

# CYPRUS

Early Childhood Education and Care  
**ECEC Workforce Profile**

*Country report author*

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## Glossary

### **EQF** – *European Qualifications Framework*

Outcomes based (knowledge, skills, competences), eight-level reference tool to enable qualification comparisons between countries.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>

### **ECTS** – *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

A system for enhancing student mobility through the Europe-wide recognition of credit transfers and credit accumulation in higher education

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en)

### **ISCED** – *International Standard Classification of Education*

An instrument for comparing levels and fields of education across countries, developed by UNESCO in the 1970s and revised in 1997 and 2011.

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

## About the author

**Eleni Loizou**, PhD, is a professor of Early Childhood Education and Care at the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus. Her research focus includes children's humour, play pedagogy, early childhood curricula, infancy pedagogy, and teacher education. In 2009 she was the scientific coordinator of the revised early childhood education curriculum in Cyprus. She is also currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA).

## 1. ECEC governance in Cyprus

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Cyprus is organised as a split-sector and partly parallel system divided between two ministries: the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (*Ypurgeio Ergasias, Pronoias kai Koinonikon Asphaliseon*) and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (*Ypourgeiou Paideias, Athlitismou kai Neolaias*). Specifically, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWS) has sole responsibility for provision for children under 3 years of age, whereas the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) is responsible for state-maintained, community and private kindergartens for 3 to under 6 year-olds. Children aged 3 to under 6 fall under the jurisdiction of either ministry, depending on whether they attend a preschool/kindergarten or a childcare centre. It is important to note that the year preceding primary school in a pre-primary class (*prodimotiki*) is compulsory and free of charge for parents (MoESY 2022a). Primary school enrolment is compulsory for all children who have turned 5 years and 10 months before the 1st September.

Currently, there is an attempt by the MoESY, supported by all parties, to change the starting age of compulsory education to 4 years instead of 5, but this has not as yet been voted on by the House of Representatives.

## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The early years workforce includes a number of adults who work directly with children in childcare and preschool/kindergarten settings for 3 months to under 6 year olds. Alongside the regular Nursery and Childcare Teachers for younger children (3 months–2<sup>1</sup>), the Preschool/Kindergarten Teachers and Centre Heads/principals for older children (3–5/6), there is a Teacher's Assistant and there may also be special education staff who, according to the children's needs, can be a Speech Therapist, an Occupational Therapist, a Psychologist, as well as a Child Personal Assistant ('accompanier' – an adult who accompanies and supports children with special needs in the classroom). Teachers' Assistants are responsible for cleaning the classrooms, tidying materials and toys, helping with the preparation of activities, being responsible for the children's safety when the teacher is out of the room, and other similar activities.

*Table 1* provides details of each staff category working in the two sectors of ECEC. It also categorises the core practitioners (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at end of this chapter).

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<sup>1</sup> **Editors' note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports for countries with a school starting age at 6 (as in Cyprus): **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds.

Table 1

## Cyprus: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Childcare sector</b>				
<b>Nursery and Childcare Teacher</b> <i>Vrefokomos/Vrefonipiagogos</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Nursery centre</b> 3 months–2 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3 months–2 years	Minimum requirement when working with children under 3 years:  Certificate or diploma from a higher education institution in relation to the care, socioemotional and spiritual education of the child  ECTS credits: 90-120 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 4 or 5
	<i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centre</b> 3 months–4 years		3 months–4 years	Minimum requirement when working with children from 3 years of age:  4-year degree at a higher education Institution (HEI)  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6 (645/655)
<b>Teacher's Assistant</b> <i>Sxoliki Voithos</i>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Nursery centre</b> 3 months–2 years  <i>Vrefokomi-koi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centre</b> 3 months–4 years  <i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/preschool</b> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Co-worker with no formal IPE	n/a <sup>2</sup>	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<b>Education sector</b>				

<sup>2</sup> n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher</b> <i>Nipiagogos</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/preschool</b> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	3–6 years	4-year degree at university <i>Award:</i> Bachelor's degree in ECEC  ECTS: 240 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Teacher's Assistant</b> <i>Sxoliki Voithos</i>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos</i> <b>Nursery centre</b> 3 months–2 years  <i>Vrefokomikoi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centre</b> 3 months–4 years  <i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/preschool</b> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Co-worker with no formal IPE	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)
<b>Child Support Practitioner</b> <i>Synodos</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio</i> <b>Kindergarten/preschool</b> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki</i> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Co-worker with no formal IPE  Supports core practitioner for individual children with special needs	n/a	Compulsory school leaving certificate  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3 (344/354)

*Box 1*

**SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals** (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and 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 Centre leader

Each centre is directed by a head or principal, who has the day-to-day responsibility for running the ECEC setting. Leadership is quite hierarchical as the head/principal is the one who guides the centre's staff pedagogically and administratively. In the case of public and community schools these persons also work directly with the children depending on the number of required hours and years of work experience. In the case of private ECEC centres, if the head/principal has an early years' degree they might work directly with the children, if not, then they only direct the centre and focus on administrative work.

Table 2

Cyprus: Centre Leaders

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Director</b> <i>Diefthinon prosopo</i>  <b>Owner/Provider</b> <i>Idioktitria</i>	<b>Vrefikos stathmos</b> <b>Nursery centre</b> 3 months–2 years  <b>Vrefokomikoi/</b> <b>paidokomikoi</b> <b>stathmoi</b> <b>Childcare centre</b> 3 months–4 years  <b>Nipiagogeio</b> <b>Kindergarten/</b> <b>preschool</b> 3–4 years  <b>Prodimotiki</b> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Centre owner	n/a	The director of an infant-toddler centre or childcare centre needs to have a certificate or a diploma from a higher education institution specialising in infancy, child care, social work, psychology or pedagogy.  ECTS credits: 90-120 EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5  The owner of a pre-school or kindergarten may or may not have a relevant degree as long as the ECEC setting employs a person who has a 4-year university degree in ECE
<b>Assistant Principal</b> (in public ECEC settings) <i>Voithos Diefthintria</i>  <b>Principal</b> (in public ECEC settings) <i>Diefthintria</i>	<b>Nipiagogeio</b> <b>Kindergarten/</b> <b>preschool</b> 3–4 years  <b>Prodimotiki</b> <b>Pre-primary class</b> 5–6 years	Centre head	3–6 years	4-year degree at university Bachelor's degree in ECEC  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 7  <b>plus</b> a Master's degree in Education  ECTS credits: 60-120

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
				EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 7  <i>plus</i> a specified number of years working in the field

## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

There are no legal provisions for centre-based posts of responsibility in Cyprus. In all types of ECEC setting posts of responsibility for pedagogical tasks (e.g. working with migrant families) are not allocated within the centre. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance is responsible for providing the necessary allowances each person/family has been evaluated for and are allowed to receive. In addition, there is the "School and Social Integration Actions (DRASE)" programme that is co-financed by the European Social Fund. In this programme there is a small number of kindergartens that offer (1) Free remedial teaching programmes and creative activities for children and parents, in the morning and afternoon; (2) Additional psychosocial support services for children and parents, through the creation and operation of Information and Psychosocial Support Centres; (3) Support / technological equipment in kindergartens.

