

CZECH REPUBLIC

ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

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1. ECEC governance

Early childhood education and care in the Czech Republic is organised as a segregated system. Pre-primary education in kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) for children aged 2/3 years up to 6/7 years and preparatory classes for 6- to 7-year olds with deferred school entry come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for ‘children’s groups’ (*dětské skupiny*) – a new form of provision for 1- to 6-year olds. The previous day nurseries no longer exist in their original form. However, some are being continued as social care institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Responsibilities are thus divided between three different ministries, which experts in the early childhood field consider to be less than optimal. In its inspection report for the school year 2014/2015, even the Czech School Inspectorate describes centre-based early childhood education and care (0-6 years) as complex and recommends inclusion within a framework of cross-ressort inter-ministerial cooperation (CSI 2016, 31).

Overall the steering system is centralised. However, responsibility for kindergartens and preparatory classes, which are part of the school system, has partly been transferred to the regional or municipal level.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes

The qualification requirements for core practitioners and other staff in ECEC provision vary according to the specific setting in which they work. The law states that ‘pedagogues’ or ‘pedagogical employees’ work in the kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) and preparatory classes (*základní školy*). In everyday terms these are usually called **Kindergarten Teachers** and this is the terminology mostly used in this report.

In both kindergartens and preparatory classes, a (mostly qualified) **Educational Support Worker** may be employed for part of the time to support individual children. Since September 2016, the specialised support staff in kindergartens may be Educational Support Workers or School Support Workers, or non-pedagogical staff; they may also be Social Pedagogues, Special Needs Pedagogues, School Psychologists¹ and Childcare Assistants; the latter support the core practitioner in groups in which at least two 2-year olds are enrolled. To this end, the Ministry of Education initiated a support programme between May 2016 and June 2017. Since September 2017, regular kindergartens are responsible for integrating 2-year olds. Staffing and general resources such as rooms and equipment are adapted accordingly.

Staff in ‘children’s groups’ (*dětské skupiny*) and other forms of centre-based provision

The diverse staff categories working in *dětské skupiny* and other ECEC institutions are described under the umbrella term of **Caregivers**. It is possible for persons with very varied qualifications to work in *dětské skupiny*: Kindergarten Teachers, Primary School Teachers, Educators, general Nurses, Midwives, Paramedics, Healthcare Assistants, Childcare Assistants, Social Workers, Social Services employees, Medical Doctors, Health Services employees, (Clinical) Psychologists. A

¹ Information source: Ministry of Education [MŠMT], 01.09.2016

‘Childminder for children up to school entry age’ – a new occupation in the Czech Republic, whose profile can be compared with that of a family day carer in other European countries – may also be employed in children’s groups.

Table 1 gives an overview of the regular contact staff employed in the education sector and the childcare sector. The core practitioners (i.e. persons with group or centre responsibility) are classified according to one of five professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this Section).

Table 1

Czech Republic: Regular contact staff in early childhood centre-based settings

Job title and professional profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
Education sector				
<p><i>Učitelka</i> Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher</p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary education professional</p>	<p><i>Mateřská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3–6/7 years (up to school entry)</p> <p><i>Speciální mateřská škola</i> Special needs kindergarten Children with special educational needs 2/3–6/7 years</p> <p><i>Přípravná třída Základní škola</i> Preparatory class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds with additional educational needs</p> <p><i>Dětská skupina</i> Children’s group 1–6 years (up to school entry)</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre Head (with mandatory additional management qualification)</p>	<p>Predominantly 3-6 years</p> <p>However, IPS programmes increasingly include curricular topics related to work with under 3-year olds</p>	<p>4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation; subject-related higher education entrance qualification</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a³ EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F 0112 ISCED 2011: 354</p> <p>Further options: 3 years higher education institution (tertiary professional school, <i>vyšší odborné školy</i>) degree/ diploma award</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 655</p> <p>or 3 years university studies; Bachelor’s degree</p> <p>ECTS points: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 645</p>
<p><i>Asistent pedagoga</i> Educational Support Worker</p>	<p><i>Mateřská škola</i> Kindergarten 2/3–6/7 years (up to school entry)</p>	<p>Qualified support worker, particularly for children with special educational needs</p>	<p>3–6 years</p>	<p><i>Minimum:</i> 4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation;</p>

² UNESCO 2012, 2014

³ n/a = not applicable

Job title and professional profile	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level ²
	<i>Speciální mateřská škola</i> Special needs kindergarten Children with special educational needs 2/3–6/7 years <i>Přípravná třída Základní škola</i> Preparatory class in primary school 6- to 7-year olds with additional educational needs			subject-related higher education entrance qualification ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 or many other qualifications accepted – see <i>Table 6</i>
Childcare sector				
<i>Pečující osoba</i> Caregiver <i>Profile:</i> No explicit profile because of the diverse staffing options (see <i>Table 6</i>)	<i>Dětská skupina</i> Children's group 1–6 years (up to school entry)	Core practitioner with group responsibility	Varies according to the qualification route completed	<i>Minimum:</i> 4 years upper secondary vocational school with pedagogical specialisation; subject-related higher education entrance qualification ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 or many other qualifications accepted – see <i>Table 6</i>

Box 1

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

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

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

Personnel statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education only refer to public kindergartens, i.e. those with municipal/district providers or which are run by the Ministry itself. No statistical data are available regarding the qualification routes of staff in church-affiliated and private kindergar-

tens or in other forms of provision (children's groups and social care institutions regulated by the Trade Licensing Act, 1991); they are therefore not included in this section.

Table 2

Czech Republic: Staffing structures in public kindergartens, 2015/2016

Staff categories	Proportion of kindergarten workforce / comments
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant university degree	18%*
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant award from a tertiary professional school	4.5%**
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a relevant upper secondary qualification	76.5%
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with other, non-specialist qualification	1%
Staff with no formal IPS	5.3% (the number of unqualified staff is on the decrease)
Specialist support staff such as Pedagogical Support Workers	Mostly not on site; may be employed as additional staff in cases of need
Male staff	Up to 1989 there were no male staff working in kindergartens and this has only changed marginally (0.5% of core practitioners/educational specialists), although the number is increasing year by year, particularly in the cities and larger towns (MŠMT 2017)
Pre-primary/ Kindergarten Teachers with a migration background	No national data available***

* The proportion of staff with a relevant university degree is on the increase (14% in 2013/2014; 16.2% in 2014/2015; 18% in 2015/2016). Concomitantly, the proportion of staff with an upper secondary qualification is on the decrease, as is the proportion of staff with other qualifications and of those with no qualification at all.

** The proportion of staff with a relevant degree from a tertiary professional school is on the rise: 3.2% in 2013/2014; 4.1% in 2014/2015; 4.5% in 2015/2016 (CSI 2016, 18).

*** Persons with a migration background in kindergartens are rare – particularly as core practitioners; in recent years they may be found working as support staff (e.g. as Educational Support Workers or, since September 2016, also as Childminder or Childcare Assistant) in groups with a high proportion of children with a migration background (usually in the context of pilot projects in large towns/cities).

In the kindergartens that were inspected during the school year 2015/2016, 5.3% of the workforce did not have a relevant qualification (CSI 2016, 14).

Statistical data about the qualifications structure of the **Educational Support Workers** in kindergartens and preparatory classes are limited. They are only presented as a proportion of all employed support staff, but not according to the various stages in the education system or the type of institution⁴.

Generally speaking, support staff in public education institutions mostly have a higher education (subject-related) entrance qualification (56.4%), followed by persons with a skilled worker's certificate (18.4%), a higher education degree (Bachelor or Master, 18.2%) or a technical college diploma (4.0%; reference year 2015, MŠMT 2016a).

In recent years a gradual increase in the level of qualifications of support staff can be observed. Persons with the lowest qualification level (lower secondary school certificate) represent the smallest group (3%). Although the relevant legislation makes it possible for persons with a very low qualification level to access this occupation, the actual qualification structures show that employees on the whole are more highly qualified (upper secondary and higher education levels) than the minimum requirements.

⁴ Statistical data are only available for the highest qualification level of the Pedagogical Support Workers, but not for the qualification routes and the kinds of study programme. It is therefore not possible to make a statement about the most frequent qualification routes or the number of lateral entrants into the profession.

Table 3

Czech Republic: Formal qualification levels of Educational Support Workers in kindergartens, preparatory classes and schools, 2011 to 2015, in %

Highest completed level of qualification	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
9 years of basic schooling (lower secondary school certificate)	5.7	4.8	4.4	3.7	3.0
Upper secondary vocational (skilled worker's certificate)	25.2	24.1	22.4	19.8	18.4
Upper secondary vocational (subject-related higher education entrance qualification)	54.6	55.6	56.0	56.2	56.4
Tertiary professional school (degree/diploma)	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.0
University (Bachelor's/Master's degree)	11.7	12.7	14.2	16.5	18.2

Source: Compiled by the Ministry of Education on the basis of ISP data (MŠMT 2016b).

The **average age** of staff in kindergartens is high. Current figures show that in recent years mostly the 26- to 35-year old cohorts and those aged 56 years and older are on the increase. *Table 4* presents the current data. The recruitment of younger specialist staff therefore needs to be systematically pursued in future.

Table 4

Czech Republic: Proportions of kindergarten staff according to average age, 2016

Age group in years	Proportion in %
Up to 25	8.4
26–35	15.5
36–45	22.6
46–55	33.9
56 and older	19.6

Source: MŠMT 2017.

3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

3.1 Initial qualifying routes

In the following section the qualifying options for three categories of staff will be presented:

- **Kindergarten Teacher** (core practitioner in kindergartens for 2-/3- to 6-/7-year olds);
- **Educational Support Worker** (support staff in kindergartens with responsibility for children with special educational needs);
- **Caregiver** (umbrella term for diverse staff categories with different qualifications in children's groups for 1- to 6-year olds – also as core practitioners).

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher (*Učitelka*)

There are currently three qualification routes available for prospective Kindergarten Teachers. However, until now, only the first option is the minimum *requirement* for occupying a post in a kindergarten.

Qualifying route 1 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Vocational school (upper secondary level) – specialisation in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

After nine years of compulsory schooling, and following the completion of a personal eligibility test and demonstration of proven skills in music, sports and the arts, it is possible to enrol at a vocational school with a pedagogical specialisation. However, this qualification route is not available at all vocational schools and is not on offer every year. A good general state of health and non-conspicuous pronunciation are requirements for admission⁵.

