

CROATIA

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Dejana Bouillet

Full Professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb

Citation suggestion:

Bouillet, D. 2017. "Croatia – ECEC Workforce Profile." *In Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

Funded by:

Contents

- 1. ECEC governance 3
- 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce? 3
 - 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision..... 3
 - 2.2 Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity 5
- 3. Initial professional studies (IPS) 8
 - 3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational..... 8
 - 3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners 11
 - 3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability 14
- 4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners..... 14
- 5. Continuing professional development (CPD) 17
- 6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing 19
- 7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues 21
- 8. General workforce issues 23
 - 8.1 Remuneration..... 23
 - 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment..... 24
 - 8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace 25
 - 8.4 Non-contact time 25
 - 8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies..... 26
- 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment 26
- 10. References 28



1. ECEC governance

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

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

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

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

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

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

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

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

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012; 2014.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Box 1

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2

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

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

*Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a.

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

Table 3

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

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

* Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a, own calculations

³ Private organisations, social and health institutions

Table 4

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

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

* Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a, own calculations

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

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

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

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

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes – higher education and vocational

ECEC/Kindergarten Teachers (*Odgojitelj predškolske djece*)

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

Table 5:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 6

Croatia: ECEC Teacher

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

Table 7

Croatia: Specialist support staff

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

Table 8

Croatia: Nurse

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

3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes for core practitioners

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

General competence specifications

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

Instrumental competencies

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

Interpersonal competencies

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

Systematic competencies

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

Specific competence specifications

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

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

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

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

General competence specifications

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

Instrumental competencies

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

Interpersonal competencies

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

Systematic competencies

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

Specific competence specifications

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

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

Curricular areas

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

Table 9

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

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

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

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

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

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

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

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

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

The curriculum of each higher education institution for each study programme is defined at the institutional level. Before the approval of study programmes, all higher education institutions have to undergo an accreditation process by the Agency for Science and Higher Education. *The Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act* (2003, with amendments) stipulates that curricula should be in line with the latest scientific achievements, national priorities, professional demands and be comparable to EU curricula. There are no compulsory or core subjects defined at the national or regional level, but most study programmes do have some required core/compulsory subjects.

This means that learning in the early childhood workplace (practicum) is incorporated in the curricula of each faculty that provides a study programme for early childhood and preschool education. Each methods course has some classes directed to practical exercise (between 15 and 45 per semester). During these sessions, students visit ECEC institutions and practise activities with the children related to the course topic (arts, music, physical activities, literacy, etc.), with the support of their university tutor and colleagues.

The cooperation between faculties and ECEC institutions and their complementary roles are regulated by an Ordinance on ‘the training centre and experimental programmes’ in ECEC institutions (Official Gazette, No. 49/2004). The status of the ECEC institution as training centre, which serve as professional development centres, is determined by the Ministry of Science and Education for between one to four years, based on the requirement of the faculty that organises the students’ placements. An ECEC institution serving as a training centre is expected to ensure:

- a high level of the quality of the educational process;
- appropriate space for different forms of learning and consultation for the students (including individual consultations);
- sufficient materials for various didactical approaches;
- qualified professional staff; and
- an annual plan and programme of training.

Mutual obligations of the training centre and the faculty are regulated through a signed contract which is renewable on an annual basis. This contract includes a plan of the work with students, as well as regulations for the financial support for mentors and the ECEC institutions where the placement will be realised. This financial support is provided by faculties and is based on the number of students who decide to spend their practicum in each institution.

The length of time spent on field-based studies and the number of ECTS points allocated are presented in *Table 10*.

Table 10

Croatia: Placements in ECEC institutions as part of the IPS of core practitioners (Bachelor’s degree)

University	Hours/days of practice	ECTS points
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Faculty of Educational Sciences	1 st year: 50/10 2 nd year: 75/25 3 rd year: 100/20 Total: 325/55	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	2 nd year: 40/8 3 rd year: 60/12 Total: 100/20	2 2 Total: 4
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences	1 st year: 30/6 2 nd year: 30/6 3 rd year: 30/6 Total: 90/18	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education	2 nd year: 60/12 3 rd year: 60/12 Total: 120/24	4 4 Total: 8
University of Zadar, Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education	1 st year: 30/6 2 nd year: 30/6 3 rd year: 30/6 Total: 90/18	2 2 2 Total: 6
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education	1 st year: 40/8 2 nd year: 80/16 3 rd year: 80/16 Total: 200/42	2 4 4 Total: 10

The placements in ECEC settings are organised as a separate course at most faculties which takes place outside the regular teaching process (during the months that are allocated to exams). Students choose their place for the practicum individually. During the time they spend at the workplace, students receive support from a mentor, who should have at least five years of working experience. This is the only requirement for taking on the role as mentor. Specific qualifications or working conditions for this position have not been developed. The mentor is expected to support the work of the student, through planning, preparing and evaluating the student's activities. The position as student mentor is awarded 3 points in the process of the professional promotion of ECEC Teachers (Official Gazette, No. 49/2004).

During the practicum period, students are expected to become familiar with the organisational, legal and pedagogical aspects of ECEC institutions, as well as with all aspects of an ECEC Teacher's work. For example, the students' obligations at the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek 2009b) are:

- to become familiar with the curriculum for educational groups;
- to inspect all administrative and pedagogical documentation of educational groups;
- to participate in daily classroom activities;
- to become familiar with team work in the kindergarten, including collaboration between teachers and parents;
- to initiate some activities with children (according to the practicum plan, as agreed with the mentor).

Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to monitor and evaluate children's activities and wellbeing, as well as their commitment to early childhood education. They are expected to develop a capacity for continuously evaluating and self-evaluating their own work and that of the teachers, and to demonstrate their sensitivity for children, parents, colleagues and other professionals who work in the ECEC setting.

Student assignments become more demanding during each year of study, but the competences to be developed through field-based work remain the same.

Work placements are also part of the **Master's study programmes**. The main aim at this stage is for students to qualify themselves for independent working with specialist methodological knowledge and skills, as well as for the reflection and improvement of ECEC theory and practice. At the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (2009b), during each of the two years of study, students spend 60 hours (3 weeks or 15 days) in an ECEC setting (8 ECTS points). During the practicum, students are expected to:

- demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of analysing, synthesising and evaluating field-specific theories and practices;
- apply modern technologies;
- demonstrate a high level of interpretation and evaluation of research data within their professional and scientific field of work;
- achieve higher-level skills through reflecting and evaluating their own practice (see *Section 3.2* for further competence specifications).

All students are obliged to keep a diary of work, as well as other documentation defined in the course syllabus. The mentor is obliged to evaluate the quality of the student's practice through a written report. At the end of the practicum, the student hands in the various forms of documentation to the responsible university tutor, who checks whether all obligations have been fulfilled. This is the only formalised procedure of self-evaluation and evaluation of student's practice. However, each university tutor can give the students special assignments connected with specific lectures or courses. In such cases, students evaluate their work within the framework of these courses and reflect on their work together with their university tutors.

It can be concluded that workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners is not sufficiently defined in Croatia. This can be deduced from the low number of ECTS points allocated

for this part of IPS, from the lack of formal procedures for organising and evaluating these processes, and from the lack of qualification requirements for field-based mentors, who are not well recognised and supported. However, some reforms are planned for this area of ECEC in Croatia. More precisely, the new Ordinance on the training centre and experimental programmes in ECEC institutions are expected to be adopted in 2017.

5. Continuing professional development (CPD)

The continuing professional development of ECEC personnel is regulated by:

- *the Preschool Education Act* (Official Gazette, No. 10/97, 107/07 and 94/13);
- *the Ordinance on the manner and conditions of taking the professional exam of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions* (Official Gazette, No. 133/97); and
- *the Ordinance on the manner and conditions for the promotion in the profession of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions* (Official Gazette, No. 133/97).

CPD is defined as the participation of ECEC Teachers and other staff in educational activities prepared and organised by Ministry of Science and Education, as well as other professional institutions and non-governmental institutions.

Promotion in the ECEC profession is based on three requirements, one of which is participation in CPD courses (Official Gazette, No. 133/97). Those are:

- Achievements in the direct educational work with children;
- Achievements in professional activities alongside the work in ECEC institutions; and
- Participation in professional development (CPD).

For professional activities alongside their pedagogical work, staff can be awarded a specific number of credit points (not ECTS points).

- 1 credit point for speaking at or co-ordinating professional meetings in an ECEC setting at the local/regional level;
- 2 credit points for publishing a paper in a professional journal or magazine, presenting at a national congress or conference, or participating in a research project;
- 3 credit points for a review of a professional book or textbook;
- 4 credit points for the translation of a professional manual or other educational books;
- 6 credit points for the authorship of educational books or scientific papers and participation in scientific research projects.

During their professional career, ECEC Teachers can advance to the status of a mentor or counsellor, dependent to a certain extent on their participation in CPD courses.

Requirements for the status of mentor are:

- at least six years of work experience;
- excellent or good assessments of their work;
- at least 7 credit points (as defined above);
- participation in continued professional training.

Requirements for the status of a counsellor are:

- at least eleven years of work experience;
- excellent assessments of their work;
- at least 15 credit points (as defined above);
- participation in continued professional training.

However, the term ‘participation in continued professional training’ is not defined in terms of a specific number of days or hours, or in terms of topics or other such requirements.

The **main provider** of CPD in Croatia is the *Education and Teacher Training Agency* (Official Gazette, No. 85/06), a public institution responsible for the provision of professional and advisory support to all levels of the education system. This includes:

- participation in the preparation, development and implementation of the national curriculum;
- providing assistance and guidelines for educational institutions, their principals, teachers, and school counsellors;
- organising and implementing in-service training for teachers, school counsellors and school principals;
- licensing examinations for teachers and for school counsellors, in accordance with special regulations.

The professional staff of the Agency are 110 subject-specific Senior Advisers working in the Central Office in Zagreb, and in three regional offices in Split, Rijeka and Osijek. The education provided by the Agency and other providers of CPD is not connected with the ECTS system.

The Agency organises CPD at state, inter-regional and regional level through different trainings for different professional groups. Each year the Agency organises around 1,000 trainings, while around 3,000 trainings are organised by counsellors at the regional level (Education and Teacher Training Agency 2016). However, only one small segment of these trainings is directed to the field of ECEC.

CPD activities organised by the Agency are financed through the state budget. It is possible to use the services of other CPD providers, but the fees usually have to be covered by the teachers unless the training is organised within the framework of EU project funding, ministry funding, or funding from other sources. Some organisations that organise trainings for Preschool Teachers or other supportive professional staff on a regular basis are: the Croatian office of the International Step by Step Association; the Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, and the Centre for Life-long Learning of the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka.