In the case of pre-service ECEC student mentoring, this is the responsibility of the Childcare Teacher or Pre-primary Teacher (see *Chapter 2.1*), depending on the students' needs. In the case of public pre-primary settings mentoring is compensated with one teaching hour (40 minutes). In other words, the teaching load of teachers who act as a mentor is reduced by one period (40 minutes) per week.

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

There are differing types of co-ordinating staff who are responsible for a number of centres and are responsible for teacher evaluation, professional development or co-ordination of the different services children might need. These are mainly in the public ECEC settings and are employed by the government. In the case of the private settings the owners or the principals of the setting might have this responsibility and be involved in evaluating the work of the teachers. In the case of private settings which have the approval of the MoESY to run a *prodimotiki*-pre-primary class, they are supervised by experienced public ECEC principals who allocate a portion of their time to visiting these settings in order to evaluate the quality of their work and services. In the case of childcare centres, a social services officer is the person who supervises the implementation of the childcare regulations.



Table 3

## Cyprus: Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Pre-primary Education Supervisor</b> <i>Epitheoritria</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Visits the settings to assess the work of the Kindergarten Teachers	3–6 years	Bachelor's degree in ECEC  <b>plus</b> Master's degree in Education ECTS credits: 60-120 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 7  <b>plus</b> a specified number of years working in the field and a specified number of years working in the positions of Assistant Principal and Principal.
<b>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</b> <i>Syndetikos letourgos</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Collaborates with all the teaching staff related with the child's special needs as well as the parents and offers guidance on developing an individualised education programme for the child.	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor's degree in Special Education <b>plus</b> 5 years of experience as a Special Educator  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)
<b>Social Services Officer</b> <i>Letourgos koinonikon ypiresion</i>	<i>Vrefikos stathmos Nursery centre</i> 3 months–2 years  <i>Vrefokomikoi/paidokomikoi stathmoi</i> <b>Childcare centre</b> 3 months–4 years	Coordinates and assesses childcare centres based on the implementation of the childcare laws and regulations	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Sociology, Psychology, Social Policy, Social Administration, Public Administration or Economics  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)

## 2.5 Specialist support staff

A range of specialist support staff work with individual children in ECEC settings. They include an educational psychologist, a special educator, and a speech and occupational therapist. All of these specialists visit different public kindergartens during the day depending on the hours allocated to each centre. They are not based at the ECEC settings. These specialists work with children who attend public pre-primary classes, as they are employed by the MoESY. In the case of private settings parents are responsible for finding these specialists in the private sector.

Table 4

### Cyprus: Specialist support staff

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Educational Psychologist</b> <i>Ekpaideytikos psychologos</i>  (for children with special learning needs – cognitive, auditory, visual impairments)	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Responds to referrals for psychological assessment and recommendations	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor’s degree in Psychology  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)
<b>Special Education Teacher</b> <i>Eidikos Ekpaideytikos / Paidogogos</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Responds to referrals for special education based on a diagnostic evaluation of child’s special needs	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor’s degree in Special Education  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7 (645/655/747)
<b>Speech Therapist</b> <i>Logotherapeytis</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Assesses and works with children with communication disorders	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor’s degree in Speech Therapy  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7
<b>Occupational Therapist</b> <i>Ergotherapeytis</i>	<i>Nipiagogeio Kindergarten/ preschool</i> 3–4 years  <i>Prodimotiki Pre-primary class</i> 5–6 years	Supports and enhances everyday skills: motor, social, mental	Broad age range – children and adults	Bachelor’s degree in Occupational Therapy  ECTS credits: 240 EQF level: 6/7 ISCED 2011: 6/7

### 3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

There are no systematically compiled national data in general regarding the proportion of different staff categories in the workforce. Statistics do not differentiate between qualification categories of staff working with children of several age groups. It is also important to note that in terms of teaching personnel and type of ECEC institution, the data do not necessarily describe the age of children served. This is because a kindergarten can be approved by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth because it runs a classroom for children aged from 5 to 6 years (*prodimotiki*). However, such settings can also serve children from 1 years old upwards if they have the necessary licence from the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

#### Education sector (3 to 5 years)

Data suggest that ECEC personnel in all types of kindergartens/preschools are mainly women. Table 5 shows the number of kindergartens, children and teachers from 2015 to 2020/21. Compared to 2019/20, both the number of settings and the number of children decreased slightly, while the number of teachers increased slightly.

Table 5

**Cyprus: Number of kindergartens, children, teachers, and type of provision, 2015/16 to 2020/21**

	Number of ...	2015-2016	2017-2018	2019-2020*	2020/21*
Public Kindergartens	Settings	269	269	277	
	Children	12,241	12,107	12,37	
	Teachers	790	789	867	
Community kindergartens	Settings	83	77	466	
	Children	2,138	2,034	21,92	
	Teachers	131	134	1,745	
Private kindergartens	Settings	179	176		
	Children	9,758	10,310		
	Teachers	868	865		
Total	Settings	531	522	743	734
	Children	24,137	24,451	33,329	32,958
	Teachers	1,789	1,788	2,612	2,705

Sources: CYSTAT 2021a, b; CYSTAT 2023, 3;

\* no further data available at the time of reporting

Table 6 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full time and part time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of kindergartens/preschools in 2018/19 (CYSTAT 2021a). In 2018/19, only 0.76% of the workforce in kindergartens and only 2.07% of centre heads (kindergartens) were men. The majority of teaching staff (95.98%) and principals/centre heads (95.84%) worked full time.

Table 6

## Cyprus: Full- and part-time teaching and management personnel in kindergartens/preschools, 2018-2019

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	Full time		Part time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	4	614	0	0
Community	0	114	0	11
Private	5	648	2	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,376</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>56</b>
	Kindergarten Principals/Centre Heads			
Public	0	170	0	0
Community	0	8	0	3
Private	6	139	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>

*Childcare sector (6 weeks to 5 years)*

Table 7 shows the teaching personnel (teachers and principals), full-time and part-time, as well as the gender of the personnel working in different types of childcare settings during the year 2018/19 (CYSTAT 2021a). In comparison, it can be seen that childcare services for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers (6 weeks to 5 years) are mainly provided by the community and private sector.

The distributions in the childcare sector regarding gender and working time are very similar to the pre-primary education sector: In 2018/19, 0.3% of teaching personnel were men and 3.8% of management personnel were also men. The greater majority of both teaching staff (88.8%) and principals (95.6%) worked full-time.