The qualifying programme usually lasts four years and ends with a subject-related higher education entrance qualification (ISCED 354). Altogether, 33 vocational schools (of which four are church-affiliated and ten privately-run) are accredited to offer the classical form of training leading to this specialist qualification (i.e. four years of full-time studies or a one- to two-year option for those who already possess a (subject-related) higher education entrance qualification in another field. A total of 23 vocational schools offer a distance learning programme which varies in length: three to five years or one to two years for applicants with a (subject-related) higher education entrance qualification in another subject area – depending on the previous course content, their eligibility and the completed qualification levels and orientation. This qualifying option (so-called combined⁶ or evening education sessions of up to 18 hours per week) may take up to a year longer than the regular qualification programme to complete.

In 2016, 16 vocational schools (14 of which were publicly run, one church-affiliated and one private school) offered this specialist route as a full-time programme and eight vocational schools as a distance learning option.

The initial professional studies in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy qualify the vocational school leavers for a broad field of work. As fully qualified practitioners they may occupy the following posts:

- Pedagogue in a kindergarten (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 6) or pedagogical employee in other kinds of ECEC setting (MŠMT 2015a);
- Educator (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 16) and Leisure-time Pedagogue (Act on Educational Staff 563/2004, paragraph 17) in outside-school-hours provision (child-care settings, children's and young people's centres, children's centres);
- Educational Support Worker (Act on Educational Staff 563/2004, paragraph 20);
- Childcare Assistant for children under three years of age (in social care institutions regulated by the Trade Licensing Act) or in groups for older children (commercial enterprises).

Qualifying route 2 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Tertiary professional school – study programmes in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The second qualification option for prospective Kindergarten Teachers is the study programme in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy at one of the four tertiary professional schools in the Czech Republic which specialise in early childhood education. The tertiary professional schools are a relatively new form of higher education providing initial professional studies – they were established as part of the Czech education system in 1991 (during the first four years as an experimental model). In the meantime there are now public, church-affiliated and private professional schools. Right from the early days these higher education institutions have offered both regular courses of studies and distance learning options.

⁵ The requirements are similar when applying for a place at a tertiary professional school and for a degree programme in early childhood education at a university and usually include a written specification from a general medical practitioner and a speech therapist.

⁶ The combined qualifying option is a mixture of face-to-face sessions and forms of distance learning; the students attend both taught classes and also complete certain tasks independently.

Entry requirements vary somewhat among the higher education institutions. Basic requirements are the general or subject-related university entrance qualification and an entrance examination (in aesthetic disciplines, pedagogy, psychology – often also a personal eligibility test or an interview with the applicant). The regular study programme lasts three years (distance learning option four years) and is completed with a diploma award (ISCED 655). It is not necessary to have completed previous vocational studies with a pedagogical specialisation in order to be accepted; admission is determined by the result of the entrance examination. The regular study programme is organised in winter and summer semesters (16 weeks of teaching and three weeks of examinations). The distance learning programme comprises 22 consultation meetings (200 hours) per academic year and three weeks of examinations. The consultations take place on a specified weekday (roughly nine hours of teaching twice a month) (Rýdl and Šmelová 2012, 115). The study programme prepares students for work in similar positions as those listed above for the vocational school leavers (i.e. as a Pedagogue in kindergartens or other ECEC settings and in preparatory classes, as an Educator in out-of-school childcare settings and social services, as an Educational Support Worker).

Qualifying route 3 – Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher **University studies in early childhood education**

Since 1970, it has been possible to study early childhood education at a university. The first accredited Bachelor programme was introduced in 1993 in Prague (Charles University), later also at other universities. Within the framework of the Bologna process, all degree courses are currently organised in Bachelor and Master programmes. Three-year Bachelor courses can be studied at nine universities in the Czech Republic (usually in the Faculties of Education) and two universities offer a consecutive two-year Master programme. Both the Bachelor programmes in Kindergarten/Pre-primary Pedagogy (literally: Qualification for teaching in kindergartens, *učitelství pro mateřské školy*) and the Master programmes in Pre-primary Education are offered as a full-time option and as a part-time, so-called combined course of studies.

Entry requirements are a general or subject-related university entrance qualification and a successfully completed entrance examination (usually a practical and theoretical examination, e.g. in aesthetic subjects, an oral examination in pedagogy, psychology, children's literature, and a personal eligibility test or test of the applicant's suitability for academic studies) – the specific conditions vary from university to university. For the Bachelor study programme there are more applicants than places – in Prague, for example, admission restrictions (*numerus clausus*) are applied. From a total of approximately 120 applicants, only 25 to 30 are accepted. Many school leavers therefore apply for a place at several universities or also for other educational study programmes (e.g. Primary Education, Special Needs and Remedial Therapy Education).

The three-year Bachelor programme includes field-based and theoretical elements. The students are awarded 180 ECTS points and at least 10% of these are optional (e.g. in Prague). The course syllabi and examination content vary from university to university. No unified professional standard currently exists for the Bachelor and Master programmes⁷. Both programmes are organised according to mandatory, elective and optional courses which aim to promote the students' general, occupation-specific, didactic and pedagogical-psychological knowledge, abilities and skills.

Table 5 describes the different qualification routes for prospective Kindergarten Teachers (*učitelka*).

⁷ A draft Professional Standard was produced within a project in 2001 but was not generally accepted.

Table 5

Czech Republic: Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher

Title in Czech: Učitelka ('Teacher') Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional
<p><i>Route 1</i> (= the only <i>requirement</i> for occupational practice):</p> <p>Entry requirements: 9 years of compulsory schooling; entrance examination; competency test (music, sports, the arts)</p> <p>Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational, specialist field pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy. Field placement of at least 10 weeks and teaching practice of at least 7 hours per week throughout the four years</p> <p>Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (<i>maturita</i>)</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 354</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General or subject-specific university entrance qualification; entrance examination and competence test (aesthetic-artistic field, pedagogy, psychology)</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at a tertiary professional school, either specialising in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy or in initial professional studies for Educators who have successfully passed an examination in early childhood education as part of their university entrance qualification</p> <p>Award: Diploma/degree</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 655</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p> <p><i>Route 3:</i></p> <p>Entry requirements: General or subject-specific university entrance qualification; entrance examination and competence test (aesthetic-artistic field, pedagogy, psychology – varies according to university); it is possible to enrol for a subsequent two-year Master full-time or distance learning programme</p> <p>Professional studies: 3-year Bachelor study programme specialising in pre-primary education</p> <p>Award: Bachelor's degree/Pre-primary education</p> <p>ECTS points: 180</p> <p>EQF level: 6</p> <p>ISCED 2013-F: 0112</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 645</p> <p>Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years); special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years) together with a Special Needs Teacher/Remedial Therapist with a higher education qualification; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds together with an Educational Support Worker with a relevant qualification but not necessarily an early childhood specialisation. Work in age-integrated children's groups (0-6 years), in micro nurseries or workplace nurseries is also possible.</p>

Beyond these three qualifying routes, alternative routes have also been introduced: since 2005, Remedial Therapists with a higher education qualification may now work in kindergartens as a fully qualified core practitioner; since 2012, persons with a higher education qualification as Educator, Primary School Teacher, Leisure-time Pedagogue or graduates of the university degree programme in Education *after completion* of an additional professional development pro-

gramme for Kindergarten Teachers (within the context of life-long learning programmes at the universities).

Educational Support Worker (*Asistent pedagoga*)

Since 1993, Educational Support Workers have been employed as additional staff⁸ in groups for socially disadvantaged children (in regular kindergartens, special kindergartens or preparatory classes in primary schools) and since 1997 in groups for children with health impairments (in integrative regular kindergartens or in special kindergartens⁹).

Legislation regarding the competencies, professional study programmes and work tasks was passed in 2004 to 2005. However, no **one** qualification route was specified. The occupation is still not seen as a 'lifelong' profession, although the Educational Support Workers are an increasingly fixed part of the ECEC workforce. The work is often undertaken by mothers (who have had experience with their own children with a disadvantage/disability and are re-entering the employment market) or former teachers, social workers, etc. It is mainly an alternative career option for these persons. However, it is expected that this situation will change and that the Educational Support Workers will become a regular part of the ECEC workforce in connection with new, pro-inclusive legislation (amendments to the Education Act) which came into force in September 2016. During the early 1990s, Roma women often worked as Educational Support Workers in order to improve the integration of Roma children.

The qualification routes described below are of equivalent value, extremely diverse and characterised by high permeability. However, the minimum qualification requirement is very low (completion of lower secondary school plus a qualification course); this is viewed negatively in specialist circles and is also linked to low pay.

Generally speaking, all those with a pedagogical specialism at upper secondary level or at tertiary level can work as an Educational Support Worker, without having to complete a further specialist qualifying course. Attending one of these courses (*so-called Study Programme for Educational Support Workers or Pedagogical Study Programme*¹⁰) is only obligatory for persons with a non-pedagogical vocational background. Tertiary professional schools and universities currently offer one or two professional development programmes which also include preparation measures for prospective Educational Support Workers.

The following qualification routes are specially oriented towards the professional preparation of Educational Support Workers.

Qualifying option 1 – Educational Support Worker

Upper secondary vocational school – Qualifying programme for Educational Support Workers

Only three vocational schools currently offer a fully accredited IPS programme in *Pedagogy for Support Workers in the Education System (Pedagogika pro asistenty ve školství)*; it is currently on offer by one vocational school, and only as a distance learning programme (five years for students with a lower secondary school certificate either as a combined programme or as evening classes and a one- or two-year regular qualifying course for persons with a completed upper secondary award in another field). Launched in 2008, the qualifying programme aims to enable these persons to acquire an upper secondary level qualification and is therefore offered as an

⁸ They may be the second or third person in the group if working in special kindergartens for children with serious health problems.

⁹ Legislation (Education Act 561/2004 [most recent amendment 2017], paragraph 16) differentiates between types of kindergarten or special classes/groups for children with the following disabilities: intellectual, physical, psychological, visual, hearing, language disorders, serious developmental disorders affecting learning, serious behavioural disorders, autism, combined disorders.

¹⁰ According to the law, 'Pedagogy Studies' is a general term for qualifying and professional development courses with a pedagogical orientation, without explicitly specifying them.

extra-occupational option¹¹. However, this qualifying option is only of minimum importance since both types of Educational Support Workers are mostly recruited through persons with another kind of pedagogical qualification.

This IPS route (as is the case for all accredited upper secondary vocational programmes) is planned according to a national framework of specifications for the vocational education institutions. Alongside general education subjects (525 teaching hours) it comprises 310 teaching hours of pedagogical-psychological preparation and 150 teaching hours related to the pedagogical tasks of a Support Worker. The minimum length of the field-based component is 100 hours. The qualifying route aims to prepare learners for supporting children with special needs (i.e. not just specifically for work in primary schools or kindergartens).

Qualifying option 2 – Educational Support Worker

Further education programme for Educational Support Workers

The *Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*¹² is the most common form of gaining the minimum qualification requirement for both types of Educational Support Worker.