Even though the system of the CPD is organised, neither core practitioners, nor qualified and non-qualified co-workers in preschool institutions are *obliged* to participate in these activities. Thus, participation depends on their interest in the advancement of their professional status. According to data compiled by the Education and Teacher Training Agency (2013), 64.5% of all ECEC Teachers in Croatia are registered in the CPD system. However, since local authorities are responsible for regulations regarding CPD participation, each ECEC institution decides on the CPD activities of teaching staff.

The Preschool Education Act defines that the heads of ECEC provision should be fully qualified ECEC Teachers or be a member of the professional support staff (members of the expert team) and have at least five years of work experience in the ECEC field. They do not have to fulfil special qualifying requirements, but the Agency organises some special trainings exclusively for the managers of ECEC institutions.

Unfortunately, no large-scale research projects on the CPD activities of ECEC personnel have been funded over the past five years. The Agency conducted an analysis of the system of CPD of educational staff in general, the results of which were published in 2013 (Gabrček 2013). However, ECEC Teachers were not included in the analysis. The only recent study to specifically include ECEC Teachers was an IPA project conducted in Croatia from 2013 to 2015 on *Qualification standards and improvement of the quality of study programmes for preschool and primary school teachers*. However, the project has not as yet had any impact on ECEC policy in general or on the professional development of ECEC staff.

Early childhood education care and the continuing professional development of ECEC staff is thus neither a topic in public debates nor in government reform initiatives.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (CQF 2013), as a major public, political and legislative framework, opens a door to the professional development of ECEC Teachers and other ECEC professions in Croatia and represents a key reform instrument governing the system of qualifications standards. The Act supports the standardisation and harmonisation of qualification standards for all professions across the education system. It steers higher education institutions towards the systematic application of a learning outcomes approach as a basis for curriculum planning (Beljo Lučić at al. 2011). In order to ensure quality and transparency of its implementation, a *Register of the Croatian Qualifications* is currently being designed, with the aim of achieving a better balance between the needs of the education sector and those of the labour market. The Register will contain a list of all professions with their respective competence specifications and learning outcomes. The Register is also planned as a basis for the development of an internal and external quality assurance system, because only those educational programmes that comply with the qualification standards of the Register are entitled to use the Croatian Qualifications Framework levels.

In order to implement the CQF, several projects have been initiated in order to define qualification standards for teacher education programmes in terms of learning outcomes, involving teacher education faculties from different universities. The project *Qualification standards and improvement of the quality of study programmes for preschool and primary school teachers* is the only project focusing on teacher education in the early childhood field. The project (2013-2015) was co-ordinated by the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education in cooperation with the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education. The aim was to develop a proposal for core standards across the relevant Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Croatia (Krstović, Vujčić and Pejić Papak 2016, 15)⁵. Two sets of students and teachers in Bachelor and Master study programmes at the two partner universities contributed towards defining two kinds of standards:

- standards for the ECEC teaching profession and specialist support staff (planning, organisation and analysis of the work; workplace preparation; operational activities related to the profession/workplace; commercial tasks; communication and cooperation with others; research, development activities, innovation; quality assurance; health and environment protection; professional development);
- standards for the qualifying process, i.e. what ECEC teachers need to learn during their initial professional studies (see *Section 3.2* for details).

Another recently adopted and significant document is *the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge* (Official Gazette, No. 124/14). The Strategy identifies and defines five objectives that refer to the entire system of education, including the ECEC system. Those are:

- developing a system for identifying, promoting and developing the capabilities and potential of individuals, and strengthening the services for lifelong personal and professional guidance;
- improving the quality of education and establishing a quality assurance system;
- developing processes and a system for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills;
- improving the system of continuing professional development of educational staff;
- enhancing the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and learning.

Key aspects of professionalisation are seen as:

⁵ The project also involves primary education, but this part of the project will be not presented here.

- general awareness of a teacher's work as socially valuable and enjoying high social status;
- high level of specific knowledge and skills which enable autonomous decision-making in complex situations;
- acquisition of professional competences through a long period of initial university education followed by a formal induction period ending with an exam for full license;
- lifelong competence development based on formal continuous professional development and informal learning and periodical evaluation of competences (re-licensing);
- programmes for initial teacher education which, besides professional knowledge and skills, enhance acquiring professional values and building a teacher's professional identity;
- establishment of professional associations which regulate, by means of a code of ethics and other acts, the criteria for entering a profession and professional practice.

The professionalisation of the teaching occupation in the way envisioned in the Strategy should be a joint endeavour of different key stakeholders. Currently, the academic community and educational experts are leading the implementation of specific activities, but for the full realisation of this goal more support from other stakeholders, such as policy makers, teacher unions, and professional teacher associations is required.

Even though the Strategy had the full support of all Croatian political parties, there are still some missing parts in the implementation strategy. These are:

- the existence of clearly defined outcomes for each level of the education system (here the Croatian Qualification Framework represents an important tool);
- the existence of a quality assurance system that could examine the success of learning processes and research work; and
- improvement of the initial education system and continuous professional training.

Recently, some important changes have occurred in the field of the ECEC. These are:

- the development, since 2011, of Master's level university studies for ECEC Teachers;
- changes following the 2013 Preschool Education Act, when:
 - the qualifications required for work in ECEC institutions were harmonised with the titles awarded upon the completion of ECEC study programmes in Croatia;
 - employment in ECEC was strictly banned for all persons who have problems with the law (because of some crime or offence act from the list in the Act);
 - employment procedures for work in ECEC institutions were more clearly defined (requiring a public announcement of vacant posts by the workplace);
 - the implementation of the national curricular framework for ECEC was made mandatory;
 - 250 hours' kindergarten attendance was made obligatory for all children in the year before entering primary school, accompanied by an Ordinance about the content and duration of a pre-primary programme (Official Gazette, No. 107/14);
- adoption of a *National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education* (Official Gazette, No. 5/15) which is in line with contemporary research knowledge on childhood, and the purpose and importance of ECEC.