Table 7

## Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare sector provision

Provider type	Teaching personnel			
	Full time		Part time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Public	0	21	0	0
Community	0	164	0	22
Private	0	394	2	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>71</b>
	Centre Heads/Management personnel			
Public	0	3	0	0
Community	0	41	0	3
Private	6	125	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

### 4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

In Cyprus, there are four higher education institutions which offer programmes of study for people wishing to work in kindergartens/preschools (from 3 up to 6 years). These are the public University of Cyprus and three private universities: European University, Nicosia University and Frederick University. The Department of Education at the University of Cyprus offers two degrees: Bachelor's degree in Primary School Teaching and a Bachelor's degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching. The department of psychology offers a Bachelor's degree in Educational Psychology. The European University offers a BA in Early Childhood Education and a BSc in Psychology. The University of Nicosia offers a BA in Pre-Primary Education and BA in Primary Education and a BSc in Psychology and in Social Work. Finally, Frederick University offers, a BEd in Pre-Primary Education and a BEd in Primary Education, a BSc in Psychology and a BA in Social Work. The Frederick Institute of Technology offers a diploma in Nursery Education.

Prospective Childcare Teachers (3 months to 5 years) have to attend one of the three Departments of Early Childhood Education at a Higher Technological Educational Institute (ATEI) in Greece in order to obtain a degree or attend the Frederick Institute of Technology for a 2year Diploma in Nursery Education. The ATEIs offer 4-year degrees in early childhood education. But in order to work with children between 3 months and 3 years they only need to have a diploma or a certificate in relation to the care, socioemotional and spiritual education of the child. *Tables 8a to 8d* provides details of the IPE requirements of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, for Childcare Teachers, Special Education Teachers and Educational Psychologists.

Table 8a

#### Cyprus: Kindergarten Teacher

<b>Job title in Greek: Nipiagogos</b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary Education Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MoESY (only for the University of Cyprus) <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years at university <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Pre-Primary School Teaching <b>ECTS credits:</b> 240 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Kindergarten/pre-primary education (3 to 5 years)

Table 8b

#### Cyprus: Nursery and Childcare Teacher

<b>Job title in Greek: Vrefonipiagogos</b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<i>For work with children up to primary school entry:</i> <b>Entry requirements:</b> General higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MoESY. <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years at university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Higher Technological Educational Institutes (HTEI – ATEI) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina)

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Vrefonipiagogos</i></b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<p><b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Studies</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 240</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 6</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Childcare centre (3 months to 5 years)</p> <p><i>For work with children under 3 years of age:</i></p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years at Frederick Institute of Technology (private HEI)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Diploma in Nursery</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 120</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 5</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5 (550)</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Childcare centre (3 months to 3½ years)</p>

Table 8c

**Cyprus: Special Education Teacher**

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Eidikos Paidagogos Eidikos Ekpaideytikos</i></b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> General higher education entrance certificate</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years at university of applied sciences; degrees only provided by Greek public Higher Technological Educational Institutes (HTEI) (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina); general higher education entrance certificate and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MoESY.</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Special Education</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 240</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 6</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Specialist support staff work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary settings (3–5/6 years) and in primary schools.</p>

Table 8d

**Cyprus: Educational Psychologist**

<b>Job title in Greek: <i>Ekpaideytikos Psychologos</i></b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> General university entrance certificate (for the University of Cyprus and private universities in Cyprus and Greek universities) and success at the Pan-Cyprian Examination organised by the MoESY.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 4 years at university</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree in Special Education</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 240</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 6</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 645/655</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> They work mostly offsite for kindergartens/pre-primary education (3–5/6 years) and in primary schools.</p>

## 4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes

All universities in Cyprus offering early childhood studies, both public and private, have the same course framework. In April 2016 the University of Cyprus, Frederick University, European and Nicosia University stated on their websites that the framework for these studies includes compulsory, compulsory optional and general education courses covering the following areas: educational science (e.g. early childhood pedagogy), teaching methodology (e.g. creative drama), content area courses (e.g. pre-mathematical concepts), foreign language instruction and field experience courses.

Some of the universities give students the option to replace two courses (e.g. compulsory or optional courses) with a course titled 'Independent study' that involves the writing of a dissertation in the field of education (e.g. University of Cyprus, Frederick University).

The goal of these studies is to prepare prospective Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers for work in private, community or public pre-primary settings. There are no specified competence requirements but students are prepared to be able to implement the national curricula.

The Greek HTEIs providing Early Childhood Education and Care studies have a similar framework with compulsory and compulsory optional courses.

## 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There are no alternative entry routes for working in public and community settings in Cyprus. Regarding the private sector for both childcare and pre-primary settings, the owners of provision can employ people from other disciplines, for example a psychologist to work with under 3 year-olds or a biologist to work with pre-schoolers. Also, in the case of childcare provision, the official requirement, as explained earlier, is a certificate or a diploma, thus service providers tend not to employ people with higher education degrees.

# 5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals

Quality teaching is not only based on the knowledge acquired but during field practice, the guided workplace experience that students experience during their degree. This experience assumes that students understand how learning takes place and how they can practise teaching to succeed learning, thus putting theory into practice. The field practice programmes aim to offer pre-service students the necessary experience to exercise their teaching skills in the different subject areas (e.g. Language, Mathematics, Music, Arts, Social Studies). All of the higher education institutions that offer a degree in ECEC have similar field practice programmes. *Tables 9a to 9d* provide the key elements of each type of practicum along with the ECTS and the expectations for each one, at one public and three private universities.

