable for all children⁽⁵⁾. The 2011 Communication states that the provision of universally available, high-quality inclusive ECEC services is beneficial for children, parents and society at large⁽⁶⁾. Moreover, the Communication emphasises that providing universal access to quality ECEC is more beneficial than provision targeted exclusively at vulnerable groups.

Currently, in Europe, there are two approaches to providing universal access to ECEC. Some countries provide a **legal entitlement** to an ECEC place, while others make ECEC attendance **compulsory**.

Legal entitlement to ECEC refers to a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children living in a catchment area whose parents, regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status, require a place for their child.

It is important to note that a 'right to ECEC for every child' expressed in legislation in general terms, but without adequate funding and the necessary policies to ensure the delivery of sufficient places is not considered a legal entitlement. Similarly, the existence of some publicly subsidised ECEC settings providing places for limited numbers of children is not considered a legal entitlement if public authorities are not obliged to provide a place. A legal entitlement to ECEC exists when every child has an enforceable right to benefit from ECEC provision. An enforceable right means that public authorities guarantee a place for each child whose parents request it (in the age-range covered by the legal entitlement), 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.

⁽⁵⁾ For the Netherlands, see country specific note to Figure 1.

⁽⁶⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

Compulsory ECEC refers to the obligation for children to attend ECEC settings when they reach a certain age.

A targeted legal entitlement or targeted compulsory ECEC that applies only to certain groups of children (e.g. disadvantaged learners, children of parents who are in employment, certain minorities, etc.) are not considered in this report.

Most European countries have, however, committed themselves to guaranteeing an ECEC place for all children, either, as mentioned above, by establishing a legal entitlement to ECEC or by making attendance compulsory (see Figure 1). However, there are significant differences in the age at which children qualify for a guaranteed ECEC place. Only seven EU-28 countries, namely Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden, as well as Norway, guarantee a legal right to a place in ECEC for each child soon after its birth, often immediately after the end of childcare leave. In most of these countries, this right is not expressed in terms of hours of provision, but usually implies a full-time place. Typically, parents are expected to co-finance the provision until the beginning of compulsory education. However, the fees are rather low. Only in Latvia is public ECEC provision free, while other types of ECEC provision are heavily subsidised.

In **Denmark**, since 2001, the regulatory framework obliges municipalities to ensure ECEC provision for all children between the ages of six months and six years (when compulsory primary education begins). 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 centre's operating expenditure.

In **Sweden**, all children from the age of one are legally entitled to ECEC. When parents require a place for their child in ECEC, the municipality should offer one within four months. Parents may choose a place in an ECEC institution run by another organisation or in another municipality. 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. A recent government report (SOU, 2013:41) shows that supply meets demand in most municipalities.

Despite the legal framework that guarantees a place in ECEC for all children from a very early age, in reality some municipalities in some countries still struggle to balance supply and demand. In Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia, despite the efforts to widen access to ECEC, the number of places for the youngest children still does not meet parental demand. In Germany, the availability of ECEC services varies significantly between *Länder*.

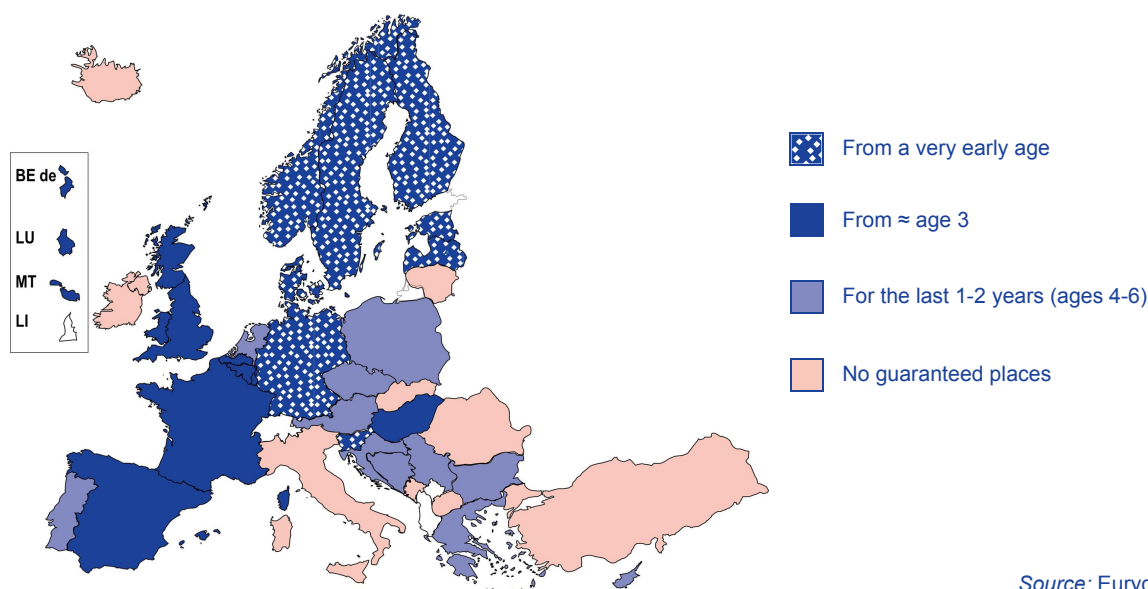
In the three Communities of Belgium, as well as in Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), a place in publicly subsidised ECEC is guaranteed from the age of 3 or a little earlier. In all of these countries, children are entitled to ECEC free of charge (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014a, Figure D5). Usually, the hours of free ECEC provision correspond to a typical school day, except in the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), where the free entitlement is between 10 hours (Wales) and 16 hours (Scotland) a week. In most of these countries, supply more or less meets demand from the start of the legal entitlement. Poland will also soon be among this group as it is introducing an entitlement to ECEC for 4-year-olds from September 2015 which will be extended to 3-year-olds from September 2017.

In **Belgium (French and Flemish Communities)**, children from birth to 3 years may attend different types of centre-based settings or regulated home-based care. However, children are only legally entitled to free early childhood education from age 2-and-a-half, in the *école maternelle/kleuterschool* (23 hours per week). This provision falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education. Primary education starts at age six.

Around a quarter of European education systems provide guaranteed places from around age 5 or a little earlier. In Bulgaria, where primary education starts at age 7, this implies two years of compulsory ECEC. Poland also guarantees a place for the last two years of ECEC – from age 4. Children have a guaranteed place for the last year of ECEC in the Czech Republic and Portugal, which provide a legal

entitlement. In Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Serbia the last year of ECEC (pre-primary classes) is compulsory. The minimum weekly duration of compulsory pre-primary education varies between 15 hours per week in some Austrian *Länder* to 26.5 hours per week in Cyprus.

