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ET2020 Working group

Early Childhood Education and Care

How to recruit, train and motivate well-qualifiedstaff

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Early Childhood Education and Care

How to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff

2020 Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture EN

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Executive Summary

Well-trained and motivated professionals help to ensure high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is provided to all children and families. The European Union (EU) has been promoting this vision for a number of years. EU support includes the adoption by Member States Education ministers of the Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems on 22 May 2019[1]. This recommends that Member States "support the professionalisation of ECEC staff, including leaders".

A European Commission expert group was set up, as part of the European Union strategic framework for policy cooperation in education and training, to offer a forum for the exchange of experience and best practice. Over a two-year period (2018-2020), the working group discussed how to advance on high quality ECEC with a special focus on inclusion and staff development[2]. This working group included national experts from 35 countries[3] and representatives from eight European organisations with expertise in ECEC[4] and three European or international organisations[5].

This report focuses on recruitment and retention of ECEC staff, and examines the best ways to educate and train this staff, both through initial training and continuing professional development. It welcomes the fact that the vast majority of ECEC staff enjoy working with young children and know they make a very important contribution to children's lives. However the sector is expanding, the expectations on staff are growing, and there are increasing opportunities to work with young children in a wider range of occupations. In this context, the report looks at how the ECEC sector can review its own practice and arrangements to ensure it attracts a sufficient number of well qualified and well-motivated staff. This report summarises the available research and looks at many of the approaches which have been used to strengthen national, regional or local practice.

The report also recognises that the quality of ECEC provision is highly dependent on the professionalism, competence and commitment of staff working in the sector - and it is therefore increasingly important that there is continued support for staff training and development. This report therefore proposes a set of core competences for ECEC assistants, core practitioners and ECEC leaders. In addition, it looks at the wide range of practices which are currently being used to strengthen the initial and continuing education and training of ECEC staff.

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[1] Council Recommendation (EU) (2019/C 189/02) on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems.

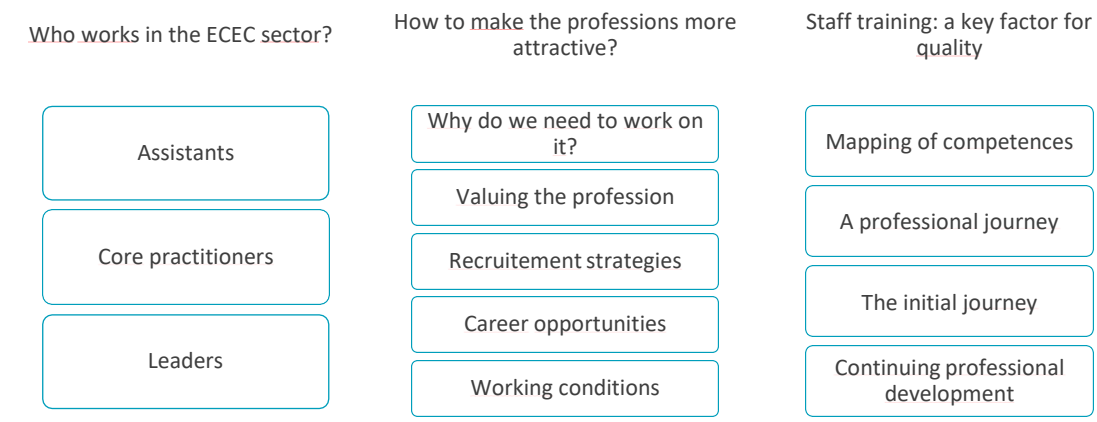
[2] The Inclusion toolkit for ECEC is available here: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/399018

[3] Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; The Netherlands; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovenia; Serbia; Slovakia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom.

[4] Alliance for Childhood; International Step by Step Association (ISSA); Eurochild; Eurocities; European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE); European Public Service Union (EPSU); European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD); European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE).

[5] Eurydice; Eurofound; OECD.

The report discusses the following questions and topics:



The report concludes that the quality of ECEC provision increases when staff are available in sufficient numbers, they are well qualified, educated and motivated to stay in the profession. It suggests that:

1. **All stakeholders involved in organising and providing ECEC share the responsibility to support the attractiveness of the ECEC sector and the professional development of ECEC staff.** This includes national and local decision-makers, employers, ECEC leaders, trade unions, social partners, and education and training institutions.
2. **The ECEC sector needs to receive the recognition it deserves, which will have a positive impact on recruitment and staff retention.** The sector's recognition can be improved through advocacy / policy work to promote:
   a. the educational and inclusive value of ECEC; the benefits and impact of good quality ECEC for children, families and society; and the role of well-qualified and motivated staff
   b. improvement in professional development opportunities, career prospects, salaries and working conditions of ECEC staff
3. **The sector can become more attractive when creative strategies are used to support recruitment strategies**:
   a. increasing the number of the ECEC roles and offering more opportunities helps to recruit staff with different skills and competences
   b. developing new pathways into the profession and diversifying the recruitment methods helps to attract well qualified candidates with a wide range of profiles
4. **Establishing and using a common set of core competences for staff can help to manage expectations and provide greater clarity about the skills and abilities of ECEC staff.** ECEC stakeholders can use this set of competences to:
   a. develop national / local / setting strategies to improve the competences of individuals and teams

b. guide the content of initial education and training, and continuing professional development programmes

5. **Participation of all ECEC staff in high quality initial education and training, and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes is key to improving the quality in ECEC provision.** To achieve this, a number of strategies need to be in place:

   a. Remove obstacles to staff participation in CPD

   b. Increase the range of learning opportunities and recognise the value of work-based learning, team-based learning, coaching and peer support.

Introduction

For a number of years the European Union (EU) promoted the idea that well-trained and motivated professionals help to ensure high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is provided to all children and families.

Member States committed to establish a European Education Area[6] which enables all young people to benefit from the best education and training, and to find employment across Europe. A key part of the European Education Area is the development of measures which can greatly influence individuals' prospects concerning education, employment and integration later in life. It recognises that:

- ECEC provision lays the foundation for further learning and is an effective investment in education and training;
- High-quality ECEC services are essential to improve education outcomes and give a fair start to all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For this reason, the European Pillar of Social Rights[7] underscores that "children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of high quality" and, in its first principle, lays down the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning applicable for both children and staff in ECEC. The forthcoming Child Guarantee[8] also highlights the need to ensure access to affordable ECEC in the case of specific groups of children in need.

Going further, Member States Education ministers adopted the Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems on 22 May 2019[9], which sets out to:

- develop a common understanding across the EU of what constitutes good quality service provision with regard to ECEC;
- support EU Member States in their efforts to improve access to and the quality of their ECEC systems.

It is completed by the EU Quality framework for Early childhood education and care which notes that the quality of provision is affected by five dimensions:

See Annex 1 for the full framework.

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en
[9] Council Recommendation (EU) (2019/C 189/02) on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems

The Council Recommendation recommends that Member States *support the professionalisation of ECEC staff, including leaders. Depending on the existing level of professional qualification and working conditions, successful efforts can include:*

- *raising the status of the ECEC profession by creating high professional standards, offering attractive professional status and career prospects to ECEC educators, striving to reach a better gender balance and creating professionalisation pathways for staff with low or no qualification as well as specific pathways to qualify assistants;*
- *improving initial education and continuous professional development to take full account of children's well-being, learning and developmental needs, relevant societal developments, gender equality and a full understanding of the rights of the child;*
- *providing time for staff for the purpose of professional activities such as reflection, planning, engaging with parents and collaborating with other professionals and colleagues;*
- *aiming at equipping staff with the competences to respond to the individual needs of children from different backgrounds and with special educational needs, including disabilities, preparing staff to manage diverse groups.*

This report focuses on:

- ways to attract and retain qualified and motivated staff to work in the ECEC sector. It seeks to inspire decision makers and ECEC employers to reform or improve their processes to recruit and retain competent and motivated staff;
- ways to strengthen the professionalism of these staff. It offers recommendations and examples to help decision makers, ECEC employers and social partners improve the quality of ECEC provision through staff professionalisation.

Reader's guide

Who is this report for?

This report has been produced for those with system-level responsibility for the ECEC sector. While most readers of this report will be working at a national, regional or local level the examples of effective practice are also likely to be of interest to managers and employers in the ECEC sector.

The examples are offered as a stimulus to reflection and thinking, recognising that they are each dependent on their ECEC system's policy environment, funding arrangements and cultural context. While it is unlikely that any particular practice could be copied and replicated in full in a different context, the report hopes to show what is already happening and approaches which can be used (with possible modifications to reflect different contexts) in another country.

Who prepared it?

The report has been produced by a European Commission's working group which included national experts from 35 countries[10] and representatives from eight European organisations with expertise in ECEC[11] and three European or international organisations[12].

This working group was established by the European Commission under the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework[13] in order to create a forum for peer learning over a two-year period (2018-2020).

Methodology

The working group's mandate included a focus on:

- social inclusion, as participation in ECEC can narrow the achievement gap between children of different backgrounds (including children with special/additional needs), improve social cohesion and support early language learning of newly arrived migrants and children whose families are from minority communities;[14]
- the professionalisation of staff as a key element in creating an attractive, sustainable and highly competent profession. The mandate covered initial and continuing professional development, career pathways and opportunities, diversity of staff (e.g. tackling the gender gap, supporting staff from different ethnic backgrounds) and staff working conditions.

Based on the European Quality Framework for ECEC, as well as research findings and evidence, the working group discussed their policy experience of professionalising ECEC staff. These reflections, and the working group's conclusions are presented in this report. The importance of well-trained, motivated and supported staff is obvious to all those who manage ECEC systems and settings - but it can be difficult to design the right mechanisms to recruit and train adequately all staff at all stages of their career.

The working group therefore worked on the following key questions:

- how to attract and retain a well-qualified, motivated and diversified workforce in ECEC?
- how to foster dynamic and motivating career pathways for all staff and leaders?
- what are the core competences which an ECEC professional should possess?

[10] Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; The Netherlands; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovenia; Serbia; Slovakia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom.

[11] Alliance for Childhood; International Step by Step Association (ISSA); Eurochild; Eurocities; European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE); European Public Service Union (EPSU); European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD); European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE).

[12] Eurydice, Eurofound, OECD.

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en.

[14] The working group also published a Toolkit for inclusion in ECEC: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/399018

- how can these competences, which may be linked to formal qualifications be best developed (e.g. enabling policies and settings, learning strategies)?
- what are the best measures to monitor and record the further professionalisation of the ECEC workforce?

Examples presented in the report have been provided by the working group members, including some municipalities which are affiliates of the Eurocities network.

Remarks

The Council Recommendation refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age - regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content - and includes centre and family day-care; privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision.

This report focuses on any regulated arrangement that provides ECEC for children from birth to the compulsory primary school age in centre-based provision; privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision.

The examples, and recommendations, in this report reflect a broad range of ECEC settings and have been selected to show the diversity of arrangements as well as the large number of effective strategies which are being used to strengthen the professionalism of staff who work in the ECEC sector.

1. Who works in the ECEC sector?

The ECEC workforce includes all staff members who work directly with children in any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age[15]. This includes leaders and managers (who may not always work directly with children), and other professionals working in ECEC settings. Across Europe this workforce is large and extremely diverse, and staff undertake a wide range of roles (see Annex 2).

Within the context of professional multi-disciplinary teams, there are clear roles and responsibilities for core practitioners, assistants, and heads of centres: these are discussed more fully in this report:

- **core practitioner**: individual (with pedagogic training) 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 be called pedagogues, educators, pedagogical staff, pre-school, pre-primary, kindergarten or early childhood teachers[16]. In small settings, core practitioners may also be head of the setting while still working with children;
- **assistant**s: where this role exists, assistants work alongside the core practitioner(s) with a group of children or class on a daily basis[17]. 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. Annex 2 gives a detailed list of which occupational groups are covered by this term 'assistant' - this role does not exist in every country;
- **head of centre-based ECEC setting (leader)**: the person with the most 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 children. In some situations the leadership role is distributed between a number of staff who may have job titles such as assistant head, senior teacher, deputy leader etc.

These roles (whose definitions were inspired by OECD and developed by Eurydice[18]) are ones where more data is available at the European and national/system level. In many situations, particularly in small ECEC settings which are owned by a centre manager, individuals take on a role of core practitioner and centre leader.

There are many other staff working in ECEC centres who undertake a wide range of roles e.g. speech therapists, special needs staff, physiotherapists, music or language teachers, artists, auxiliaries who do not have a pedagogic role, co-professionals whose focus is children's health

[15] Currently, 31 million children under this age live in the European Union and are potential users of ECEC services. Eurydice, 2019.
[16] In a few Member States and systems, childcare practitioners are also important members of the professional team working with young children.
[17] Assistants may, or may not, have a pedagogic role.
[18] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

or social care, carers, parents and others who volunteer or support ECEC providers. In addition, many people work in the sector outside an ECEC centre or setting e.g. nannies, child minders and family support workers etc. Some of these roles have been defined[19] as follows:

Professional role: A professional role is one which is regulated and requires individuals to develop and reflect on their own practice and with parents and children, create a learning environment which is constantly renewed and improved. Those fulfilling these roles will have appropriate qualifications and will be expected to take responsibility for the provision of high quality ECEC services in line with the available resources and the requirements and expectations of their system.

Professional leadership: Professional leadership in an ECEC context requires skills, behaviours and competences related to supporting children's care and education, pedagogy, engagement with parents, the local community, staff management and organisation. As with other leadership roles in the education sector, ECEC leaders need to establish a culture and purpose which ensures high quality provision is available to all children, and staff and parents are involved and supported.

Research[20] has highlighted the importance of ECEC assistants whose role is often less visible and whose voice is not always heard when considering staff issues. Their roles, which do not always offer opportunities for progression, make a significant contribution to the provision of professional ECEC. As many countries and ECEC centres (though not all) employ assistants in a variety of roles, this report includes them in its analysis.

Even though there are a large number of staff roles in ECEC centres, there are many common expectations which are described in the 'core competence' section later in this report e.g. all staff are expected to work within the set of values and regulatory arrangements which are determined at a local, regional or national level, and staff are expected to:

- promote each child's development and learning;
- keep children safe;
- support children's transition into and from ECEC settings;
- be aware of the impact their practice has on children for whom they have responsibility;
- recognise the different cultural and social backgrounds of children;
- work with all families including those who may have different values and attitudes; and treat all children and families with respect;
- work with the local community and within the ECEC system;
- work as part of a team.

[19] European Commission, *Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care*, European Commission, Brussels, 2014.
[20] Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

2. How can the profession be made more attractive?

2.1 Why do we need to raise the attractiveness of the profession?

Well-qualified and motivated staff teams lead to higher quality provision

For many years, research has highlighted the links between staff working conditions and the quality of ECEC e.g. staff child ratios and class size have an impact on communication, support and pedagogical style of staff[21]. Building on this body of research and in consultation with national stakeholder representatives, the International Labour Organisation released policy guidance on the 'Promotion of decent working conditions for early childhood education personnel' (2014).[22] This recognises the crucial role of the early childhood workforce in achieving high quality ECEC provision for all; and underlines that a greater focus should be placed on improving the professional development, status and working conditions of personnel. As emphasised in the research overview carried out by Bennett and Moss (2011)[23] within the *Working for Inclusion* project, the workforce is central to ECEC provision as it accounts for the greater part of the total cost of early childhood services and is the major factor in determining children's experiences and their outcomes. For these reasons how ECEC staff are recruited, trained and treated is critical for the quality of early childhood services and for the inclusion of all children.

OECD's 2017 work on key indicators[24] confirms that staff job satisfaction and retention – and thereby the quality of ECEC environments – can be improved by:

- low child-to-staff ratios and low group size;
- competitive wages and other benefits;
- reasonable schedule/workload;

[21] Eurofound, *Early childhood care: Accessibility and quality of services*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

[22] *ILO policy guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel, Meeting of Experts on Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel*, Geneva, 12–15 November 2013, International Labour Office, Sectoral Activities Department, Geneva, 2014.

[23] Bennett, J. and Moss P. *Working for inclusion: how early childhood education and care and its workforce can help Europe's youngest citizens*. Final report of the cross-European programme Working for inclusion: the role of early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion. 2011.

[24] OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care,* Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.

- low staff turnover;
- good physical environment;
- a competent and supportive centre or setting manager.

Further work by the OECD[25] highlighted the importance of job quality in ensuring employee well-being. This can be considered as comprising three aspects: labour market security; quality of the working environment; and earnings quality.

The European Quality Framework for ECEC identifies *staff* as one of the five dimensions which contribute to high quality provision. The Council Recommendation for high-quality ECEC systems therefore invites Member States to support the professionalisation of ECEC staff including leaders. The Recommendation notes that, *depending on the existing level of professional qualification and working conditions, successful efforts can include:*

- *raising the status of the ECEC profession by creating high professional standards, offering attractive professional status and career prospects to ECEC educators, striving to reach a better gender balance and creating professional pathways for staff with low or no qualifications as well as specific pathways to qualify assistants;*
- *[…] providing time for staff for the purpose of professional activities such as reflection, planning, engaging with parents and collaborating with other professionals and colleagues.*

A sufficient number of qualified staff from diverse backgrounds are not always available

Staff shortages: state of play

Increasingly studies show the links between staff skills and competences and the quality of ECEC provision as measured by children's development, learning and well-being. Many countries are taking policy measures to ensure that ECEC staff are more highly skilled and qualified. However, because of difficulties in recruiting staff and high staff turnover rates, there are shortages in many ECEC systems. These staff shortages (which are often the result of government policies, requirements and decisions) make it difficult for:

- ECEC providers to offer a full range of services e.g. ECEC settings reduce their opening hours, accept fewer children, find it more difficult to respond to children with additional or special needs;
- ECEC staff to participate in professional development;
- ECEC leaders to manage effectively.[26]

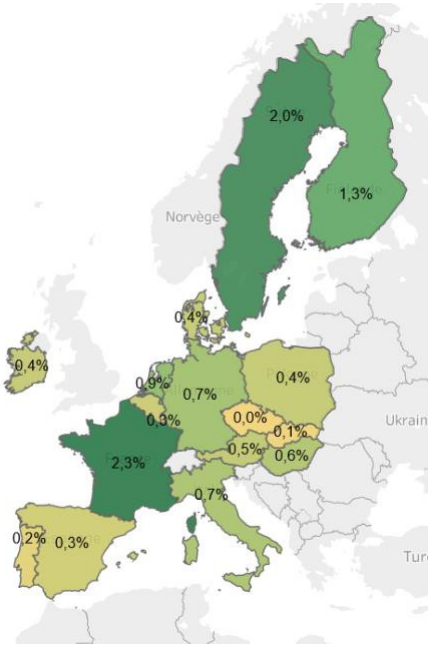
[25] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.
[26] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

To ensure high quality ECEC services can be offered to all children and their families, there is a need to encourage more, qualified staff to join the sector[27] and more needs to be done to encourage the retention of existing staff. In many situations the challenge for policy makers and the ECEC sector is one which combines recruiting and retaining enough staff with ensuring their skills and competences are sufficient to ensure high quality provision. This includes the need to manage the risk of 'brain drain' as staff move to other countries where salaries and conditions are more attractive. There can be a trade-off between the quantity and quality of recruits - in fact this trade-off is becoming more evident as there is a trend for countries to increase their expectations of core practitioners.[28]

These staff shortages can be seen from Cedefop's analysis of vacancies[29] - in the 18 countries shown in figure 1, ECEC professions represent 1.6% of all online job vacancies.

Only a minority of European countries report not having ECEC staff shortages[30]. In Spain for example, in 2017, there were more ECEC professionals than were needed in public settings.[31]

Figure 1 – Percentage of ECEC jobs amongst online job vacancies



For those countries with shortages, the recruitment and retention difficulties can apply to ECEC assistants (where they exist), core practitioners and/or ECEC leaders. In addition, some

[27] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

[28] In one third of European education systems a bachelor's degree (EQF Level 6) is required for core practitioners to work with young children (usually under the age of 3) e.g. in Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and Finland. In Portugal and Iceland, a master's degree (EQF Level 7) is required. The percentage of education systems requiring a bachelor's degree (or higher) for a core practitioner is higher when the core practitioner works with older children: around 75%. France, Italy, Portugal and Iceland set a master's degree as the minimum requirement for core practitioners. In the Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Austria, Romania and Slovakia the minimum requirement is below bachelor's degree (for both age groups).

[29] Cedefop's OVATE project.

[30] During the working group discussions, representatives from Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Spain noted that they were currently not dealing with staff shortages.

[31] Arrabal, A.A. 2017, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer, *Spain – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, 2017.

countries face regional recruitment and retention issues e.g. there could be few staff shortages in large cities alongside shortages in more rural areas[32].

Understanding and managing staff shortages

In order to address staff shortages, it is essential to understand their cause(s). Some causes are positive, such as the creation of a universal right to ECEC, while others are more negative, such as difficult working conditions. Figure 2 summarises some of the main causes for staff shortages in ECEC.

Figure 2 – Main causes of shortages in ECEC staff

Shortages can become more acute when ECEC settings (or the ECEC system) encourage greater participation, expand ECEC provision, reduce the child/staff ratios, offer guarantees to families in relation to access/participation in ECEC e.g.

- Germany has taken steps to improve the quality of provision by extending its ECEC guarantee for all children from the age of one in August 2013. This led to a noticeable rise in the number of children attending ECEC. To meet this demand Germany estimates it may need 372,000 additional ECEC staff by 2025. With an expectation that there will be 181,000 new staff entrants, Germany expects a shortfall of around 191,000 people[33];
- since 2009, Norway has had a statutory right to a place in kindergarten for children from the age of one. Stronger regulations both in the teacher: child ratio and all staff: child

[32] For instance, in Romania, there is no shortage of qualified staff at the national level. However, in small urban and more isolated areas ECEC providers have difficulties recruiting qualified staff. In Croatia there is an oversupply of applicants in the capital city (Zagreb) and some regional centres (like Split) but in other areas there is a shortage of ECEC professionals.

[33] OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

ratio were introduced in 2018/19 to ensure high quality provision (teacher: child ratio is 1:7 for those under three years of age, and 1:14 for children aged over three. The all staff: child ratios are 1:3 and 1:6);

- since 2000, Denmark has had a statutory right to a place in ECEC from the age of 26 weeks. The national regulations on minimum requirement set out the staff: child ratios (1;3, 1;6). These are under negotiation in the autumn of 2020.

Staff shortages can also arise due to the combination of a growing number of 0 to 5 year olds and an increased participation in ECEC. In Austria for instance, it is estimated that in 2020 36,650 additional places in ECEC settings would be needed.[34]

As outlined in figure 2, there are many pressures which can contribute to the difficulty of recruiting core practitioners e.g.:

- the increasing requirement for employees to have completed a relevant bachelor's (EQF Level 6) or master's degree (EQF Level 7);
- a limited number of training and education pathways for potential applicants to demonstrate they have the necessary skills, understanding and competences;
- the availability of other, better paid, options for those whose professional qualifications offer a choice of careers;
- the perception that a career in the ECEC sector is not attractive to all members of society;
- the drop-out rates during the initial education and training programmes;
- the shortage of men looking to work in an ECEC settings. Their absence from the sector makes it more difficult to recruit the required number of staff and limits the benefits for children of working with male role models;
- limited funding from national, regional and local authorities;
- salaries and career opportunities which are seen as uncompetitive[35];
- the profession is not attractive to all potential recruits;
- the high expectations placed on staff by society;
- the physical, mental and emotional demands of the work, etc.

Once employed, ECEC settings and systems need to ensure high retention rates for their core practitioners. In several OECD countries, leaders report that around 20% of staff left their ECEC centre in the previous year.[36] High staff turnover in ECEC can be the cause of staff shortages. It is commonly known that low pay, low recognition and low job satisfaction are factors that

[34] Krenn-Wache, M., edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer, *Austria – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, 2017.
[35] The research confirms the intuitive sense that higher salaries have an impact on the recruitment and retention of staff e.g. T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood National Center, *Child Care WAGE$ Initiative Overview*, 2017.
[36] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

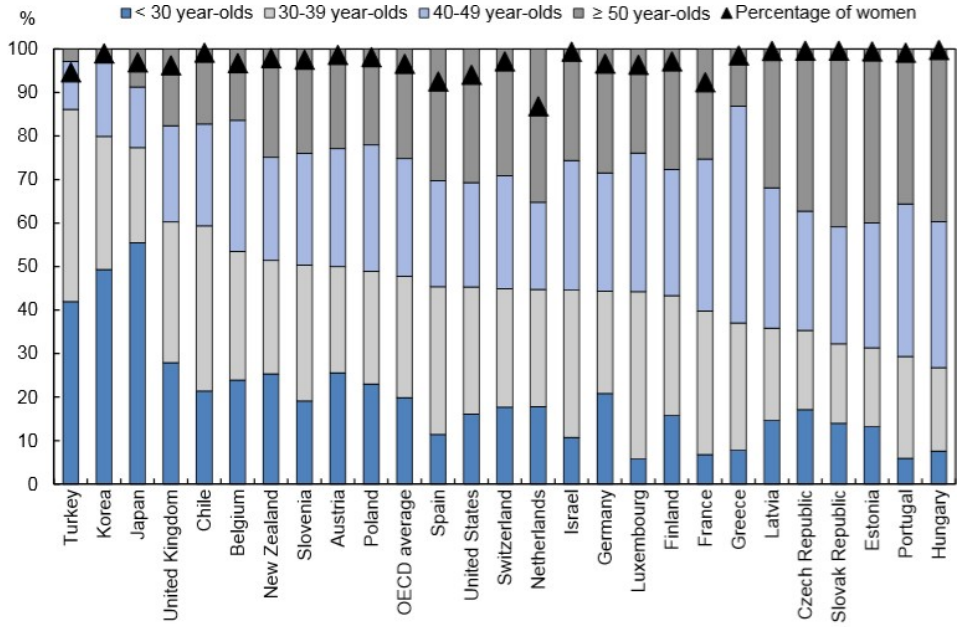
increase the chances of staff leaving the sector.[37] The Eurocities network has asked its members about the ECEC challenges they face. Of the 23 cities surveyed, three cities cited high staff turnover as a key challenge for ECEC.[38] These cities confirm that the retention challenges are connected to:

- low pay, low recognition and low job satisfaction[39];
- the relationship between starting salaries and the extent to which salaries rise during an individual's career (see figure 13);
- a high staff: child ratio which affects staff working conditions and increases the difficulty of the job[40];
- the quality of the working conditions, the level of managerial support and the working environment;
- an ageing workforce.

The age distribution of core practitioners in pre-primary provision (ISCED 02) affects retention. In some countries, a high proportion of the workforce is approaching retirement age (Figure 3). Retirement is in fact the most common reason staff give for why they would leave their job (Figure 4)[41].

Figure 3 – Age distribution of teachers (full-time and part-time) in pre-primary education (2014)

[37] OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.
[38] Eurocities, *European Pillar of Social Rights – Cities delivering social rights – Early childhood education and child welfare in cities in Europe*, 2019.
[39] OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.
[40] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.
[41] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

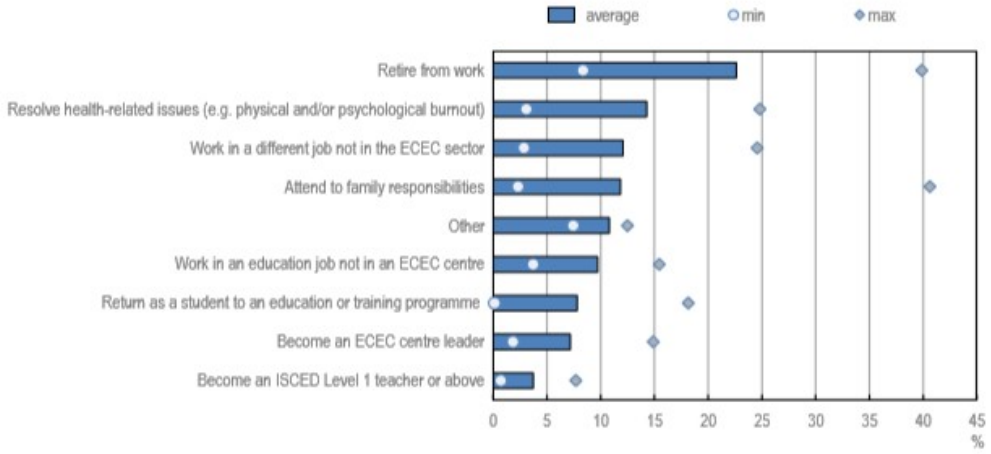


Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order of the percentage of teachers aged 40 years or older at the pre-primary level.

Source: OECD (2017a), OECD Online education database, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/education/database.htm.

Figure 4 – Most likely reasons to leave an ECEC role

Average pre-primary education staff reports across countries of the single most likely reason to leave their job as ECEC staff and minimum and maximum percentages observed across countries



Source: TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database (Table D.3.19).

In 2014, in pre-primary education in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia 35% or more of the core practitioners were at least 50 years old.[42] In Italy, in the 2017/18 school years approximately 41% (34,616) of the teachers in State preschools were older than 54.[43]. In Sweden, one prediction estimates the need for pedagogical staff in preschools (including childcare workers) will increase by 10,000 full-time positions

[42] OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care,* Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.

[43] OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

between 2014 and 2024. The need for preschool teachers alone is expected to increase by 3,100 full-time positions by 2029[44]. Finland also has an ageing workforce in ECEC. In the capital area for instance, there is a shortage of 500 ECEC teachers and an unmet demand for special education teachers for the early years.[45]

An ageing workforce is not the only reason for staff shortages. It only becomes a problem if the birth rate stays the same or increases or if the time it takes to train an ECEC practitioner increases (as a result of policy initiatives) and this delays the entry of staff into the labour market.

As set out earlier, **it is important to balance the recruitment of a sufficient number of ECEC employees with the need to ensure that those staff who are selected are appropriately qualified, and able to enhance and support the quality of provision**. It is detrimental to the quality of provision to recruit unqualified or inappropriately qualified staff as a way of filling staff vacancies or addressing staff shortages.

In the majority of European education systems, core practitioners are supported by assistants or co-workers. For these members of staff there are different recruitment and retention issues to consider. In most European countries, the top-level authority does not set any regulations in terms of a minimum qualification for ECEC assistants[46]. On the one hand this gives ECEC providers (or ECEC system managers) more flexibility about who to recruit, but on the other hand assistants may have a weaker attachment to employment in the ECEC sector. In an unregulated situation there is a risk of developing lower retention and higher turnover rates. When ECEC providers are unable to recruit a sufficient number of qualified staff, there can also be a tendency to look for ad-hoc or temporary arrangements which may include recruiting assistants rather than core practitioners.

However, when staff shortages are likely to occur, or are already happening, decision-makers may have to put in place immediate remedial measures. It is important to combine these short-term measures with a longer-term strategy which addresses all the cause of recruitment and retention difficulties.

Country examples	
Italy: calling on temporary teachers in pre-schools for children aged from three to six	In general Italy does not face staff shortages. However there are differences between state preschools (60% of all settings), those managed by charter schools (33%) and those managed by the municipality (7%). Staff shortages can be a problem for the private and municipality schools because teachers often prefer to work in state schools where there are better working conditions and the collective labour agreement has established fewer working hours and the same salaries as primary teachers. Staff vacancies in the state sector are managed through the employment of permanent staff alongside a small percentage of teachers who work in a pre-primary

[44] Karlsson Lohmander M., edited by Oberhuemer, P. and Schreyer, I., *Sweden – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, seepro-r, 2017.
[45] Onnismaa, E.-L., edited by Oberhuemer, P. and Schreyer, I., Finland – ECEC Workforce Profile, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, seepro-r, 2017.
[46] Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

	school for one school year or single periods as temporary teachers. There is a list of temporary teachers which is organised by the Ministry. It is an on-line application process and the information provided by applicants is checked by the regional school offices. Each applicant is assigned a score based on their years of experience and qualifications. In the list of temporary staff there are about 30,000 pre-primary teachers. In addition, there are other teachers on the list who are able to substitute for absent colleagues for short periods. In the State sector, the supply of pre-school teachers is higher than the demand. Each year the Ministry of education hires 50% of its new pre-school teachers from this list and 50% on the basis of applicants' performance in a public competition. *Core practitioners in the State pre-school sector in Italy (2017-18):* Permanent teachers: 80,870 - Temporary teachers: 2,523

Strategies need to be developed by national and local decision makers as well as employers, with the support of all ECEC stakeholders. In 2020 the Social Services social partners, the Federation of European Social Employers and EPSU, developed a joint position paper on Recruitment and Retention in European Social Services (including ECEC). This focused on the challenges and solutions[47]. Their 2020 thematic seminar considered "How to manage diversity and mobility of the workforce in more attractive social services"[48], in order to propose some solutions.

Countries facing staff shortages are looking at how to respond to the situation from a long-term perspective. These system-level responses include new initial training routes, the creation of new ECEC roles, changing working conditions, higher salaries, 'top-up' arrangements which enable individuals to qualify to work in the sector etc.

[47] http://socialemployers.eu/en/news/joint-position-paper-on-recruitment-and-retention-in-european-social-services/.
[48] http://socialemployers.eu/en/press-releases/meeting-on-social-services-workforce-key-learnings-and-recommendations/.

2.2 Valuing the profession

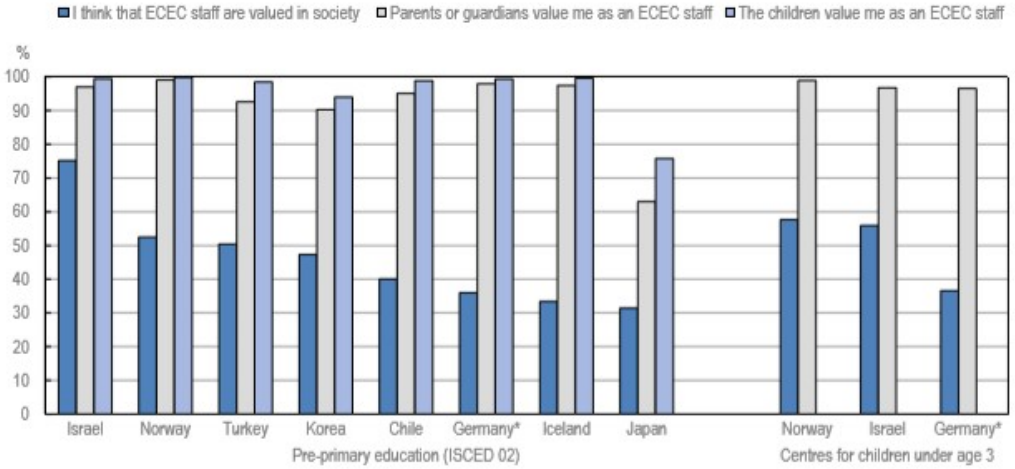
In a number of countries, for many years, ECEC provision was merely seen as a service to support parents' – and particularly women's participation in the labour market. The Covid-19 crisis has also been the opportunity to recall the crucial role played by ECEC professionals to support families. While this childcare service is an essential role of ECEC and helps breaking the cycle of poverty, researchers have also proven consistently that provision of quality ECEC is a great tool to support the development of cognitive, social and emotional skills of children, leading to further success in life. **It is therefore crucial to recognise that ECEC professionals do not only offer a childcare service which is essential to parent's employment, but they mostly offer professional care and education which supports children's development and well-being.**

Finding enjoyment from work is easier when individuals know they are appreciated and valued by society, their employers and the people they work with. While, for some people, it is enough to know they are doing a good job - for many people external confirmation of this is important. For the ECEC sector this external appreciation can come from the children and their families; their colleagues and employers; and from society at large.

The evidence for how much individuals feel appreciated is varied. In an OECD research, practitioners report that they gain a great deal of satisfaction from their work; receive very positive feedback from children and parents (figure 5) but they also report they do not feel valued by society[49].

Figure 5 - Staff feelings of being valued by children, families and society

Average percentage of staff who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each of the following statements



* Estimates for sub-groups and estimated differences between sub-groups need to be interpreted with care. See Annex B for more information.
Notes: Staff in centres serving children under age 3 were not asked the extent to which they feel valued by the children they serve.
Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of staff agreeing that ECEC staff are valued in society.
Source: TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database (Table D.3.18).

Feeling valued by specific children or parents may be more important for ECEC staff than feeling valued by society in general, and therefore their responses to questions on 'how much

[49] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

do you feel valued may not be directly comparable. Yet, the generally high levels of job satisfaction, including the fact that most staff "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" contrast with their views on how they feel valued by society.

At the same time, in these OECD countries less than two in five staff members report being satisfied with their salary.[50] Pre-primary teachers earn 78% of the salaries of workers with tertiary education in other fields.[51]

A number of campaigns have been launched by trade unions or professional associations to highlight the value of ECEC for children, families and society, and the related need for better-paid and more recognised professionals. Such campaigns include:

- The Irish campaign "Big start", by the trade union SIPTU[52]
- The German campaign by the trade union Ver.di[53]
- The French campaign "Pas de bébé à la consigne" ("No baby in the locker room")[54]
- The Danish campaign by the trade union FOA public services[55]
- The Hungarian campaign "Let's show our net salary!" - organised by the trade union BDDSZ[56]

One way to value the profession is to increase the minimum qualification requirements for ECEC staff - however this can create the risk of not being able to attract a sufficient numbers of skilled and qualified new entrants.

Country examples	
Finland	In Finland, staff turnover is very low. This is partly because careers in early childhood education are culturally highly esteemed: alongside their salary (which is low compared to other professions), staff are encouraged by the high level of training (at least a three-year qualification) required to work in early childhood positions. Around 90% of trained ECEC staff stay in the profession throughout their career[57].
Hungary	While there are no national staff shortages throughout Hungary, there are shortages in Budapest which has 33% of all the country's crèches. Hungary's introduction of a

[50] OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care,* Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.
[51] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.
[52] https://www.bigstart.ie/
[53] https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/She%20works%20hard%20for%20the%20money_0.pdf (p. 29)
[54] http://www.pasdebebesalaconsigne.com/
[55] https://www.epsu.org/epsucob/2019-november-epsu-collective-bargaining-news-22 .
[56] https://bddsz.hu/bolcsode-netto-ber-2019
[57] Apolitical (2019), Four steps to fix early childhood's workforce crisis comments that 'This has been encouraged by the high levels of training required to work in early childhood positions — all of which need at least a three-year qualification. As a result, around 90% of trained educators stay in the profession throughout their career.'

bachelor level qualification in 2009 (EQF Level 6) has made the profession more attractive, increased salaries and provided more opportunities for career advancement[58]. However the salaries (which are regulated by law and set at a national level) are not seen as attractive when there are many other job opportunities e.g. in Budapest.

Other ways to value the ECEC profession could include:

- ensuring salaries and working conditions are the same as those offered to staff with tertiary level qualifications in similar sectors;
- ensuring there is a high quality induction phase to support new staff - with mentoring, team support and respect for the health and safety of ECEC staff to avoid burn-out;
- providing more, and better, opportunities for high quality and relevant initial and continuing professional development which meet the needs of staff' and children;
- ensuring that ECEC policies are discussed through a framework of social dialogue and ECEC settings consult with members of staff when making significant decisions;
- financial support, e.g. towards the cost of housing for new staff;
- national, regional and local awards for the most successful or innovative practice;
- establishing a career pathway which enables core practitioners to take roles with more responsibility;
- **greater recognition from political and administrative leaders that the ECEC role is one that should be valued and praised**.

Ideally, a set of holistic strategies, which operate at different levels within the sector, can support the raising of the attractiveness of the profession.

There are two sets of actions associated with making the profession more attractive: those which support staff recruitment and those which support staff retention. They are explored in this document.

[58] Korintus. M., edited by Oberhuemer, P. and Schreyer, I., *Hungary – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, . 2017.