Table 9a

## Cyprus: Key elements of field practice in university IPE programmes – University of Cyprus (2021)

University of Cyprus IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)	
Practicum Elements	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 6 Duration: 13 weeks (24 lectures and 5-day visits at a public preschool)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 6 Duration: 13 weeks (24 lectures and 5-day visits at a public preschool)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	4 <sup>th</sup> year of studies ECTS: 20 Duration: 13 weeks (10 weeks of field experience at a public school, visiting daily, and 3 weeks of seminars at the university)
Programme Requirements and Learning Outcomes	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Know the history and developments of early years in Cyprus.</li> <li>– Gather information in reference to the timetable and regulations of pre-schools and the regulations (e.g. planning, administration, environment and material organisation) as well as the different types of ECEC settings.</li> <li>– Develop professional attitudes and values that will support their professional identity.</li> <li>– Observe, collect and analyse data from their school visits.</li> <li>– Identify the characteristics of an effective preschool teacher.</li> <li>– Learn to communicate with children effectively and the rest of the school staff.</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Observe and implement the different obligations and take on the roles of the preschool teacher (e.g. teaching, play).</li> <li>– Implement different teaching strategies based on current pedagogical principles.</li> <li>– Prepare a long-term activity play (using the project approach) and a short-term activity plan (lesson plans).</li> <li>– Plan and implement lesson plans effectively (content area and play)</li> <li>– Communicate effectively with a group of children, the whole class and use individualised ways of working with children.</li> <li>– Observe, record and analyse the teacher’s teaching based on pedagogical principles.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Systematically observe and analyse the relationships and interactions that take place within the classroom and the school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Plan and lead the teaching process of the different content areas (Language, Mathematics, Science, Arts, Music, Social Studies, Physical Education as well as Play Activities)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Plan and implement lesson plans for the different content areas and plan play activities.</li> <li>– Observe and take on the different roles expected by the teacher (e.g. teaching, planning, managing, playing).</li> <li>– Analyse the teaching process critically.</li> <li>– Develop the following attitudes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Interest in the teaching outcomes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<b>University of Cyprus</b>	
<b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acknowledge other people's point of view</li> <li>✓ Willingness to learn new strategies and ideas</li> <li>✓ Reflective and critical stance</li> <li>✓ Develop confidentiality stance</li> <li>✓ Be responsible for own choices</li> </ul>
Assessment	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	Assignment 1 (10%): Planning and organisation of a classroom Assignment 2 (15%): Planning and implementation of play activities, Assignment 3 (20%): Portfolio Final Exam (40%) Attendance and Participation (5%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	Assignment 1 (20%): plan a theme using the PROJECT approach Assignment 2 (15%): Write 3 Lesson Plans Assignment 3 (20%): Presentation of Free and Structured Play activity planning Assignment 4 (25%): Presentation of Lesson Implementation Assignment 5 (10%): Observation of the teaching of a 4 <sup>th</sup> year student with a supervisor and filling out a feedback form Attendance and Participation (10%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	Evaluation of lesson plans in the different subject areas 70% Professionalism 5% Implementation of the project approach 15% Implementation of a free and/or structured play activity for 45 minutes and a critical analysis of the experience 10%

Table 9b

**Cyprus: Key elements of field practice in university IPE programmes – European University (2021)**

<b>European University</b>	
<b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
Practicum Elements	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 6 Duration: Lectures at the University (18 hours) and field experience in a pre-school (40 hours) 1 day spent at an ECEC setting (public or private) for a period of 8 weeks
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 12 Duration: Lectures at the University: 15 hours Field experience at a preschool: 75 hours (15 days spent at a preschool over a period of 8 weeks)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	4 <sup>th</sup> year of studies ECTS: 12 Duration: Lectures at the University (12 hours) and field experience in a preschool (200 hours), 8 consecutive weeks
Programme Requirements and Learning Outcomes	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	<b>The students are expected to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Observe, document and analyse – (a) the children, the programme and the environment of a preschool, (b) the daily life at the preschool (e.g. outdoor play, routines, activities), (c) the different teaching approaches (e.g. project approach), (d) the different ways of planning learning and activities (e.g. play, work in teams, collaborative work, thematic approach)</li> </ul>

<b>European University</b> <b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
	<p>and € the content areas as taught in preschool (Language, Mathematics, Physical education, Social studies, Science, Arts, Music).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Get to know the timetable and the curriculum of preschool.</li> <li>– Develop the skill of observing and planning individual observations.</li> <li>– Learn different observation methods and know their pros and cons.</li> <li>– Interact with the children and explore the uniqueness of the early years period.</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop observation, analysis, self-evaluation and reflection skills.</li> <li>– Develop skills to enhance communication, differentiation, planning and managing the classroom.</li> <li>– Plan, implement, and assess activities in the different content areas of the curriculum.</li> <li>– Critically observe and assess different pedagogical models, teaching approaches, ways of organising learning through the collection and analysis of data in real life learning environments.</li> <li>– Participate in group activities of the preschool and value the meaning of collaboration and collective effort.</li> <li>– Construct a personal philosophy and attitude towards early years education.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Be responsible for a preschool classroom and deal with (a) the planning and implementation of activities, (b) the problems and issues that arise and (c) planning of different school activities.</li> <li>– Participate in different collective activities and value collaboration and collective efforts.</li> <li>– Develop critical and reflective skills in assessing their own or other people’s teaching as a means of continuously improving their own practical and theoretical knowledge.</li> <li>– Experiment and discover new approaches.</li> <li>– Report, analyse and implement new teaching approaches for effective learning, classroom planning and management.</li> <li>– Plan rich learning environments that respond to the individual needs of each child and enrich their learning potential.</li> <li>– Plan, implement and assess activities in the different content areas considering the epistemological framework of each one.</li> <li>– Cope with potential difficulties in the pedagogical process while focusing on finding solutions to problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	Field experience 90%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	



Table 9c

## Cyprus: Key elements of field practice in university IPE programmes – University of Nicosia (2021)

University of Nicosia IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)	
Practica Elements	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 5 Duration: one semester
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 5 Duration: one semester
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	4 <sup>th</sup> year of studies ECTS: 10 Duration: one semester
Programme Requirements and Learning Outcomes	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Judge and find positive and negative elements of didactic methods.</li> <li>– Develop basic teaching skills.</li> <li>– Know the basic elements of a lesson plan and be able to implement them smoothly.</li> <li>– Plan, organise and implement a lesson plan.</li> <li>– Explore the ability of self-evaluation, presenting the effectiveness of the work with critical reflection</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The students are expected to:</li> <li>– Plan teaching and implement it smoothly and effectively.</li> <li>– Implement didactic strategies and techniques that draw on the students' interest and active participation in the learning process.</li> <li>– Use multiple didactic methods and approaches for effective teaching and learning.</li> <li>– Deepen the pedagogical dimensions of specific teaching episodes during their own and other people's teaching.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Implement autonomous teaching: plan and implement a weekly teaching programme based on current strategies (e.g. thematic strategy, individual learning, project approach)</li> <li>– Implement teaching strategies and techniques that draw on the students' interest and active participation in the learning process.</li> <li>– Plan and implement weekly teaching programmes.</li> <li>– Plan and control a team of children outside the classroom with responsibility (e.g. playground, day trip, school activities).</li> <li>– Develop respect, collaboration and flexibility attitudes towards the people in the school (teachers, children, principal, assistants and parents).</li> </ul>
Assessment	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	Written examination, activity development, micro-teaching, reflective journal.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	Written examination, activity development, observations, reflection and assessment for two lesson implementations at preschool, portfolio (lesson plans, self-evaluation).