Figure 1: Age from which a place in ECEC is guaranteed, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

	BEfr	BEde	BEnl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Starting age of legal entitlement (years)	2½	3	2½		5	½	1	1½	-		3	3		-		1½	-	3		2¾
Starting age of compulsory ECEC (years)				5						5			6		4½	5		4	3	
Weekly entitlement (hours)	23	23	23	20-24	40	40	⊗	40	-	22.5	25	24	(4)	-	26.5	⊗	-	18 [26]	20	30
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT		BA	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Starting age of legal entitlement (years)	:		4	5	-	11/12	-	¾	1	3	3	-	3		-	-	-	1		-
Starting age of compulsory ECEC (years)	5	5	5					6							5½				5½	
Weekly entitlement (hours)	-	15-20	25	25	-	40	-	40 [18]	15	15	10	-	(16)		(10.5)	-	-	40	20	-

⊗ No central regulations

Explanatory note

Where the weekly entitlement is marked in brackets, the figure was calculated by dividing the annual hours of entitlement indicated in regulations by 38 – the most common number of weeks in a school year. Information about age and hours of legal entitlement is blue; information about age and hours of compulsory ECEC is red. Where the weekly entitlement and hours of compulsory ECEC differ, the square brackets indicate the hours of compulsory ECEC. Weekly hours are truncated at 40.

Country-specific notes

Belgium: 28 periods of 50 minutes.

Bulgaria: Compulsory ECEC: 5-year-olds – 20 hours; 6-year-olds – 24 hours.

Netherlands: Stresses the importance of accessibility and freedom of choice for parents in ECEC provision. Universal entitlement and progress towards this goal are not supported as they do not match the Netherlands ECEC system, which combines a demand-driven structure for children under 4 and supply-side arrangements for all children aged 4 and up, or for those aged 2-and-half to 4 from disadvantaged backgrounds. This combined system has led to a 90 % participation rate for 3 year old children and 100% participation rate for children aged 4 and up.

Austria: Weekly hours of compulsory ECEC vary between *Länder*.

United Kingdom: In England and Wales, children reach compulsory school age at the start of the school term following their fifth birthday. Part of the reception year (classified as ISCED 0) is compulsory for children whose birthdays fall in the earlier part of the school year.

In 2014, only six EU-28 education systems, namely Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) as well as Iceland, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey had not provided a guarantee to an ECEC place. However, in some of these countries, despite the absence of a legal entitlement or obligation to attend, governments may still make a substantial investment to ensure that all children can access some ECEC provision, at least during the year or two prior to the commencement of primary education. For example:

In **Ireland**, the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme currently provides for free pre-school for up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks for children aged over 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months on 1 September of the year that they will be starting. There is universal eligibility for the scheme and take up for the current scheme is in excess of 90 %.

In **Slovakia**, children attending ECEC one year before starting compulsory primary school receive state allowances for education and care. Priority admittance is given to children a year before compulsory school attendance (5-year-olds).

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, there is no legal entitlement but commitment in the Programme for Government means that a funded pre-school education place is available from age 3 to almost all families who want it. Compulsory primary education begins at age 4.

Recent policy developments

Countries with recent reforms on the provision of guaranteed places include Hungary, Poland and Finland.

In **Hungary**, instead of the previous legal entitlement, from September 2015, ECEC became compulsory for children from the age of 3.

Poland extended the legal entitlement to 4-year-olds from September 2015.

Finland introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting school from August 2015.

Some countries plan reforms in the near future:

In **the Czech Republic**, from 1 September 2017, pre-primary education will be compulsory from age 5, namely one year before primary education. At the same time, the legal entitlement will be extended to 4-year-olds, and later on also to 3-year-olds (from 1 September 2018) and 2-year-olds (from 1 September 2020).

In **Estonia**, a new legislation on ECEC is currently being prepared. The planned changes will give local governments the possibility to create new kindergarten or childcare places that meet the needs and preferences of families. EUR 47 million will be invested during the years 2014-2020 enabling to create approximately 3 200 new ECEC places.

In **Ireland**, from September 2016, children will be able to start in free pre-school when they reach age 3 and to remain in free pre-school until they transfer to primary school.

Greece is planning legislation for lowering the starting age of compulsory ECEC years from 5 to 4.

In **Hungary**, from January 2017, every local government will have to provide care for children under 3 if there are 40 children under 3 living in the area, or the parents of at least five children express their wish for care. At present, this is a requirement for local governments where the population in the area is more than 10 000.

Italy is planning legislation to establish an integrated or unitary ECEC system catering for children from birth to six years of age. If the legislation is passed, a plan would be developed to guarantee more provision.

In **Lithuania**, from 1 September 2016, pre-primary education will be compulsory (20 hours per week) for all children for one year before primary schooling.

In **Poland**, from September 2016, compulsory ECEC starts at age 6 instead of 5. From September 2017, the legal entitlement will be extended to 3-year-olds.

Portugal will establish a legal entitlement for 4-year-olds from 2016/17 and for 3-year-olds in the following years.

In **Finland**, the right to ECEC was limited to 20 hours per week as from 1 August 2016. The full-time entitlement remains for children whose parents are working or studying. A child is also entitled to full-time ECEC if it is necessary due to his or her development, support needs or family circumstances, or if it is otherwise considered to be in the interest of the child.

2. PROFESSIONALISATION OF ECEC STAFF

ECEC staff have a major role in shaping children's experiences and determining their learning outcomes (Winton and McCollum, 2008). The 2011 Commission Communication ⁽⁷⁾ states that staff competences are key to high quality ECEC. Research conducted by the OECD stresses that there is strong evidence to suggest that better educated staff are more likely to provide high-quality teaching approaches and stimulating learning environments, which lead to better learning outcomes (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). In this report, progress towards the professionalisation of staff is assessed by examining current initial training requirements and regulations on continuing professional development.

ECEC staff refers here only to those professionals who have regular, daily, direct contact with children and whose duties involve education and care. These staff 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 educational guidelines or curricula.

The term ECEC staff does not include heads of ECEC settings, medical/healthcare staff (such as paediatricians, physiotherapists, psychomotor therapists, nutritionists, etc. providing support for children's physical development), professional specialists (such as psychologists), assistants/auxiliary staff who perform only domestic or maintenance roles (such as preparing food and cleaning premises).

2.1. ECEC staff qualification requirements

The indicator on the requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to be qualified to a minimum of Bachelor level in the field of education (i.e. a minimum of three years at ISCED 6 according to the ISCED 2011 classification) aims to show whether education staff in the sector are highly qualified. This is important as staff who are highly qualified in education can provide leadership to other team members when designing and delivering developmentally appropriate activities for children and thus raise the quality of provision.

Programmes at **ISCED level 6, at Bachelor's or equivalent level**, are often designed to provide participants with academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions, but do not necessarily involve the completion of a research project or thesis (UNESCO, 2012).

Figure 2 shows that in about a third of European education systems there must be at least one staff member who has tertiary level education in educational sciences for all groups of children across the entire phase of ECEC.

