

# FRANCE

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

*Country report author*

**Sylvie Rayna**

EXPERICE – University Sorbonne Paris Nord

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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

**Sylvie Rayna**, PhD in psychology, is honorary *maître de conférences* in educational sciences at the French Institute of Education (*École Normale Supérieure de Lyon*). She is an associate researcher at the EXPERICE laboratory at Paris Nord University where she is continuing her (mostly comparative) research on ECEC policies and practices, with a particular interest in transitions in ECEC (0–6 years) and cultural projects.

## 1. ECEC governance in France

The system of early childhood education and care in France is bi-sectoral, split between a childcare sector (0–2 years<sup>1</sup>) and an education sector (2–5 years). 2 year-olds may attend a childcare setting or a pre-primary<sup>2</sup> school (*école maternelle*).

During lunch breaks, out-of-school hours and holidays, most children attending the *école maternelle* are also supervised by a third sector: the pre-primary leisure-time sector (*accueil périscolaire*), with services in the schools or near them.

Since September 2019, compulsory schooling in the *école maternelle* begins when the children are 3 years old. They start primary school (*école élémentaire*) when they are 6 years old.

### 1.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

During President Macron's first term (2017–2022), provision for the under-threes (both centre-based and home-based) was under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health (*Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé*) and local authorities. At the beginning of his second term in June 2022, this Ministry was split into two. The new ministries are called the Ministry for Health and Prevention (*Ministère de la santé et de la prévention*) and the Ministry of Solidarity, Autonomy and Persons with Disabilities (*Ministère des solidarités, de l'autonomie et des personnes handicapées*).

The new Minister of Solidarity stated the following: "I am, and I want to tell you this very clearly, the Minister for Early Childhood and Families". At the same time, a State Secretary for Childhood has been directly linked to the new Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne (before this, the relevant State Secretary was linked to the Ministry of Solidarity and Health). Moreover, the Minister in charge of equality between women and men, diversity and equal opportunities who has to ensure "the improvement of the consideration of maternity and paternity in professional careers and the development of childcare, in particular childcare centres", is also delegated to the Prime Minister. There is therefore a certain amount of overlapping in terms of responsibility for ECEC.

At the beginning of E. Macron's first term, linked to the National Strategy for preventing and fighting poverty launched in October 2018 (Jeantet 2022), a commission of specialists in early childhood (but without representatives from the social sciences and education) had made recommendations for family and childhood policy (prenatal–2 years, the 'first thousand days'), which have been piloted by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health since 2021 (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2020).

In 2021, a Childcare Sector Committee (*Comité de Filière Petite Enfance*) was created to cope with the significant lack of available places and, according to the previous Minister, to "respond to the professionals' feeling of lack of recognition and the need to reaffirm the meaning of their activity". In June 2022, this committee made some propositions, after having asked the CNAF

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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: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. In the case of France, where children start the *école élémentaire* at age 6, the relevant formats are **0–2** and **2/3–5** years.

<sup>2</sup> To establish a degree of comparability between the country reports, the term 'pre-primary' is used in this report when describing the *écoles maternelles*. However, the *école maternelle* and the *école élémentaire* jointly form the *école primaire* for children aged 2–11 years.

(*Caisse Nationale des Allocations Familiales*/National Family Allowance Fund) to quantify the shortage in *crèches collectives* in the spring of 2022.

The Decree n° 2021-1131 30 (2021) on childcare had introduced, for the first time, common regulations for both home-based and centre-based care. *Crèches collectives* are categorised according to their size: *micro-crèches* (12 places maximum), *petites crèches* (13–24 places), *crèches* (25–39 places), *grandes crèches* (40–59 places). Also for the first time, a curriculum was launched in the childcare sector, the *Charte nationale d'accueil pour les jeunes enfants* (National Charter for Childcare, Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2021a) – It is inspired by the “Giampino report” – a report commissioned by the Minister of Families, Childhood and Women’s Rights under F. Hollande’s presidency (Giampino 2016); this report was the product of a broad consultation process with stakeholders in the childcare sector and the *Charte* has been available since 2017 (Ministry for Families, Children and Women's Rights 2017). It is interesting to note that in the Decree, *crèches familiales* – a marginal setting grouping home-based childcare providers employed by the *crèche familiale* (which organises activities for them and the children under their care) – are placed in the same category as the *crèches*. A more recent setting which is on the increase, the *maisons d'assistantes maternelles (MAM)*, is placed in the same category as independent home-based provision. The *MAM* are settings where several independent home-based providers work together entirely outside their own homes, thus creating a group of children (Garnier, Bouve, and Janner-Raimondi 2022). Independent home-based childcare providers also have the possibility of joining a *Relais assistants maternelles RAM* for shared activities and training. From 2021, the *RAM* became *Relais petite enfance RPE*, with extended missions towards families (Decree 2021-115).

Centre-based settings for children up to 3 years of age include **full-time** provision and **part-time** sessional care (*haltes-garderies*). The **all-day settings** are:

- *crèches collectives* – mostly *établissements multi-accueils* (they can include some places for part-time, home-based or emergency situations), which accounted for more than 80% of the places in childcare centres in 2019 (National Early Childhood Observatory 2021);
- *micro-crèches* (i.e. limited to 12 children maximum), accounting for more than 12% of the places in 2019; and
- *jardins d'enfants* for 2 and 3 year-olds. Now that school is compulsory from age 3 (since September 2019), these are now a minority setting, existing in some cities only; they are to be disbanded by 2024 or transformed into *crèches*

All these full-day settings can be publicly run, associative, parent-run, or private. The private sector continues to increase in number. Private *micro-crèches* in particular appear to be a “promising market”: in 2020, annual revenue amounted to more than 1.7 billion euros (Xerfi 2021).

To be able to open and then operate, all *crèches* must be approved and then controlled by the departmental services of the *Protection maternelle et Infantile – PMI* (Maternal and Child Protection), but a new Decree n°2022-856, highly criticised, aims to transfer this responsibility to the CAF (Family allowance fund), starting with an experiment with the CAF in the Haute-Savoie *département*.

In 2019, there were a total number of 60 childcare places for 100 children under 3 years of age, 30 of these in childcare centres (National Early Childhood Observatory 2021). There are significant regional disparities. The COVID pandemic has not impacted the choices of parents of babies (6 months to 1 year): in 2021, according to a survey with 9,000 families, the *crèche* remained the most desired form of childcare (34%), although only 24% said they currently use it (Crépin and Boyer 2022). Faced with the massive shortage of childcare professionals, the new Prime

Minister Elisabeth Borne announced, in July 2022, the wish of her government to build “a real public service for early childhood”, with the creation of 600,000 new places in *crèches*.

This public service (*service public de la petite enfance- SPPE*) was part of President Macron's campaign commitments (at the crossroads of the policies of supporting the birth rate, of full employment, of equality between women and men and of equal opportunities from an early age). In December 2022 – after a consultation phase about the *SPPE* with mayors and presidents of intermunicipal authorities, presidents and directors of family allowance funds, professionals in the early childhood sector through the Early Childhood Sector Committee and the National Union of Associations families (UNAF) –, Jean-Christophe Combe, Minister of Solidarity, Autonomy and Persons with Disabilities, had organised the National Council for the “Refoundation” of Early Childhood (*conseil national de refondation sur la petite enfance – CNR*). While, in March 2023, a report by the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs (Bohic et al. 2023) was published on the quality of care and prevention of abuse in *crèches* (after the death of a baby in a private *crèche* in Lyon in summer 2022), three reports by the Supreme Council for the Family, Childhood and Age (SCFCA 2023a, b, c) provided quantitative and qualitative recommendations for the *SPPE* project. However, an enforceable right is not yet envisaged.

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, Prime Minister E. Borne launched the *SPPE* with 5.5 billion euros for 100,000 places in *crèches* by 2027 (target: 200,000 places in 2030) (see the Key Contextual Data document for France for more details).

## 1.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

Pre-primary education settings (*écoles maternelles*) for 2 to 5 year-olds fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs (*Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la jeunesse*) and, since 1989, are part of the primary school system. Teachers undergo the same training in university institutes for pre-primary and primary teachers, with the professional title *professeurs des écoles* and a curriculum based on 3 cycles of learning from 2 to 12. The first of these focuses on pre-primary education (Ministry of National Education, Youth Affairs and Sports 2015, 2021b).

In 2020/2021, 84% of all school Teachers worked in the public sector and 16% in private schools under contract with the State (Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021).

Although most 3 year-olds customarily attended the *école maternelle*, instruction became compulsory in September 2019 through the Law n° 2019-791 on the *école de la confiance* (school of trust). This change increases the cultural gap with the childcare sector.

Around 12% of 2 year-olds also currently attend an *école maternelle* (often only during the morning), whereas in the 1990s about a third of the age group were enrolled. Due to national policies they are more likely to attend schools situated in disadvantaged areas, or in some regions (West and North of France) may attend according to local traditional choices.

Auxiliary staff, buildings, equipment and the organisation of the lunch break and leisure-time during out-of-school hours and holidays come under the responsibility of local authorities.

Children with disabilities have been individually supported (full time or part time) since 2003 by *auxiliaires de vie scolaire AVS* (school life assistants) from pre-primary school to secondary school, and not by an additional teacher as is the case in some other countries. The parents must make a request for an *AVS*, the procedure is complex, the provision is insufficient, the results are questionable. In 2014, their job description was changed to *accompagnante/accompagnante d'élève en situation de handicap AESH* (support staff for students with disabilities). They are recruited by the rectorates or departmental services of the the Ministry of National Education (level Baccalaureat or equivalent, but no specialist training). They operate during school

hours in the classrooms, they may also work during lunch breaks and leisure-time activities but, in 2020, the municipalities had to take charge these out-of-school hours. Debates are ongoing... The new Minister of National Education and Youth Affairs, Pap Ndiaye, will be responsible for a "School reform", announced President Macron, having first to solve for 2022–2023 the problem of the increasing teacher shortage.

Local disparities exist: variations in funding between cities are considerable. The funding level varies: according to a teachers' union (SNUipp-FSU 2021), schools, in some cities, can be funded up to 10 times more than in other cities. A former Children's Advocate has noted: "The priority budgetary item of the State, National Education, is nonetheless an impoverished domain in many towns, villages, districts" and called for "true transparency" on the distribution and use of resources, i.e. on the choices made (Brisset 2021, 9).

Concerning the lowering of compulsory instruction age to 3, parents' associations tend to be in favour of this early instruction, which is assumed to reduce school inequalities. This is not so in the case of teachers' unions who are, together with some researchers (Garnier and Brougère 2017; Garnier 2019) and other specialists (Association Spirale 2021), very critical about this measure as well as about the general educational policy approach of the Minister Jean Michel Blanquer, which is very focused on children's evaluations and evidenced-based approaches. During President Macron's first term, for the first time, a panel evaluated "incoming" children (around 35,000 3 year-olds) to assess achievements of the pupils. Data were collected in January, March and May 2022; grids of observation were focused on the behaviour of children, recalling the proposal for early detection to prevent delinquency by President Sarkozy in 2005; the draft Law evoked "a behaviour book" on the children, to be documented by the teachers.

### 1.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

Leisure-time facilities during out-of-school hours and holidays (called *accueils périscolaires* or *centres de loisirs*) in both pre-primary and primary school settings (or near them), come under (since 2022) the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs and are organised by local authorities. They provide for children aged 2–11 years during a substantial lunch break and leisure-time periods before and after school hours and on Wednesday afternoons, as well during holidays. Since President Macron's first term (2017), cities are free to continue or discontinue the changes introduced by the School Rhythm Reform (introduced in 2013 by the previous Minister of Education, Vincent Peillon, under F. Hollande's presidency), which includes school finishing at 15:00 on two days, followed by a *temps d'activité périscolaire (TAP)* (leisure-time periods including Leisure-time Facilitators but also various associations). The latter sector has increased since this reform (Foirien 2018). In 2020–2021, one in two municipalities have a school *accueil périscolaire* (1.7 million places) (Foirien 2021).

"Professionalisation issues" of the "marginalised professional world" of leisure-time work are just beginning to surface (Divert and Lebon 2019). Through strikes, they are currently demanding better working conditions.

The positive role of the *accueils périscolaires* during the pandemic has been officially recognised in a report by the General Inspectorate of Education, Sport and Research (Mansuy et al. 2021), which highlights the following: the low recognition and precariousness of jobs and the problems of acquiring relevant professional diplomas; a lack of coordination at the local authority level; a discontinuity in education between school and out-of-school hours. The report recommends not only an appropriate professional qualification which takes into account the specificities of these leisure-time sessions and a reinforcement of the further training of Leisure-time Facilitators, but also the integration of out-of-school hours' issues in the initial professional education of teachers. It also recommends, at the local level, improved coordination and a greater continuity in

public policies. It was followed, in 2022, by the Plan "Pour un renouveau de l'animation en accueils collectifs de mineurs" (For a renewal of animation in centres for minors), which intended to counteract the lack of *animateurs/animateuses* with 25 measures (short and long term), but also to decompartmentalise school hours and out-of-school hours towards a better complementarity (Ministry of National Education, Youth Affairs 2022a). A *Comité de Filière Animation* (Leisure-time Sector Committee) has been created.

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

The ECEC workforce is characterised by hierarchical structures.

- In the centre-based childcare sector, a considerable proportion of staff has a paramedical background (*puériculteurs/puéricultrices* and *auxiliaires de puériculture*, who can also work in hospitals).
- In the *écoles maternelles*, teachers are not early childhood specialists; *professeurs/professeuses des écoles* can teach to 2 to 11 year-olds.
- Leisure-time settings linked to *écoles maternelles* (and often in the same building) are staffed by *animation* personnel (who can work with 2–18 year-olds).

The three sectors constitute three distinct cultural universes.

In childcare, educational staff are a minority (*éducateur/éducatrice de jeunes enfants – EJE*) (MHP and MSADP 2022a). There is weak recognition of the educational role of the *accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance – AEPE* (Ministry of National Education 2017a), as well as, in *écoles maternelles*, of the auxiliary staff (who have also the *AEPE* diploma) and of the Leisure-time Facilitators working in out-of-school hours.

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

#### 2.1.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

40% of personnel in childcare centres are required to be qualified. No precise statistics are available about the composition of the staff, but the main professionals in direct contact with children under 3 are the auxiliary personnel: *auxiliaires de puériculture* and *accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance (AEPE)*. According to the new Decree on Childcare (2021-1131), a full-time *EJE* is not required in *micro-crèches*; in larger *crèches*, one *EJE* is required for working with the children; some of these *crèches* may have two *EJEs*. The heads, generally a *puériculteur/puéricultrice* or an *EJE*, may or may not participate in activities with the children.

If they are employed by municipalities, all these workers become local municipal civil servants after having passed an exam. *Puéricultrices, EJE, auxiliaires de puériculture* are supported by their own professional associations, which organise local and national conferences.

All these workers are “under tension” (Odena 2009): the heterogeneity of professions makes teamwork difficult, the various initial training courses do not sufficiently prepare for work in childcare centres (Odena 2019). This tension was exacerbated during the pandemic. Studies on the hardship of work in *crèches* (Meuret-Campfort 2014) and its disrepute (Mozère and Jonas 2011) have been supplemented by studies of suffering at work (Moisset 2022) that affects both centre leaders and the staff in direct contact with children.



During the pandemic, a survey launched by an information site for childcare professionals<sup>3</sup> gave voice to 1,270 of this group, 60% of them are staff working in *crèches*. Results indicate a strong feeling of being underpaid by 88% of them, mostly among the staff in direct contact with the children and in private *micro-crèches*, and a lack of recognition, by their hierarchy, of their acquired skills (a better recognition is noted in associative *crèches*). The wishes of *crèche* staff are: a salary increase of 25% (considered "realistic" and corresponding to an additional expenditure of 1,157 million euros, i.e. 7.6% of the Family Policy budget devoted to childcare); additional further training (CPD); smaller *crèches* (for 88%, the ideal size is considered to be 30 places or less); a better staff to child ratio in the work with infants (pre-walking), with 68% suggesting 1:3; and better support by the hierarchy (APEMA 2022).

The main categories of staff working in centre-based settings for under-threes appear below.

### **Paediatric Nurse** (*puéricultrice/puériculteur*)

The 1983 initial professional education curriculum (consolidated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2017/1983) prepares these professionals for working in hospitals (0–16 years), in medical consultations with mothers (prenatal to 6 years in *PMI*), as well as in childcare settings (under 3 year-olds) as a Centre Head in a *crèche collective* or open-door centre for home-based childcare providers (*relais petite enfance – RPE* – previously called *relais assistantes maternelles – RAM*) (Albérola and Olm 2011; Vérité 2008). They can then become Early Childhood Coordinators/coordinators of *crèches* (Baudelot and Rayna 2000).

The initial professional education in a public or private *école de puériculture* (3 years as a nurse, plus 1 year of specialisation as a Paediatric Nurse) for work with children 0–16 years old, is not yet recognised as an equivalent of a Master's degree but nevertheless as a Bachelor's degree. Their association (*ANDPE*<sup>4</sup>) continues to demand recognition at the level of a Master's degree.

In *crèches*, increasing administrative tasks of heads have impacted the presence of Paediatric Nurses among the children. Initiation and/or participation in certain activities or projects with children – such as cultural or artistic projects (Rayna 2016), or bridging activities between *crèche* and *école maternelle* or leisure-time settings (Péralès, Chandon Coq and Rayna 2021) – can vary from one *crèche* to another.

### **Early Childhood Educator** (*éducatrice/éducateur de jeunes enfants – EJE*)

The curricular requirements of the *EJE* initial professional education were updated in 2005 and for the childcare sector now include: working in direct contact with children or as a Centre Head in a *crèche collective* or in open door centres for home-based childcare providers (*relais assistantes maternelles – RAM* – renamed *relais petite enfance – RPE*), and sometimes with 2 year-old children in bridge classes in *écoles maternelles* (Dupraz 1995; Villain and Gossot 2000), as well as in *PMI* consultations. The minimum requirement was changed in 2011 from a post-secondary qualification to a Bachelor's degree for working with 0–7 year-olds. The training reform of 2018 required a mandatory agreement between the public or private IPE institution (*école d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants*) and a university for the approval of the ECEC centres; their pedagogical committee must be chaired by an academic, and the examination boards for obtaining the final diploma must include a trainer or an academic and a state-recognised professional in the sector (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2018).

<sup>3</sup> This survey by the site *Les pros de la petite enfance* was conducted with P. Moisset who has published the analysis in several articles (on this site).

<sup>4</sup> Association Nationale des Puériculteurs/puéricultrices Diplômée.e.s et Etudiant.e.s (National Association of qualified paediatric nurses and students)

### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse (*auxiliaire de puériculture*)

These professionals work in hospitals, childcare settings and *PMI* consultations. The 2006 curricular requirements for this qualification have been consolidated by the recent training reform which provided for two months of additional training (currently from 10 to 12 months) (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2021b). Since 2020, there are no more entrance exams to public or private *écoles d'auxiliaires de puériculture* (minimum age: 17 years), the candidates have to provide a presentation file (“dossier”). The diploma obtained is now higher than the *CAP-AEPE*. This upgrading, welcomed by the National Association of Childcare Auxiliaries (*ANAP*), has not reduced the shortage.