It can be concluded that Croatia is characterised by a relatively rich activity in terms of policy documents directed towards improving the quality of the education system as a whole. However, in comparison with primary, secondary and tertiary education, reforms in the field of ECEC do not have such a high level of attention from policy makers, researchers and professional associations. All initiatives in the field during the last five years were mentioned in this report.

Moreover, it is important to note that the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education started a project on the self-evaluation of ECEC institutions in the year 2010. The aim of the project was to develop a methodology and instruments adapted to the ECEC sector. The findings were published in a handbook (Antulić 2013), which provides a resource for supporting all ECEC institutions in the process of quality assurance, and is thus a significant tool in the professionalisation of ECEC Teachers and other relevant ECEC staff.

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

Representative research studies focusing on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues do not exist in Croatia. Studies conducted in the last five years mostly cover only small samples and do not represent the ECEC profession of overall Croatia. Some of these studies are presented below – sources are available at the central portal of Croatian scientific journals (Portal of scientific journals in Croatia, www.hrca.hr).

Evaluation of a new study programme in early childhood education and care at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka.

Source: Tatalović Vorkapić, S., L. Vujičić, and Ž. Boneta 2016. (see references)

Aims: The study aimed to investigate the motivation of ECEC Teachers and graduate students to enrol in a new Master's study programme at the University of Rijeka, the levels of competence developed during their studies, and the predictive power of three significantly connected motives in relation to those competencies.

Procedure: 44 preschool teachers participated in this study, all females with a mean age of 34 years (SD=7.5), ranging from 23 to 51 years of age. The average length of working experience was 10 years (SD=7.92), ranging from 2 to 32 years of working within ECEC. A questionnaire with 39 items was used. Participants were supposed to estimate their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale. To analyse the ECEC teachers' motives for enrolling in this graduate study programme, a set of ten items was used.

Findings: Statistical analysis revealed a highly positive perception of relevant competences gained. This finding confirmed the hypothesis that continuing professional development through formal higher education contributes significantly to improving ECEC Teachers' performance while coping with changing and growing job demands. Moreover, the participants demonstrated an intrinsic motivation for enrolling for such a course. Extrinsic motives were indicative of a more negative, while intrinsic motivation led to more positive perception of learning outcomes and gained competences. Overall, the evaluation was highly positive and the findings confirmed the importance of satisfying the professional needs of ECEC Teachers.

Principals' attitudes towards (self)evaluation in ECEC institutions

Source: Magaš, M. and S. Tatalović Vorkapić 2015. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this study was to examine and analyse principals' attitudes toward the (self)evaluation of work performance in ECEC institutions and the relation between the characteristics of these institutions, principals' socio-demographic characteristics, and their attitudes toward (self)evaluation.

Procedure: This study included 62 kindergarten principals across the country, representing 9.2% of the total number of ECEC institution principals in Croatia. A questionnaire with 31 statements was created for the purpose of this study.

Findings: The principals expressed positive general attitudes toward (self)evaluation. A positive correlation was found between the principals' professional qualifications and their attitudes toward (self)evaluation, i.e. the principals with higher professional qualifications tended to express a more positive attitude towards (self)evaluation. These results indicate the significance of studying attitudes toward quality and (self)evaluation and confirm the important role of principals in ensuring and improving kindergarten quality.

Preschool teachers and counselling with parents

Source: Skočić Mihić, S., D. Blana Trošeč, and V. Katić 2015. (see references)

Aims: The research set out to test the hypothesis that ECEC Teachers feel only partially competent in parents counselling, which is connected with their age, life experience, working experience and level of education.

Procedure: The study included 136 ECEC Teachers who completed a scale for self-assessment of competences for counselling parents constructed for the purpose of this research. A factor analysis resulted in several subscales.

Findings: The results indicate that ECEC Teachers evaluated their counselling competences as mediocre. Differences could be shown in relation to their age, life experience and work experience and the type of their initial education. Professional experience proved to be the key element in acquiring competences for counselling which correlated with life experience and the level of education. This suggests that teachers who are at the beginning of their careers are at a disadvantage when it comes to parent counselling. This could be avoided if counselling competences were included in the learning outcomes during initial professional education.

Situation-related coping with stress among ECEC Teachers

Source: Pavlović, Ž. and J. Sindik 2014. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this study was to examine the possibility of forecasting situation-related coping with stress on the basis of predictors such as personality traits of ECEC Teachers (optimism/pessimism, emotional competence, self-efficacy), seniority, dispositional styles of coping with stress and how teachers perceive different sources of stress on the job.

Procedure: The participants were 336 ECEC Teachers from the county of Split-Dalmatia. The following instruments were applied: Scale for assessing stress of Preschool Teachers, optimism-pessimism scale of general self-efficacy, social desirability scale, emotional competence questionnaire EUK-15, questionnaire on coping with stressful situations.