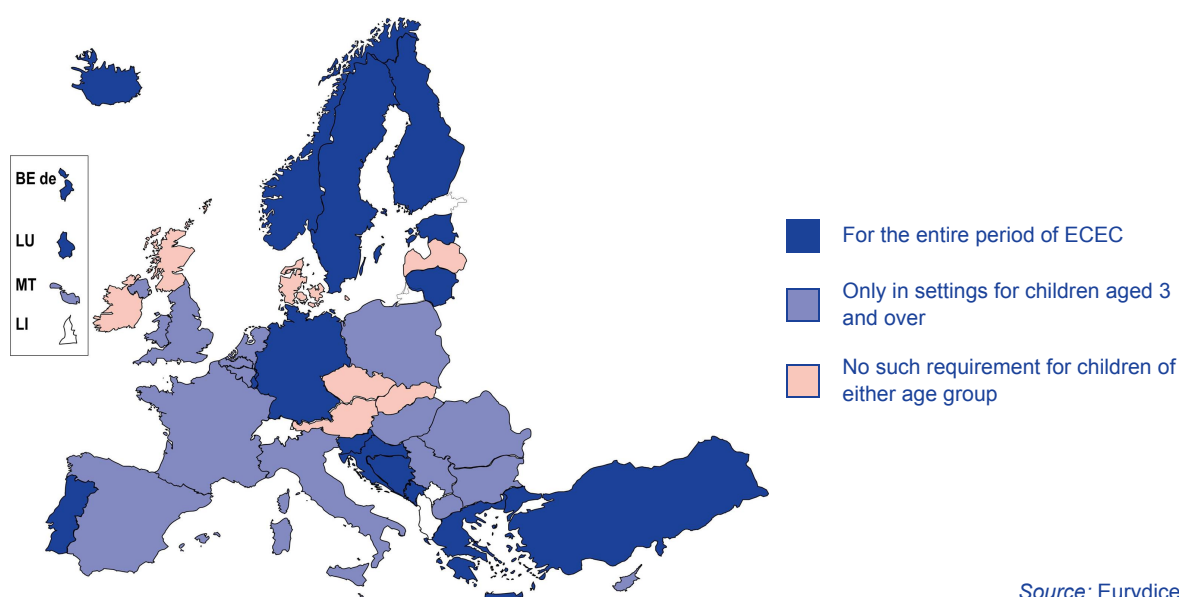
In **Finland**, the minimum requirement for an ECEC teacher is a Bachelor level degree. Other types of staff (child care workers or 'practical nurses') must hold at least a vocational qualification in the field of social welfare and health care (upper secondary education ISCED 3). Legislation requires that a minimum of one in three members of staff in ECEC settings catering for children up to age 6 must have a higher education degree (Bachelor of Education, Master of Education or Bachelor of Social Services). All teachers in pre-primary education for six-year-olds must have a Bachelor's or Master's level university degree in education.

⁽⁷⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

The requirement for at least one member of staff to have a tertiary qualification in educational sciences applies only to groups of children aged 3 years and over in more than a third of European education systems (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) ⁽⁸⁾, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia).

In **Italy**, ECEC teachers working with children aged 3 years and over are required to have at least five years of university education, which corresponds to ISCED 7 (Master's degree level). The minimum qualification requirement for educational staff working with younger children is set at upper secondary (ISCED 3), but some regions employ educators (*educatore dell'infanzia*) with tertiary education degrees. In settings for children under 3, regional regulations make provision for auxiliary staff (*educatore, operatore*) and their requisite qualifications.

Figure 2: Requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to have a tertiary qualification in education (minimum 3 years ISCED 6), 2015/16



Country-specific notes

Germany: The vocational training for kindergarten teachers is classified as ISCED level 6, which includes programmes at Bachelor's or equivalent level.

France: For children under 3 in *crèches et autres structures collectives*, no qualified staff member is required in settings catering for up to 24 children. In settings with 25 to 49 children, at least a 0.5 post must be held by a staff member with a tertiary qualification in education (minimum 3 years ISCED 6) is required. In settings with 50-69 children, a full post must be held by a staff member with this level of qualification. At least a 0.5 additional tertiary level post must be provided for each group of up to 20 children. For all children attending *école maternelle* (from age 2), at least one full-time post must be held by a staff member with a tertiary qualification in education for each group.

Netherlands: Only in settings for children of 4 years and over.

There is no requirement for one member of staff per group to have a minimum of 3 years' tertiary education in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Austria, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Scotland) for either children under or over 3 years of age. However, in some of these countries, although there is no central requirement, staff educated to ISCED level 6 may still be employed and/or there may be a requirement for staff to have undertaken vocational training or short-cycle ECEC related tertiary education.

In **Denmark**, local authorities are responsible for recruiting staff, there is no central regulation. In practice, teams have a pedagogue (*pædagog*) with 3.5 years of ISCED 6 education and a pedagogical assistant (*pædagogisk assistent*). Staff without specialist educational or childcare qualifications are also used.

⁽⁸⁾ In settings for children from 2½ years.

In **Latvia**, ECEC staff are required to have completed a first level tertiary education (ISCED 5) study programme or second level (ISCED 6) higher pedagogical education programme and have a pre-school teacher qualification.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, ECEC practitioners must hold at least a recognised vocational qualification at ISCED level 3. Although there is no longer a requirement for qualified teachers to be based full-time in ECEC settings, the government has a policy that all pre-school children should receive access to a qualified (ISCED level 6) teacher. Access to a teacher can be considered either as teacher involvement in a specific centre on a full/part time basis or sustained peripatetic support that contributes positively to the learning experience for children (The Scottish Government, 2009). Moreover, all managers of ECEC centres are required to have, or be working towards, a BA in Childhood Practice (ISCED level 6), which has content on both early education and care.

Recent policy developments

A few education systems are introducing reforms to staff qualifications.

In **Ireland**, from 31 December 2016, all staff working directly with children in the early years' service must hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework (ISCED 4), or the equivalent. The Room Leader working with children of 3 years and over must hold a qualification on Level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework (ISCED 5).

In **Italy**, the School Reform Law (L. 107/2015, art. 1 c. 181e) envisages future legislation establishing at least a 3-year university degree for educational staff working in 0-3 settings.

In **Malta**, from 2015/16, the required level of qualification for staff working in kindergarten centres was raised to Bachelor's degree level with four years of study or two years of study for holders of the MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years (and which would have been preceded by a two-year MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development).

2.2. Continuing professional development of ECEC staff

Establishing the initial qualification requirements for staff working with children is only the starting point for ensuring a well-qualified workforce. Continuing professional development (CPD) is an important means by which employees can upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their career. In certain cases, participating in training also allows staff to upgrade their qualifications. The 'Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014) highlights that continuing professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff, on the teaching methods and approaches used and on children's outcomes.