The programme is currently on offer at various higher education and further education institutions (20 providers in all). Each institution has to have its own particular programme accredited. Course content varies according to the specialisation, such as preparation for work mostly with children with a migration background or with socially disadvantaged children.

The individual courses can usually be completed within a year. The focus lies on the practical aspects of the work rather than a theoretical grounding. This study programme is of at least 120 hours' duration (full-time option) – 80 hours of theory and 40 hours of practically oriented work. Many courses may be longer.

A further possibility for gaining the minimum qualification for working as one of the two types of Educational Support Worker is the *Pedagogy Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*. This further education programme is also provided by various higher education and further education institutions. The *Pedagogy Study Programme* is for persons with a completed upper secondary or a higher education award in a **non-pedagogical** field. The course runs for a minimum length of 80 teaching hours.

A third option for acquiring the minimum qualification for working as an Educational Support Worker (both types) is to attend a *Professional Development Study Programme* in the context of courses offered by higher education institutions and universities.

Table 6 gives an overview of the various qualifying routes for the occupation of Educational Support Worker. The Act on Educational Staff (No. 563/2004, paragraph 20) differentiates between two types and various qualification pathways within this occupational profile:

Type 1: The Educational Support Worker carries out direct pedagogical work in a group in which children with special educational needs (such as health problems or socio-cultural disadvantages) are enrolled or in a school where these children are integrated on an individual basis.

Type 2: The Educational Support Worker carries out direct pedagogical work which constitutes an educational *support* measure in a school or other educational institution. Qualification specifications are lower for this type.

In kindergartens and preparatory classes, it is mostly Type 1 Educational Support Workers who are employed.

¹¹ Personal communication with Dr Jana Kašparová, National Education Institute, 23.09.2016.

¹² In accordance with legislation (Law No. 563/2004, paragraph 20e and Regulation No. 317/2005, paragraph 4).

Table 6

Czech Republic: Educational Support Worker

Title in Czech: <i>Asistent pedagoga</i> ('Educational Assistant')
<p>Type 1 There are currently six qualification pathways to become an Educational Support Worker (Type 1) in kindergartens and preparatory classes. These practitioners do not work in children's groups and social care institutions.</p>
<p><i>Route 1.1</i> Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational with pedagogical specialisation Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (<i>maturita</i>) ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 354 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)</p> <p><i>Route 1.2</i> Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification with a <i>non</i>-pedagogical specialisation Professional studies: Award of one of the three following supplementary qualification options: Award: Certificate (1) Qualifying course of studies with pedagogical specialisation at a higher education institution or university (2) <i>Pedagogy Study Programme</i> of at least 80 hours' duration offered by a higher education institution/university or other accredited education institution, specialising in the work as Educational Support Worker (3) <i>Professional Development Programme for Educational Support Workers</i> of at least 120 hours' duration offered by a higher education institution/university or other accredited education institution (<i>Study Programme Educational Support Workers</i>). Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)</p> <p><i>Route 1.3</i> Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school with <i>pedagogical specialisation</i> Award: Diploma/degree* ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 6 ISCED 2013-F: 0113 ISCED 2011: 655 Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support) *The tertiary professional schools are not yet integrated into the Bachelor/Master system, although according to ISCED (2011) their awards are located at level 655 and in the EQF they are placed at level 6. Permeability of these professional studies is limited – only one university accepts a selection of the examinations in its Bachelor study programme, otherwise the tertiary professional school graduates have to complete the full course of studies.</p> <p><i>Route 1.4</i> Entry requirements: Diploma/degree from a tertiary professional school with a <i>non</i>-pedagogical specialisation (3-year professional studies programme) Professional studies: Supplementary qualification programme (see Route 1.2) Award: Certificate from the supplementary qualification programme Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6-</p>

Title in Czech: Asistent pedagoga ('Educational Assistant')

to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 1.5

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years university, Bachelor study programme with a specialisation in Educational Science; it is possible to enrol for a subsequent two-year Master's degree programme

Award: Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0111

ISCED 2011: 645

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 1.6

Entry requirements: Completed Bachelor study programme in a *non*-pedagogical specialisation

Professional studies: Supplementary qualification programme (see Route 1.2)

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Type 2

There are currently five qualification options available for Educational Support Workers (Type 2) in kindergartens and preparatory classes (but not in children's groups and social care institutions); until now it is only the first route that is the *requirement* for employment in such a post.

Route 2.1

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling

Professional studies: Accredited supplementary qualifying programme (*Study Programme for Educational Support Workers*) of at least 120 hours' duration which is offered by further education institutions

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.2

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: Upper secondary vocation offering a specialism in the preparation of Educational Support Workers (in the case of a subject-related university entrance qualification in a *non*-pedagogical subject the professional studies can be completed within 1 to 2 years or as a distance learning programme within 1 to 3 years)

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0113

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.3

Entry requirements: Skilled worker certificate

Professional studies: Supplementary *Pedagogy Study Programme* (offered by a higher education or another kind of accredited educational institution lasting at least 80 hours, specialising in the work as Educational Support Worker)

Title in Czech: *Asistent pedagoga* ('Educational Assistant')

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.4

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification in a *non-pedagogical* discipline

Professional studies: Supplementary *Pedagogy Study Programme* or *Study Programme for Educational Support Workers* or (see Route 1.2)

Award: Certificate

Main ECEC workplaces: Kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; special needs/remedial therapy kindergarten (2/3–6/7 years), together with a core practitioner; preparatory class in primary school for 6- to 7-year olds, together with a core practitioner (in each case – focus on children in need of special support)

Route 2.5

All further qualifying options for Type 1 Educational Support Workers (see Routes 1.1 to 1.6)

Caregiver (*Pečující osoba*)

There are no specialist qualifying programmes or initial professional studies for Caregivers in children's groups (*dětské skupiny*). The work may be undertaken by persons with various but at the same time field relevant qualifications. As a rule (apart from the first example 'Teacher with qualification for work in kindergartens'), the qualification profiles do not have an explicit specialisation in early childhood education and care for under 6-year olds (or only to a certain extent in comparison with Route 1).

Since September 2016, persons with vocational qualifications in the pedagogical, social or health occupations (ISCED 354) or with a qualification as Childcare Assistant (see Route 11) or as a helper (*chůva* – Childminder) may work in kindergartens which also admit 2-year olds.

Table 7 gives an overview of the 14 different professional awards which are specified as valid for employment in a post as core practitioner in the age-integrated children's groups.

Table 7

Czech Republic: Caregiver

Title in Czech: *Pečující osoba*

Profiles: Diverse

1. *Teacher with qualification for work in kindergartens*

See **Table 4** for the three study routes

2. *Teacher with qualification for work in primary schools*

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 5 years Master study programme with specialisation in Primary Education

Award: Master's degree

ECTS points: 300

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0113

ISCED 2011: 746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

3. Educator

3.1 Educator (Diploma/Bachelor)

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme specialising in studies for Educators (literally: *Study Programme in Educational Science*, i.e. specialisation for work with 7- to 18-year olds in schools and out-of-school provision)

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree; a subsequent Master's programme can be followed in the case of the Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 645/655

3.2 Educator (upper secondary vocational award)

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocational with specialisation in Professional Studies for Educators

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

4. General Nurse

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

5. Midwife

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years Bachelor study programme

Award: Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

6. Paramedic

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree

ECTS points: n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

7. Healthcare Assistant

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

Professional studies: 4 years upper secondary vocation with a relevant (non-pedagogical) specialisation

Award: Subject-related university entrance qualification (*maturita*)

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

8. Caregiver

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years upper secondary vocational with a relevant specialisation and a practicum of at least 700 hours

Award: Skilled worker's certificate

ECTS points: n/a

EQF level: 3

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 343

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

9. Social Worker

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree, subsequent Master's and Doctoral degrees possible

ECTS points: either n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

ISCED 2013-F: 0923

ISCED 2011: 645/746/747/844/655

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

10. Social Services Employee

Entry requirements: 9 years compulsory schooling; entrance examination

Professional studies: accredited qualifying course (at least 180 hours) 'Worker in Social Services'

Award: Certificate

ECTS- Points: n/a

EQF-Level: 2

ISCED 2013-F: 0923

ISCED 2011: 244

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

11. Childcare Assistant (literally 'Childminder for children up to school entry age')

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification

Professional studies: 1) none, just an examination without previous formal professional studies, 2) Further Education programme for lateral entrants of 160 hours (60 hours field-based studies)

Award: Certificate

ECTS points: n/a

EQF-Level: 4

ISCED 2013-F: 0922

ISCED 2011: 344/354

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

12. Healthcare and Social Services Employee

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 3 years tertiary professional school or Bachelor study programme

Award: Diploma/Bachelor's degree, subsequent Master's degree possible

ECTS points: either n/a or 180

EQF level: 6

Title in Czech: Pečující osoba

Profiles: Diverse

ISCED 2013-F: 0913

ISCED 2011: 645/746/655/746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

13. Medical Doctor

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 6 years university studies

Award: MUDr. (*Medicinae Universae Doctor* – General Practitioner in the Czech Republic)

ECTS points: 360

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0912

ISCED 2011: 747

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

14. (Clinical) Psychologist

Entry requirements: General or subject-related university entrance qualification; entrance examination

Professional studies: 5 years: 3-year Bachelor's degree and subsequently a 2-year Master's degree

Award: Bachelor's and Master's degree

ECTS points: 300 (180+120)

EQF level: 7

ISCED 2013-F: 0313

ISCED 2011: 746

Main ECEC workplaces: Children's group (*dětská skupina*), 1–6(7) years, as core practitioner

3.2 Competencies und curricula in IPS programmes

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher (*Učitelka*)

Qualifying route 1

Upper secondary vocational school – IPS in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The curricular foundations for this qualification are set out in the *Educational Framework Programme for the Field of Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy* (2009), which forms the mandatory basis for all vocational schools with this orientation. The document defines not only general but also occupation-specific competencies and subjects based on the four goals for lifelong learning for the 21st century (the 'Four Pillars of Learning model'¹³ in the Delors Report¹⁴). The programme aims to link abilities and skills included in the nine-year basic school curriculum with core general and occupation-specific competencies:

- The core competencies are: learning competence, problem-solving competence, communicative competence, personal and social competence, civic competence and cultural awareness, work and business competence, mathematical competence and application competence regarding information and communication technologies.
- The occupation-related competencies focus on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of pedagogic, artistic and leisure-time activities of young children and school-age children. Vocational school leavers should also be aware of safety measures and health protection at work and strive for the highest possible quality in their own work in accordance with

¹³ Learning to know; learning to do; learning to be; learning to live together.