Findings: The main finding of this research was that ECEC Teachers perceived their work as extremely stressful. The results indicated that dispositional coping mechanisms focused significantly on personality traits such as self-efficacy (to a lesser extent), and seniority. Participants perceiving extreme stress tended to be less content with their job. The findings contribute to a better understanding of stress among ECEC Teachers. This can contribute towards an improved design of stress prevention programmes for ECEC Teachers.

Students' views on the ECEC Teacher profession related to level of professional education

Source: Borovac, T. 2014. (see references)

Aims: The study aimed at highlighting differences in students' perceptions of the ECEC Teacher profession related to their level of education.

Procedure: A questionnaire compiled for this study comprised three subscales: understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, images of children and childhood, and perception of competences and professional duties. The research was conducted with students in their final (third) year of an undergraduate study programme in early childhood/pre-school education and students of the final (fifth) year of the Master study programme (N=74).

Findings: Statistical analysis led to the conclusion that the students of the third and the fifth year differ in significant ways in their perceptions of the ECEC profession in all three subscales. These results can be used for further analysis of students' perceptions of their future profession, especially in terms of meta-competences, and for evaluating the effectiveness of the study programme for prospective ECEC Teachers.

Educators' views on competencies for the effective management of problem situations

Source: Modrić, N. 2013. (see references)

Aims: The aim of this research was to examine ECEC Teachers' attitudes towards specific knowledge and skills relevant for the daily work of educators, especially for the management of problem situations. The author investigated how these skills were assessed by ECEC Teachers and to what extent they have mastered them. The specific aim of the research was to investigate whether the assessments of the teachers involved in the programme of education for Problem Situation Management (PSM) differed from the assessments of those who were not involved in this programme.

Procedure: The sample consisted of 155 ECEC Teachers in five preschool institutions in Zagreb and Samobor. The participants completed a specially compiled questionnaire.

Findings: The research results showed no statistically significant differences in the assessment of the importance of educators' knowledge and skills among participants. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the self-assessment regarding their mastering these skills and knowledge, towards a greater competence of the participants who completed the PSM education.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

There are two main differences between ECEC Teachers and other teachers in Croatia. Firstly, the qualification requirement for primary and secondary school teachers is a Master's degree, whereas for ECEC Teachers it is a Bachelor's degree. Secondly, teachers in schools are paid at a nationally agreed level, whereas ECEC Teachers are paid according to local regulations (because municipalities are responsible for ECEC in Croatia). It means that the source of salaries for teachers in schools is the national budget, while the sources of salaries for ECEC Teachers are municipality budgets which fund the specific ECEC institution. Some ECEC institutions are financed by private and other sources (for example, religious communities). Generally, the salaries of teachers in schools are the same across the country, whereas the salaries of Pre-school Teachers are highly variable.

Table 11 presents examples of monthly salaries (gross) of ECEC Teachers in eight Croatian towns from two regions.

Table 11

Croatia: Examples of monthly salaries (gross) of ECEC Teachers in two counties*

Town	Kuna	EUR (approx.)
Ludbreg	6,198	821
Novi Marof	6,357	842
Koprivnica	6,648	881
Ivanec	6,837	906
Čakovec	7,014	930
Lepoglava	7,362	975
Varaždin	9,300	1,232
Krapina	9,500	1,258

* Harači Pintarić, I. 2016.

Table 11 clearly illustrates the inequalities in ECEC Teachers' salaries, which are dependent on the economic development and financial possibilities of towns and municipalities as providers of ECEC institutions. Regional differences in salaries compared to the national average (7,739 kunas/1,032€, according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2016) can be up to 18% higher than or up to 10.6% lower than the national average salary.

It is important to note that the average salary of ECEC Teachers across Croatia is lower than the salaries shown in *Table 11*, since many municipalities in Croatia cannot offer proper salaries to their employees. Furthermore, the table shows the gross levels of salaries, meaning that ECEC Teachers have to live on much less (on average, around 5,633 kunas/748€ according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2016)). ECEC Teachers thus have relatively modest incomes regarding the level of their education. However, in some municipalities they are paid better than teachers who work in schools. The average net salary of employees who have acquired academic qualifications in the education sector is the lowest average salary of employees who have obtained academic qualifications in Croatia. Generally, such salaries are adequate for the necessities of life. If ECEC Teachers experience particularly difficult living conditions, their rights are regulated by other laws and they receive support from other public services (for example, from centres for social welfare according to the Social Welfare Act).

ECEC Teachers receive additional payment for:

- a post as centre head or deputy leader;
- years of work experience;
- the status of mentor or counsellor (see *Section 5*);
- working overtime.

They can also receive extra money if they participate in certain professional activities not connected to the ECEC institution (as a member of a non-governmental professional organisation, as a participant in a professional project, etc.).

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

Table 12 shows that the majority of ECEC staff is employed on a full-time basis. The exception are staff in preschool programmes organised in other facilities (for example, in primary schools or libraries), since these programmes last between three to five hours daily. According to the *Ordinance on the content and duration of preschool programmes* (2014), each child that does not participate in regular early and preschool education should spend 250 hours in one of these alternative facilities during the year preceding primary school entry.

Table 12

Croatia: Persons employed in ECEC institutions, by full-time and part-time work, 2015*

Preschool institution	total	Full time (40 hours per week)	Part time (20 hours per week)	Per cent of the full-time employees
Kindergartens	18,243	17,180	1,063	94.2%
Preschool programmes out of kindergartens	267	0	267	0%
Other legal entities	281	201	80	71.5%
Total	18,791	17,381	1,410	92.5%

*Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015a

Some part-time employees in ECEC settings work as assistants for children with developmental difficulties. Since these children mostly attend for only four to five hours daily (whereas the majority of children attend for 10 hours), these staff tend to work less hours.