2.3 Communication campaigns

In a context where staff shortages can be significant, the recruitment and retention of staff in ECEC are challenges which can be addressed by communication campaigns. Such communication activities are uncommon in the field of ECEC but could be a solution to improve the attractiveness of the profession by showing the variety of roles in an ECEC setting and the value of the profession.

Country examples	
Belgium (Flanders)	A campaign[59] to promote the profession of core practitioner (kinderbegeleider) in childcare settings for babies and toddlers has emphasised the caring and educating role of working with young children in the setting. The video focuses on "educare" and was made in collaboration with VDAB, the government organisation in Flanders which seeks to bring supply (employers) and demand (job seekers) together.
Norway: 2012-14 campaign	The Ministry of Education and Research launched a national recruitment campaign for 2012-14, *The best job in the world is vacant*, to enhance the application rate for the kindergarten teacher education and to raise the status of working in kindergarten. It established regional networks all over the country with the main stakeholders in the sector, in order to develop local measures. In collaboration with the Ministry, the networks participated in education fairs, organised career days for kindergarten education students in their final year, and worked systematically with the media on a local level to profile work in ECEC as attractive and meaningful. An important element in the campaign was the website *The best job in the world is vacant*, with information about the kindergarten teacher education, films/videos[60], blogs, Q&A, and other texts promoting work in ECEC. The use of students and staff as role models was part of the concept, with special efforts to promote male staff. As ambassadors in the fairs, and in presentation of the daily life in ECEC on film, in articles and blogs, they were promoting the possibility for a job where you could make a difference for many people; the children, the parents and the colleagues. The number of qualified candidates applying to complete a Kindergarten Teacher Education programme has risen from 6,194 in 2011 to 9,773 in 2020.

[59] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5aB46pPBkc

[60] https://vimeo.com/87857285; https://www.kreativtforum.no/arbeider/verdens-fineste-stilling-er-fortsatt-ledig

2.4 Recruitment strategies

Recruiting more people to the ECEC sector is a priority in many countries. Strategies need to include:

- considering the level of qualifications required;
- developing new ways and opportunities to get in the profession;
- attracting people who had not previously considered working in the ECEC sector;
- and promoting the benefits of employment in the sector.

Levels of qualifications

European education ministers (in the Council Recommendation on ECEC) have stressed the importance of increasing the level of professionalisation in the ECEC workforce and the EU quality framework recommend to 'aim for a pedagogical staff that is composed of highly qualified professionals holding a full professional qualification specialised in ECEC'.

Differences on the level of qualifications required to become an assistant, core practitioner or leader reflect the ways in which ECEC is organised and funded, the work that individuals are asked to do and the traditions and values of each ECEC system. **Increased expectations associated with a higher entry-level qualification can at first seem to be a barrier. However, there are longer-term benefits associated with higher quality provision, higher professional status and more opportunities for career development, which are efficient incentives for staff to join and stay in the ECEC workforce.**

Core practitioners

Almost all European countries regulate the minimum qualification levels required to become a core practitioner[61]. Figure 6 shows that:

- only one third of European education systems require core practitioners working with a group of younger children (usually under the age of three) to have a Bachelor's degree or higher level of qualification[62].
- 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 higher for those working with older children, and three quarters of the education systems have such a requirement.

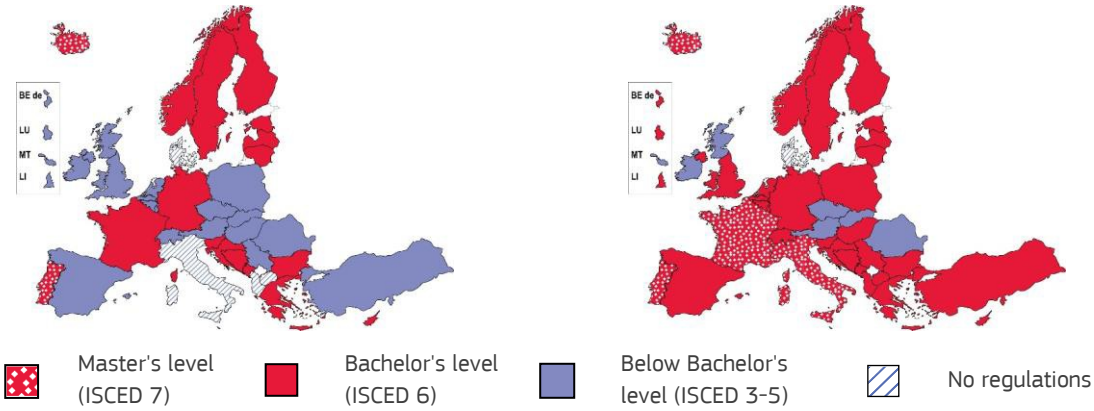
[61] In Denmark, there are no top-level regulations on this matter, but it is common that team leaders have Bachelor degree.

[62] The Seepro reports note that there are many occasions when those with Bachelors' degree are working with colleagues with a higher degree (e.g. in Albania, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Croatia Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovenia, Serbia, Ukraine and Sweden).

Figure 6 - minimum qualification levels required in ECEC (or education) to become a core practitioner in a centre-based ECEC settings, 2019/2020

a) Settings for children under the age of 3

b) Settings for children aged 3 and over



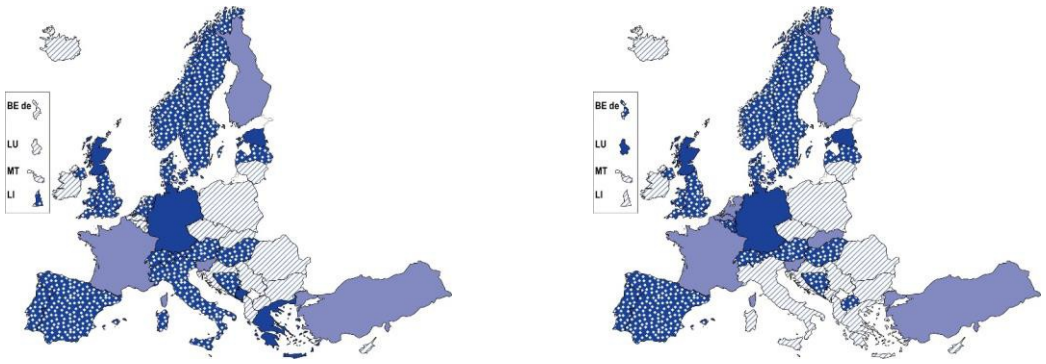
Assistants

Assistants are common in ECEC settings in Europe. Eurydice data shows that assistants work alongside core practitioners in two thirds of European countries (see Figure 7).[63] However, only a few education systems require assistants to have a certain minimum initial qualification in ECEC or education. In addition research[64] notes that part of the ECEC workforce is represented by 'low qualified' assistants who are sometimes 'invisible' - even though they represent 40-50% of the workforce in some countries.

Figure 7 - Minimum qualification levels required in ECEC (or education) to become an assistant in centre-based ECEC settings, 2019/2020

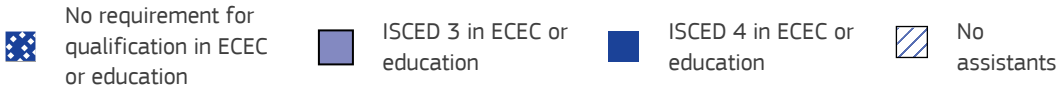
a) Settings for children under the age of 3

b) Settings for children aged 3 and over



63 Eurydice notes that there are no assistants in 12 countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Albania, Iceland and Serbia). In some countries (e.g. Finland) there are assistants who mainly help children with special needs whose qualifications may not be regulated. These assistants are not covered by this report. European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

64 Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.



Source: Eurydice. Based on data in Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition, p.74[65].

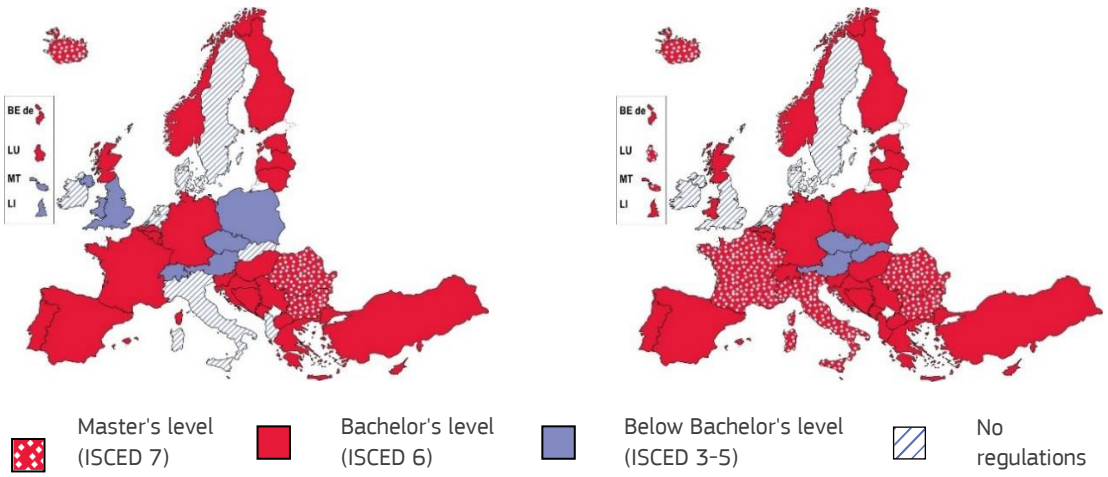
Leaders

The requirements for heads of ECEC settings are usually set at a higher level than for core practitioners. 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 several education systems, the minimum qualification level for heads is at Master's level (figure 8)[66]. In one third of European countries, heads of settings for older children must have some additional specific training and previous professional experience in ECEC or education[67].

Figure 8 – Minimum qualification levels to become a head of centre based ECEC setting, 2018/2019

a) Settings for children under the age of 3

b) Settings for children aged 3 and over



Source: Eurydice, Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition, p.76[68].

[65] Notes: 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.

[66] In Finland, heads of centre-based ECEC settings will need to hold a masters degree in education from 2030.

[67] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

[68] Explanatory note: When there are differences, the data indicate the public sector. When there are different regulations depending on size of the setting, the Figure shows the situation in larger settings.

Achieving qualifications

As demonstrated above, in most situations employment in the ECEC sector is dependent on the successful completion of the required qualification(s). However, **to increase attractiveness of the sector, for each qualification there should be many ways for individuals to demonstrate the required/expected competences and be assessed** - this can be through university study, work-based programmes, prior learning, micro-credentials[69], blended learning (including e-based programmes and distance learning) and dual programmes which combine study and employment.

Common elements across all the qualification pathways can be summarised as:

- availability of initial training;
- the competences (developed in partnership with stakeholders, practitioners and policy makers) which need to be demonstrated when assessed;
- practical work-based training which focuses on the competences;
- a common set of values which place children at the centre of provision;
- a quality assurance system which provides confidence that every individual has met the competences at the required level.

Diversifying and expanding pathways into and within the profession

Most countries have regulations setting out who can work as a core practitioner. Usually these regulations are based on qualifications or personal, professional and social competences There can also be rules setting out which organisations can offer training and education to achieve the prescribed qualification or competences; what content should be included in these qualifications; and how the qualification should be designed. Rules and regulations help to maintain expectations and give ECEC settings and employers confidence about recruiting new staff. In addition to ensuring the competences and abilities of new recruits, the initial training and education programmes need to be sufficiently attractive to ensure there are enough potential applicants to fill all the vacant posts in the ECEC sector.

When the traditional recruitment roads via initial training and education programmes do not fulfil both the quantitative and qualitative expectations of the ECEC sector, it is worth considering how to provide more diverse routes into the profession. Some, or all, of the new approaches need to be attractive to potential recruits who could not (or did not want to) take a more traditional route. It is important to focus on expanding the pool of applicants rather than encouraging existing trainees/students to switch to a new way to train. The potential pool of new workers can be expanded by emphasising system-level approaches which are based on 'flexible routes to inflexible expectations'. The strategy could focus on always having a route for each candidate in order for them to feel confident that there is a way to train to become a core practitioner. Each initiative which increases applicants'

[69] Micro-credentials, defined as a competence-based digital forms of certification indicating fitness for a job, are one of the emerging trends in the post-secondary education sector that has been driven by the growing disconnect between employers' needs and what graduates possess as skills.

choices should ensure trainees/students are able to demonstrate the required outcomes / competences / skills.

In many other occupational areas, a flexible approach to initial training can be seen by the growth of apprenticeships, work-based learning and the recognition of prior learning. **An increase in flexibility helps countries to address staff shortages as more candidates are attracted to a profession when they realise they can train alongside paid employment; their previous experiences and learning reduce the time it takes to complete a training programme; and they can benefit from the expertise of staff who are currently working in the sector.**

There is significant potential for the ECEC sector to use more flexible approaches which can take different forms e.g.:

- increasing the number and range of organisations which are accredited or approved to offer the initial set of competences or qualification - this can include approving groups of ECEC settings to develop and manage an initial training and education programme;
- the accredited or approved training and education providers introduce new ways to qualify individuals e.g. through the use of more ICT-based and distance learning;
- creating new ways to gain 'qualified status' e.g. through apprenticeships, internships, accelerated pathways for ECEC assistants or other ECEC staff (e.g. childminders, parental support staff and pedagogic coaches);
- providing initial programmes which give entry to a wide range of pedagogic professions (e.g. joint courses to train as an ECEC core practitioner and a primary school teacher);
- developing new pathways for candidates facing particular barriers to accessing more traditional programmes (e.g. for candidates from socially-disadvantaged communities, recent migrants, those whose home language differs from the national language(s) etc.);
- increasing the number of training places which are available to ECEC assistants wishing to train to become a core practitioner;
- offering additional courses for qualified school teachers to retrain to work in the ECEC sector;
- providing incentives for staff to invest in their education and professional development;
- developing accessible options for graduates with related qualifications to re-qualify based on demonstrating work-based competences.

Whichever approach is taken to increase flexibility, developments are more likely to succeed if they are based on collaboration with staff in the ECEC sector and the education and training providers.

Country examples	
Italy: flexibility following training	The same Primary Science Education qualification is required for teachers in primary and pre-schools. This enables qualified staff to choose and move from one career pathway to the other. Staff can also move from the birth to three sector to the 3-6 sector and vice versa if they meet the minimum requirements. Pre-school teachers wishing to move to the birth to three sector need 60 ECTS points tailored to the 0-3 sector; graduates in the 0-3 sector wishing to move to a pre-school are able to join the final (third) year of the primary Science Education programme.

Lithuania: alternative pathways to be recognised as an ECEC pedagogue	The increase in the number of pathways to recognition[70] has been driven by policy reforms in the ECEC sector e.g. the introduction of compulsory pre-primary education and the expansion of early childhood provision. These changes have led to increased ECEC participation and a need for more pedagogues. One approach to this shortage has been the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport policy of requiring those who were working as ECEC and pre- primary education to acquire the pedagogue qualification within two years if they did not have it. As part of this 2009 policy, individuals who had the following experiences were considered as already having a pedagogue qualification: • a post-secondary award (pre-2009) or a specialist secondary award (pre-1995), no less than eight years of pedagogical work experience, and completed no less than 320 hours (or 12 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; • a higher education degree, no less than six years of pedagogical experience, and completed no less than 240 hours (9 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; • a higher education degree awarded by a University, no less than five years of pedagogical experience, and completed no less than 160 hours (6 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses; • a higher education degree and completed 1600 hours (60 ECTS points) of pedagogy, psychology and didactics courses during full-time or part-time studies and passed all exams in these courses.
Germany: Skilled Labour Initiative for Attracting Talent and Retaining Professionals in ECEC	In Germany, for staff to work as teachers in ECEC settings, they usually need to complete a qualification which is equivalent to a bachelor's degree. Staff shortages in the ECEC sector, as well as staff dissatisfaction with salaries, have made it difficult to strengthen the workforce by expanding higher education provision. One approach to addressing staff shortages has been the Skilled Labour Initiative for Attracting Talent and Retaining Professionals in ECEC[71]. This approach focuses on providing paid employment alongside vocational training/apprenticeships. Interest in the programme has been strong throughout Germany, with more applicants than the programme can accommodate. The initiative began in 2019, and under the Good Day Care Act, Länder can apply for funding from the federal government to improve the quality of ECEC in ten areas - one of which is support for training ECEC staff.
Iceland: paid internships	Since 2009, Iceland has required pre-primary teachers to complete a master's degree (ISCED level 7)[72]. The Preschool Act of 2008 requires two-thirds of staff working with children in ECEC to be qualified teachers. Teachers' salaries do not necessarily reflect this level of educational requirement, and shortages of qualified staff contribute to municipalities appointing staff to teaching roles without the required training. As the demand for pre-primary education staff is greater than the supply, there are significant staff shortages. In 2019 a new five

[70] Siarova, H. and D. Buinauskas, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer, *Lithuania – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, seepro-r, .2017.
[71] Oberhuemer, P. and I. Schreyer, *Germany – ECEC Workforce Profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, seepro-r, 2017.
[72] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

	year plan included paid internships and study grants for students in their final year of teacher training. These grants assist students in completing their education on time and encourage them to enter the teaching profession as soon as possible after graduating. Students participating in the paid internships also receive on-site mentoring from experienced teachers. The Ministry funds the major universities in order that offer a three-semester course for experienced teachers to prepare them to provide this type of mentoring. The legislation on teacher education and recruitment (effective from the start of 2020) introduced a competence framework and a teacher licence based on demonstrating these competences.
Malta: validation of prior learning	Malta's qualifications framework is based on National Occupational Standards[73] which identify the performance that is required from an employee when carrying out a specific occupation at a specific level. These standards define the main jobs that people carry out, and connect the qualification system to the requirements of the labour market. Malta's qualifications framework uses a learning outcomes approach based on knowledge, skills and competences. In September 2012 regulations were introduced for the validation of informal and non-formal learning to support those with no qualifications from formal education[74]. Under these regulations, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education is responsible for assessing individuals' achievement against the National Occupational Standards in a number of industries/ sectors, including health and social care as well as education support.
Belgium (Flanders): assessment of previously acquired competences	In Belgium (Flanders) there are a few ways to qualify as a childcare worker[75]: • the traditional way which involves completing a training programme; • completing an addition year of schooling. This one year of specialisation is completed after secondary education; • through study at an adult education centre; • assessment of previously acquired competences. This may include a combination of training and assessment. In January 2020, the Flemish Government approved childcare work as a profession for which pathways based on an assessment of previously acquired competences can be developed. In cooperation with the childcare sector and the centres for adult education, a tool was developed to assess individuals' competences (the profession of childcare worker is defined with 15 competences). After an assessment childcare workers (already at work or wanting to start working) receive a certificate for their competences. This evidence exempts them from part of the (regular) training at an adult education centre.
Belgium (Flanders):	In Ostend a childcare centre[76] runs a training programme for young job-seeking parents (in practice, mostly mothers). The childcare centre is situated in an area of Ostend where more than 34% of children were born in vulnerable families.

[73] Examples of the National Occupational Standards include: Childcare worker (EQF Level 4) and Childcare manager (EQF Level 5).
[74] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/malta-vinfl-takes.
[75] https://www.etaamb.be/nl/besluit-van-de-vlaamse-regering-van-19-juli-2019_n2019014004.html
[76] for babies and toddlers.

the Ostende example	Together with its partners (VDAB[77], Vesalius Institute in Ostend), the childcare setting invests a lot of energy in training, guiding and supporting trainees in school and in the workplace (the childcare centre). This project[78] is supported by the Children's Poverty Fund of the King Baudouin Foundation and the Province of West Flanders and is being evaluated by KU Leuven-HIVA. Since the beginning of 2015, a new group of 10 to 15 interns started the programme, most of them with no secondary education degree. The vast majority of trainees are women from vulnerable background and with children. The experience of the trainees is integrated into the organisation of the setting as their "expertise" offers added value especially in dealing with children from disadvantaged or vulnerable families. Major success factors have been identified: • all the key parties (childcare centre, VDAB and Vesalius Institute) have always continued to engage in the conversation with each other and on a regular basis. • teachers are present in the setting for half a day every week to observe and support the trainees.

Specific pathways for existing staff to become core practitioners

Many staff work in an ECEC setting: auxiliaries; co-workers; assistants; parental advisors; home-setting liaison officers etc. Many countries employ ECEC assistants whose role can be very broad and cover a wide range of responsibilities. Staff who take on an assistant's role can have a wide range of backgrounds, qualifications and experiences. While a lot of research[79] highlights assistants' lower levels of qualifications, this is not a universal situation. Many assistants and other members of the ECEC workforce are well-qualified and have extensive experience and competences which benefit children and other staff in the ECEC setting. Despite these variations in experience and qualifications, ECEC assistants and other staff often have few opportunities to complete continuing professional development (CPD). This situation is unhelpful as it fails to capitalise on all the human resources available to an ECEC setting. For both the individual ECEC worker and the ECEC setting, a lack of CPD is a wasted opportunity to strengthen the quality of provision.

Developing new career and training opportunities make working in the sector more attractive and can help to retain experienced assistants in the profession.

Country examples

[77] The public employment service of Flanders.

[78] http://www.denopvang.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Brochure-dn-Opvang.pdf.

[79] The report comments that in many Member States, the qualification of the ECEC workforce remains rather low. The trend is influenced by the fact that there are differences in qualification between core practitioners and their assistants. In some countries, the minimum level of initial qualification required for assistants is upper secondary; in others, no formal qualification is needed. Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden: supporting assistants' to become teachers	These Nordic countries have developed special routes for ECEC assistants to train as pedagogues. These countries employ large numbers of ECEC assistants - the 2019 figures were: Their approaches differ but each country enables experienced assistants to gain a bachelor degree in ECEC: • in Norway the education and training is work-based and involves a four year programme which combines study and work (see below); • in Sweden[80], assistants with three to five years experience can combine part-time study with work. The length of this programme is usually the same as the ordinary training for pedagogues; • in Denmark, assistants with five years experience can combine part-time study with work. The first year is full-time and the remainder of the programme is part-time. From 2020, one University College allows assistants with two years experience access this programme. Each country's approach recognises the competences and strengths of ECEC assistants, manages the difficulty of recruiting core practitioners and seeks to diversify the range of staff working with children. Compared to traditional degree programmes, those applying to train as core practitioners through one of these routes are more likely to be older and male. The provision of this type of scheme encourages the development of a culture of 'one profession' within ECEC settings[81].
Norway: options to train	Norway has a range of ways in which staff can formalise their competences at different levels e.g. as a core practitioner, a more skilled co-worker and a childcare worker. The work-based kindergarten teacher training programme is for assistants, childcare and youth workers who wish to qualify as kindergarten teachers. The programme is part-time, lasts four years and generates 180 ECTS credits. The students are required to work in a kindergarten during their university studies. The kindergarten serves as a learning arena, and there is close co-operation between the educational institution and the setting. The option of combining work and study helps to recruit students who do not wish to study full time. Funding for kindergarten owners is available to ensure that the students complete the training programme. This programme is part of a national strategy to enhance the competence for all groups of staff.
Ireland: supporting continuing professional	Although financial incentives for services to employ graduates working with 3-5 year olds were introduced in 2010, there was in the past little support for staff with lower qualifications to up-skill. Following the announcement in 2013 of minimum qualification requirements (at level 4 on the European Qualifications Framework, EQF) to come into force by 2016, the Irish Government introduced a

[80] 9% of applicants have some training in pedagogy (e.g. unfinished studies as preschool teachers, child carers etc.) but they have not passed an exam.

[81] University Colleges Denmark has a fact sheet on these students: https://danskeprofessionshøjskoler.dk/analyser-og-fakta/fakta-om-meritpaedagoguddannelsen/.

development (CPD) through a learners' fund and incentives for services	Learner Fund to give financial support to staff to complete the qualifications. In 2017, the Learner Fund was extended to provide financial support for practitioners to up skill to degree-level qualifications (Level 6 EQF). Between 2014 and 2019, more than 6,500 staff (in a workforce of 27,000) were supported by the Learner Fund to undertake a qualification at EQF Levels 4, 5 or 6. Throughout this period incentive payments for services to employ graduates have continued. A review published in 2020 found that the incentive payments have been effective in helping double the proportion of staff with degree-level qualifications from 12% in 2012 to 25% in 2019. However, the review also noted that the limitation to 3-5 year olds may have contributed to a lower proportion of graduates working with children aged 0-2. In 2018 the Government published a national strategy ("First 5") that included commitments to prepare a Workforce Development Plan and to achieve a graduate-led workforce (with at least 50% graduate practitioners) by 2028. Preparation of the Workforce Development Plan is under way. The Plan is expected to define a graduate-level core practitioner role (working with children of all ages 0-5) and to set out measures to support existing practitioners to up skill to meet the qualifications required for the role.
France: investing in initial qualification for low qualified professionals	France's split ECEC system is characterised by staff who work in a large number of different roles, each of which has its own training programme. In recent years childcare centres have seen an increase in the number of unqualified or low-qualified workers (e.g. assistants and auxiliaries) who are expected to collaborate with core practitioners[82]. The legislation for childcare centres states that at least 40% of staff must be professionally qualified. The increasing number of assistants has led to a need to develop a shared culture among staff including a common body of knowledge on child development, a shared vision on parental participation and shared pedagogic methods. Despite the heterogeneity of the workforce, and the emphasis on lifelong learning, traditionally there have been few opportunities for horizontal or vertical job mobility. In 1988 the Association des Collectifs Enfants Parents Professionnels introduced a way for its young employees to gain the required diploma. The scheme enables youngsters who had previously dropped out of education to access higher education through the recognition of acquired competences. Eight training centres accept ECEC staff with low qualifications (e.g. assistants) on a graduate programme. Students/trainees obtain a three-year post-secondary school diploma while remaining in paid employment. Their training is based on three weeks per month at work and one week per month in a training centre. During training, they are accompanied by a 'tutor', who is an educator from their employer's team (and thus a work colleague) and they have a 'reference trainer' who provides support in the training centre. At the end of the training, all the trainees take the state exam alongside other students.

[82] Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

Specific pathways to become an ECEC leader

In many countries, there are national or local schemes to support staff wishing to prepare or train to become an ECEC setting leader. In other countries training and support becomes available once an individual is appointed to the role.

Country examples	
Lithuania: national competences for leaders	Lithuania publishes entry criteria for staff wishing to become an ECEC leader - these criteria are the same as those for head teachers of schools. They include academic qualifications, experience of teaching and management, the ability to use an additional language etc. Every applicant has to complete a test and interview to demonstrate five competences which are set at the national level. The remaining five competences which are set at the municipal level have to be demonstrated in an interview. Candidates can be assessed in the centre they lead if they have been an ECEC leader for over 10 years. These assessments are organised by the National Agency for Education (established by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Science) and its specialist assessors who have: • a master's degree or equivalent higher education qualification and at least three years' experience in the assessment of managers' practical activities and/or assessment of managerial competences; • the qualification of a teacher and at least five years' experience in managing an educational institution or in the organisation of education and /or monitoring of education, acquired in a public administration institution or an educational support institution.
Norway: a national strategy	The requirement for head teachers in Norwegian kindergartens is regulated in the Kindergarten Act[83]. They have to possess a bachelor's degree in kindergarten teacher education or a pedagogic degree with a focus on working with children. Their role includes: • day-to-day responsibility for pedagogical practices, staff and administration; • ensuring pedagogical practices comply with the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan and that staff have a common understanding of their duties as described in these documents; • enabling staff to put their expertise into practice; • leading and following up on the planning, documentation, evaluation and development of kindergarten content and working methods and ensuring all staff are involved; • cooperation with the kindergarten owner, the pedagogical leaders and other kindergarten staff in order to develop and sustain good pedagogical and administrative management. Since 2011 leadership training has been provided as part of a national strategy to raise the competence of all staff, enhance management skills and improve the quality of kindergartens. Training is state-funded, at Master's level (30 credits at M level) and part-time over three semesters. More than 2,300 leaders from private

[83] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-64/KAPITTEL_5#KAPITTEL_5.

	and public ECEC settings have completed the training in one of the eight universities offering the programme
Estonia: national competence model for the initial and in-service training of leaders	According to the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy preschool child care institutions leaders should be regularly assessed to ensure they have the essential competences required for their position. The Ministry of Education and Research, in agreement with the unions including the Association of the Heads of preschool institution, manages the competence of leaders of educational institutions. The competences form the basis for recruiting ECEC leaders, providing feedback on their performance, as well as offering additional training. This training emphasises new approaches to learning. A public competition is organised when there is a need to fill a vacant position of ECEC leader. The preschool owner announces an open position of ECEC leader, makes proposals for a recruitment procedure and submits this to the board of trustees for comment. Applicants for a leadership role must meet the qualification requirements set by the Minister of Education and Research. Leaders are required to have high education qualifications (bachelor degree) and leadership competences. The new ECEC Act will stipulate that the qualification requirements for ECEC leaders will be a master degree and leadership competences.
Slovenia: head teacher training	To be appointed head teacher of a public kindergarten, candidates shall meet the educational qualification requirements for pre-school teachers (qualification level ISCED 6) or counselling specialists (qualification level ISCED 7). The head in public kindergarten has to have at least five years of working experience in education (not necessarily in ECEC)[84]. This applies also for heads (educational leaders) of private settings. They have to follow a 144-hour programme (training for ECEC headship). 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.
Spain: becoming an ECEC leader	ECEC teachers in the Spanish public system are selected through a public competition. When appointed they become civil servants. After at least five years of teaching experience in the public sector every ECEC teacher can apply to become a principal of a pre-primary and primary public school (education pupils aged 3-12), by participating in a competitive and merit-based examination process. Candidates must meet a set of minimum requirements e.g.: • successfully completing a course on school leadership and governance; • submitting and defending a school management project (this should include objectives, lines of action, programmes and activities, assessment etc.) Becoming a principal leads to a significant increase in the salary. As an incentive to promote performance, a proportion of this increase is retained while the individual remains active in public practice after leaving the principal position. This increase is paid to the former principal provided they have received positive outcomes in their compulsory annual performance evaluations.

[84] Article 53 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act.

Italy - selecting leaders	The criteria for selecting leaders are the same in all state schools (including 3-6 settings). They include academic qualifications, experience of teaching, the ability to use a foreign language, competences in management, leadership of complex systems, understanding of the legislation and regulation of schools, pedagogic knowledge etc. There are public competitions for these positions based on a written computer-based test and an oral test. Once appointed, each year every school leader has to record their professional experience in a portfolio covering: • the development of strategies in line with the school's priorities and management plan; • the planning and management of resources; • the management and development of staff; • strategies and plans to support for the school improvement process. The portfolio should be a tool to support the setting's orientation, and an analysis and reflection on the tasks and skills required to be a school leader. It also supports staff professional development and self-evaluation. Every year school leaders are evaluated by the General Director of the Regional School office on the basis of the portfolio and a visit from an evaluation team.

Developing a wide range of roles to appeal to applicants with a wide range of backgrounds

Across Europe, staff in ECEC settings undertake a wide range of roles. In addition to assistants, core practitioners and leaders, there are many other staff who work in a pedagogic and caring role with children. Some of these roles are part-time, some are full-time and others are employed on a peripatetic basis in order to respond to the needs of individual settings and children. These employees can be family support workers, community liaison staff, home-setting coordinators, pedagogic coaches, special needs staff, language support staff etc. Each of these employees can be responsible for education and care, and work with core practitioners. It is also possible to supplement the ECEC team by employing staff with specialist knowledge or skills on a casual basis e.g. musicians, artists, computer specialists can offer additional skills to support children's learning and development. e.g. in some ECEC settings in Italy (inspired by Reggio Emilia approach), core practitioners in nursery and pre-schools can be helped by "atelierista". These colleagues take responsibility for an "atelier" (workshop) - an environment which promotes knowledge and creativity, suggests questions and generates evocations. The "atelierista" cooperate with core practitioners to design educational and expressive activities. The "atelierista" is usually employed by the municipality.

When staff are recruited to a wide range of roles, it can reduce pressure on the core practitioners and the ECEC leaders. One advantage of creating additional roles is the possibility that this type of work appeals to individuals who would not consider applying to become a core practitioner. Developing a broad range of roles benefits children, core practitioners and the quality of the setting's provision. Individuals appointed to one of these roles may wish to train as core practitioners but this should not be assumed. It is important that each member of staff is supported and valued for their current role and responsibilities, rather than what they could potentially contribute in a different role. Alongside core practitioners, for many countries, one

of the increasingly significant additional ECEC roles is that of assistants[85] who usually have different skills, experiences and competences to the ECEC pedagogues. They work in a wide variety of roles and provide education and care which supports children, ECEC practitioners, ECEC settings and families in the local community. Assistants can work with individual children, small and large groups of children within an ECEC setting.

In some situations staff are part of their own professional group (e.g. children's social workers, children's health workers, child psychiatrists who are deployed in an ECEC setting) and are likely to be seen as co-workers and part of a multi-disciplinary team which arranges provision around the needs of the children/individual child. In some situations, other staff (e.g. family support workers, language specialists) who work in the ECEC settings are less likely to be part of a professional group and it is worth considering whether there should be an agreed set of national/system-wide competences to describe their role. **Creating an official competence profile can introduce barriers to employment and the selection of candidates; however it can provide ECEC leaders with assurance. The development of personal, professional and social competence profiles for a broad range of staff (including ECEC assistants) can help to create a framework which shows the connections between all staff at the system level.** Not every country uses competence profiles - many use qualifications or training requirements to provide assurance to employers and the state that individuals are capable of working in the profession. And sometimes these qualifications and training programmes are linked to competences. As shown in figure 9, there is considerable variation in the use of competences as the basis for employing a wide range of ECEC staff (2016 figures)[86].

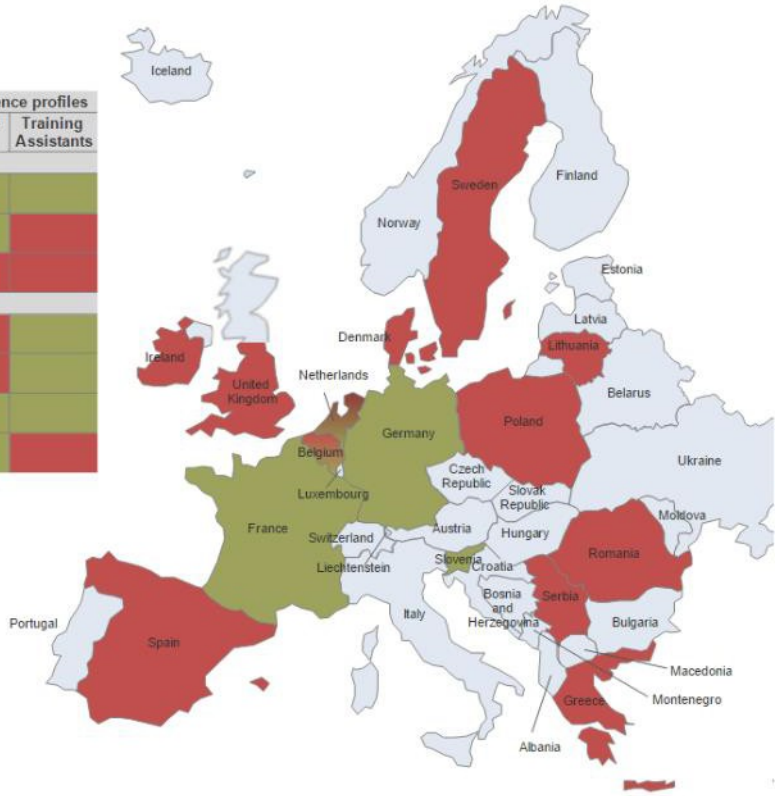
[85] Eurydice Key Data 2019 notes that in twelve of the 38 countries covered by the report there are no assistants (page 76).

[86] Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.The report does not clarify which age ranges are covered by competences for the Core practitioners.

Figure 9 – Competence profiles of assistants and core practitioners

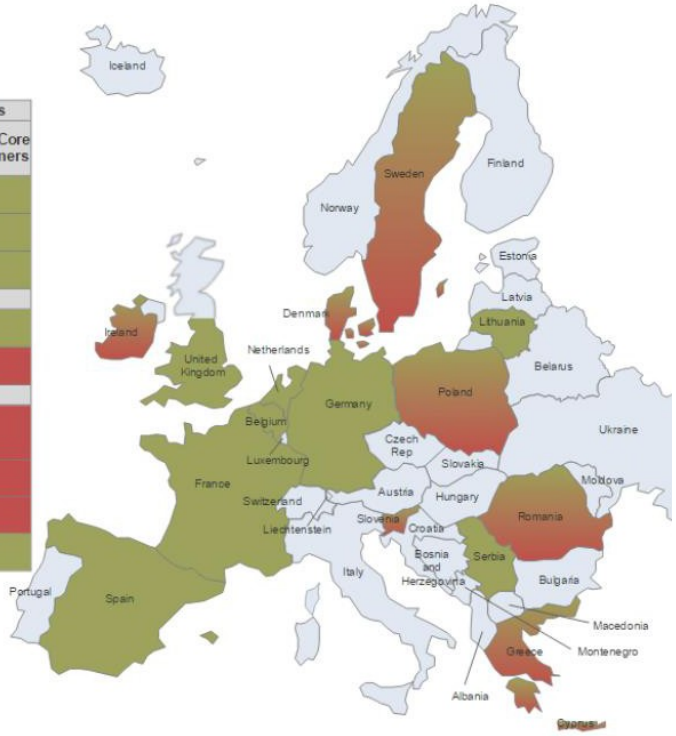
Availability of competence profiles
not available
available

	Competence profiles	
	Profession Assistants	Training Assistants
Netherlands		
Onderwijsondersteuner (4-12)		
Klassenassistent (4-12, special education)		
Groepshulp (0-4)		
Belgium		
[FL] Begeleider kinderopvang (2,5-6)		
[FL] Doelgroepdeelnemer (0-3)		
[FR] Puéricultrice (2,5-6)		
[FR] Assistant aux instituteurs préscolaire (2,5-6)		



Availability of competence profiles
not available
available

	Competence profiles	
	Profession Core Practitioners	Training Core Practitioners
Denmark		
Greece		
Ireland		
Poland		
Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego		
Opiekunka dziecięca		
Romania		
Profesori pentru învăţământul preşcolar şi primar, institutori învăţământ preşcolar, educatoare		
Asistente de pediatrie		
Slovenia		
Sweden		



Country examples	
Portugal: multidisciplinary teams	Each cluster (which combines pre-primary, primary and secondary schools) has a multidisciplinary team to support inclusive education. This team could include, for example, special education needs teachers, teachers with coordinator roles and responsibilities at different education levels, a psychologist, and the teacher of a group of children or the class director. This multidisciplinary team proposes measures to support children's learning and monitors the enforcement of these measures. In Portugal staff teams can be from different education levels. The Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education include the option of creating staff teams from different settings and with different roles e.g. special education needs teachers, content teachers, and staff who focus on sociocultural issues.
Belgium (Flanders): pedagogic coach	A 2014 decree on childcare for the 0-3 year olds requires all those working in childcare to be qualified by 2024, and states that every provider must provide support for their childcare workers. In this context a new Bachelor's degree for pedagogical coaching (Pedagogie van het Jonge Kind) has been established in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. Participants are also trained to work with children and their parents. Some of these newly qualified professionals work as part of the management staff in childcare centres.
Italy: support teachers in pre-primary schools	Children with disabilities are offered additional help from a support teacher. These teachers are required to have an additional specialisation or a master degree in special education. There is a shortage of support teachers with permanent contracts and the demand for qualified teachers in special education is met by temporary teachers as shown below Permanent teachers / Temporary teachers / Total TOTAL 6,878 10,865 17,743 *State pre-school sector in Italy (2017-18)*
Slovenia: counselling services in kindergartens	All public kindergartens in Slovenia have a counselling service for children, teachers and parents. The service plans, monitors and evaluates the development of a kindergarten and provides education in cooperation with pre-school teachers and the kindergarten management. Larger kindergartens may have more than one counsellor on the staff, but all services must have at least one person who may be on a reduced number of working hours. The counselling service is provided by specialists e.g. psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, social pedagogues, or special pedagogues. They must have at least a higher education degree (second cycle qualification) in: • psychology; • pedagogy; • social pedagogy or social work; • special and rehabilitation pedagogy; • family social work; • social inclusion and equity for children with disabilities; • personal and organisation counselling;

- inclusive pedagogy.