<b>University of Nicosia</b> <b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	Individual Assignment/Portfolio, Feedback and evaluation of 3 lesson implementations at preschool, assessment by the classroom teacher and the university supervisors, assessment from the student's mentor

Table 9d

**Cyprus: Key elements of field practice in IPE diploma and university programmes – Frederick Institute of Technology (2022) and Frederick University (2021)**

<b>Frederick Institute of Technology</b> <b>Diploma in Nursery (2 years)</b>	
Practica Elements	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	Practical Experience I ECTS: 4 Duration 3 weeks
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	Practical Experience II ECTS: 4 Duration: 3 weeks
<b>Programme Requirements and Learning Outcomes (these refer to the programme in general)</b>	
The students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Possess the knowledge and skills of oral, written and technological communication, so as to communicate and co-operate efficiently with their peers, children, parents, and others.</li> <li>– Organise activities which will help children to acquire mathematical concepts and experiences from natural sciences, and cultivate their problem solving thinking and their initiative.</li> <li>– Handle successfully not only routine problems in the pre-school institution, but also to solve any problems arising in their working environment.</li> </ul>	

<b>Frederick University</b> <b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
Practicum Elements	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 5 Duration: 1 semester
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of studies ECTS: 5 Duration: 1 semester
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	4 <sup>th</sup> year of studies ECTS: 6 Duration: 1 semester
4 <sup>th</sup> Level	4 <sup>th</sup> year of studies ECTS: 12 Duration: 1 semester
<b>Programme Requirements and Learning Outcomes</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	<b>The students are expected to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Discuss about teaching and learning in preschool using terms that relate to the pedagogical principles, the teaching-learning participants, the elements that impact teaching, the pedagogical climate of the teaching, the teaching-learning planning and assessment.</li> <li>– Note the elements that comprise the pedagogical climate of teaching and learning.</li> </ul>

<b>Frederick University</b> <b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Analyse the role of the teacher, the student, the environment and the content areas in the teaching-learning process.</li> <li>– Problematised issues such as the curriculum, differentiation, technology, environmental education, parental involvement.</li> <li>– Explain the meaning of planning teaching and learning using webs for the analysis of a theme into specific subthemes.</li> <li>– Study the curriculum and describe elements that need to be taken into consideration for the planning of teaching-learning, such as the choice of content to teach, the process of teaching, the goals set, the methods employed and assessment.</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The students are expected to:</li> <li>– Describe and analyse areas of development for the child based on the early childhood curriculum and discuss goals and activities based on these.</li> <li>– Discuss the way content areas are structured in education, focusing in the early years as these are presented in the curricula.</li> <li>– Set goals which are simple, clear, differentiated and evaluative.</li> <li>– Study and develop lesson plans taking into consideration the interconnection of goals, materials, activities and assessment.</li> <li>– Develop work plans based on the project approach.</li> <li>– Observe and document important episodes from the preschool based on different focus areas, and analyse these.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Plan and implement appropriate work plans.</li> <li>– Develop and implement teaching skills in practice.</li> <li>– Develop interrelationship skills, guidance skills, problem solving skills.</li> <li>– Be informed about the quality and needs of the students.</li> <li>– Deal with expected and unexpected issues and behaviour problems.</li> <li>– Use appropriately the materials and different strategies to satisfy students' differing needs.</li> <li>– Analyse, judge and assess educational problems.</li> <li>– Assess their own behaviour and improve their work.</li> <li>– Appropriately handle the children's time and know what they are expected to teach.</li> <li>– Develop initiative and a flexible and innovative stance.</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> Level	<p><b>The students are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Analyse and examine educational terms, theories and issues.</li> <li>– Plan and organise lessons with appropriate goals, the necessary teaching materials and through multiple activities.</li> <li>– Develop a series of teaching and learning material based on implemented strategies that make the process of teaching and learning easier.</li> <li>– Implement the teaching and learning processes, taking into consideration the goals of each content area and the special characteristics of the classroom.</li> <li>– Effectively deal with problems and collaborate with all those involved in the implementation of the programmes in the school.</li> <li>– Develop intercommunication with the people and teams in the school.</li> <li>– Develop guidance skills and appropriately guide people and teams.</li> </ul>

<b>Frederick University</b> <b>IPE degree: Early Childhood Education (4 years)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop an encouraging environment for learning and positively face the different needs of the children and the individualities of the classroom.</li> <li>– Increase the experiences of children in reference to knowledge, emotionally and psychosocially.</li> <li>– Use techniques and strategies that develop higher order thinking.</li> <li>– Analyse and evaluate their accomplishments and learn to strive for continuous progress.</li> <li>– Develop an independent, flexible and innovative stance.</li> </ul>
Assessment	
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	Participation – Classroom assignment 10% Team presentation 10% Written Assignments 40% Final Exam 40%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	Portfolio with Lesson Plans 20% Project Development 20% Observation notes from preschool visits 50% Evaluation by the preschool’s principal 10%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	University supervisors’ grading 60% Portfolio 15% Seminar attendance 5% Principal’s evaluation 5% Total of lesson plans 15%
4 <sup>th</sup> Level	University supervisors’ grading 60% Portfolio 10% Seminar attendance 5% Principal’s evaluation 5% Monthly planning 5% Total of lesson plans 15%

The Pre-primary Teachers and Childcare Teachers who mentor preservice student/trainee teachers in private preschools and childcare centres are not paid in any form and do not have any time release like the public school mentors described earlier.

## 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

Continuing professional development for staff in ECEC provision in both the public and private sector is undertaken mainly by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth through the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (C.P.I.). These programs are offered every year and are addressed to all current teachers of all levels. However, a closer look at the choice of themes for these seminars reveal that the options for focused CPD for Childcare Teachers are limited. In addition, all higher education institutions in Cyprus offer professional development seminars, workshops and conferences. These are optional for all staff in ECEC provision and take place during their own time

and at their own cost. Depending on the research interests and expertise of the university teaching staff, there may be some focused opportunities for CPD for Childcare Teachers.

The C.P.I. is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and is responsible, among other services, for providing professional development activities for serving teachers in all sectors and at all levels of education by offering compulsory and optional seminars.

The C.P.I. has developed a Teacher's Professional Learning Programme (PLP) (Eracleous *et al* 2022) that covers many of the ways it provides professional development for teachers. Specifically, this programme involves extensive activities in the school unit, as it includes a year-round systematic support from the Pedagogical Institute for the professional learning of teachers. Officers of the Pedagogical Institute, as Supporters, collaborate throughout the school year with the school to promote professional learning within the school, with actions and practices that are selected and interpreted based on the needs of teachers and the context (school and classroom). The aim is to meet the professional / learning needs of teachers and to improve professional practices. The PLP utilises a variety of methodologies, such as Action-Research methodology, Lesson Study methodologies, Quality Circles for Teachers and others, which are in line with the needs of teachers and the specifics of each school.

The PLP is structured on the basis of effectiveness elements related to teachers' professional learning programs:

1. Active involvement
2. Reflection
3. Teacher's dynamic professional identity
4. School based context
5. Collaboration and professional learning communities.

So, this type of professional development offered by the C.P. I. is one that entails teachers' active involvement, with continuous reflection and highlights the importance of developing a learning community.