As already mentioned, each institution decides on the kind and number of professional support staff according to the *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC* (2008). This document links the number of children in each institution with the possible support employees (peda-

gogues, psychologists, rehabilitators...). Some of them are employed on a part-time basis, whereas some work in multiple preschool institutions.

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

The *Preschool Education Act (1997)* stipulates that ECEC Teachers and other professionals (pedagogues, psychologists, experts in the field of education and rehabilitation, speech therapists) who are employed in preschool institutions for the first time are to begin their job as a probationer. A probationer's internship lasts for one year and is completed by passing a professional exam. The process and content of a probationer's internship, the support to be provided by other personnel, as well as the content of the final exam are regulated by the *Ordinance on the manner and conditions of taking the professional exam of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in preschool institutions (1997)*. The professional exam is obligatory for all probationers employed in ECEC institutions with a permanent or a limited contract, with a full-time or part-time contract, as well as for all persons who participate in different forms of educational work with children and their parents (volunteers, external collaborators).

The probationer receives support from the centre head/director, a specified mentor, and from members of the expert team. During the year of probation, ECEC Teachers should become familiar with:

- the legal framework of their work (the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Preschool Education Act, National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education, as well as other legislation and regulations);
- general and profession-related regulations (statute, organisations, rules, management ...);
- specific characteristics, needs and dynamics of a child's development up to compulsory school age;
- aims and procedures of care, education and upbringing of young children;
- organising resources for educational processes with young children;
- relationships and communication among professional staff, children and parents;
- planning, programming, preparation, realisation and evaluation of educational programmes;
- pedagogical documentation.

Each probationer is required to be present in her/his mentor's classroom for at least 30 hours during the year while the mentor is obliged to observe at least 10 hours of the probationer's work per year. The content of the probationer's programme is a written official document.

However, after the probation period, regular supervision of work in the ECEC setting is not regulated, only that of the teachers who are interested in a career promotion. The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education initiated a project on self-evaluation in ECEC institutions in the year 2010 (Antulić 2013). Some ECEC settings follow the proposed model, but there is no obligation to participate in this system of monitoring. As shown in a recent UNICEF research (Bouillet, forthcoming), some ECEC institutions have developed a system of professional reflections on the quality of their work, while others follow the more formal framework above. According to the *Strategy of education, science and technology (2014)*, these inconsistencies should be changed in the near future, meaning that a certain form of self-evaluation is likely to become obligatory.

8.4 Non-contact time

Both the content and daily schedules of work in ECEC settings are regulated by the *National Pedagogical Standards for ECEC (2008)*. According to this document, ECEC Teachers work in direct contact with children for 27.5 hours weekly. The rest of the time (12.5 hours) is allocated for the planning, programming and evaluating of work, preparation, organisational and material resources, collaboration with parents and other participants of ECEC processes - and

for professional development. The same regulations apply for rehabilitators who work in special (segregated) educational groups for children with developmental disabilities. Assistants are expected to work full time directly with children.

Members of the specialist support staff and nurses should be involved in the direct work with children, teachers and parents for 25 hours per week. The remaining 15 working hours are designated for collaborative work with other institutions, professional development, planning, preparation of work and other obligations. This is a general rule, regardless of the number of ECEC institutions in which someone works.

8.5 Staff shortages and recruitment strategies

In general, ECEC Teachers do not have problems finding a job, even though each year around 500 students graduate from the Bachelor study programmes. Problems are more likely to arise from the relatively small number of specialist support staff, especially speech therapists and rehabilitators. Only one faculty in Croatia (at the University of Zagreb) provides a study programme for these professionals. The number of graduates from the faculty is not sufficient to meet the needs of ECEC institutions across the country. Moreover, the majority of these professionals prefer working in towns rather than in rural areas. Even though it is a huge problem, there are no specific recruitment strategies to deal with this issue. This is one of the negative consequences of ECEC coming under the jurisdiction of local communities. Small towns and municipalities do not have the financial and human resources to deal with this problem, while state institutions (especially the Ministry of Science and Education) do not feel responsible for this problem.

A systematic approach is needed, which involves the academy, the responsible ministry and the local communities. However, both current practices and research (Bouillet, forthcoming) have shown that the collaboration among the different sectors and levels of government is not well developed. Bearing that in mind, no solutions are visible in the near future.

There are also differences between urban and rural areas: whereas the capital city of Croatia (Zagreb) and some regional centres (for example Split and Rijeka) are faced with too many applicants for work in ECEC settings, in less developed areas there is a shortage of ECEC professionals.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The required qualification level for ECEC Teachers can be highlighted as a positive feature of the ECEC system in Croatia. The transition from vocational to university-based studies for prospective ECEC Teachers has been an important step in the professionalisation of ECEC staff. Also, the increasing number of Master's study programmes has opened up possibilities for a formalised form of continuing education for ECEC Teachers. However, changes in the Croatian ECEC legislation are needed which recognise and acknowledge the differences between Bachelor's and Master's degrees on a formal level.