The counsellors perform three related and connected types of activities: support; development and prevention; and planning and evaluation. They also plan and implement individual support programmes for children with special needs.

The counselling service works in accordance with the programming guidelines for counselling staff in kindergartens adopted by the Council of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General education.

Diversifying the workforce

The European Quality Framework for ECEC encourages the "recruitment of staff from marginalised, migrant or minority groups as it has proven to be of advantage if the composition of staff in ECEC settings reflects diversity in the community".

It is important that ECEC recruitment strategies and policies encourage all those with the ability and aptitude to work with young children to train to enter the sector. This helps to develop and sustain a diverse workforce - one that reflects both society and the background of the parents whose children are in ECEC settings. It is therefore worth reviewing the existing selection processes used for initial training and education programmes to establish whether there are implied barriers which inhibit or prevent some members of society from applying to enter the sector. A more diverse workforce significantly benefits all children, bringing a wider range of skills, attitudes and experiences in the ECEC setting. While it is worth investing in a more diverse workforce in all situations, it is particularly important when there are staff shortages and when the ECEC sector is looking to attract those who have not traditionally sought employment in ECEC settings.

The CoRe study[87] has shown that successful strategies to encourage diversity include the creation of a wider range of qualifying pathways, the need to focus on the recognition of prior learning for experienced untrained practitioners, and the provision of additional support courses for students from a minority ethnic background. The NESET report on ECEC assistants[88] included a discussion on how to encourage more assistants from diverse backgrounds to enter the profession and report noted there were no statistics about the socio-economic or ethnic-cultural background of assistants. However, according to the national experts who were involved in the study, there was a higher share of assistants with a minority ethnic background or low socio-economic status compared to the core practitioners. The NESET report recommends that "Member States should invest in hiring a diverse workforce in ECEC services in terms of language, gender, socio-cultural background."

Staff with different cultural backgrounds

Settings which employ staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds are more likely to be able to create an inclusive approach to ECEC. This is often characterised by work which makes

[87] Urban, M, Vandenbroeck, M., Peeters, J., Lazzari, A. and Van Laere, K., *CoRe: Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care*, European Commission, 2011

[88] Peeters, J.; Sharmahd, N.; Budginaitė I., '*Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards Qualification*', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

children and their families welcome in ECEC e.g. through outreach work; recognition of children's home language(s); employing staff from the local communities; extending the opening hours in order to meet the needs of families who work long hours; welcoming parents and families into the setting, and engaging parents as a resource for their child(ren)'s development.

ECEC systems are looking to attract staff from different, non-traditional backgrounds for two main reasons: to address recruitment and retention issues; and to support children and families from all communities and backgrounds. These twin objectives need different strategies:

- recruitment issues are often better addressed at the system level through new pathways to train as a practitioner; marketing and communications campaigns; the recognition of prior achievement; the removal of perceived and real barriers to enter an initial education and training programme etc.;
- creating a more diverse workforce is better addressed at the ECEC setting level through the creation of outreach activities, the employment of parents from the local community, more part-time employment, more language training etc.

Each objective, and associated strategies, can be seen within the context of supporting high quality ECEC. This requires that the ECEC system should:

- ensure all staff (irrespective of their backgrounds) who work with children have appropriate initial and continuing education and training. Alongside core practitioners, this includes assistants, auxiliaries and other staff who work with children in an ECEC setting;
- all centre leaders have appropriate initial and continuing education and training;
- use a much wider range of approaches to recruit ECEC staff in order to strengthen diversity, attract candidates from non-traditional markets, meet the recruitment challenge and maintain high quality provision;
- work with ECEC settings and social partners to analyse the reasons for staff shortages in ECEC and implement a detailed plan to address these shortages.

Each strategy should be monitored and evaluated and the results used to make improvements. In many national and regional systems there are few systematic approaches to collecting information on the background of staff working in the ECEC sector[89] - and consequently it is not clear if the workforce is representative of the families which use the services. One exception is the UK where the research[90] notes that 9–10% of staff working in the day care sector are from a black, minority ethnic or migration background. This increases to 16% of staff working in children's centres (there are strong regional variations which reflect the composition of the local population e.g. up to 38% of day-care staff in London are from a black, minority ethnic or migration background).

Country examples

[89] http://www.seepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm. These country reports usually comment that there is no systematic approach to collecting workforce data on ethnicity or migration status.
[90] Hevey, D., edited by Oberhuemer, P. and Schreyer, I., *United Kingdom – ECEC Workforce profile*, in Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, seepro-r, 2017.

Developing a recruitment strategy in Ghent, Belgium	Ghent is a rapidly expanding city with a very diverse population. It has permanent staff shortages in the ECEC sector (currently there is a 10% vacancy rate). The city authorities manage, recruit and employ staff in 78 ECEC centres, and need to find new ways to attract staff into the sector. An analysis of the city's recruitment and selection processes identified significant time delays between the start of the recruitment process and the date at which individuals began work. As new staff need to earn an income as soon as possible, some candidates were forced to take other roles outside the sector. Ghent has looked at how to address this problem and now: • uses a new style of application form which allows non-traditional candidates to record what they can do and have already done; • offers successful applicants immediate employment on a temporary contract. These six month temporary contracts (which can be extended to 18 months) provide opportunities for new staff to be trained, to develop the relevant competences and prepare for the formal examination which is part of the selection process to gain a permanent contract; • supports potential candidates to prepare for the formal examination. The city authorities recognise that candidates who have been less successful in their own schooling are more likely to fail the formal examination. Central to the city's strategy is the provision of support to non-traditional candidates. This approach, which began in June 2018, has been monitored and lessons continue to be learnt. In the first intake in September 2019, 74 of the 92 applicants were successful and offered temporary positions. So far 26 of these applicants have passed the formal examination and been offered a permanent role. The city authorities have not reduced their entry standards, and the formal examination remains unchanged. They have been successful by recognising the needs of a new group of potential staff, ensuring they feel welcome when they begin their temporary appointment, and responding to their circumstances.
Baobab: a pilot project to recruit ECEC staff in Brussels	BAOBAB is a small scale project to recruit staff from minority ethnic communities and provide training for them to work with children or as kindergarten teachers. The project focuses on candidates who live in Brussels, have completed secondary education, have a sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language and speak a second language. The project is based on candidates working in a pre-primary school for three days/week for four years. During their working week they co-teach with a mentor and receive guidance and advice. Alongside their employment they study for a BA in pre-primary education for two days/week, receive job coaching, receive a salary for their work and have their costs of training refunded. The initiative aims to attract candidates who would not, or could not, attend a traditional full-time higher education programme. The project, albeit small-scale, shows that there are potential candidates wishing to work in a professional ECEC role if the barriers to accessing training are dismantled.
Bridge - building courses in Denmark	Some of Denmark's university colleges have developed pathways for students who traditionally find it difficult to access training programmes. These 'building-bridge' courses (sometimes called access or pre-course opportunities) are for migrants and refugees who were born outside the EU, the EFTA countries, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. To secure a place on the one-year course candidates need to have completed upper secondary education. Other educational

	backgrounds can be accepted if the applicant passes an entrance test. The course includes study of the Danish language (50% of the course); culture and society; professional practice; and learning to study[91]. There is a 6-8 weeks practice and students are assessed through a final exam. After passing the exam students can apply to continue their education - most of the students on these 'access' courses continue their training and enter a pedagogue education programme which takes 3.5 years.
Recruiting staff to Estonia's bilingual kindergartens	Estonia is supporting bilingual teams in kindergartens. The project is based on government support to appoint a 'Professional Estonian speaking teacher in every Russian speaking preschool group'. The project began in September 2018 and involved 53 new Estonian teachers being trained to work with 53 groups of Russian speaking children in 22 pre-schools in Tallinn and Eastern Estonia. In 2019 there was training for staff in a further 30 pre-schools and in 2020 the project will cover a further 50 pre-schools. This project is needed because the Estonian Education Information System reported that in 2018/2019 10,721 children participated in ECEC groups which used the Russian language. The project supports co-teaching and team work between ECEC staff and, in most situations, ECEC activities are organised in two sub-groups, one in Estonian and the other in Russian. The children learn the Estonian and Russian languages throughout the day. The project's monitoring has shown that most participants have noticed children's increased interest in the Estonian language and culture, an increase in children's vocabulary, and children's courage to communicate and play in Estonian.

Men in ECEC

Employing more men in ECEC has the potential to improve child development and learning, particularly in the development of children's attitudes towards gender roles. Establishing a higher male to female ratio in ECEC is a significant challenge for European countries. Making the ECEC profession more attractive to men and promoting vacancies to men can also increase the pool of potential recruits and help to address staff shortages.

The shortage of men working in ECEC settings is a policy priority in some countries. In Latvia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Portugal fewer than 1% of ECEC staff working in pre-primary education are male. Even in countries where there are more men working as a pre-primary teacher (e.g. the Netherlands, France and Norway) they are outnumbered by women[92]. In 1996 the European Commission network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile the Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women set a 20% minimum target for the share of ECEC staff that should be male. The highest proportion of women teachers are in the early years of schooling, and the percentages fall at each successive level of education. On average across OECD countries, around 97% of teachers in

[91] Information on the content of the course is available at https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/1062.

[92] In 2019 in Norway 9.3% of the pedagogical leaders were men, - this number has increased by 2% since 2014. 9,8 % of the staff working directly with the children were men. From 2013 - 2018 the percentage of male students in the kindergarten teacher education programmes has been stable at around 19 -20%. In the same period the number of male students graduating from the Kindergarten teacher education increased from 10.8% to 15.5%.

pre-primary education are women[93]. Research into men in ECEC is ongoing - the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) has looked at gender imbalances in the ECEC work force and the role that gender plays in adult-child relations. The Association's Special Interest Group on Gender[94] focuses its research on the effectiveness of national approaches and projects to recruit more men into the ECEC profession.

A more diversified workforce can help to increase the quality of ECEC provision. Male ECEC workers can enrich everyday relationships in ECEC centres and this can have a positive influence on the team culture. Having few men in ECEC prevents children from seeing male role models who can be important for boys as well as girls. However, this argument must be handled with care as most children have female and male role models (father, grandfather, uncle, elder brother etc.) outside the ECEC settings. There is no evidence that regular contact with a male ECEC worker compensates for the absence of a male role model at home, though there is a belief that children benefit from a gender balanced ECEC setting and this is better for children's social development. The inclusion of trained male workers could address the negative stereotypes about men and their abilities to nurture and care for young children. Male staff in ECEC settings can have an advantage when working with parents as some fathers feel overwhelmed when liaising with staff in female-only settings.

Why do so few men work in ECEC?

There are three main reasons why few men work in the ECEC sector. Each is based on a 'belief system' and set of views which can be challenged through actions to encourage men to apply and train for work in the sector.

- prejudices about men who work in ECEC

Many men have relevant experience of looking after and nurturing young children and wish to work in the ECEC sector. While men are able to interact sensitively with children, provide intimate care and play with children, there can be ECEC teams and employers who doubt this. This may lead to situations where male ECEC workers are pushed away from caring roles and towards more traditionally "male" activities (like outdoor play). Some parents have concerns about child safety and do not want men to take care of their children. The risk of child abuse and inappropriate behaviour from all staff must be addressed through robust and comprehensive safeguarding policies, procedures and training.

- men's views about the ECEC profession

The ECEC profession is strongly identified as female. For a number of men, this makes employment in the sector unappealing. Most men never consider a career in ECEC partly because nobody invited them to consider working with young children. A career in ECEC is generally characterised and seen as one which has low pay and low status. These are barriers for all potential employees in the ECEC sector but they are not seen as barriers in other sectors where many men work in lower paid jobs e.g. as an auto mechanic. Even though salaries, status and career opportunities are not the only criteria for choosing a profession, it seems that men's

[93] OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care,* Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.
[94] https://www.eecera.org/sigs/gender-balance/.

perceptions of working in the ECEC sector, and their perception of how they will be seen by society at large, are significant obstacles.

- views about men who work in professions where the majority of staff are female

In many professions (e.g. nursing and secretarial work) the majority of staff are women. In these situations some men believe there are few incentives to work in a so-called 'female profession'. When deciding on a career men are thought to look for work which offers higher pay, more benefits and chances for promotion. Men are often encouraged and expected to be competitive, ambitious, task-focused, assertive and rational. These personal attributes are often associated with employment in professions which mainly recruit men. It seems that men who choose to work in a 'female profession' are affected by negative stereotyping from society at large and this adds a social cost to their career choice.

Men's experiences of working in ECEC settings can be improved through the creation of networks which enable male staff to contact each other, share their experiences at work, and offer support based on mentoring and coaching. Targeted communication activities can also be helpful.

Country examples	
Denmark: pathways for assistants to improve their qualifications	One approach to training and employing more men as core practitioners has been to provide non-professional opportunities for men to work in an ECEC setting to gain experience. In Denmark there has been a deliberate strategy to encourage young men (usually on completion of their secondary education course and before moving to higher education) to take an assistant role. Once employed, during this gap year in their education, these young men are encouraged to take a Bachelor's degree and qualify as a pedagogue. This generic pedagogy degree enables graduates to work in a wide range of professional areas - it is hoped that their gap year experiences will encourage more of these graduates to select an ECEC role. In Denmark, eight percent of pedagogues employed in ECEC are male. The number is larger for those employed as a pedagogical co-worker. Here, the number is 16%[95].
Norway: Play resources	There has been a persistent challenge in Norway to increase the number and proportion of men in pedagogical work with children in ECEC. Regulations have been put in place to promote recruitment, giving priority to men when two applicants have the same level of qualifications as well as a number of other strategies. An ambitious target of 20% was introduced as part of the strategy for gender equality in the sector in 2000. The proportion of men has slowly increased from 9.4% in 2014 to 9.9 % in 2018. The proportion of male students starting the kindergarten teacher education has been stable the last years with 19.2% in 2013 and 19.6% in 2018. The proportion of male students finishing the kindergarten teacher education has increased in the same period from 10.8% in 2013 to 15.5% in 2018. This indicates a lower drop-out rate for male students than in previous years. Today the aim of 20% male staff is not explicitly expressed, but it is still an aim to recruit more male staff to ECEC. Research shows that it is easier to recruit men

[95] Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2020: "Hvem er det pædagogiske personale i de kommunale daginstitutioner"?

	to an ECEC setting that already has male staff, especially if the men are kindergarten teachers. A higher proportion of men increases the probability of a positive assessment of gender equality. Whether this is a result of gender awareness among staff or whether a higher proportion of men increases gender awareness is uncertain. Play Resources is an example of a recruitment programme designed to attract more men to the profession in the long term. The project has spread to the whole country and aims to give boys of lower secondary school age a positive experience of working in ECEC. The boys who are offered work in a kindergarten are asked to take an active part in playing with the children on the children's own terms. As play resources, the boys are assigned a male mentor. The county governor of Oppland, Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, the Centre for Equality and the Eastern Norway Research Institute have launched a research and innovation project to investigate what it takes to recruit men to work in kindergartens and have published an online handbook of good examples for ECEC staff[96]. In 2019, the government put 5 million NOK (465.000€) into a national project to use male role models in the recruitment of male teachers to primary and lower secondary schools. From the autumn 2020, a further 6 million NOK (560.000€) was put into the project in order to extend it to include ECEC and the recruitment of multicultural staff in ECEC and schools. The government prepares a strategy for 2021 – 2024 to contribute to more equality in education and the labour market.
Germany: More Men in ECEC	In Germany the percentage of men working in the ECEC sector is low. The numbers have risen for several years - in 2013 the proportion of men in ECEC settings was around 3.4%. The German Coordination Centre "Men in ECEC" – financed and supported by a Federal Ministry (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend) and the Catholic University of Applied Sciences in Berlin – promotes dialogue between policy, practice and research in order to improve the prospects for male ECEC workers in the long run. In partnership with relevant stakeholders, the Centre has developed strategies to increase the proportion of male ECEC workers and to establish a gender-sensitive pedagogy in ECEC. The Coordination Centre provides counselling and information, organises events, conducts research and liaises with the press. The Centre organised: • the programme "More men in ECEC", funded by the European Social Fund from 2011-2013 based on 16 projects (with a total budget of 13 million Euro). This aimed to raise the percentage of men working in ECEC. The projects developed career and occupational orientation projects for boys and young men, worked with schools to organise internships in ECEC settings and gave pupils a more detailed and attractive insight into the profession. The projects' activities included public relations measures, such as social media activities, video, cinema, radio spots, large-scale campaigns, posters, media cooperation, etc. The projects organised gender specific initiatives (in cooperation with the ECEC providers) to offer gender training for ECEC workers, gender-sensitive projects for children, projects with fathers etc.;

[96] https://dmmh.no/media/illustrasjonsbilder/for-barnehagene/lekeressurs-dmmh-web2.pdf.

	• the programme "Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC", also funded by the European Social Fund from 2015-2020, aims to create training courses for men and women seeking to change their career, and improve the existing ECEC teacher training courses.
Ireland: Men in Childcare Network	The Men in Childcare Network's vision is that children appreciate and value being cared for by men and women. The network hopes to achieve its vision by: • informing and supporting men who are interested in a career in the ECEC sector; • recognising the importance of the ECEC profession in society and the role men can play in the sector; • informing stakeholders about the benefits and qualities of male ECEC workers; • helping childcare centres to recruit and support male workers.
United Kingdom: Men In The Early Years	The national network Men In The Early Years (MITEY) produces resources to support early years organisations to attract more men in ECEC, for example the "MITEY guide to recruiting men" gives an overview of best practices, both internationally and from within the UK. MITEY proposes strategies to help ECEC settings to attract male staff. MITEY recommends that ECEC settings: • define their goals: why does a setting want men in their workforce? The focus should be on improving representation as it is important that the workforce better represents the community it serves; • sign up to the MITEY Charter: an ECEC provision can sign up to the charter to show it values the ability of men to contribute positively to ECEC and that it is taking steps to bring men into the workforce; • mind the language: when publishing a vacancy, an ECEC setting should think about tailoring the job titles and recruitment messages (for instance "early years educator" instead of "nursery nurse") to attract men. The ECEC workforce – which is mostly female – should be supported to welcome men into the team; • aim for diversity and inclusion: an employer who values diversity looks to recruit individuals who are great at doing the job and represent the whole society; • take positive action (for example by including statements in a job advertisement such as "We particularly welcome applicants from men, as they are under-represented in our workforce." to give everyone a clear message that it has acknowledged and is concerned by the lack of men in the workforce.) An ECEC setting can encourage under-represented groups to apply and it can also offer them extra help (training or support) to perform to the best of their ability; • use diverse images: an ECEC setting must do its best to represent diverse men in all its publicity materials; • reach out to boys and men: working with boys, teenagers, young and older men in order to convince them that an ECEC career could be for them; • support male staff: once recruited, men should have opportunities to network with other male colleagues. This demonstrates clearly that men are valued, it combats isolation and creates a space for peer-to-peer support.

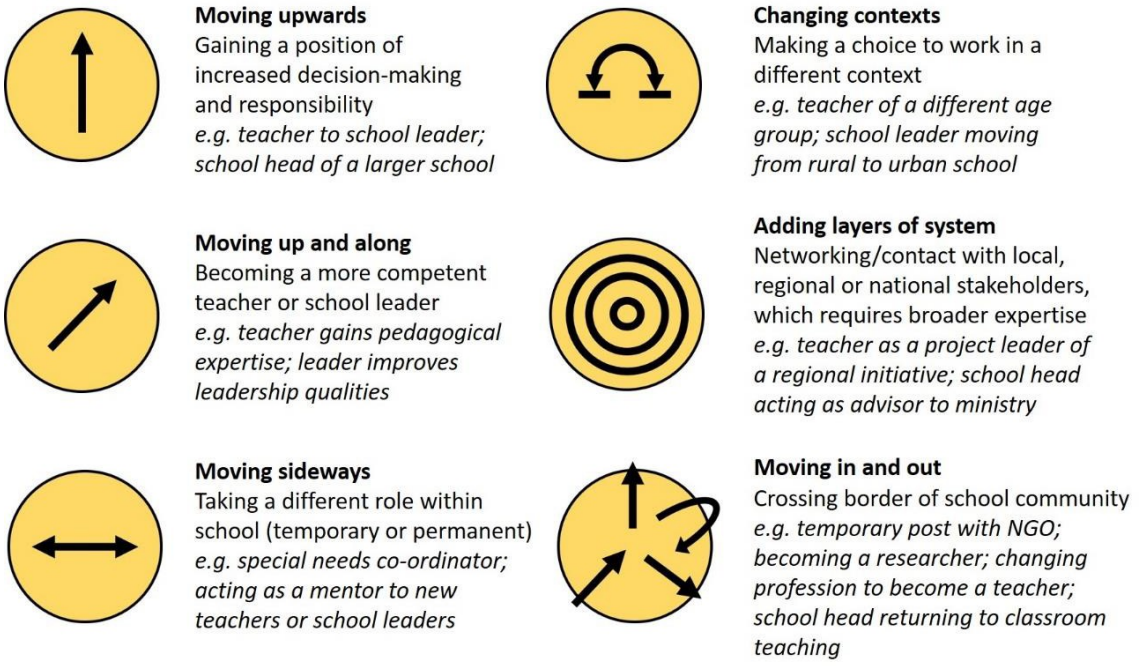
United Kingdom: GenderEye	The GenderEye Toolkit[97] presents findings from research on obstacles to gender diversity in the ECEC workforce and reviews possible solutions. It shares resources developed by ECEC settings and proposes a 3-step strategy for ECEC settings to improve their recruitment processes in order to attract more men.
France - promoting ECEC employment **Denmark: "Pedagogical staff for the youngest children make a difference for life"**	The sector association for the family and society (La branche professionnelle des Acteurs du Lien Social et Familial[98]) launched a major campaign to promote early childhood professions, support professional diversity and develop the place of men in the education of young children. It includes promotional videos and testimonies from male educators. The Danish ministry for children, education and equality ran a country-wide campaign in 2016 to attract more men to work in ECEC. The campaign focused on the difference the pedagogical work in ECEC makes for children's lives, and the importance of attracting and retaining more men in ECEC. Amongst other things, a video was released[99] and a Facebook page was created[100].

[97] https://gendereye.org/outputs/useful-resources/.
[98] http://www.metiers-petite-enfance.fr/.
[99] https://vimeo.com/189299931.
[100] https://www.facebook.com/paedagogergoerenforskelforlivet/.

2.5 Offering motivating and dynamic career opportunities

The European Commission's working group on Schools has emphasised the importance of motivation, individuals' abilities, and opportunities for teachers. This is based on an understanding of the development of a teacher's working life as a 'career': a path over a period of time with different opportunities for variation and progress within or across a profession. In its policy guide 'Supporting teacher and school leader careers'[101], the group proposes a direct response to concerns that careers in school education are often seen as 'flat' with no or few opportunities for progression. These ideas are based on approaches that are established in some countries in Europe. There are several different ways of understanding teachers' and school leaders' career paths – even if they are centred on the important role of classroom teaching – and one or more of these directions may be pursued consecutively or at the same time. It proposes (figure 10) a description of various career paths which are offered to school teachers and leaders, which is also applicable in most ECEC contexts.

Figure 10 - Six types of teacher and school leader career paths.



To support ECEC staff in accessing and benefiting from these possible career paths, it is important to consider how to offer more and better opportunities for professional development, develop the range of career pathways and the way to facilitate individuals who wish to take on different roles in an ECEC setting.

[101] European Commission, *Supporting teacher and school leader careers: A Policy Guide*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020

Opportunities for professional development

Understanding what individuals want from work is an important step in improving productivity, motivation and retention. Not everyone wants the same things from a career. Providing opportunities for all staff to discuss their aspirations, learn new skills and work with colleagues can contribute to making employment more enjoyable and more rewarding. In most situations these opportunities are part of a well-structured continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Chapter 3 of this reports includes more information on how to make sure CPD activities benefit all staff.

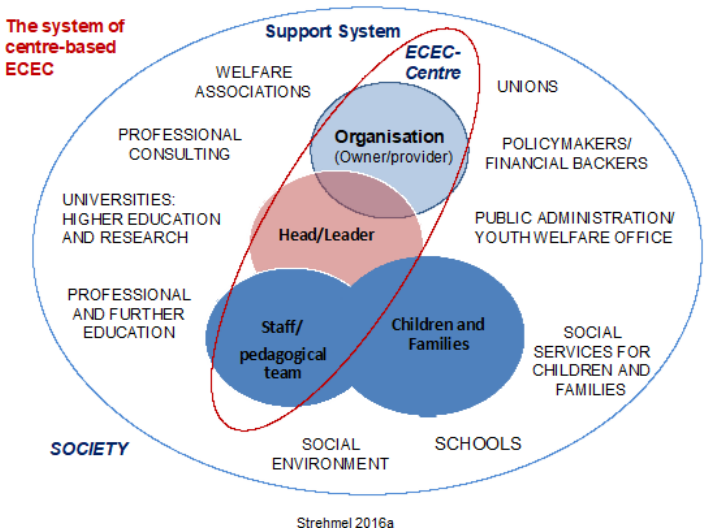
Career opportunities for ECEC leaders

ECEC leaders can be employed in the same role for many years. While this is satisfying and motivating for many leaders, others are looking to take on a different role and a wider range of responsibilities. Even though there is constant change within any ECEC setting (e.g. with new children and families, new staff, new curricula, new regulations to manage etc.) some leaders wish to develop their skills and competences in other areas. This could involve roles within their setting (e.g. training new pedagogues, supporting apprenticeship programmes, developing second language provision, working on an Erasmus+ project etc.) or roles in the local community (e.g. working with municipalities on safeguarding issues, children's health, children's social care, working with families at risk of disadvantage, parental liaison roles etc.). Identifying activities and learning which appeals to individuals is important in motivating and retaining ECEC leaders in their setting.

Sometimes these new roles involve training, but often the roles build on activities which the leaders have developed within their setting.

As the work of ECEC leaders in the private and, sometimes the public sector is often very broadly defined[102] and connects to many other children's services (see figure 11), there is a lot that ECEC leaders can offer to the wider community, and it is important that the ECEC system facilitates this cooperation.

Figure 11



Strehmel 2016a

[102] Strehmel, P., Leadership in Early Childhood Education - Theoretical and Empirical Approaches, JECER 5 (2), Journal of Early Childhood Education Research, Special Issue: Leadership in Early Childhood Education., 2016, pp. 344-355.

Opportunities to take on different roles in an ECEC setting or context

While many people in the ECEC sector enjoy their work and wish to continue in their current role, others are looking for new opportunities. If these opportunities are unavailable, or too difficult to access, staff leave the sector and work elsewhere. In some countries, assistants, core practitioners and leaders have many choices about where they work and, for those who are looking to develop their careers, it can be relatively easy to work in primary schools or another role which uses their competences and experiences. Losing staff from the ECEC sector because they feel they are unable to fulfil their ambition and career aspirations is a waste of talented human resources. Given the costs and difficulties associated with recruiting, training and developing staff, it is wise to look at different ways to retain staff through the development of career pathways.

Country examples	
Slovenia: career advancement	According to article 105 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act, preschool teachers can be promoted to the titles of Mentor (mentor), Advisor (svetovalec) and Councillor (svetnik). The Rules on Promotion of Education Staff to Titles issued by the Minister of Education determines the conditions of advancement, criteria for evaluation of conditions and procedures. The promotion is not automatic. Its conditions include a certain number of years of experience, the performance at work, additional professional work and participation in continuing professional development activities (CPD). The conditions are awarded points. In order to be promoted to a title, a preschool teacher needs to collect a certain number of points (the higher the title, the more points are needed) and get a performance evaluation by the head teacher/director and by kindergarten assembly of preschool teachers. Titles are permanent and teachers can keep them even if they change a job position or find employment in another pre-school institution. Promotion to titles results in an increase in salaries.
Denmark: special roles for pedagogues	Pedagogues in Denmark can take on special or additional duties such as language guidance/support to children, "pedagogic frontrunners" to develop the curriculum, or a "pedagogic staff resource" for children with special needs etc. In Denmark, municipalities have to carry out language assessments for all two or three year olds not in ECEC and those in ECEC who need further language stimulation. The language assessment and language stimulation is carried out by staff with the special qualifications to perform the task. Those conducting the language assessments and language stimulations on bilingual children need to have the necessary professional knowledge regarding bilingual children's language development and Danish as a second language through relevant education or in others ways trough relevant experience. There are special diplomas and CPD courses for pedagogues in relation to language development.
Sweden: teaching future ECEC staff	Experienced preschool teachers can be appointed as adjunct teachers. They are usually employed at the university on a part-time basis while working concurrently in preschools. The universities' invite these adjunct teachers to support the training of new staff. Appointments are based on the completion of the following training/qualifications:

- a preschool teacher degree;
- a course on 'Teaching and Learning in Higher Education';
- a course on 'Supervision in Preschool, School and Leisure-time centre'.

Sweden's ECEC settings also employ first teachers and senior teachers. This distinction was introduced through Government reforms to teacher education and training in 2012. The idea was for all staff (and trainees) to benefit from the expertise of certified teachers who were highly qualified and had demonstrated excellence over a period of at least four years in the workplace. Initially this initiative did not involve preschool teachers. However, various municipalities have introduced this possibility for their preschool teachers.

2.6 Improving working conditions

The European Quality Framework in the 2019 Council Recommendation for high quality ECEC systems highlights that staff need "supportive working conditions", including "more adequate wage levels" and giving attention to adult-child ratios. Other elements such as the amount of child-free time available to ECEC staff, number of working hours, contractual status and in general the working environment also influence working conditions. Getting these policies and practices right can help to make employment in an ECEC context a more attractive option and support staff retention.

Staff: child ratio

Research evidence confirms that:

- the staff: child ratio can have a significant impact on the quality of care that children receive[103], improve the attractiveness of working in the sector and the quality of practitioners' practices[104];
- higher staff ratios (more staff per group of children) are more likely to facilitate positive and responsive interactions among adults and children – both on an individual and a group basis.

Setting child/staff ratios and group sizes based on children's ages is important if high quality ECEC is to be delivered effectively and the profession is to be made more attractive. The EU quality framework for ECEC recommends that "adult-child ratios and group sizes should be designed in an appropriate manner for the age and composition of the group of children, as younger children require more attention and care". These ratios can be set centrally, regionally, locally or at the establishment or organisational level where ECEC settings are more autonomous.

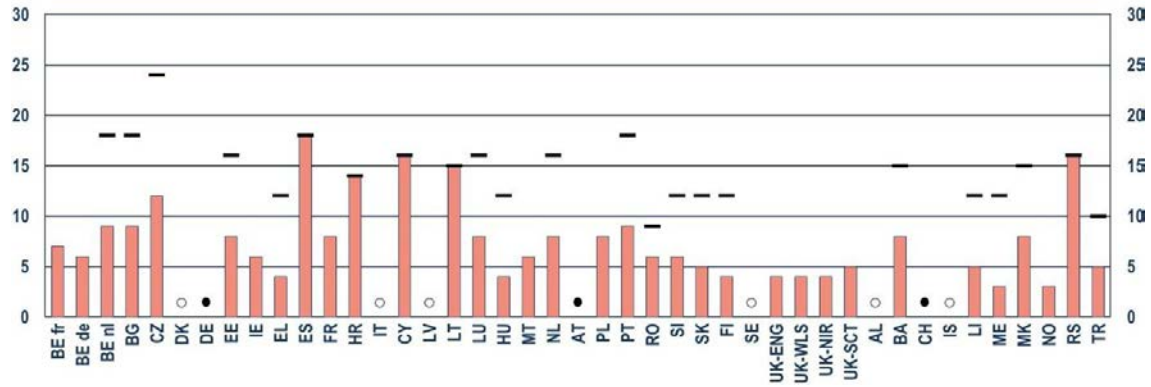
In most ECEC systems the staff/children ratios are monitored as there are recommendations or requirements at the setting or system level. Figure 12 shows the maximum number of children per staff member and per group for children aged two and four across Europe.

[103] Munton, T., Mooney, A., Moss, P., Petrie, P., Clark, A., Woolner, J., et al, Research on ratios, group size and staff qualifications and training in early years and childcare settings, TCRU, Institute of education, University of London, 2002.

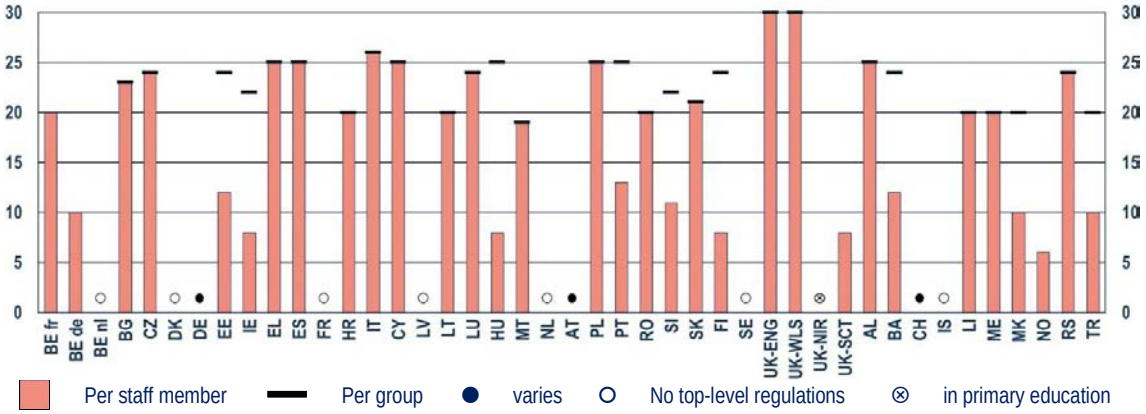
[104] *Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review*, Eurofound, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

Figure 12 - Maximum number of children per group and per staff member in centre-based ECEC provision at ages 2 and 4, 2018/19

a) 2-year-olds



b) 4-year-olds



Source: Eurydice. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition, pp. 88-89. 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. Assistants recruited to support children with special education needs are not included[105].

There is no consensus across Europe or in research on the 'best' ratios and there is a debate as to whether it is always a good idea to improve the existing ratios. Decisions on changing ratios, either at a setting or a system level are influenced by the cost of making changes and

[105] Czech Republic: the figure a shows the situation in dětské skupiny and the figure b 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. Greece: the figure 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: the figure shows the situation in care-type settings (accueil du jeune enfant). For 4-year olds, the maximum group size is regulated at local level (department) 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): the figure shows the situation in the reception class of primary school.

the contextual factors in each ECEC system. Research however shows that it is difficult to have a child centred approach to ECEC with large groups of children and low staff numbers. Eurofound's 2015 systematic review *on Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services*[106] noted that:

- five studies found that, broadly speaking, staff: child ratio and class size have positive effects on the quality of practitioners' practice and on staff–child interaction;
- two studies described the effect of large classes on staff–child interactions. One study reported on one class with 35 children in a rural area of England and concluded the teacher (despite her high level of experience and competence) was working under stress. She was able to do effective teaching, but at great personal and emotional expense. In smaller classrooms, teaching can be more flexible and activities are more open ended. Teachers working in small classes reported that they had more time for monitoring, checking and understanding children's learning; they could more effectively encourage children to work independently and they could get to know the children better as individuals. The second study explored the views of teachers from Andalusia (Spain) who had to adapt their teaching after an over enrolment of children in their class. One way that teachers responded was to more often rely on lesson books with worksheet activities – in conjunction with centre-based activities – as a way of maintaining control of larger groups of children. In addition, larger classes were seen as particularly problematic because of the young age of the children (as young as two and a half years at the start of the school year). Some teachers described experiencing burnout and symptoms of depression.

The 2018 expert group[107] on ECEC indicators, set up by the European Commission, proposed two indicators relating to ratios, to be considered by decision-makers:

- the average ratio of children to staff working directly with children;
- the average ratio of children to professionally trained staff working directly with children.

These indicators are directly related to the quality of provision. They reflect the fact that in some systems there are regulations on the number of professionally trained ECEC staff but not the overall staff to child ratio. **Establishing and adhering to a ratio offers greater certainty to staff about the reality of their day-to-day work with children and helps to manage their workloads. Without established ratios (which can be set at the provider or system level) there is a risk that the demands placed on core practitioners could rise and make the job less attractive.** However, while there is considerable research on the impact of staff/child ratio on the quality of the ECEC settings,

[106] *Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review*, Eurofound, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.
[107] European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018

children's outcomes and well-being, the links between staff/child ratio and its impact on the attractiveness of the profession or the level of staff retention is less well developed[108]

It seems intuitive that a lower child/staff ratio improves quality and retains more staff but there are other factors to consider e.g. the costs of employing more staff; a system's traditions; the number of assistants/other staff in the room; the core practitioner's contact hours/week; what is expected from each core practitioner etc.

It is also important to consider what happens in practice - there may be regulations concerning the child to staff ratio but in a context of staff shortages and a context where professionals burn out frequently, the reality may differ from the legal expectations. With very large numbers of ECEC settings in every country's system, it can be hard to monitor what is happening in practice. It is advisable to put in place monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the staff/child ratio is actually implemented.

Country examples	
Denmark: additional support for vulnerable children	The Danish government is negotiating a requirement for a minimum child-staff ratio in ECEC – 1:3 in nurseries and 1:6 in kindergartens. The government has granted 500m DKK (67 Million €) in 2020 to hire more staff in nurseries and kindergartens. In the next five years the funds received by the municipalities to hire additional staff will grow, and by 2024, this will be 1.6 billion DKK (215 Million €). In 2018 government funding was assigned to support the appointment of additional pedagogues to work in 100 ECEC settings with large numbers of vulnerable children. The €34 million was initially provided for three years. This was enhanced in 2019 with €100 million for extra staffing in ECEC with large numbers of 0-2 year old children from vulnerable families. So far more than 400 ECEC settings have received extra funding for more staff. In January 2020, one of the Danish trade unions (BUPL[109]) organised a survey to investigate the outcomes associated with this "social staffing". The survey was sent to 948 pedagogues in the 100 settings which were funded from 2018 - 479 replies were received. BUPL's analysis shows that employing more pedagogues benefits the pedagogical work and the well-being of children. The respondents commented that the additional staff increased the possibility of: • working with children in small groups (88% of the replies); • supporting children's language development (86%); • helping children to get involved in play (86%); • including children who are at risk in ECEC practice (86%); • helping children to solve disagreements (86%); • improving cooperation with parents (78%); • planning and evaluation of provision (71%);

[108] The 2019 OECD TALIS Starting Strong report notes that the second reason for leaving the profession is to 'resolve health-related issues (e.g. physical and/or psychological burnout' - OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

[109] BUPL: Børne- og Ungdomspædagogernes Landsforbund.