Moreover, the C.P.I. offers other forms of seminars and workshops which include the following:

1. Optional Seminars which are free of charge and take place in the afternoons (i.e. after kindergartens/preschools have closed) and may include general pedagogical or specific themes for every level of education and/or content area. The seminars comprise five sessions lasting 2½ hours once a year.
2. School-based seminars take place in kindergartens/preschools where groups of teachers within the same or nearby public kindergartens who are interested in participating in such seminars meet together in one institution.
3. Seminars for kindergarten/preschool heads which aim to improve management strategies and to help them cope with current challenges focusing on modernising the Cypriot system in relation to EU policies. (C.P.I. 2022)

Regarding the *private* sector, the kindergarten owners are responsible for providing their staff with professional development but they can also participate in the optional seminars offered by the C.P.I.

The only obligatory CPD programme for teachers in *public* kindergartens/preschools takes place during the first week of September before school starts. Teachers attend one-day seminars either at their kindergarten/preschool or in large teams based on themes that the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth considers necessary. For example, over the past five years, teachers have attended various professional development seminars on the new Early Childhood Curriculum (e.g. on play, music, language, mathematics) which was revised during the recent Educa-

tional Reform. In addition, two periods weekly (80 minutes altogether) are dedicated to professional development, during which the principal/centre head organises planning activities, or teachers who have participated in other types of professional development share their experience, knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

Moreover, during the academic year the Early Childhood Supervisors (*Epitheoritries*) organise seminars or conferences according to what they consider is important for the field. During these seminars, teacher representatives from the larger kindergartens (e.g. with two and more classrooms) attend and they are then required to share the information of the seminar with the other teachers in their team. These seminars take place during working hours.

The C.P.I. offers an in-service programme for newly appointed principals. During the year in which they take up their position, principals attend a weekly professional development session during their working hours. They are supported in developing leadership, managerial/ administrative and organisational abilities and skills. In addition, there are several optional seminars offered by the C.P.I. over the course of each year and other conferences organised by higher education institutions which they can attend during their own free time and at their own cost.

Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers may participate in optional workshops during their own time, sometimes covering the costs in order to have these documented in their assessment file. Attendance is considered for a teacher's annual assessment but there is no direct impact on remuneration. Career advancement is mainly accomplished through years of experience and post-graduate degrees.

Being part of the European Union provides early childhood teachers opportunities to participate in different programmes and seminars. For example, the optional seminars organised and provided by the C.P.I. are co-funded by the European Social Fund of the EU. In addition, early childhood teachers have the opportunity to participate and visit other European countries to enrich their own professional development. Two examples of such programmes include: (1) *MENETEP-Mentoring technology-based pedagogy*, which aims at developing teachers' digital skills, and (2) *DiDeSu- Differentiation of instruction for teacher professional Development and students' Success*, which aspires to make a substantial contribution to the field of teaching methodology and effective differentiated teaching, utilising the opportunities for collaboration at European level as provided through Erasmus +, and to create learning communities within schools.

There are no specific professional development options for Teachers' Assistants, and employers do not expect them to participate in CPD activities. The Child Personal Assistants ('accompaniers') decide for themselves whether to participate in different optional seminars or conferences to enrich their knowledge and skills. Finally, the Special Educators, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Psychologists who visit the kindergartens to provide special assistance to the children who need it follow the same scheme of professional development provided by the C.P.I. or their department at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

In the **childcare sector**, Nursery and Childcare Teachers work full-time and are paid as little as €600–€750, lower than the minimum wage. Also, they are often laid off at the end of the year so that they do not have to be paid during the summer holidays and the providers do not have



to raise their salary. There is no set regulation in terms of working and salary conditions in the private sector and, regardless of the teacher’s qualifications, the providers offer the same salary. In the **education sector**, all teachers working in the public sector, regardless of the level of education or specialisation, earn the same amount. Therefore, Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers earn the same as primary school teachers. The public sector has a yearly average increase based on inflation and tax index.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has issued regulations in terms of the functioning of (non-profit) community kindergartens along with the remuneration of the Kindergarten Teachers in these settings. An ECEC Teacher working in a community kindergarten earns less than one working in the public sector but it is still considered to be a fair/good wage.

In the private sector, remuneration is the lowest and working hours are the longest. There have been cases where someone is forced to be absent from work and as a result their employer deducts a certain amount from their salary. There is no agency to control what the private sector offers in terms of working conditions and salaries. People working in the private sector do not earn enough to support themselves (e.g. to rent their own apartment) or a family because they usually earn the minimum wage or close to that. *Table 10* shows the remuneration of Kindergarten Teachers according to the setting they work in.

Table 10

**Cyprus: Remuneration of Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teachers, 2022**

Type of ECEC provision	Remuneration
Public kindergartens	A8-A11 or combined (based on years of service) A8: €17,946 – €27,593 per annum A10: €25,112 – €34,720 per annum A11: €29,684 – €39,292 per annum
Community kindergartens	€1.068,73 per month and an annual increase of €24,96
Private kindergartens	Depends on the owner of the setting. Usually they offer the lowest average wage. The lowest average wage per month (before taxes) in Cyprus is currently €870 and after six months of work €924.

Source: MoESY 2022b

The Teachers’ Assistants in public and community schools, who do not have a higher education degree, earn €870 monthly and within six months their wage is raised to €924 through the regulations applying to the public school system.

## 7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision

The working hours in community kindergartens differ from those in public kindergartens and the private sector. Staff in community kindergartens work 36 hours per week with a daily schedule between 7:30 and 14:45 and they do not have as much annual leave or as many sick leave days as staff in the public school system. Teachers who work in the private sector always work one or two afternoons (at the most until 18:00) and have no sick leave days.

### Staff in preschool/kindergarten settings

In the public sector, Kindergarten Teachers usually work on a full-time basis. In general, only those who substitute for other teachers due to health issues or maternity leave work part time. In the private sector, however, there tend to be more teachers working on a part-time basis, since the wages are then lower – a benefit for the owner of the setting only – and the practitioners have fewer benefits.



As already shown in *Table 6*, for the academic year 2018/2019, full-time work is predominant among teaching and management personnel in kindergartens. Overall, only 4.08% of teaching staff and 4.15% of management staff work part-time, with a percentage below the average of teaching staff (3.25%) and management staff (3.26%) working part-time in the private sector.

### Staff in the childcare sector

*Table 11* provides information which refers to the number of full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel (teachers and principals respectively) working at the different types of childcare centres during the academic year 2018/2019 (CYSTAT 2021a).

The majority of both teaching and management personnel work full time. Part-time workers are most likely to be found in the private sector.

*Table 11*

**Cyprus: Full-time and part-time teaching and management personnel in childcare centres, 2018-2019**

Type of school	Teaching personnel		Management personnel		Total
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	
Public	618	0	170	0	788
Community	114	11	8	3	136
Private	653	47	145	11	856
<b>Total</b>	<b>1385</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1780</b>

### 7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff

The newly qualified and appointed staff can choose from the different forms of seminars offered by the C.P. I. as described on *Chapter 6*. So, they basically participate in the compulsory one-day seminars offered for all teachers in September or they choose from the other voluntary seminars offered in the afternoons based on the themes that interest them. Additionally, in the case where their school demands in service professional development, they take part in the activities which are usually based on the needs of the school, as assessed by the head and supported by the C. P. I. officers.