### Early Childhood Educational Support Person (*Accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance: AEPE*)

Another kind of auxiliary staff, holders of an early childhood certificate following a 2-year vocational secondary school course in a public or private vocational school (*lycée professionnel*), are also allowed to work in *crèches* and become local civil servants (after having passed the required examination). This *CAP petite enfance (CAP PE)* certificate<sup>5</sup> – created in 1991 for the workers who support teachers in schools (*ATSEM – agent territorial spécialisé des écoles maternelles* in public schools or *ASEM* in private schools and schools in Paris) – was upgraded and replaced in 2019 by the *CAP Accompagnant éducatif petite enfance* certificate. Minimum age is 18 years (on the day of passing the *CAP*). This first step towards another diploma in childcare now permits work in home-based and centre-based care, *écoles maternelles* and leisure-time settings. The new *CAP* aims to revalorise these less recognised (often unnamed) professionals (Ulmann *et al.* 2011).

Table 1

France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – childcare sector

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<p><b>Paediatric Nurse</b> <i>Puériculteur/ puéricultrice</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Health/Social Care Professional</p>	<p>All kinds of <i>crèches</i> <b>Nurseries</b> 0–2 years</p> <p>They can also work in: <i>Relais assistantes maternelles – RAM, renamed Relais petite enfance RPE</i> <b>Open door centres for home-based childcare providers</b> 0–2 years</p> <p>As well as in:</p>	<p>Centre Head</p> <p>Early Childhood Coordinator</p>	<p>Intra utero–16 years</p>	<p>3-year post-secondary qualification National diploma/ Nurse (<i>Diplôme d’État d’infirmière</i>) <b>PLUS</b> 1-year course at private or public <i>école de puériculture</i> National diploma/ Paediatric Nurse (<i>Diplôme d’État de puériculture</i>)</p> <p>ECTS credits: not (yet) applicable EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6</p>

<sup>5</sup> CAP = *certificat d’aptitude professionnelle* (Certificate of professional competence)

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
	<p>medical consultations at <i>Protection maternelle et Infantile – PMI</i></p> <p><b>Mother and child protection centres</b> for babies and older children 0–5 years</p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Hospitals</b> (maternity, paediatric services) 0–16 years</p>			
<p><b>Early Childhood Educator</b> <i>Éducateur/éducatrice de jeunes enfants – EJE</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	<p>All kinds of <i>crèches</i></p> <p><b>Nurseries</b> 0–2 years</p> <p>They also can work in:</p> <p><i>Jardins d’enfants</i></p> <p><b>Kindergartens</b> 2–3 years (very few kindergartens now and they will soon be disbanded)</p> <p><i>Relais assistantes maternelles – RAM, renamed Relais petite enfance RPE</i></p> <p><b>Open door centres for home-based childcare providers</b> and the children in their care 0–2 years</p> <p><i>Classes passerelles</i> in <i>écoles maternelles</i></p> <p><b>Bridge classes</b> in pre-primary settings 2 year-olds</p>	<p>Core practitioner with group responsibility, specialist in early childhood education</p> <p>Centre Head</p> <p>Early Childhood Coordinator</p>	0–6 years	<p>3-year post-secondary qualification at a private or public specialist IPE centre (<i>école d’éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i>), which can be part of a broader School of Social Work</p> <p>National diploma as Early Childhood Educator (<i>Diplôme d’État d’éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i>) A mandatory agreement with a university for the approval of the IPE centre is required.</p> <p>ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6</p>

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 ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
	Other services: <i>PMI</i> Remedial centres 0–16 years Children’s wards in hospitals Mother-child clinics Centres for psy- chosocial care			
<b>Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse</b> <i>Auxiliaire de puéri- culture</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Health/Social Care Professional	All kinds of <i>crèches</i> <b>Nurseries</b> 0–2 years  They can also work in <i>PMI</i> (0–5 years) or maternity and paediatric hospi- tals (0–16 years)	Core practi- tioner in <i>crèches</i>  Co-worker in <i>crèches</i>	0–16 years	Minimum entry age 17 years in a private or public specialist train- ing centre ( <i>école d’aux- iliaires de puéricul- ture</i> ), followed by a 12- month professional training.  National Diploma as Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse ( <i>Diplôme d’État d’auxiliaire de puéricul- ture</i> )  ECTS credits: n/a <sup>6</sup> EQF level: 3 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Early Childhood Educational Support Person</b> <i>Accompagnant éducatif/accompa- gnante éducative petite enfance (AEPE)</i>  As <b>ATSEM/ASEM in pre-primary school</b>	All kinds of <i>crèches</i> <b>Nurseries</b> 0–2 years  They can now also work in <b>Home-based childcare settings</b> 0–2 years  and in <b>Leisure-time setting</b> 2–5 years  <i>Écoles maternelle</i> 2–5 years	Co-worker, in <i>crèches</i>  Co-worker or worker, in home-based childcare set- tings  Co-worker in leisure-time settings  Teacher’s assistant in <i>écoles mater- nelles</i>	0-6 years	2-year vocational sec- ondary school course ( <i>lycée professionnel</i> ) Minimum age: 18 years when passing <i>the CAP</i> ) Award: <i>CAP AEPE</i> -Cer- tificate (early child- hood)  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2011: 3

<sup>6</sup> n/a not applicable

### 2.1.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

The Law *pour une école de la confiance* (for a school of trust) (2019-791), which lowered compulsory instruction age to 3 years in September 2019, has revised the initial professional education for school teachers. The *INSPE (Instituts Nationaux Supérieurs du Professorat – National Higher Institutes of Teaching)* have replaced the *ESPE (Ecoles Supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation – University Colleges of Teaching and Education)*. They are attached to a university (Ministry of Higher Education and Research 2020). There are 32 *INSPE* situated in the 30 school districts (*académies*) in France. They are public – with a few exceptions such as the Catholic University of Lyon or the Catholic Institute of Paris. The district rector organises the recruitment examination (*CRPE – concours de recrutement de professeurs des écoles*) for the area and the students' workplace-based learning.

The new award for becoming an *Agent (territorial) Spécialisé des Écoles Maternelles (ATSEM/ASEM)* is the certificate as an *Accompagnant éducatif/accompagnate éducative petite enfance (CAP AEPE)* which replaced the *CAP PE* in 2019. In municipal schools, a recruitment examination is required for becoming an ATSEM and municipal civil servant. In the private sector, ASEM are recruited by the heads of the schools and paid by the private school provider.

#### Pre-primary Teacher (*professeur/ professeure des écoles*)

The qualification route for Pre-primary and Primary School Teachers (*professeurs/professeures des écoles*), who are national civil servants qualified to work with children (2–12) both in *écoles maternelles* and *écoles élémentaires*, takes place after the completion of a Bachelor's degree in a chosen discipline. Successful candidates are awarded a Master's degree in "Professions of teaching, education and training" (*MEEF – métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation*).

The studies are discipline-oriented. The *professeur* is an "expert in the content taught" (Ministry of Higher Education and Research 2020). At the beginning of the Master's degree course, students choose between a range of different options which can be proposed by the universities associated with the *INSPE*, where they then attend courses in these key areas and receive mentoring support throughout the two years of study and during the preparation of their Master's thesis.

During the first year of the Master's degree course, they not only have to pass the exams of the *MEEF* itself but also a required specific academic recruitment examination (*CRPE – concours de recrutement des professeurs des écoles*). During the second year, if they have passed the exam, they are paid (€1,827 per month gross = €1400 net corresponding to the first step of a teacher remuneration) to work half-time as a teacher while they continue studying. The reform of the *MEEF* (Ministry of National Education, Youth Affairs and Sports 2021b) stated that the *CFPE* will now take place at the end of the second year. From 2022-2023, students will be paid only after their studies (at the second step) (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022b, 2022c). Work-study training will however allow a small remuneration (€ 865 per month gross = €722 net) planned for a certain number of selected students (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022b).

The *INSPE* are also open to parents with three children and high-level athletes without a Bachelor's degree.

#### Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM/ASEM*)

In *écoles maternelles*, Pre-primary Teachers are supported by auxiliary staff specialised in working with pre-primary age children: *Agents (territoriaux) Spécialisés des Écoles Maternelles*

A(T)SEM. They are recruited by the municipalities (and can become municipal civil servants) or by heads of private schools.

Each class for 2 to 3 year-olds (*toute petite section, TPS*) and for 3 to 4 year-olds (*petite section, PS*) generally has its own *ATSEM/ASEM*, who helps the teacher, cleans the room, cares for the children (Garnier 2010) and is in charge of them during out-of-school hours. They mediate between the pre-primary institutions and families (Garnier 2008). According to a report by the General Inspection of National Education (Bouysse, Claus, and Szymankiewicz 2011), there are significant disparities between municipalities, with some providing support for greater educational involvement and others continuing to regard *ATSEM* as the former *dames de service* whose only tasks were cleaning the classroom and helping children in the bathroom. Some cities have one *ATSEM* in each pre-primary class. In some settings, teachers and *ATSEM* can cooperate as complementary members of a team (Vasse 2008).

Since 2016, an *ATSEM* group has been created. The *ATSEM* now have an annual event. In 2017, the report on “The missions of the *ATSEM*” by the General Inspectorate of National Education and the General Inspectorate of Administration (Debrosse et al. 2017) recognised their educational role and pedagogical assistance to teachers. In 2018, the Decree n° 2018-152 stated that they “belong” to the “educational community”, they can assist teachers with children with special educational needs.

Table 2

France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – pre-primary education sector (*écoles maternelles*)

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<p><b>Pre-primary and Primary School Teacher</b> <i>Professeur/professeure des écoles</i></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>	<p><i>Écoles maternelles</i> <b>Pre-primary schools</b> 2–5 years</p> <p><i>Écoles élémentaires</i> <b>Primary schools</b> 6–11 years</p>	<p>Core pedagogue with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre Head</p>	2-11 years	<p>2-year Master’s degree (<i>MEEF</i>) at a higher education institute (<i>INSPE</i>) <b>plus</b> passing the <i>CRPE</i> examination (Entry requirement for <i>INSPE</i> = Bachelor’s degree (3-year <i>licence</i> in any subject)</p> <p>ECTS credits: 120 (total including Bachelor requirement = 300) EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 7</p>
<p><b>Municipal auxiliary staff</b> <i>ATSEM/ASEM – agents (territoriaux) spécialisés des écoles maternelles</i></p>	<p><i>Écoles maternelles</i> <b>Pre-primary schools</b> 2–5 years</p> <p>working alongside the teacher or during lunchtime and out-of-school hours</p>	Co-worker with specialist qualification	2-6 years	<p>2 years at a vocational secondary school (<i>lycées professionnels</i>) to acquire a <i>CAP AEPE</i>/Early Childhood Educational Support Person certificate</p> <p>ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2011: 3</p>

### 2.1.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

50% of staff in leisure-time settings have to be qualified. Staff (*animateurs périscolaires*) employed by the municipalities (or associations) complement the work of the *écoles maternelles* in out-of-school hours: before 8:30 and after 16:30, during the two-hour lunch break, on Wednesday afternoons and during the school holidays. If cities (such as Paris) continue to apply the School Rhythm Reform (Law 2013–595), school finishes at 15:00 on two days per week and is followed by a *temps d'activité périscolaire (TAP)* (a leisure-time period).

In the public sector, the Leisure-time Facilitators can be tenured or contractual workers within the territorial public function (*fonction publique territoriale*) after passing a recruitment examination as *animateur territorial d'animation*.

Leisure-time activities usually take place in the building and grounds of the *écoles maternelles*. The staff in this sector comprise out-of-school care Leisure-time Facilitators (*animateurs/ animatrices périscolaires*), led by a Head of the leisure-time setting (*directeur, directrice de centre de loisirs*). They cooperate with *ATSEM /ASEM* staff during the lunch break and, if there are *TAP*, with cultural associations (professionals for reading with young children, artists, sport educators, etc.). The offer of leisure-time activities is highly variable, depending on the particular city (Divert and Lebon 2017; Lebon and Simonet 2017).

The minimum and most frequent award in this leisure-time sector for both pre-primary and primary school children is the 'Skills for the Leisure-time Facilitator Occupation' certificate (*BAFA – brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions d'animateur*), acquired after one month's training (in three sessions) in a training centre and on site). The requirement for heads is the 'Skills for the function of directors of leisure-time settings' certificate (*BAFD – brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions de directeur de centres de vacances et de loisirs*). The *BAFD* is obtained after 10 days' training, 14 days of practical placement, 6 days of course attendance and again 14 days of placement (Ministry of City, Youth Affairs and Sports 2017). *BAFA* and *BAFD* are non-professional diplomas. They characterise the so-called "voluntary" animation sector (a majority) as opposed to the so-called "professional" animation sector which comes under a series of other diplomas, infrequently issued despite the motivations of some of the "voluntary" Leisure-time Facilitators (Bacou, Dansac, Gontier and Vachée 2014).

The requirements for entering the *BAFA* training have been lowered to 16 years old in July 2022; for the *BAFD*: having the *BAFA* and being 18 years old continue to be required. These diplomas were awarded by adult education centres<sup>7</sup> – most of them are related to *éducation populaire* movements which were the founders, before the State, of the training in the animation jobs –, recognised by the Ministry of City, Youth Affairs and Sports and since 1st January 2021, by the Ministry of National Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, which became in July 2022 Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse*).

Staff may work full time but more frequently part time. Most of them are students. Turnover is therefore significant.

<sup>7</sup> The list is available at: <https://www.bafa-bafd.jeunes.gouv.fr/coms/listeOfn.aspx>



Table 3

## France: ECEC staff in centre-based settings – out-of-school leisure-time sector

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Leisure-time Facilitator</b> <i>Animateur/animateur-trice (BAFA)</i>	<i>Accueil périscolaire</i> <b>Out-of-school care provision</b> 2–11 years  <i>Colonies de vacances</i> <b>Holiday centres</b> 2–17 years	Core practitioner	2–12/17 years	<b>BAFA</b> One month of training in three sessions at a training centre recognised by the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs, including work placements – within a maximum period of 30 months  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 3 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Lead Playworker/ Leisure-Time Facilitator</b> <i>Directeur de centres de loisirs (BAFD)</i>	<i>Accueil périscolaire</i> <b>Out-of-school care provision</b> 2–11 years  <i>Colonies de vacances</i> <b>Holiday centres</b> 2–17 years	Lead member of staff in leisure-time facilities	2–12/17 years	<b>BAFD</b> ( <i>BAFA</i> or equivalent is required) Around 45 days of training (courses and placements) at a training centre recognised by the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs.  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 4

## 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

### 2.2.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

Generally, the Head of a *crèche* is either a *puériculteur/puéricultrice* or an *EJE*. They can take on the position of *directeur/directrice* after three years of experience. Other professionals can also



become a Head, such as a medical doctor. In large *crèches*, heads are generally helped by a Deputy Head. Requirements vary according to the size of the *crèches*. According to the Decree of August 2021-1131, a full-time Head is required for *grandes crèches* and a half-time Head for *petites crèches*. For *micro-crèches*, only a *Référent Technique* (technical adviser) is required, who can be part of the staff in contact with children; however, for managing several *micro-crèches*, a Head is required. Since this Decree, Psychologists, Psychomotor Therapists, Teachers, Social Workers may also work as Deputy Heads.

Heads have hierarchical power over staff, but with variations according to the type of *crèche* format, with more vertical organisation in the municipal *crèches* of large cities, a more horizontal organisation in associative *crèches*, and a more vertical organisation with aims focused on profitability in private *crèches* (Odena 2019). Heads themselves are part of a very hierarchical system.

Their missions include: recruiting staff; supervising their work; developing and implementing the educational and social project; managing the pedagogical, educational, logistical and financial aspects of the *crèche*; welcoming parents and their children; ensuring health and safety.

They may be actively involved themselves, with the staff, the children and the families in projects such as those with artists (Rayna 2016) or in bridging activities with *écoles maternelles*, *centres de loisirs* and other institutions or associations (Péralès et al. 2021; Pourcelot 2021).

### 2.2.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

Pre-primary (and Primary) School Teachers (*professeurs/ professeures des écoles*) are qualified to work with children both in *écoles maternelles* and *écoles élémentaires*. They can become Heads after three years in the job. A short training is planned once their application has been accepted by the departmental authorities. In large schools, Heads are full time, with pedagogical (school projects) and administrative tasks (solving the problems of teacher replacements, canteen registrations, etc.); small schools may have a half-time Head who teaches a class during the other half time (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2014). They have no hierarchical power over the teachers. The Heads see themselves as an in-between – “... neither a real peer, nor a real superior” (Glomeron 2015, 3). However, they are in charge of the *ATSEMs* during school time, even if the *ATSEMs* come under the overall hierarchy of the municipality.

Unlike Heads of institutions for older children (12+), before 2021 they did not have any status benefits, despite the similarity of their missions (Roaux 2019a, 2019b). However, the Law n° 2021-1716 has created a recognised status as Head, giving them material and administrative help. With this law, Heads enjoy greater autonomy in the day-to-day management of their school. In 2022, one or more *référents direction d'école* (School Heads Advisers) will be created in each Directorate of the Departmental Services of National Education to support School Heads. The Decree no. 2022-724 specifies the missions and methods of recruitment of these Advisers who must already have been a Head of school. They will have to respond to Heads' requests for advice and support as well as facilitating exchanges among them. They will be appointed for three years (renewable once).

### 2.2.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

The tasks of Heads of out-of-school care settings in pre-primary and primary schools are both educational (responsible for the educational project, links with families) and administrative (registration of children, partnerships, etc.). They welcome and train students preparing for a *BAFA*. They are in a hierarchical position but try to build projects with the Leisure-time Facilitators.



They take part in some activities in direct contact with the children. They can develop partnerships with the Schoolteachers, although collaboration is often difficult due to their different professional cultures, and with other partners (such as museums).

From 2013, educational complementarity/continuity is the aim of local projects that municipalities had to develop within schools and around. Very few of these *Projets Educatifs De Territoire* (Local Educational Project) (*PEDT*) include childcare settings. In Paris, significant common activities are developing between municipal *crèches*, *écoles maternelles* and leisure-time settings in *écoles maternelles* (Péralès, Chandon-Coq, and Rayna 2021).

## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

In France, there are no designated posts with an agreed remuneration in schools or childcare centres for specific pedagogical projects (such as, for example, being responsible for working with migrant parents across the school/centre). However, there are a number of non-paid posts of responsibility. For example, Centre Heads contribute towards selecting and evaluating the staff, except in schools where they have no hierarchical position. In all sectors, they can supervise students, together with selected staff. Some schools may have a remunerated position as *maître formateur*, a Tutor Teacher. These teachers receive an annual allowance (€1,250 in 2021). Heads (and staff), in all sectors, develop various kinds of projects without extra pay, although in the education sector Heads and Teachers working in schools situated in disadvantaged areas receive an annual allowance of €1.733 and in very disadvantaged areas €4.646.

In the childcare sector particularly, the role of Centre Heads (as well as municipal Early Childhood Coordinators) is pivotal. They can sustain professional development activities which provide a rich informal learning context for the low qualified workers and contribute towards motivating staff to progress in their career in terms of within-sector possibilities (Galtier 2013).

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

### 2.4.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

In France, the Early Childhood Coordinator (*coordinateur/coordinatrice de la petite enfance*), a post created in 1981, cannot be compared to the *pedagogisti* in Italy who work in both the childcare and education sectors, thus contributing to a culture of early childhood (Galardini et al. 2020). French Coordinators work only within the childcare sector – sometimes only with *crèches*; they are mostly former Centre Heads. No specific qualification for the job is required. However, the National Centre for Territorial Public Services (*Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale CNFPT*) offers a training cycle (7 modules over 27 days). Their overall mission is to participate in the development and application of a comprehensive early childhood policy (Baudelot and Rayna 2000; Baudelot et al. 2003).

They can support the implementation of the educational plans of *crèches*, such as those developed with local artists and parents (Rayna 2016) or with Leisure-time Facilitators and Teachers in the frame of municipal educational projects (*PEDT*) (Péralès, Chandon-coq, and Rayna 2021). They help to create and co-ordinate networks of *crèches*, but their primary task is to supervise the staff, to evaluate them together with the Heads, to evaluate the Heads, and to check the proper functioning of the settings. This part of their job devoted to steering and control seems to have increased in recent years; sometimes it can have a limiting effect on staff creativity.

Heads of *crèches* (and other professionals) can have other posts of responsibilities in municipal early childhood departments. The CAFERUIS training (*certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'encadrement et de responsable d'unité d'intervention sociale* – certificate of aptitude for manage-

ment functions and heading a social intervention unit) can be useful. Created in 2004, this certificate for middle managers in social and medico-social organisations is based on 400 hours (four theoretical units: project design and management; technical expertise; team management; administrative and budgetary management), plus work-based training (420 hours), plus a dissertation.

#### 2.4.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

*Professeurs/professeures des écoles* are inspected and evaluated by national education Inspectors (*inspecteurs/inspectrices de l'éducation nationales – IEN*) who are in charge of a *circonscription* (a district including 30-50 schools). A recent report (Cour des comptes 2022) noted inequalities in their distribution. Large *académies* are less favoured: in 2020, in the poorest *département* (Seine-Saint-Denis, in the North of Paris), there was one *IEN* for 307 Teachers while there was one *IEN* for 209 Teachers at the national level. The individual inspections represent 30% of their work (they are also in charge of the organisation of examinations, administration of schools, etc. *IEN* work towards the implementation of national initiatives, within the framework of the plan of their *académies*. They work with both pre-primary and primary schools. As with the teachers, they have lost the specificity of working in *écoles maternelles*; little room is given to pre-primary schools in their training; they are generally more oriented towards the primary school and beyond than to early childhood. A study of 600 *IENs* indicates that their morale is deteriorating (too many meetings, etc.). Two-thirds of them say they have little room for initiative and feel dissatisfied with the listening and support from their superiors (Fotinos and Horenstein 2016). A considerable fragmentation of their tasks is estimated and recommendations have been made to the Ministry of National Education to refocus their job on the pedagogical support of teachers and staff.

Pedagogical Advisers (*conseillers/conseillères pédagogiques*), who work closely with the *IEN*, accompany novice Teachers and organise local pedagogical support, contributing to the initial and continuing professional education of the Teachers. However, the attractiveness of this job is declining.

*Professeurs/professeures des écoles* working in *écoles maternelles* continue to have their own association (*Association Générale des Enseignants d'École Maternelle – AGEEM –* created in 1921) and conferences, despite the integration of the *école maternelle* into the primary school.

#### 2.4.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

Leisure-time Facilitators work under the responsibility of their Head. The staff of the leisure-time settings are supervised by the municipal service in charge of school affairs. As with Early Childhood Coordinators, municipalities can have coordinators for *accueils périscolaires*. There is no legal framework for the supervision. In this sector there is no association nor national network, but some Leisure-time Facilitators attend popular education federations (League of Education, *Franças*, Léo Lagrange, etc.).

### 2.5 Specialist support staff

#### 2.5.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

Medical supervision of children is compulsory in all *crèches* with more than 10 children, but not therapy. Until recently, it was provided by a paediatrician or general practitioner, in cooperation with the *Protection maternelle et Infantile (PMI, Maternal and Child Protection Service)*. According to the recent Decree on childcare (2021-1131), this medical doctor was replaced in 2021 by a *réfèrent santé et accueil inclusif* (Health and Inclusive Care Adviser): ten hours per year for *micro-crèches* and up to 50 hours per year for *crèches* with 60 places. Due to the shortage of

doctors (also severe in the *PMI* centres), this function is now open to Paediatric Nurses or general nurses with three years of professional experience with young children. They will not be recruited to carry out the medical follow-up of the children, but to contribute to the dissemination of a health-related culture among the teams (administration of medicines; adaptations for children suffering from chronic illness or in a situation of disability; identification of abuse or situations presenting a danger to the child, etc.).

Other paramedical staff can intervene, at the request of the *crèches*, on a regular basis: Psychologists, Psychomotor Therapists, more recently Speech Therapists or Occupational Therapists, but not for therapy, even if children with disabilities are present.

All these medical and paramedical professionals work part time or full time, with varying status. Other external professionals (artists, musicians, storytellers, etc.) intervene occasionally to develop certain activities and enrich the work of the staff.

In recent years, compensatory programmes (language, play) targeting certain children and families have developed in some cities, following recommendations on social investment in early childhood (Terra Nova 2017). Highly criticised (Ben Soussan and Rayna 2018) but supported at the national level, these costly programmes which have not shown their effectiveness (Chaisemartin, Daviot, Gurgand, and Kern 2021), are still recommended in poor neighbourhoods – where the number of *crèches* is six times lower than the national average and 68% of children from the richest 20% families have access to childcare compared to only 9% for the poorest (Institut Montaigne 2022).

### 2.5.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

The *médecins* and *infirmiers/infirmières de l'Éducation Nationale* (school doctors and nurses) have a preventive role. Their tasks increased during the pandemic, while at the same time shortages in the entire field of school medicine are significant (including secondary school). A report by the National Academy of Medicine (2017) warned of this deficiency and about the territorial disparities (one doctor for 2,000 to 46,000 pupils). The Cour des Comptes (2020) also made a critical communication to the Finance, General Economy and Budgetary Control Committee of the National Assembly. Currently, the national average is one Nurse for 2,000 pupils (the government's goal in the early 2000s was to have one nurse for 500 pupils).

The *RASED* (*Réseau d'aides spécialisées aux élèves en difficulté*, Network of specialised support for pupils in difficulty), established in France in 1990, brings together *psychologues scolaires* (School Psychologists) and *rééducateurs/rééducatrices de l'Éducation nationale* who are both specialised teachers. They are full members of the teaching staff of the schools where they work. These positions decreased between 2007 and 2012, under the presidency of N. Sarkozy, and again since 2017 despite the creation in 2017 of the body of School Psychologists (recruited into the body of Teachers, with a national diploma in school psychology obtained at university, they remained before 2017 Teachers by statute). The *rééducateurs/rééducatrices* have a one-year training at an *INSPE*.

Since 2019, Speech Therapists can work in schools with children with disabilities, under certain conditions (e.g. with children who are not already in speech therapy outside school).

A short-term training of 60 hours only is organised by the Ministry of National Education for recruiting *accompagnant/accompagnante d'élève en situation de handicap AESH* (Support staff for pupils with disabilities). The *AESH* work part time or full time.

### 2.5.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

There are no specialist support staff allocated to leisure-time settings, including the ones which receive children with disabilities. However, during *TAP* (*temps d'activité périscolaire*) in some cities, cultural or sport associations can continue to provide intervention.

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

### 3.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

#### Qualifications

In 2011, *crèches* employed on average 11 staff: eight to ten of them were civil servants or had a secure job; one to three worked on a part-time basis with a non-permanent contract. Most were low-qualified staff, and turnover was frequent. 90% of the *crèches* employed at least one educator; 87% at least one auxiliary Paediatric Nurse, and 71% employed someone with the *CAP petite enfance* qualification. 50% of Centre Heads were qualified educators (Albérola and Jauneau 2012). More recent data are not available, even in the most recent CNAF or SCFCA reports. Following the Decree 2010-613 on childcare services, during N. Sarkozy presidency, the proportion of required staff with a diploma in the childcare sector decreased to 40% (*CAP PE* not included). This Decree provoked strong protests in the field (Ben Soussan 2011). This measure has been maintained while the increase in the private sector and the shortage of qualified staff have led to an overall drop in qualified staff in the *crèches* and especially in private *micro-crèches*. Deregulation aggravated the situation (Decree 2021-1131; Ministry of Solidarity, Autonomy and disabled persons 2022). One of the recent SCFCA reports (2023a) raises the question of strengthening the regulation of private *micro-crèches* whose profitability has been increased by these recent measures.

#### Gender

In France, 49.8% of the jobs occupied by women are concentrated in only 12 of the total of 87 professional categories (Ministry of Women's Rights 2016). Inequalities between women and men persist at all levels of society; the reduction of gender inequalities progresses very slowly; the negative consequences of the pandemic crisis were stronger for women (Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, Diversity and Equal Opportunities 2022; Roussel 2022).

Projects have been carried out with the aim of changing attitudes towards an increasing balance such as *Les métiers n'ont pas de sexe* ('Jobs have no sex') (State Secretariat for Equality between Women and Men 2017) including projects located in the under-threes childcare sector (Dhorain and Stefan 2014).

Childcare professions – open to men since 1973 for *EJE* and since 1983 for all other professions (Paediatric Nurses, Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses, etc.) – remain female-dominated despite the Law for equality between women and men (2014-873) and various initiatives for gender mix in childcare. In the childcare sector, ten years ago, men represented only 1% of the *auxiliaires de puériculture*, 1.5% of the *puéricultures/puéricultrices* and 2.7% of the *EJEs* (Grenat and Nahon 2011, Albérola and Olm 2011). Men themselves tended to avoid working directly with children and

generally seek jobs with greater responsibilities (Grenat and Marquier 2009). Nowadays the percentages remain very low, they are lower still for personnel in direct contact with children (Forment and Vidalec 2020).

Professional experiences of the rare men in childcare and in *écoles maternelles* shed light on the gender obstacles that run through the attempts at mixing – gender pressure on men being less clear in *école maternelle* than in *crèches* or home-based settings (Devineau, Félieu, Valentin, and Clémence 2020).

## Ethnicity

Statistics regarding the ethnicity of staff are not authorised in France. However, auxiliary staff (*auxiliaires de puériculture, CAP AEPE*) often have a background of migration, which is more common in particular among unqualified staff.

Table 4

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – Childcare sector (0–2 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	<b>2011*</b> : <i>Puéricultrices/puériculteurs</i> : <b>4%</b> <i>Éducatrices/éducateurs</i> – as Heads): <b>16%</b>
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary)	Not applicable
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary) (regional variations)	<b>2011*</b> : <i>Auxiliaires de puériculture</i> : <b>36%</b> <i>Accompagnant éducatif / accompagnante éducative petite enfance</i> : No data
Non-qualified or minimally qualified staff (Variations among municipalities, public and private sectors)	Approx. <b>50%</b>
Specialist support staff who work on site on a regular basis:  <i>Paediatrician</i> : (one half day/week, compulsory) who examines the babies on entry and follows them up. Since 2021 they have been replaced by a Health and Inclusive Care Adviser (Paediatrician or Paediatric Nurse) <i>Psychologist and/or Psychomotor therapist</i> : (one half day/week, non-compulsory, but frequently requested) Since 2019, <i>speech therapist</i> (under certain conditions)	No data
Male practitioners	2011*, 2012**, 2019***: <i>Puériculteurs</i> : <b>1.5%</b> <i>Éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i> : <b>2.7%</b> <i>Auxiliaires de puériculture</i> : <b>1.0%</b> <i>Accompagnants éducatifs</i> : <b>1.0%</b>
Staff with a minority ethnic background	No national statistical data available. Estimated share of staff from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa relatively high***.

Sources: \*Gresy and Georges 2012; \*\*Naves and Visnia-Weill 2014; \*\*\*Forment and Vidalec 2020

### 3.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

There are twice as many Teachers in primary than in pre-primary education. 12% are Heads of public schools (9% of private schools), 36% of public school Heads continue to teach while leading the school, 8% are totally discharged from teaching. 24% of Teachers are assigned to priority education (in the public sector), where 53% complete at least their 4th year in the same school – excluding priority education, they amount to 61% (Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021).

Around 50,000 municipal auxiliary workers (*ATSEM/ASEM*) (1 for 50 children) work in pre-primary and primary education (Debrosse et al. 2017).

#### Qualifications

Teachers in the *écoles maternelles* (Ministry of National Education 2017b) must be fully qualified, apart from those working part time during the second year of their Master's degree programme (*MEEF*). Since 2021, the Master's students have to pass the *CRPE* not at the end of the first year but at the end of the second year – at the same time as their Master's exams and thesis; they are therefore no longer paid during their second year of their Master's studies, as was the case previously.

Contractual teachers may also be recruited: these are persons who have obtained the Master's degree but have not passed the *CRPE*, which is required for tenure, or even persons who have only a Bachelor's degree or with other profiles. They were numerous in the past; after a decrease in numbers, the last ten years have seen a renewed increase in the context of Teacher shortages. 24% of staff in schools are contractual staff (5% of the teachers in public schools, 19% in private schools) according to the *Social report on school education 2020-2021* by the Department of Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance of the Ministry of Education (2021). Despite the precariousness of employment, being a contract teacher seems to be becoming a more a deliberate choice (Bertron et al. 2021), while the institutionalisation of contractual workers suggests a quiet neo-liberalisation of education (Pons 2021). The resignation rate has also increased, especially among new fully-qualified teachers.

Concerning the *ATSEM* – 90% of them are territorial civil servants in the public sector –, there are disparities, and thus inequalities, between rich and poor municipalities which can employ more or less *ATSEM* per school (Garnier 2008, 2016). In previous official texts, the *ATSEM* only "participated" in the educational community but, since the Decree No. 2018-152 of March 1, 2018, they "belong" to the educational community. This Decree also gives them access to territorial Leisure-time Facilitators' jobs.

*Auxiliaires de vie scolaire AVS* (school life assistants), who supported children with disabilities since 2003, becoming in 2014 *accompagnant/accompagnante d'élève en situation de handicap AESH* (support staff for children with disabilities), are lacking. Recruited by the rectorates or departmental services of the Ministry of National Education after 60 hours of training provided by Ministry of Education, they receive around the minimum wage, with little upgrading taking place in 2022, Trouver un Métier 2022a; Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022d).

#### Gender

Up until 1974, men were not permitted to work in *écoles maternelles*. While they remained a minority among teachers, they held the majority of the positions at higher hierarchy levels such as the inspectorate (Ferrier 1997). In the *école maternelle* and *école élémentaire* together, there were 80% women in public schools and 98% in private schools. Gender stereotypes, fear of paedophile accusations and the relatively low status of this job may explain the lack of men (Fillod

2001; Jaboin 2010). Considering the education system as a whole, about 70% of the jobs were held by women while 70% of men occupy the administrative and management posts.

Nowadays the feminisation of the sector is confirmed (Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021). Women represent 84% of the teaching force in public pre-primary and primary schools and 92% in private schools. 10% of Teachers, mainly women, in the public pre-primary and primary sector work part time (mainly to care for a child). Feminisation varies according to the hierarchical category, but the presence of women is increasing in the hierarchy: in 2020, 69% of Heads were women; 71% of *inspecteurs, inspectrices de l'éducation nationales (IEN)*; and 53% as *inspecteurs, inspectrices d'académie (IA)*.

Among the *ATSEM*, the rate of feminisation is 98% (Forment and Vidalec 2020).

### Ethnicity

Statistics regarding the ethnicity of staff are not authorised in France. However, auxiliary staff in both the *écoles maternelles (ATSEM)* and the *écoles élémentaires*, often have a background of migration.

Table 5

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a pre-primary and primary education higher education teaching degree	2014/15 (no more recent data available): with a Master's degree ( <i>Professeurs/professeures des écoles</i> ) <b>97%*</b>
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	<i>ATSEM</i> (paid by municipalities): ranging from one per class to none (big variations between cities)
Unqualified staff	None
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis  Further specialists (psychologists, specialized teachers) are requested if necessary through the <i>RASED</i> . Since 2019 speech therapists can work in schools under certain conditions.	School doctors and school nurses work in several <i>écoles maternelles</i> and <i>écoles élémentaires</i> at the same time (health promotion, early detection of developmental difficulties, promoting inclusive work). They visit settings regularly. But their numbers continue to decrease sharply: 2006: <b>1,400</b> medical doctors 2017:** <b>990</b> medical doctors
Male practitioners	In pre-primary settings <i>and</i> elementary schools Public sector: 16%*** Private sector: 8%***
Staff with minority ethnic background	No national statistics available – staff with a background of migration tend to work in areas with a high minority language population.

Sources: \*Ministry of National Education 2017b. \*\* National Academy of Medicine 2017. \*\*\*Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021.

## 3.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

### Qualifications

The “voluntary” Leisure-time Facilitators in *accueils périscolaires*, who usually work between 15 and 20 hours per “school week” and are in a precarious employment position (Mansuy et al. 2021), have a non-professional diploma (*BAFA*) (one month in a training centre and placements).



Some of them become “professional” Leisure-time Facilitators thanks to a *certificat de qualification professionnelle (CQP) animateur périscolaire* (professional certificate as a qualified Leisure-time Facilitator) which can be acquired by training of three months alternating between the training centre and the professional field. Few *animateurs/animateuses* have this certificate or other professional diplomas, such as the CPJEPS – *certificat professionnel de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport* (professional certificate – youth, popular education and sport). The majority of Heads of *accueils périscolaires* have the *BAFD*, another non-professional diploma obtained after the *BAfA* (around 45 hours of courses and placements).

To become a professional Head, another diploma is required, the *BPJEPS – brevet professionnel de la Jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport* (professional diploma – youth, popular education and sport). This baccalaureate level diploma then opens access to the DE JEPS (*diplôme d'Etat de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport*, national diploma – youth, popular education and sport) or to the DES JEPS (*diplôme d'Etat supérieur de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et du sport spécialité "animation socio-éducative et culturelle"*, higher national diploma – youth, popular education and sport specialty "socio-educational and cultural animation"). This *Baccalauréat* plus the 3-year diploma allows higher positions in other sectors, such as head of social centres.