	• strengthening cross-professional collaboration (61%) BUPL concluded that the support offered to vulnerable children by an additional pedagogue improved children's well-being, learning and social development. There was however no conclusion on how this new staff: child ratio influenced the attractiveness of the job and supported staff retention.
Norway: electronic monitoring	New regulations on core staff and teacher-to-child ratio in Norwegian kindergartens were introduced on 1 August 2018 and time was allowed for implementation. The core staff ratio requires kindergartens to maintain a core staff equivalent to one employee for every three children under the age of three and one employee for every six children over the age of three. Children are considered to be over three years of age from August in the year of their third birthday. According to the Regulations on Teaching Staff, there must be at least one pedagogical leader for every 14 children over the age of three and one pedagogical leader for every seven children under the age of three. Pedagogical leaders must be qualified kindergarten teachers or equivalent. The local authority may grant a dispensation from this qualification requirement for up to one year at a time so that someone who does not meet the requirement can still work as a pedagogical leader. 94% of kindergartens fulfilled the core staff ratio in 2019, which is an increase from 75% from 2018. 64% of kindergarten fulfilled the teacher-child ratio in 2019, which is an increase from 53% in 2018. The local authorities are responsible for working with kindergartens that fail to meet the statutory requirements. This can include guidance and inspections. The ratios are monitored as part of an annual electronic report submitted by all kindergartens. They all use the kindergarten statistics reporting platform BASIL. The statistics include every ECEC setting in the National Kindergarten Register which according to its industrial classification operates as a kindergarten and is registered to care for children. Kindergartens use BASIL to report on the number of children, number of staff, staff qualifications, children who use a minority language and children receiving special educational support.
Belgium (Flanders): external monitoring	In Flanders, as soon as a childcare setting has its licence, it is inspected by the Flemish Care Inspectorate Agency[110] to check whether the legal requirements are being met. The staff: child ratio is specified in legislation. Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), the agency of the Flemish Government responsible for implementing the policy laid down by the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family with regard to formal childcare, is informed after every visit and uses the inspection findings to monitor and promote quality in childcare settings for babies and toddlers (including whether the staff: child ratio is being respected). The inspection is based on a visit when the setting is first licensed, followed by a second visit within the first year of operation. For established settings there is an inspection visit once every three years or at any time when there is a justifiable reason for inspection (e.g. a complaint by a parent or as a result of the previous monitoring visit).

[110] https://departementwvg.be/zorginspectie/groepsopvang.

Even though the impact of high staff ratios on children's development has been extensively demonstrated[111], the findings reveal that the influence of the staff: child ratio on quality cannot be disentangled from other elements of the working environment including staff education and training, staff salaries and group size. The staff: child ratio is therefore only one aspect of increasing the attractiveness of employment in the sector.

Salaries

Salaries matter…

The European Quality Framework recognises that 'ECEC systems that aim at improved working conditions, including more adequate wage levels, can make employment in ECEC a more attractive option for better-qualified staff, looking for proper careers'.

Salaries are usually the result of negotiations between employers' and staff representative organisations. They represent the largest single cost in providing ECEC and have a direct impact on the attractiveness of the working in the sector. Understanding how salary levels and their structure influence recruitment and retention - and therefore increase the attractiveness of the profession - is complex as it depends on individuals' motivation and their expectations[112]. Salaries can influence individuals' decisions to:

- enrol in initial training and education programme;
- enter the sector after graduation (as graduates' career choices are associated with relative earnings in different occupations and their likely growth over time);
- return to the sector after a career interruption;
- remain in the sector (in general, the higher the salaries, the fewer people choose to leave the profession).

In most countries, ECEC provision is managed and led by organisations in the public sector. However, there are many situations where provision and salaries are determined by market forces and private and third sector providers evaluate and assess how much to pay to attract the professional staff they need. Research[113] from 2018 in the UK (which combines public, private and not-for-profit providers) shows that staff turnover rates are far higher in the private sector than in public sector provision where pay and other conditions of service are better. The report notes that the latest government data reported turnover rates of 14% for group-based providers, 8% for nursery provision in school-based settings and 9% for reception provision in

[111] Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B., The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project. Institute of Education, University of London, London, 2004.
Pramling, N. and Pramling Samuelsson, I., Educational Encounters: Nordic studies in early childhood didactics, Springer, Dordrecht, 2011.

[112] Eurofound, *Early childhood care: Accessibility and quality of services*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015. This highlights research by Almeida et al (2012) in Portugal which found the behaviour of teachers is better adapted to the interests and capabilities of children when they earn higher wages and have more non-contact time. The Andrzejewska (2011) study examined the link between the cognitive skills of children and staff–child ratio, type of preschool centre and teachers' career progression. The relation between teachers' career progression and the cognitive competences of children was in general found to be statistically significant.

[113] Bonetti, S., *The early years workforce – a fragmented picture*, Education Policy Institute, 2018.

2016. These percentages have been steadily increasing over the last few years, in line with a similar trend affecting other phases of the education system. Moreover, averages mask the diversity in turnover rates among staff at different qualification levels with staff qualified at EQF Level 3 leaving at a rate of 21%, at EQF Level 2 at 19%, unqualified staff at 18% and staff who are qualified at a level higher than EQF Level 3 at 12%.

ECEC salaries are usually low

The poor pay of many workers – especially those employed in services for younger children in split systems – is well documented. As reported in the OECD *Starting Strong II* report, 'figures from various countries reveal a wide pay gap between childcare staff and teachers, with childcare staff in most countries being poorly trained and paid around minimum wage levels'[114].

Even though salary levels are not the only reason for entering and remaining in an occupational area, it must be considered by policy makers and, in the private and voluntary sectors, by the owners and managers of individual ECEC settings.

Country examples	
Ireland	Ireland's services for pre-school children are delivered almost entirely by the private sector (a combination of for-profit and non-profit providers). As such, salaries are determined by individual ECEC providers within a competitive market. Employers need to continually review the salaries they offer (alongside working conditions, the number of hours at work, the contact hours and other factors that influence the attractiveness of working in the sector). In 2019, on average, ECEC settings were offering an hourly wage of €12.55[115] (the national minimum wage was €9.80). Services' annual staff turnover rate in 2019 was 23% and more than half of those who left their job also left the ECEC sector. While the Government does not control wages in the sector, it has undertaken a number of measures to support service providers to pay higher wages, and is currently developing a new funding model.[116]

Is aligning ECEC staff salaries with primary school teachers' salaries a solution?

In many countries, staff who are qualified to work in the ECEC sector have the ability (and right) to work in other educational or pedagogic areas. When there are significant differences between salaries in the ECEC and primary schools, these opportunities are likely to make recruitment and retention more difficult.

[114] Bennett, J. and Moss P. *Working for inclusion: how early childhood education and care and its workforce can help Europe's youngest citizens*. Final report of the cross-European programme Working for inclusion: the role of early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion. 2011.

[115] For heads of ECEC centres the average hourly rate was €15.56. Room leaders in the ECCE programme i.e. core practitioners working with 3-5 year olds received, on average, €13.24 per hour.

[116] www.first5fundingmodel.gov.ie.

The importance of comparability between ECEC and primary school settings encouraged the European Commission 2018 expert group[117] to consider the average salary of ECEC staff employed in the public sector. This group decided that comparisons with primary school teachers with similar qualifications would be one way to gauge the status and value of the ECEC sector. This indicator would compare average salaries of those working in the primary school and ECEC sectors. Data for the public sector is more likely to be available – for countries/systems with a significant amount of private sector and/or voluntary sector provision comparable data will be scarcer.

In 2014, the OECD noted that ECEC teachers' salaries remained below those of other tertiary-educated workers in most countries. On average, pre-primary teachers in OECD countries earned only 74% of the average salary of a tertiary-educated, 25-64 year-old full-time, full-year worker[118]. Recent data[119] shows that:

- in 12 European countries, pre-primary (ISCED 02) teachers receive the same statutory starting salary as primary and secondary teachers, and usually have the same level of entry qualification[120];
- in Belgium, the statutory starting salary is the same for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary teachers with a bachelor's degree, while upper secondary teachers usually hold a master's and earn more.
- in a further five countries (Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary and the Netherlands), pre-primary teachers are required to have the same qualification level to enter the teaching profession as primary teachers and have the same statutory salary, while lower and upper secondary teachers receive a higher statutory salary and generally hold a higher qualification;
- in six countries the pay level and qualification requirements for pre-primary teachers are lower than for primary and secondary teachers (Czechia, Malta, Slovakia, Finland, Albania and Serbia). In three others (Germany, Estonia and Ireland), the qualification retirements are lower but there is no data available about their statutory salaries. In another four countries (Denmark, Lithuania, North Macedonia and Norway), the starting salaries of pre-primary teachers are lower despite similar qualification requirements.

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[117] European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018

[118] OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care,* Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.

[119] Teachers' and School Heads' salaries and allowances in Europe 2018/19 - Eurydice – Facts and Figures. The Eurydice report on teachers' and school heads' salaries and allowances, 2018/19 includes data for 42 education systems in Europe on: a) the minimum and maximum statutory salaries of pre-primary teachers (ISCED 02 i.e. excluding assistants and other non-teaching staff) which could be compared to the statutory salaries of primary and secondary teachers; b) the average salaries of pre-primary teachers which could be compared to the average salaries of primary and secondary teachers.

[120] Bulgaria, Greece, France, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, Montenegro and Turkey. In Poland, pre-primary and primary teachers with a bachelor's are paid on the same pay scale, but most of them hold a master and are paid on the same pay scale as secondary teachers. In Montenegro, pre-primary teachers with a bachelor's degree are paid on the same pay scale as primary and secondary teachers (for whom this is the minimum qualification). In Slovenia, the minimum qualification for pre-primary teachers is lower (at ISCED 6 level) than for primary and secondary teachers (ISCED 7), but statutory salaries are the same.

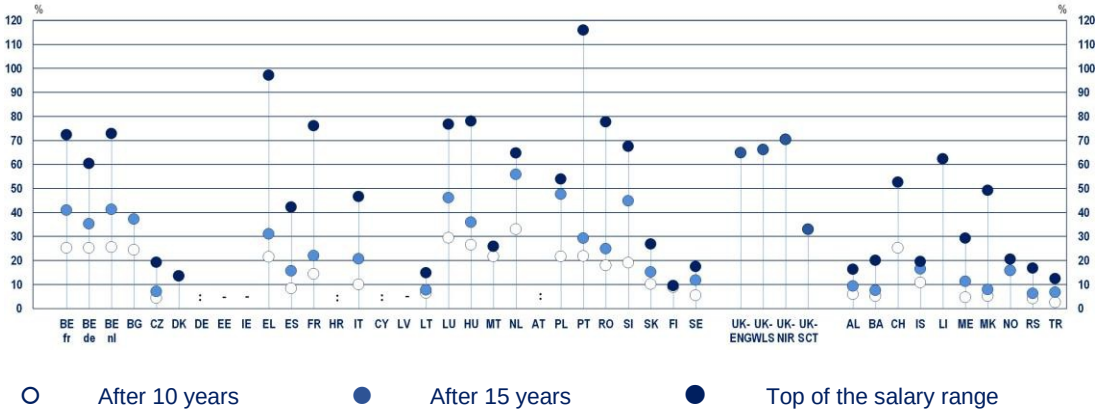
The following examples illustrate what can be achieved by a greater alignment between the salaries of ECEC core practitioners and primary school teachers.

Country examples	
Estonia	To support the ECEC sector, Estonia's national policy is to reduce the salary gap between primary school teachers and core practitioners. Since 2017 (through support to local government) a core practitioner's salary has started to change from 80% to 90% of a primary school teacher's salary. For ECEC staff with a MA, the salaries are the same. There is a large demand to train as ECEC teachers and currently there are seven applicants for each place on an initial training and education programme. This initiative has made the teaching profession more attractive, increased the status of ECEC staff in society and improved ECEC working conditions. Preschool teachers' qualification have increased - according to the Estonian Information System, in 2020 the share of teachers with a degree equivalent to a bachelor's was 50% and a degree equivalent at the master's level was 20%. The comparable figures for 2017 were 45% and 17%.
Portugal	All pre-school teachers working in a public setting have similar terms and conditions of employment, security of employment and progression opportunities as primary and secondary teachers. The salary and entry requirements are identical. In 2017/2018 more than 90% of the educators employed by the public sector had permanent tenure. In 2018/2019 only 127 vacancies were opened to the nationwide application process. In 2020/2021 the number of vacancies opened for an external application was 34. Individual pre-school settings also advertised 248 positions for specific timetables in 2020/2021. More than 3500 people applied for one of these roles. The Ministry of Education also advertises for substitute teachers. This year more than 4,200 people applied for one of these 56 vacancies in a public setting. The data shows that the profession is attractive, but there is a clear discrepancy between the supply and demand of trained and qualified early childhood educators in the public sector.
Poland	The salary system covering teachers employed in schools and institutions provided by locally-based self-governing units and schools provided by government administration is the same. Remuneration is the same for every teacher, regardless of whether they work in a kindergarten, primary school or high school.

Prospects of salary increases as a result of progression or more experience

Attracting staff to the ECEC sector is dependent on starting salaries, salary increases due to experience, and opportunities for career development. As shown in figure 13, in some countries the salaries of core practitioners rise significantly as they gain more experience. However in other countries there is little difference in the salaries of new staff and those with 15 years' experience.

Figure 13 – Percentage difference between the statutory starting salaries of pre-primary teachers and their salaries after 10 and 15 years' service, and at the top of the pay range, 2018/19[121]



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020. Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2018/19. Eurydice Facts and Figures.

For some employees a low starting salary combined with annual increases based on experience is not a disincentive to working in the sector. In some countries this model of 'moving up the pay scale' is one of the attractions of working in the sector. When there are few, or only small, increases in salary there can be difficulties in retaining experienced staff.

Country examples	
Spain: Promoting and recognising continuing professional development	Continuing professional development activities are not mandatory. However in most Spanish regions their completion has a direct impact on the salary of the ECEC career teachers who are civil servants. These professionals are entitled to apply for an extra-salary supplement every five-six years if they participate in at least a minimum number of hours of CPD (usually equivalent to 10 ECTS credits). The supplement varies in each five to six year period and there is a maximum of five periods. CPD activities are proposed or recognised by the Educational Authorities through a network of teacher training centres.

Additional financial incentives

Salaries will always be the most important (and largest) part of the benefits for ECEC practitioners. However, the overall compensation package for staff can include additional benefits such as:

- employer's contribution to a pension;

[121] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020. Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2018/19. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Data refers to the statutory salaries of full-time beginning teachers with the minimum qualification to teach at pre-primary level. The salary data for each country and the relevant methodological notes are available in the National data Sheets of the report. The reported salaries may be a weighted average of the regulations applicable to different geographic areas (e.g. Germany, Spain, United Kingdom (England), Bosnia & Herzegovina, Switzerland), or of several pay scales (e.g. Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Austria). In Estonia and Latvia, official regulations only define the minimum salary.

- subsided access to ECEC resources or tax allowances on the purchase of instructional materials
- staff lunches;
- regional allowances for working in rural areas,
- family allowances,
- additional allowances for unsocial or long hours;
- free membership of associations;
- reduced rates on public transport or coverage of transport costs associated with getting to and from work.

The country sheets included in the Eurydice report on teachers' salaries show the allowances granted to pre-primary teachers and school heads across Europe.

Making the profession more attractive can involve changing one or more of these additional financial benefits. In many countries such changes would need to be agreed with employers and social partners as salaries, benefits and working conditions are agreed at the national/system level.

Country examples	
Italy: electronic card	All State teachers (including pre-primary teachers) receive a personal electronic card for training and cultural activities. The credit on the card, € 500 per year can be spent on books, computers, courses, didactic materials etc.
Lithuania: reimbursing travel costs	One way of making ECEC more attractive in Lithuania has been to consider the personal and social motivation of staff. This consideration has taken place in a context where ECEC salaries are the lowest in the education sector; there is significant growth in the number of children attending ECEC; and there is a high demand for provision especially in the capital and other large cities. For staff working in kindergartens and other ECEC settings, they know their institution will usually be open for 10 hours a day (there are different models in each institution, but if the setting is financed by the state it must be open for more than four hours per day). Educators can expect to work 36 hours per week, 33 of these are in contact with children and three hours are for preparation. There is a shortage of ECEC educators in Lithuania and municipalities, which have direct responsibility for the ECEC sector, have been thinking about how to attract more people into the workforce. For ECEC staff who live in a rural area working in a city can involve a journey of 40-50 km each way. At the local government level there are opportunities to reimburse the travel expenses to and from work - this helps to make working in a city more attractive to ECEC educators who live in a rural area.

Child-free time

It is increasingly recognised that ECEC staff need 'child-free' time (i.e. paid time when they are not actually working with the children), during which they do equally important tasks that foster quality in the setting, e.g. liaising with parents or external stakeholders in the

community, .documenting/recording child's development and learning progress, daily/weekly planning, discussing pedagogic approaches or organisational issues with colleagues, or undertaking training and other activities which contribute to their professional development.

This is why the 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality ECEC systems recommends that: Member states should consider 'providing time for staff for the purpose of professional activities such as reflection, planning, engaging with parents and collaborating with other professionals and colleagues'.

It seems however that in a great number of ECEC systems and settings, "child-free time" is not guaranteed, meaning that all of the activities mentioned above need to take place during the staff's free time, or while working with the children, which can be detrimental to the quality of both activities.

The OECD report Education at a glance 2019 indicators notes that 'statutory teaching time in public school varies more at the pre-primary level than at any other level. [...] On average across OECD countries and economies, teachers at this level of education are required to teach 1024 hours per year, spread over 40 weeks or 195 days of teaching'.

Work by a European Commission group of experts in 2018 looked at indicators[122] which could be used to measure the extent to which this statement has been met. This expert group commented on the value of monitoring the percentage of time assigned to staff for preparation and reflection i.e. when they are not working directly with children. This indicator could be one way to measure workload and the time available for ECEC staff to prepare and reflect on their work with children. The indicator, based on the idea of 'non-contact' time, considers hours which are allocated for work (but not directly with children) and could be defined at a national, regional or local level. There may be significant differences for staff working in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In most ECEC systems the concept of non-contact time is only relevant for staff with a pedagogic role. In addition, there may be significantly different arrangements for staff working with children from birth to three and from three to the start of primary schooling; and for professionally trained staff and other staff. The expert group noted that this data could be difficult to collect and analyse if it is not covered by legislation, regulation or system-level expectations. In some systems, data may be available through ECEC staff representative groups or trade unions.

To support the application of this indicator, the expert group noted it was worth considering:

- how best to gather data e.g. should a sampling approach be used as it is more feasible than a census;
- the structure of the working day for staff in ECEC services – how do different types of staff have access to non-contact time to support their work with children e.g. through planning and review processes
- whether the curriculum framework requires staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their work with children;

[122] European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018

- are there different arrangements for staff who work with children under and over the age of three?

A number of countries are taking measures to ensure child-free time is increasingly available to ECEC staff.

Country examples	
Slovakia	For many years Slovakia's regulations have covered how core practitioners (teachers) use their time in kindergartens (age range from three to six). They have direct contact with children for 28 hours per week. Their remaining hours (up to 37.5 working hours per week) are spent to support their work with children, e.g. this time can be used on planning, review, evaluation, administrative work or contact with parents. The ways in which this non-contact is used is not covered by legislation[123].
Poland	For many years the Polish regulations have covered the way in which core practitioners (teachers) use their time in kindergartens (age range three to six years). Core practitioners who work with children aged from three to five years have direct contact for 25 hours per week. For those who work with six-year-old children, it is 22 hours per week. The remaining hours (up to 40 hours per week) are intended to support work with children, prepare for work, administrative work, further training or contact with parents. The use of this non-contact working time is not covered by legislation.
Spain	In most regions of Spain, ECEC teachers (working in the public sector with children aged from three to six) spend a total of 25 hours a week in direct contact with children (direct teaching). The rest of their time (up to 37.5 hours a week) is used for other activities which do not involve direct teaching or contact with children e.g. coordination, planning, assessment, administrative tasks, working with parents etc. Usually a teacher's weekly timetable comprises a minimum of 30 hours on the school grounds The remaining 7.5 hours of the weekly commitment can be fulfilled outside the school.
Norway	Non-contact time for kindergarten teachers (time for preparation, planning, development, assessment and documentation) is part of the negotiated central agreement between employers and employees. It is a long-standing arrangement and part of the main agreements between: • public owners' organisation (municipalities) and employees' organisations (teachers and other staff); • the private ECEC owners' organisation and employees' organisations; • big private owners that have decided to negotiate agreements with the main employees' organisations (teachers and staff).

[123] Zákon 138/2019 Z.z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov - § 7 (1)-(2): https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2019/138/20191015.
Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republiky 201/2019 Z. z. o priamej výchovno-vzdelávacej činnosti: https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2019/201/20190901.
Príloha č. 1 k nariadeniu vlády č. 201/2019 Z. z.: https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/prilohy/SK/ZZ/2019/201/20190901_5160498-2.pdf.

	These agreements are quite similar and states that five days (37.5 hours) per year should be set aside for professional and pedagogic development activities for the whole staff. During these days the ECEC institutions are closed. In addition all kindergarten teachers (pedagogical leaders) have at least four hours per week to use for planning, preparation and follow-up of pedagogic work in the ECEC.
Finland	In Finland the communal collective agreement (KVTES) agreed a weekly planning, evaluating and documenting time for qualified ECEC teachers, ECEC special education teachers and head of early education centres, that is 13% of the weekly working time. This is approximately 5 hours / week. The teacher's non-contact time can be carried out at the workplace or outside the workplace, but agreed with the head of the ECEC centre. On top of the planning, developing and assessment time for pedagogical activities, the teacher needs to reserve time for meeting parents and for co-operation with experts and multi-professional networks. It is up to the head of the ECEC centre to take care that in spite of this non-contact time there is sufficiently staff to take care of the children.
Portugal	According to the Statute of the Teaching Career, the working hours of preschool teachers in Portugal consist of 35 weekly hours of service, which include 25 teaching hours and 10 non-teaching hours. The teaching hours correspond to 5 daily work hours, which include the planning, management and assessment, with a pedagogical intention, of a variety of activities with the group of children so as to provide meaningful learning experiences. The non-teaching hours cover autonomous work and administrative work at the workplace. Autonomous work includes not only the planning of activities and the assessment of the learning and the teaching process but also the preparation of scientific and pedagogical research. As to the administrative work at the workplace, this must be developed under the guidance of intermediate leadership in order to contribute to the development of the educational project of the school, which may include the following activities: • taking part in meetings of a pedagogical nature legally convened; • taking part in continuous professional development, duly authorised; • substituting other teachers from the same school in situations of short-term absence; • technical and pedagogical advice to the school administration and management board; • performing other pedagogical coordination roles; • monitoring and supervising extra-curricular activities; • providing individual support for children with learning difficulties; • developing teaching materials.
Slovenia	The legislation foresees that pre-school teachers and their assistants work five days a week, eight hours a day, or 40 hours a week (full time work includes the right to a 30-minute lunch break). Within this range of hours pre-school teachers must provide instruction for 30 contact hours in a kindergarten, and their assistants must instruct for 35 contact hours. They both have to be on the ECEC setting's premises for six

	hours each day for children aged from one to three, and four hours each day for children aged from three to six. The Kindergarten Act[124] (Article 41) determines the workload of preschool teachers and preschool teacher assistants who work together in all kindergarten groups. Pre-school teachers are required to: • prepare for their work; • design and prepare their pedagogic method and didactic aids; • deliver their contact hours; • document their activities with children; • follow and record the development and progress of the children; • organise cultural, sporting and other events for pre-school children and prepare and lead trips and camps; • take part in organising everyday life and work at the kindergarten, collaborate with colleagues, professional staff and external experts and parents; • take part in continual professional development in order to update their educational methods and content; • work as mentors to trainees. Pre-school assistants work with pre-school teachers in developing, planning and implementing educational work in the group, independently pursue certain activities of preschool education, and participate in other activities and duties related to the kindergarten.
Estonia	As part of their conditions of service, all pedagogues in Estonia are allocated five hours each week for reflection. This time can be used to improve their professional development and their ability to work with children. Their development is guided and measured by a set of national profession standards and competences.
Malmö (Sweden)	An agreement with the teacher unions sets out the minimum amount of time that is allocated to core practitioners as non-contact time. This time can be used for preparation or to support pedagogic and professional development.

Working hours and contractual status

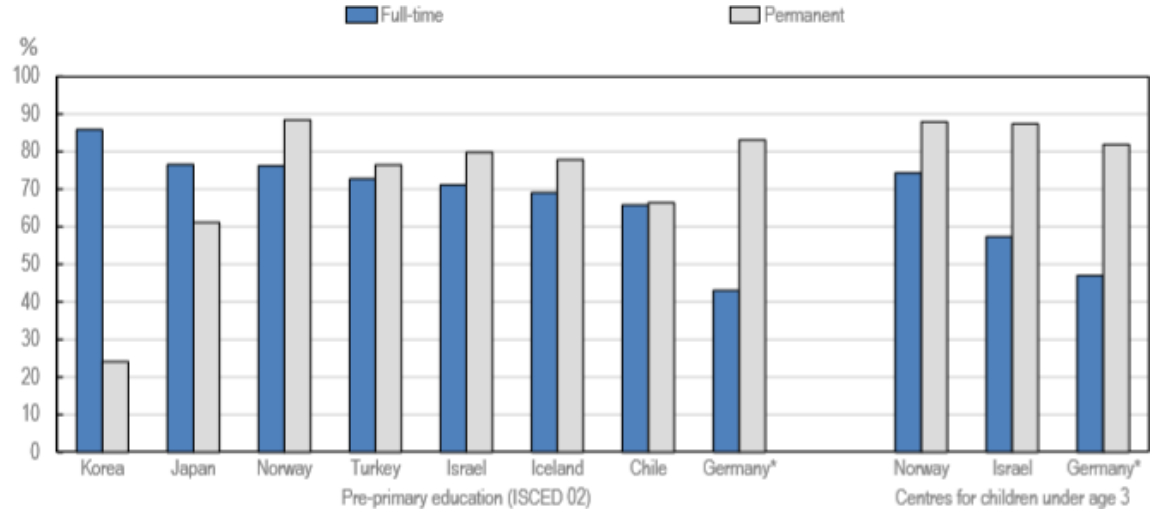
One aspect of working conditions which can influence the attractiveness of the sector is the availability of full-time and permanent contracts, ensuring professional and income stability.

Differences in working hours can be seen in recent work by the OECD[125] which covers pre-primary provision at ISCED Level 02. Figure 14 shows the extent to which ECEC staff working hours and contracts vary across countries.

[124] http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO447.

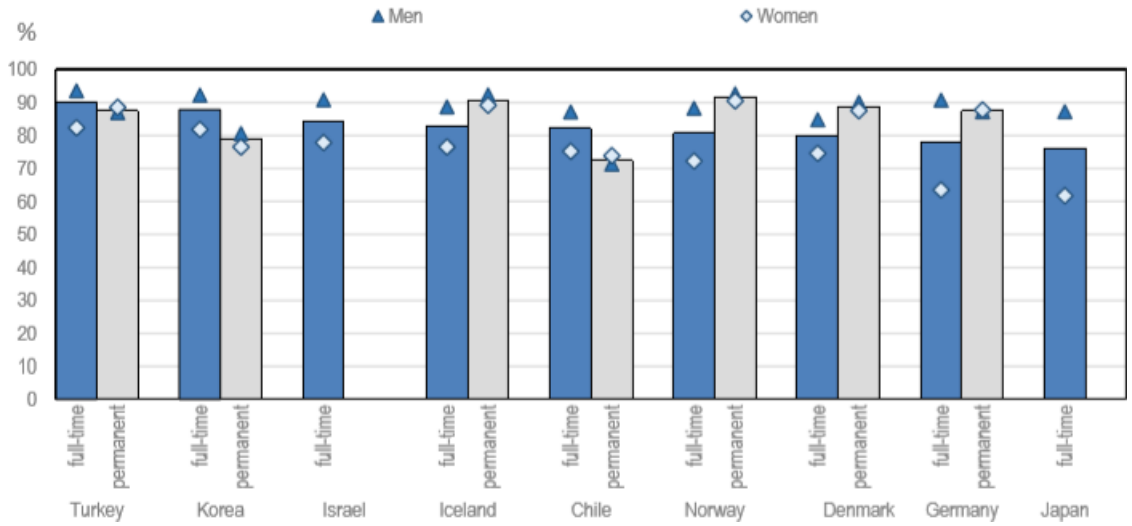
[125] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

Figure 14 - Percentage of staff with permanent contracts and full-time working hours



The prevalence of part-time working hours may represent a preference among ECEC staff, particularly if they are seeking to balance family demands with work, but this should be a choice offered to them rather than a lack of opportunity for full-time contracts. In some countries ECEC staff have lower rates of permanent employment (figure 15) than the overall labour force, and this lack of job security can make it difficult to attract new staff or retain existing staff.

Figure 15 - Percentage of the overall labour force with permanent contracts and full-time working hours for pre-primary provision at ISCED level 02 (2018)



The TALIS Starting Strong[126] report also notes that staff who have fixed-term contracts are less likely to have participated in professional development activities in the previous 12 months. This suggests that the type of contract staff members receive (i.e. permanent or fixed term) may determine their opportunities for ongoing professional development in addition to other staff characteristics (e.g. pre-service educational attainment).

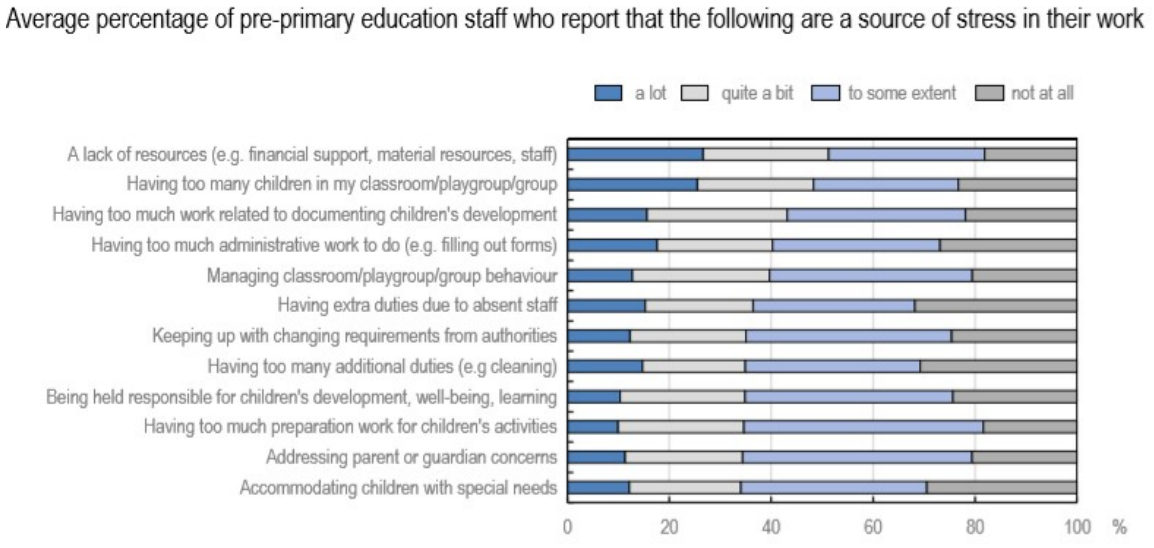
[126] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

Country examples	
Denmark	In 2019, the trade union for the ECEC sector (BUPL) completed a survey of members who were working as part-time pedagogues. A majority of these part-time working pedagogues said that they would return to full-time employment if the working conditions were improved e.g. better child-staff ratio.
Portugal	As generalist teachers, both preschool and primary teachers are entitled to a reduction of 5 weekly hours when they reach 60 years of age. When they reach 25 and 33 years of effective teaching service, they can still apply for a leave of absence from teaching for a school year. The Statute of the Teaching Career applies to preschool teachers working in the public sector. This statute can, however, be applied, with the necessary adaptations, to preschool teachers working in the for-profit and not-for-profit private sector. Non-teaching staff are part of the General Labour Law. Accordingly, their working hours are eight hours a day and forty hours a week. These are the working hours set in Portugal, with the exception of civil servants, who work 35 hours a week.

Working environment

The attractiveness of any profession is affected by the working environment - simply put, is the ECEC setting a place where staff enjoy their work and gain job satisfaction? The better the working environment; the more likely are staff to remain in their post. A 2018 survey of pre-primary teachers by OECD notes the following sources of stress.

Figure 16 - sources of work-related stress



Note: *Response options are ranked in descending order of the percentage of staff who rated them as "a lot" or "quite a bit" a source of stress.*
Source: TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database.

Creating an environment where staff wish to work is a central task for all managers: this is just as important in the ECEC sector as it is in other professional areas. Managing and leading teams requires sensitivity and an ability to balance professional autonomy with direction. ECEC staff are looking for flexibility (including managing their own family situations); support from

colleagues and managers; recognition for their work; good salaries with progression; opportunities to develop and receive training; and a positive environment which makes it enjoyable to go to work. This is a long list of expectations which can be difficult to meet. Managers know they need to create this sort of working environment if they are to motivate, encourage and retain professional staff. Achieving all this, while setting clear expectations of what is expected from ECEC team members, requires tact and diplomacy. For ECEC setting leaders, training and development provides them with valuable support to create this type of environment.

In addition to making the ECEC setting a 'better place' to work, a more supportive and enabling environment encourages staff recruitment and retention. One reason for professional staff leaving their job is because of the actions of managers - it is often always because they are dissatisfied with the work.

Eurofound's 2015 systematic review *on Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services*[127] summarised the evidence on the impact of working conditions. Their report noted that one of the studies reported findings on the effects of working conditions on pedagogic practice from the point of view of practitioners. This took place in Spain and found that the burden of dealing with too much administration had an adverse impact on teachers' pedagogical practice. Escalating administrative tasks coupled with changes to the school day to cut rest periods meant that staff had little opportunity to meet, plan, reflect on activities or engage in training.

In addition to the administrative burdens, there are physical requirements of working in the ECEC sector. The Democratic Trade Union of Crèche Employees in Hungary's survey of 6000 crèche workers highlighted the significant increase in the birth weight of babies compared to 15-20 years ago. A crèche normally has 12-14 children in a group and childcare workers often have difficulties in lifting children. It found that core practitioners lifted 1,200 kg/day. As the respondents in the survey were mainly women between the age of 40 and 50, the risk of osteoporosis was significant.

Improving the whole range of working conditions is a necessity to increase attractiveness of the ECEC professions.

[127] *Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review*, Eurofound, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

3. Staff professionalism – a key factor for high quality

The 2019 Council Recommendation for high quality ECEC systems invites Member States to 'support the professionalisation of ECEC staff, including leaders', and invites them to consider:

- *Improving initial education and continuous professional development to take full account of children's well-being, learning and developmental needs, relevant societal developments, gender equality ad a full understanding of the rights of the child;*
- *Providing time for staff for the purpose of professional activities such as reflection, planning, engaging with parents and collaborating with other professionals and colleagues;*
- *Aiming at equipping staff with the competences to respond to the individual needs of children from different backgrounds and with special educational needs, including disabilities, preparing staff to manage diverse groups.*

The European Quality Framework for ECEC highlights that there is a need for 'well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role'. It includes ten statements, each of which invites Member States to take action in relation to the quality of provision. A number of these statements cover actions related to ECEC staff:

- *state-of-the-art initial education and training programmes are designed with practitioners and provide a good balance between theory and practice. It is also an asset if education and training programmes prepare staff for working collectively and for enhancing reflective competences. Such programmes can benefit from training staff to work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups, from minority, migrant and low-income families;*
- *staff who are equipped to follow the developmental needs, interests and potential of young children and able to detect potential development and learning problems can more actively support child development and learning. Regular, tailor-made continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities benefit all staff members, including assistants and auxiliary staff;*
- *competences for staff should, in line with the different structures of training in the Member States, include knowledge of child development and psychology, child protection systems, and more generally on the rights of the child;*

The 2019 Council Recommendation for high quality ECEC systems, alongside the European Quality Framework for high quality ECEC, underpin this chapter. The further professionalisation of ECEC staff has an impact on the delivery of the curriculum; support for social inclusion; the ability of staff to respond to individuals' learning and caring needs; and the effectiveness of integrated services which focus on the holistic needs of children. This further professionalisation can be supported by strengthening initial and continuing education and training which can be provided through a range of approaches (e.g. traditional face-to-face provision, coaching, mentoring and on-line learning).

The research[128] emphasises the importance of staff expertise in providing high quality[129] ECEC. To fulfil their professional role in supporting children and their families, ECEC staff require high levels of skill and competence as well as a deep understanding of child development and knowledge about early childhood pedagogy. The further professionalisation of staff (ECEC assistants, core practitioners and leaders) is key to providing better quality services, higher quality staff-child interactions and better developmental outcomes for children.

Within the context of the widespread recognition that more and better education and training helps to strengthen the professionalisation of staff, it is important to look at specific activities which have a high impact. This helps to ensure that the interventions which are organised at the system level are as effective as possible and funding is well spent.

The research identifies a number of specific activities which lead to improved outcomes for young children - these include:

- providing support to new staff in their first six months of employment (e.g. mentoring, coaching, professional supervision, weekly team meetings, observation and discussion of practice, or other measures which are part of the setting's daily practice);
- ensuring there is a strong requirement for an initial qualification (better trained staff are more able to provide leadership to colleagues. In addition settings with more qualified staff offer higher quality support for children to develop their communication, language, literacy, reasoning, social, thinking and mathematical skills);
- providing continuing education and training (e.g. through mentoring by more experienced/highly qualified ECEC staff, encouraging reflection and coaching which is integrated into the ECEC setting's daily practice);
- enabling ECEC assistants to gain qualifications and take on a new professional role (e.g. by encouraging collaboration between core practitioners, assistants and other members of staff).

Improving staff education and training whether it is through better or more relevant initial preparation, more focused continuing training, is always expensive. However improved education and training can be cost-effective because of the impact it has on the quality of provision and children's outcomes. It is important that the success of any intervention is

[128] For example:
European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018
European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016
OECD, *Starting Strong IV - Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and care*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015
OECD, *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.
Slot, P., Romijn, B. & Wyslowska, O., *Inventory and analysis of professional development and models related to inclusiveness*, ISOTIS, 2017
NESET: Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in ECEC: Pathways towards qualification - 2016
Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review, Eurofound, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015
Guerin, B., *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - Early Childhood interventions and progression to higher education in Europe*, Rand Corporation, 2014

[129] As defined by the Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems

monitored and data is used to inform future policy developments in relation to staff professionalisation.

This European research into the importance of staff professionalism is included in many international reports e.g. ISSA's report into Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Competences and Standards[130] highlighted four areas where the quality of provision can be supported through staff professionalisation.

Figure 17 - supporting the workforce

This research analysed the competences and standards used in 15 countries and found that:

- competences for professionals and other staff are more likely to be in place in systems where there are clearly defined job descriptions. However, where these competences exist, they vary in format and content across roles, sectors and regions;
- there is no common core of competences for the early childhood workforce although competences commonly emphasise the importance of monitoring and evaluation, and interpersonal and communication skills;
- competences and standards can enhance the relevance of training and professional development programmes;
- competences can support continuous quality improvement by enabling professionals, other staff and their supervisors to more effectively assess performance;
- competences and standards can guide recruitment processes if they are aligned with the skills and profiles of the existing and potential future workforce;
- few systems, particularly in low and middle-income countries, have registration, certification, and licensing procedures in place, even though these processes can help recognise and professionalise the workforce and support the delivery of high quality services.

In a second report on staff professionalisation, ISSA commented on the organisation of training and professional development[131]. This report noted that:

- training and professional development programme are offered by a wide variety of providers and lead to different type of qualifications;

[130] Early Childhood Workforce Initiative's Landscape Analysis Series (a multi-stakeholder initiative to support and empower those who work directly with young children; it involved the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) and Results for Development (R4D)). *Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Competences and Standards*. Washington, D.C., 2018

[131] Early Childhood Workforce Initiative's Landscape Analysis Series, *Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Training and Professional Development*, Washington, D.C., 2018.

