

# HUNGARY

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

*Country report author*

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## Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## About the author

**Marta Korintus** worked as a childcare expert and director of research at government institutes in Hungary. For more than 40 years she was involved in research and development work related to services for children under the age of 3. Her international work experience includes bi-lateral and cross-national cooperation and research as well as participation in international (EU, OECD) projects and activities.



## 1. ECEC governance in Hungary

The system of ECEC in Hungary is bi-sectoral. ECEC for children younger than 3 years of age (*bölcsőde*) is regulated by the legislation relevant to children's rights, child welfare and child protection, and is therefore part of the child welfare system, whereas ECEC for children between 3 years and compulsory school age (*óvoda*) is part of the education system. *Bölcsőde* is the responsibility of the Minister of Culture and Innovation and *óvoda* is the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior since the new government was set up after the national elections in 2022. Provision and organisation of *bölcsőde* and *óvoda* are delegated to local authorities.

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

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The term *nevelés* has a central role in early childhood work in Hungary. It does not have an exact English equivalent, the closest translation being 'upbringing'. It is a holistic concept, including not just care and education (considered as very closely related, if not inseparable), but also health, behaviour, and social skills – everything needed in life. It has, therefore, much in common with the concept of 'social pedagogy' (as used, for example in Denmark or Germany) or 'education in its broadest sense' (Kaga, Bennett and Moss 2010, 104). When you provide care, you also teach children directly or indirectly and vice-versa. In other words, it relates to the concept of 'pedagogy'.

The **occupational titles** of core pedagogues in ECEC centres for children under the age of 3 are *kisgyermeknevelő* (Infant and Early Childhood Educator) and *szolgáltatásnyújtó* (Childcare Worker, lit. 'Childcare Service Provider'). The term *kisgyermeknevelő* was first introduced in the relevant legislation in 2011 to replace the term *gondozónő* (childcarer) and to acknowledge the work in nurseries and mini nurseries as pedagogical. *Szolgáltatásnyújtó* is the occupational title for practitioners working in family nurseries and workplace nurseries. The occupational title of core pedagogues in ECEC centres for children between the ages of 3 and 6 is *óvodapedagógus* ('Pre-primary Pedagogue').

The jobs and the content of the respective initial professional studies of *kisgyermeknevelő* and *óvodapedagógus* follow the pedagogical tradition, and both have the term 'pedagogue' (*nevelő* and *pedagógus*) in the Hungarian terminology. It is important to note that the translation 'Pre-primary Pedagogue' does not indicate a school-type approach in kindergartens. The job and content of the 100-hour course to qualify as a *szolgáltatásnyújtó* also includes pedagogical aspects, but to a lesser extent and for a shorter duration.

There are several types of qualification which are acceptable when wishing to work as a *kisgyermeknevelő*. Three of these in *Table 1*, the Bachelor's degree (*csecsemő – és kisgyermeknevelő*), the Certificate in Childcare and Early Education<sup>1</sup> (*kisgyermekgondozó,-nevelő*) and the

<sup>1</sup> This form of VET education replaced the first one in this column, which has the same name, in 2020. it is now a school-based form of education.

Certificate as Childcare Worker (*szolgáltatásnyújtó*) can be currently acquired during initial professional education/training. However, five other, older qualifications are also still legally recognised (15/1998 NM *rendelet*, Ministry of Welfare 15/1998).

Auxiliary Co-workers/Assistants (*bölcsődei dajka*) in nurseries, who do the cleaning, bring the food to the children's room, prepare the room for after-lunch nap, etc. can acquire a vocational certificate for support staff in *bölcsőde* as specified in legislation (Ministry of Human Resources 20/2017)<sup>2</sup>. The content of the 100-hour course includes 75 hours theoretical subjects and 25 hours practicum.

Table 1 shows the details and also categorises the core pedagogues (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at end of this chapter).

Table 1

**Hungary: ECEC staff in centre-based settings**

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Childcare sector</b>				
<p><b>Infant and Early Childhood Educator</b> <i>Kisgyermeknevelő</i></p> <p>Previous and still valid title: <b>Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator</b></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (Nursery specialist)</p>	<p><i>Bölcsőde</i> <b>Nursery</b> <b>Mini-Nursery</b></p> <p>0–2 years<sup>3</sup></p>	<p>Core pedagogue with group responsibility</p> <p>Centre head</p>	0–3 years	<p><b>Infant and Early Childhood Educator</b> (optional qualification route since 2009) 3 years at university <i>Award:</i> Bachelor's degree <i>csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő</i> ECTS credits: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2011: 6</p> <p><b>Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator</b> 1 or 2 years post-secondary vocational programme <i>Award:</i> Certificate in Childcare and Early Childhood Education (<i>kisgyermekgondozó,-nevelő</i>)</p>