### 7.4 Non-contact time

*Table 14* illustrates the number of teaching periods (40 minutes) and non-teaching activities undertaken by each type of personnel in the public sector (MoESY 2021a).

*Table 12*

**Cyprus: Number of weekly working hours and activities undertaken by personnel in the public sector**

Personnel	Teaching time periods (40 minutes)	Non-teaching activities within the school	Staff meeting	Educational seminars
<b>Principals in kindergartens</b> depending on the number of teachers in the setting	11 to 21	14 to 24	1	2
<b>Assistant Principals</b>	23	12	1	2
<b>Primary School, Pre-primary and Special Teachers</b> depending on the years of teaching	25 to 29	6 to 10	1	2

Principals teach fewer hours than assistant principals and teachers; the higher the number of teachers in a setting, the lower the number of hours the principal has to teach. With increasing years of teaching experience, teachers spend less time teaching. Regarding the private and community sectors it is up to the providers and principals of the school to arrange non-contact time but it is generally uncommon.

All teachers, regardless of the number of their teaching periods, are obliged to stay at pre-school/kindergarten for the whole day. After teaching they have time to cooperate with parents and attend staff meetings that usually start at 13:15 after the pre-school/kindergarten day ends. Finally, all teachers have two periods a week to attend educational seminars/conferences.

## 7.5 Current staffing issues

In the field of ECEC there are more teachers than needed since there is no direct correspondence between the number of people studying and graduating as ECEC teachers and the actual number of teachers needed in the public, community and private sector. This can often mean that over-qualified people work with age groups for which they were not trained, and are poorly paid.

## 8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues

### New teacher appointment system

The Educational Service Commission of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth considers the appointment of new teachers in public kindergartens/schools to be one of the main problems facing the public education system since most teacher candidates are appointed for the first time many years after they graduate. Because of the fact that there is no immediate need to employ teachers in the public-school system, whoever graduates with a BA in Education is signed up on the public-school system list of educators. Thus, a graduate may not be employed in the public system until five to ten years after completing their initial professional education since this is the time it can take for a position to become available in public kindergartens or schools. In the meantime, this person may have been teaching in the private sector or may have been engaged in an entirely different profession all these years.

Therefore, following the guidelines of UNESCO 1997 and those of the committee for Educational Reform in Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth prepared a proposal in 2014 for a new process of appointing new teachers in the public education sector. In 2015, the Greek-Cypriot Parliament passed a specific bill in accordance with the Ministry's proposal and a new teacher appointment system has been in place since 2017.

The criteria taken into consideration for including teacher candidates in the Appointments List include the following:

1. Written examination (45 credits)
2. Additional academic qualifications (up to 20 credits – 15 for a Master's degree and 20 for a Doctorate)
3. Educational experience (25 credits)
4. Year of graduation (first degree) (5 credits)
5. Average grade of first degree (3 credits for Excellent, 2 credits for Very Good and 1 point for Good or when there is no grade on the degree)
6. Service with the National Guard (2 credits)

The written examination takes place every two years and is open to new applicants and those already on the Appointments List wishing to improve their overall score. The examination score of each candidate is valid for ten years. To stay on the list, they have to take the exam again within two years before the end of the tenth year.

Candidates who fulfil all the requirements and are on the Appointments List have to follow an assessment programme during which their pedagogical and methodological abilities are assessed. If they are assessed as inadequate they will be obliged to participate in a special course offered by the C.P.I. with the aim of enhancing the necessary skills to be effective in their teaching. If the teachers who participated in the special programme are still assessed as inadequate when they return to the teaching position, they will be removed from the list (MoESY 2021b).

### **New assessment system**

In January 2019, the MoESY developed the new system for the formative assessment of teachers and of school evaluation (public education), including kindergartens. The main purpose of the proposal was to develop an evaluation plan which helps to enhance the quality of the education provided.

The evaluation maintains a pedagogical character and aims at the feedback of all those involved in the learning process: students, teachers, parents, guardians and the educational system in general, with the main aim of giving feedback on the effectiveness of the educational practices and setting priorities for future action.

The basic principles of the assessment system include:

- Support processes for teachers and kindergartens through formative assessment and school project evaluation
- Provisions to support new teachers, contractors and substitutes
- Transparency and dialogue between all stakeholders
- A meta-assessment process, with the aim of gathering information for the continuous improvement of the evaluation criteria, the forms and the procedures used in the evaluation.

Based on the new assessment system, the following are evaluated:

- Substitutes and special contract teachers
- Teachers on probation
- Permanent teachers, senior teachers, assistant principals
- Principals
- Inspectors / Supervisors
- First Education Officers

The objectives of the assessment system are defined as:

- Providing schools and teachers with constructive feedback on the effectiveness of their educational practices and definition of their future priorities
- Establishing standards for efficient and continuous processes of internal evaluation and improvement
- The evaluation of the kindergarten's ability to carry out effective and continuous internal improvement
- Ensuring ongoing professional training and support for all involved
- Monitoring the practices of the kindergarten and all involved to achieve high quality standards and ensure accountability.

Finally, the system is unified and includes two types of evaluation:

1. Internal evaluation (self-evaluation): Internal evaluation, as a process of self-assessment, will be developed by the school as an internal process with initial needs detection, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions.
2. External evaluation (feedback): External evaluation will follow and support self-assessment and will provide feedback to the kindergarten so that the process of re-designing can then be documented by an external assessment panel to strengthen and support the self-assessment process (MoESY 2021c).

### Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth with the Ministry of Social Welfare Services are involved in a project with UNICEF funded by the Next Generation EU which aims to develop the EU Quality Framework for ECEC in Cyprus. A working group of experts from both ministries and the ECEC field have been meeting to unfold, define and describe the elements of high quality ECEC for all children and provide suggestions for their development and implementation. The framework is guided by five elements: access, staff, evaluation and monitoring, governance and funding, and curriculum. After several meetings the working group has prepared the elements of the Quality Framework for ECEC taking into consideration the Greek-Cypriot context. The document will be presented to the two ministries for considering their own actions during the following months.

## 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

There are limited research projects which focus on ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues. Nevertheless, the following research examples provide a general picture of professionalisation issues in the field. These include three studies that (1) focus on the role of the practicum/work placement in initial professional education at the time of COVID, (2) elaborate on infant practices for initial teacher education programmes and (3) discuss continuing professional development for digital skills enhancement.