Continuing professional development is defined as participation in formal and non-formal professional development activities, which may, for example, include subject-based and pedagogical training. In certain cases, these activities may lead to further qualifications.

Professional duty means a task described as such in working regulations/contracts/ legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession.

European countries usually regard CPD as a professional duty and/or necessary for the promotion of staff who already hold higher-level qualifications, namely ECEC teachers. In many countries, CPD is an integral part of the teacher's role, including ECEC (or pre-primary) teachers. However, for the categories of staff who are not required to have a minimum of 3 years' training in education at ISCED level 6, CPD is often optional. For example,

In the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**, CPD is a professional duty for teachers with qualified teacher/registered status and, for England only, those with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) or Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS). CPD is optional for all other categories of staff (those with a level 2 or 3 qualification).

As shown in Figure 3, continuing professional development is a professional duty and/or necessary for the promotion for staff working in settings for children under 3 years of age in only half of European countries. For example:

In **Malta**, there is no obligatory or specifically organised continuing professional development for staff working with children under 3 years of age in childcare settings. However, for ECEC staff working with children aged 3 years or over, CPD sessions are held once per term after school hours (three two-hour sessions per school year).

In **Poland**, CPD is necessary for promotion for all teachers in pre-school and school education, but CPD is not required for staff working with children under 3 years old.

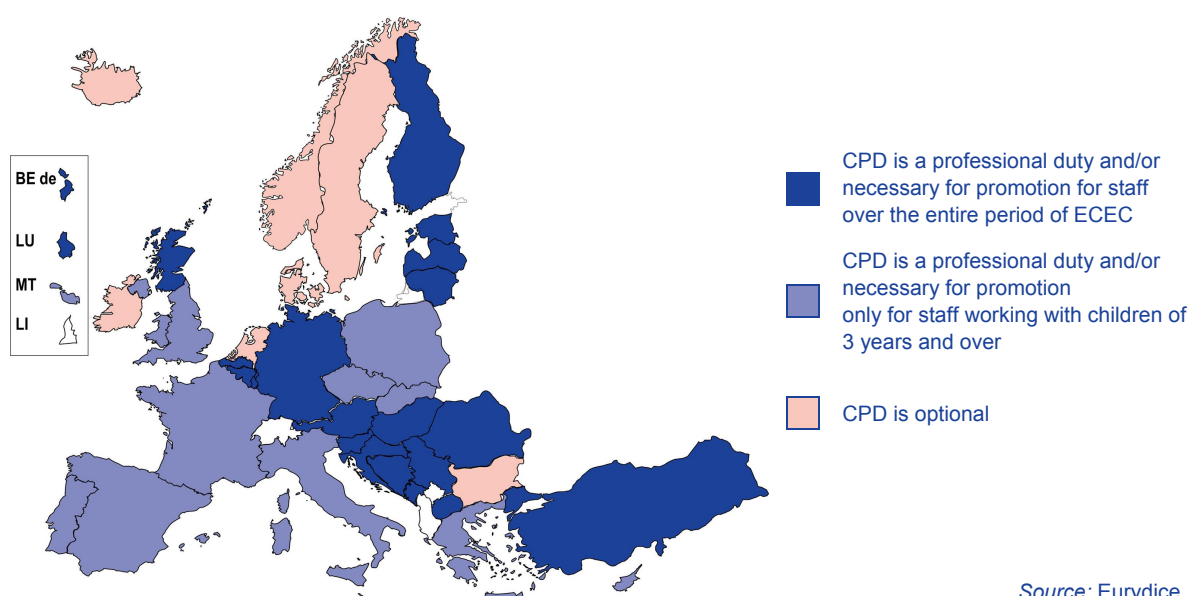
In **Slovakia**, all pedagogical employees are obliged to develop their professional competences through continuing education and self-education. CPD is necessary for promotion and allows teachers to reach higher salary scales. For ECEC staff working with children under 3 years old no formal teacher qualification is required and CPD is optional.

In many countries, however, pre-primary teachers work throughout the entire ECEC phase and CPD is a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion.

In **Lithuania**, according to the Law on Education (2011), each teacher must upgrade his/her qualification. Each teacher is entitled to at least five days' paid annual leave of absence for his/her continuing professional development.

In **Slovenia**, CPD is a professional duty and a right according to the Organisation and Financing of Education Act and the Collective Agreement for Education. Pedagogical staff have the right to five days' in-service training a year or 15 days over three years.

Figure 3: Status of continuing professional development (CPD) for ECEC staff, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

CPD is shown here as a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion even if the requirement only applies to one category of staff.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE nl): Although CPD is considered as a professional duty, training activities cannot be mandatory unless the school head or school board deem them necessary for individual teachers.

Germany: Varies between *Länder*. In most *Länder*, CPD is necessary for promotion, however it is usually a 'soft' professional duty or optional. A fixed number of days available for CPD are agreed in work contracts.

Continuing professional development may also be seen as helping to compensate for a lack of initial training, and in several education systems it is required of all ECEC staff regardless of the level and type of their education.

In **Slovenia**, CPD is also a professional duty for assistants.

The **Scottish** Social Services Council, which is responsible for registering people who work in social services and regulating their education and training, stipulate that all workers in day care services for children must engage in 10 days or 60 hours of CPD over the course of their five-year registration period.

For ECEC staff working with children aged 3 years and over, CPD is a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion everywhere except in Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Norway. However, even in these education systems, CPD may be required, for example:

In the **Netherlands**, all ECEC settings are obliged to have a 'staff development plan'.

Recent policy developments

Four countries reported reforms regarding CPD for ECEC staff.

The 2014 **Flemish** Parliament Act on Childcare for babies and toddlers requires an annual assessment to be carried out by ECEC providers to identify and meet the training needs of practitioners working with babies and toddlers (under 3 years old). Providers offering more than 18 places must incorporate this process into their quality assurance manual.

In **Bulgaria**, according to the Pre-school and School Educational Act, from 1 August 2016 all teachers and educators are obliged to improve their qualifications on an annual basis. CPD becomes an integral part of appraisal and is monitored through a system of qualification credits. ECEC settings are obliged to create conditions for at least 16 academic hours of CPD annually for each educator.

In **Ireland**, from 31 December 2016, all staff working directly with children in early years services must hold a minimum level of qualification in a relevant area. Any staff currently employed without the relevant qualifications will have to undertake CPD to meet this criterion.

In **Italy**, the recent School Reform Law (L. 107/2015, art. 1 c. 181e) envisages future legislation that stipulates compulsory CPD for staff across the entire period of ECEC.

3. EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

The activities that children love – play, movement, crafts, singing, drawing, eating, cooking, gardening, dancing, etc. – can be used to provide learning experiences, develop children's personal and social skills and strengthen their confidence and self-esteem. Rich and varied activities, based on well-defined objectives that ensure progress towards the desired learning outcomes, encourage communication between children and staff and involve parents and the local community, are essential elements of high quality education and care (see EACEA/Eurydice, 2009 and European Commission, 2014). At national level, policy-makers seek to influence children's learning experiences by issuing a detailed ECEC curriculum or by publishing official guidelines outlining the main principles of education for this age group.

The **ECEC curriculum** as defined in the EC quality framework (European Commission, 2014) covers developmental care, formative interactions, learning experiences and supportive assessment. It promotes young children's personal and social development and their learning as well as laying the foundations for their future life and citizenship. The ECEC curriculum is set out in formal documentation issued by the responsible authorities.

The learning opportunities to be provided to young children can also be communicated through official **educational guidelines** which explain the content and teaching approaches incorporated into legislation as part of, for example, an ECEC education programme or reference framework. The guidelines often refer to skills, educational standards, curriculum criteria or care/education plans; they may also offer practical advice for ECEC practitioners.

All European countries issue official educational guidelines to help settings improve their provision. However, in around a quarter of European countries, educational guidelines or curricula are not provided for settings for children under 3 years old (see Figure 4).

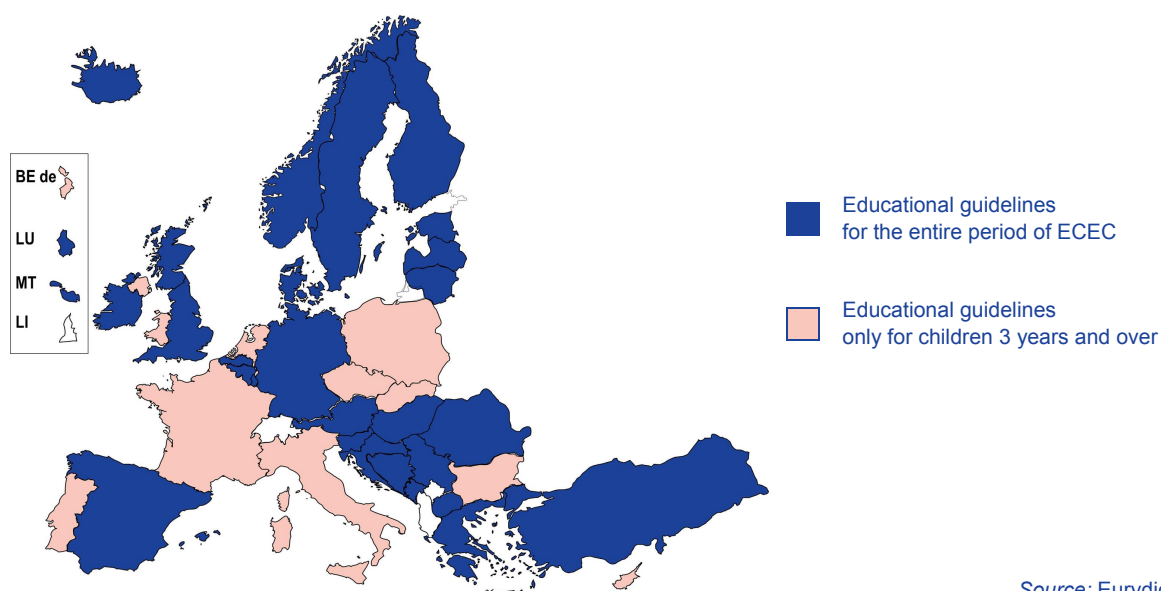
Depending on how formal or binding they are, educational guidelines allow varying degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied in ECEC settings. There may be more than one document applicable to the phase in a particular country or region within a country, but they all contribute to establishing the basic framework in which ECEC staff are required (or advised, where mandatory requirements do not exist) to develop their own practice to meet children's needs. Recommendations are usually quite broad, and often institutions are free to develop their own curricula and choose their own methods.

In federal systems with significant regional autonomy, as is the case in Germany and Spain, the central recommendations contain general principles and objectives, but the education authorities of the *Länder* and the Autonomous Communities are responsible for providing more detailed programmes of study for ECEC including objectives, content and assessment methods, etc. For example:

In **Germany**, a Common Framework for Early Education in Childcare Centres defines general goals, principles, developmental areas, conditions for the implementation of educational objectives and facilitating the transition to primary school. The 16 curricular frameworks of the federal states (*Bundesländer*) further develop the overall ECEC goals, pedagogical practices and learning areas stated in the Common Framework.

In other countries (e.g. Estonia, Denmark, Lithuania (ages 0-5), Sweden and Finland), the guidelines and principles established in the national framework provide a reference point for producing local curricula at the municipal level or within ECEC settings.

Figure 4: ECEC educational guidelines, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

Often the curriculum is more detailed at the later stages, i.e. the last year or two of the pre-primary stage. For example:

In **Bulgaria**, educational guidelines cover only the compulsory pre-primary preparation for school (last two years of ECEC). There is a detailed programme based on a modular system, which offers content suited to the educational needs of: children who have been attending kindergarten; children who have not attended kindergarten prior to their enrolment in the preparatory group; and children whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian and who have not attended kindergarten. The programme includes the following educational fields: the Bulgarian language, mathematics, the social world, the natural world, play culture, arts and literature for children, music, technology and every-day life, and physical education.

Every setting in **Lithuania** develops its own curricula (pre-school programme) on the basis of the Outline of Criteria for the Pre-school Education Curriculum. The Ministry of Education also provides detailed recommendations on how to prepare such curricula. However, for the last year of ECEC, there is a detailed pre-primary curriculum.

Even when there are no official guidelines at central level, often ECEC providers are required to draw up their own education and care plan in order to become accredited. Settings are required to outline, for example, their proposed socio-pedagogic activities, the education and support provided for children, and information about their cooperation with parents. For example:

In the **Netherlands**, based on a national pedagogical plan, each ECEC setting for children aged under 4 is obliged to develop its own curriculum programme. In *basisonderwijs* for 4 and 5 year olds, core objectives (*vroegschoolse educatie*) exist. Targeted ECEC settings for children from 2.5 to 4 are obliged to make use of one of the several educational programmes that exist (*vve programma*).

Recent policy developments

Several education systems are reviewing or introducing new educational guidelines or curricula.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, a pedagogical framework for childcare settings for babies and toddlers (under 2-and-a-half years) has been available since 2014 and is being implemented from 2015/16. It has been commissioned by the 'Child and Family Agency' (*Kind en Gezin*) and developed by two university research teams. The framework outlines pedagogical practice, describes what is understood by pedagogical quality and provides points of departure to develop appropriate pedagogical activities. The framework aims at helping ECEC settings to check and improve their work.