¹⁴ Deutscher UNESCO-Kommission. 1987. Eds. Lernfähigkeit: Unser verborgener Reichtum. UNESCO-Bericht zur Bildung für das 21. Jahrhundert [Learning Competence: Our Hidden Resource. UNESCO Report on Education for the 21st Century]. Neuwied; Krieffel; Berlin: Luchterhand. See also: <https://www.unesco.de/infothek/publikationen/publikationsverzeichnis/delors-bericht.html>.

the concept of lifelong learning. Each vocational school develops its own curriculum; these are organised either in subjects or in modules.

Table 8

Czech Republic: Curricular areas (vocational school) – Pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

Learning areas	Minimum number of hours during IPS	
	Weekly	Total number of hours
Language education: Czech language	5	160
Language education: foreign language	10	320
Civic education	5	160
Science education	4	128
Mathematics education	8	256
Aesthetic education (music, the arts, drama)	5	160
Health education	8	256
Education in information and communication technologies	4	128
Economics education	2	64
Pedagogical-psychological education	21	672
Didactics of pedagogical work	30	960
Disposable hours	26	832
Total	128	4096

Source: MŠMT 2009b. Framework Plan Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy, 58

Private vocational schools may also work according to the framework programme *Education and Socialisation of Children in the Early Years and in the Early School Years*, which guarantees the full qualification as a Kindergarten Teacher. However, up till now it has only been accredited by two vocational institutions.

Qualifying route 2

Tertiary professional school – Study programme in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy

The study programme comprises theoretical and practical components and focuses mainly on pedagogical work with 3- to 6-year olds in kindergartens, but also in other settings. The specific content of the curricular areas is decided by the individual tertiary professional schools. Each higher education institution has its own accredited programme; these have a common foundation, but vary in terms of implementation, duration and orientation. In general, both general (foreign language, ICT, etc.) and occupation-specific curricular areas are included, i.e. pedagogy, psychology, didactics, legislation and school management and subjects which promote specific competencies (communicative, artistic, physical). A number of optional subjects linked to current pedagogical issues (intercultural education, second language/foreign language learning, environmental education), or to provide in-depth knowledge in a specific area (e.g. in an aesthetic discipline), are also available for the students. The higher education institutions organise the study programmes in modules (mandatory, elective, optional). Field-based studies are conducted as a weekly practicum, mostly during the first and second year of studies, as well as during the academic year or during holiday time.

The study programme ends with a diploma award (*absolutorium*) which comprises three examinations: an oral examination in a foreign language, a theoretical and/or practice-based examination in field-related subjects, and defence of the diploma dissertation.

Qualifying route 3

University – degree course in early childhood education

The Bachelor study programme curriculum focuses on the following professional competencies (Opravilová 2007): respect for children, children's development, creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and understanding. Observing the children provides the foundation for the educational processes which are then adapted according to their needs and abilities. Pedagogical approaches and activities should be selected in order to address the specific situation and developmental level of the children and decisions made analysed and justified accordingly. Activities should be planned and conditions provided which benefit the development of individual children and the group, including children with special support needs. The skilled provision of child-appropriate music, art and drama experiences should correspond with the early childhood environment and the teacher's own abilities. In general, individualisation and differentiation are key concepts in pedagogical work for which the students need to be prepared.

The study programmes are starting to react to current societal problems and increasingly include the pedagogical challenges arising from them in their curricular frameworks: the education of children with enhanced support needs; inclusive education; fostering learning in children with a migration background and socially disadvantaged children; transitions (particularly in connection with starting school); at some universities also foreign language learning in the early years, etc.

Curriculum content aims to prepare students for competence-oriented pedagogical work in the context of contemporary concepts of education and socialisation in early childhood settings (particularly kindergartens) and for the increasing importance of special needs pedagogy. Societal developments highlight the need for preparation in these areas – which compared to the situation in other European countries are relatively new issues in the general pedagogical discourse in the Czech Republic – and are prompting the university faculties to redesign their study programmes accordingly. Whereas curriculum content has previously focused exclusively on the early years, particularly from 3 to 6, courses/modules or topics on the upbringing and education of under 3-year olds are now being increasingly integrated¹⁵). The pedagogical and psychological disciplines form the core of study programme content. Social topics or social and leisure-time pedagogy are not included, or at the most only marginally.

Field-based studies in early childhood settings are organised differently from university to university (see *Section 4*).

Faculty kindergartens are often attached to the universities; these may be regular kindergartens and also ones with alternative/innovative pedagogical approaches (Montessori, Waldorf/Steiner, Dalton Plan, Reggio Emilia, Forest Kindergartens, Step-by-Step or 'Health Support Kindergarten'¹⁶), which cooperate on a long-term basis with the relevant professorial chair and ensure the field-based component of IPS together with the university tutors. The students acquire theoretical knowledge and practical experience with alternative pedagogy programmes and with other types of early childhood settings.

The course of studies is concluded with a Bachelor's degree comprising a written thesis and an oral examination which as a rule includes sub-examinations in pedagogy, psychology, in a specialist area or in children's literature and defence of the thesis. For those wishing to continue their studies, a subsequent two-year Master's degree programme can be followed.

Graduates of the university programmes are qualified to work as core practitioners or Centre Heads in regular and special needs kindergartens, in other early childhood settings, in kindergar-

¹⁵ For example, at the Education Faculty of the Charles University in Prague, a Master study programme with a specialisation in work with children under 3 years of age (so-called Early Childhood Studies).

¹⁶ This innovative pedagogical concept is of Czech origin and was developed in the early 1990s as a response to the holistic and humanist oriented approach. It was particularly influential in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century. Nowadays, elements of this approach are an integral part of most curricular programmes in kindergartens and primary schools.

tens offering alternative pedagogy programmes and in kindergartens attached to hospitals, convalescent homes and sanatoriums.

Educational Support Worker (*Asistent pedagoga*)

Qualifying option 1

Vocational school programme

The few vocational schools that offer this programme include the following topics in their curriculum: Czech school system; basic approaches towards pedagogy in early childhood and other educational settings; special education topics (supporting children with disabilities, socially disadvantaged children and their families); family living conditions and childrearing; mobbing in children's groups; problems of addiction in families; communicating with parents; behaviour and individuality of children, etc. The field-based component prepares learners primarily for ways of effectively cooperating with the core practitioner in the group and for working individually with children and respecting their needs.

Qualifying option 2

Supplementary training for Educational Support Workers

Curriculum content includes topics from general and social pedagogy, psychology, educational theory and educational diagnostics. Neither a national framework programme nor a national curriculum exists. Each course provider has its own programme accredited and specifies the content (also in connection with the regional needs of the educational institutions).

Example of a supplementary training for Educational Support Workers

Provider: National Institute for Professional Development (NIDV)

Course length: January 2016 to June 2016, 147 hours (107 hours theory, 40 hours practice)

The curriculum includes the following topics: educational institutions kindergarten and school, education work and the role of the Educational Support Worker, fostering children's learning, system of early childhood care, pedagogical-psychological and cultural features of the work of Educational Support Workers, computer basics, social-pathological phenomena and prevention, supporting abused and neglected children. Learners can also choose between two of the following modules: characteristics of the Czech and Romany language, literature, adapting teaching materials (NIDV 2016).

Caregivers (*pečující osoba*) in children's groups

Diverse qualifying options

As previously mentioned, the children's groups (*dětské skupiny*) are a new form of early childhood setting. They partly take the place of the former children's nurseries and are also a measure for reducing the current lack of places in kindergartens due to the high birth rate.

The staff in *dětské skupiny* are not pedagogues or teachers as in kindergartens or primary schools. They are neither considered to be pedagogical employees, since according to the relevant legislation they do not provide educational work, nor are they recognised as social workers or health workers, since they do not provide social or health services. The work in *dětské skupiny* can be undertaken by persons with different pedagogical, social or health qualifications (altogether 14 options, see *Table 6*).

The qualification requirements for staff working in children's groups has been widely discussed and criticised in specialist circles, since the general requirements for running the children's groups and the qualifications of staff are distinctly lower than those for work in kindergartens, even though the children's groups often appear to offer very similar services.

There are no current statistical data on the qualification structure and qualification routes of staff in children's groups; it is therefore not possible to differentiate between these and other qualifying paths or to describe them. Instead, the lowest possible qualification level will be presented, together with a new specialised training programme for prospective staff without a relevant qualification who wish to work in children's groups and in social care institutions for under 3-year olds.

The lowest qualification level is that of **Childminder for children up to school entry age** (*Chůva pro děti do zahájení povinné školní docházky*, see Table 6, 10). This new occupation was introduced in 2012. From 2013 to 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs awarded 38 training authorisations. The condition for acquiring the qualification is a successfully completed examination which can be sat without having had some previous form of training (MPSV 2014). Between 2013 and 2015, a total of 454 persons passed this examination. In the context of the Trade Licensing Act, they may work as care personnel outside a regular setting (e.g. in a child's home, as a caregiver in a children's group, etc.). There are no statistical data available on the number of persons with this examination who work in children's groups.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has created a 160-hour **Professional Development Programme for Lateral Entrants** (for persons without relevant training and competencies). The programme is to prepare those interested for the examination and to transmit competencies in the following areas: ethical principles and guidance of children (values education); developmental stages and children's socialisation; challenging educational situations; guiding children in hygiene habits; developmentally appropriate methods and approaches in pedagogical work; operational and safety regulations in work with children; first aid and accident prevention; basics of a healthy style of living; caring for sick children; relevant legislation.

3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher – alternative qualification routes

The three standard qualifying paths for staff in kindergartens are available both as full-time and combined options/studies. The combined form represents the **first alternative** regarding entry into the profession and initial profession studies usually take longer than the regular full-time option.

Second alternative: A further option was opened up for Remedial Therapy Pedagogues in 2005¹⁷, who may now work as fully qualified core practitioners in kindergartens without needing further examinations or certification.

Third alternative: Since 2012, other persons who have studied education at a university (with a degree in primary education, pedagogy, leisure-time pedagogy or completed studies for Educators) within the framework of a so-called lifelong learning programme specialising in kindergarten pedagogy can also acquire the certification needed to work as a fully qualified core practitioner in a kindergarten. Participants in this lifelong learning programme produce a final thesis and have to pass an oral examination at the end of the course.

Fourth alternative: Persons with a vocational award from the training programme for Educators can gain the relevant qualification if they additionally pass the partial test in early childhood education of the university entrance qualification.

Fifth alternative: Persons without a relevant qualification can carry out pedagogical work in kindergartens and preparatory classes in the following cases:

(1) If they were at least 55 years old on 01.01.2015 and can produce evidence that they have had at least 20 years of experience either in a kindergarten or a preparatory class;

¹⁷ Since 2005 for Remedial Therapy Pedagogues with a university degree in Special Needs Pedagogy, since 2012 also for award holders of this study route at tertiary professional schools.