### Gender

In 1982, over half (56%) of Leisure-time Facilitators were women. The feminisation of the sector has increased sharply since the mid-1990s. Nowadays the animation sector is highly feminised: In 2019, more than two-thirds of *BAFA* graduates (68%) and *BAFD* (72%) were women (Foirien 2020), but still less than in the childcare sector and the pre-primary education sector.

### Ethnicity

Statistics regarding the ethnicity of staff are not authorised in France. However, “the ethno-racial dimension of workers in the animation sector appears to be strong”, especially in the Paris region (Divert and Lebon 2019).

Table 6

France: Structural composition of ECEC workforce – Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

Staff categories	Year/proportion of workforce
Staff with a specialist three-year (or longer) early years higher education degree	None
Staff with a specialist vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	No national statistics available
Unqualified staff	No national statistics available
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists) who work on site on a regular basis	None
Male practitioners	No national statistics available, but it is estimated that more male staff work in the leisure-time sector than in the childcare and pre-primary education sectors. In <b>2019</b> , 32% of <i>BAFA</i> graduates were male and 28% of <i>BAFD</i> *.
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background or a ‘background of migration’	No national statistics available, but it is estimated that more staff with a BME/migration background work in the leisure-time sector than in the childcare and pre-primary education sector

Source: Foirien 2020

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

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

Diversity is the main characteristic of the different job categories in ECEC, both regarding the duration of IPE (ranging from a few weeks to a Master's degree) and the content (from a para-medical to an educational/instruction orientation). IPE takes place in various kinds of centres: vocational training centres (for *puériculteurs/puéricultrices, auxiliaires de puériculture*), centres linked to a university (for *EJEs*), university affiliations (for Teachers) or a vocational secondary school (for *AEPE*). IPE can follow classical qualifying routes but also apprenticeship routes. Validation of acquired experience (*VAE*) may be used (except for *puériculteurs/puéricultrices*). For workers and job seekers, all the diplomas can be also acquired as part of continuing professional development.

#### 4.1.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

The care sector comprises a majority of workers with low-level IPE.

The medical history of this sector remains visible through the presence of *puériculteurs/puéricultrices* (Heads of *crèches*) and of *auxiliaires de puériculture* working in direct contact with the children (since 2018, the level of their diploma has been upgraded). The place and recognition of the other auxiliary staff, the *accompagnants éducatifs /accompagnantes éducatives petite enfance (AEPE)*, has increased but the level of their diploma remains the same (now below the level of *auxiliaires de puéricultures*). Early Childhood Educators (*EJE*), who have always been in the minority as far as contact with children is concerned, are increasingly becoming Heads of *crèches*; nowadays they have a Bachelor's degree.

#### Paediatric Nurse

A *Diplôme d'État d'infirmière* (national diploma /Nurse, 3 years) or *Diplôme d'État de sage-femme* (national diploma /Midwife, 4 years), obtained after the *Baccalauréat*, is needed to enter a vocational training centre for prospective Paediatric Nurses (plus an entrance examination). The professional education consists of 1 year of studies in a public or private specialist training centre (*école, institut de puériculture*). The award is the National diploma in paediatric nursing (*Diplôme d'État de puériculture*). The Master's degree is not yet a requirement, but is one of the demands made by the profession.

Table 7

#### France: Paediatric Nurse

<b>Job title in French:</b> <i>Puéricultrice/puériculteur</i> <b>Profile:</b> Health/Social Care Professional
<b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance requirement ( <i>Baccalauréat</i> ); <i>Diplôme d'État d'infirmière</i> (National diploma – Nurse, 3 years) or <i>Diplôme d'État de sage-femme</i> (National diploma – Midwife, 4 years) <b>plus</b> entrance examination <b>Professional studies:</b> 1 year at a specialised vocational private or public training centre ( <i>école/institut de puériculture</i> ) <b>Award:</b> National diploma – paediatric nursing ( <i>Diplôme d'État de puériculture</i> ) <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6

<b>Job title in French: Puéricultrice/puériculteur</b> <b>Profile: Health/Social Care Professional</b>
<b>Main (ECEC) workplaces:</b> <i>crèches</i> ; registered family day care networks; mother and child protection centres ( <i>PMI – Protection maternelle et infantile</i> , 0–16 years); maternity and paediatric hospitals (0–16 years)

### Early Childhood Educator

The university entrance requirement (*Baccalauréat* or equivalent) plus entrance examination, or qualification as *auxiliaire de puériculture*, *CAP petite enfance* and 3 years of work experience plus entrance examination, are required for being accepted at a vocational Early Childhood Educator training centre. Professional education consists of 3 years of post-secondary studies (equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree) at a private or public vocational training centre (*école, institut, centre de formation d’éducateurs de jeunes enfants*) – which may be part of a more general School of Social Work, nowadays linked with universities. The award is the national diploma – Early Childhood Educator (*Diplôme d’État d’éducateur de jeunes enfants*).

Table 8

#### France: Early Childhood Educator

<b>Job title in French: Éducatrice/Éducateur de jeunes enfants – EJE</b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance requirement ( <i>Baccalauréat</i> ) or equivalent + entrance examination <b>or</b> qualification as <i>auxiliaire de puériculture</i> , <i>CAP petite enfance</i> and 3 years’ work experience <b>plus</b> entrance examination <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years at a specialist training centre ( <i>école/institut/centre de formation d’éducateurs de jeunes enfants</i> ) – which may be private or public and can be part of a more general School of Social Work and linked with a university. <b>Award:</b> National diploma /Early Childhood Educator ( <i>Diplôme d’État d’éducateur de jeunes enfants</i> ) <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6 <b>Main (ECEC) workplaces:</b> <i>crèches</i> ; Kindergartens ( <i>jardins d’enfants</i> , 2–4/6 years); family day care networks ( <i>RAM – relais assistantes maternelles</i> , renamed <i>RPE – relais petite enfance</i> ; mother and child protection centres ( <i>PMI – Protection maternelle et infantile</i> , 0–16 years); bridge classes in pre-primary institutions ( <i>classes passerelles</i> , 2–3 years)

### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse

The requirements for entering a private or public vocational training centre (*école/institut de formation d’auxiliaires de puériculture*) are: minimum age 17 years and completion of the first 4 years of secondary school. Since 2020, in order to increase recruitment, the entrance examination has been cancelled. The professional education consists of 12-month professional training. The award is the National diploma /Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse (*Diplome d’État d’auxiliaire de puériculture*).

Table 9

#### France: Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse

<b>Job title in French: Auxiliaire de puériculture</b> <b>Profile: Health/Social Care Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 17 years following completion of the first 4 years of secondary school <b>Professional studies:</b> 12 months at a private or public specialist training centre ( <i>école de formation d’auxiliaires de puériculture</i> )

<b>Job title in French: <i>Auxiliaire de puériculture</i></b> <b>Profile: Health/Social Care Professional</b>
<b>Award:</b> National diploma /Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse ( <i>Diplôme d'État d'auxiliaire de puériculture</i> ) <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a <b>EQF level:</b> 4 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3 <b>Main (ECEC) workplaces:</b> <i>crèches</i> ; mother and child protection centres ( <i>PMI – Protection maternelle et infantile</i> , 0–15/16 years); maternity and paediatric hospitals (0–15/16 years)

### Early Childhood Educational Support Person

The requirements for initial professional education leading to a certificate in early childhood education (*CAP AEPE accompagnant éducatif petite enfance*) are: having completed the first four years of secondary school and to be at least 16 years old. This professional training consists of two years at a private or public vocational secondary school (*lycée professionnel*) or similar organisations. The *CAP AEPE*, awarded by the Ministry of Education, replaced the *CAP PE* (EQF/ISCED level 3) in 2017. It gives an official name to these workers: Early Childhood Educational Support Person (*accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance*).

Table 10

France: Early Childhood Educational Support Person

<b>Job title in French: <i>Accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance – AEPE</i></b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 16 years, having completed the first 4 years of secondary school <b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years at a vocational secondary school ( <i>lycée professionnel</i> ) or similar organisation <b>Award:</b> Certificate in Early Childhood Education ( <i>CAP AEPE accompagnant éducatif petite enfance</i> ) <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a <b>EQF level:</b> 3 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3 <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> all kinds of <i>crèches</i> (0–2 years) (and <i>écoles maternelles</i> as <i>ATSEM/ASEM</i> )

#### 4.1.2. Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

Since the inclusion of *écoles maternelles* into primary school education, Pre-primary Teachers were renamed *professeurs/professeures des écoles*; they no longer have a specialist qualification for working with children under 6 years of age. The curriculum for the Master's study programme covers both pre-primary and primary education, whereby the orientation is strongly didactic and instructional. In its report on Leisure-time Facilitators, the General Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education (Mansuy et al. 2021) recommended that the initial training of Teachers include more about the issue of out-of-school hours and the relevant staff.

Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM/ASEM*) have a much lower level of qualification, from a vocational secondary school (*CAP-AEPE*).

#### Pre-primary Teachers

The entry requirements for attending an *Institut national supérieur du professorat et de l'éducation (INSPE)* are: a 3-year university degree course award in any subject area (*licence*). These higher education colleges for teachers with university status as “university components attached to one university” (Ministry of Higher Education and Research 2020) are also open to parents with three children and high-level athletes without a Bachelor's degree, evaluated through a specific validation process (*VAPP – Validation des Acquis Professionnels et Personnels*).

The training consists of 2-year course of Masters' studies. The award is a Master's degree (*Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation, MEEF*) (see Table 11).

The training includes a recruitment examination (*Concours de recrutement des professeurs des écoles – CRPE*). Success at the *CRPE* is required to become a national civil servant. Holders of *MEEF + CRPE* then start their traineeship. After one year they are tenured.

Table 11

**France: Pre-primary and Primary School Teacher**

<p><b>Job title in French:</b> <i>Professeur/ professeure des écoles</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 3-year university degree course award in any subject area (<i>licence</i>)  <b>Professional studies:</b> 2-year course of studies, including a recruitment examination (<i>CRPE</i>), at a higher education college for Teachers with university status (<i>INSPE – Institut national supérieur du professorat et de l'éducation</i>)  <b>Award:</b> Master's degree <i>MEEF (Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation)</i>  <b>ECTS credits:</b> 300 (including 180 for the BA level degree as entry requirement)  <b>EQF level:</b> 7  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 7  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Pre-primary education (<i>école maternelle</i>, 2–5 years); elementary school (<i>école élémentaire</i>, 6–11 years)</p>

**Auxiliary worker**

The *CAP AEPE accompagnant éducatif petite enfance* is the required qualification for becoming an auxiliary worker in pre-primary and primary education. Entry requirements are a minimum age of 16 years and completion of the first four years of secondary school. The professional education consists of 2 years at a vocational secondary school in a *lycée professionnel* or similar organisations.

Holders of this certificate in early childhood education can work in *crèches* or gain a qualified *ATSEM* status obtained after having passed an exam of Territorial Public Services (*Fonction Publique Territoriale*), for working in public *écoles maternelles*, 2 to 6 years, during school and out-of-school hours and becoming a territorial civil servant. *CAP AEPE* is not required for parents of three children and high-level athletes.

Table 12

**France: Pre-primary Auxiliary Worker – ATSEM/ASEM**

<p><b>Job title in French:</b> <i>A(T)SEM – agents (territoriaux) spécialisés des écoles maternelles</i></p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 16 years, having completed the first 4 years of secondary school  <b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years at a vocational secondary school in a <i>lycée professionnel</i> (or other organisation)  <b>Award:</b> Certificate in Early Childhood Education (<i>CAP AEPE accompagnant éducatif petite enfance</i>) and qualified <i>ATSEM</i> status  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 3  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Pre-primary education (<i>écoles maternelles</i>, 2–5 years) during school and out-of-school hours.</p>

### 4.1.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

In this sector, only limited preparation is required, *BAFA*, a non-professional diploma for *animateurs/animateurices périscolaires*, called “*animateurs/animateurices volontaires*”. The equivalent for the heads is the *BAFD*. For becoming “professional” Leisure-time Facilitators or Heads, other diplomas are required.

#### Leisure-time Facilitators

The “entry requirement” is a minimum age of 16 years; heads need to be at least 18 years old and the holder of a *BAFD*. For the Leisure-time Facilitators, the training consists of three sessions at a centre recognised by the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs, including work placement (within a maximum period of 30 months); for the Heads, it consists of four sessions: two theoretical sessions and two placements. The awards are: Leisure-time Facilitator Certificate (*BAFA -brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions d’animateur*); and the Leisure-time Leader Certificate (*BAFD – brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions de directeur de centres de vacances et de loisirs*).

Table 13

#### France: Leisure-time Facilitator

Job title in French: <i>Animateur/animateurice</i>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 16 years (Heads: 18 years).</p> <p><b>Studies:</b> 3 sessions (around 30 hours, within a maximum of 30 months), including work placement, at a training centre recognised by the Ministry of City and Youth Affairs; for the Heads: 2 theoretical sessions and 2 work placements (around 45 hours within a maximum of 4 years)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Certificate to practice as a Leisure-time Facilitator (<i>BAFA -brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions d’animateur</i>); Certificate to lead a leisure-time setting (<i>BAFD – brevet d’aptitude aux fonctions de directeur de centres de vacances et de loisirs</i>)</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 3</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> Out-of-school leisure time setting (2–11 years); holiday centres (4–17 years)</p>

Very few Leisure-time Facilitators are “professionals”. Becoming a “professional” Leisure-time Facilitator has now become possible thanks to a *Certificat de Qualification Professionnelle (CQP) animateur périscolaire* (Professional Qualification Certificate Leisure-time Facilitator). The training is carried out by authorised organisations. The requirements are: minimum age 18 years; having completed the first four years of secondary school; experience in leisure-time work desired; having developed a project in leisure-time work.

The professional diploma for heads is the *BPJEPS (Brevet professionnel de la Jeunesse, de l’Éducation Populaire et du Sport, spécialités Loisirs tous publics ou Animation sociale)* (Professional diploma in Youth, Popular Education and Sport, leisure-time facilities for all ages or social animation): one year in a recognised training centre. The requirements are: minimum 18 years, the *BAFA* or other diplomas or 200 hours of experience in leisure-time work; holders of the *CQP* are granted a shorter length training. Very few heads of leisure-time settings have this baccalaureate level diploma.

However *BPJEPS* opens access to the level III DE JEPS (*diplôme d’Etat de la jeunesse, de l’éducation populaire et du sport*)(national diploma of youth, popular education and sport) and to the level II DES JEPS (*diplôme d’Etat supérieur de la jeunesse, de l’éducation populaire et du sport spécialité “animation socio-éducative et Culturelle”,* higher national diploma of youth, popular education and sport specialty "socio-educational and cultural animation").



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

Diverse competences are required for each profession, linked to the specificities of the different occupations and professions in the childcare sector. Giampino's report (2016) recommended maintaining the different job categories but raising the quality of the lowest IPE levels (auxiliary staff), naming the unnamed professionals (holders of *CAP petite enfance*) and working towards a more coherent and holistic system with a common core in the IPE of the diverse professionals. The report by an advisory body attached to the Prime Minister (the Supreme Council of Family, Childhood and Age) about managing quality in early childhood (SCFCA 2019) has continued in this way, recommending a common foundation in training within the childcare sector and continuity with education and leisure-time sectors.

### 4.2.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

#### Paediatric Nurses

The professional diploma was created in 1947. Initial education takes place in a training centre linked to a hospital (39 in France). Qualified Nurses who want to become a Paediatric Nurse must pass an exam for entering these public or private training centres. The content of the training (1,500 hours) lasting one, sometimes two years, has not changed since 1990. It includes theoretical and practical teaching units and five placements in hospitals, childcare centres and other settings which have an agreement with the training centre. The assessments relate to 10 competences (see *Table 14* below). Obtaining this national diploma is based on the successful evaluation of the placement periods and on three written tests (solving a care problem in the field, in the hospital or extra-hospital sector; information action on health education; oral presentation of a professional project).

These professionals continue to demand a revalorisation of their diploma at Master's level. Their national association (*ANDPE*) is waiting for the concrete consequences of O. Veran's (previous Minister of Solidarity and Health) declarations, in 2022, towards a two-year diploma (Master's degree) awarded by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

#### Early Childhood Educators

The reform of *EJE* training (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2018) has maintained the previous length: 1,500 hours theoretical training, plus 2,100 hours of placements, as well as the four *domaines de compétence* (*DC*) (curricular areas), each including two (written, oral) exams, of the *Diplôme d'Etat d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants DEEJE*. New content related to digital technology and a foreign language have been introduced. For each competence domain, the jury is now composed of a trainer or an academic, and a qualified professional. A training booklet is provided to the jury with very precise rubrics for the evaluation of the different areas of competence and each placement (evaluation by supervising trainer, the supervising professional and the student). The part of reflexivity and initiation into research have been slightly reinforced.

*Competence domain 1* (400 hours) – supporting young children and families – includes a situation analysis and a memorandum of practice.

*Competence domain 2* (600 hours) – educational work with young children – includes a presentation by the student and reflective analysis of their training experience, and an analysis of a health and prevention setting (transmitted by the centre).

*Competence domain 3* (250 hours) – multi-professional teamwork and professional communication – includes a presentation of professional communication and a file on teamwork and institutional dynamics.

*Competence domain 4* (250 hours) – interindividual dynamic, partnerships and networks – includes a dossier based on a field experience and knowledge checks.

The four placement periods (the 1st placement: at least eight weeks during the first year) are no longer linked to curricular areas but must achieve the predefined objectives.

### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses

Recent changes concern the training of *auxiliaires de puériculture* (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2021b) who remain “health professionals” under the responsibility of a Nurse or a Paediatric Nurse. They “carry out stimulating activities and care adapted to the evolution of the clinical condition aimed at the well-being, autonomy and development of the child”. Their role is “part of a global approach to the child and takes into account the relational dimension of care as well as communication with the family in the context of parenting support, other professionals, learners and caregivers”. They “participate in the reception and social integration of children with disabilities, suffering from chronic pathologies or at risk of exclusion or abuse”. The training lasts 1,540 hours (over a maximum period of two years), with 770 hours of theoretical and practical teaching in a public or private specialist training centre or as remote learning (limited to 70%), and 700 hours in a professional environment. This national diploma corresponds to *Baccalauréat* level.

The courses are organised in five competence blocks:

1. Support and care of the children in the activities of their daily life and social life
2. Evaluation of the state of health and implementation of appropriate care
3. Information and support of the persons and their context
4. Maintenance of the immediate environment of the person and the materials related to the activities
5. Work in a multi-professional team and processing of information related to care activities, quality/risk management.