The *Strategy of education, science and technology* (2014) indicates that candidates for ECEC Teacher study programmes do not have the highest achievements in secondary education and state university entrance (*matura*) examinations. "The issue concerning the real career intentions of these candidates regarding employment in the education sector also remains open, especially taking into account the salary that may be earned in the profession" (Official Gazette, No. 124/14, 66). Recognition of a Master's degree in ECEC in terms of payment could be one of the motivational factors for attracting and retaining the best students into the ECEC field. The quality of the teaching and learning processes at faculties is another important factor

for increasing of the status of the teaching profession in society. The third most important precondition is the systematic improvement of ECEC Teachers' salaries at the national level.

In Croatia, there is a formally established system of in-service teacher training, also for ECEC Teachers. However, the forms, programmes and topics of the training are not well harmonised. In most cases trainings only take place on a 'one-off' basis, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for experiential/incidental learning and reflection, and their application lacks monitoring and support. The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of in-service training and the development of mechanisms that will ensure that all ECEC staff are obliged to participate in that form of training during their whole career is needed. The *Strategy of education, science and technology* recommends several changes in this direction:

- improving the quality of the mentorship system during the traineeship/probationary period;
- aligning the continuing professional development of teachers with competence standards;
- implementing the teacher licensing system (including ECEC Teachers).

The following procedures are suggested (Official Gazette, No. 124/14):

1. preparing key documents for the professionalisation of the teaching occupation: a National Competence Standard for the Teaching Profession based on the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) and a Code of Ethics for Teachers;
2. developing a model and introducing a system of (re-)licensing for the acquisition and retaining of the license to work in education institutions;
3. developing a system of career advancement with the possibility of career flexibility based on the National Competence Standard for the Teaching Profession;
4. improving the income level of teachers;
5. stimulating interest in studying at faculties of teacher education and applying rigorous criteria for selecting the best candidates;

The first step in the implementation of the Strategy in the field of the ECEC is the project *Qualification Standards and Improvement of the Quality of Study Programmes for Preschool and Primary School Teachers* (Krstović, Vujičić, and Pejić Papak 2016). However, the results of the project do not as yet have any formal effect on implementation in the ECEC system.

A comprehensive Curriculum Reform also began in the year 2015, based on the Strategy. This reform includes the conceptualisation of the curriculum for all stages of education. Within this framework, the ECEC curricular framework is under revision.

The UNICEF Office for Croatia recently signed a programme of collaboration with the Croatian Government for the period from 2017 to 2020. The priority of this programme is ECEC, and it could be a boost for the further improvement of ECEC in Croatia. The basis for this is an analysis that aims (Bouillet, forthcoming):

- to inform UNICEF and relevant stakeholders about the existing equity issues regarding the access to preschool education;
- to provide evidence for UNICEF advocacy efforts in respect to this problem;
- to support the Croatian government in identifying and implementing strategies for enhancing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the early childhood education system, primarily in respect to the needs of the most vulnerable children.

All above-mentioned reforms and initiatives could lead to the further professionalisation of ECEC; however, the government of Croatia needs to make ECEC a political priority. Good ideas need political support; without political will, the implementation of defined measures will not be possible.

10. References

- Antulić, S. ed. 2013. *The Handbook for Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions*. Zagreb: Nacionalni centar za vanjsko vrednovanje obrazovanja [National Centre for External Evaluation of Education]
- Beljo Lučić, R., A. Buntić Rogić, M. Dubravac Šigir, M. Dželalija, S. Hitrec, S. Kovačević, M. Krešo, M. Lekić, K. Mrnjaus, M. Rašan Križanac, M. Štajduhar and M. Tatalović. 2011. *Croatian Qualifications Framework: Introduction to Qualifications*. Zagreb: Government of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.
- Borovac, T. 2014. „Percepcije studenata odgojiteljskih studija o odgojiteljskom pozivu u odnosu na razine obrazovanja“ [The Perception of Students of Preschool Education Programmes Regarding the Profession of Preschool Teachers in Relation to their Levels of Education], *Školski vjesnik: časopis za pedagoška i školska pitanja [Journal for Pedagogical Theory and Practice]* 63:1-2: 23-36, <http://hrcak.srce.hr/123228>.
- Bouillet, D. forthcoming. S one strane inkluzije predškolske djece: analiza pristupačnosti kvalitetnog ranog i predškolskog odgoja djeci u ranjivim situacijama u Hrvatskoj [The Other Side of Inclusion of Preschool Children: Analysis on Equity Issues Regarding Access to Quality Early and Preschool Education of Children in Vulnerable Situations in Croatia]. Zagreb: Ured UNICEF-a za Hrvatsku [UNICEF's Office for Croatia].
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. 2015a. *Osnovne škole i dječji vrtići i druge pravne osobe koje ostvaruju programe predškolskog odgoja 2015./2016.* [Kindergartens and Other Legal Entities Implementing Preschool Education Programmes, by the Beginning of Pedagogic Year 2015/2016]. http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2016/08-01-08_01_2016.htm
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. 2015b. *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske 2015* [Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia 2015]. http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/ljetopis/2015/sljh2015.pdf
- Dobrotić, I., T. Maković and J. Baran. 2010. “Zaposlenost žena i pristup sustavu predškolske skrbi za djecu u Hrvatskoj: postoji li veza?” [Female Employment and Access to Child Care Services in Croatia: Is There a Connection?], *Revija za socijalnu politiku [Croatian Journal of Social Policy]* 17:3:363-385.
- Education and Teacher Training Agency. 2016. *Program rada Agencije za odgoj i obrazovanje za 2016. godinu* [Report About Work of the Education and Teacher Training Agency], Zagreb: Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje, 2016.
- Gabrček, S. 2013. *Analiza postojećeg AZOO sustava stručnog usavršavanja odgojno-obrazovnih radnika i procjene potreba za stručnim usavršavanjem odgojno-obrazovnih radnika* [Analysis of the Current System of Professional Development of the Educational Workers], Zagreb: Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje,
- Harači Pintarić, I. 2016. „Preplaćene ili potplaćene tete?“ [Overpaid or underpaid ECEC Teachers?], *Regionalni tjednik 7 plus*. [Regional Weekly 7 plus]. 26.02.2016 <http://regionalni.com/aktualno/>
- Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. 2009a. *Programme of graduate University studies of early and preschool education*. Osijek: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences.
- Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. 2009b. *Programme of undergraduate University studies of early and preschool education*. Osijek: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Educational Sciences.
- Krstović, J., L. Vujičić and P. Pejić Papak, eds. 2016. *Qualification Standards and Improvement of the Quality of Study Programmes for Preschool and Primary School Teachers*. Rijeka: Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka,
- Magaš M. and S. Tatalović Vorkapić. 2015. „Stavovi ravnatelja prema (samo)vrednovanju u ustanovama za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje“ [Principals' Attitudes Toward (Self)evaluation in Early Childhood Education Institutions]. *Život i škola: časopis za teoriju i praksu odgoja i obrazovanja* [Life and School: Journal for the Theory and Practice of education] LXI: 27-37, <http://hrcak.srce.hr/162136>.
- Modrić, N. 2013. „Kompetencije odgojitelja za učinkovito upravljanje problemnim situacijama“ [Competences of Preschool Teachers for Effective Management of Problem Situations]. *Napredak: časopis za pedagojsku teoriju i praksu* [Progress: Journal of Pedagogical Theory and Practice] 154:3: 427-450, <http://hrcak.srce.hr/138810>.

- Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman. 2010. *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems – European profiles and perspectives*. Opladen and Farmington Hills, MI.: Barbara Budrich.
- Pavlović Ž. and J. Sindik. 2014. „Situacijsko suočavanje sa stresom kod odgojitelja“ [Situational Coping with Stress Among Preschool Teachers], *Sigurnost: časopis za sigurnost u radnoj i životnoj okolini* [Security: Journal for Safety in Working and Living Environment] 56:3: 187-201, <http://hrcak.srce.hr/127761>.
- Tatalović Vorkapić, S., L. Vujičić and Ž. Boneta. 2016. "Contemporary Challenges and Preschool Teachers' Education in Croatia: The Evaluation of the New Study Program of Early/Preschool Care and Education at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka." In *Professional Development and Workplace Learning: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, edited by K. Wolfe chapter 57. Hersey: IGI Global.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2012. International Standard Classification of Education 2011. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2014. ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013). Manual to accompany ISCED 2011. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

Ordinances and Acts in chronological order

- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 1997. No 133 – *Pravilnik o načinu i uvjetima napredovanja u struci i promicanju u položajna zvanja odgojitelja i stručnih suradnika u dječjim vrtićima* [Ordinance on the Manner and Conditions for the Promotion in the Profession of Preschool Teachers and Other Professionals in Preschool Institutions] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1997_12_133_1926.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 1997. No 133 – *Pravilnik o načinu i uvjetima polaganja stručnog ispita odgojitelja i stručnih suradnika u dječjem vrtiću* [Ordinance on the Manner and Conditions of Taking the Professional Exam of Preschool Teachers and other professionals in Preschool Institutions] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1997_12_133_1925.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2004. No 49 – *Pravilnik o vježbaonicama i pokusnim programima u dječjim vrtićima te o dječjim vrtićima kao stručno-razvojnim centrima* [Ordinance on the Training Centre and Experimental Programmes in Preschool Institutions] <http://www.propisi.hr/print.php?id=2578>
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2006. No 85 – *Zakon o Agenciji za odgoj i obrazovanje* [Act on Education and Teacher Training Agency] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2006_07_85_2020.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2010. No 90 – *Državni pedagoški standard predškolskog odgoja i naobrazbe* [National Pedagogical Standards for Preschool Education] (preceded by No 163/2008) http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2128.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2013. No 94 – *Zakon o predškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju* [Preschool Education Act] (preceded by No 10/1997, 107/2007) <https://www.zakon.hr/z/492/Zakon-o-pred%C5%A1kolskom-odgoju-i-obrazovanju>
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine 2014. No 93 - *Zakon o radu* [Labour Act] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_07_93_1872.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2014. No 107 – *Pravilnik o sadržaju i trajanju programa predškole* [Ordinance on the Content and Duration of Preschool Programmes] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_09_107_2081.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2014. No 124 – *Strategija obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije - Nove boje znanja* [Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge] [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2015. No 5 – *Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje* [National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education]. http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_10_124_2364.html
- [Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2015. No 60 – *Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju* [Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act] (preceded by No 123/2003; 198/2003; 105/2004; 174/2004; 02/07; 45/2009; 63/2011; 94/2013; 101/2014). <https://www.zakon.hr/z/320/zakon-o-znanstvenoj-djelatnosti-i-visokom-obrazovanju>

[Official Gazette] Narodne novine. 2016. No 41 – *Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru* [Croatian Qualifications Framework Act] (preceded by No 22/2013). <https://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru>

[Official Gazette] Narodne novine 2016. No. 102 - *Prosječne mjesečne neto i bruto plaće zaposlenih u 2016.* [Average Monthly Net and Gross Earnings of Persons in Paid Employment for 2016] http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2016_11_102_2187.html