- although opportunities for training are increasing, they remain limited for those working with the youngest children, assistants and for rural and remote populations;
- limited financial support for training can contribute to further inequities in access;
- variation in the duration, structure and intensity of training programmes has an impact on quality;
- training opportunities are enhanced when they are aligned with competences and standards for different roles;
- the training and the professional development curricula should address the particular needs of the workforce and be relevant in local contexts;
- opportunities to gain practical skills are important components of initial training;
- in-service training opportunities are most effective when they are ongoing, tailored to individual needs, and incorporate peer learning;
- staff roles are often not clearly defined which weakens training and professional development and limits opportunities for career advancement;
- rapid training of staff who are already working in an ECEC setting can help to address workforce shortages and provide opportunities for career advancement;
- greater recognition from political and administrative leaders that the ECEC role is one that should be valued and praised.

Across Europe a range of approaches are being used to strengthen the quality of training and education as the professionalisation of staff is widely recognised as the most important factor for improving the quality of ECEC. Supporting staff helps to develop a competent and well-functioning ECEC system which promotes the importance of high quality provision for all children. While the content of training and education programmes can differ for those who work with children from birth to the age of three, and from three to the start of pre-primary/primary school, there is much that is common.

This chapter explores how national and local decision-makers, as well as social partners, training institutions and employers can support an increased professionalism of all the staff who work in the ECEC sector.

3.1 The professionalisation of ECEC staff needs to receive increased attention

Despite the widely-recognised importance of appropriately trained and qualified ECEC staff, this area of quality has not always received the attention that is required. The quantity and quality of the initial and continuing education and training available to ECEC staff has not ensured that **all** staff are well-prepared and supported in their role.

It is important to ensure the content of education and training (both initial and continuing) programmes is relevant for the realities of working in the ECEC sector. For many countries this relevance is achieved by focussing on competences, skills, behaviours and attitudes. The focus is not always on the content of the education and training curriculum; rather the focus is on developing attributes which help learners to join and remain involved in the sector for many years. Designing programmes which best meet learners' immediate and longer-term needs requires the active and full involvement of the social partners (employers and employees' representatives) and other stakeholders with an interest in the content of ECEC programmes e.g. higher education institutions and research organisations. Learners are less likely to be well-prepared for employment if there is a mismatch between the content of their education and training programme and the expectations of an employer. The need for relevance to the world of work applies to programmes for assistants, core practitioners and leaders.

Training programmes for ECEC leaders require the development of particular skills including the need to strengthen their pedagogic and managerial competence. The development of leaders' abilities to help staff to reflect on their own practice supports improvements in the quality of provision. In this context it is helpful for ECEC leaders to be aware of emerging research and new initiatives as this can strengthen their ability to be reflective and consider a range of approaches to leading their centres. Providing access to both initial and continuing training for ECEC leaders is an important aspect of improving the quality of ECEC provision. This training should be based on the actual job/role undertaken by ECEC leaders and provide opportunities to meet their peers, engage in discussion and reflection, and balance pedagogic and managerial leadership skills.

3.2 Mapping the competences of ECEC staff

While the work of assistants, core practitioners and leaders is different, there are many things about the ways they behave at work that is similar. The working group has considered the extent to which a common set of expectations could be developed for these members of staff. Their reflections build on work completed in Erasmus+ projects[132] and previous discussions in working group supported by the European Commission. These expectations combine an individual's ability to complete activities as well as their knowledge on ECEC practice.

The following expectations can be seen as relevant to all staff working in one of the three roles covered by this report. In an ECEC environment all staff can be expected to:

- promote each child's development and learning;
- work with the local community and within the ECEC system;
- work as part of a team;
- keep children safe;
- support children's transition into and from ECEC settings;
- be aware of the impact their practice has on children for whom they have responsibility;
- recognise the different cultural and social backgrounds of children;
- work with all families including those who may have different values and attitudes; and treat all children and families with respect.

ECEC staff who meet these expectations are likely to be operating within the values and regulatory arrangements which are determined at a local, regional or national level. In addition to these generic expectations of all staff, the working group considered whether there were specific core competences which were suitable for all assistants, core practitioners and leaders in all ECEC centres across Europe.

The working group believes there is a set of core competences which can be used and recommends that they are organised in six areas:

- knowledge and understanding (1);
- ECEC practice (2);
- working with children (3);
- working with families and the local community (4);
- working with internal or external colleagues (5);
- professional development (6).

They are a minimum set of expectations which can be enhanced or further developed in a national, regional or local context. They have been designed to be clear statements of action which can be developed further. They are suitable for all those who work with children (aged from birth to the primary school age) covered by the ECEC regulations in individual Member States. Each competence can be interpreted within the context of a Member State's ECEC

[132] e.g. THE SPROUT PROJECT considered a European profile based on knowledge and abilities to underpin European competences.

system(s). They have been designed as short statements which can (and should) be measured in order for ECEC staff and others to evaluate the extent to which each competence is being (or has been) demonstrated.

Table 1: Mapping of ECEC staff core competences

Competences	ECEC assistants (where applicable)	ECEC core practitioners	ECEC leaders (e.g. administrative and/or pedagogic head of ECEC centres)
Knowledge and understanding (1)	• have sufficient knowledge of different pedagogical experiences to organise them effectively • have sufficient knowledge of the ECEC setting's curriculum, the value of play and children's early development	• have a deep knowledge of different pedagogical experiences in order to develop and organise ECEC activities • have a deep understanding of the ECEC setting's curriculum, the value of play and early childhood development in order to support individual children and lead professional practice	• ensure ECEC staff deliver high quality pedagogic experiences • have a sufficiently deep understanding of how to manage and motivate staff in order to lead the delivery of high quality provision • have extensive knowledge of children's early development, learning and play
ECEC practice (2)	• are aware of the impact their practice has on children • are aware of the impact their values and attitudes have on children and their families • support children's play in order to promote children's well-being, development and learning	• evaluate the impact of their and others' practice on children and their families • are aware of the impact their values and attitudes have on children and their families • plan and create effective learning environments which support children's well-being and development, and enable children's learning to emerge through play and planned activities	• are aware of the impact the ECEC setting makes on each child and their families • ensure the ECEC setting demonstrates values of inclusivity, respect and tolerance • ensure the quality of provision is monitored and evaluated through internal and/or external processes
Working with children (3)	• maintain meaningful relationships with children	• manage and lead supportive educational and caring relationships with children	• create a safe and inclusive environment in which all children are valued, their

	• work with other staff to promote children's well-being, development and learning • encourage individuals and groups of children to engage fully in all the activities offered by the ECEC setting • create a caring environment where children can learn from each other	• work with other staff to promote children's well-being, development and learning • observe and document children's progress • work with other staff as part of a team to identify and intervene in situations in order to keep children safe and support learning	rights are respected and they are able to learn and develop through play • maintain accurate and up-to-date information on each child's progress • establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with children and other professionals
Working with families and the local community (4)	• develop effective relationships with families and the local community • treat all families with respect and according to their needs	• ensure the ECEC setting's approach to working with parents and the local community is implemented effectively • ensure parents are regularly involved in their children's ECEC activities • work with families to support their parenting skills	• support individual children and their families whose experiences make it more difficult for them to succeed in an ECEC setting • establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with families and the local community • establish and maintain good working relationships with families and the local community
Working with internal or external colleagues (5)	• maintain effective working relationships with colleagues • with support from colleagues, work effectively under the guidance of ECEC leaders	• provide guidance and support, including mentoring, to ECEC assistants or other staff • under direction from an ECEC leader, take responsibility for leading some aspects of the ECEC setting's operational activities	• create and maintain a professional, reflective and supportive working environment which leads to high quality provision • create and develop mutually-beneficial working relationships with colleagues from other settings and different professional backgrounds

			• work with colleagues to monitor and improve the quality of practice
Professional development (6)	• engage in regular professional learning and development • are able to reflect on, and verify the impact of their practice	• participate in their own (and promote their team's) ongoing improvements in professional competence and skills • work effectively with colleagues including those from other professional backgrounds (e.g. teachers, health workers, social workers, family support teams etc.) • through self-reflection demonstrate improvements in their practice	• create or maintain a learning environment which promotes professional development and enhances the quality of provision • combine pedagogic, and organisational leadership skills in order to support the needs of children, families and staff • use information from regular evaluations of the setting's practice to identify development needs of all staff

The selection of the core competences takes account of the European Quality Framework (EQF) which comprises ten quality statements covering the five areas of quality: access, workforce, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding. These statements can be compared against the core competences in this document - this matching exercise is attached as annex 3 to this report.

The core competences can be used and interpreted in a large number of different contexts. As set out in annex 2, the different roles in ECEC settings illustrate the complexity of provision across Europe and the importance of considering the core competences within the context of each ECEC system. As these are proposed as a set of minimum competences, there are other behaviours and skills which can be important in different contexts e.g.

- the direct involvement of centre leaders with children on a daily basis;
- the importance of collaboration between assistants (and other staff) and core practitioners;
- whether other groups of staff in an ECEC setting should have a similar set of core competences;
- how should the core competences be related to individuals' roles, job descriptions and any performance management arrangements;
- how should evidence of demonstrating the core competences be collected and evaluated.

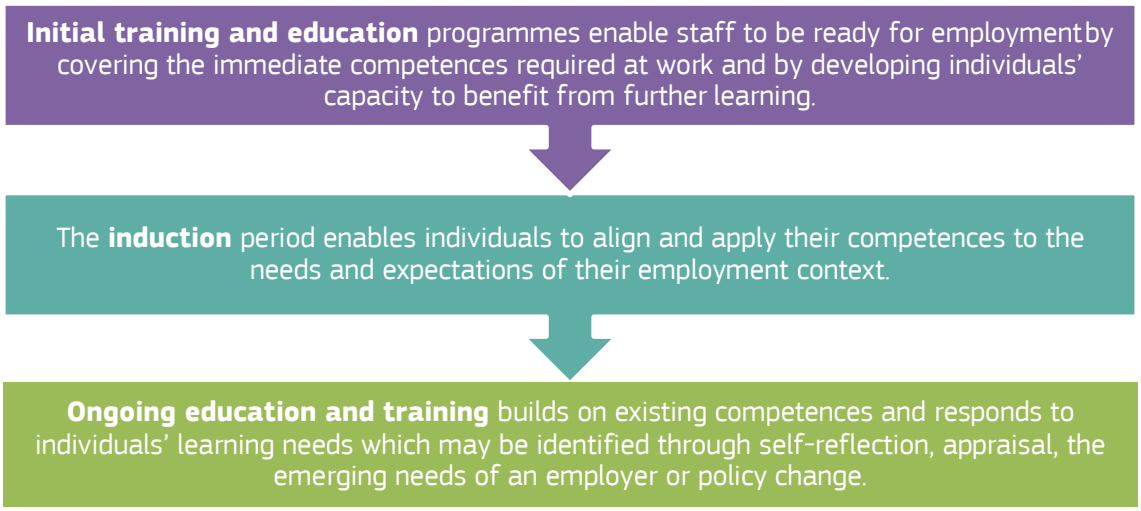
3.3 From initial to continuing learning: a professional journey

Alongside the establishment of a set of core competences for ECEC staff, it is important to consider how their initial and continuing education and training prepares them for their role. For most people the journey to professional competence takes time - and skills are acquired through initial training, a period of induction into the profession, and during ongoing professional development, as well as through everyday practice. All staff (assistants, core practitioners and ECEC leaders) need access to, and support, for all aspects of their initial and subsequent education and training.

This section looks at what is already happening in relation to staff training and education, and sets out how policy makers can strengthen this aspect of professionalisation. In many situations, the initial training and subsequent development of ECEC staff is insufficiently focused on the competences that are required for working in an ECEC centre. If there is a mismatch between the skills needed for employment and the skills acquired through training, this needs to be addressed in order to improve the quality of ECEC provision.

Recognising the value of the journey

The initial training for assistants, core practitioners and ECEC leaders is unlikely to provide all the experiences and expertise that is required for a particular role in an ECEC setting. Competence is enhanced through employment and the acquisition of skills and knowledge through day-to-day engagement with colleagues and children. The development of competence takes time and individuals need opportunities to practise and refine their approach. Everything cannot be learnt immediately and new members of staff cannot be expected to be fully competent when they start a new role. Initial training and education, induction and on-going professional development are all part of the process of developing competence and each has an important role in strengthening and supporting improvements in the quality of ECEC provision.



Each aspect of professional development should be connected, and the proposed core competences can provide the framework for these connections. Taken together these three aspects of the professional journey ensure staff are fully supported in their employment.

In many ECEC systems these three aspects of provision are in place for core practitioners; however the approach used for assistants and leaders is more fragmented. It is important for assistants and leaders to have access to, and benefit from, both initial and continuing training in order to improve the quality of ECEC provision. This education and training should be based on the actual job/role undertaken by ECEC staff and provide opportunities for staff to meet their peers and engage in discussion and reflection.

However, the initial training, induction and continuing professional development is not universally available for all ECEC staff. Sometimes there are mandatory requirements; at other times education and training arrangements are advisory or voluntary. These differences in approach reflect tradition, policy priorities and the financing of staff development. The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of each aspect of education and training can help to strengthen the case for providing all three aspects of the professional journey.

National or system-level strategies

Ongoing improvements in ECEC provision are best achieved when there is a national or system-level strategy to enhance quality. Support for staff professionalisation is an important aspect of any strategy which focuses on high quality ECEC. Each Member State's strategy will differ, but they are all likely to include arrangements for the initial education and training, induction and ongoing professional development of all staff, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Success is more likely when the strategy is co-ordinated and managed at a local, regional or national level rather than relying on the independent actions of many individual ECEC settings or providers.

Country examples	
Lithuania: new legislation	In Lithuania all ECEC teachers must have higher or advanced education (ISCED 6), a good knowledge of the Lithuanian language, have completed a special pedagogy and psychology course for teachers and be able to work with information and communication technologies. A great deal of progress has been made on these targets - in the 2018-2019 school year 84% of teachers had completed higher or advanced education and 71% had acquired the appropriate education qualification. However, as a result of observing teachers and analysing their competences, changes were made to the legislation (Law of Education) to support staff and ensure their continuing education. The 2018 legislation included: • a new Code of Ethics setting out the main principles of conduct including the principle of responsibility. By following this principle, an educator is required to continually improve their professional competences; • new "Teacher training regulations" requiring trainees to acquire a teacher qualification and subject competences; new rules on how to organise pedagogic programmes, pedagogical internships, the professional development of teachers, and the requirements for operating teacher training centres;

	• new expectations regarding in-service training (categorised as non-formal adult education). At least once in every four years, all teaching staff have to prove they have improved their skills in developing children social and emotional competences; • amendments to the Requirements for Teachers' Qualifications setting out the requirements for the competences needed by ECEC teachers and student assistance specialists in Digital Literacy Programmes. Support for these ECEC and school developments have used the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (5.77 million Euro). Through a new project 'Continue' (Tęsk) six universities and one college provide pedagogic studies and the development of subject specific competences. These studies focus on the competences teachers and educators need in order to work in the relevant subject or pedagogic specialism including ECEC. The three-year project (2018-2020) will finance 821 study places. As part of the project university staff act as mentors to support 180 teachers who are in their first year of employment. This support includes observing teachers and helping them to reflect on their pedagogy.
Ireland: developing a graduate-led workforce	"First 5" (Ireland's whole-of-Government strategy for babies young children and their families, 2019-2028) includes a commitment to develop a comprehensive Workforce Development Plan for the ECEC sector. The Plan will set out steps to achieve workforce-related commitments, including: achieving a graduate-led (50% graduate) workforce by 2028 (up from 25% graduates in 2019); raising the profile of careers in the sector; establishing a career framework and leadership development opportunities; building a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce; introducing a national programme of Continuing Professional Development opportunities for practitioners; further developing incentives for employers to attract and retain staff; and introducing minimum qualification requirements for childminders and for school-age childcare. A consultation process with practitioners and other stakeholders is under way in mid-2020, with a view to publishing an interim report by the end of 2020 and implementation plans in 2021.
Ghent, Belgium: a professional development strategy	The qualification requirements for childcare workers (0 to 3 and out of school care) in Flanders (and Belgium on a whole) are quite low (secondary vocational level) compared to other European countries. To increase the level of professionalisation, over the last 40 years the city of Ghent has developed a multi-layered competent system. The following core elements are crucial in this multi-layered strategy: • a team of pedagogical coaches is responsible for developing a multi-layered CPD programme for all of the 800 childcare workers and service leaders. This includes training in a wide range of pedagogical topics and approaches using a variety of different CPD methods. The program can be adapted to the specific context of the centres because it is based on the daily practice of the setting and the experiences of the pedagogical coach connected to every location. This programme enables the pedagogical team to provide a long-term strategy for CPD, develops innovative learning strategies and policies in cooperation with research centres and exchanges with other cities on a regional and international level; • for childcare workers a professional competence profile was developed based on 15 competences which cover the skills needed to work with children, parents, the ECEC team and the local neighbourhood. These competences have different

	levels starting with competences for new childcare workers and evolving to competences for experienced high level childcare workers. The competence profile is also a source of inspiration for induction process and the city's CPD policy; • during their first year of employment, childcare workers are mentored by an experienced colleague in the same childcare centre. These mentors are mentored by their centre leaders and provided with mentor training; • professional learning communities on different topics (from 'Job-crafting' to 'Risky Play') are provided for childcare workers and centre leaders throughout the city of Ghent; • a new BA programme (Pedagogy of the Young Child) has been set up by a local university. This training focuses on pedagogical coaching and the graduates are trained to coach centre leaders and childcare workers.
Poland: integrating initial and continuing training	A system of professional promotion of teachers was introduced in 2000 (and gradually modified in subsequent years). It includes four levels: • trainee teacher; • contracted teacher; • appointed teacher; • chartered teacher, There is also an honorary title of school education professor for outstanding chartered teachers. From the moment a teacher starts work in a school they become a trainee teacher and begin a nine month internship towards the position of a contracted teacher. If the trainee receives a positive evaluation and is accepted by the committee who complete an interview, the head teacher awards the trainee the position of contracted teacher - after a year of work at the school. After working for another two years as a contracted teacher, the teacher can start an internship of two years and nine months for the position of appointed teacher. If the individual receives a positive evaluation of their work and passes the examination before the examination board, the local authority in charge of the school will appoint the teacher (this takes place after six years of work in the school). After obtaining the position of an appointed teacher, the teacher employment is guaranteed. After working for another year as an appointed teacher, the individual can start an internship of two years and nine months towards becoming a chartered teacher. If there is a positive evaluation of the individual's professional achievements during the internship and there is acceptance from the qualification committee after an analysis of these professional achievements and an interview, the body responsible for pedagogical supervision grants the status of a chartered teacher (This is after ten years of work in the school). Each teacher decides whether and when to start an internship for an appointed or chartered teacher's position as it is not obligatory to make an application. However the remuneration system and the hiring rules provide appropriate benefits

	(including financial) from taking on this training. This encourages teachers to strive for further professional advancement. Only appointed or chartered teachers can apply for certain positions and functions in the educational system e.g. school director, Visiting Officer, inspector, methodological advisor, expert on professional advancement.
Slovenia: professional development of education staff in kindergarten	The Organisation and Financing of Education Act determines the general conditions for staff working directly with children in public kindergartens: • the education staff in kindergartens must have a perfect command of the Standard Slovenian language; • hold a relevant educational qualification as stipulated by the Act and other regulations and • pass the professional examination in accordance with this Act. The Kindergarten Act and the associated regulations determine the relevant fields of study. The qualification requirements for pre-school teachers in settings for children under the age of three and in settings for children over the age of three are the same. In accordance with the Act, the educational activities in public kindergartens are undertaken by pre-school teachers, pre-school teacher assistants, counsellors, organisers of health and hygiene regimes and organisers of meals. Pre-school teachers must have an education qualification of at least a first cycle study programme (ISCED 6) in pre-school education or a second cycle study program (ISCED 7) in the field of education, arts, humanities or social sciences supplemented with the relevant pre-school teacher training. Pre-school teacher assistants must have an upper secondary educational qualification in pre-school education. The first cycle study programme for pre-school teachers integrates theoretical professional and special subject; the professional subject syllabi outweighs the rest (it is at least 85%). Practical training in kindergartens is compulsory (12 credits). All new education staff have support from mentors during the induction period, which may be organised as a traineeship (trainees enter the profession by initially undergoing practical training under the mentorship of an experienced mentor and gradually take more responsibility) or, when there is a vacancy, kindergartens may hire a beginner teacher (their work is based on a programme of induction developed with their mentor and head teacher). Trainees as well as beginners (hired when there is a vacancy) must have completed their relevant initial education. During the induction period they gain knowledge of the real pedagogical process at a kindergarten, and learn about various methods and forms of pedagogic work. At the end they have to pass the state professional examination to be fully qualified. An important part of their professional development is further training; CPD is a vital element of their career path because in the face of the rapid changes, they must continuously validate and update their knowledge and skills. CPD is mandatory for all education staff in kindergartens, they have the right to five days of professional training per year or 15 days every three years. Pre-school teachers as well as other education staff, together with the head teacher, decide on the training programmes they take.

Finland: new legislation on staffing	The new legislation on ECEC[133] came into force in September 2018 and established ECEC as part of the education system. One of the central themes in the Act are regulations related to job titles and qualifications of staff and data collection in ECEC. The new staff structure in centre-based ECEC, from January 2030 will be: • 1 teacher • 1 teacher or social pedagogue • 1 childcarer From 2030 each head of an early education centre must have a master's degree in educational sciences. To support the achievement of the new staffing structures, the yearly target for the number of ECEC graduates and special needs teachers, and the number of graduates is monitored closely. The annual number of graduating teachers has increased from 475 to 590. For 2021 to 2024 the numbers will increase further to 855. This work is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture's project to improve the national data collection and statistics on ECEC. The database on ECEC will be used by different authorities according to their statutory right to have information. The database includes information on the providers, the public and private ECEC settings, the children and the staff. The Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed an expert group for the development of ECEC staff education and training issues. This group includes experts from the Ministry and each training level (upper secondary, vocational education and training, Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities), the National Agency for Education, the Education Evaluation Centre, the Trade Unions, the Student Organisations, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and a representative of one municipality. The expert group is working on different themes: research, continuous learning, educational pathways and anticipation of the workforce. The expert group will prepare a "Development programme on ECEC training" which will be released in January 2021.
Norway: a national strategy to enhance competence for all staff	The aim of the national strategy *'Competences for tomorrow's kindergartens 2018 - 2022*' is to strengthen competence for all staff in the kindergarten sector. Targeted measures on different levels should contribute to: • strengthening opportunities for kindergarten teachers to keep themselves up to date in their field; • increasing the proportion of kindergarten teachers and the proportion of kindergarten teachers with a relevant master's degree; • increasing the proportion of child care and youth workers in kindergarten; • providing continuing leadership training for kindergarten heads and assistant heads; • providing staff members with the skills needed to create a good, inclusive and safe environment for care and learning and for combating bullying in kindergarten;

[133] https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2018/20180540

	• strengthening continuous and further education so more employees acquire formal competence in early childhood education; • developing the pedagogical work in all kindergartens by using kindergarten-based competence-building measures; The strategy has been developed in close co-operation with relevant stakeholders and includes roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, focus areas for the period of the national strategy, and a system for competence development with targeted measures for all groups of staff.

Strategies based on collaboration and shared values

Developing a strategy for staff professionalisation takes time; involves joint decision-making or consultation with social partners and stakeholders; and emphasises the needs of children and their families. The factors influencing the development of a strategy (at the local, regional or national level) include:

- agreement on the vision and purpose of a strategy;
- a concern for the best interests of the child and the family;
- an inclusive approach that considers the views of all those with an interest in supporting staff professionalisation;
- a focus on the same outcomes arising from staff professionalisation i.e. a set of agreed competences;
- an agreed way to measure the impact of the strategy;
- a process to quality assure the implementation of the strategy.

Country example	
Milan (Italy)	Milan has more than 1.4 m citizens and employs more than 3,000 ECEC core practitioners and 300 ECEC assistants ("auxiliary staff") who work with 33,000 children aged from 0-6. The city is responsible for 104 nurseries, 172 pre-school settings and 11 integrated childcare centres. It also manages a number of public private partnerships and oversees the accreditation of private ECEC providers. The city has developed its own policies and strategies to professionalise the ECEC workforce. These cover initial training, the selection of staff, continuing professional development and working conditions. The city offers a range of support e.g. the provision of short courses, advice on educational planning, research and 'action research', the promotion of a pedagogic culture and opportunities for ECEC staff to meet and discuss practice. Support is focused around three dimensions: the provision of an effective network of ECEC practitioners; the comprehensive supply of documents and advice to support staff; and encouragement to experiment and 'learn by doing'. This professional support focuses on the implementation of the city's *Pedagogic Guidelines for 0-6 childcare services*. These guidelines, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, put the child at the centre of provision by:

- accepting each child's situation is the one that they experience;
- listening to and understanding the point of view of girls and boys and promoting their participation;
- dedicating educational and pedagogical attention to the needs of each child;
- recognising that children's differing learning needs are "normal" (e.g. including the needs of children with special/additional educational needs, disabilities, development difficulties, learning difficulties);
- designing and undertaking every intervention in the best interest of the children.

3.4 Starting the journey

In many situations recruiting and retaining ECEC practitioners is difficult and this has an impact on what level of qualification can be required from both an ECEC assistant and a core practitioner. However, irrespective of the recruitment situation, it is important to strengthen the quality of provision by developing and maintaining high expectations from the initial period of preparation.

This should include a mandatory period of pre-serving training, opportunities for learners to work and be trained in ECEC settings as part of their initial programme, and a significant induction period where individuals are assessed in relation to demonstrating a set of required competences.

Preparation for employment in the ECEC sector usually involves an initial education and training programme, and a period of induction. The focus of the initial programme is on entry to a profession while the focus of induction is preparation for a particular job. While induction build on learning acquired during the initial programme, the emphasis is more practical and organised around the specific needs of an employer, groups of children and their families. In many ways the initial programme is generic and induction is precise and tailored to the individual needs of the member of staff within a known context. Despite these differences, each part of the period of preparation can make use of the core competences as training and education can be organised to help individuals to demonstrate their skills and abilities.

Systems which are able to create clear connections between the two phases of preparation are more likely to be able to strengthen the quality of training, support retention, and enable individuals to thrive in the sector. Typically this development of clear connections is achieved through:

- the use of a common set of personal, professional and social competences for initial training and induction;
- the development and use of a clear set of ethical values;
- ensuring every trainee/student benefits from an opportunity to complete significant periods of real world training in ECEC settings as part of their initial programme;
- initial training programmes whose content encourages reflection, the analysis of effective practice and opportunities to learn from practical experience.

Initial learning: a range of strategies

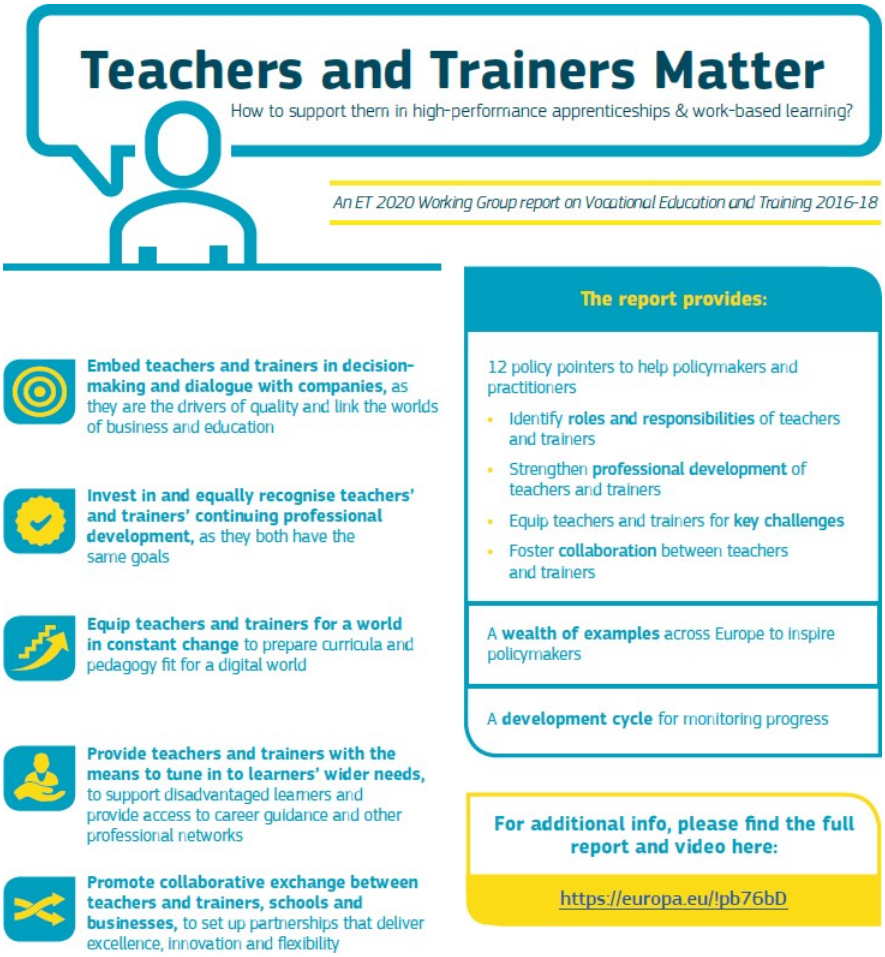
Vocational training, apprenticeships, dual-learning and work-based learning

Qualifications which are designed to enable individuals to enter the ECEC sector are expected to include a strong focus on vocational relevance. Unlike more generic subjects (e.g. history, political science, geography, business studies, sport etc.) most learners taking an ECEC qualification have already decided their immediate career plans. In making this decision, before they take the qualification, learners will expect to be prepared for a job in the ECEC sector. This very-strong connection between the qualification and the occupational area highlights the

importance of a vocational focus which emphasises the relationships between work-based training and study.

Work-based learning (or training) is more focused than work experience. It is an opportunity for the individual to be trained while being employed or working as an intern/student in the ECEC sector. Across Europe there are many ways of organising these periods of learning - the best of which involve work-based mentors who can support, train and assess learners during their study for their qualification. Preparing to work in the ECEC sector is not just about practical skills and competences; training and education has to prepare learners for a potential career in the sector and this requires higher-level thinking skills, critical analysis and the ability to reflect on your own (and others') practice.

As work-based learning becomes an increasing important part of all initial education and training programmes, there is an increased emphasis on training and supporting work-based mentors. For training organisations, including universities, the recruitment and selection of mentors has become an important aspect of the quality assurance of provision. A previous European Commission working group on vocational education and training[134] offers 12 policy pointers and inspirational examples to strengthen the support for teachers and trainers who work with apprentices and learners undergoing work-based learning.



[134] European Commission, *Teachers and Trainers Matter - How to support them in high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018.

In some ECEC systems, work-based mentors are supplemented or replaced by mentors from the training institutions. However the initial programme is organised, learners need to gain practical experience alongside their acquisition of the knowledge and expertise required to succeed in the sector. Whether the majority of time is allocated to education and training in the workplace or in an institution of learning, each part of the learner's experiences should be designed to ensure there is a coherent and integrated programme. In most situations learners benefit from completing training in two practical training contexts - and taken together these last for at least three months. In many programmes of study, the practical elements of training will be considerably longer.

In 2018 an ECEC expert group, working under the guidance of the European Commission, looked at the best ways to measure the quality of ECEC provision. It highlighted the importance of work-based learning[135] to measure the quality of provision by considering "the percentage of ECEC staff working directly with children who have received at least three months' relevant work experience as part of their initial training programme."

Country example	
Spain: Higher Technician in Pre-Primary Education	The education authorities have designed a vocational qualification for pre-primary education. This is part of a VET diploma programme which is based on learning outcomes and has been approved by Royal Decree. It covers 55-65% of the national curricula in order to ensure the national validity and consistency of the qualification. The Royal Decree sets out the facilities and equipment requirements for VET providers, the assessment criteria and the teacher requirements for each VET diploma programme. This qualification (ISCED 5) is based on 2000 hours over two academic years and includes a compulsory work placement module in an ECEC centre. Students who wish to take the Higher Technician in Pre-Primary Education[136] should hold an official Certificate in Post-Compulsory Secondary Education (Bachillerato) or have passed the corresponding access test. The successful completion of the diploma provides access to university studies. Throughout the training and study, students acquire the general competences associated with the design, implementation and assessment of educational projects and programmes for young children during the first cycle of pre-primary education (0-3). The students work in the formal education sector, and use the pedagogical approach prepared by a schoolteacher who is specialised in pre-primary education. Those who gain the qualification can work in either the formal or non-formal education sector, or within children's social services.

Induction into the profession

Taking on a new job always involves a great deal of learning. There are new systems and processes to learn; new colleagues and managers to work with; and new approaches to

[135] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/825252b4-3ec6-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-6966849

[136] More information on the qualification for the Higher Technician in pre-primary education is available: https://www.todofp.es/dam/jcr:9cb116ff-e249-4cba-b3f8-7f924e911a62/tseducacioninfantilen-pdf.pdf

understand. These expectations, alongside the need to become aware of the needs of the setting's children and families, exist in the ECEC sector. The European Quality Framework for ECEC therefore highlights that 'offering mentoring and supervision to newly recruited staff during their induction can help them to quickly fulfil their professional roles'.

Typically entry into a new role is accompanied by a period of probation where an individual's skills and competences are reviewed to ensure they are appropriate to their role. In addition, many employers and ECEC systems operate an induction period for those members of staff starting their first role in an ECEC setting. Induction is different from probation as:

- **induction** is seen as a process of confirming that an individual is suitable for the profession for which they have been trained. It can involve a formal process of registering with a professional organisation; a process of demonstrating a set of competences in an employment context; or it can be part of initial education and training as professional recognition is conferred after induction rather than after the award of a qualification;
- **probation** focuses on confirming someone is suitable for the job to which they have been appointed.

Both induction and probation can involve an assessment process which can be conducted by an internal or external colleague. It is also possible for the two processes to be combined. Both processes can be seen as part of the quality assurance arrangements of employers and the ECEC sector.

There are different approaches to induction based on how key questions are answered e.g. decisions on:

- what should be seen as support;
- who should provide support;
- do those who provide support have to be trained;
- does support have to last for an agreed number of hours/week;
- are part-time staff included etc.

However despite these differences, induction is always characterised by support, guidance, personalised assistance, reflection and a formal assessment process which confirms that the individual has met the requirements and expectations of the profession.

The 2018 ECEC expert group identified the importance of induction[137] as a way of measuring the quality of provision. This group proposed to measure 'the percentage of staff who receive formal support for at least their first six months at work.' This group argued that staff who are better supported provide a better service to children. This support could be based on mentoring, coaching, professional supervision, weekly team meetings, observation and discussion of practice, or other measures.

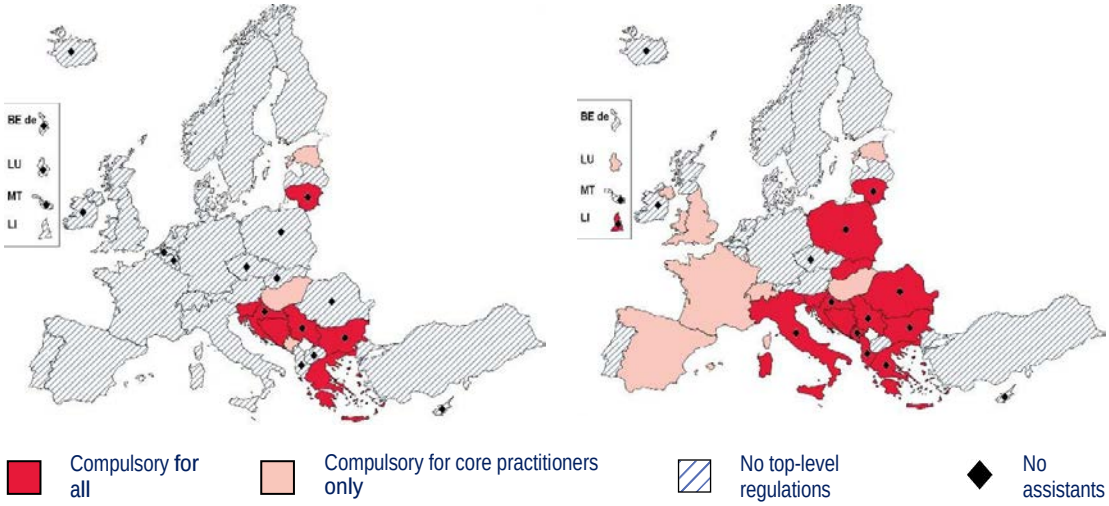
[137] European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018

Eurydice[138] reports that in 2018/19 only seven countries make it compulsory for all staff to complete induction. Six additional countries make it compulsory but only for staff working with older children. Induction is more often compulsory for staff working with older children than for those working with younger ones; the duration of induction also varies significantly across Europe. Eurydice reports the length of induction depends on whether ECEC staff work with children under, or over the age of three (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Induction for core practitioners and assistants in centre-based ECEC settings in 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	1	2	●	●	1	●	1	●	2	●	●	0.17 or 0.83	●	●	●	1	●	●	1	1
	≥ 3 years				0.25-1	3		1		3		2	1		1	1	:		12/24	1		
Assistants	< 3 years	○	●		●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	0.17 or 0.5	○	●	○		●	●	●	○
	≥ 3 years			○				○		●					0.25					○	○	

● No compulsory induction period ○ No assistants

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

Source: Eurydice. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition, p. 82. The figure shows the status of induction according to top-level regulations[139]. 'Compulsory for all' either means that it is compulsory both for core practitioners and assistants or that it is

[138] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

[139] Germany: Whether assistants are employed to work with either group of children depends on the Land. Spain and Luxembourg: The figure shows the situation for the public sector. There are no top-level regulations concerning 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). Switzerland: The minimum duration varies between cantons.

compulsory for core practitioners where there are no assistants. In addition, in some countries, there could be regulations in the collective agreements on induction.