They correspond to ten modules (see *Table 14* for the number of hours for each one). Students must be provided with individualised pedagogical support (7 hours), guided personal work and individualised pedagogical monitoring. Courses or practical work (35 hours) always aim to teach “the body language techniques necessary for the acquisition of skills”. “Health simulation tools” continue to be favoured in order “to promote practical and body language learning”.

Work-based training includes four placement periods (hospital, childcare, etc.), one at least with children with physical or mental disabilities and one at least with night work and weekend work experience: The first three placements have a duration of 5 weeks each, the final one: seven weeks. The evaluation of the placements must be taken into account for the validation of each block of competences.

### Early Childhood Educational Support Person (AEPE)

The *Accompagnant éducatif/accompagnante éducative petite enfance* (AEPE) is a childcare professional for children under 6 years old. Since 2017, the *CAP Accompagnant éducatif petite enfance* (CAP AEPE) replaces the *CAP Petite enfance* (Ministry of National Education 2017a). This certificate (maintained at the same level) has been revised in order to strengthen the skills and the employability of AEPE (by public employers in particular) and to facilitate mobility within the 0–6 sector (between: school, *crèches*, leisure-time centres, as well as the home-based care sector). This CAP is acquired following four years of secondary school, as a two-year course at a *lycée professionnel* (or a growing number of other organisations) – some of them propose one year if the student has another CAP or a Baccalauréat.



Care, hygiene, food and safety of the child remain on the training curriculum but stimulating the child, child development and the relationship with the family have been expanded. This content is organised into **three professional units**:

- Supporting the development of young children
- Working in a collective setting
- Working in an individual setting together with the Health and Environment Prevention unit.

There are also **three general education units**, common to all CAPs (1. French, history, geography, moral and civic education; 2. mathematics, physics-chemistry; 3. physical and sports education, environmental health prevention, plus an optional foreign language test).

Linked to the two first professional units, the placements (14 weeks) must be carried out in two types of setting (0–2 years/2–5 years): *crèches*, family childcare, *écoles maternelles*, *accueils périscolaires*. After 1,169 hours of training (609 hours of courses + 560 hours of placements), the exam includes: one written and oral test (professional unit 1), one written test (professional unit 2) and an oral test (professional unit 3 setting). The other tests concern the general education units.

Table 14

**France: Competence specifications and curricular areas in the childcare sector**

Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
<b><i>Puéricultrices/ puériculteurs*</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To know how to care for children and guarantee conditions for their health and safety in a variety of settings</li> <li>– To promote children’s health through preventative approaches</li> <li>– To support parents and care professionals</li> <li>– To lead <i>crèches</i> with a multi-professional staff team</li> </ul> <p>10 abilities: to communicate; to solve a problem; to work in a group; to facilitate; pedagogical ability; to situate oneself professionally and participate in the management and organisation of a service; to solve a nursing care problem with a child or a group of children; to supervise students during their placements); to situate oneself in the service; to enhance one's professional attitudes.</p>	<p>After an entry examination, the content of the training is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The child from intra utero to 15 years (150 h)</li> <li>– Illness and medico-socio-educational prevention (150 h)</li> <li>– Social and familial environment (150 h)</li> <li>– Professional expertise, regulations, management (90 h)</li> <li>– Workplace-based training (hospital, <i>crèches</i>, <i>PMI</i>) (710 h)</li> <li>– Pedagogical reflection about workplace training (100 h)</li> <li>– Individual studies (150 h)</li> </ul> <p>A mixture of coursework, practical placement, analyses of placement experiences</p> <p><b>Total = 1,500 hours (1 year)</b></p>
<b><i>Éducateurs/ éducatrices de jeunes enfants, EJE**</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To care for children in a holistic way</li> <li>– To act as an agent of the child’s socialisation, requiring ethics, knowledge, techniques and articulation within the social and cultural context of the families</li> </ul>	<p>After an entry examination, the training follows a curriculum (2005) (focused on the child), but each training centre interprets it in a different way. Some focus more on psychoanalytic approaches, some on parents and diversity, etc., whereas others also begin to include new issues, such as gender issues.</p> <p>The new national diploma (2018) maintains 1,500 hours theoretical training, including digital</p>

Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To assume a specific position as a specialist of early childhood within social work: to fight risks of exclusion, prevent difficulties, facilitate construction of social links and parental support</li> <li>– To assume an educational and social expertise function for early childhood as a participant in local policies: to formulate families' needs, develop partnerships</li> </ul> <p>These actions require skills to work in a team, to elaborate, implement and evaluate educational and social plans, to develop partnerships with actors in the social and health sectors as well as with schools.</p> <p><i>Year 1:</i> Identity construction in progress (observe, understand, adapt)  <i>Year 2:</i> Appropriation and responsibility (analysis and planning of educational strategies)  <i>Year 3:</i> Affirmation and confirmation (professionalism as a complex construct)</p>	<p>technology and a foreign language, and 2,100 hours practical training, as well as courses structured in 4 main curricular areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting the young children and their families (500 h)</li> <li>– Educational activities with young children (500 h)</li> <li>– Multi-professional teamwork and professional communication (250 h)</li> <li>– Institutional and inter-institutional dynamics and partnerships (250 h)</li> </ul> <p>For evaluation of each area, the jury is composed of a trainer or an academic, and a qualified professional.</p> <p>Placement areas are no longer linked to curricular areas. The 4 placement periods must achieve predefined objectives</p> <p><b>Total = 3,600 hours (3 years)</b></p>
<p><b>Auxiliaires de puériculture***</b></p>	<p>10 competencies corresponding to 10 modules (<i>see next column</i>). Their training is shared with <i>aides soignantes</i> (nursing assistants). Modules 1, 1bis, 2, 3, 4 are specific for the Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses training.</p> <p>3 main missions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To support the child in the activities of his daily and social life</li> <li>– To collaborate in personalised care projects in their field of competence</li> <li>– To contribute to risk prevention and interprofessional clinical inter-professional reasoning</li> </ul>	<p>Since 2020, the entry examination is no longer required.</p> <p>Since 2021, the training includes 2 more months but less placements (no longer 6 but only 4). The modules have been changed, two modules have been added.</p> <p><i>Module 1+1bis:</i> Daily activities with a young child (175 h) Activities of stimulation, leisure, education and support (28 h)</p> <p><i>Module 2:</i> Identification and prevention of risky situations (21 h)</p> <p><i>Module 3:</i> Assessment of the clinical state of a person (77 h)</p> <p><i>Module 4:</i> Implementation of adapted care, evaluation and readjustment (154 h)</p> <p><i>Module 5:</i> Support for the mobility of the person being cared for (35 h)</p> <p><i>Module 6:</i> Relationship and communication with people and their environment (70 h)</p>

Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
		<p><i>Module 7:</i> Supporting people in training and communication with peers (21 h)</p> <p><i>Module 8:</i> Maintenance of premises and equipment and prevention of associated risks (35 h)</p> <p><i>Module 9:</i> Processing of information (35 h)</p> <p><i>Module 10:</i> Multiteam work, quality and risk management (70h)</p> <p><b>plus:</b> 4 placements (5 weeks each, except the final one: 7 weeks) in hospitals (maternity, paediatric), <i>crèches</i>, services with children with special needs and disabilities (1 placement with these children is mandatory and no longer the placement in maternity hospital)</p> <p><i>Courses:</i> 770 h <i>Placements:</i> 770 h <b>Total = 1,540 hours</b> (12 months)</p>
<p><b>Accompagnant éducatif/ accompagnante éducative petite enfance (AEPE)</b> ****</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Being able to ensure young children’s well-being, care, body hygiene, nutrition, safety</li> <li>– Contributing to their education and socialisation</li> <li>– Being responsible for the cleaning of the premises</li> </ul> <p>Developing common and specific competences, related to three contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-primary school</li> <li>– Centre-based childcare</li> <li>– Home-based childcare.</li> </ul>	<p>In 2017, the <i>CAP AEPE</i> replaced the <i>CAP PE</i> (2 years in a <i>lycée professionnel</i> or other organisations, after 4 years of secondary school). Care, hygiene, food and safety of the child as well as stimulating the child, child development and the relationship with the family have been expanded and are organised into 3 <b>professional units</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting the development of young children</li> <li>– Working in a collective setting</li> <li>– Working in an individual setting</li> </ul> <p><b>plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Health and Environment Prevention unit</li> <li>– 3 other units, general education units, are common to all <i>CAPs</i>.</li> </ul> <p>Placements (14 weeks) are mandatory in two types of setting (0–2 years) and (2–5 years)</p> <p><i>Coursework:</i> 609 hours <i>Placements:</i> 560 hours <b>Total= 1,169 hours</b></p>

Sources: \*Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration 2017; \*\* Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2018; \*\*\* Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2021b; \*\*\*\* Ministry of National Education 2017a

#### 4.2.2. Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

##### Pre-primary Teachers

Since 2020, the *MEEF* for teaching in both *écoles maternelles* and primary schools continues to give little room to early childhood education and continues to be focused on didactics and disciplines.

Competences to be acquired during the two years of this Master’s degree diploma are always defined according to the 2013 Law (2013–595). Teachers – “actors in the educational community and the public service of national education” – are “multi-subject teachers, effective in the trans-

mission of fundamental knowledge and the construction of learning” and “reflective practitioners, agents of their own professional development”. They must be able to: master disciplinary knowledge and its didactics; master the French language as part of their teaching; build, implement and initiate effective teaching and learning situations that take into account the diversity of pupils; organise and ensure a mode of operation of the group that promotes learning and socialisation; assess pupil progress and learning. They also sharing common competences with all teachers throughout the education system (see *Table 15*).

Each *INSPE* and university attached to it compose their own course programme according to the national regulations (minimum of 800 hours, without the placements): at least 55% of the hours for teaching of fundamental knowledge at school, at least 20% for *polyvalence* and general pedagogy and at least 15% for initiation into research. The five areas defined nationally are:

- Disciplinary area
- Didactics (including digital training and teaching with digital technology)
- Job practice context
- Professional situation (with observation placement during year 1 and placement with class responsibility under supervision during year 2)
- Initiation into research (including thesis).

**Plus:** 1 observation placement during year 1 (6 weeks) and 1 placement in accompanied responsibility during year 2 (12 weeks). Placements are supervised both by the teacher from the school and by the teacher educator at *INSPE*. The *MEEF* also includes some common courses for teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary) and educational counsellors (secondary schools): secularism and republican values, professionalism, combatting discrimination, etc. For their research dissertation, students must choose between several options for in-depth study (such as the inclusion of children with disabilities, literature for children, etc.) and are guided at university by a university professor.

During the two years, students have also to prepare for the recruitment examination (*CRPE*) which enables them to become a civil servant.

In each area of the *MEEF*, all units are assessed by continuous evaluation and/or a final exam. The *CRPE* includes written eligibility tests and oral disciplinary tests.

*Year 1:* 500 hours minimum of training (60 ECTS credits), plus a six-week placement

*Year 2:* 300 hours minimum of training (60 ECTS); plus a 12-week placement.

A variety of lecturers teach in *INSPE*: experienced Teachers, Heads, Teacher Educators, Inspectors, University Professors. The overall approach includes course work, placements with guidance and supervision, research, coaching.

### **Municipal auxiliary staff (ATSEM/ASEM)**

The auxiliary staff of *écoles maternelles* must be able to: identify the children’s needs (from 2 years of age upwards), support children’s autonomy; apply rules of safety and hygiene, prepare pedagogical support following the teacher’s instructions; participate in class activities under the guidance of the teachers; ensure that cleaning rules are followed. Since 2017, with the *CAP AEPE*, they must acquire common competences and specific competences according to the context: pre-primary school; centre-based childcare; home-based childcare. The placements (14 weeks) must be carried out in two types of setting (0–2 years and 2–5 years). After 1,169 hours of training (609 hours of courses + 560 hours of placements), the exam includes: 1 written and oral test (professional unit 1), one written test (professional unit 2) and one oral test (professional unit 3 setting). The other tests concern the common general education units.

To become an ATSEM/ASEM, the holder of a CAP AEPE must pass an exam organised by a centre (*départementale de gestion*), which organises the exams for all territorial jobs. These include: one written eligibility test (multiple-choice questions) and an oral eligibility test. An internal exam (oral eligibility test) also exists for persons working in the public sector with at least two years of contact with 2–5 year-old children (limited to 30% of the vacancies). A third modality concerns persons with at least four years of contact with young children or as a leader of an association (one written and one oral eligibility test).

Table 15

**France: Competence specifications and curricular areas in the pre-primary education sector**

Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
<b>Professeurs, professeures des écoles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mastering disciplinary knowledge and its didactics</li> <li>– Mastering the French language as part of his teaching</li> <li>– Building, implementing and animating effective teaching and learning situations that take into account the diversity of pupils</li> <li>– Organising and ensuring a mode of operation of the group that promotes the learning and socialisation of pupils</li> <li>– Assessing pupils’ progress and learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Plus</b> common competence specifications for all teachers throughout the education system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sharing republican values</li> <li>– Acting according to the main principles of the French education system and rules of the school</li> <li>– Knowing each pupil and their learning processes</li> <li>– Taking into account pupils’ diversity</li> <li>– Supporting pupils in their learning</li> <li>– Acting as a responsible educator according to ethical principles</li> <li>– Mastering the French language</li> <li>– Using another language</li> <li>– Using elements of the digital culture</li> <li>– Co-operating within a team</li> <li>– Contributing to the activities of the educational community</li> <li>– Co-operating with pupils’ parents</li> <li>– Co-operating with the school’s partners</li> <li>– Involving oneself in an individual and collective process of professional development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Master MEEF:</b></p> <p>Each <i>INSPE</i> and university compose their own course programme according to the national regulations (55% of the hours for teaching of basic knowledge at school, at least 20% for <i>polyvalence</i> and general pedagogy and at least 15% for initiation into research) and the 5 defined areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Disciplinary area</li> <li>– Didactics (including digital training and teaching with digital technology)</li> <li>– Context of professional practice</li> <li>– Professional situation (with placements)</li> <li>– Initiation into research (with dissertation).</li> </ul> <p>For their research dissertation, students have to choose between a number of options for in-depth study; they are guided at university by a university professor.</p> <p>During the 2 years, students have also to prepare for the recruitment examination (<i>CRPE</i>).</p> <p>A variety of lecturers teach in <i>INSPE</i>: experienced teachers, teacher educators, inspectors, university professors. The overall approach includes course work, placements with guidance and supervision, research, coaching.</p> <p>The MEEF also includes common courses for teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary) and educational counsellors (secondary schools): secularism and Republican values, professionalism, combating discrimination, etc.</p> <p><b>Year 1</b> (around 500 hours) (60 ECTS credits) <b>plus</b> a 6-week placement in a school (observation and guided practices)</p> <p><b>Year 2</b> (around 300 hours) (60 ECTS credits) <b>plus</b> a 12-week placement under supervision</p> <p><b>Total</b> = 800 hours minimum, plus 18 weeks (placements)</p>



Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
<b>ATSEM</b> <b>/ASEM-</b> <i>agent-(terri- torial) – spécialisé des écoles mater- nelles</i>	<p>In <i>écoles maternelles</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identifying children needs (from 2 years of age upwards)</li> <li>– Supporting children’s autonomy</li> <li>– Applying rules of safety and hygiene</li> <li>– Preparing pedagogical support following the teacher’s instructions</li> <li>– Participating in class activities under the guidance of the teacher</li> <li>– Ensuring that cleaning rules are followed.</li> </ul> <p>Developing, with <i>CAP AEPE</i>, common competences and specific competencies according to the context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-primary school</li> <li>– Centre-based childcare</li> <li>– Home-based childcare</li> </ul>	<p><b>CAP AEPE</b></p> <p>(2 years in a <i>lycée professionnel</i> or other organisations, after 4 years of secondary school). Care, hygiene, food and safety of the child as well stimulating the child, child development and relationship with the family have been expanded and are organised into 3 professional units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting the development of young children,</li> <li>– Working in a collective setting</li> <li>– Working in an individual setting)</li> </ul> <p><b>plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Health and Environment Prevention unit</li> <li>– 3 general education units common to all CAPs.</li> </ul> <p>Placements (14 weeks) in two types of setting: 0–2 years and 2–5 years</p> <p><b>plus</b></p> <p>a local recruitment examination for becoming an <i>ATSEM</i></p> <p><i>Coursework</i>: 609 hours <i>Placements</i>: 560 hours <b>Total = 1,169 hours</b></p>

### 4.2.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

#### Leisure-time Facilitators

The *BAFA* for “voluntary” Leisure-time Facilitators consists of a general training session on the basics of leisure-time work (eight days minimum), a practical placement (holiday centre or a *centre de loisirs* experiment (14 days minimum), and an in-depth session (minimum six days) or qualifying session (minimum eight days).

The professional certificate *CQP* is obtained after three months of training shared between a centre and a workplace. The content is based on three components: welcoming children and families during out of school hours; designing animation projects for children; conducting out-of-school activities for children. The evaluation is based on a report of leisure-time activities and an observation of the workplace, followed by an interview with the jury.

#### Heads

To obtain the *BAFD* diploma, the training consists of two theoretical training sessions and two workplace sessions in the following order: general training session (basic concepts of leadership and building a personal training project: nine or ten days); placement as head or deputy head (14 days); improvement session (to develop skills: six days); placement as Head to polish skills: 14 days).

The professional diploma, *BPJEPS* (two specialisations: leisure-time work or sport) consists of around one year in a recognised training centre (around 620 hours in the centre/1,150 hours in workplaces). The content of the training consists of four competence units:

- To supervise any persons in any place and any setting
- To implement a leisure-time project as part of the setting’s programme
- To lead a leisure-time work activity and

– To mobilise the *éducation populaire* approach.

This diploma opens access to higher diplomas, *DE JEPS* and *DES JEPS*.

Table 16

**France: Competence specifications and curricular areas in the pre-primary leisure-time sector**

Job title	Competence specifications	Curricular areas
<p><b>Animateur/animatrice volontaire</b></p> <p><b>Animateur professionnel/animatrice professionnelle</b></p>	<p>For carrying out activities in both <i>écoles maternelles</i> and <i>écoles élémentaires</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensuring physical and moral safety</li> <li>– Participating in the implementation of the pedagogical plan organised by the head of the <i>accueil périscolaire</i></li> <li>– Establishing trusting relationships with the children</li> <li>– Developing welcoming relationships among children, families and staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>BAFA:</b> Training with 3 sessions (during school holidays):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Basic training (8-9 days)</li> <li>– Work-based learning (14 days)</li> <li>– Reflexion session (minimum 6 days)</li> </ul> <p><b>Total: 1 month</b></p> <p><b>CQP:</b> 5 months shared between a centre and a workplace around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Welcoming children and families during out of school hours</li> <li>– Designing animation projects for children</li> <li>– Conducting out-of-school activities for children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Total = approx. 400 hours</b></p>
<p><b>Directeur/directrice de centre de loisirs, volontaire</b></p> <p><b>Directeur/directrice de centre de loisirs, professionnel/professionnelle</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developing the skills needed to lead a centre and to prepare a pedagogical plan</li> <li>– Learning to assume responsibility for a centre (staff motivation, organisational and management tasks).</li> </ul>	<p><b>BAFD:</b> 2 theoretical training sessions and 2 workplace sessions in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– General training session (9 or 10 days)</li> <li>– Placement as head or deputy head (14 days)</li> <li>– Improvement session (6 days)</li> <li>– Placement as head (14 days)</li> </ul> <p><b>Total = 1 month and a half</b></p> <p><b>BPJEPS:</b> Around 1 year in the training centre and workplaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supervising any groups of persons in any place and any setting</li> <li>- Implementing an animation project as part of the setting's programme</li> <li>- Leading a leisure-time activity</li> <li>- Mobilising the <i>éducation populaire</i> approach</li> </ul> <p><i>Coursework:</i> 620 hours (approx.) <i>Placements:</i> 1150 hours (approx.)</p> <p><b>Total = around 1 year of training</b></p>

### 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Numerous unqualified auxiliary staff are employed in the childcare, education and leisure-time sectors, as well as less qualified contractual teachers in schools. An increase in numbers is currently particularly strong in the context of increasing staff shortages.