(2) If the educational institution can demonstrably show that no person with a relevant qualification is available to carry out the pedagogical work. The non-qualified person may only practise pedagogical work until a qualified staff member is found.

Educational Support Workers in kindergartens and preparatory classes – alternative qualifying routes

The qualifying pathways of Educational Support Workers in kindergartens and preparatory classes are not documented in official statistics or inspection reports. It is therefore not known how often a specific qualification route is followed (see *Table 5*). These Support Workers are not employed in other early childhood settings (children's groups, social care institutions).

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teacher – formal connectivity options and career opportunities

- Kindergarten Teachers who have acquired the relevant qualification in the context of a university degree in special needs pedagogy may also work as teachers in higher levels of the education system.
- Kindergarten Teachers with a specialist Master's degree in early childhood education may work as Primary School Teachers if they supplement their qualification in the framework of the lifelong education programme – a professional development programme which focuses on the preparation of Primary School Teachers. This is mostly conducted through a three-year distance learning course at the faculty of education which is linked to a final examination and defence of a dissertation. These persons do not acquire a further independent certification, but just extend/supplement their initial qualification.
- Conversely, persons who have studied primary education may work in a kindergarten if they supplement their initial qualification through participation in a lifelong education programme which focuses on the preparation of Kindergarten Teachers.
- Pedagogical staff in all stages of the school system (also in kindergartens as ISCED level 02) have two promotion possibilities. They can either (1) assume a specialist post in the setting or (2) take on a leadership assignment (posts of responsibility). The Ministry of Education is currently preparing a new Career System for pedagogical staff which will open new promotion prospects through the development of profession-related competencies and a corresponding promotion in the Career System. A Career System does exist in the Czech Republic but its effectiveness has been questioned since career advancement is anchored in other legislative classifications (Eurypedia 2016): The Education Act (No. 561/2004, paragraph 131) determines the competencies and the appointment procedures for Kindergarten/School Heads (MŠMT 2015b). Qualification requirements are specified in the Act on Educational Staff (No. 563/2004, paragraph 5). A Centre Head is appointed by the service provider. For a lead position in a kindergarten, the applicant must be able to prove that he/she has had at least three years of work experience 1) as a Kindergarten Teacher or (2) in other settings which require expertise of a similar specialist kind or (3) another leadership post or (4) at least three years of work experience in research and development. A Kindergarten Teacher can enrol for a course in 'Headship Studies'(professional development for pedagogical staff according to the Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 24, section 4 a) that must be finished after a maximum of two years in the leadership post.
- For Centre Heads who have completed the 'School Management' programme at a higher education institution or university professional development programme on organisation and leadership in the school system, this course of studies is accepted as an alternative to the course in 'Headship Studies' (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraph 25, section 3).
Most kindergarten staff in a leadership position are in the 46-55 age category and have between six and eleven up to 15 years of experience in such a post (CSI 2016, 14). A higher

education degree is therefore not obligatory for kindergarten Centre Heads.

- Experienced staff (mostly former Centre Heads) can apply for the post of School Inspector in the Czech Schools Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*). School inspectors are civil servants, and not necessarily staff with a specialisation in pedagogy. Requirements are a completed Bachelor's or Master's degree and at least five years of work experience (for persons with an upper secondary qualification 20 years).

In the Czech Republic, there is no uniform and legislatively regulated system of mentoring. Until now, no remuneration system exists or reduction of contact time with children for those Kindergarten Teachers working as mentoring staff with career beginners. However, the Centre Head may be granted a financial allowance for this assignment. The new Career System is meant to change this situation and to specify explicit requirements regarding the qualification, payment and working hours of staff with a mentoring role.

Entry options for persons with a non-relevant qualification – career changers/lateral entrants

Entry options for persons without the required qualification have already been described. In the Act on Educational Staff (2004) and in legislation which sets out the qualification requirements for other staff working in ECEC settings, no distinction is made between the alternative options for career changers who wish to enter the occupation.

System permeability

The tertiary professional schools continue to have a relatively problematic position in the qualification system for early childhood staff: on the one hand they provide initial professional studies at tertiary level, on the other hand there exists very little permeability in terms of studying for a Bachelor's degree at a university and little acknowledgment or recognition of the previously acquired qualification. The professional schools are still not integrated into the Bachelor-Master system although the diploma award is placed at level 655 of ISCED (2011) and level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework. The diploma qualification is considered to be at a lower level than the Bachelor's degree. Only one university (*České Budějovice*) recognises part of the diploma studies for their study programme in leisure-time pedagogy (the three-year course of studies can be completed within a year and graduates may go on to study for a Master's degree. Other universities do not recognise the diploma qualification and diploma holders have to complete all modules of the Bachelor study programme.

Studying at a tertiary professional school is for many school leavers with the university entrance qualification an alternative, second way (besides studying early childhood education at a university) of acquiring a tertiary-level qualification. Compared with the university studies in early childhood education for the Bachelor's degree, the higher education institution study programmes are relatively broad, without an in-depth specialisation in pedagogical work with young children.

Employment of specialist staff from other European Union countries

All persons who apply for a post as a core practitioner or support worker in kindergartens and preparatory classes (assistants are excluded for the time being) have to fulfil the following legislative requirements (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004, paragraphs 3, 4 and 6):

- The *general conditions for educational staff*, who in the Czech Republic belong to the so-called regulated professions, are: legal capacity, qualification (recognition according to Law No. 18/2004, paragraph 6), integrity, state of good health, proficiency in the Czech language.
- All applicants who have acquired the relevant qualification in a language other than Czech are required to take a proficiency exam in the Czech language. The assessment is conducted by the university faculties of education, by language schools with authorisation to hold state

examinations in the Czech language and by professional development institutions for educational staff.

This examination of competence in the Czech language is **not** required by the following persons:

- a) Persons who will work in an educational institution with a language of instruction other than Czech,
- b) Persons who have passed an exam in the Czech language as part of their university entrance qualification,
- c) Persons who teach in another language (also applies to staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes) or give conversation classes.

Kindergarten Teachers and Primary School Teachers are not permitted to submit proof of their competence in the Czech language if the examination was taken in another country – in these cases the examination must take place in the Czech Republic.

The necessary recognition of specialist qualifications for persons from other EU countries, EEA countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway) and Switzerland is undertaken according to Act No. 18/2004 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

Staff in kindergartens and preparatory classes who are recognised as qualified in another EU country and may practise their profession there (i.e. in the case of Germany, mostly those who have a qualification as Educator (*Erzieherin*), Childcare Assistant (*Kinderpflegerin*) or Childhood Pedagogue (*Kindheitspädagogin*)), are also recognised by the Ministry of Education as qualified for the work in kindergartens or other ECEC settings in the Czech Republic¹⁸. During the recognition procedures, not only the formal initial professional studies are taken into account but also the applicant's non-formal competencies and previous work experience as well as further acquired competencies (e.g. through professional development activities). It does not matter that the curricular content of the IPS of Educators in Germany and Kindergarten Teachers in the Czech Republic vary in a number of respects. What is crucial for the recognition procedure is whether the applicant possesses a relevant qualification and permission to practise the profession in the country of origin. In such cases the qualification is then recognised in the Czech Republic and if the person fulfils further legislative requirements then he or she can work as an early childhood specialist.

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

The practicum is a firm component of all initial professional study programmes for core practitioners in **kindergartens**. For staff working in **children's groups** and social care settings the situation is more diverse, since not all IPS routes specialise in education and not all focus on young children. This means that the initial workplace-based learning of staff in children's groups may have been in an educational, social services or health services setting and not necessarily have focused on pedagogical work with under 6-year olds.

For the upper secondary level **vocational schools**, the field-based component of the IPS programmes is regulated nationally, not regionally or through provider specifications. The relevant document is the national *Educational Framework Programme for Pre-primary and Leisure-time Pedagogy* (75-31-M/01; MŠMT 2009b). In the context of the national curriculum reform embodied in the National Education Programme of the Czech Republic (so-called White Paper) and in the Education Act No. 561/2004, three different IPS programmes were reconceptualised and merged. The current broader field is intended to replace the three previous IPS programmes

¹⁸ Confirmed by Mgr. Dagmar Němečková, Ministry of Education, responsible for the recognition of qualifications (05.05.2016).

Pre-primary and out-of-school pedagogy (75-31-M/005), Leisure-time pedagogy (75-31-M/004) and Education of children before school age and in the early years of school (75-31-M/008).

The practical component of IPS is organised individually by each vocational school. A so-called specialist practicum (*odborná praxe*) lasts at least ten weeks throughout the qualifying course (often organised in block periods in a kindergarten). The so-called teaching practicum (*učební praxe*) takes place for at least seven hours a week throughout the school year and throughout the entire IPS programme. The field-based component may also take place during school holidays but not for more than three weeks within the overall programme. Each vocational school specifies the concrete conditions within its own IPS curriculum. It is therefore not possible to make further general comments on the organisation of the practical component.

The vocational schools cooperate with kindergartens in the vicinity where the practica take place. There is no national framework of requirements for the cooperation between IPS institutions and the ECEC settings. Each institution has its own internal regulations (recruitment, remuneration, participation, etc.) and locations for the placements. The IPS institutions uphold the quality of the practica by establishing a network of cooperating settings and organising training sessions for practitioners with a mentoring assignment.

Tertiary professional schools and universities have their study programmes accredited by the Ministry of Education (Act No. 563/2004). The IPS programmes all include field-based components which are diversely organised: as continuous sessions on specified weekdays during the entire semester (individual subject-related hours or half-days with more general implications for the educational work) or as block periods (one- to three-week practicum in a kindergarten during the semester or in the school holidays). Beyond this general framework, smaller development projects may also be conducted.

Structure of workplace-based learning

The IPS institutions determine the organisation and length of the practica themselves. For the vocational schools, the minimum length is nationally regulated. The following tables illustrate three different examples of how the practical component of IPS can be organised (*Tables 9, 10 and 11*).