Country examples	
Italy: induction periods	During a compulsory one-year induction period (at least 180 days during the first year of employment), newly-qualified teachers are expected to attend: • educational activities with children (at least 120 days); • training activities (50 hours) including • meetings; • laboratory sessions to test and develop ideas; • peer to peer training and observation; • on-line training; • visits to innovative schools; • the production of documents through a professional portfolio. As an example, the city of Milan selects the staff who will work in one of their ECEC settings after completion of the initial education and training programme (which includes placements in ECEC settings). All those appointed as a core practitioner complete an induction year which includes an introduction to their role, information on the responsibilities of the city and what is expected from a member of staff. Each core practitioner works alongside a mentor and is supported by the head of the setting who acts as a coach. There are formal monthly meetings between the mentor and the new member of staff. In addition to centre-based training and support, the city organises central training for all newly appointed staff. This can include training from external organisations. New members of staff are appointed for a six-month probationary period and complete their induction, following a formal evaluation after 12 months.
Turkey: teacher training candidates	The process of appointing teachers to schools under the Ministry of National Education (MONE) is carried out according to MONE Regulations on the employment, appointment and movement of the teachers. Acting teachers complete 60 days of work and are assessed. Those who are successful take an exam at the end of one year. Contracted teachers are appointed in February and then complete a 654-hour training programme including in-classroom and in-school activities, outdoor activities and in-service training. Trainee teachers study planning, preparation and assessment, activity implementation, monitoring activities, and observe in-school activities. Outdoor activities include familiarising with the city identity, instructional processes, knowing about the nearby schools, meeting with the experienced staff, volunteers and entrepreneurship and professional development and career. Trainee teachers are expected to read a book and watch two movies each month. Their in-service training focuses on democracy building in Turkey, history of the teaching profession, multiculturalism and its reflection on education, the basics of educational approaches in our culture and civilisation, values and business ethics, regulations about teachers and teaching process, communication and classroom management, comparative educational

	systems, national and international education projects, inclusive education and training for disasters.
Slovakia: induction	Each core practitioner is obliged to start induction when they are first employed in a kindergarten. Their induction programme (the adaptation programme) has to be completed successfully within two years from the start of their employment. A mentor coordinates and takes responsibility for induction, and evaluates the degree of acquisition of professional competences at the end of induction process. For some of the time, the new staff member works alongside the mentor (usually another core practitioner) in order to demonstrate the induction requirements which are set out in legislation. Induction is characterised by support, guidance, personalised assistance, reflection and formal evaluation. This process enables the mentor to confirm that the new staff member has met the requirements and expectations of the profession. Successful completion of induction is based on a recommendation from the mentor alongside a formal evaluation by a three-member examination committee[140].
Ghent, Belgium: induction	After their initial training based on the national legislated vocational programme, childcare workers enter the job market with limited experience as an intern. Therefore the city of Ghent provides a six month induction period for childcare workers alongside in-service training. The 'Welcoming Bath' training starts within the first six weeks and consists of a 4 half-days of training. It introduces new childcare workers to the city's mission and their pedagogic policy on ECEC. All the topics are connected and based on concrete daily practises in the day care centres. This first series of training explains the competence profile and learning to use a self-reflective approach to work. In the first six months of employment all childcare workers and centre managers are required to complete a 'basic course' which provides more in-depth coverage of the city's pedagogic frameworks in order to strengthen the reflective approach.
Slovenia: induction	Pre-school teachers as well as their assistants with relevant initial training and education can enter the profession in two ways: applying for open recruitment trainee position (traineeships) advertised by the Ministry of Education or by applying for an open recruitment position advertised by a kindergarten (beginner role based on receiving mentor support). The induction period is based on trainees undergoing practical training under the mentorship of an experienced pre-school teacher. They gradually take more responsibility. According to the prescribed programme, trainees learn about the content needed for independent work and prepare for the state professional examination. The traineeship normally takes six months (for pre-school teacher assistants) or ten months (for pre-school teachers). The traineeship programme is prepared by the mentor (appointed by the head teacher) who has to comply with a set of national requirements. The traineeship programme includes the familiarisation with pedagogic processes in the pre-school institution and with various educational methods. Trainees deepen their knowledge of and improve their skills, learn to design lesson plans, prepare lessons and execute them while observing the mentor's lessons and other pre-school teachers. They cooperate with the leadership of the

[140] Zákon 138/2019 Z.z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov - § 31; § 37 (1); § 51; § 52; § 64 (2c); § 70 (6a): https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2019/138/20191015.

kindergarten, organising parent meetings and consultations. Before the traineeship concludes, they need to take the professional examination. The mentor prepares the trainee for the professional examination and writes the final report on the trainee's capabilities and assesses their abilities for individual work.

The induction for beginners can be organised differently but is still based on a programme of induction and interaction between the pre-school beginner, the mentor and the head teacher. The programme is adapted in line with the time the beginner is working with children and their overall working hours.

Tutoring, coaching and mentoring

Training and education is partly about preparation for work, and partly about the development of skills which support long-term career aspirations and subsequent learning. In those sectors where the initial training and education programmes are likely to lead to employment in a limited number of occupational roles, it is particularly useful if the competences achieved during the initial and induction periods are the same (or similar). Most ECEC learners on an initial programme will be looking for employment in the sector.

There are many ways to enhance learners' confidence and ability to take on their first job, and enabling them to succeed at work. These include:

- **mentoring** which Cedefop defines[141] as guidance and support provided in various ways to a young person or novice (someone joining a new learning community or organisation) by an experienced person who acts as a role model, guide, tutor, coach or confidante. Mentoring is developmental and based on building strong relationships between colleagues. It seeks to influence trainees and new members of staff through discussion, reflection and guidance
- **coaching** which is focused on specific tasks e.g. showing a new member of staff how something is done, discussing an activity which was not performed to the required standards etc.;
- **tutoring** which is similar to a more traditional teaching relationship between a 'teacher' and a 'pupil'.

In many systems staff combine aspects of tutoring, coaching and mentoring. The balance between the three types of support and guidance can change through initial training and induction, and in line with the employer's and the individual's needs.

Taking on a role to support colleagues can be demanding, and it can be very difficult to provide positive or negative feedback. As well as the time involved in supporting a colleague or trainee, staff need to understand the competences which are being developed, how the individual will be assessed or monitored, and how to give feedback which enables progress. The expectations and obligations associated with these roles highlight the need for training and the careful selection of individuals who could be members of staff in the same setting or from another organisation.

[141] CEDEFOP, *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014

Country examples	
Norway: induction and mentoring	A 2016 report highlighted that 40% of newly qualified and employed teachers (NQTs) in ECEC and school settings said that they had not received mentoring. A parliamentary resolution in 2017 asked the government to establish a national framework for a mentoring programme for NQTs in ECEC settings and schools. The government has followed-up this resolution through an agreement between the national authorities and the organisations representing the ECEC sector, schools, teachers, student teachers and universities. The agreement includes principles and obligations for mentoring. The national framework includes a web-based handbook and an updated education programme (30 ECTS) to qualify mentors. The agreement lasts from September 2018 to July 2021. The ongoing evaluation of this initiative is examining the quality of guidance offered to NQTs, and how the stakeholders use the principles and meet their obligations. The interim evaluation in March 2020 highlighted that: • compared to 2017, there has been an increase in the number of NQTs both in ECEC settings and schools receiving mentoring (from 55% to 63% in ECEC settings); • 60% of setting owners say they have a plan for mentoring; • in ECEC settings mentoring usually happens twice a month, but sometimes it is more frequent; • between 56% and 64% of mentors say they have received formal training as a mentor; • the NQTs who received mentoring are more positive (compared to those who have not received mentoring) about their first year as a teacher. The final report will be prepared in early 2021.
Italy: induction tutors	During the induction of new teachers, there is a specific and strategic role for their tutor. Tutors can qualify as a "mentor" with responsibility for welcoming newly hired teachers into the professional community and encouraging their participation in the life of the school through listening, consulting and collaborating. The focus of their tutoring is on the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of teaching. The tutor includes observing new members of staff in the classroom, developing cooperative approaches to learning, encouraging new teachers to experiment, and validating/checking didactic resources. The training of tutors is organised by the Regional school offices and can involve universities. The training focuses on professional supervision (e.g. observation criteria, peer review, preparation of didactic documents, professional counselling, etc.).
Belgium (Flanders): mentors	Within the context of the 2014 Parliament Act, subsidies have been granted by the Flemish Government to a group of mentors to support unqualified childcare workers in home-based settings to get qualified. There are many unqualified childcare workers in home-based settings. The legislation requires them to gain their qualification by 2024. As they work alone with no back-up, they have limited opportunities to access training and gain their qualification. The mentors' role

includes developing and/or improving instruments to identify and assess the competences of home-based child care workers. The mentors work in partnership with an approved test centre and develop tailor-made training pathways for home-based staff to demonstrate any missing competences and become qualified, without having to follow a formal training programme.

The quality of initial education and training

The search for quality is essential for the initial training and education of all ECEC staff. The quality of ECEC provision is enhanced when the content of the initial training and education programmes and their associated learning outcomes match the competences required to work in the ECEC sector. If there are significant mismatches between the outcomes of initial training programmes and the skills required to be successful at work, individuals and the sector are less able to provide high quality ECEC.

OECD's survey of ECEC staff working with children under the age of three[142] in centre-based settings in Denmark, Israel and Norway noted that a substantial minority (25-30%) of staff had not been trained specifically to work with children as part of their initial education.

It also makes it much more difficult for individuals to successfully complete their induction programme. Making changes to the content and pedagogy of initial programmes takes time as these decisions are often made by autonomous organisations. The development and use of an agreed set of competences can help to reduce any mismatch in expectations.

The 2018 ECEC expert group[143] looked at ways to measure the quality of provision and proposed 'the percentage of staff working directly with children who have completed professional education relevant to their role in an ECEC setting.' In addition this group considered it important to look at the percentage of:

- ECEC leaders working in an ECEC setting who have completed leadership training or have a recognised, relevant leadership qualification;
- staff who receive formal support for at least their first six months at work;
- staff working directly with children who have received at least three months' relevant work experience as part of their initial training programme.

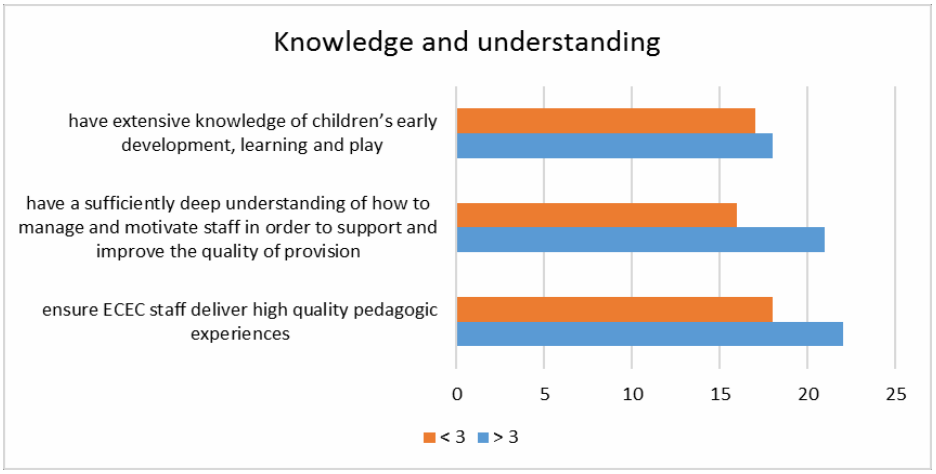
This expert group noted that professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff pedagogy and children's outcomes. Developing high quality education and training programmes for all staff working in an ECEC context (e.g. preschool teachers, assistants, educators, family day carers etc.) helps to create a shared agenda and understanding of quality.

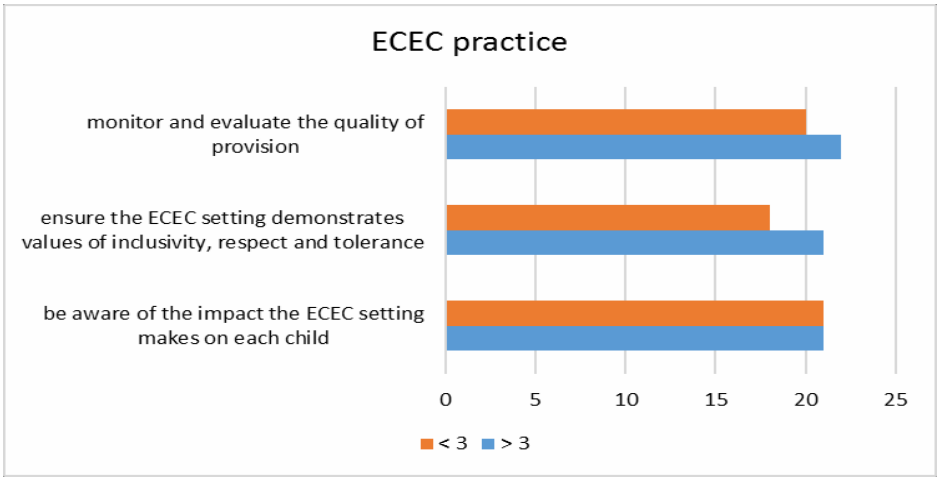
[142] OECD, Quality Early Childhood Education and Care for Children Under Age 3 – Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2020.
[143] European Commission, *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators - Recommendations from ECEC experts*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018.

The quality of the initial education of ECEC leaders

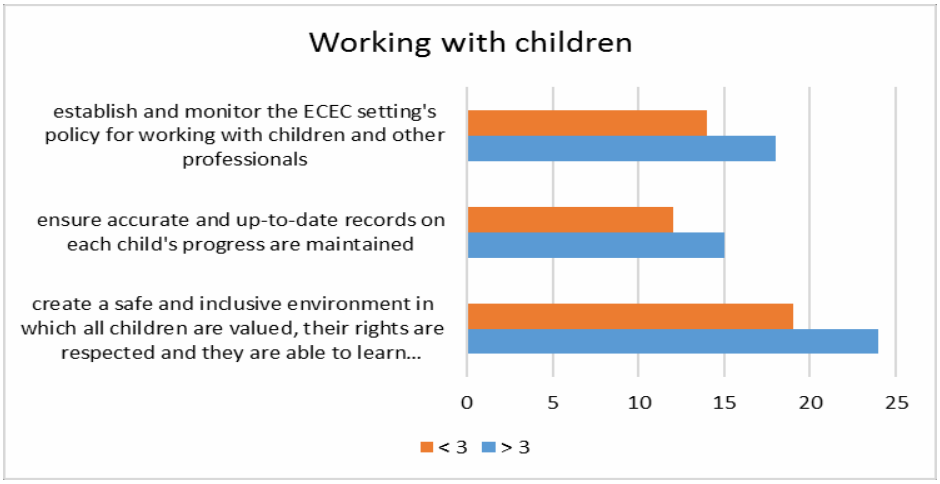
Leaders, as well as core practitioners and assistants, benefit from initial and continuing training. As shown in figure 19, the expectations and requirements to become an ECEC centre leader vary across Europe. In 2019, a small survey of members of the working group which produced this report looked at each competence required from leaders (working with children under and over the age of three)[144], and how important they were in enabling ECEC leaders to fulfil their tasks. The survey results showed that expectations vary according to the age of children being involved:

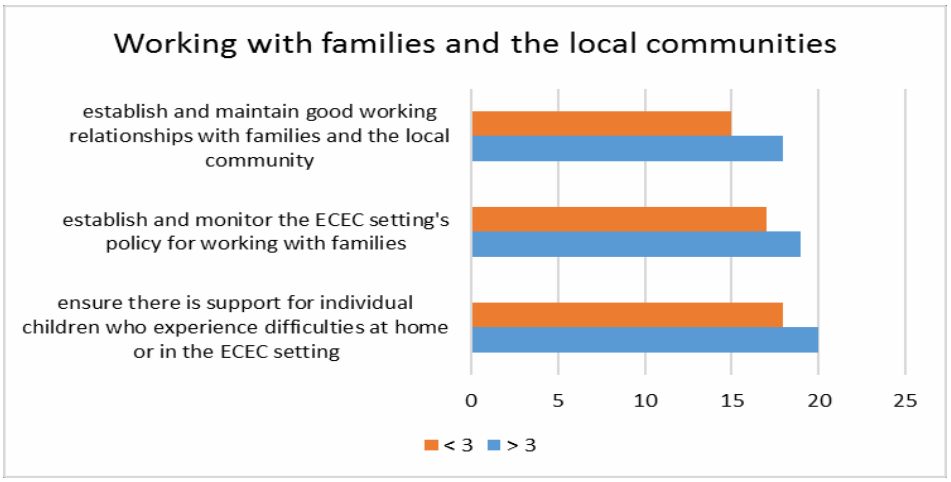
Figure 19: Number of working group respondents who thought each competence was very important, for children under and over the age of three





[144] Based on the draft mapping of competences presented in this report.


Working with children
establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with children and other professionals
ensure accurate and up-to-date records on each child's progress are maintained
create a safe and inclusive environment in which all children are valued, their rights are respected and they are able to learn...
0
5
10
15
20
25
< 3
> 3


Working with families and the local communities
establish and maintain good working relationships with families and the local community
establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with families
ensure there is support for individual children who experience difficulties at home or in the ECEC setting
0
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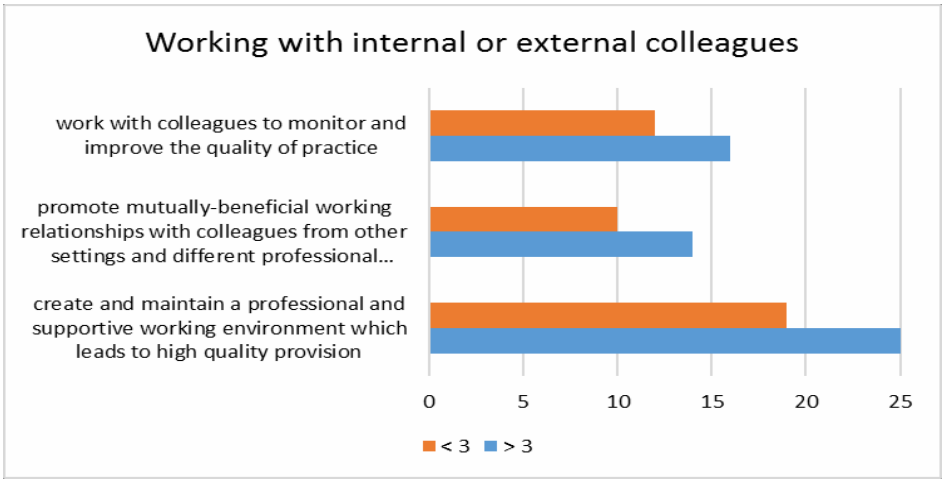
15
20
25
< 3
> 3


Working with internal or external colleagues
work with colleagues to monitor and improve the quality of practice
promote mutually-beneficial working relationships with colleagues from other settings and different professional...
create and maintain a professional and supportive working environment which leads to high quality provision
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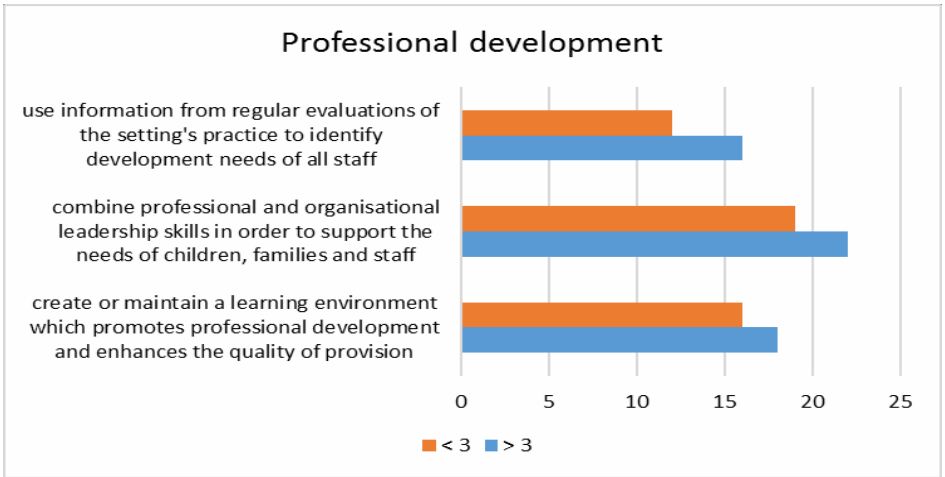


The survey also considered the availability of support for those taking a leadership qualification or seeking training.

- The percentage of occasions when there was *always or sometimes* support for those taking a qualification - financial (41%) and other support (43%).
- The percentage of occasions when there was *always or sometimes* support for those training - financial (37%) and other support (48%).

Finally, the survey of working group members looked at the extent to which training prepared leaders to acquire the expected competences and accomplish their tasks. The survey showed there is a wide discrepancy between the expected (or desired) competences and the training provided to ECEC leaders, with an even wider gap for leaders working with children under the age of three (figure 20) than for leaders working with children over the age of three (figure 21).

Figure 20: number of systems in which training is available for leaders working with children *under the age of three* to acquire the expected (desired) competences

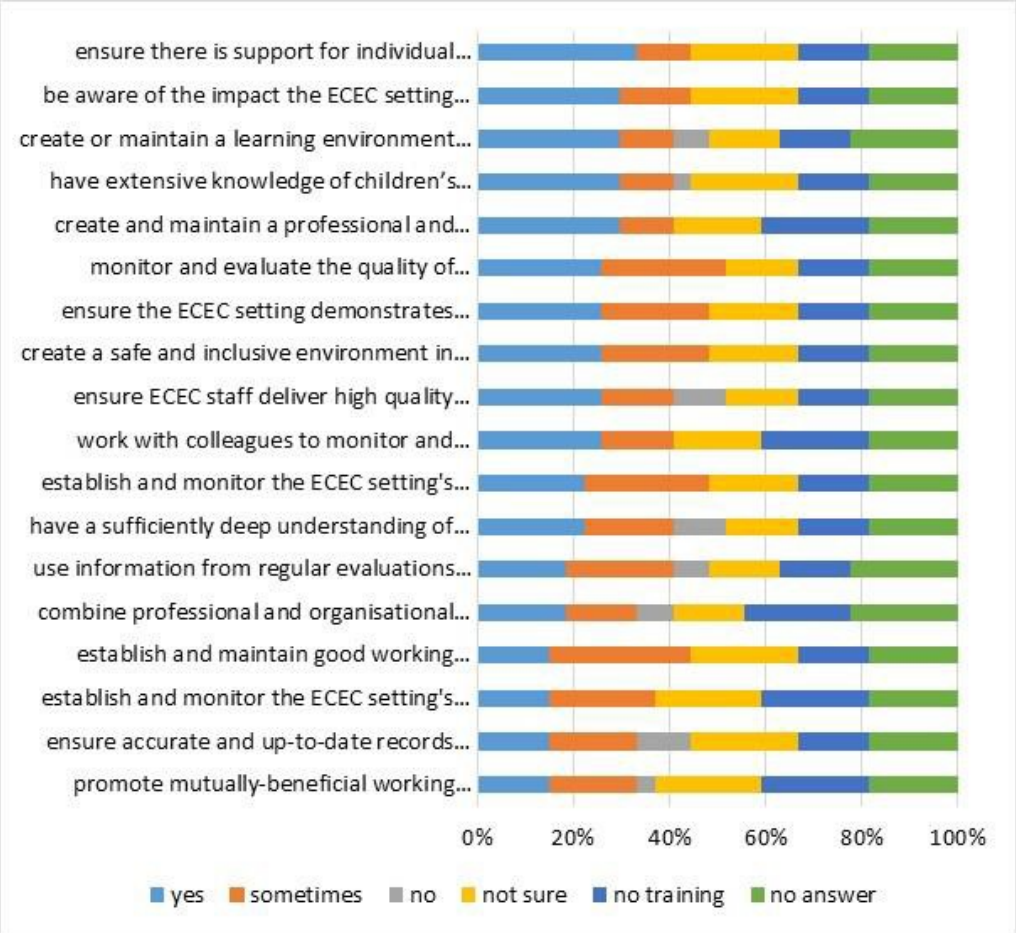


Figure 21: number of systems in which training is available for leaders working with children *over the age of three* to acquire the expected (desired) competences

The survey concluded by noting that:

- there were different expectations for leaders working with children under three and over three;
- there was a great deal of support for the use of a set of competences for centre leaders;
- the training currently offered to leaders did not match the competences that appeared to be important in ECEC systems.

It is therefore important that:

- **national and local policy makers as well as employers should work closely with training providers to ensure that ECEC leaders receive the adequate training to complete their tasks**
- **a range of measures should be taken to encourage ECEC leaders to train adequately (e.g. financial support)**

Country examples	
Sweden: training following appointment	Chapter 2 of the Education Act requires ECEC leaders in Sweden, within five years of their appointment as a head of a preschool, to participate in a compulsory 'head teacher' training programme. This is the same programme which is offered to head teachers in schools.
Norway: leadership training for head teachers in kindergartens	The national legislation[145] requires all head teachers of ECEC settings to have a bachelor's degree in kindergarten teacher education or a pedagogic degree with a focus on working with children. The national leadership programme lasts for three semesters and aims to support head teachers and assistant head teachers in public and private kindergartens. It aims to enhance management skills and the development of quality in the kindergartens. During recent years significant changes in society led to greater diversity in the sector; larger kindergartens; more diversity among children when it comes to languages and cultural background; an increasing number of children under the age of three and with special needs attending kindergartens. The changes have led to a more complex and challenging role for head teachers, and a need for additional training to fulfil their tasks. The national leadership programme seeks to reinforce the competences of head teachers and stimulate reflections on management and responsibility through a series of tasks, case studies and discussions. This national programme has been evaluated and changes have been made to respond to head teachers' feedback and comments.
Denmark: equipping pedagogues to become leaders	As part of the agreement on salary and working conditions between Local Government Denmark and the trade union BUPL, a 2018-2020 project focused on motivating pedagogues to become leaders. A number of municipalities have been involved in developing new ways to prepare pedagogues for a leadership job. This involves courses (Leader at the step – the leap for leadership) for pedagogues to learn about the requirements to become a leader. A survey has shown that 43% of pedagogues are interested in becoming a leader but they are worried about the tasks, if they have the necessary competences and if the workload is too much. On the other hand they would like to become a leader to create well-being and job enjoyment among staff, and to influence the profession and educational strategies. They would like to receive focused preparation for the profession as a leader, to have a more flexible transition from being a core practitioner to a leader and the possibility to try out the job before they take on the role. This is achieved through the course which includes theory and practice in order to find out if the job as a leader is something to aim for. The course is run by the Centre for Public Development of Competences in three municipalities. The experience from these municipalities is being used to inform other municipalities and prepare well qualified leaders for the future.
Slovenia: the National School of	The initial head teacher education is the same as for pre-school teachers or counselling specialists. Candidates must have at least five years of work experience in education and have the title of advisor or councillor (or have had

[145] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-64/KAPITTEL_5#KAPITTEL_5.

Leadership in Education	the title of mentor for at least five years). The initial head teacher training involves completing a training programme leading to the licence for head teacher - the Headship Licence Programme. Legislation requires all potential head teachers to participate in this programme. The candidates can be head teachers appointed within the previous year or aspiring head teachers. The training programme lasts for 144 hours and is based on six modules with optional subject matter, and a final task at the end of the programme. The programme aims to train participants to take on school and kindergarten leadership and management as defined by the legislation, as well as developing individuals' knowledge, skills and competences. The Headship Licence Programme is organised by the National School of Leadership in Education which was established in 1995 as a public service by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Over the last 25 years it has developed a system of lifelong learning based on the professional development of Slovenian head teachers. In addition to the Headship Licence Programme the National School of Leadership in Education organises programmes for newly appointed head teachers and experienced head teachers. These include: • mentoring for newly appointed head teachers: the programme is intended to offer systematic support and assistance for head teachers in their first term of headship; • the Headship Development Programme which has been designed for head teachers after two mandates of headship. It aims to help them to adopt innovative and effective management approaches, to learn, and develop quality and organisation efficiency. The National School of Leadership in Education also offers programmes of support to head teachers to promote and develop practical solutions to adopt in ECEC settings, and training for middle leaders.
Finland: development programme on leadership	In the Government Programme and as part of the Right to Learn programme, a leadership development programme for ECEC and pre-primary and basic education will be implemented in Finland during 2020-2022. The aim is to develop up-to-date, unified, research-based and nationwide university-level management training which is implemented both in degree training and in-service training. It also aims to strengthen the coherence and continuity of ECEC and pre- and primary education in leadership. The current situation of leadership will be assessed by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)[146]. Support for leadership and networking between leadership researchers and leaders and developers will be strengthened by the National Agency for Education. A support website and support materials for managing curriculum work will also be prepared.

[146] https://karvi.fi/en/early-childhood-education/.

Examples of system-wide strategies for initial education and training

In most ECEC systems there are rules or regulations relating to the qualifications or competences required for new members of staff. These rules are most likely to cover core practitioners. However, as shown in figure 7, many countries and systems have no regulations covering ECEC assistants. One of the advantages of system-wide expectations is the assurance provided by clear expectations regarding the initial qualification or training. However these assurances are diminished when there is an excessive amount of variability between the same programmes or qualifications offered by individual training providers.

Greater consistency, and therefore greater confidence about what can be expected from newly qualified staff, can be achieved through a system-level strategic approach to the initial education and training programmes. Such an approach could involve clear statements about the content of all programmes; the outcomes or competences which should be achieved by all learners; or the structure and organisation (including periods of work-based learning) of all programmes. Such system-level expectations for both initial training and induction can be established at a local, regional or national level.

Country examples	
Estonia: reform of initial training and education	In Estonia's unitary system there have been significant changes to initial education and training in the last ten years. Children are seen as active participants in their learning and teachers are trained to support the children. This has led to new programmes for the initial professionalisation of staff and all pedagogues need to complete a BA based on pedagogical training associated with a set of professional standards which were developed in partnerships with stakeholders. This BA programme covers psychology, educational science and practical activities e.g. play, transition from home to ECEC settings, organising services, didactics, inclusion, child development etc. This new initial training curriculum has improved connections between theory and practice, and better meets the professional standards. There are more visits from students to ECEC settings - these start in the first year of the degree and include 4/5 weeks practice with time for reflection. Following the completion of this degree, all ECEC practitioners must complete induction during their first year of employment and receive advice and guidance from mentors.
Ireland: new criteria for recognition of degree programmes	There used to be considerable diversity in the degree programmes (EQF Level 6) relevant to ECEC in Ireland, with little national oversight of the structure or content of programmes. Following a process of research and consultation with stakeholders, in 2019 the Irish Government published Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care Sector, to support the development of professional awards that will prepare core practitioners to take on the complex challenges of practice. The Criteria and Guidelines include minimum requirements in terms of programme content, course duration (either 180 or 240 ECTS credits depending on qualification level) and structured, supervised, assessed professional practice placements (at least 35% of the overall course duration). To support implementation, a Qualifications Advisory Board was established in 2020, to review degree programmes for their coherence with the Criteria and Guidelines. In future only practitioners who complete degree

	programmes approved by the Qualifications Advisory Board will be eligible for recognition and funding. In addition, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (the regulator for qualifications) in 2019 published new Professional Award-type Descriptors for early learning and care qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 on the EQF. These are aligned with the degree-level Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines to create a continuum of qualifications. Through a Workforce Development Plan (currently being developed), this continuum of qualifications will be linked to new competence profiles for different occupational roles in the sector.

3.5 Continuing the professional journey

Initial training and induction provides the basis for employment and a career in the sector. As this career progresses individuals and their employers will be looking to enhance skills and competences. The demands for additional training, guidance and education can arise for a variety of reasons e.g. individuals' career aspirations; changes to the ECEC curricula; new scientific knowledge on child development; new requirements on how ECEC settings are organised; in response to annual appraisals or as a way to motivate and encourage staff.

Very often continuing development does not focus on the acquisition of new or additional competences. Instead it focuses on developing existing competences to a higher level and/or acquiring new knowledge. When new competences are involved it is usually because the individual is preparing to take on a new role or develop a particular specialism e.g. working with children who have additional needs. Encouraging the refreshment, reinforcement and enhancement of existing competences involves identifying individuals' motivations and organising training and support to meet their needs.

The OECD notes[147] that *participation in in-service training (or professional development) is the most consistent predictor of a quality staff-child interactions, and also has direct links to child development and learning.* The OECD's current review of quality[148] is also looking at how investment and opportunities for staff development enhance children's development, motivate staff and support the profession.

High quality and relevant CPD which is offered to all staff (and not just the core practitioners) helps to create a more vibrant and dynamic workplace; promote the ECEC setting as an attractive place to work; support the retention of existing staff; encourage and promote professionalism; and focus ECEC practice on the quality of provision. In addition, CPD can be one way for individuals to demonstrate their competences; reflect on whether they wish to take on a more senior role; and complete an additional qualification.

Policy-makers therefore need to develop a lifelong learning strategy for the ECEC sector, which needs to be supported by investment and developed in partnership with social partners and other key stakeholders. To support this effort, this chapter explores:

- **the levels and obstacles to participation in CPD,**
- **the various ways to organise and fund CPD,**
- **methods and actors involved in designing and delivering CPD,**
- **the diversity of learning strategies,**
- **country-wide strategies to foster provision of quality CPD to all ECEC staff.**

[147] OECD, *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018.
[148] OECD, *Quality beyond regulation* (due to be published in Starting Strong VI in 2021)

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD)

A professional duty, an obligation or an option?

CPD can be organised in different ways and cover many different topics. It is typically considered as:

- a **professional** duty when CPD is regarded as compulsory without a minimum amount of time being specified;
- **mandatory** when there is also a specified minimum time requirement;
- **optional** when it is not specifically mentioned in the regulations. This does not mean there is no CPD provision for ECEC staff but there is less emphasis on the role of CPD in ensuring a high quality workforce.

The CARE project (Curriculum and Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC) looked at the conditions for developing initial professional competences and for sustainable workforce development (CPD). One report[149] notes *there are vast differences between countries in terms of resources and regulation of in-service training, and two opposing approaches have emerged. The first places responsibility for CPD with the individual (or e.g. professional organisations) in an entirely decentralised system with little or no regulation. The second places responsibility with national or local authorities which establish systems for continual professional development (with varying degrees of transparency and regulation) and provide some degree of support and resources. The potential benefits of a more systematic approach to in-service professional development, and of establishing strong links between pre-service and in-service professional development, remain largely unexplored and unexploited.*

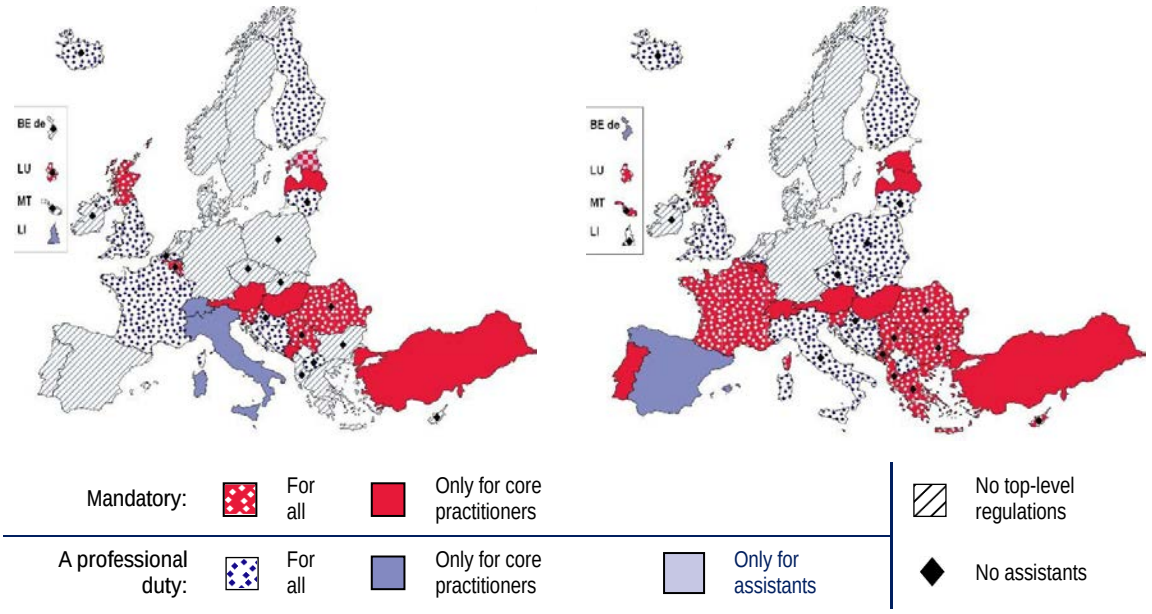
Figure 22 notes that only a quarter of the education systems make CPD mandatory for core practitioners working with younger children. A few more, but still less than half of the education systems, require CPD for core practitioners working with older children. In ten ECEC systems, CPD is a professional duty for all staff. And in five additional countries this professional duty only applies to staff working with older children.

[149] CARE, *Comparative review of professional development approaches*, 2015.

Figure 22 – Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for core practitioners and assistants working in centre-based ECEC settings, 2018/19

a) Staff working with children under 3

b) Staff working with children aged 3 and over



Source: Eurydice. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition, p. 84. The figure shows the status of CPD according to top-level regulations[150]. 'Mandatory': CPD is compulsory and the minimum amount of time to be spent on it is specified. '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.

One conclusion from this data is **that there is currently 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.**

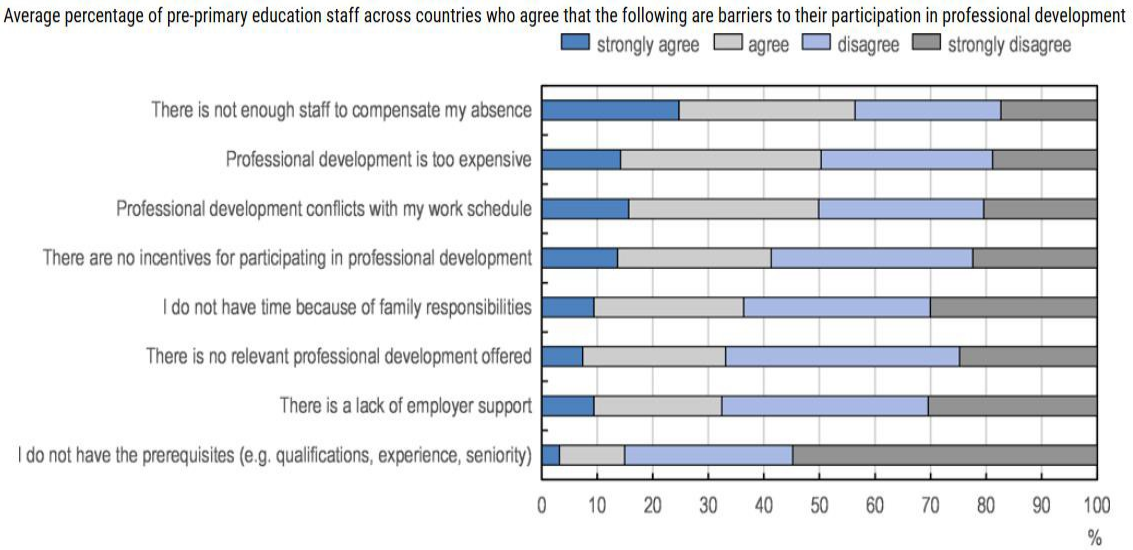
[150] Germany: The figure represents the situation in most Länder. CPD is mandatory only in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia. Whether assistants are employed to work with either age group depends on the Land. Spain: The figure shows the situation in most of the Autonomous Communities. However, 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 the figure (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. Finland: the obligation is for the ECEC organiser or provider to ensure that ECEC staff participate sufficiently in in-service training that maintains and develops their professional skills. The implementation and effectiveness of in-service training must be monitored and evaluated. This is regulated by the Act on ECEC.

Obstacle to participation in CPD

The barriers facing staff who wish to participate in CPD can be significant - lack of funding; lack of time; lack of suitable provision; lack of commitment by individuals; lack of support from leaders, lack of access to training centres, etc.

One survey[151] of staff and leaders in nine countries looked at the barriers to participating in CPD (figure 23).

Figure 23 - Barriers to participating in CPD



Source: OECD TALIS Starting Strong 2018

Chapter 2 of this report examined how child-free time could improve working conditions of ECEC staff, and the possible impact this could have on the attractiveness of the profession. We must also recognise that availability of such child-free time is important for ECEC staff to participate in CPD.

It is essential for decision makers, ECEC employers and training providers to identify the barriers most relevant to their national, regional or local context (e.g. through surveys or studies) in order to design efficient measures and incentives, and facilitate participation in CPD.

Organising and funding CPD

There are different ways to organise CPD: the content and approach can be decided centrally (at local, system or national level); by individual settings or by individual members of staff. In most situations it is best to combine all three approaches in order to find activities which appeal to the largest number of ECEC staff. Alongside understanding what outcomes are required from CPD, it is important to consider which organisations provide the training. When the demand for CPD cannot be met by high quality, local training providers (including staff in ECEC settings) there will be considerable frustration with the system. However getting it right (i.e. through a system which is based on individuals' needs and desires for CPD) helps to make the ECEC

[151] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

profession more attractive, support retention and the quality of provision, and motivate existing staff. CPD needs to be attractive to respect the work-life balance of the staff who attend, and be relevant to the needs of staff and children.