In **Bulgaria**, according to the Pre-school and School Educational Act, from 1 August 2016, the compulsory pre-primary preparation for school phase (last two years of ECEC) follows an innovative system approach as an integral part of the development strategy for the ECEC setting (school).

In **Poland**, from September 2016, the development of reading and mathematical skills as well as preparation for the acquisition of writing skills will be reintroduced into the pre-school core curriculum. This is due to the raising of the starting age of compulsory education in primary school from 6 to 7.

In **Portugal**, the Educational guidelines for children aged 3 and over have been reviewed and updated (published in July 2016). Moreover, a set of educational guidelines for *crèches* (ECEC settings for under-3s) is in preparation.

In **Slovakia**, a new State Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education has entered into force on 1 September 2015. In the academic year 2015/16, the new state educational programme will be implemented on a voluntary basis. It will be applied in all ECEC facilities for 3- to 5-year-olds from 1 September 2016.

In **Finland**, a new national core curriculum for pre-primary education was adopted in December 2014 and local curricula based on the new core curriculum will be implemented by August 2016. In August 2015, the Finnish National Board of Education assumed the duties of the national development agency in ECEC. At the same time, preparation started for a national core curriculum for ECEC that will replace the current national ECEC curriculum guidelines in August 2017.

4. SPECIFIC LANGUAGE SUPPORT MEASURES

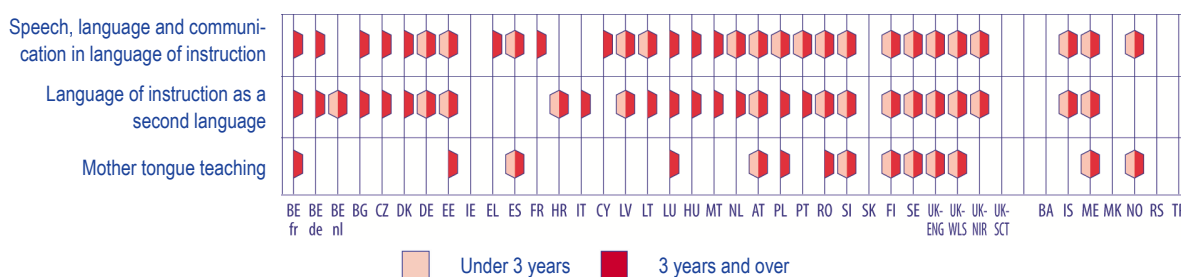
Some children at certain developmental stages might need additional support in order to reach their full potential. Language is essential for interaction and it forms a foundation for learning, therefore children who face difficulties in their language development need to get timely additional support. There are many and varied language support measures available in European countries, often tailored to meet the specific needs of certain linguistic groups or even specific children. Three types of language support measures are shown in Figure 5:

- measures for children who have speech, language and communication needs in the language of instruction;
- measures to improve the language of instruction for children who speak other language(s) at home;
- mother tongue teaching: measures to improve children's skills in the language they speak at home where it is not the language of instruction.

Language of instruction refers to the main language that is officially used in education at ECEC and school level. It may not be the first or home language for all pupils.

The limitation of this indicator relates to the fact that only central level recommendations are reported, therefore regional and local practices are not reflected even when they are widespread. Languages spoken in a country often vary in different regions and localities, therefore many measures are taken at these levels. Nevertheless, most European countries have introduced some language support measures in ECEC at central level. In some countries, these language measures are funded at the central level, providing additional/specialist staff or grants to settings implementing these measures. Learning guidelines and materials are often provided, as well as language assessment tools and training for staff.

Figure 5: Language support measures in ECEC, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

Note: Some support measures may not apply in all settings.

Although many European countries provide central language support measures for the entire period of ECEC, some countries specifically target children only from the age of 3 (Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, France, Cyprus, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary and Malta). There are no central level language support measures in Ireland, Slovakia, the United Kingdom (Scotland), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. However, these countries may still have some language support measures. For example:

In **Slovakia**, according to the pedagogical-organisation guidelines (2015/16), ECEC centres with a minority language of instruction should also develop a programme to improve and develop language skills in the state (Slovak) language.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, instead of targeted programmes, the measures taken are individually tailored. Children for whom English is a second language receive additional help.

The principal group of language support measures is designed for all children who have speech, language and communication needs in the language of instruction. These are broad measures, targeted at all children, including those that speak the language of instruction at home.

In the **Czech Republic**, speech therapy is generally provided by pedagogical and psychological counselling centres (outside the ECEC settings). However, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports funds additional language support to be provided in ECEC centres for 3-year-olds and over, under the annual programme 'Speech-language Support and Prevention in Pre-primary Education' (*Podpora logopedické prevence v předškolním vzdělávání*)⁽⁹⁾. Financial support is provided for teachers' CPD, school projects for speech development and for acquiring modern equipment.

In **Portugal**, speech therapy may be provided under the National System for Early Intervention, targeted at children aged 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 European education systems, there are increasingly more children who speak a different language to the language of instruction at home. They are expected to learn the language of instruction so that they are able to communicate and access education. Responding to migration and refugee flows, many countries have introduced additional measures recently.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, ECEC centres for children younger than 3 years must provide a language policy that covers measures to support the acquisition of Dutch and devotes attention to languages spoken at home. As a temporary measure for 2015-2016, ECEC centres for children over 2-and-a-half years receive an extra EUR 950 for every new non-Dutch speaking pupil who has had less than 9 months of education in Dutch but needs further support in the language. Additional instruction hours are given to pupils aged 5 and over that need support in Dutch.

The **Czech** Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports programme 'Support of Activities to Aid the Integration of Foreigners in the Territory of the Czech Republic'⁽¹⁰⁾ provides grants for schools or other institutions with pupils in ISCED 0-3. This includes the development of approaches to and methods of teaching the Czech language as a foreign language; the development of skills among educational staff to work with migrant children; and the production and distribution of modern text books and teaching aids.

The **German** Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) is running a programme 'Early-Years Language Learning: Because Language is the Key to the World' (*Sprach-Kitas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist*)⁽¹¹⁾ from 2016 to 2019. The aim of this national programme is to support ECEC centres in developing children's language skills as well as helping them cope with diversity and strengthen their cooperation with families. The programme will be run in approximately 3 500 ECEC centres until 2019. ECEC centres will receive an additional, specially qualified language-intervention professional to support the team. ECEC centres will also receive support from professional education consultants for all issues relating to language and inclusion.

In **Malta**, children who are not able to communicate in either Maltese or English are temporarily enrolled on a language induction course to prepare them for mainstream education. The course lasts one academic year.

Portugal has recently introduced guidelines on Portuguese as a second language in pre-school education.

Countries that grant a right to **mother tongue teaching** consider that fluency in the language spoken at home also increases a child's ability to master the language of instruction. Moreover, such teaching is seen as a way in which a child's linguistic expertise is recognised and their cultural heritage is valued. Some countries grant the right to mother tongue teaching to all children irrespective of the language or background.