A few years of acquired experience in the ECEC field allows access to training to acquire certain diplomas without necessarily having the prerequisite levels of study. Work experience also contributes towards a reduction in the length of training. Small changes in the entry modalities to training have been introduced to facilitate access to some diplomas.

In terms of IPE, validation of acquired experience (VAE) can be also used (except for the Paediatric Nurse diploma). Alternative pathways exist in all the sectors, such as apprenticeships. In this case the student must also be registered in an apprentice training centre (*centre de formation d'apprentis – CFA*). Most training courses are not free of charge and costs vary (they can be expensive in the childcare sector). The apprenticeship route is a way of reducing the costs while earning money. Funding and new funding initiatives linked to the shortage are diverse (by employers, regions, *Pôle employ* (job centre), etc.)

All qualified staff progress within their own category. Possibilities of system permeability are limited, both within each sector as well as between sectors, which are “separate universes” (Galtier 2013). In the childcare sector, any procedures aimed to support movement within the sectors depend mostly on the municipality’s training policy and demand high individual motivation and perseverance – private sector staff have even fewer opportunities. However new diplomas for auxiliary staff (Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses, *AEPE*) are opening up slightly more mobility perspectives.

#### 4.3.1 Centre-based childcare sector (2–5 years)

##### Paediatric Nurses

The training costs vary from one training centre to another (up to more than €9,000 per year). Within the childcare sector, Paediatric Nurses with several years of experience as Centre Heads can apply to become municipal coordinators of *crèches* or municipal Early Childhood Coordinators and assume other responsibility in municipality’s early childhood departments. The national certificate of aptitude for management functions and heading a social intervention unit – *CARE-FUIS* (*certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'encadrement et de responsable d'unité d'intervention sociale*, 400 hours) which can be obtained through VAE, can be useful.

##### Early Childhood Educators

The national Early Childhood Educator diploma costs are also varied (up to €5,000 annually). To become an *EJE*, acquired experience in childcare (at least 1 year) can be validated. The apprenticeship pathway is possible for less qualified persons working in the childcare sector (Thollon Behar and Mony 2016).

Within the childcare sector, with several years of experience as Centre Head, *EJEs* can also apply to become municipal coordinators of *crèches* or municipal Early Childhood Coordinators as well as for other responsibilities in municipal early childhood departments. The *CAREFUIS* can be useful.

##### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses

The costs of their national diplomas vary from one training centre to another (up to more than €4,500 annually). Equivalence of modules or blocks of competences are given to holders of certain diplomas or titles (*CAP AEPE*; vocational Baccalaureate Services to people; life assistants for





families; etc.). The diploma can be obtained by validating the acquired experience (18 years old and a minimum of 1 year's experience). For *AEPE* or non-qualified workers, the apprenticeship pathway is possible (for an 18-month period maximum)

The holders of this diploma can then begin an *EJE* training as an apprentice.

### Early Childhood Educational Support Person (*AEPE*)

Non-qualified workers can follow the training towards the *CAP AEPE* in a training centre or at the national centre for distance education (*CNED – centre national d'enseignement à distance*). The costs also vary (up to €2,500 per year). The *CAP* can be obtained through *VAE* (for home-based care providers, *BAFA* holders, etc.). The apprenticeship pathway is possible (from a minimum age of 16 years or being a job seeker).

Holders of the *CAP* are eligible to register for the qualification routes as Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse. They can become *ATSEM/ASEM* in *écoles maternelles* or enter the leisure-work sector.

### 4.3.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

#### Pre-primary Teachers

Fees are around €250 for each year of the *MEEF*. State assistance for studies is given to students under certain social conditions. Parents of three children and high-level athletes can begin the Master's studies without a Bachelor's degree. The Master's degree can be obtained following a pre-professional course during the *licence* (year 2), including paid working time in the school of 8 hours per week. Students selected by rectorates, can be contractual teachers during the *MEEF* studies: with full responsibility, on a part-time basis (one third of the working hours) and €865 monthly earnings.

Holders of *MEEF + CRPE* can become Heads of schools, specialised Teachers, or pass examinations towards becoming *maîtres formateurs*, *conseillers d'éducation* or Inspectors.

#### Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM/ASEM*)

The *ATSEM* recruitment examination is accessible to holders of the *CAP AEPE* (cost of the *CAP AEPE* up to €2500), but also to parents of three children, high-level athletes, persons with two years of public service with children aged 2–5 years, or 4 years of experience in some other sectors. *VAE* allows *ATSEM/ASEM* to follow the Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse or *EJE* training. Since 2018, access to recruitment examinations for Leisure-time Facilitators is also open to *ATSEM* and access to *ATSEM* recruitment examinations is open for Leisure-time Facilitators.

### 4.3.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

*BAFA* costs vary according to the training centres (up to €1,000 annually). Various financial aids (including from *CAFs*, family allowance funds) are possible under certain conditions. To face the increasing shortage of Leisure-time Facilitators (10%) several *BAFA* training sessions were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID crisis. Financial aid (€4 million) of €200 per student was granted in 2022 for acquiring the *BAFA* more quickly (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022e). For the *CQP*, an exceptional funding assistance of €1,600 per Leisure-time Facilitator has been given to 2,500 practising *animateurs* with at least three years of work experience (unqualified or just with the *BAFA*) (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022a).

Holders of *BAFA* can go on within the pre-primary leisure-time sector and beyond (sport, culture, social... sectors) with the professional diploma, *BPJEPS* (animation or sport) which open access to higher diplomas (*DE JEPS* and *DES JEPS*) and responsibilities, such as municipal coordinator of *accueils périscolaires*, head of a social centre, etc.

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

All the initial training programmes are based on both courses and placements, but their proportion varies according to each kind of professional education. This element of IPE is regulated by national guidelines. Placement agreements are mandatory for all courses and study programmes. Their content can vary according to the specific diploma or to the training centre. The modalities of supervision of the students as well as the modalities of collaboration between the training centres and the ECEC settings also vary. There is no additional remuneration for the guidance and supervision of students – except the *maîtres formateurs*. These Tutor Teachers, who both teach in their schools and train *MEEF* students in their classroom as well as at the *INSPE*, receive an annual allowance of €1,250 (in 2021).

### 5.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

#### Paediatric Nurse

The placements of the students represent 710 total hours of the 1-year national training of paediatric nursing (1,500 hours). There are five placements (four weeks each) in hospitals, childcare centres, *PMI* and other settings. The placements are evaluated by the trainer tutoring the student and the head of the placement setting.

100 hours of reflection on the work placement experience are included in the 660 hours dedicated to theoretical and practical courses; 140 hours are spent in the IPE institution and are specifically related to their workplace experiences (Thollon-Behar and Mony 2016).

#### Early Childhood Educator

Placements represent the largest part of the 3-year national training of *EJEs*: 2,100 hours (60 weeks, total training: 3,600 hours). According to the reform in 2018, the four placements must achieve predefined objectives. The 1st placement (at least eight weeks during year 1) with an *EJE* mentor, aims to “understand the missions of a service, an establishment, an institution; identify the functions and activities of the *EJE*; identify the characteristics of a territory and its actors; identify the specificities of the target group; confirm the professional project”. Then, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th placements (total: 52 weeks; at least two-thirds with an *EJE* mentor) aim to implement “the acquisition of skills in connection with the professional reference system and the construction of an identity and professional position”. “By mobilising theoretical knowledge”, they have: to implement “a process of welcoming and supporting the child and their family; to be part of a multi-professional and multi-disciplinary teamwork; to analyse the institutional environment, the inter-institutional and partnership issues of cooperation and inclusion in networks of socio-professional actors; to create the conditions for the reception of young children and their families; to establish a daily personalised relationship with the young child and their family; to implement an educational project with the young child, in conjunction with the family; to create and lead individual or collective activities promoting play, expression, autonomy and socialisation; to develop professional writing within the framework of ethical rules and the rights of persons; to search, analyse and share information; to be part of a reflective approach” (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2018, Annex III).

For each placement, the agreement required between the training centre, the student and the head of the recognised site has to specify the procedures for carrying out the practicum, its objectives, particularly in terms of professional learning, the evaluation procedures, the names



and qualifications of the supervising EJE, the procedures for organising tutoring, and the reciprocal commitments of the signatories. A supervisor from the training centre must monitor the students and the head of the host setting must appoint a local tutor/mentor. At the end of each placement, the local tutor (or/and head) assesses the competences acquired by the student on the criteria of a portfolio (in accordance with a detailed model). This evaluation must be taken into account for the validation of each block of competences of this diploma.

### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse

The new one-year national training of prospective Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses (2021) includes the same number of hours (770 hours: 22 weeks) for both courses and placements. Four placements (five weeks each, except the final one: seven weeks) are made in hospitals (maternity, paediatric), *crèches*, services with children with special needs and disabilities (at least one placement with these children is mandatory, whereas a placement in a maternity hospital is no longer mandatory). During these placements, the experience of night work and week-end work is required. The first three placements aim to explore three missions of Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses: “supporting the children in the activities of their daily and social life; collaborating in personalised care projects in their field of competence; contributing to risk prevention and interprofessional clinical reasoning”. The final placement aims at “the consolidation of the professional project and the strengthening of skills in order to validate all the skills areas”. The head of the host setting is supposed to appoint a tutor/mentor who supervises the student while a supervisory tutor at the training institution ensures the follow-up of the student. A portfolio approach is recommended for following and evaluating the student’s progress. An evaluation sheet template is provided for each placement (to be filled in and given to the student during an interview). These evaluations must be taken into account for the validation of each block of competences.

## 5.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

### Pre-primary Teacher

The *MEEF* includes 18 weeks in schools. During year 1, the 6-week placement consists of observation and progressive accompanied practice with the *maître formateur* or a voluntary host teacher designated by an Inspector and a tutor from the *INSPE*. The workplace activities must be prepared before the placement, then analysed during the training at the *INSPE*. During year 2, a 12-week placement of guided responsibility takes place. When the *CRPE* used to take place at the end of year 1, successful students worked (mid-time = 312 hours) under guided responsibility (and paid full time); the students who failed the *CRPE* continued to be supervised by their tutor. Since 2022, the *CRPE* takes place at the end of year 2 and the placement is now no longer paid. Students will receive only €1,260 gross for the school year, €126 paid each month for 10 months. However, some students selected by the rectorates can become a contractual teacher with full responsibility, on a part-time basis (one third of the working hours) and €865 monthly earnings). This is also possible from year 1, as well as from a professional *licence* level (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022c).

## 5.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

For the Leisure-time Facilitators, *BAFA* placements constitute the second of the three sessions of this training and half of the training hours (14 days minimum), under the responsibility of the head of the *accueil périscolaire* or the municipal hierarchy. Each of the three sessions of the *BAFA* is evaluated by the Director of the session and by the tutor of the placement. These three



written evaluations are then examined by the jury (comprising members of the regional delegation of youth and sport).

Placements for *CQP* (200 hours) also come under the responsibility of the Head of the *accueil périscolaire* or the municipal hierarchy. For the exam, an observation of the workplace is required, followed by an interview with the jury (alongside a report of leisure-time work).

For the heads, the *BAFD* diploma requires two workplace sessions (14 days) following two theoretical training sessions (10 then 6 days): the first placement as Head or Deputy Head, and the second placement as Head, to polish skills. The evaluation procedures are the same as for the *BAFA*.

The *BPJEPS* consists of around one year at a recognised training centre (around 620 hours in the centre/1,150 hours in workplaces).

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

Continuing education is a right for any actively employed or job-seeking person: it is free and remunerated. Access to continuing training can be at the initiative of the employer or at the initiative of the worker. Within the framework of the professional training reform (2015), continuing education is provided through a personal training account (*compte personnel de formation* – CPF). CPF, mainly financed by the employers, can be opened with the first job and consists of up to 24 hours of training during the first five years, then up to 12 hours during the next three years. This personal account is granted to anyone over the age of 16 who works, full or part time, in the public or private sector, as an employee or self-employed, but also who is looking for a job. Since 2019, the supply to the account is no longer calculated in days but in euros: €500 per year (€800 for employees with little or no qualifications). Eligible trainings are ones that are certified; they also include the supervision of validation of acquired experience, as well as trainings on specific content proposed by the certified training providers (public, associative, private). There is no minimum nor maximum duration of continuing education per year. CPD can take place during working hours with the agreement of the employer and with continued remuneration, or outside working hours, with a training grant. In addition, every two years, a professional interview with the employer is devoted to the prospects for professional development of each worker, and every six years an inventory is made of his/her professional career. Access to all diplomas in ECEC is possible not only for students (IPE) but also for workers in the field (or those not currently working) and job seekers (CPF). Beyond access to certified training, the CPF above all allows access to training activities aimed at improving knowledge and skills. CPD can take very varied forms (formal courses; centre-based activities; increasing online training since the COVID-19 crisis). Training offers tend to be marketed in the childcare sector; private providers are beginning to develop in the leisure-time sector, but not yet in the education sector. The most qualified professionals continue to have the most favourable access to CPD.

### 6.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

The qualifying diplomas for *puériculteur/puéricultrice*, *auxiliaire de puériculture*, *EJE* and *AEPE* can also be acquired through CPD courses. These may vary in duration, contents (communication, play, cultural activities, practice analyses, etc.); specific modalities depend on the provider's options.

A recent inquiry showed that when childcare professionals demand more CPD sessions, they wish for more offers focusing on the observation of children, i.e. on a central aspect of their expertise (APEMA 2022).

As part of the E. Macron strategy for preventing and combatting poverty, a national annual training plan for all childcare staff (*plan “Ambition Enfance-Egalité”*) was launched in 2021 (Gouvernement 2021; Feufeu 2021) around seven themes, partly taken from the *Charte nationale de l'accueil du jeune enfant* (National Charta for Childcare): language; food and nature, art and culture, occasional care, prevention of stereotypes, parental care, digital technology. A national component promotes access to training, while a local component, piloted by the departmental Commissioners for the fight against poverty, encourages the emergence of local projects: municipalities, associations, training centres, etc. are eligible to participate in this call for projects to set up specific partnerships (for instance: artistic workshops in the *crèches* of the Centre-Val de Loire; or the training of 130 staff in Tourcoing).

Studies on CPD in the childcare sector are lacking.

## 6.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

### Pre-primary Teachers

The *MEEF* is accessible through *VAE*, *VAPP* and Validation of Higher Education (*VES – Validation des études supérieures*). The *INSPEs* also offer teachers a certificate for specialist support, adapted teaching and the education of pupils with disabilities: the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle aux pratiques de l'école inclusive – CAPA-SH*, including several options for becoming a specialised teacher. Teachers' professional experience is taken into account. The *INSPEs* also offer a certificate for becoming a Tutor Teacher- (*maître formateur*). Moreover, the *INSPEs* offer training modules as part of the local academic training plan (*plan académique de formation – PAF*). This plan modifies the national priorities detailed in the national training plan (*plan national de formation – PNF*) according to local issues and challenges. Teachers either apply to participate in this training and/or are selected.

All teachers participate in CPD (face-to-face or online) provided by Ministry of Education. 18 hours per year are compulsory. Of the 18 hours of educational activities integrated into the teachers' service, nine hours are devoted to hybrid training actions. *M@gistère* is an online or face-to-face continuing education system that offers hybrid, interactive training modules. The contents of the courses are: analyses of teaching sequences, videos, virtual classes, collective preparations of teaching sequences and self-assessment exercises. It brings together MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and online training offered by universities. Another site, *Eduscol*, is a national portal for all teachers (resources and materials “scientifically and pedagogically validated”) and links to expert sites developed with the *Écoles Normales Supérieures (ENS)*. A Ministry of Education portal brings together national and academic resources (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2023). In addition, the *Canopé* network proposes educational resources in an innovative way (example: in Paris, a training course on bridge activities between *écoles maternelles* and *crèches* was carried out in 2021-2022 and continued in 2022-2023).

A national evaluation by the General Inspectorates indicates an inappropriate and inefficient „top down“ teachers' CPD (Cristofari, Lepivert, and Lussania 2017). A survey (2014-2018) by questionnaire and interview with more than 600 Paris Teachers, Teacher Educators and Inspectors (Barrère, Broccolichi, Corrège, Joigneaux, and Roditi 2018) focusing on experiences, (dis)satisfactions and expectations regarding the CPD of these professionals, indicates a dominant dissatisfaction: complaints by the oldest teachers, frustration of the most recent in the profession (limited access to CPD) and the desire to self-train through other channels made difficult through



lack of time. Among the reasons for dissatisfaction: the significant training needs were confronted with a limited institutional provision, or the share of training dedicated to new regulations was too low. If the training sessions are often described as useless or even discouraging, those that are appreciated are described as: in phase with the situations and/or the projects of the participants; provided by trainers mastering the theoretical and practical dimensions of the issues and taking into account the experiences and questions of the participants.

A recent synthesis of several reports and an international conference (Mons, Chesné, and Piedfer-Quêne 2021) confirms and questions the quality and access of the CPD organised by the Ministry of Education: it is still more accessible to Inspectors (97%) than to Teachers (71%) and Heads (76%); while participation in CPD has increased, its effects on teaching practices are limited (38% of school teachers consider that it has not had a positive impact). The CPD model is questioned as to the lack of consideration of the expression of needs (for 52% of teachers in 2018-2019, training content was imposed. These often short training courses are ex cathedra courses (only 7% of teachers had follow-up activities in the field) and there is too little focus on learning communities (only 38% of school teachers took part in training set up specifically for their school); the follow-up of CPD is not valued in the careers of staff (only 47% of Teachers had discussed training issues during their meeting with an Inspector); evaluations of the quality of CPD are not systematic (no means of evaluating their satisfaction for 45% of Primary School Teachers). So, whereas half of the Teachers attend courses outside the mainstream CPD provision “an ecosystem of informal continuing education has been formed in parallel”, and the lucrative private sector is still absent. The five axes of the 15 recommendations of this synthesis are:

- Encouraging staff to train, with training time credit and support for stimulating learning communities
- Strengthening the institutional ecosystem of the Ministry's training
- Including research in National Education training, with the possibility of obtaining a diploma
- Support, through mentoring and tutoring, new teachers, contractual teachers and professionals who are retraining in teaching without initial professional education in the field
- Valuing the investment of staff in their continuing education (discussion time in staff evaluations; compensation for taking on collective missions within schools on skills acquired during training, etc.).