Finding the best, and most affordable, way to ensure CPD takes place is an important aspect of staff professionalisation. For those systems which make CPD compulsory there are significant challenges associated with monitoring that it is happening and deciding what are the consequences if an individual (and their employer) does not complete the required CPD. Creating compulsory CPD can lead to the need to establish significant systems for monitoring take-up alongside the monitoring of the impact of further training. In addition, in an ideal world, CPD would occur because individuals (and their employers) recognised its benefits and considered it part of their professional responsibility. On the other hand, without compulsion less CPD will be completed, it will be more difficult for staff to find the time for CPD, decision on CPD will be the responsibility of ECEC managers/setting owners, and there is a risk that practice does not change with the times. It is, of course, possible for any strategy to combine compulsion (e.g. if there is a new curriculum) with a voluntary arrangement which supports individuals and their employers who wish to participate in CPD.

Whatever decisions are made it is important to ensure the quality of the CPD provision is monitored and evaluated, and its impact is measured in relation to changes in individuals' practice. As the focus for CPD is improving quality (as measured by children's learning and development) the monitoring and evaluation should focus on outputs and outcomes for children.

Where there is a nationally funded strategy for CPD, it is often connected to the measurement of the impact/results of training, and an examination of the changes that arise from CPD. **There is a need for monitoring of the impact of training, including feedback from stakeholders, as this helps to strengthen the quality of CPD and make the case for additional funding**.

Continuing professional development benefits assistants, core practitioners and centre leaders - it can be easy to forget or ignore the ECEC assistants and centre leaders. **It is important to monitor who receives CPD** as often the majority of support is allocated to the core practitioners, and assistants and leaders have fewer opportunities. The quality of ECEC is enhanced when CPD includes training for all members of the team.

In an environment where there is rarely sufficient funding to cover all the required CPD, many ECEC setting leaders and decision makers look for ways to increase the available finance. It is important that nationl and local decision-ùmakers ensure availability of funding to support staff to participate in CPD.

Country examples	
Italy - financial support	Italy's national plan for continuing training is based on supporting individuals. All teachers in State schools are allocated 500 Euros every year which has to be used for training. The Ministry of Education also provides financial resources to networks of schools throughout the country to organise training activities. As part of the process, the ECEC settings (State pre-schools) define the training needs of their staff and then decide what training (and what approach to training) works best for

	them. The training has to be in line with the priorities defined by "the national three-year teacher training plan for 2016-2019".

It is also important to think about the practicalities of CPD as courses have to be designed, mentors need to be trained, centres need to be equipped and staff need a range of options. In some countries CPD is organised in regional centres and the ECEC practitioners are heavily involved in deciding its content and design. The need to consider practicalities require system leaders to consider the content and best pedagogy for CPD in order to have the greatest impact on practice. Given the variety of arrangements in the ECEC system, a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be successful e.g. there is a need for different arrangements in urban and rural areas; different incentives to participate in different CPD topics or activities; different arrangements for the public, private and voluntary sectors etc.

A shared responsibility

Supporting improvements in staff professionalisation is a crucial aspect of the management and governance of an ECEC system. It is the responsibility of policy-makers to strengthen the quality of ECEC by setting out clear priorities for initial and continuing education and training. These can often be further developed at a local or regional level, or through a collective agreement. Staff professionalisation is an ongoing process and policy officials need to find ways to encourage, support and monitor CPD arrangements in all ECEC centres. These developments should be in partnership with staff in ECEC settings as this helps to ensure that the policies and approaches to CPD enhance quality, place children at the centre of provision, and meet the needs of families and the local community.

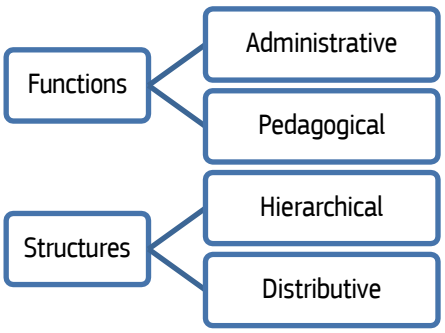
Country examples	
Ljubljana (Slovenia) – Education Centre	Since 2013, the Education Centre in the City of Ljubljana has developed its own strategies to support the professionalisation of ECEC (and school) staff which enables different professional workers to connect and exchange practices. The centre is designed for professionals in education - educators, pre-school teachers, management, counsellors, special pedagogues who work with children and adolescents with special needs in the City of Ljubljana and complements CPD offered at the state and system level. The centre provides five programmes: • professional development of special and social pedagogues; • individual counselling programme; • a telephone and e-counselling programme for educators, teachers and families; • a programme of lectures and seminars for educators, teachers and families; • a school programme for parents/families. The Education Centre uses examples of effective practices in kindergartens alongside knowledge from professional literature. It checks and tests various possible approaches to practice, examines the challenges of implementing new approaches and exchanges experience. It has successfully offered programmes for

	education professionals who work with children with special needs. In 2019/2020, the second cohort of professional workers from kindergartens and schools completed a two-year training programme to work with children with special or additional needs.
Malmö (Sweden) – developing local trust	The ECEC department in the municipality of Malmö has offered ECEC settings support and opportunities for CPD without limiting local initiatives. The focus is on building trust between the ECEC settings and the municipality. The municipality has high ambitions and places demands on the work of preschool teachers - this is combined with increased support and better working conditions. Alongside these local initiatives to support the initial training and CPD of preschool teachers, the national system ensures there is sufficient flexibility to facilitate local variations. The municipality of Malmö's approach to developing and adjusting the work of the ECEC settings has been gradual, with a high degree of involvement and dialogue with representatives of preschool staff and leaders. Follow-up activities, and the monitoring and evaluation of CPD have been designed in order to learn rather than to control. This has been one way of building organisational trust.

The role of ECEC leaders to support the CPD of their staff

A 2019 OECD literature review[152] examined the research on ECEC leadership and how leaders have an impact on the quality of ECEC provision. Research suggests that leadership plays a central role in improving and sustaining the quality of provision in ECEC settings. The literature review noted that support for ECEC leadership may need to be strengthened in areas such as recruitment, preparation and professional development, recognition of qualifications and compensation and job design. The review's analysis noted that leadership can be considered in terms of its functions and organisation (Figure 24).

Figure 24: ECEC leadership: functions and structures



In relation to the functions (or roles) of ECEC setting leaders, there is a noticeable trend towards ensuring a balance between administration and pedagogy. Leaders are increasingly expected to be able to organise and manage a centre, and provide professional leadership to support children's development and learning. Given this trend towards more complexity, ECEC settings are examining the best ways to ensure there are sufficient human resource and expertise to

[152] OECD, *Leadership for Quality Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD Education Working paper N° 211, 2019

offer this leadership. In this context the 'lone leader' who makes all the decisions and manages everything is becoming more scarce. Newer approaches include clear responsibility through a formal hierarchy which may include deputy leaders and assistant leaders; or a more distributed leadership model where a large number of individuals (e.g. year leaders, curriculum leaders) collectively manage and lead the setting's provision.

The role of ECEC leaders includes the promotion of a positive organisational climate, staff well-being, and professional development. Taken together these can lead to better staff motivation and improvements in the quality of provision.

At the system level, the OECD's review of leadership included the following policy conclusions and recommendations:

- ECEC leadership can be strengthened by raising the status, clarifying roles, establishing guidance and resources to protect and support the administrative and pedagogical time;
- ECEC leaders may play an important role in informing new policy development and their effective implementation;
- there is a need to develop recruitment pipelines for ECEC leaders, mentoring programmes, support for new leaders, leadership credentials, and access to professional development;
- the importance of encouraging distributive leadership as this can engage staff as change agents.

There are many practical suggestions about how ECEC leaders can support CPD in the settings they lead and manage:

- encouraging peer learning between core practitioners in different ECEC settings, core practitioners and assistants; core practitioners and other staff in the same ECEC setting;
- the application of core competences as the basis for organising staff CPD;
- the provision of supportive staff supervision;
- closer working relationships with other professional groups to support integrated working for the benefit of children e.g. collaboration between staff from the health and social care sectors;
- ensuring continuing training is relevant to the role of their staff and themselves.

The importance of considering individuals' CPD needs applies to ECEC centre leaders. In a framework which highlights the importance of both managerial and pedagogic leadership, a set of core competences can be useful in identifying priorities.

Recording staff professionalisation

When individual members of staff complete training and development, it is helpful to measure and record their achievements. If this training involves the completion of a formal, accredited CPD programme, the individual may receive a certificate of attendance or achievement - and in some systems may be awarded credit towards a qualification or micro-credential. However, there are many training and development activities which do not lead to certification and credit. These can be informal and non-formal, take place within the ECEC setting, or take place as a

result of an appraisal process. For all these developments, it is useful for the ECEC setting to record what has been completed and evaluate the impact that the activities have on children's learning.

The measurement and recording processes help ECEC leaders to assess whether the training has been valuable and worthwhile. It is part of a quality assurance process which supports future developments and the decisions about which training to provide to staff. As well as measurement which is made by ECEC settings, individuals will wish to record what they have done. If a set of personal, professional and social competences are being used to describe the expectations of ECEC staff, it is possible to use these statements to record progress and discuss achievement through an annual or regular appraisal or development process. There is also an option to use the Europass[153] profile to record skills, qualifications and experiences. An up-to-date Europass profile ensures an individual has all the information needed to create tailored CVs and job applications, and to prepare quickly for discussions on performance with their managers.

Country examples	
Italy: recording CPD	Understanding the impact of training (both initial and continuing) is an important aspect of quality assurance. Knowing what training is effective, in terms of changed behaviours or improved children's outcomes, helps to provide the basis for evaluation and supports subsequent reforms. Italy has developed an experimental self-evaluation report for pre-primary schools. The Ministry adopted a nationally-approved evaluation model which is being tested in a thousand public and charter schools. The model is based on the preparation of a self-assessment report to facilitate reflection and self-analysis about ECEC process and results. It also offers an opportunity for staff to reflect about their daily practices and the quality of the whole childhood system. The self-evaluation focuses on three components: the overall development of the child; the child's well-being; and the child's learning with the purpose of ensure each child has a good start in life. This experimental project in the ECEC sector is based on the National Evaluation System which is used in schools. It includes four phases: • self-evaluation by the setting; • an external visit; • the development of a continuous improvement plan by the setting; • reporting on the outcomes of the whole evaluation process (accountability). This is a new approach for the ECEC sector which involved adapting the school-based approach. The early work has identified the need to make changes to the school-based model to respond to the wide variety of ECEC settings, the age of the children, and the understanding of what high quality means in terms of outcomes.

Designing and delivering CPD

The main focus of CPD should be on meeting the needs of children through improving staff skills; this section will explore how to define learning needs of ECEC staff. It also recognises

[153] https://europa.eu/europass/en.

that most CPD takes place in the ECEC centres but it highlights the importance to identify CPD opportunities offered by other organisations, as they can provide experiences and training which differ from setting-based activities.

Identifying learning needs

Identifying what CPD individuals require can be through an appraisal system, through observation of practice, through an analysis of the setting's monitoring and evaluation activities, through discussions with individuals or through a process of self-selection. On some occasions, the focus of CPD will be on individuals, at other times it will be on all staff in a setting as the process of identifying training needs has highlighted a common issue.

These different 'bottom-up' approaches are based on individual ECEC settings identifying training needs. CPD is therefore easier to design and organise when there is agreement on what is important, which can be supported by:

- a description of the skills and competences required by the profession (use of a core set of competences);
- ways of measuring individuals' skills and competences;
- agreement on how CPD would support improvements in skills and competences.

It can take a long time to organise CPD in response to individual needs especially when provision has to be local and at a time which is suitable for staff. In many ECEC systems there are a large number of common requests for CPD (e.g. support for children with special needs; advice on how to work with staff from other sectors; support for working with children and families with additional languages etc.). This can be easier for the ECEC sector to plan a series of activities which anticipates that individuals will ask for guidance in these areas. This enables the development of a 'menu-based' approach to CPD where many opportunities are identified in advance but there is space for the sector to respond to the training needs of individuals. In this context as well, an agreed set of core competences can make these predictions more reliable and accurate.

In any case, the organisation and provision of CPD should take account of the values which underpin the sector (e.g. the balance between care and education; the rights of the child; the inclusion of all children etc.).

Discussions on the content of CPD need to consider the strategic priorities at the system level, the needs of employers and ECEC settings, and the priorities of individual members of staff.

An OECD survey[154] of staff and leaders in nine countries looked at their main professional development needs and identified that the greatest demand was for competences to work with children with special needs (figure 25):

Figure 25 - Professional development needs

[154] OECD, *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

	Children with special needs	Dual language learners	Facilitating creativity	Working with parents	Group management	Children from diverse backgrounds	Facilitating play	Child-development	Facilitating learning in literacy	Facilitating children's transition
Pre-primary education										
Chile	1	2								3
Germany*	1	2		3						
Iceland	1	2			3					
Israel	1		2					3		
Japan	1			2				3		
Korea			1	2			3			
Norway	1	2				3				
Turkey[3]	1		3			2				
Denmark**	1	3							2	
Centres for children under the age of 3										
Germany*	1			2				3		
Israel	1		3					2		
Norway	1	2				3				
Denmark**	1	2				3				

Source: OECD TALIS Starting Strong 2018.

We also note that typically the CPD opportunities provided to ECEC leaders include:

- education and training with follow-up activities;
- opportunities for reflection and learning at an individual and group level (e.g. in an environment where there are leaders from many ECEC settings in a provider organisation);
- opportunities to build working relations based on peer support;
- participation e.g. in managerial decisions of a provider organisation;
- access to professional consultants, coaching and supervision.

In systems where there are a set of core competences, the alignment between different priorities is likely to be greater. If the core competences underpin the initial and ongoing training of all ECEC staff, it is easier to design a strategy which builds on individuals' previous learning, takes account of any appraisal mechanisms, responds to internal and external quality assurance processes which identify 'areas for improvement', and strengthens the development of a coherent approach to staff professionalisation. In systems where there is less agreement on the competences that all ECEC staff should demonstrate, it is more difficult to build and maintain a strategic approach to CPD.

Country examples	
Slovenia: definition of priorities by a Council of experts	Each year, the Ministry of education, science and sport announces a public call for proposals for CPD. The council of experts for general education defines the priority themes based on the recommendations of the Ministry and in co-operation with the development and counselling institutes. The programmes are then selected by the tender commission and approved by the Minister. Kindergartens plan their staff CPD in their annual work plan. This CPD is state-funded, and the state has set up the network of CPD providers and programmes to offer the approved programmes. CPD is the right and obligation of education staff, and pre-school teachers and teachers assistants get paid study leave and have their

	travel costs and participation fees reimbursed. The state and the municipalities provide the funds to cover the cost of participation. It is up to pre-school teachers, teachers and assistants to decide on the training programmes they want to take. Training for major changes (e.g. to the curricular or other reforms) is either compulsory or recommended. Participants are awarded points for their involvement in CPD programme and these can be used towards applying for promotion.

Involving a range of partners

Universities

Universities and other higher education institutions have an important role in supporting the further professionalisation of the ECEC workforce. In addition to organising and delivering initial training and education programmes, they are involved in a wide range of CPD activities. The higher education sector can:

- help ECEC settings and authorities to design high quality and relevant CPD;
- award credit (sometimes in the form of ECTS points) to ECEC practitioners to use towards the award of additional qualifications;
- deliver centre and setting-based CPD programmes and support peer learning, coaching, mentoring, jointly-developed new initiatives, observation and reflection, and discussion through team meetings
- involve ECEC staff in small and large-scale research projects;
- support mentors who work with trainee practitioners in ECEC settings etc.

For many ECEC settings and systems, there is considerable value in working with the higher education sector to benefit from different views and perspectives.

Country examples	
Finland: collaboration with universities	The Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE) supports ECEC teachers' professional learning in many ways e.g. universities organise annually in-service education funded by FNAE. For ECEC teachers' education, the following topics are discussed and promoted: digital learning, playful learning, evaluation, special education, socio-emotional skills and competences, leadership in ECEC, gender equality, multicultural education, and language awareness Finnish universities also coordinate many teacher education development projects that support ECEC teachers' professional learning. These projects promote the implementation of the national Teacher Education Development Programme (TEPD). The strategic guidelines of the TEPD define the direction of teacher education in Finland and the development of competences during their career. The guidelines apply to all teachers, including teachers in ECEC. Examples of the projects which offer education and materials for ECEC teachers include:

	• Collective leap of competence – pedagogical skills to develop cooperation between the education sector and the working environment of ECEC teachers. Teachers develop a good command of high-quality interaction and action models to support children's development. Activities are based on increasing skills, such as inclusive team leadership, collaborative learning, and reformative, research-based expertise. • Mentoring and learning partnerships in early childhood education and care. Through cooperation, the education sector and the working environment of ECEC teachers develop a mentoring model supporting the various phases of professional development. The education of mentors has covered on-the-job learning for ECEC students and the induction of ECEC teachers and directors. Cooperation is based on the partnership network of over 60 ECEC centres; • Linguistically responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy and ECEC. The project has promoted linguistically responsive and culturally sustaining teacher education through collaboration with teachers, and the collection of existing practices. New models of practice are being developed through a dialogue between research, education and practice. Freely available digital educational materials have been shared for developing linguistically responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy.
Milan (Italy): university led programme for all ECEC staff	The city of Milan offers a university-led CPD programme to staff and ECEC leaders. It is issue based and has run from 2012-2019. The initiative has provided team-based training for more than 3,600 pedagogues and 80 leaders of ECEC services in Milan. For core practitioners the focus has been on developing the confidence to engage in practice-based research using their own approach to ECEC. For the heads of service the focus has been on developing their identity as leaders and supporting their management of resources.

Staff unions, social partners, external advisers

Staff professionalisation (including discussions and negotiations on salaries, pay scales, conditions of service, and staff/employer relationships) is an area of interest for the unions and professional associations who represent staff and employers. In many ECEC contexts, the social partnership model gives employer and employee representatives opportunities to discuss system-level issues associated with the employment and deployment of staff. Social partners are also engaged in a broad range of other activities including research and development, the collection and production of evidence on effective practice, the provision of funding to support individuals' development and the promotion of the ECEC profession. In some countries they lead branch observatories which study and make proposals in relation to education and vocational training. They also manage training funds. These activities offer important opportunities to strengthen public recognition of the work undertaken by the profession as well as opportunities to motivate and support individuals in the sector.

For small ECEC settings it can be more difficult to organise CPD and support staff professionalisation. There is a risk that individual centres become isolated and fail to benefit from the strengths of larger organisations and networks. Research by Strehmel[155] on ECEC leadership notes the value for centres becoming members of umbrella organisations or

[155] BAGE – Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Elterninitiativen e. V. (2019). Die besondere Qualität – Rahmenkonzept der BAGE zur besonderen Qualität von Elterninitiativen. Berlin

networks as these are more likely to be able to offer relevant professional development services while safeguarding an organisation's autonomy.

Country examples	
Denmark: trade union research	BUPL (the union of pedagogues) represents up to 90% of the professional staff in nurseries (children aged 0-3 years), kindergartens (children aged 3-6 years), age-integrated childcare centres (children aged 0-6 years), out of school care (children aged 6-10 years) and youth clubs (young people aged 14-18 years) in Denmark. The union's work includes: • funded research e.g. on gender diversity and equality, pedagogy in a digitalised age, the ECEC working environment, and society's views on pedagogues (€760,000 in 2019 and 2020); • a strategy for professional development which includes better education for pedagogues, more professional autonomy, and a greater use of ethics and judgement to support and improve ECEC; • support for research to individual members of the union (€145.000 per year); • funding for research at Roskilde University (€600.000).
Sweden: trade union contribution	The ECEC trade unions in Sweden, Lararförbundet (teachers) and Kommunal (assistants), have worked together on important issues relating to staffing and the quality of ECEC. In 2011 they wrote a joint letter to all municipalities about the new schooling and curriculum. It emphasised that different skills in preschool are complementary and enrich each other. The letter also called for the roles of each member in the preschool to be clarified, based on the new steering documents. With the revision of the curriculum in 2018, the unions provided suggestions to the government about the changes which were needed on staff roles in order to create a strong understanding of the role of child assistants in the curriculum. In 2018 Kommunal published "Your child's future" which covered these questions.
Slovenia: trade union support to ECEC staff	The Trade Union of Education, Science and Culture of Slovenia (SVIZ) is the largest independent, democratic and non-party interest organisation in the public sector in Slovenia. It represents the interests of employees in education, protects their economic and social position and asserts the role and importance of education as a fundamental pillar of a successful future for any society. The trade union organises conferences for ECEC staff. These provide an opportunity to discuss the position and function of employees, and the adoption of new provisions and changes to working conditions for ECEC employees (which is partly related to legislation and partly to pedagogy). They also offer legal assistance to their members, organise education seminars for union trustees in kindergartens, and provide information on professional issues related to kindergartens.

France: sector 'observatories'	The French ECEC branch observatory[156] is led by the social partners in the sector. The observatory campaigns to: • promote early childhood professions; • support professional diversity; • develop the place of men in education of young children.
Denmark: Work-based learning from practice consultants	In Denmark, 67% of ECEC staff have an education as either pedagogical assistant or a professional bachelor's degree as a pedagogue. It means that over 30% of staff in Danish ECEC lack professional qualifications. Since 2017 ECEC have been offered the opportunity to receive guidance from a national team of "practice consultants" ("praksiskonsulenter"). The purpose has been to support Danish municipalities and ECEC providers in their work with developing and strengthening the pedagogical quality – especially for the benefit of vulnerable children. The practice consultants have a special focus on improving the quality of the learning environments for the 0-2 year old children since this is crucial for the task of strengthening well-being, learning, development and education for all children. The target group is the pedagogic staff and leaders in ECEC, as well as relevant leaders and professionals in the municipal administration who are working to support changes in the pedagogic practice. The practice consultants' approach is based on ensuring that the learning and development of new competences takes place in the specific practice in which individuals work. The consultants' advice is based on a framework whose content relates to a strengthened pedagogic curriculum. The work to strengthen the local pedagogic quality is based on particularly important areas, where there is a potential for development i.e. • safe and pedagogical learning environments; • an inclusive and differentiated parent collaboration; • strong professional management; • a well-organised interdisciplinary collaboration The municipality applies for the support and selects the participating day-care facilities. The support is planned and developed in close collaboration so that it meets the municipality's strategic and developmental needs, and pedagogic requirements of the ECEC settings. An emphasis is placed on ongoing dialogue about methods and approaches in order to provide the best possible benefit for the participants. The practice consultants' focus on three parallel tracks: • The pedagogical track based on observation and advice on practice, practice-oriented guidance and correcting knowledge; • The capacity-building track in ECEC settings based on advice on the role and practice of the leader, supporting systematic reflection and evaluation, and practical support to work with goals/targets/objectives;

[156] http://www.metiers-petite-enfance.fr/.

	• The capacity-building track in municipal administration based on support for strategic and organisational management of quality, support for developing data-informed and reflective practice, and support for the systematic involvement of interdisciplinary teams.
Slovenia: professional meetings and annual conference for head teachers	The National School of Leadership in Education offers head teachers of kindergartens opportunities to share practice and theory, and exchange experience at an annual national professional conference and other regular meetings. During these events, head teachers meet other head teachers and professionals from kindergartens, representatives of the Ministry of Education, representatives of public institutions, domestic and foreign scholars and researchers in the field of education. Different topics, especially in the field of the management of education are discussed. The key objectives of these meetings are to: • address current topics in management, finance and legislation in education; • systematically develop the professionalism of head teachers, assistants to head teachers and other professionals in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools; • promote the exchange of experience and good practices in the field of education; • share the theoretical knowledge of scholars and other experts; • strengthen links between the Ministry of Education, public institutions and head teachers.
Estonia: involving non-governmental organisations in initial workforce competences or qualifications	The Ministry of Education and Research's strategic partner Hea Algus, has been officially registered in 1996 as a non-governmental organisation to manage the educational programme *Step by Step* in Estonia. The Ministry of Education and Research provides financial support to ECEC teachers' education. A large part of Hea Algus' work is to support ECEC leaders', teachers' and assistants' development of initial competences through CPD programme and their professional supervision. Based to the National Curriculum for the Preschool Child Care Institution and ECEC teachers occupational qualification standards, Hea Algus: • introduces and develops a methodology that focuses on learning through activity/play; • supports independent decision making; • helps to create a child centred learning environment which meets the needs of children, teachers and parents; • creates a network of educational establishments which implement the self-centred methodology in close cooperation with each other, universities and educational officials. Hea Algus develops teachers' initial competences through various developmental projects international experience and the development of new areas of activity in ECEC. Estonian research[157] has shown that preschool childcare institutions that participate in Hea Algus programmes have higher

[157] Õun, Ugaste, Tuul & Niglas, 2010; Peterson, Veisson, Hujala, Sandberg & Johansson, 2016

	quality than other ECEC institutions. From 2008 – 2020 Hea Algus provided ECEC teachers with CPD programme and supported teachers' achievement in occupational qualifications and competences in every Estonian county.

A range of learning strategies

There is a myriad of approaches which support the further development of ECEC staff - many can be organised in the ECEC settings through the deployment of internal expertise. However there are some CPD opportunities which are better undertaken through an external programme e.g. when there are changes to ECEC provision at the system level.

CPD is more effective when it is based on, and integrated into, ECEC practice. It is particularly effective when it includes feedback on how individuals' practice has changed e.g. video feedback of the impact of short-term training has proved effective in strengthening practitioners' care-giving and language stimulation skills. It also has a positive impact on children's language acquisition and cognitive development[158].

Designing the most appropriate ways to learn is an essential aspect of a CPD strategy. Some approaches are more effective than others. In addition, not everyone wishes to learn in the same way. Taking account of individuals' preferences increases the impact of CPD and helps to improve the quality of provision.

Typically the factors that increase the effectiveness and impact of CPD in the ECEC sector include:

- **opportunities for staff to reflect on their learning. This can include an opportunity for self-assessment;**
- **training which recognises the importance of child centred learning;**
- **the development of competences which are relevant to the settings in which participants work;**
- **the combination of knowledge and practice which is based on evidence of what works;**
- **a focus on working in teams;**
- **a focus on specific tasks or activities which are important to the individual;**
- **opportunities for staff to work together and develop a team-based approach to provision.**

It is useful for decision makers and ECEC providers to consider the whole range of learning strategies and facilitate access to the most relevant ones for ECEC staff according to their needs and what is possible.

Professional learning communities

The European Quality Framework comments that 'professional learning communities, where they exist within and across settings, have shown a positive impact through assigning time and space for collegial practice and joint work'. The OECD also notes[159] that 'opportunities forteam

[158] *Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review*, Eurofound, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.
[159] OECD, *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018.

collaboration and networking affect the extent to which staff feel supported and feel part of the team, and the degree to which there is a joint vision and mission in the organisation, which in turn contribute to staff's practices and quality'.

One of the most popular forms of professional learning in the ECEC sector is indeed the use of professional learning communities. This is defined[160] as 'a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an on-going, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way'. The goal is not 'to be a professional learning community', but to improve well-being and learning for children and families. The same report identifies five areas where there is a need:

- for staff members to frequently engage in 'reflective and in-depth dialogue' with colleagues about educational matters based on daily practice;
- for staff members to 'de-privatise their practice', by observing each other, giving feedback, planning jointly, building relationships with the neighbourhood and community, and engaging in dialogue with parents;
- to invest in 'collective responsibility': pedagogic improvement is no longer considered to be the sole responsibility of a centre head or single pedagogue, but rather a collective one;
- to focus on reaching a shared vision and set of values based on children's rights and respect for diversity;
- to invest in 'leadership' as a powerful factor in transforming a setting's culture.

These professional learning communities provide opportunities for participants to share and discuss examples of practice, and encourage team-based reflection of how to organise and manage children's activities. This type of approach helps staff to:

- share best practices;
- focus on real-world examples and issues;
- take responsibility for organising their learning activities;
- use mentoring and coaching techniques to support individuals' learning;
- work in teams and with families;
- promote reflection;
- develop a shared ownership of the training and development process;
- organise CPD in their own setting or centre.

The importance and value of collaboration between different groups of staff has also been identified in the Erasmus+ VALUE[161] project. This initiative, which included pilot projects in Belgium, Denmark, Portugal and Slovenia, looked at the benefits of supporting collaboration

[160] Sharmahd N., Peeters J., Van Laere K., Vonta T., De Kimpe C., Brajković S., Contini L., Giovannini D.; *Transforming European ECEC services and primary schools into professional learning communities: drivers, barriers and ways forward*, NESET II report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017

[161] VALUE – Value diversity in care and education. www.value-ecec.eu.

between ECEC core practitioners and assistants. It identified the principles which need to be agreed for collaborative practice and learning to take place:

- crucial role of the facilitator;
- sufficient opportunities to express their views in order to create a safe learning environment;
- positive recognition and appreciation for all staff members;
- work on professional identities and self-confidence;
- professional activities from an education and care perspective;
- collective responsibility;
- a shared vision and set of values for the team;
- the sharing of classroom practices and the need to avoid disciplinary territoriality;
- developing good social relations and collaborative skills of all team members.

The project emphasised the need for the right structural conditions to support collaboration e.g. non-contact time for all staff, leadership which supports teamwork, and sufficient time for change to occur. Professional learning communities need support for them to continue to be effective and sustainable

Self-reflection and individual learning plans

Staff development is both the responsibility of individuals and their employers - together they can organise CPD which increases motivation, improves staff retention and strengthens the quality of provision. This is best achieved through a process of considering how individuals are currently working and identifying what would enhance their practice. Using a standardised approach to measuring and recording practice helps to ensure greater consistency and transparency.

One of the most frequently used approaches is the creation of individualised learning plans which are based on self-reflection and the self-identification of training needs. Supporting staff to think critically about their practice is part of the centre leader's responsibilities. Critical and realistic self-reflection can be based on evidence from an individual's practice with children; contributions to the wider work of the setting; and participation in staff meetings and other centre-based activities. In many situations the individual's record of their self-reflection creates the basis for a 1-2-1 discussion with the centre leader as the first step towards agreement on future development and training needs.

Country examples	
Belgium (Flanders): CPD for new staff	The 'Kleine kinderen Grote Kansen' project is helping to develop new practitioners' understanding of child poverty and the reality of living in poverty. The project has developed a conceptual framework which describes good quality ECEC and demonstrates a clear understanding of child poverty and how to work with children and families in poverty. The project organised a conference for 400 staff from both parts of the split system and produced a video which follows one ECEC teacher for a year. Five, one-hour clips from this video are used for training purposes, for

	reflection, and for analysis. Each clip shows what the practitioner did, describes what could be done, shows the practitioner re-doing the same activity after receiving training and support, and the practitioner's reflection and analysis of the new approach. The first phase of the project ran from 2015 to 2018 for all pre-school teacher education programmes and all pedagogical guidance services. This project continued from 2018 to 2020. In this follow-up phase, attention was paid to the further implementation of the results from the first phase.
Estonia: self-reflection to define CPD needs	Following a process of self-reflection, pedagogues are encouraged to select their own approach to professional development. They are advised by their heads of centres or mentors.
Malmö (Sweden): peer visits	Peer visits are used to support learning about a range of practice. The municipality of Malmö has produced its own quality criteria for peer visits based on the national curriculum. The criteria are used as the basis for a self-review carried out by the preschool staff, and an external review carried out by a small team of educators from the municipality's pedagogic support team which includes special needs educators and preschool lead teachers from other preschools. The peer visits aim to enhance individuals' ability to reflect on ECEC practice, and create opportunities for staff to discuss their practice with others who have different perspectives. The peer visits were evaluated through a survey sent out twice a year from 2014-2016 to all participating heads of preschools. In 2016 the evaluation included interviews with ECEC staff and leaders, pedagogic support team leaders and ECEC district managers. The evaluation showed that the quality criteria and the self-review process were seen as supportive in creating and developing a common practice in the preschool and a common reflection on that practice. The evaluation has been used to improve the model for peer visits, and this has led to a decentralisation of responsibility, and the creation of shared ownership in order to minimise the feeling of being inspected.

Web-based and e-learning

As in all occupational areas, there has been a growth in the offer and use of web-based learning in the ECEC sector, with a particular increase during the Covid-19 crisis. The potential financial savings, the ability to change content quickly; and the opportunity for participants to complete training at any time in any location have all led to greater interest in how this form of learning can be managed. Provision ranges from the mass on-line open courses (MOOCs) to virtual conferences, webinars, on-line 1-2-1 mentoring and coaching programmes. It also includes online and freely accessible high quality learning resources.

Recent Eurofound research[162] looked at some training courses that feature an online component. In Poland, both public providers (for example, the Centre for Education Development and the Higher School of Social Sciences in Lublin) and private providers (for example, the company MrM Soft Marek Maroszek) offer online training for preschool teachers,

[162] Eurofound, *Access to care services: Early childhood education and care, healthcare and long-term care*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020.

special educational needs teachers, psychologists and parents to support children with disabilities. These courses cover legal issues and the theoretical and practical aspects of supporting children in preschool. In Romania, the European Centre for the Rights of Children with Disabilities has launched an online course for teachers, made up of five online presentations lasting one hour. Although it is not an interactive course, participants must complete an evaluation questionnaire in order to obtain a certificate of graduation

While online learning offers considerable advantages for the provision and take-up of CPD, it also presents challenges that should be taken into account by decision makers and education and training providers when developing their e-learning offer, and by ECEC staff and employers when using these opportunities.

Advantages

- E-learning courses allows to reach out to a broad target group (students in teacher education, teachers, pedagogical advisors and many other ECEC professionals); it also helps reaching out to staff living in rural or remote areas;
- Training material available online can support an even larger group of ECEC staff' learning;
- It may offer quick updates on recent policy developments, new research findings or innovative practices, therefore broadening the knowledge base offered to ECEC staff;
- It is compatible with other duties; learner can set its own study rythm
- The use of technology to complete the course contributes to the development of digital competences;
- E-learning courses/events may be cheaper to organise/attend than presential learning (even though MOOCs are increasingly for a fee);
- An in-depth professionalization process can be developed, for example by offering content in a structured way and responding to the characteristics of effective professionalization;
- It enables differentiation, as participants according to their own preference, can train in depth on certain parts of the training;
- A large range of teaching and assessment modalities can be developed, possibly with personalized feedback;
- Online learning may offer the opportunity for collaboration between different providers in the professional continuum, for example between teacher educators and (pedagogical) advisors. It can also support regular contacts.

Challenges

- ECEC being a very practical profession, there are limits to what can be taught online;
- ECEC staff need the adequate equipment and a minimum of digital competences;
- Following e-learning education and training successfully requires discipline and perseverance; drop-out rates from MOOCs are high; it is not always clear at the start what the necessary investment of time for the entire process is. Along the way participants often get into time constraints and this can lead to quitting prematurely.
- Certification (e.g. at macro level) is often lacking (participation in a MOOC is not always validated). This may deter ECEC staff from participating and their organisation from supporting participation in such opportunities
- Developing a MOOC requires great effort and time of providers because it involves more than just putting a course online: feedback and strong follow-up during the process are needed. It also requires the necessary infrastructure.

Recommendations for successful participation in online learning as a learning strategy for CPD therefore include:

- online learning should be regarded as a fully-fledged form of professionalisation and be embedded in the ECEC setting's professionalisation policy. This includes providing time and space to participate in the online courses / events and implement the learning or any innovative practice;
- as much as possible, incentives and certification should be included in planning for e-learning opportunities;
- a quality control mechanism should be in place, particularly for courses or MOOCs;
- in order to avoid disconnecting with other stakeholders, cooperation is necessary e.g. with teacher training and pedagogical guidance services.

Country examples	
Milan (Italy)	Milan has developed two e-learning courses which are compulsory for all ECEC staff in the city. Each 2.5 hour course is based on the national plan for ECEC which has been amended to suit the local context. Following individual's completion of the course, everyone attends a peer learning event with colleagues to discuss their work.
Spain	The Spanish Ministry of Education and VET, through the INTEF (National Institute of Educational Technology and Teacher Training), offers a wide range of online learning experiences (e.g. courses supported by tutors, MOOC, NOOC[163], webinars) for any teacher in any level of education including ECEC staff. The online training offer covers different aspects which are relevant for ECEC staff, such as embedding new technology in the teaching practice, project based learning, designing learning spaces or computational thinking. There are also some specific courses dealing with topics

[163] A NOOC is a Nano Massive Online Course. It is a micro-course which lasts a few hours. It helps participants to obtain the necessary skills to develop a digital competence. Nano-courses can last for one to three hours of training - sometimes they are longer with a maximum of 20 hours.

	related with ECEC, such as project based learning in pre-primary levels, creating open educational resources in pre-primary levels, developing logical thinking, robotics or bilingual education in ECEC[164]. The platform for the online courses collects and analyses data on the enrolled participants, individuals' participation, forum discussions, outputs from the participants completing the course etc.
Belgium (Flanders)	The Flemish Ministry of education provides information on distance learning opportunities on its website[165]: These opportunities include: • webinars with pedagogic advice for distance learning in all levels of education. These webinars can usually be viewed[166] after the discussions are completed; • Facebook live discussions, facilitated by an expert on nursery education, on distance learning with toddlers[167]. • a variety of teaching materials which support teachers including a list of CPD opportunities organised by various providers. This list[168] is not exhaustive as providers register their own activities in this database. In addition, the pedagogical guidance services provide many digital learning opportunities e.g.: • GO! (education of the Flemish Community) - Digitise your lesson with webinars • Katholiek onderwijs Vlaanderen (Catholic Education Flanders) - Distance Learning • OVSG - webinars (Local authorities Education): Teaching online? How do you do it?

Participating in research

Many core practitioners and other ECEC staff want to be involved in research in order to reflect on their own practice or to gain a greater understanding of some of the theoretical aspects of provision. Often they want to build on their initial training and education, and develop their expertise in research methods and systematic evaluation of practice. In systems where individualised learning records and/or profiles are used, it is relatively easy for staff to express their desire to be involved in, and learn about, ECEC research. Often this involvement is through work with a local or partner institution of higher education, and involves participation in centre-based research activities, attendance at research seminars and conferences, or the preparation and delivery of research initiatives.

[164] The complete Spanish online training offer from the Ministry of Education and VET can be found in the following links: tutored courses http://formacion.intef.es/, MOOC and NOOC https://enlinea.intef.es/courses.
[165] https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/aanpak-en-communicatie-bij-afstandsleren
[166] https://toll-net.be/moodle/xertetoolkits/play.php?template_id=43349#page1
[167] https://www.facebook.com/klasse/videos/fb-live-over-preteaching-met-kleuters/545749373036369/?_so_=permalink&_rv_=related_videos
[168] https://www.klascement.net/nascholing-of-activiteit/107797/dag-van-de-kleuter-voor-peuter-en-kleuteronderwijzers/?previous

The Erasmus+ project START[169] offers an example of successful cooperation between ECEC professionals and research bodies. This work includes experimenting with new professional practices to improve the quality in ECEC provision through improved transitions between settings and phases of education and care.

Job-shadowing

Job shadowing can be one aspect of a peer visit. It provides opportunities for staff to spend a significant amount of time working with a colleague who has a similar role in the same or a different ECEC setting. It can be used for trainees, newly qualified staff and more experienced colleagues. It is most effective if the participants meet to discuss their mutual objectives before the job shadowing starts, and there are opportunities for reflection and learning once the experience is completed. Many ECEC settings have used Erasmus+ funding (under the Key Action 1 programme[170]) to complete job shadowing in other countries.