Although there is no individual right to mother tongue teaching, in the **United Kingdom (England)**, the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states that 'for children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home'. There is an information resource for parents which sets out the types of support available⁽¹²⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/podpora-aktivit-v-oblasti-integrace-cizincu-na-uzemi-cr-v>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/dotacni-program-msmt-na-podporu-vzdelavani-v-jazycich-3?highlightWords=integrace+romsk%C3%A9+komunita>

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://sprach-kitas.fruehe-chancen.de/programm/ueber-das-programm/>

⁽¹²⁾ <http://www.afasic.org.uk/download/101/>

According to the **Norwegian** Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens, ECEC institutions must support minority language children in using their mother tongue, while working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills. There is an earmarked state grant to municipalities aimed at enhancing language development for minority language children in and/or outside ECEC. The state grant is designed to strengthen local work on language learning and multiculturalism.

Some countries provide mother tongue teaching for a specific language or languages, usually the regional or minority languages.

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research financially supports Sunday schools that provide mother tongue teaching for 3 to 18 year-old children from ethnic minorities.

Spain has bilateral agreements with several countries, for example Portugal and Romania⁽¹³⁾, to promote knowledge of the respective languages to students from these countries in order to safeguard their identity and culture respecting the host country. For example, the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura⁽¹⁴⁾ and the Comunidad de Madrid⁽¹⁵⁾ are running the 'Programme of Portuguese Language and Culture' in ECEC and primary schools. In these schools, the teaching activities in Portuguese are part of all school activities. Other activities include student exchanges, study visits, cultural weeks, etc.

Luxembourg provides an assistant for supporting the learning of the mother tongue for all children from Portuguese origin.

In **Poland**, at the request of parents, mother tongue teaching may be carried out in national minority languages (e.g. Lithuanian, German, Belarusian and Ukrainian) for children aged 3 and over.

Portugal has a bilateral agreement with Romania to offer Romanian language and culture classes for students with Romanian origin, with an aim to develop their identity and cultural background. These classes are open to all students.

Slovenia provides bilingual settings in the areas inhabited by Italian or Hungarian minorities. Educational authorities have issued a Supplement to the Curriculum for working in the 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 size, extra staff or a higher level of education among staff.

Montenegro has pre-school activities in Albanian in certain areas. Also, Roma speaking staff are employed to foster the language development of Roma children.

In some cases, both approaches to mother tongue teaching are supported, namely providing a support framework for all languages as well as giving additional funding/status for specific minority languages. For example:

In **Sweden**, the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) stipulates that 'Pre-school shall contribute to giving children with a mother tongue other than Swedish the opportunity to develop both the Swedish language and their mother tongue'⁽¹⁶⁾. 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 pre-school partly or completely in the minority language. The municipalities within the administrative areas are allocated government funding for the additional costs.

Even when there is no central regulation on mother tongue teaching, it can be provided in ECEC settings. For example:

In **Germany**, bilingual ECEC centres exist, particularly in larger towns. In these centres, native speakers of German and another language are employed. In addition, specific programmes to improve children's skills in a non-German language are usually put in place on the initiative of staff or an ECEC provider.

For information on language support for students in primary and secondary education who have a mother tongue other than the language of instruction, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2016, Figure 3.3).

⁽¹³⁾ http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/upe/impresos_pdf/CircularCulturaRumana1516.pdf

⁽¹⁴⁾ http://www.educarex.es/pub/cont/com/0004/documentos/Ins_24_2013.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁾ http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/upe/impresos_pdf/CircularCulturaPortuguesa1516.pdf

⁽¹⁶⁾ http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800#K8

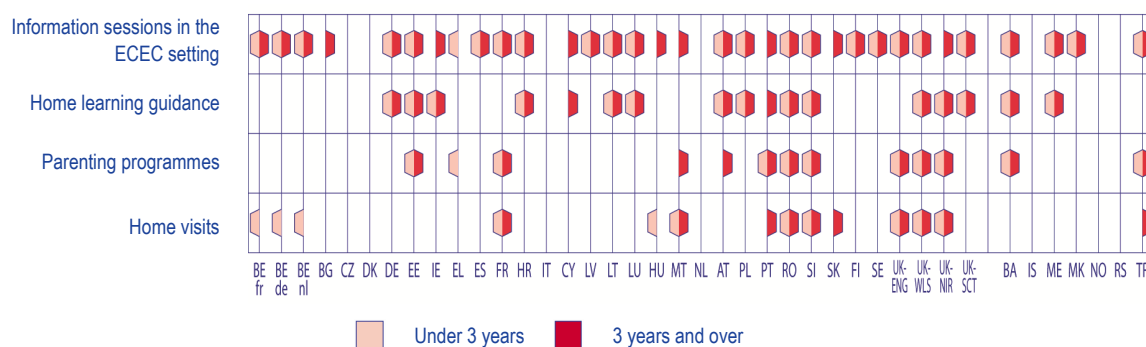
5. SUPPORT MEASURES FOR PARENTS

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 principals 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.

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 types of support that settings should provide to parents. Figure 6 shows whether central regulations/recommendations and/or curriculum for ECEC specify the following support measures for parents:

- a) Information sessions and parent-teacher meetings in the ECEC setting.
- b) Home learning guidance, which refers to fostering the child's learning at home, by providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children with curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
- c) Parenting programmes, which refer to formal parenting classes to help families establish home environments that support children as learners.
- d) Home visits.

Figure 6: Support measures for parents, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

Note: Some support measures may not apply in all settings.

This variety of measures is intended to respond to the various needs of different types of families, as well as the various needs of families parenting children of different ages. Many education systems therefore have a comprehensive approach to parenting support, which incorporate several of the measures listed above.

In the United Kingdom (Wales), *Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support* ⁽¹⁷⁾ acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be successful. It sets out a range of possible parent support measures. It sets out overall principles that parenting support is about working with parents to reduce risks; strengthen parenting capacity; develop and build resilience and sustain positive change with the overarching aim of improving outcomes for children.

Figure 6 shows that the most common form of cooperation between parents and settings is through **information sessions and parent-teacher meetings**, which should form the basis of a regular

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://gov.wales/docs/ds/jlg/publications/cyp/140910-parenting-in-wales-guidance-en.pdf>

dialogue between families and ECEC practitioners. Parents receive information on their child's progress and development as well as advice on their child's education. Some countries specify the frequency or format of such meetings, for example:

In **Austria**, so called *Elternabende* (parents' evenings) are required twice a year by law in most *Länder*. Many services offer meetings and guidance more often than is required by law.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of 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 to be provided to parents, informal meetings between staff and parents are also common practice.

Home-learning guidance is centrally recommended or included in educational guidelines in more than a third of European education systems. With the aim of boosting children's language development, cognitive development and academic achievement, this is sometimes referred to as the 'home curriculum' (OECD, 2012). Home learning 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 call, etc.) and by enriching these activities with stimulating discussions.