### Auxiliary staff (ATSEM/ASEM)

For the *CAP AEPE*, CPD is possible in centres like *GRETA (GRoupements d'ETAbissements)*, depending on the Ministry of Education for providing adult training, or other authorised public or private organisations.

## 6.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

Through CPD, it is possible to prepare for the *BAFA* exams needed to become a “voluntary” or a professional Leisure-time Facilitator as well as for the *BAFD* for the heads. The growth of private offers in the CPD of professional Leisure-time Facilitators, alongside of the traditional public provision and associations’ offers, is challenging the relationship between the process of professionalisation and the structuring of the professional Leisure-time Facilitators’ training market – a comparison of three local markets indicates specific characteristics, differentiated and chaotic modes of regulation (Bock 2022).

In front of the insufficiency or difficult access to existing diplomas, the Education Inspectorate (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2020) recommended strengthening CPD (with

more clarification of the methods of organising CPD and the responsibilities of the various actors), systematising coordination times and the designation of territorial Advisers. The *Comité de filère* (Steering Committee), created in 2022, will be commissioned to find the ways and means of a commitment by all private and public employers, to leave no Leisure-time Facilitator without training after three years of professional practice.

Among the 25 measures of the recent plan of the Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs (2022a), a one-off grant (4 million euros) was pledged in 2022 to train for the professional qualification certificate (*CQP*) for 2,500 Leisure-time Facilitators in practice for at least three years without qualification or with only the *BAFA* (support granted to the professional branch, up to €1,600 per Leisure-time Facilitator, to cover the teaching costs of training). This plan also facilitates the access of *ATSEM* to leisure-time professions and, more generally, provides better information on employment and training opportunities.

No studies are available on CPD in this sector.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

Working conditions are problematic in all the three sectors: low salaries, few career prospects, hardship at work, particularly among auxiliary staff. Remunerations are lower in the childcare and leisure-time sector than in the education sector. Single parenthood and the more generally worrying situation of poverty mean that some auxiliary staff are living in precarious conditions (Zaouche Gaudron 2021).

### 7.1 Remuneration

#### 7.1.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

All workers in the public sector may have the status of a contractual worker or a local civil servant or, in the private sector, of an employee. In the public sector of childcare, the salaries of territorial civil servants depend on a national index grid, defined according to their rank and evolving every two to four years by changing levels.

The salaries vary according to the position in the hierarchy. The heads have the highest remuneration. Among the auxiliary staff, Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses have a better salary than the *AEPE*. Salaries tend to be higher in the private than in the public sector.

#### Paediatric Nurses

Their salary is lower if they work in *crèches* than in hospitals. However Paediatric Nurses find the work conditions better in *crèches* (they are Heads) than in hospitals, according to an enquiry of their national association which led to a *White Book* with 92 recommendations (ANPDE 2018). The average remuneration in the private sector seems to be a little bit better than in the public sector.

In the public sector, the gross monthly remuneration, according to their grade (each one includes several steps) was, in 2022 (Trouver un Métier 2022b):

- Grade 1: from €1,977 gross per month to €2,638 gross
- Grade 2: from €2,225 gross per month to €2,938 gross
- Grade 3: from €2,043 gross per month to €3,083 gross.

Paediatric Nurses receive bonuses and allowances, common to all civil servants, according to their status and personal situation. They can work up to 220 hours of overtime per year. In Paris, where flats are very expensive, some *crèches* have a free apartment for the Head (the other Heads receive a little compensation).

In the private sector, salaries are not fixed by a national index scale, they depend on the national collective agreement for their sector of activity. The average remuneration of beginning Paediatric Nurses is €2,200 gross per month (€1,716 net) and for experienced Paediatric Nurses, it is €2,800 gross per month (€2,184 net). They may receive conventional bonuses and allowances.

### Early Childhood Educator

The remuneration of a municipal civil servant *EJE* depends also on their grade. In 2022 (Trouver un Métier 2022c), these were:

- Grade 1: from €1,710 to €2,516 gross per month
- Grade 2: from €1,879 to €2,765 gross per month
- Grade 3: from €1,907 to €2,849 gross per month.

In addition to this basic salary, there are also bonuses and allowances.

The *EJE* employed in the private sector earns on average €200 net more than the *EJE* who works in the public sector. As Heads of *crèches*, they receive a little additional compensation.

The salary is a little lower than that of a Paediatric Nurse. Example: in the region Ile-de-France, a Head with *EJE* training receives an average of €2,108 net per month, and Heads with a Paediatric Nurse training €2,357. Since some years, some *EJE* can access, as Heads, one of the Parisian *crèches* with a free apartment; the others receive a little additional compensation (like the Paediatric Nurses).

### Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses

In 2022, the salaries (also a little bit better in hospitals) for those working in municipal *crèches* were (Trouver un Métier 2022d):

- Grade 1: Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse: €1,556 gross per month to €1,968
- Grade 2: Principal Auxiliary Paediatric Nurse: €1,640 gross per month to €2,216.

In addition to this remuneration, they receive a certain number of bonuses and allowances.

In the private sector, the salary varies according to the type of setting, region, etc. but it is generally lower.

### AEPE

The salary of the holder of a *CAP AEPE*, who are all contractual workers, is around the level of the minimum wage. This remuneration, around €1,800 gross per month, does not increase very much. It is a little lower in the private sector.

## 7.1.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

### Pre-primary Teachers

Lower than teachers' average remuneration in Europe, the salaries of *professeurs /professeures des écoles* are the same for working both in *écoles maternelles* and in *écoles élémentaires* (but lower than that of Teachers in secondary education). In 2019, in the public sector, the estimated average net salary was €2,550 per month (gross salary: €3,160). Bonuses constitute 9% of the gross salary (less than in secondary education). Remuneration is 51% higher at the end of their



career (less than in secondary education). Salaries are lower in private schools, where the average net salary is €2,160 per month (gross: €2,760) in private schools under contract with the State (Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021).

In 2022, according to their grades, public school Teachers earned (Emploi-Collectivites.fr 2022):

- Grade 1: €1,890 gross per month to €3,264
- Grade 2: €3,370 gross per month to €4,025
- Grade 3: €3,370 gross per month to €4,256.

Heads receive an additional sum of €108 per month, plus €42 (small schools), €59 (4 to 9 classes) or €75 (10 classes and more)

An annual allowance is provided in disadvantaged areas (2021): €1,733; and in very disadvantaged areas: €4,646. A Headteacher's bonus varies not only according to the size of the school but also to its location (disadvantaged area: between €600 and €1,880 per year; very disadvantaged areas: between €750 and €1350 per year).

The annual allowance for Tutor Teachers (*maîtres formateurs*) was €1,250.00, in 2021.

### Auxiliary staff (ATSEM/ASEM)

As municipal civil servants, the salary of ATSEM (ASEM in Parisian schools), defined according to an index grid, evolves according to their seniority (level) and the notation by the municipality (Trouver un Métier 2022e):

- Grade 1: €1,556 gross per month to €1,968
- Grade 2: €1,640 gross per month to €2,216.

In addition, these civil servants also receive bonuses and allowances according to their professional and personal situation.

### 7.1.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years).

The remuneration of Leisure-time Facilitators is generally at the minimum wage level, or just above, and bonuses are rare. The basic full-time gross monthly salary of Leisure-time Facilitators is €1,435. The gross monthly salary for a 20-hour part-time job is €820. Full-time appointments are rare: they generally work 15-20 hours per week. Disparities can be observed depending on the city and on the type of contract (short-term or permanent, part time or full time). Tenured or contractual workers in/with the municipal *écoles maternelles* have a remuneration, fixed by the index grid, which depends on their grade and evolves, like the other workers, every two years on average through changing levels: from €1,607 gross per month to €2,357 gross per month (indications for a full-time job). There are bonuses and allowances which depend on the personal and professional situation (Trouver un Métier 2022f).

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

In France, the legal working time is 35 hours per week, according to the labour code (*code du travail*) (Labour Code 2016a), and a maximum of: 10 hours per day, 48 hours per week (Labour Code 2016b). Overtime (either payable or recoverable and increased in both cases by 25% for the first eight hours and 50% beyond) is not taxable. It is possible in the childcare sector, but not for teachers in the *école maternelle* (rare in the *école élémentaire* but frequent in secondary education). In the leisure-time sector, there is a maximum of 140 hours per year.

Part-time work has increased since the 1970s in France, being progressively used to fight unemployment. Flexible working hours are primarily an issue concerning women employed in poorly protected sectors. Currently, women occupy eight out of ten part-time jobs (generally low-

skilled and low-paid positions). A recent study (Briard 2020) showed that for the 45 predominantly male professions (64% of men), part-time work concerns 3% of men and 16% of women; for the 24 predominantly female professions (70% of women), part-time work concerns 33% of women and 9% of men. Women with a Bacculaureate plus a 2-year diploma are those who make use of part-time work the most. Forced part-time work is over-represented in feminised professions. Moreover, chosen part-time work is more common among women, and among non-managerial staff in predominantly female occupations. It responds to family motivations for women and professional motivations for men (other parallel employment, training, studies). Women resort more to part-time work if they have young children and a spouse (especially a manager). In France, single parenthood has increased in all categories, so also among ECEC staff.

### 7.2.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

In *crèches*, professionals work full time or part time, overtime is possible (13 hours per week) (no precise date available).

### 7.2.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

It is possible to work part time in schools: half-time (50%) or one day less per week (75%) or 80% under certain conditions. The authorisation is given for one year (renewable over three years). Then, the Teacher is automatically admitted to full-time employment (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2020). In 2020–2021, 10%-11% of Teachers (public-private) worked part time; more women (11%) work part time than men (3% in both sectors) as well as more tenured teachers (8.8%) than contractual teachers (0.8%). In public schools, 3% teachers work at 50%, 9% in private schools. Teachers working at 80% account for 7% in both public and private schools (Department of Evaluation, Prospective and Performance 2021).

No overtime is given to Pre-primary Teachers (very few to Primary Teachers, more frequent at the secondary level).

ATSEM/ASEM can work full-time or part-time and also overtime.

### 7.2.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

Full time employment in this field is rare. However, employers can ask Leisure-time Facilitators to work up to 140 hours of overtime per year.

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

### 7.3.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

To become a Head of a *crèche*, 3 years of experience as *EJE* or Paediatric Nurse are required. Being a Deputy Head in a large *crèche* is a way to gradually enter the position. Coordinators of Early Childhood have a role (unspecified) in supporting new Heads, particularly to promote the sustainability of ongoing projects (too often ephemeral). The staff, depending on its cohesion, and/or the *EJE* in the staff, can also provide support.

Concerning the procedures for welcoming new staff, there is no legal requirement for introductory measures. They vary from one *crèche* to another. On their arrival, the *EJE* and the auxiliary staff are accompanied by the Head and the colleagues. Placements carried out during their IPE, with support by a tutor at the training centre and a tutor/mentor in the *crèche*, are fundamental. During their placements, in France or other countries, *EJE* or auxiliary staff may experience innovative practices; they may then transfer them in the *crèches* where they will work if their Head and staff are sufficiently open to innovation.

### 7.3.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

The support of young teachers begins during their placements as students (year 1 and year 2 of *MEEF*) with the guidance of a Tutor Teacher (*maître formateur*, who works both in the classroom and in the *INSPE*) and/or a voluntary host teacher (selected by the Inspector); also involved is the *conseiller pédagogique* who continues to support novice teachers, both as trainees, and before being tenured.

Linked to the recent recognition of the Headteacher's position, in 2022, the *référents direction d'école* (School Headship Advisers) in each Directorate of the Departmental Services of National Education, are required to support new school Heads. According to the Decree no. 2022-724, these Advisers, appointed for three years, are to give them advice and support and facilitate exchanges among heads.

### 7.3.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

The Heads continue to support students who start working. The team of Leisure-time Facilitators also plays a significant role. Specific support for young Leisure-time Facilitators is one of the 25 measures included in the plan *Pour un renouveau de l'animation en accueils collectifs de mineurs* (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022a).

## 7.4 Non-contact time

The working time of all ECEC professionals includes non-contact time (preparation work, documentation, staff meetings, cooperation with parents, networking in the community, etc.), which varies according to the local needs, the decisions taken by Heads, the setting provider, the nature of the projects in progress (with or without the families, partners, etc.), the involvement of each one. Only Teachers have precise service obligations. In all sectors, many professionals complain about lack of time and having to use their personal time.

### 7.4.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

There are no legal regulations for non-contact work, which vary according: to the *crèches*, their plans and dynamics; to the Coordinators' approach towards their work; to the orientations of the municipalities or private providers, and so on. However, in the public sector *crèches*, “pedagogical days” (with closure of the *crèche*) have become widespread (one to three days per year, as in Paris). Local authorities (like the *Département de Seine-Saint-Denis*) may provide an annual pedagogical day for all *crèches* in their area. Non-contact time in the private sector appears to be lower than in the public sector.

The recent Decree (2021-1131) provided for six hours per year for “practice analysis” with “an internal or external competent person”.

### 7.4.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

In addition to longer holidays (school holidays), teachers do not work the legally required 35 hours per week in their workplace. According to the national regulations, they have 24 weekly hours of teaching with the pupils, plus 108 hours per year for: educational activities (36 hours); CPD (18 hours), including 9 hours of distance sessions on digital media; school councils (6 hours); and 48 hours devoted to teamwork, relations with parents, monitoring of pupils with disabilities, etc.

Teachers working in disadvantaged areas benefit from a reduction in their service with the children of 18 half-days per school year for teamwork.

The obligations for the *maîtres formateurs* are: 16 hours per week with the children; eight hours per week for students' training and support in the classroom and at the *INSPE*; plus 36 hours a

year to work on team consultation, relations with parents, developing and monitoring of projects.

There is no regulation for the *ATSEM*, who share their time, during the school hours and out of school hours, between the work with children, cleaning the classrooms, plus participating in meetings if they are included in the school projects.

#### 7.4.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

There is no regulation about non-contact time in this sector. Within the 25 measures of the plan *Pour un renouveau de l'animation en accueils collectifs de mineurs* (Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022a), one proposal recommends extra pay for preparation.

### 7.5 Current staffing issues

The three sectors, unattractive for a long time, are experiencing unprecedented staff shortages. With the COVID-19 crisis, the situation has worsened everywhere. The concern, shared at all levels (parents, professionals, providers, etc.), is reinforced in the childcare sector where many workers are about to retire. The "Giampino report" (2016) formulated a set of recommendations which have inspired certain measures in recent years. New measures were announced in July 2022 by the new government.

#### 7.5.1 Centre-based childcare sector (0–2 years)

To cope with the historical shortage of childcare staff – their aging is stronger than in the two other sectors –, the Childcare Sector Committee (*Comité de Filière Petite Enfance*) – created in 2021 by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and presided by the early childhood Advisers at the association of Mayors of France and members of the college for the defence and promotion of children's rights and which includes union and association representatives of professionals in public and private childcare – made 22 recommendations. They are based on a precise quantification of the shortage in *crèches collectives* in the spring of 2022 conducted by the National Family Allowance Fund (*Caisse Nationale des Allocations Familiales, CNAF*). The results (based on 15,986 *crèches collectives*) showed that the recruitment crisis affects 50% of *crèches*, especially in Paris and the Paris region, where some existing places can no longer be granted due to lack of staff. Even if the shortage is less severe for heads (although one *crèche* in ten is affected) than for the auxiliary staff in contact with children, this crisis severely impacts the conditions of work of the staff and thus quality of care. The shortage of *EJEs* is 17%, 45% of *Paediatric Nurse* posts are not covered, *AEPes* are also lacking, although no precise percentage is available (CNAF 2022). Among its requests, the Childcare Sector Committee has demanded more places in training for all diplomas, and a *Paediatric Nurse* diploma was mentioned which restricts employment to childcare.

In July 2022, the new Minister of Solidarity announced short-term measures for 2022: a ministerial order (immediately published) which formalises previous derogations granted "on an exceptional basis" from 2022-2023. This states that if the search for a qualified employee lasts longer than three weeks, then an unqualified candidate can be recruited, up to a maximum of 15% of the workforce, who must be supported by in-house training, i.e. an "integration course" of 120 hours then by qualifying training within a maximum period of one year (MHP & MSADP 2022b). €500,000 have been pledged in support of the Childcare Sector Committee over 18 months, towards the construction of an Observatory on the quality of life at work in early childhood; a doubling of the local funding (an additional €3 million) of the plan *Ambition Enfance-Egalité* (for "the analysis of practices in all settings", said the Minister) and €2 million for a campaign to promote the early childhood professions. He announced that he will work with the

Minister of Education (on the *CAP AEPE*), with the regions (on the places available in the training of *EJEs* and Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses) and with the Departments about quantifying staff needs. In September, some measures were announced by the Minister but they concern only home-based providers. In May, following the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs's report (Bohic et al. 2023), the Childcare Sector Committee pleaded for a salary increase from 2023. Professionals are waiting for its propositions regarding pay.

### 7.5.2 Pre-primary education sector (2–5 years)

#### Pre-primary Teachers

The average age of Teachers in 2020 was 44 years (Department of Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance 2021). The average age of those admitted to the *CRPE* increased from 27.8 years in 2013 to 29 years in 2020. The absenteeism of registrants for passing the *CRPE* exam was high in 2020, 61% of registrants gave up. Success rates vary according to the academies: 14% (Toulouse) to 81% (Versailles, where the shortage is very high). In 2022, the results of the competitions confirm the staffing shortages for pre-primary and primary schools (particularly in the most vulnerable areas of the Paris region, where a second session was organised to recruit more Teachers in the academies of Versailles and Créteil). The long-standing decline in attractiveness for this profession is combined with an economic recovery which also puts it in competition with other professions. At the beginning of July 2022, the new Minister of Education, Pap Ndiaye, declared the need for a "shock of attractiveness" in order to no longer have recourse to contractual teachers. However, faced with the emergency, the academies have renewed and hired more contractual teachers for the 2022-2023 school year from Bachelor's degree holders. From 2023, remuneration will increase, said the Minister: at least €2000 net at the beginning for every teacher; and a bonus for those with some specific tasks (to be specified with the unions).

#### Auxiliary staff (*ATSEM/ASEM*)

The average age of auxiliary staff can be estimated at around 45 years.