Table 9

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the four-year vocational school qualification route (Example: Litomyšl vocational school)

IPS year	Pedagogical practicum	
	Number of hours per week (16 weeks/semester)	Block periods Number of weeks in IPS year
I.	0	2
II.	0	2
III.	3	3
IV.	4	3

Table 10

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the three-year qualification route at tertiary professional schools (Example: Litomyšl vocational school and tertiary professional school)

Type of practicum	Number of weekly hours per semester						Total
	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	
Semester							
Specialist practicum (Seminar)		2					2
Specialist practicum 1			3	3			6
Specialist practicum 2					4	4	8

Table 11

Czech Republic: Mandatory practica within the Bachelor study programme at universities (Example: Charles University in Prague, 2016/2017)

Length	Year of study / semester	Type and focus of practicum
5 days	I./ winter semester	Introductory practicum Observation visits; familiarisation with the setting, room organisation and work of the Kindergarten Teachers (in faculty kindergartens only)
1x weekly and two-week block period at the end of the semester	II./ summer semester	Pedagogical practicum Supporting the core practitioner; observation assignments; some independent work with children (in faculty kindergartens only)
5 days	III./ winter semester	Practicum in settings with alternative educational approaches/programmes Closer familiarisation with alternative and innovative educational programmes; observation assignments; support work (predominantly not in faculty kindergartens)
10 days	III./ summer semester	Practicum in ECEC settings Independent pedagogical work (predominantly not in faculty kindergartens)

ECTS points are awarded only by the universities (not by the tertiary professional schools). The number of ECTS points varies according to the accredited university programme – for example, at Charles University 10 points are allocated to the field-based component within the current Bachelor study programme. The remaining field-related studies are occupation-related, i.e. they are included in the relevant courses (e.g. didactics of sports teaching). Within the new accreditation of IPS programmes (since 2017/2018), 15 ECTS points are now allocated for the general field-related components in the obligatory subjects and a further 8 ECTS points for optional courses related to practica, an indication of the growing importance of this component of the study programme.

Competencies in the field-based components of IPS

Students are expected to acquire workplace-based experiences in the planning and preparation, implementation, documentation, reflection, cooperation with staff members and with parents, etc. Moreover, they are expected to familiarise themselves with further aspects of the work of the staff, with the organisation and the running of an early childhood setting. They begin their qualification route with observation visits and at the end they should be in a position to take over the work of the core practitioner to a certain extent. They should be able to realise theoretical knowledge in practical situations and to acquire experience in working with individual children and with groups, with different pedagogical approaches and in different types of early childhood settings. There is no general specification of skills and competencies (an exception is the *Educational Framework Programme for Vocational Schools* (MŠMT 2009b), which describes the competence specifications – see above).

Evaluation

The students are assessed both by the tutors from the IPS institution and the responsible mentoring staff in the early childhood settings. This is mostly the case in kindergartens only; other early childhood settings are rarely used for practica and then mostly in the context of practica in settings with alternative and innovative programmes. Peer evaluation among the students is also utilised, particularly if the practica are conducted in pairs or in small groups.

Qualification of mentoring staff in ECEC settings

No specified qualification is currently required for the staff who undertake mentoring tasks in the settings. They are mostly selected on the basis of their work knowledge and experience and their occupation-related and individual competencies. Each IPS institution chooses both the

cooperating settings and the staff and often has its own selection criteria. They usually prepare the mentoring staff for their guidance of the students themselves.

The Career System for teaching staff, included Kindergarten Teachers, envisages a position for staff with a mentoring role. These are deployed in the context of practica for vocational schools, tertiary professional schools and universities and are paid for their work by the IPS institution. There is no generally binding or regulated time allocation for this work. The Centre Head decides on the time management of mentoring staff in kindergartens.

Reforms, trends, debates on workplace-based learning

There are no current national debates about the practical component of the programmes of initial professional studies. The introduction of new inclusive measure in September 2016 and the obligatory pre-primary year in September 2017 (see *Czech Republic - Key Contextual Data*) are likely to have implications for the field-based component of IPS. A new debate on the appropriate innovations needed is expected.

The practica are continuously adapted by the IPS institutions to comply with new demands and expectations. This means that the students generally are given the chance to visit different kinds of early childhood setting (such as the new children's groups, social care settings, family centres, etc.) and to become familiar with alternative and innovative pedagogical approaches. Some IPS institutions even offer the students study trips to visit ECEC settings abroad. These are not reforms, but trends in the direction of familiarising students with new forms of early childhood education and care.

5. Continuing professional development¹⁹

According to the Employment Act (No. 262/2006), all employers are obliged to support the skills development of their employees. This means providing obligatory extra-occupational CPD. Professional development is aimed both at (1) broadening skills or (2) raising the formal qualification level. The employer can order the employee to participate in courses to broaden their skills (also outside working hours, as overtime).

For staff in social care facilities for under 3-year olds there is no further framework of requirements other than the Employment Act (2006).

Main forms

The main forms of CPD provision are the same for both core practitioners and support workers. The following options are available:

- (1) According to the Employment Act, all pedagogical staff are required to renew, sustain and extend their qualification. For staff in public education institutions the conditions for CPD are set out in the *Act on Educational Staff* (No. 563/2004) and in the *Regulation on the Professional Development of Educational Staff* (No. 317/2005). The Centre Head puts forward a professional development plan for the kindergarten staff. The plan may also include provider-specific requirements.
- (2) The kindergarten staff can also participate in CPD activities and either broaden their competence or aspire to a formal (higher) qualification. The latter can involve studying for a new (academic) award or an additional specialisation.
- (3) According to Act No. 563/2004, self-study is also classified as CPD.

¹⁹ In the Czech language, no distinction is made between different categories of professional development – *další vzdělávání* is used as an umbrella term.

The *Regulation on the Professional Development of Educational Staff* (No. 317/2005) envisages three forms of professional development:

- 1) **CPD to acquire the qualification requirements for the post of employment:** This includes, for example, the courses for Kindergarten/School Heads (100 hours) or for Educational Support Staff (120 hours), which qualify for these posts. Study programmes leading to a supplementary qualification also belong to this form of CPD – this applies particularly to educational staff without a relevant qualification. This kind of qualifying path is usually concluded with an oral examination by the examinations committee and the defence of a written piece of work. The costs are covered by the practitioner, although the employer may contribute towards them.
- 2) **CPD to acquire additional qualification requirements for the post of employment:** This includes, for example, a course for those in educational leadership posts (350 hours). In this case, too, the course is concluded with an oral examination by the examinations committee and the defence of a written piece of work. The costs are usually covered by the Centre Head, although the employer may contribute towards them.
- 3) **CPD to broaden skills and competencies** is for the ongoing consolidation of occupation-related competencies. CPD sessions focus on current theoretical and practical issues in early childhood education and care. The most common forms are courses and seminars of at least four hours' duration. Costs are mainly covered by the employer. However, if practitioners wish to attend a financially more expensive course than usual, it could be that they are expected to cover part of the costs themselves.

There are no national regulations for in-house CPD activities. These take place according to decisions made by the Centre Head regarding the necessity for team CPD sessions and the thematic focus. In-house CPD usually takes place at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

Leave entitlement

Leave entitlement depends on the specific form of CPD:

- 1) **Self-study:** Staff in schools and kindergartens are entitled to 12 paid days of leave for self-study purposes per year if there are no compelling reasons within the setting against granting it.
- 2) **Participation in CPD activities:** Particularly the kindergarten staff often have problems in being granted free days for the more time-consuming forms of CPD and often have to attend courses during their holiday leave.

The following leave provision may be granted for forms of CPD which lead to a higher formal qualification:

- All teaching days within the course;
- Two working days for every examination taken at higher education institutions and universities;
- Five working days for preparing and taking the examinations or the university entrance qualification;
- Ten working days for preparing and defending the final written paper, thesis or dissertation;
- 40 working days for preparing and taking the state examination or doctoral examination.

The granting of leave for CPD activities (roughly two to five days per year) is not particularly problematic. In the case of longer-term CPD courses, however, this can be more difficult. The legal entitlement to leave days may not be granted for 'business reasons'.

CPD providers

The main provider is the National Institute for Continuing Professional Development (*Národní institut pro další vzdělávání*, NIDV), founded in 2004, which is funded by the Ministry of Education and has 13 regional branches. The NIDV coordinates the planning and organisation of CPD programmes and prepares the national programmes. It is also responsible for organising government priority topics such as management, curricular framework programmes, foreign lan-

guages, the new Career System. CPD courses are mostly financed over the European Social Fund and over Ministry of Education development programmes. They are therefore usually free of charge for participants or require only a small fee. The ECEC settings thus have few costs to reimburse for the CPD of their pedagogical staff. Replacing the staff who attend CPD sessions is the responsibility of the Centre Head and takes place mostly in the form of overtime or through a change in the organisation of shift work. However, CPD activities also often take place in the evening or during weekends. The Ministry of Education national programmes are primarily targeted at teachers working in the higher levels of the school system. However, the number of courses on offer for Kindergarten Teachers has been increasing in recent years.

Further important providers of CPD are the tertiary professional schools and the universities. They are the exclusive providers of certain CPD programmes²⁰ within the framework of the lifelong learning system (Eurypedia 2016).

CPD sessions are also provided by educational settings, non-profit organisations, private CPD providers whose programmes have been accredited by the Ministry of Education (43 in Spring 2016) and are often financed within the context of European projects, meaning that the participants have only to contribute a small fee.

Formal recognition of CDP

Participation in CPD provision has not been formally recognised up till now. However, within the new Career System (in preparation), recognition of CPD and further work experience will be included. Educational staff will be expected to take examinations in certain intervals which will enable a further step up the career ladder and will be combined with a higher salary and with taking on a specific post of responsibility.

Qualification requirements for Centre Heads

Alongside their basic qualification as Kindergarten Teacher, kindergarten principals are required to complete a professional course for school leaders within two years of taking on the position. An exception is made for those Centre Heads who have acquired leadership knowledge and skills in the context of a higher education study programme in school management or in a professional development course on school leadership and organisation within the lifelong learning programmes offered by tertiary professional schools/universities; an exception is also made for persons who already have ten years of experience as a Centre Head. The heads of other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care settings for children under age 3) are not obliged to complete certain CPD courses or modules.

Kindergarten staff are obliged to maintain and extend their professional competencies. However, since there are no posts of responsibility other than that of Centre Head – neither in kindergartens nor in other ECEC settings – supplementary, formal qualifications through CPD are not obligatory. At the same time, for regular staff in early childhood settings a broad range of non-mandatory offers of CPD are available. The selection of CPD courses and topics is made in accordance with the interests of the staff member and the needs of the setting (Act on Educational Staff No. 563/2004).

Opportunities of formal CPD

All educational staff have the possibility of acquiring an additional formal qualification or attending further studies in the context of the CPD programmes offered by the tertiary professional schools and universities in early childhood education or related fields (e.g. primary education, educational science, special education, etc.). The professional schools and universities also offer distance learning options. No state grants are available for these forms of formal CPD and the costs are mainly borne by the participants. Employers usually only cover costs for non-formal

²⁰ What is meant here are longer-term CPD programmes: Studies in the field of educational science of 250 hours duration (supplementary to the current educational qualification), studies for extending the basic qualification (e.g. for a higher school level, to carry out special needs work with children with a disability), studies for educational leaders, etc.