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'.

The **Croatian** National Curriculum for Early and Pre-primary Education contains a number of notes and guidelines regarding support for parents whose children attend ECEC institutions.

Parenting programmes have similar objectives to those set for guidance on home learning. The main distinction between these two types of support lies in their organisation: in the case of parenting programmes, 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).

In **Estonia**, for instance, within the framework of the Strategy for Children and Families and its associated development plan, parenting programmes have been operating since 2012 covering such topics as child health and development, bullying in ECEC settings, and children's and parents' rights. Some training courses are provided within ECEC settings.

A few countries/regions specify that parenting programmes are often directed at the most vulnerable groups. For example:

In **France**, an initiative 'Open School for Parents for the Success of Children' (*Ouvrir l'école aux parents pour la réussite des enfants*)⁽¹⁸⁾ aims to facilitate the integration of newly arriving immigrant families. Parents learn French in order to be able to understand written documents relating to the education of their children and participate in oral exchanges about the education of their children. Parents also acquire knowledge of the functioning and expectations of the school as well as values of French society.

Home visits involving ECEC staff (teachers or specialists) are recommended in about a third of 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: on the one hand, staff provide advice to parents, while on the other hand, staff learn more about a child's family environment, and can therefore improve their understanding of the child's needs.

In **Romania**, home visits may be carried out when a child has difficulties in adapting to a new ECEC setting and/or communicating with staff or other children.

⁽¹⁸⁾ <http://eduscol.education.fr/cid49489/ouvrir-l-ecole-aux-parents-pour-la-reussite-des-enfants.html>

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 the **Czech Republic**, according to the curriculum, teachers should regularly inform parents about their children's achievements and progress, and nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) should support family education and provide guidance. However, the ways this should be done are not prescribed and systematic support is not usually provided in practice.

In **Denmark**, many municipalities and ECEC settings work with parents in order to inform them about learning environments at home. At state level, several projects are available to support municipalities with providing knowledge, cooperation and resources (e.g. 'Early Intervention – Long Lasting Effect' (*Tidlig Indsats – Livslang Effekt*)⁽¹⁹⁾, 'Day Care in the Future' (*Fremtidensdagtilbud*)⁽²⁰⁾).

In **Italy**, in keeping with the principle of schools' organisational autonomy, central guidelines may not set down which measures schools should implement. 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**, ECEC settings are not obliged to involve parents in their work but the inspectorate of educational programmes monitors ECEC settings in this respect.

In **Norway**, the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergarten, which is a regulation of the Kindergarten Act, states that parents and ECEC staff are to have regular contact for information exchange and discussion. Even though it is not regulated in detail by law, the majority of ECEC settings organise information sessions and bilateral parent-teacher meetings at least twice a year.

It is important to note that ECEC settings are not the only providers of support.

In several **German Länder**, family centres (*Familienzentren* or *Eltern-Kind-Zentren*) as well as ECEC settings offer other family-oriented services including, for instance, parenting programmes and counselling for parents.

In **Cyprus**, government organisations such as pedagogical institutes or non-governmental organisations such as parents' unions (locally financed) run educational seminars for parents.

In **Austria**, different bodies (mostly non-governmental organisations) run centrally financed education projects for parents.

In **Finland**, the tasks of municipal child health clinics also include monitoring the wellbeing of the whole family and supporting 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.

Recent policy developments

In **Bulgaria**, the new Pre-school and School Educational Act (effective from 1 August 2016) determines that parents have a right to receive information, support and counselling at the kindergarten or school on issues related to the education, career orientation and personal development of their children at least once a year.

On the basis of the new ECEC General Curriculum, which came into force on 1 September 2015, the **Lithuanian** Ministry of Education and Science issued new editions of guidance materials for parents, e.g. 'Your child – a pre-schooler'⁽²¹⁾ and 'Second language at an early age'⁽²²⁾. These publications are intended to help parents better understand their child, to help them develop their knowledge and to help them track their child's development.

In **Portugal**, a pilot parenting programmes' project is underway with 30 playgroups working nationwide.

In **Finland**, the revised Early Childhood Education and Care Act, adopted in May 2015, emphasises the participation and role of parents.

⁽¹⁹⁾ <http://socialstyrelsen.dk/projekter-og-initiativer/born/om-tidlig-indsats-livslang-effekt>

⁽²⁰⁾ <http://www.fremtidensdagtilbud.info/>

⁽²¹⁾ <https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/Leidinys/ikimokyklinukas1.pdf>

⁽²²⁾ <http://www.upc.smm.lt/ugdymas/mazumos/failai/leidiniai/Antraji-kalba-ankstyvajame-amziuje-tm.pdf>

Key definitions

Compulsory ECEC refers to the obligation for children to attend ECEC settings when they reach a certain age.

Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to in-service, formal and non-formal professional development activities, which may, for example, include subject-based and pedagogical training. In certain cases, these activities may lead to further qualifications.

Disadvantaged students (groups at risk or vulnerable groups) are defined at national level. Possible criteria are socio-economic status, ethnic origin, having a migrant background or others depending on the national context.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC): provision for children from birth through to primary education that is subject to a national regulatory framework, i.e., it must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures.

ECEC curriculum as defined in the EC quality framework (European Commission, 2014) covers developmental care, formative interactions, learning experiences and supportive assessment. It promotes young children's personal and social development and their learning as well as lays the foundations for their future life and citizenship. The ECEC curriculum is set out in formal documentation issued by the responsible authorities.

Educational guidelines: regulations on ECEC content and teaching approaches, which may be incorporated into legislation as part of an education programme, as a reference framework of skills, care and education plans, educational standards, criteria for developing local curricula or practical guidelines for ECEC practitioners.

Home learning guidance refers to fostering the child's learning at home, by providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children with curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning. With the aim of boosting children's language development, cognitive development and academic achievement, this is sometimes referred to as the 'home curriculum' (OECD, 2012).

Legal entitlement to ECEC refers to a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children living in a catchment area whose parents, regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status, require a place for their child.

Language of instruction refers to the main language that is officially used in education at ECEC and school level. It may not be the first or home language for all pupils.

Parenting programmes refer to formal parenting classes to help families establish home environments that support children as learners.

Professional duty means a task described as such in working regulations/contracts/ legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession.

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Structural Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2016

This publication presents the main structural aspects regarding access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services and their quality in 40 European education and training systems. It examines whether and from what age countries provide a guarantee to a place in ECEC – the main means to ensure access. It also covers several essential aspects of ECEC quality, namely requirements for staff education and continuous professional training; existence of educational guidelines or curricula; provision of language support and means to encourage cooperation between ECEC staff and parents. The publication is based on a chapter in the Eurydice report [Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2016](#).

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>.