The municipalities lack *ATSEM*, who protested during 2022 for better conditions, supported by parents. Relying on some reports which suggest that professional development opportunities are insufficient, the Government has introduced little changes towards a quicker progression within their career pathway and opened up access routes to this profession (internal exam or internal promotion to diverse municipal employees, including Leisure-time Facilitators) and allowances.

### 7.5.3 Pre-primary leisure-time sector (2–5 years)

The average age of the Leisure-time Facilitators is estimated at 25 years.

The shortage of Leisure-time Facilitators is increasing: in 2020, *Pôle emploi* recorded 94,180 recruitment intentions in this sector. Many municipalities (estimate: 80% in 2021) have great difficulties recruiting because the job offers only low pay, fragmented days and a significant workload. Job precarity is strong, as well as the lack of recognition and the costs of training for the certificate (*BAFA*). With the COVID-19 crisis, many people preferred to reorient themselves towards other sectors of activity. In 2022, the State Secretary for Youth and Engagement, together with around fifty organisations, employers and funders, launched the Plan "*Pour un renouveau de l'animation en accueils collectifs de mineurs*" (For a renewal of animation in centres for minors). Some of the 25 short and long-term measures are oriented towards more continuity in the child's day – Ministry of National Education and Youth Affairs 2022a). A *Comité de Filière Animation* (Animation Sector Committee), including representatives of the actors, the State, municipalities, the unions, etc., has been created. The mission of the Committee is articulated with

that of the Early Childhood Sector Committee. Among the short-term measures: a financial help to municipalities to increase leisure time activities on Wednesday afternoon (€53 million), as well as for the students, not only the age lowered to 16 years for beginning the *BAFA*, but also the “exceptional help” (€4 million) for paying and finishing the *BAFA* quickly (€120 each), and the support for *CQP* for 2,500 Leisure-time Facilitators who have been practising for at least 3 years (€1,600 each). The training, open to *ATSEM*, will include new modules of civic interest (citizen projects, sustainable development, inclusion/handicap...) – an experiment will be launched in 2022 for 200 training courses for deepening civic engagement (€100 each). A plan will propose paid hours for the preparation of the activities to Leisure-time Facilitators working at 80%. The Committee is called on to rethink the *BAFA* (reinforcement of public and free initial training, with associations more focused on continuing training; simplification of existing professional certification procedures by structuring them at infra-baccalaureate, baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate levels, corresponding to the levels of skills expected – coordination, team management and management – and articulated between them thanks to progressiveness via blocks of skills). It must also restructure the professional training; and find ways and means of a commitment by all employers, not to leave any Leisure-time Facilitator without CPD after three years of professional practice.

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

Over the past five years and currently, policy reforms and initiatives were/are aiming at the reduction of the severe shortage in all sectors, as detailed above, by a series of measures (Decrees and Orders) concerning the training (lowering of entry ages or requirements into training); expanding the group of potential candidates; providing financial support to students or salaries; facilitating measures for passing exams) as well as a few qualitative measures towards a more appropriate content of the training to make the job more recognised and more attractive. However, lowering the requirements threatens to reduce the quality of ECEC settings. And financial attractiveness remains a big challenge.

Small advances have been noted to give more coherence within the childcare sector: introducing the same regulations for both centre-based and home-based provision (Decree 2021-1131); moving towards a common basis in the initial training; reforming the training of Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses. These are beginnings.

The renewal of the cultural and artistic policy in early childhood, in 2017 at the end of F. Hollande's presidency, led to an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Solidarity and Health to introduce or strengthen both kinds of training (initial and continuing) in cultural/artistic stimulation for childcare staff and training in early childhood for arts and culture professionals (MCC and MFCWR 2017). Currently the changes are mainly on the side of the training of childcare professionals.

Very small advances have been made to decompartmentalise jobs, although much remains to be done in the French divided system.

Part of the professionalisation issues, particularly in the childcare sector, have been oriented by and included as part of the Plan against poverty launched by E. Macron in 2017 (14.2% of the population in France are affected, the overseas departments in particular. An inter-ministerial delegation was created to develop a National Strategy from 2018 and among the measures concerning early childhood, a training plan (*Ambition Enfance-Egalité*) inspired by the National

Charta (2019) and some recommendations of a report about Piloting quality in early childhood by the Supreme Council of Family, Childhood and Age (SCFCA 2019). Another report, *Les 1000 premiers jours* (Ministry of Solidarity and Health 2020), commissioned by E. Macron, is part of this Strategy and inspired the training plan; the Ministry of Culture is involved. The recent assessment of the four years and 35 measures of the National Strategy carried out by the evaluation committee (France Stratégie 2022) indicates the absence of improvement in inequalities in early childhood, despite the increase in the overall budget initially planned. The target of training 600,000 professionals (plan *Ambition Enfance-Egalité*) was not achieved (only 12%). In addition, the very diverse content and modalities of the funded trainings were questioned. Whereas some of them focus on early artistic and cultural training, others are linked to contested compensatory programmes, which continue to be supported (Institute Montaigne 2022). The evaluation committee addressed its recommendations to the new government, for 2023-2027, the first being to “continue or even amplify the measures whose effectiveness has been proven, and to abandon or reconfigure the measures which have not produced the expected effects”. The new Minister has announced a doubling of the local funding (an additional €3 million) of this training plan.

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

Two recent edited volumes (Ulmann and Garnier 2020; Moisset 2019a) have brought together studies using different methodologies that shed light on the different characteristics of ECEC staff's work, its representations and its experiences. They have probably contributed to reforms of training in the childcare sector and towards sustaining prospects for openness between sectors. Another edited volume (Péralès et al. 2021)-was written during the first lockdown by Parisian staff from the three sectors (childcare, education, leisure-time facilitation). It documents ongoing experiments of bridging activities in the context of the Paris' territorial educational project (*PEDT*), showing the important roles of Early Childhood Coordinators as well as constructions of common repertoires of practices among practitioners in the three sectors. It contributed towards sustaining and extending the bridging process in the field.

The volume on the "invisible but nevertheless overinvested in social issues" work of ECEC staff (and students) (Ulmann and Garnier 2020) focuses on everyday practices, where they are played out, to better understand professionalism as a process emerging from the practices themselves and, beyond the myth of complementarity, socio-professional competition linked to the diversity of professionals and their statutory hierarchy. Among the seven contributions, where the researchers analyse what the professionals experience, think, mobilise or invent, three are reported here:

### What images of work are conveyed in the initial professional education of Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses?

**Source:** Rodriguez and Ulmann 2020 (see *References* for full details)

**Aims:** To explore the links between training of *auxiliaires de puériculture* and their work in *crèches*.

**Procedure:** The data come from a previous ethnographic study conducted in two types of field: childcare centres and training centres (observations and interviews with students and trainers,

who are former *puéricultrices* in hospitals or *crèches*, and some co-analysis with them) (Ulmann, Rodriguez, and Guyon 2015). The authors focus on the “practical work” part of the 17-week training (+ 17 weeks of placement) offered to students over 17 who have passed an entrance examination (recognised as difficult). This practical work gives a large part to simulation: situations which reproduce professional situations by simplifying them (e.g. use of a doll to learn body care skills).

**Selected findings:** The results indicate that the representations of work transmitted by the trainers are based on the adequacy of technical skills, acquired by “capable” students, who have learned to hide their feelings in the relationship with children.

**Implications:** The authors question this rationalisation of practices compared to the flexibility required to act in a variety of contexts and to the opportunity to explore the subjective dimensions inherent in this work of caring for very young children. The co-analysis “opens the way to the co-construction of a reflection on work which, gradually, can lead to the design of pedagogical settings based on professional situations, not only to impose rational knowledge but also to question the obstacles to its implementation”. For the authors, “it is also necessary to think that training can be an instance for learning a profession but also for making it evolve. It would be a question of better knowing the real practice of *auxiliaires de puériculture* in order to identify the corpus of knowledge which is specific to it and which is in no way reducible to the medical knowledge which is provided to them in training”.

## Surveys of care and education practices in work with young children

**Source:** Ulmann 2020 (see *References* for full details)

**Aims:** To analyse the links between organisations of activity in *crèches* and professional competence.

**Procedure:** This ethnographic study is based on participants and external observations in four *crèches*, during several weeks each (two municipal, one associative and one parental *crèche*), interviews with their heads and deputies, and discussions with the team.

**Selected findings:** The author notices a blind spot concerning organisational work, which is almost absent from the various training courses (*auxiliaires de puériculture, EJE...*) and tends to be delegated to the *crèche*, or to the personal choices of the heads. She notes the lesser autonomy of heads of municipal *crèches* compared with the parental *crèches*, the weight of managerial logic on the quality of work and the professional fatigue of heads and teams. She questions the procedure of requiring *crèches* to provide written documentation: Designed and used in very different ways, could it be an ersatz to the visibility of organisational work? She observes the importance of the place of heads in the organisation of the *crèche*, with different “styles of governance” based on their educational understandings and social and political ideologies: the staff of all *crèches* reported that they stay or leave depending on the work initiated by the head.

**Implications:** The author notes that training, referring to medical knowledge (for *auxiliaires de puériculture*), does not always make it possible to cope with the complexity of working with young children. Organisational work would seem to offer more resources to make their job better recognised. For the author, it is not the intrinsic complexity of the work that often produces fatigue or even the bitterness of a lack of recognition, but the lack of time reserved for collective work to reflect and experiment. Also, the training must “contribute to the development of thought in the professional space, as in the training space. Work can thus become a resource for training and the latter an opportunity to set this thought in motion, particularly by opening up new ways of seeing, acting and developing one’s skills in, by and for work.”



## Observing and talking about the quality of work with young children

**Source:** Garnier 2020 (see *References* for full details)

**Aim:** To better understand professionalism as a process emerging from everyday practices.

**Procedure:** The study is based on previous comparative research (with G. Brougère, S. Rayna, and P. Rupin 2016) using a visual methodology. The author focuses on the ways of verbalising and the words used by the different professionals to describe their work with children aged 2–3 years in one centre in the childcare sector (one *crèche* for 0–3 year-olds) and two classes for 2 year-olds in the education sector, in *écoles maternelles* (one bridging class and a classical *toute petite section* class). Participants: were one *EJE* and four *auxiliaires de puériculture* (staff of the 2-3 years old group, *crèche*); two part-time teachers and one *ATSEM* (staff of the *toute petite section* class, *école maternelle*); one teacher, one *EJE* and one *ATSEM* (staff of the the bridge class, *école maternelle*).

**Selected findings:** The study suggests what childcare teams and teachers do (or do not do), and what is (or is not) worth saying, to emphasise their work's importance or criticise it. The confrontation with the video concerning their settings and with the videos of the other settings shows differentiated relationships to the visibility and invisibility of work. For example, the visibility of the work with the teacher of the *toute petite section* consists in explaining what was done to get there (in the video) with the 2 year-olds and what is "behind" what children do (the teacher's "goals"); in the *crèches*, the teams insist on the quality of their professional "presence" at work. The diversity of terms rejected/chosen according to the categories of professionals marks the place of a specific "language culture". Words are more than a simple vocabulary used to label things, words are "action programmes", as argued by the author.

The edited volume compiled by Pierre Moisset (2019a) also explores different facets of the various professions and professionals of childcare: How do they enter the profession? What does childcare consist of? How do they live their occupation? The authors (researchers, trainers and professionals) discuss their important place in society and conditions for a better situation. Here are two examples which, among others, echo the contributions in the volume presented above:

### The unique position of Auxiliary Paediatric Nurses

**Source:** Moisset 2019b (see *References* for full details)

**Aims:** To present the voices of *auxiliaire de puéricultures'* on their work in *crèches*.

**Procedure:** The study is based on a comparative research concerning the various professionals working in *crèches*. Using a questionnaire survey (939 participants, working in mostly public settings in 138 cities, with one half consisting of *puéricultrices* and the other half *EJE* and *auxiliaires de puériculture*) the author asked the professionals to describe the way they experienced their work, on the one hand with the children in the *crèches* and on the other hand with the team, the hierarchy, the parents.

**Selected findings:** Even though all the professionals express their fatigue and difficulties, the study shows that the *auxiliaires de puériculture* have a more disenchanted view of these two aspects of their work and their profession than the heads (*puériculteurs/puéricultrices* or *EJE*) and other qualified staff members. Thus, they more frequently describe their work as routine, boring and unrewarding, while declaring themselves more frequently stressed. Surprisingly, they are more pessimistic than professionals holding a *CAP PE*, for whom working in a *crèche* is a form of promotion and a way of accessing higher qualifications and, therefore, greater recognition. The author speaks of "the basin effect" among *auxiliaires de puériculture*, who come up

against a "glass ceiling", whereas with their experience, they feel competent to claim more responsibilities and latitude of action.

**Implications:** Rather than looking for alternative pathways such as the validation of acquired experience, allowing them to move towards the status of *EJE*, and so on, the author invites the participants to think about the recognition of their experience "without this going through new diplomas but by taking greater (and financially recognised...) responsibility within the *crèches*". He asks: "How to change the management of teams in *crèches* to give more possibilities and freedom of exercise to *auxiliaires de puériculture* and get them out of a position of exhausting and discriminating work routines in the long run".

### Work organisation and working conditions in *crèches*

**Source:** Odena 2019 (see *References* for full details)

**Aims:** To identify the impact of three types of organisation on professionalisation, professional development prospects and/or the possibility of integration and participation in the team.

**Procedure:** The author draws on previous studies of the views of various qualified members of staff, mostly from 12 monographs on private *crèches* (with A.-M. Daune-Richard and F. Petrella 2007; Odena 2012) and 32 interviews in eight *crèches* – three associative, three private and two municipal – (Odena 2009).

**Selected findings:** In cases where the organisation of *crèches* is vertical and centralised (especially in the public or private sector), access to training is more hierarchical (easier for the most qualified personnel: *puériculteurs/puéricultrices*, *EJE*) and more fragmented (specific content for each category of staff), which is a source of frustration. In the private sector, training is more standardised, professionals suffer from not meeting other professionals. The associative sector, with a more horizontal organisation, is distinguished by training through projects, where all members of the team participate. These organisations impact the "making sense" of work organisation.

### Creating bridges across sectors – quite an art!

**Source:** Péralès, Chandon-Coq, and Rayna (eds.) 2021 (see *References* for full details)

**Aims:** This edited volume, based on a shared process of practices analysis by voluntary staff (all categories), sustained by one researcher and two Early Childhood Coordinators (0–2 years) in charge of the municipal *crèches* of two Parisian *arrondissements*, plus one Coordinator of the leisure-time sector, document the emergence and development of experiments of bridging activities launched by these coordinators in the context of the Paris' *PEDT* (*Paris territorial Educational Project*).

**Procedure:** After making a picture of the history of shared activities, mixing children from *crèches*, *accueils périscolaires* and *écoles maternelles* (mainly the 2 and 3 year-olds) and their staff, in each *arrondissement* as well in the previous experience of the Coordinators, a series of multivocal stories constitute the essence of the book, making visible the collaborative procedures between staff, the evolutive and unique process and experience of each pair of settings, the whole dynamics and the supportive role of the Coordinators as well as staff from the culture sector in such often fragile and ephemeral projects, the creativity of the field, the rich experience of children, parents and professionals.

**Selected findings:** The collective writing experience, which required detailed observations, interviews with parents, as well as reflexive teamwork and partnership, and which helped to sustain the local network of ECEC settings and to valorise this field of work and its actors, contributed towards supporting and extending the process during and after the pandemic towards

more continuity and coherence in the life of the children attending ECEC collective settings in Paris simultaneously or successively.

**Implications:** New data continue to be provided concerning a smooth entry to school for 3 year-olds and reciprocal enrichment of professional practices, some of them are published in a professional journal (Benamer 2021; Jalet and Perez 2022; Soutra and Doucours 2022; Benamer and Quémar 2023) as well as new experimentations in other *arrondissements* (Watanabe-Vermorel *et al.* 2022; Beauvois 2023), since the signature, including the Directorate in charge of the *crèches*, of the new *PEDT*.

Based on the same approach of documenting innovative experiences, another publication gives voice to both professionals of childcare and professionals of French museums which begin to open their doors to the under 3 year-olds, showing other ways of professionalisation of both kinds of staff as well as new ways for fighting the increasing cultural inequalities (Rayna 2022).

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

The French ECEC system, which suffers from old problems that the pandemic has aggravated, is facing many challenges. The tensions present among childcare professionals (Odena 2009) and others are indeed redoubled in the context of staff shortages and in the face of the tensions existing at the level of the policies and the paradigmatic choices which underlie them, within the overall developing process of the marketisation of early childhood.

The **first** and immediate challenge concerns reducing the shortage of personnel in all the three sectors, thus linking it to the **second** challenge, that of the quality of ECEC provision, which in turn is associated with the **third** challenge, the permeability between the three sectors.

These linked challenges require taking quantitative and qualitative measures: a substantial increase in remuneration, more appropriate initial and continuing training, an improvement in working conditions which, together, should help to upgrade the status of the work and the professions concerned. In a training market with training that is intermittent (therefore ineffective) and increasingly provided by the private sector (with questionable proposals), other forms of training should be taken into consideration. These would include a long-term approach, based on methods of action research, with recognised and competent trainers or partners from other sectors, such as artists; they would also include the form of study travel (Pirard, Rayna, and Brougère 2020) to broaden perspectives and strengthen the agency of professionals and thus the quality of ECEC, where too many staff are above all operative workers.

Shared training and activities between the three sectors need to be expanded. The task is immense in a country which continues to think of reform on a sectoral basis and not (yet) for the whole 0–6 period. Real progress should, in fact, go through a grouping and therefore a reduction in the number of professions, with a vision crossing and really unifying the three sectors. The new Prime Minister has recognised a childcare system out of breath and deeply unequal, the difficulties of schools and of the municipalities (for the out-of-school leisure-time periods). The Early Childhood Coordinators need to be (better) trained in their tasks. Teachers need to be provided with more knowledge of early childhood and appropriate practices for working with young children, their parents, professionals of the care sectors, with ways of coping with diversity (Garnier 2016), with ways of moving towards more social justice (Joigneaux 2009).

Huge efforts need to be made in bringing about a common and consistent training, especially in relation to welcoming diversities and disabilities, to bridging activities between the three sectors, or to achieving equality between girls and boys<sup>8</sup> which is lacking everywhere. The training of the trainers in each sector needs to be consolidated and include international perspectives. More research needs to be done on ECEC in order to inform policy makers more precisely, particularly about the necessity of CPD, as well as about innovative professionalising experiences or about the very invisible professionals such as those in charge of the individual support of children with disabilities, or about new and increasing collective settings still categorised as home-based provision (*Maisons d'assistances maternelles – MAM*).

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<sup>8</sup> A Minister of Education, under F. Hollande's presidency, was unable to carry through one education plan on equality between girls and boys planned for the *école maternelle*. The rare initiatives in *crèches* (Bienaimé et al. 2014) encounter many difficulties in developing.

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