Country examples	
Milan (Italy)	Each year, ECEC staff visit three other settings to see what others are doing. In all Italian schools, during their induction newly hired teachers (either individually or in small groups) can visit schools which are seen as innovative. The purpose of the visit is to foster collaboration, dialogue and reciprocity. They are designed to motivate individuals, and increase their interest and desire to engage in research and improvement in practice through the use of new teaching methodologies and technological innovations. These visits can last for two days of "full immersion" in the host schools.
Ghent (Belgium)	The Childcare Service of the City of Ghent has developed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at all levels in the organisation. This includes job shadowing where childcare workers share examples of new pedagogic practice through visits or events where innovative projects are presented to colleagues in small groups. Three types of job shadowing are supported: • every two year the Childcare Service organises an event for the 800 childcare workers. During this event a wide variety of good practices is shared between staff in the 33 kindergartens (0-3)and 44 out-of-school services (3-12). This includes allocating a full day to visit and learn from each other's practice. After the meeting the city's pedagogic coaches prepare new PLCs on topics arising from the discussions; • new childcare workers receive support from experienced colleagues during their first months of employment. Initially, at the beginning of their 'Induction' they stay in the same location to optimise their initiation and ensure they benefit from intensive mentoring by pedagogical coaches. In the following period the job shadowing takes place and new childcare workers work in different locations in the same neighbourhood. This helps them to learn from other settings and make the strong connections with the neighbourhood; • childcare workers take part in job shadowing projects in other cities. The Childcare Service is involved in a project called JOKO (Job shadowing in KinderOpvang =

[169] START – A good start for all: sustaining transitions across the early years - http://start.pei.si/.
[170] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/.

Job shadowing in Childcare) which enables public and private ECEC centres from different cities to learn through job shadowing.

International cooperation

Observing practice in other countries in order to reflect on your own is a great source of learning for education professionals. The Erasmus+ programme offers a range of funding opportunities to ECEC staff and organisations to learn from their peers across Europe.

Some Erasmus+ projects offer the opportunity for ECEC staff to directly enhance staff professionalisation through participating in activities such as job shadowing or attending training courses in other countries. This type of activity can help to enhance staff and students' skills, experiences and competences. Many of the Erasmus+ projects show how ECEC institutions can enhance their curricula through their staff attending training programmes on the education methods and approaches used in other countries.

Other Erasmus+ projects support cooperation between ECEC settings and organisations interested in ECEC. These projects have provided learning opportunities for the staff who have been directly involved, and they illustrate how ECEC settings can support staff to develop competences. These projects have covered a range of themes including the development of a holistic learning environment, different approaches to the effective delivery of staff development, and the way in which learning can be recognised and recorded.

Examples of system-wide strategies for CPD

There are many different approaches to CPD, and there are many different activities which could be completed. There is a risk of developing lots of individual activities which are unsupported by a coherent strategy. Creating connections and a more strategic approach to the selection and design of CPD activities increases impact. One way of creating a strategy is through the use of a common set of core competences - this helps all those who are planning CPD to focus on an agreed set of competences. Agreement on the strategic direction for CPD helps to create a shared purpose; opportunities for learning to build on previous achievement (rather than lots of one-off unconnected courses); and the development of systematic approaches to monitoring and recording the effectiveness and impact of CPD.

A selection of opportunities are less likely to lead to improved quality than a strategic approach which focus on an agreed set of outputs or competences. Many European countries and cities have developed such strategic approaches.

Country examples	
Turkey: Promoting teachers' participation in CPD	Continuing professional development and the further education and development of teachers are governed and executed in accordance with legislation and regulations from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The need for the in-service education is identified by the MoNE through an evaluation of developments in science and technology, administrative reports, inspection reports, demands of the personnel, research results, advices of the boards concerned, questionnaire survey results and action plans. The General Directorate of Teacher Training and Development and General Directorate of Human Resources plan and implement a national annual programme, and Province Level National Education Directorates plan and implement the annual programme locally. Professional development activities at school level for ECEC staff is planned and implemented in accordance with the Regulation for Preschool and Primary Education Institutions. The key objectives of this programme, organised by the MONE, are to enhance ECEC teachers' and centre leaders' knowledge and skills for pedagogical and managerial tasks, to discuss effective approaches to problems commonly encountered in ECEC settings, and to develop annual plans reflecting the needs of children and the environment of their ECEC centres. Within this scope, two seminars (at the beginning and end of the education year) are held per year for the vocational development of the teachers and in-service trainings are planned throughout the educational year. Participation in professional development activities at school level is compulsory but participation in in-service training is not. All expenses associated with participation in in-service training activities organised by the MONE or its provincial directorates are free for staff working in public ECEC settings. Participants are considered on official leave while training takes place and receive their salaries accordingly. ECEC centre leaders can apply for in-service activities through the MoNE's Education Information System (MEBBİS). The criteria for selecting applicants vary according to the goal of the activity and the group of staff targeted, but priority is given to leaders and staff without prior training in the area.

Hungary: compulsory CPD	There is an accredited and obligatory CPD system for crèche workers which is regulated by legislation. The requirement is based on 60 credit points for those who have vocational training or 80 credit points who those who have a BA, or MA Degree during every four years The regulation requires each ECEC setting leader to write a four- year CPD plan. The leader is responsible for: • sending the person to the training and paying the costs (training, travel, substitution etc.); • documenting / recording the credit points, if the person reaches the required credits the CPD cycle ends, and a new one starts at the end of the four year. The requirements allow individuals to collect the necessary credit points from different accredited CPD providers. The legislation sets out what percentage of the credit points have to be from each type of course: • obligatory courses for all workers in the sector are a minimum of 20% of the credits; • job related courses are approximately 40% of the credits; • free choices courses can be up to a maximum of 40% of the credits.
Slovenia: mandatory CPD	The Ministry of Education organises and finances CPD to support education staff, develop kindergartens, and develop the ECEC system as a whole in order to improve its quality and efficiency. CPD is a right and a duty for all education staff in kindergartens. The collective agreement sets out that education staff have five days of CPD per year, or up to 15 days over three years. The network of CPD providers and programmes on offer is set up by the state and the funds to cover the cost of participation are provided by the state and the municipalities. All pre-school teachers as well as other education staff get paid leave of absence and their participation fees, travel costs and expenses reimbursed. The Ministry of education analyses the efficiency of the system and carries out periodic evaluations of the CPD programmes. Kindergartens plan the CPD for their education staff in their annual work plan. It is up to pre-school teachers to decide which training programmes they take (this is usually decided in partnership with the head teacher). The CPD can consist of short programmes aimed at professional and disciplinary development, or longer programmes which qualify pre-school teachers for different roles (providers of these programmes are higher education institutions). Individuals' participation in CPD programmes leads to the award of points that can be used in relation to promotion to other professional roles.
Spain: teacher training centres	Continuing professional development is seen as one of the fundamental pillars of professionalisation. The Educational Authorities propose, elaborate and coordinate training plans (at the national or regional level) through a network of teacher training centres which usually include a specialist adviser in ECEC. CPD is designed for leaders, teachers and other core practitioners working in public or state-subsidised ECEC institutions. The training programmes respond to the

	learning needs of staff identified through close collaboration between the training centres and ECEC settings. The training includes face-to-face, blended and online courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, meetings, mentoring programmes, and advice for the design and development of self-training activities in ECEC centres. Each activity is evaluated to measure the impact on children, staff and organisations. The training centres also promote the exchange of good practice, and develop, disseminate and evaluate research projects and innovative materials. CPD activities are not mandatory. The value of the training can be seen through a range of direct impacts on the teaching staff (e.g. on staff salaries, internal promotions etc.).
Denmark: the development of competences	In 2018 165m DKK (22 million €) was allocated to support the development of competences for childminders, pedagogic staff and leaders in ECEC, as well as municipal public administrators working with developing pedagogic quality in ECEC. The Ministry's working group consisted of members from all the pedagogy schools in Denmark as well as relevant stakeholders to design the content of the courses. This content was based on a strengthened pedagogic curriculum with a focus is on: • supporting knowledge and actions which create stimulating learning environments; • working with parents and the local civil society; • working with staff in other sectors including those in health care; • the creation of a good evaluation culture within the pedagogic practice. The courses are practically oriented. Managers and professional leaders are given the tools and know-how to implement and mobilise their new knowledge in their everyday working life with colleagues. 30% of the municipalities' allocated funds are spent on childminders and 70% of the funds cover the cost of courses for professional leaders in ECEC, institution managers and ECEC pedagogues. Managers and professional leaders were chosen as the main target group for boosting skills because they have a particularly important role to play when it comes to setting the direction for, and using new know-how about the curriculum etc. Municipalities can also give priority to 'crash courses' aimed at public administrators, pedagogic consultants and cluster and area managers. In 2019, 75m DKK (10 million €) was allocated for the development of competences for those working with children aged from 0-2 in vulnerable positions. Two five-day courses for pedagogic assistants and childminders were developed alongside a diploma module for pedagogues. The fund was divided amongst the municipalities based on two criteria: • the socio-economic index; • the number of children between the ages of 0 and 2.

	For the first time, a CPD initiative had an explicit focus on children in vulnerable positions.
Malmö (Sweden): a CPD strategy	Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden with approximately 330,000 inhabitants. The municipality's ECEC department consists of 220 public preschools with 18,000 children and 5,000 staff. The department was formed in 2013 to promote CPD. The staff of every preschool (including the leaders) are part of a CPD system which connects them to colleagues, promotes a culture of reflective inquiry and organisational learning. The main aims for CPD in Malmö is for preschool staff to have access to professional support close to their own practice; and for all actions to benefit the pedagogical relations between children and staff. CPD is based on the following (some changes have been made as a response to regular monitoring and evaluation): • staff have time for professional development. There is an agreement with the teacher unions on a minimum amount of non-contact time; • leadership should be close to preschool practice. The head of the preschool is supported by deputy heads and preschool lead teachers who support pedagogic and professional development. The preschool lead teachers spend 60% of their time supporting staff in their pedagogic practice with children. Each preschool lead teacher serves as a role model and pedagogic leader. The remaining 40% of their time is dedicated to other kinds of leadership assignments, e.g. strategic planning or evaluation together with the heads and deputy heads of preschool • teams to support pedagogic and professional development. In Malmö there are five geographical district, each employs support teams for pedagogic development, special needs education, administration and supply teachers. The teams that support pedagogic development and special needs education work closely with heads of preschools and preschool lead teachers to provide CPD to the preschool staff • peer visits. A local set of quality criteria has been produced, based on the national curriculum. These are used as the basis for self-review by the preschool staff, and an external review by a small team from the municipality's pedagogic support team. This team includes special needs educators and preschool lead teachers from other preschools. The aim is to enhance reflection on ECEC practice, and create opportunities for staff to have a dialogue about their practice with others who have different perspectives. The organisation's work has been evaluated and some changes have been made to the way in which peer visits are organised. In other areas, the evaluation highlighted the need for the organization to continue its existing plans e.g. strengthening activities to ensure ECEC leadership is based on practice in ECEC settings. The key challenges for the organisation's CPD strategy have been to: • maintain the number, and attract more, well qualified preschool staff; • create conditions which encourage professional learning among the large section of staff who lack formal qualifications for working with children

Conclusions

Quality of ECEC provision increases when staff are available in sufficient numbers, they are well qualified, educated and motivated to stay in the profession. This can be achieved by recognising that:

1. **All stakeholders involved in organising and providing ECEC share the responsibility to support the attractiveness of the ECEC sector and the professional development of ECEC staff.** This includes national and local decision-makers, employers, ECEC leaders, trade unions, social partners, and education and training institutions.
2. **The ECEC sector needs to receive the recognition it deserves, which will have a positive impact on recruitment and staff retention.** The sector's recognition can be improved through advocacy / policy work to promote:
   a. the educational and inclusive value of ECEC; the benefits and impact of good quality ECEC for children, families and society; and the role of well-qualified and motivated staff
   b. improvement in professional development opportunities, career prospects, salaries and working conditions of ECEC staff
3. **The sector can become more attractive when creative strategies are used to support recruitment strategies**:
   a. increasing the number of the ECEC roles and offering more opportunities helps to recruit staff with different skills and competences
   b. developing new pathways into the profession and diversifying the recruitment methods helps to attract well qualified candidates with a wide range of profiles
4. **Establishing and using a common set of core competences for staff can help to manage expectations and provide greater clarity about the skills and abilities of ECEC staff.** ECEC stakeholders can use this set of competences to:
   a. develop national / local / setting strategies to improve the competences of individuals and teams
   b. guide the content of initial education and training, and continuing professional development programmes
5. **Participation of all ECEC staff in high quality initial education and training, and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes is key to improving the quality in ECEC provision.** To achieve this, a number of strategies need to be in place:
   a. Remove obstacles to staff participation in CPD
   b. Increase the range of learning opportunities and recognise the value of work-based learning, team-based learning, coaching and peer support.

Annex 1 – EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

ACCESS to quality early childhood education and care services for all children contributes to their healthy development and educational success, helps reducing social inequalities and narrows the competence gap between children with different socio-economic backgrounds. Equitable access is also essential to ensure that parents, especially women, have flexibility to (re)integrate in the labour market.

Quality Statements:

1. Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.

Universal legal entitlement to early childhood education and care services provides a solid basis for reaching out to all children. Population data and parents surveys on the demand for early childhood education and care places can serve as a basis for estimating further needs and adjusting capacity.

Provision can address barriers that may prevent families and children from participating. This may include an adaptation of the requested fees for early childhood education and care to allow also low-income households' access. There is also evidence that flexibility in opening hours and other arrangements can enable participation especially for children of working mothers, single-parent families and from minority or disadvantaged groups.

Provision that is equally distributed across urban and rural areas, affluent and poor neighbourhoods, and regions can widen access for disadvantaged groups in society. Availability and affordability of high-quality services in neighbourhoods where poor families, minorities or migrant or refugee families reside is reported to have the biggest impact on supporting equity and social inclusion.

2. Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

Early childhood education and care settings can actively encourage participation by involving parents, families and carers in decision-making processes (e.g. in parental committees). Reaching out to families - especially to single-parent and disadvantaged or minority or migrant families - with targeted initiatives allows them to express their needs and enables services to take these into account when tailoring provision to the demands of local communities.

Recruitment of staff from marginalised, migrant or minority groups can be encouraged as it has proven to be of advantage if the composition of staff in early childhood education and care settings reflects diversity in the community.

Creating a welcoming environment for children that values their languages, culture and home backgrounds contributes to the development of their sense of belonging. Appropriate continuous professional development also prepares staff to welcome and support bilingual children.

Early childhood education and care settings can develop good practices in families for a smooth transition from the home environment to the setting, as well as foster high levels of parental participation by organising specific initiatives.

STAFF is the most significant factor for children's well-being, learning and developmental outcomes. Therefore staff working conditions and professional development are seen as essential components of quality.

Quality statements:

3. Well-qualified staff with initial and continuing training that enable them to fulfil their professional role.

Effective early childhood education and care systems consider raising the professional status of staff, which is widely acknowledged as one of the key factor**s** of quality, by raising qualification levels, offering attractive professional status and flexible career prospects and alternative pathways for assistants. This can be supported by aiming for a pedagogical staff that is composed of highly qualified professionals holding a full professional qualification specialised in early childhood education, in addition to assistant staff.

State-of-the-art initial education programmes are designed together with practitioners and provide a good balance between theory and practice. It is also an asset if education programmes prepare staff for working collectively and for enhancing reflective competences. Such programmes can benefit from training staff to work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups, from minority, migrant and low-income families.

Staff that are equipped to follow the developmental needs, interests and potential of young children and able to detect potential development and learning problems can more actively support child development and learning. Regular, tailor-made and continued professional development opportunities benefit all staff members, including assistants and auxiliary staff.

Regarding the necessary elements of child development and psychology, competences for staff should, in line with the different structures of training in the Member States, include knowledge on child protection systems, and more generally on the rights of the child.

4. Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.

Early childhood education and care systems that aim at improved working conditions, including more adequate wage levels, can make employment in early childhood education and care a more attractive option for better-qualified staff, looking for proper careers.

Adult-child ratios and group sizes are most adequate if designed in an appropriate manner for the age and composition of the group of children, as younger children require more attention and care.

Professional learning communities, where they exist within and across settings, have shown a positive impact through assigning time and space for staff collegial practices and joint work.

Offering mentoring and supervision to newly recruited staff during their induction can help them to quickly fulfil their professional roles.

CURRICULUM is a powerful tool to improve well-being, development and learning of children. A broad pedagogical framework sets out the principles for sustaining children's development and learning through educational and care practices that meet children's interests, needs and potentialities.

Quality statements:

5. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential addressing their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and their well-being.

Child-centred pedagogical approaches can better sustain children's overall development, provide support for their learning strategies and promote their cognitive and non-cognitive development by building more systematically on experiential learning, play and social interactions.

There is strong evidence that an explicit curriculum is an asset as it can provide a coherent framework for care, education and socialisation as integral parts of early childhood education and care provision. Ideally, such a framework defines pedagogical goals enabling educators to personalise their approach to the individual needs of children and can provide guidelines for a high-quality learning environment. It gives due consideration to including availability of books and other print material to help literacy development of children.

By promoting diversity, equality, and linguistic awareness an effective curriculum framework fosters integration of migrants and refugees. It can nurture the development of both their mother tongue and language of education.

6. A curriculum that requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.

A curriculum can help to better involve parents, stakeholders and staff and to ensure that it responds more adequately to the needs, interests and the children's potential.

A curriculum can define roles and processes for staff to collaborate regularly with parents as well as with colleagues in other children's services (including health, social care and education sectors).

Whenever possible, the curriculum can provide guidelines for early childhood education and care staff to liaise with school staff on children's transition to the primary and/or pre-primary schools.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION sustain quality. By pointing to strengths and weaknesses, its processes can be important components of enhancing quality in early childhood education systems. They can provide support to stakeholders and policy makers in undertaking initiatives that respond to the needs of children, parents and local communities.

Quality statements:

7. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

Transparent information on service and staff or on curriculum implementation at the appropriate – national, regional and local – level can help to improve quality.

Regular information feedback can make the process of policy evaluation easier, also by allowing to analyse the use of public funds and of what is effective and in which context.

To identify staff learning needs and to make the right decisions on how best to improve service quality and professional development, it is beneficial that early childhood education leaders collect relevant data in a timely manner.

8. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

In order to protect the rights of the child, robust child protection/child safeguarding policies should be embedded within the early childhood education and care system to help protect children from all forms of violence. Effective child protection policies cover four broad areas: (1) policy, (2) people, (3) procedures, and (4) accountability. More information on these areas can be found in 'Child safeguarding standards and how to implement them' issued by Keeping Children Safe.

Monitoring and evaluation processes can foster active engagement and cooperation among all stakeholders. Everyone concerned with the development of quality can contribute to – and benefit from – monitoring and evaluation practices.

Available evidence indicates that a mix of monitoring methods (e.g. observation, documentation, narrative assessment of children competences and learning) can provide useful information and give account of children's experiences and development, including helping a smooth transition to primary school.

Monitoring tools and participatory evaluation procedures can be created to allow children to be heard and be explicit about their learning and socialising experiences within settings.

GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING are crucial to enable early childhood education and care provision to play its role in the personal development and learning of children and in reducing the attainment gap and fostering social cohesion. Quality results from comprehensive and coherent public policies that link early childhood education and care to other services concerned with the welfare of young children and their families.

Quality statements:

9. Stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.

Early childhood education and care provision benefits from close collaboration with all services working for children, including social and health services, schools and local stakeholders. Such inter-agency alliances have shown to be more effective if governed by a coherent policy framework that can pro-actively foster collaboration and long-term investment in local communities.

Stakeholders' involvement has been shown as crucial to design and implement early childhood education and care provision.

The integration or coordination of services in charge of different regulations on early childhood education and care can have a positive effect on the quality of the system.

10. Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal entitlement to high-quality affordable early childhood education and care, and progress is regularly reported to relevant stakeholders.

Improvement of quality in service provision for all children might be better achieved by progressively building up universal legal entitlement. This includes promoting participation in early childhood education and care from an early age. It can be useful to evaluate whether market based early childhood education and care services create unequal access or lower quality for disadvantaged children and, if necessary, make plans for remedy actions.

A close link to labour, health and social policies would clearly be an asset as it can promote a more efficient redistribution of resources by targeting extra funding towards disadvantaged groups and neighbourhoods.

Annex 2 – Terminology of ECEC professions in Europe

This table has been prepared on the basis of the country reports published by the seepro-r project (www.seepro.eu) and updated or completed by members of the European Commission working for ECEC (2018-2020).

Country	Assistant	Core practitioner	Leaders (e.g. administrative and/or pedagogic heads of ECEC centres)
Austria **(1-6)**	Pädagogische Assistentin (Pedagogical Assistant) Assistants => Supporting the core practitioner	Kindergartenpäd-agogin / Elemen-tarpädagogin (Kindergarten Pedagogue / Early Childhood Pedagogue) => Core practitioner with group responsibility Sonderkindergar-tenpädagogin und Frühförderungs-fachkraft (Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogue and Early Intervention Specialist) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Individual work with children	
Austria **(1-14)**		Kindergarten- und Hortpädagogin (Kindergarten and After-School (Hort) / pedagogue) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Belgium[171] (NL) **(0-3)**		Begeleider Kinderopvang (BENL); Puéricultrice (BEFR); Kinderbetreuerin (BEDE)	Verantwoordelijke in de Kinderopvang (BENL) - Centre head/management

[171] There are also pedagogic coaches (ISCED 6). who can be external or internal to the ECEC setting. In case the pedagogical coach is internal, he/she can also be in some cases the head or leader of the centre.

		(Childcare Worker) => Core practitioner with group responsibility in centre-based setting (also in home-based settings) Minimum qualification level ISCED 3[172]	In some settings the same person is the head of centre and the core practitioner (and can sometimes be the provider and/or the pedagogical coach. Minimum qualification level: - Settings <=18 places: ISCED 3 - Settings > 19 places: ISECED 6
Belgium (NL) **(2 ½ - 6)**	Kinderverzorger (BENL); Puéricultrice (BEFR); Kinderbetreuerin (BEDE) Assistant of pre-primary teacher in pre-primary settings, mostly with 2- and 3-year olds (not in the German Speaking Community) Minimum qualification level ISCED 3[173]	Kleuterleider / Kleuteronderwijzer / Leraar Kleuteronderwijs (BENL); Institutrice préscolaire /Institutrice maternelle (BEFR) / Kindergärtnerin (BEDE) (Pre-primary Teacher) Core practitioner with group responsibility in centre-based settings Minimum qualification level ISCED 6[174]	Directeur kleuterschool/basischool(BENL); directeur d'école maternelle (BEFR); Schulleiter Kindergärten (BEDE) School leader Minimum qualification level ISCED 6
Belgium (NL) **0-12**		Begeleider buitenschoolse kinderopvang (BENL) (Out-of-school childcare worker) => Core practitioner with group responsibility in centre-based setting (also in home-based settings) Minimum qualification level ISCED 3[175]	Verantwoordelijke in de buitenschoolse kinderopvang (BENL) Centre head/management In some settings the same person is the head of the centre and the core practitioner. Minimum qualification level ISCED 5
Bulgaria		Pedagog na detska yasla (Nursery Teacher)	

[172] Duration = = 4 years vocational training at upper secondary level (1 year on top of the last year of upper secondary education))
[173] Duration = 4 years vocational training at upper secondary level (1 year on top of the last year of upper secondary education))
[174] Duration = 3 years Bachelor degree level
[175] Duration = = 4 years vocational training at upper secondary level (1 year on top of the last year of upper secondary education)

(3m-3)		=> Appointed to several nursery groups; responsibilities include arranging, planning and managing the educational activities for the children. => Medicinska sestra (Medical Nurse) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Bulgaria **(2-7)**	Pomoshtnik-vazpitatel (Teacher's Assistant) => Non-qualified co-worker	Detski uchitel (Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility; Centre head/ Kindergarten principal	
Croatia **(6m-7)**	Osobni pomoćnik (Assistant) => Non-qualified co-worker. They help in supporting children with developmental difficulties. => Viša medicinska sestra (Nurse) => Qualified co-worker particularly in health issues	Odgojitelj predškolske djece (ECEC Teacher / Kindergarten Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility => Stručni suradnik – pedagog Pedagogue (specialist support staff) => Stručni suradnik – psiholog (Psychologist) =>Stručni suradnik – edukacijski rehabilitator ili logoped => (Special Needs Teacher / Rehabilitator, Speech Therapist) => Specialist support staff	
Cyprus **(3m-3)**		=>Vrefokomos/ Vrefonipiagogos (Nursery and Childcare Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head	

Cyprus (3m-5y8m)	=>Sxoliki Voithos (Teacher's Assistant) => Co-worker with no formal IPS		
Cyprus (3-5.8)	=>Synodos (Child Support Practitioner) => Co-worker with no formal IPS / Supports practitioner for individual children with special needs	=> Nipiagogos (Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	=>Voithos Diefthintria (Assistant principal) =>Diefthintria (Principal) => Centre head
Czech Republic (1-7)		=> Učitelka (Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre Head (with mandatory additional management qualification)	
Czech Republic (1-6)		=> Pečující osoba (Caregiver) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Czech Republic (2-7)	=> Asistent pedagoga (Educational Support Worker) => Qualified support worker, particularly for children with special educational needs		
Denmark	PAU – pædagogisk assistent uddan-nelse (Pedagogical Assistant/ Education) - ISCED 3 => Qualified co-worker => Pædagog-medhjælper (Pedagogue / Co-helper) => Non-qualified co-worker - ISCED 2	=> Pædagog (Pedagogue) - ISCED 6 => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Pedagogical leader / Centre leader	

Estonia **(0-7)**	Lapsehoidja Childcare Worker (Nurse; Childminder) => Qualified co-worker => Õpetaja abi (Teacher's Assistant) => Qualified co-worker	=> Koolieelse lasteasutuse õpetaja (Early Childhood Teacher) => Core practitioner or teacher with group responsibility / Centre director / Head teacher / Master teacher
Finland	=> Varhaiskasvatuksen lastenhoitaja - Childcarer in ECEC (ISCED 3) => vocational upper secondary qualification in education and guidance, or in healthcare and social services => Qualified co-workers in social and health care or instruction. They are part of the team, but they do not have a pedagogical training. => Avustaja – Assistant, part of the team, working with the children, no national qualification requirements	=> Varhaiskasvatuksen opettaja =Teacher in early childhood education and care => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head (ISCED 6) => Varhaiskasvatuksen sosionomi=Social pedagogue in early childhood education and care (ISCED 6) => Core practitioner with group responsibility (but not in pre-primary transition class) / Centre head
France **(0-6)**	=> "CAP petite enfance" (Early Childhood Educational CoWorker) => Co-worker, in crèches / Teacher's coworker in écoles maternelles	
France **(0-3)**	=> Auxiliaire de puériculture (Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse) => Core practitioner in crèches / Co-worker in crèches	

France **(2-6)**	=> ATSEM - agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles (Municipal auxiliary staff) => Co-worker with specialist qualification	=> Puériculteur/ puéricultrice (Paediatric Nurse) => Centre head / Early childhood co-ordinator => Éducateur/éducatrices de jeunes enfants (Early Childhood Educator) => Core practitioner with group responsibility, centre specialist in early childhood education / Centre head / Early childhood co-ordinator => Professeur des écoles ((Primary and) Preprimary Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head	
Germany **(0-14)**	=> Childcare Assistant/ Social Assistant => Supplementary staff	=> Educator => Childhood Pedagogue => Social Pedagogue => Core practitioner/ group leader / centre head	
Greece **(6m-6)**	=>Voithos vrefonipiagogou (Nursery and Childcare Teaching Assistant) => Qualified co-worker	=> Vrefonipiagogos/ Vrefonipiokomos (Nursery and Childcare Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head Diefthintis	
Greece **(4-6)**		=> Nipiagogos (Kindergarten Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Kindergarten principal Proistamenos	
Hungary **(0-3)**	=> Bölcsődei Dajka (Auxiliary Co-worker at Crèche) - No requirements: Co-worker with	=> Kisgyermeknevelő (Infant and Early Childhood Educator / Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator) - Core practitioner with group responsibility.	=> Centre head - Minimum qualification level ISCED 6, plus 5 years' work experience as educatoror => Core practitioner with group

	no formal IPS or no specialist qualification, only 100-hour-course, ISCED 1.	Minimum qualification level ISCED 5, but some of them have ISCED 6, or 7.	responsibility / Centre head with group responsibility in small centres.
Hungary **(3-6)**	=> Óvodai Dajka (Auxiliary Co-worker of Kindergarten) - No requirements: Co-worker with no formal IPS qualification however since 1990 available a special training course leading to a vocational certificate - secondary level vocational training certificate (Óvodai dajka OKJ), ISCED 2 - for support staff in óvoda.	=> Óvodapedagógus (Pre-primary Pedagogue) Core practitioner with group responsibility Requirement: ISCED 6	=> Centre head – Minimum qualification level ISCED 6, plus 5 years' work experience as pedagogue plus special exam. or => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head with group responsibility in small centres.
Ireland[176] **(0-5)**		=> Early childhood practitioner => Room Leader for the ECCE programme for 3 to 5 year olds	
Italy **(0-3)**[177]		=> Educatore/educatrice (Educator) => Core practitioner	=> Coordinatori pedagogici (Pedagogical Coordinators) => Centre Head / Regional Coordinator of several centres
Italy **(3-6)**		=> Insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia (Pre-primary Education Teacher) => Core practitioner (class teacher)	=> Dirigenti (Directors, Centre Heads, Principals)

[176] Ireland is developing a Workforce Development Plan which will describe different professional roles and career pathways.

[177] Italy, as with many other countries, employs auxiliary staff (Ausiliari/operatori) who are co-workers rather than assistants. These co-workers do not have a specialist ECEC qualification.

		=> Insegnante di sostegno (Special Needs Teacher) => Core practitioner (teacher/educator with an additional qualification for working with special needs children)	=> Centre head, also of several centres in one region
Latvia **(1½-7)**	=> Skolotāja palīgs (Teacher Assistant) => Responsible for children's care needs and sup-porting the teacher in educational and play activities	=> Pirmsskolas izglītības skolotājs (Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Lithuania	=> Auklėtojos padėjėja (Pedagogue Assistant) => Pedagogo padejėjas (ECEC and Pre-primary Assistant) => Co-worker (with no relevant qualifications or no formal IPS)	=> Auklėtojas/auklėtoja (Early Childhood Pedagogue) => Priešmokyklinio ugdymo pedagogas (Pre-primary Pedagogue) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Luxembourg	=> Éducateur diplômé (Educator) => Teacher's Assistant in the formal education sector => Auxiliaire de vie (Care Assistant / Care Worker) => Care Assistant in the non-formal education sector	=> Social Pedagogy/ Social Work Specialist – Bachelor Professionel => Core practitioner in the non-formal education sector => Centre head in the non-formal education sector	
Luxembourg		=>Éducateur diplômé Educator) => Core practitioner in the non-formal education sector => Bachelor en sciences de l'éducation (Primary School Teacher – Bachelor Professionel)	

(3-12)		=> Core practitioner in the formal education sector / Bachelor en sciences sociales et éducatives	
Malta (0-3)		=> Childcare Worker => Core practitioner with group responsibilities	=> Supervisor / Manager / Coordinator => Core practitioner with management responsibilities, sometimes also working with children
Malta (3-5)		=> Kindergarten Assistant (KGA) => Core practitioner with group responsibilities	
Netherlands		=> Peuterspeelzaalleidster or Pedagogisch medewerker (Toddler Playgroup Caregiver or Pedagogical Worker) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Netherlands (3m-4)		=> Pedagogisch medewerker (Leidster) (Pedagogical Worker) => Core practitioner with group responsibility in same-age or mixed-age group	
Netherlands (4-12)	=> Onderwijsassistent (Teaching Assistant) => Qualified co-worker / Teacher's class assistant	=> Leerkracht (Primary School Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Norway (0-6)	=> Barne- og ungdomsarbeider (Child and Youth Care worker) = ISCED 3 (vocational training => Qualified co-worker	=> Kindergarten teacher) ISCED level 6 => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head -ISCED level 6 => Styrer (Head of Kindergarten) - ISCED level 6	

	=> Barnehageassistent (Assistant) = part of the team working with children - no regulated qualification level	=> Pedagogisk leder (Pedagogical leader) = head of department/leading the group of children and staff - ISCED level 6	
Poland (20w-3)	=> Wolontariusz (Volunteer) => Co-worker with minimal specialist preparation	=> Opiekun dziecięcy (Nursery Educator / Caregiver) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Poland (3-6)		=> Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego (Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head	
Portugal	=> Assistente operacional (Auxiliary staff) => Co-workers without specialist qualification	=> Educador/a de infância (Early Childhood Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility => Docente de educação especial (Special Education Teacher) => Specialist support worker	=> Diretor técnico/ Diretor pedagógico (Specialist Director/Centre Head => Pedagogical Director/Centre Head) => Centre head (in most cases also a core practitioner with group responsibility)
Romania (0-3)	=> Îngrijitor (Caregiver) => low qualified co-worker	=> Educator–puericultor (Educator – early years) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Romania (3-6)		=> Educatoare (Educator) => Institutori (învățământ preșcolar) (Pre-primary Teachers) => Core practitioner with group responsibility	
Romania (3-11)		=> Profesori pentru învățământul preşcolar şi primar (Primary and Preprimary Teachers)	

		=> Core practitioner with group responsibility / Director	
Slovak Republic (0-3)		=> Opatrovateľ detí (Child carer) - ISCED 3	
Slovak Republic (2-6)		=> Učiteľ materskej školy (Kindergarten Teacher) - ISCED 3 => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Kindergarten principal	
Slovenia	Vzgojitelj predšolskih otrok - pomočnik vzgojitelja (Pre-school Teacher – Assistant) => Qualified co-worker; children 1 – 6 years; works with pre-school teacher in developing, planning and implementing educational work in the group, autonomously pursues certain activities of preschool education, and participates in other activities and duties related to the kindergarten activity; minimum qualification level ISCED 3	Vzgojitelj (Pre-school Teacher) => Core practitioner with group responsibility; children 1 – 6 years; responsible for planning and implementation of education, communication with parents, as well as participation in the organisation of life and activities at a kindergarten; minimum qualification level ISCED 6 Svetovalni delavec (Counsellor) => Core practitioner with group responsibility; counselling specialist works with children; plans, monitors and evaluates the development of a kindergarten and provides education in cooperation with pre-school teachers and the school leadership; minimum qualification level ISCED 7	
Spain	=> Assistants (of any type) are not mentioned or regulated at the National level. In the 17 Autonomous Communities there may be some assistants e.g Foreign language conversation assistants. Monitor/ Animador de ocio y tiempo libre (Play Worker/ Sociocultural Animator). Physiotherapist Nurse	=> Maestro especialista en Educación infantil (Early Childhood Education Teacher; ISCED 6) => Core practitioner with group responsibility in 0-6 year olds. Responsible for the design, implementation and assessment of the Pedagogical proposal. => Técnico superior en educación infantil (Higher Technician in Pre-Primary Education, ISCED 5) => Core practitioner in the first cycle of pre- primary education (0- to 3-year olds) under the supervision	=> Director/a (Head Master): => Public centres: Maestro especialista en Educación Infantil. They may manage more than one centre. => Private centres: The Head Master may not be qualified, but the responsible for the pedagogical proposal must always be held by an Early Childhood Education Teacher.

	These professionals cannot have contact with children without the presence of the core practitioner.	of an Early Childhood Education Teacher, in institutions dependent on national or regional and local bodies, and in private centres. => Técnica / Auxiliar en educación infantil (Technician in Pre-Primary Education, ISCED 4) => obsolete qualification with the same professional recognition and duties as the Higher Technician.
Sweden **(1-5)**	=> Barnskötare (Childcare Worker) => Qualified co-worker - ISCED 3	=> Förskollärare (Preschool Teacher/ ECEC Teacher) - ISCED 6 => Core practitioner with group responsibility / Centre head
Turkey	=> Destek eğitim personeli (Support education staff) Supports children who do not have self-care skills, preferred to have completed a preschool education programme or a vocational education programme on child development	=> Okul öncesi öğretmeni (Preschool teacher) Core practitioner with group responsibility for 3-6 year olds, responsible for implementing the preschool education programme

Annex 3 – Mapping of the EQF statements against the core competences

The ten quality statements in the European Quality Framework

1. Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.
2. Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.
3. Well-qualified staff with initial and continuing training that enable them to fulfil their professional role.
4. Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.
5. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential addressing their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and their well-being.
6. A curriculum that requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.
7. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.
8. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.
9. Stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.
10. Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal entitlement to high-quality affordable early childhood education and care, and progress is regularly reported to relevant stakeholders.

Quality statement	ECEC assistants (where applicable)	ECEC core practitioners	ECEC leaders (e.g. head of ECEC centres)
1			
2	• maintain meaningful relationships with children • encourage individuals and groups of children to engage fully in the activities offered by the ECEC setting • create a caring environment where children learn from each other • develop effective relationships with families and the local community • treat all families with respect and according to their needs	• are aware of the impact their values and attitudes have on children and their families • ensure the ECEC setting's approach to working with parents and the local community is implemented effectively • ensure parents are regularly involved in their children's ECEC activities • work with families to support their parenting skills	• are aware of the impact the ECEC setting makes on each child and their families • ensure the ECEC setting demonstrates values of inclusivity, respect and tolerance • create a safe and inclusive environment in which all children are valued, their rights are respected and they are able to learn and develop through play • support individual children and their families whose experiences make it more difficult for them to succeed in an ECEC setting
3	• engage in regular professional learning and development • are able to reflect on, and verify the impact of their practice	• participate in their own (and promote their team's) ongoing improvements in professional competence and skills	• create and maintain a professional, reflective and supportive working environment which leads to high quality provision • establish and maintain good working relationships with families and the local community • combine pedagogic and organisational leadership skills in order to support the needs of children, families and staff

4	• maintain effective working relationships with colleagues • with support from colleagues, work effectively under the guidance of ECEC leaders	• provide guidance and support, including mentoring, to ECEC assistants or other staff • under direction from an ECEC leader, take responsibility for leading some aspects of the ECEC setting's operational activities	• ensure ECEC staff deliver high quality pedagogic experiences
5	• have sufficient knowledge of different pedagogical experiences to organise them effectively • have sufficient knowledge of the ECEC setting's curriculum, the value of play and children's early development • support children's play in order to promote children's well-being, development and learning	• have a deep knowledge of different pedagogical experiences in order to develop and organise ECEC activities • have a deep understanding of the ECEC setting's curriculum, the value of play and early childhood development in order to support individual children and lead professional practice • plan and create effective learning environments which support children's well-being and development, and enable children's learning to emerge through play and planned activities	• have a sufficiently deep understanding of how to manage and motivate staff in order to lead the delivery of high quality provision • have extensive knowledge of children's early development, learning and play
6	• are aware of the impact their values and attitudes have on children and their families • work with other staff to promote children's well-being, development and learning	• work with other staff to promote children's well-being, development and learning	
7		• through self-reflection demonstrate improvements in their practice	• ensure accurate and up-to-date records on each child's progress are maintained

			• establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with children and the local community • maintain accurate and up-to-date information on each child's progress • work with colleagues to monitor and improve the quality of practice
8	• are aware of the impact their practice has on children	• evaluate the impact of their and others' practice on children and their families • observe and document children's progress	• ensure the quality of provision is monitored and evaluated through internal and/or external processes • establish and monitor the ECEC setting's policy for working with children and other professionals • use information from regular evaluations of the setting's practice to identify development needs of all staff
9		• manage and lead supportive educational and caring relationships with children • work with other staff as part of a team to identify and intervene in situations in order to keep children safe and support learning • work effectively with colleagues including those from other professional backgrounds (e.g. teachers, health workers, social workers, family support teams etc.)	• create and develop mutually-beneficial working relationships with colleagues from other settings and different professional backgrounds

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