### School practicum experiences at the time of COVID-19: Focusing on the implementation of play practices

**Source:** Loizou and Theodosiou 2022 (see *References* for further details).

**Aims:** The study describes the experiences of fourth year Early Childhood Education (ECE) pre-service teachers during their school practicum at the time of COVID-19 in Cyprus. The authors aimed to see how capable pre-service students felt in surpassing difficulties, such as COVID-19, when implementing play practices, and how their interaction with others (e.g., supervisors, peers, and mentors) made them stronger to cope with COVID-19 related stress.

**Methods/Procedures:** The participants were 28 fourth-year preservice female students who completed their practicum experience at public preschools. The data collection included the completed reflective journals at the beginning, the middle and at the end of the practicum that the students had to complete. These journals included open-ended questions guiding the student teachers to reflect on their play practice, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the health protocol on their planning and implementation of play, their teaching abilities, as well as the support they received during their school practicum.

**Findings:** The findings focus on the play practices of preschool teachers during their practicum in COVID-19 period, and are presented in three sections: 1. Emotions and challenges expressed at the beginning of the internship at the kindergarten, 2. Play practices and teacher involvement in play during the COVID-19 pandemic and 3. Solutions found in the implementation of practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings suggest that preschool teachers not only experienced this in different ways, but that there were constructive discussions that contributed to the implementation of their play ideas.

**Implications:** Play as a practice, which is often discussed as crucial for children’s learning and development, can be “vulnerable” in adverse situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but teachers can be creative enough to turn this vulnerability into potentiality.

### Infancy pedagogy and praxis

**Source:** Loizou and Demetriou 2019 (see *References* for further details)

**Aims:** Through an examination of the reflective comments of 42 preservice Early Childhood Education Teachers (PS-ECETs), this study describes how an infancy course within an Early Childhood Education programme used four different ways of organising learning to unravel details of infant pedagogy, focusing on the role of the teacher.

**Methods/Procedures:** The participants of this study were 42 female pre service ECE Teachers in their second year of studies who were registered for the course ‘EDU102: Infancy and Practice (0–3 years)’. The data collection included the reflective assignments of 42 students focusing on visits 5 and 6 which involved the implementation of the four ways of organising learning. For these reflective assignments they were provided guidelines to focus on their actions, children’s and teachers’ actions, as well as their emotions in reference to their caregiving role.

**Findings:** Findings suggest that the way PS-ECETs describe their roles and the goals they set for the infants differ according to the specific way of organising learning (routines, structured play, quiet time observation, and purposeful playful intervention). The level of teacher involvement changes according to the way of organising learning, being more active during structured play and less active during quiet time observation.

**Implications:** Findings allow conclusions to be drawn about infant teachers’ practices (appropriate ways of interacting with infants to provide education and care), teacher education programmes that educate infant teachers along with professional development programmes for in-service infant teachers.

### A teacher professional development programme for digital skills enhancement

**Source:** Papasolomontos 2021 (see *References* for further details)

**Aims:** Considering that digital technologies constitute a most integral part of our lives and at the same time offer opportunities for effective teaching and learning, the Pedagogical Institute offered a Training Programme aiming to enhance the development of teachers' digital skills. The Programme was completed by 47 teachers from all levels, including kindergarten. The purpose of this study is the presentation of the programme and the views of the teachers who completed the programme.

**Methods:** A PD Programme was offered remotely, utilising the Online Learning Environment (OLE) of the C.P.I. It consists of an Introductory Module and 10 other Learning Modules with themes defined through a process of diagnosing the needs of teachers but also taking into account European and national directions. All 47 participants completed a questionnaire electronically at the end of the programme.

**Findings:** Findings show that the purpose and the expected results of the Programme were clear and unambiguous (61%), the general content, which was also described as "innovative" by the trainees, met its purpose and objectives Programme (61%). Also, the Programme was described as clear and understandable (63%), responding to the expected results (63%) and was useful for the development of their digital skills (76%). As far as the Programme met their expectations, one (1) person said little, 18 (39%) people said enough and 27 (59%) people a lot.

**Implications:** The findings have implications for the revision and improvement of the programme. It is suggested that the time period for which the programme is offered needs to be reconsidered to avoid time pressure and additional workload. A reduction of the theoretical component of the programme is also proposed.

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

There are specific issues within the ECEC field in Cyprus which are directly related to quality and have an impact on the educational system and specifically on the effectiveness of the experiences we provide for children and thus their learning and development.

### Quality issue 1: Salaries in the ECEC field

The field of early childhood education has always been underestimated by society and the government in terms of the importance of early education and care. This is reflected in the fact that people working with children aged 3 months to 3 years do not need to have a degree; a school leaving certificate is considered sufficient. In addition, in the private sector, which is the largest provider of places for children from birth up to 4 years 8 months, Nursery and Childcare Teachers are rarely acknowledged by their employers and are mostly underpaid (see *Chapter 8*). Since there are many early childhood teachers with a degree in ECEC, the providers are always in the safe position to find someone when the need arises. This affects the quality of education and care offered to children and will continue to do so in the near future. Teachers will be less and less motivated to work with children and this will definitely have an impact on children, their development and learning and finally an impact on society.

### Quality issue 2: Teacher assessment and evaluation

The evaluation of teachers and the educational work of a preschool (public and private) is or rather should be a continuous dynamic process integrated in the daily operation of the setting. Unfortunately, the small number of Early Childhood Education officials and supervisors in Cyprus in combination with the procedures followed by the two ministries do not fully cover this need. The evaluation process should, in addition to assessing the educational work of the kindergarten, be linked to the general educational planning and the development of action plans of the Ministries. The ultimate goal should be to improve the quality of the educational work and the teachers who provide it. The ECEC system of Cyprus needs to be revised and adjusted so that the goal mentioned above is achieved to the maximum extent possible. This achievement will provide feedback on the teaching and administrative work of teachers, teaching practices, training programmes, while contributing to the creation of awareness, motivation, efficiency and enhancing individual responsibility without cancelling scientific training. These procedures



should include support for teachers and kindergartens, as well as provisions to support new teachers, contractors and substitutes. In addition, they should rely on transparency and dialogue between all the stakeholders. In addition, since Nursery and Childcare Teachers are expected to focus on care, they are not evaluated in reference to the education part of their work. It is imperative that education becomes part of their work and they get to be evaluated by both Ministries.

### Quality issue 3: The role of Teacher's Assistant

In ECEC, the staffing of kindergartens with properly trained staff is constantly emphasised in order to ensure quality education. The kindergartens in Cyprus, public, private and community settings employ Teachers' Assistants, who mainly support the teacher in reference to the cleanliness of the classroom, morning welcoming of children, preparation of art materials, etc. It is imperative to staff preschool classrooms with more than one trained adult so that the needs of all children are fully and adequately met. In Cyprus each preschool has 25 children without the provision or possibility of supporting the teacher's pedagogical work either by another teacher (co-teacher) or someone who is partially trained in ECEC. At the time of COVID-19 it was even more evident that if classrooms were staffed with two ECEC teachers, then provision of quality education would have been possible.

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