CPD activities. However, no tuition fees are required for studying for a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree at a public university²¹.

It may be the case that an employment contract specifies certain conditions, e.g. that if the employee undertakes a longer-term professional development option or university studies they are obliged to work for this particular employer for a certain length of time (however, this period may not exceed five years).

Research projects on the topic of CPD

During the last five years or so, no large research projects have been conducted with a focus on the CPD of early childhood staff. However, CPD institutes tend to offer quite a few projects which include CPD sessions and are linked to smaller research projects. Small research projects are also carried out by staff in the faculties of education (focusing e.g. on the evaluation and development of centre-specific programmes).

In the context of a comprehensive ESF project *Systemic Promotion of Inclusive Education in the Czech Republic* between 2013 and 2015 (Registration number CZ.1.07/1.2.00/ 43.0003) considerable emphasis was placed on the initial studies, continuing professional development and ongoing support of the Educational Support Workers: a Standard for the work of Educational Support Workers was developed, alongside guidance for the work with children with different kinds of special educational needs and further guidance on specific issues in the work of pedagogical staff. Several drafts were produced relating to IPS and CPD which focused on further systemic development.

Current reforms/trends/debates related to CPD

In 2015, the Ministry of Education issued a draft for the new Career System which was the result of a research and development project which includes partial changes in the CPD system: the mandatory accreditation of all programmes that lead to a higher qualification; specifying standards for continuing professional development; raising the significance of the accreditation committee in the process of accrediting CPD courses, etc.

Top priority in the current reforms and debates is the issue of how the recognition of CPD should take place within the new Career System (so-called occupational regulation). This includes the following aspects: raising the quality of CPD courses; systemic planning of CPD (specification of the government priorities in the CPD of educational staff); new and more intensive forms of in-house CPD in the educational institutions.

Current trends in the CPD field include a stronger orientation towards contemporary problems and issues in the settings such as: supporting and educating children with special educational needs (above all language enhancement; fostering learning in children from socially disadvantaged families, children with ADHS, etc.); inclusion; centre management; socialisation and education of 2-year olds in kindergartens; CPD for Educational Support Workers.

6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

Partial changes are currently underway, but complex changes in the CPD system for educational staff in kindergartens and schools are being pursued.

²¹ Every student is entitled to fee-free participation in **one** Bachelor, Master or Doctoral study programme. Additional studies followed have to be paid for by the student, whereby the level of fees depends on whether an earlier study programme was successfully completed.

Professionalisation and staffing issues in the education system, including Kindergarten Teachers and staff in preparatory classes

New Career System for educational staff

The most important ongoing reform is the development and implementation of a new Career System for staff in the education system. The Career System is intended to support professionalisation and improved remuneration. The *Educational Policy in the Czech Republic up to 2020* (MŠMT 2014b), the *Long-term Educational Plan* and the *Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for the period 2015–2020* (MŠMT 2014a) have already focused on this.

From 2012 to 2015, a new Career System and a Teacher Standard also applicable for Kindergarten Teachers were outlined in the context of a comprehensive ESF national project. In 2015, the Ministry of Education decided to further modify the draft. Subsequently, a revised version was prepared by a small Ministry working group – unlike with the original version, this time without debate in broad specialist circles and among educational staff. This has been an issue for criticism. In February 2016, amended legislation was put forward which includes the implementation of the new Career System and in 2017 it came into force. The current version includes three qualification levels (QS1: Beginner Teacher; QS2: Independent Teacher; and QS3: Expert Teacher). The Career System also defines the conditions for career progression which are linked to a salary increase, to the transition to QS2 and to the acquisition of a permanent post. The Beginner Teachers are supported during a two-year induction period by mentoring staff in the educational institution and by additional actors (higher education institutions, faculties of education, QS3 teachers).

The planned, three-level Teacher Standard is supposed to provide guidance for the planning and evaluation of professional development and to be based on occupation-related competencies and their gradual progression. The legislation determines three areas for the evaluation of teaching staff: (1) individual professional development, (2) individual educational work and (3) cooperation and participation in organisational development.

The transition to the next higher career level is also to be linked to an assessment procedure. The move from QS1 to QS2 will take place at the kindergarten or school and two further assessments will be organised by the Ministry of Education through the National Institute for Professional Development.

The new Career System will also introduce two new posts of responsibility within QS3, one post of ‘mentor’ and one post of ‘coordinator’ related to organisational development. Undertaking these posts will require completing a new professional development course of at least 250 hours and will be linked to higher pay and a reduction of direct teaching hours/contact hours.

The reform seeks to provide a continuum within the professionalisation pathway: recruiting candidates with good entry requirements; initial professional studies; the induction of newly qualified staff; and promoting professional development.

Reform of salaries and qualification conditions for educational staff

During the last five years the salaries for core practitioners in kindergartens have been gradually raised (approximately half as much again as the previous salary level) – firstly for Kindergarten Teachers with a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, subsequently for those with an upper secondary or tertiary professional school qualification.

Since 01.01.2015, only persons with a relevant qualification may work as pedagogical staff in kindergartens. There are a few exceptions: for example, for persons who have at least 20 years of work experience and are 55 years old. Non-qualified staff may only be employed in cases where the Centre Head can prove that there is no qualified applicant for the post. However, this person may not be given a permanent contract.

The reforms had a direct effect on early childhood staff’s interest in the Bachelor and Master programmes in combined form and for distance learning options offered by the vocational

schools and tertiary professional schools: In recent years the number of vocational schools providing qualification routes in pre-primary and leisure-time pedagogy has doubled (currently 33 vocational schools).

Professionalisation and staffing issues – Staff in other ECEC settings

Alongside the introduction of new forms of ECEC settings, a new qualification was also introduced, that of the **Childminder for Children up to School Entry Age** (*chůva pro děti do zahájení povinné školní docházky*). Persons with this qualification may work in social care settings for children up to 3 years of age, in children's groups and, since September 2016, also as assistants in kindergartens which admit 2-year olds. This qualification has established itself over the last three years and the number of qualified persons is growing year by year (see also *Section 3.2.3*).

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

ESF National Project 'Career System'

Source: National Institute for Professional Development [NIDV]. 2015 (see *References* for full details).

Background and aims: The project was prepared in 2009 and implemented between 2012 and 2015 by the National Institute for Professional Development (NIDV) (with a budget of 30 million korunas, approx. 1,110,151€).

Procedure: A range of specialist stakeholders participated – Centre Heads, the Czech Schools Inspectorate, Ministry of Education employees and several university faculties of education. The drafts of the Career System and the Teacher Standard were presented widely to specialist audiences.

Findings and implications: Outputs from the project were commented by a further 60 experts and debated in all regions of the country with Centre Heads/School Heads and more than 2,000 teachers. Overall, the final version was positively rated. However, it was pointed out that the Career System needs to bring a long-term perspective for the profession, including evaluation procedures which take into account everyday pedagogy and are not just linked to the acquisition of CPD course credit points.

Research projects at the University Faculties of Education

From 2007 to 2013, the Faculty of Education at the Charles University in Prague conducted a comprehensive research project entitled *The Teaching Profession in the Context of Changing Educational Demands*. The project focused on current trends in theory and research related to the teaching profession and initial education/training for the profession in the Czech and European context and their practical implementation in the system of initial and continuing professional development of educational staff.

Kindergarten Teachers were included in the project as teachers in the first stage of the Czech education system. A follow-up project (PRVOUK up to 2016 and PROGRESS since 2017) focused and are still focusing not only on the teaching profession at different stages in the education system and the related initial and continuing professional studies, but also include research on additional current issues and topics such as inclusion, a system of pedagogical coaching, development of standards for teachers and heads of kindergartens and schools.

A further example is a research project at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen entitled *Study Programme for Kindergarten Teachers – Theory and Practice in*

Dialogue which was conducted between 2011 and 2014. The project focused on the further development of the study programme for early childhood education at the Faculty and on strengthening the cooperation with kindergartens in the context of the field-based component of the study programme. One of the outputs of this project was the development and piloting of a set of guidelines for assessing and recognising former qualification routes (formal and non-formal education) and previously acquired experiences of students. It is an interesting contribution to the discussion about the assessment of prior qualifications and experience of students in the Czech Republic.

A number of other Faculties of Education also carry out projects aiming to evaluate and develop their study programmes in the field of early childhood education. However, these are not national projects.

8. General workforce issues

8.1 Remuneration

The remuneration of staff working in ECEC provision depends on the specific setting.

Pre-primary / Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers are paid as pedagogical staff in the education system according to the tariff system (14 salary grades altogether). They are allocated to the lowest salary grades (8-10) in the tariff system. Each grade is sub-divided into 5 levels. Kindergarten staff are allocated by the Centre Head to a specific grade according to their function (core practitioner, core practitioner with post of responsibility, length of work experience, etc.). If the staff acquire an additional qualification (e.g. through professional development courses) this does not usually influence the salary grade allocation. The post of Centre Head is an exception to this rule, where a supplementary qualification is required and therefore also linked to a promotion in the tariff system. Kindergarten staff have a general entitlement to pay for additional work and overtime in the context of the direct work with children. They may also receive further non-tariff allowances (e.g. for taking on a mentoring role, for specialist work such as producing a centre-specific CPD programme, for long-term high-quality work or for taking on exceptionally demanding tasks).

Table 12

Czech Republic: Tariff allocation and gross salary of Kindergarten Teachers and other educational staff in the education system (valid since September 2016)

Profile	Salary grade	Gross annual minimum salary	Gross annual maximum salary
Kindergarten Teachers Leisure-time Pedagogues	8–10	207,120 CZK 7,966 €	306,720 CZK 11,797€
Primary School Teachers Teachers in Lower and Upper Secondary Grades Special Needs Pedagogues, Psychologists	11–13	365,680 CZK 14,065€	382,920 CZK 14,728€

Source: Eurypedia 2016.

Kindergarten Teachers are paid less than Primary School Teachers (see *Table 12*). To exist on this pay, e.g. as a single parent in a large city, can be a challenge, even though the tariffs for kindergarten staff across the country were raised considerably in recent years. The average gross monthly salary of a Kindergarten Teacher is 21,797 CZK (838€); if Centre Heads are included in

the calculation 23,720 CZK (roughly 912€ in 2017). Kindergarten Teachers working in public kindergartens earn slightly more (883€) than their colleagues in private (743€) and church-affiliated settings (764€ in 2014; MŠMT 2015).

Posts of responsibility (Centre Head, deputy Centre Head, staff with mentoring role) receive an additional staff supplement. The supplements range between 5% and 50% of the tariff pay on the highest level in the specific salary grade; for Centre Heads the allowance may be between 15% and 60%. Within the tariff system, Centre Heads are paid the same as other educational staff (salary grade 10). The specific conditions for pay in public settings are determined by the authority which appointed the Centre Head.

Staff salaries comprise: (1) basic tariff pay and (2) non-tariff pay. Non-tariff pay can be allocated as follows:

- **Allowance:** Teachers are legally entitled to an allowance if they are assigned a task (e.g. leadership role, work in settings for children with special educational needs) which is anchored in legislation.
- **Staff supplement:** For these, there is no legal entitlement; it is up to the Centre Head to decide whether a staff member is granted a supplement or not, e.g. for long-term high-quality work or for additional assignments (supporting other teachers, children with special educational needs, etc.). This is then a permanent supplement which cannot be withdrawn as long as the conditions permit. The staff supplement may comprise up to 50% of the basic tariff pay (in some cases even up to 100%).
- **Award or so-called reward:** This is a one-off allowance for exceptional work for which there is no legal entitlement.

In 2011, for example, the staff supplements and awards accounted for roughly 10% of the total salaries of teachers (at all school levels).

Staff in other ECEC settings (children's groups; social care settings for under 3-year olds)

The pay for regular staff and leading staff is the same in these settings and is regulated according to the Labour Code.

8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

A full-time member of staff in a public kindergarten works a 40-hour week (31 hours of which are dedicated to the direct work with children). The hours of work are the same for all core practitioners in kindergartens. For Centre Heads, the proportion of direct work with children is reduced according to the size of the kindergarten. Full-time staff members in other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care settings for under 3-year olds) also work a 40-hour week. The employer determines the work assignments of each employee; there are no centralised regulations.

Full-time employment is typical for educational staff in kindergartens (95% of all Kindergarten Teachers). In church-affiliated (82%) and private settings (89%), the proportion of part-time staff is more frequent, but also not particularly high (2015/2016, MŠMT 2016c, 2016d).

8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Specific induction measures for newly qualified staff in early childhood settings do not exist and are also not anchored in legislation. The general conditions for career beginners are embodied in the Labour Code (entitlement to adequate introductory measures during the first two years in employment).

Support measures in kindergartens

There is no uniformly organised system of mentoring in the workplace in the Czech Republic. However, procedures in this respect exist in most kindergartens: the Centre Head decides on the specific length of the introductory phase. She/he may, for example, assign this role to an experi-

enced member of staff, a so-called induction teacher. However, staff with a mentoring role are neither granted reduced working hours (also no reduction in the direct work with children), nor a supplement entitlement. However, they can be granted an allowance for the additional work; allocation and amount are also decided by the Centre Head. According to the national inspectorate report for 2014/2015 (CSI 2016), a position of responsibility for induction measures was in place in 82.4% of the kindergartens inspected. Further introductory measures included consultations between the newly qualified staff member and the Centre Head (76.6%), courses and seminars (64.4%), observation visits among staff (62.2%) and a formal kindergarten-specific induction programme (64.3%). However, only 53.5% of the surveyed staff considered the reflection measures provided by the Centre Head as fully adequate.

Staff and Centre Heads may direct any questions they may have to the Czech Schools Inspectorate, which has both a controlling and advisory function. However, conditions for the advisory framework are not legally anchored.

Network for promoting professional quality

There is no national network focusing on the improvement of quality in education institutions. In the early childhood field, it is the professional organisations which bring experts and teachers together. Centre Heads and staff can turn to state-run advisory services (psychological-pedagogical advisory centres and special education centres) or to the Czech Schools Inspectorate. Non-profit, non-governmental organisations may provide specialist advice on certain issues (e.g. inclusion, supporting specific target groups). Such services are often provided within a project framework. Some of these organisations also arrange theme-specific networks for teachers and parents, providing advice and help for the daily work with children. Some of these organisations are also accredited CPD providers and play an important role in CPD provision for ECEC in the Czech Republic.

8.4 Non-contact time

The working hours of **Kindergarten Teachers** in full-time employment are split into so-called direct and indirect pedagogical work. Nine hours per week are allocated for indirect pedagogical work. This includes, for example, working with parents, team discussions, networking, preparing materials, planning, follow-up, evaluation and documentation. For Centre Heads, the direct pedagogical work may be reduced by 13 to 24 hours per week (5 to 16 hours per week in boarding kindergartens), depending on the size of the kindergarten. Although in publicly-run kindergartens the number of reduced hours for the Centre Head is regulated at the national level, in practice they often 'step in' in cases of staff shortages.

In the case of full-time **Educational Support Staff** the Centre Head decides as to how many hours should be allocated for indirect pedagogical work. Up to 20 hours from a total of 40 may be allocated for the indirect work.

The non-contact hours of a full-time **Caregiver** in other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care provision for under 3-year olds) are not regulated by law (only the 40-hour working week). Since the service providers determine the work assignments of each member of staff, a certain contingent may also be allocated for indirect pedagogical work.

8.5 Staff shortages and staff recruitment

For years now there have been country-wide shortages in the staffing of kindergartens in the Czech Republic. Centre Heads in the larger towns often receive several applications for one post, some also with a Bachelor's degree. The staff shortages are mostly to be found in the smaller towns, where often less well-qualified Kindergarten Teachers and persons with a secondary-level qualification apply for jobs (CSI 2016).

The considerable pay rises made in recent years (first for those with a Bachelor's or Master's degree, subsequently for all Kindergarten Teachers) were part of a comprehensive staff recruitment strategy which also included opening up new qualification routes and options for career changers/lateral entrants. These latter strategies apply mostly to ECEC settings other than kindergartens, where staff by law may have a wide range of pedagogical, social and healthcare qualifications.

9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The following issues can be described as **short-term challenges** in terms of the qualification, recruitment and support of the early childhood workforce.

- **New Career System: a complex qualification and career advancement system** (so-called *Qualification Regulation*) for teachers in the education system (beginners, mentors, experienced teachers with guidance tasks, etc.) is to be developed and implemented in the coming years. Promotion in the Career System will in future be linked to professional development, higher pay and competence development. The Career System will be applicable for all teachers in the education system, including Kindergarten Teachers. The funding of coaching/mentoring and CPD is to be part of this system.
- **Innovations in the varying IPS programmes** which place more emphasis on current issues. Particularly important are: inclusion; working with diversity; alternative and innovative approaches to practice; individualisation and differentiation; second language learning/learning a foreign language in kindergarten; effective cooperation with parents; work with under 3-year olds; transitions; social-pedagogical work in cooperation with families, etc. These topics are still rarely included in the current IPS programmes compared with the situation in west European and Nordic countries.
- **Lack of Educational Support Workers and assistants in kindergartens:** As a rule, two core practitioners are responsible for a group/class of 24 (sometimes up to 28) children but their working hours only overlap for 2½ hours a day. This makes for stressful working conditions and means that it is difficult to work individually with children needing special support. Since September 2016, additional Educational Support Workers can be employed in groups in which children with special needs are enrolled²².

Early childhood professionals are seen as the key to quality (CSI 2016). The number of those studying in a Bachelor or Master programme has increased in recent years. The number of teachers and students in vocational schools and higher education programmes is more or less balanced. This is a reflection of the European trend in the direction of tertiary level IPS programmes for early childhood core practitioners (see Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010). However, in the overall structure of the workforce in the Czech Republic, it is still the staff with a secondary-level qualification who form the majority (76.5 %).

Long-term challenges in terms of the qualification, recruitment and support of the early childhood workforce include the following:

²² Up until the amendment of the Education Act (September 2016), the Centre Head had to apply for Educational Support Workers each year anew, which required a considerable amount of time and also led to staffing insecurity. If a child with special educational needs has a recommendation from the schools advisory service that he/she requires additional support, the Centre Head can now make appointments on the basis of this recommendation and apply for the resources to pay for an Educational Support Worker, and is no longer dependent on a decision from the regional authorities.

- **Introduction of obligatory higher education qualification for core practitioners in kindergartens:** A higher education requirement was planned in 2008, but has still not been introduced. The situation in the larger towns shows that Centre Heads now often demand a Bachelor qualification when advertising for a post in their kindergarten. This is not yet the case in rural areas.
- **New profiling in the qualification routes for staff in children's groups and social care settings for under 3-year olds:** The current qualification requirements are too diverse. Most of the routes followed do not specialise in early childhood education and care, but tend to be broader social care and healthcare qualifications. The broad spectrum of options means that staff from other fields can be employed. While this is a solution in terms of staff recruitment, it does not guarantee quality. The challenges include raising the formal qualification requirement and ensuring an in-depth specialisation in early childhood education and care for those who work as core practitioners in children's groups and social care settings for under 3-year olds. In general, it is problematic that these practitioners undertake very similar work to that of Kindergarten Teachers, that their initial professional studies are often at a much lower level and that they are not specialised for early childhood work.
- **New profiling in the qualification routes for Educational Support Workers:** The qualifications of those working in this role are very diverse and the required qualification level very low. Expert discussions in recent years have underlined the fact that the Educational Support Workers should be educated and trained at a higher formal level.
- **Diverse quality in the university study programmes in early childhood education:** The difference between the good quality university Bachelor and the high competence level of degree holders and the often questionable qualification programmes offered as a distance learning option by some of the private vocational schools are nowadays assessed as problematic. These differences in qualification routes and the efforts required to complete them contrast negatively with the pay, which is more or less the same for all Kindergarten Teachers, regardless of their qualification route.
- Recent debates in specialist circles have been asking whether the vocational schools should focus more on preparing staff for home-based family day care with lower qualification requirements and that Kindergarten Teachers should be educated and trained exclusively through a Bachelor level study programme.
The position of the tertiary professional schools and their IPS programmes are also linked to this problem, since in most cases there is no possibility of recognition when starting a university degree course.
- **Raising the pay level** for early childhood staff and for staff in the education system in general.
- **Recruitment of male ECEC staff** (combined with status and pay rise).
- The **negative attitude in kindergarten teams regarding inclusive approaches and pro-inclusive measures** is a challenge connected to the political and social developments in the second half of the 20th century. These attitudinal tendencies have currently increased since the amended Education Act (2016) introduced new framework conditions for integration. The negative attitude is a general trend in the Czech Republic which is also impacting on the education system. Czech society and teachers appear to be little prepared for an inclusive approach. An important goal is therefore to positively influence the attitudes of pedagogues in terms of working in teams towards a child-oriented approach, reflecting on their own attitudes (stereotypes, prejudice) and promoting the individual potential of all children in the best way possible. This can be supported, for example, through continuing professional development for kindergarten teams. Such CPD provision is currently offered in the larger towns by non-governmental organisations and is funded through EU projects in the context of municipal integration strategies.

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