<sup>2</sup> 20/2017. (IX. 18.) EMMI rendelet (Ministry of Human Resources 20/2017 Ministerial Decree)

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

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
				<p>ECTS credits: n/a<sup>4</sup> EQF: Level 5 ISCED-P 2011: 454<sup>5</sup></p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Childcare Diploma (<i>csecsemő- és kis- gyermeknevelő asszisztens</i>) Since 2017 the occupa- tional title <b>ECEC Assis- tant</b> is used. ECTS credits: 120 EQF: Level 5 ISCED 2011: 5</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>one of the older (up to 2002) upper secondary Childcare Certificates listed in legislation ECTS credits: n/a EQF: Level 3 ISCED 2011: 4 and 3</p>
<b>Nursery auxiliary co-worker</b> <i>Bölcsődei dajka</i>	<i>Bölcsőde</i> <b>Nursery Mini-nursery</b> 0–2 years	Co-worker with no for- mal IPE or specialist qualification		20 hour training course leading to a vocational certificate for support staff
<b>Childcare Worker</b> (lit. ‘Childcare ser- vice Provider’) <i>Szolgáltatásnyújtó</i>	<i>Munkahelyi bölcsőde</i> <b>Workplace nursery</b> 0–2 years  <i>Családi bölcsőde</i> <b>Family nursery</b> 0–2 years	Core peda- gogue with group respon- sibility no IPE requirement.		100-hour training course leading to a vocational certificate for working in family nurseries and workplace nurseries.  <i>Award: Certificate as Childcare Worker (lit. ‘Childcare Service Pro- vider’) (szolgál- tatásnyújtó)</i>
<b>Education sector</b>				
<b>Pre-primary Pedagogue</b>	<i>Óvoda</i> <b>Kindergarten</b>	Core peda- gogue with	3–6 years	Bachelor’s degree 3 years university

<sup>4</sup> n/a = not applicable

<sup>5</sup> For more information on VET in Hungary and on EQF 5 post secondary VET programmes, see CEDEFOP 2019

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
<i>Óvodapedagógus</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	3–5 years	group responsibility  Centre head with group responsibility in small centres		ECTS credits: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2011: 6  Centre Heads: 5 years' work experience as a Pedagogue plus a certificate in centre leadership
<b>Minority Ethnic Pre-Primary Pedagogue</b> <i>Nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (minority ethnic specialist)	<i>Óvoda Kindergarten</i> 3–5 years	Core pedagogue with group responsibility	3–6 years	3 years at university with specialisation in a minority language <i>Award:</i> Bachelor's degree  ECTS credits: 180 EQF: Level 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Auxiliary Co-worker</b> <i>Dajka</i>	<i>Óvoda Kindergarten</i> 3–5 years	Co-worker with no formal IPE or specialist qualification		No requirements  Since 1990 available: 400 hour training course leading to a vocational certificate for support staff

#### Box 1

**SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals** (adapted from Oberhuermer, 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

Centre Heads in **settings for children under the age of 3** may have one of the following qualifications:

- Master's degree with a specialisation in early childhood pedagogy

- Bachelor’s degree as Infant and Early Childhood Educator
- One of the (upper secondary vocational) qualifications listed in legislation<sup>6</sup>
- Higher education degree in other study areas listed in legislation (e.g. health visiting, health management, pedagogy, social pedagogy) in addition to one of the qualifications for regular contact staff as specified in the 15/1998 NM *rendelet* (Ministerial regulation, Ministry of Welfare 1998).

Employers usually issue calls for the job requiring one of the higher level qualifications.

The requirements for Centre Heads in **settings for children between the ages of 3 and 6** are:

- Bachelor’s degree as *óvodapedagógus* (pre-primary education professional)
- Certificate specialising in centre leadership
- Five years of work experience as a Pre-primary Pedagogue (Hungarian Parliament 2011).

Centre Leaders for large centres in both sectors usually have administrative tasks and responsibility for the pedagogical work. In smaller centres – defined either by the low number of children or by its position in a large hierarchy – the director works directly with children on a regular basis and also fulfils administrative tasks. The daily work hours are divided between these responsibilities.

### 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

Centre-based posts of responsibility can be for supervising students coming for their practicum and placed with regular staff. Either the Centre Head or one of the core pedagogues (*kisgyermeknevelő* or *óvodapedagógus* respectively) is assigned this responsibility. The Hungarian Government 230/2012 Regulation states the requirement to draw up a contract for the cooperation between IPE institutions and ECEC centres for students’ field-based studies, including the rights and obligations of higher education institutions and of the hosting ECEC centre.

### 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Coordinating and supervisory staff are employed in designated large nurseries for monitoring, coordinating and advising staff in other nurseries in a given area to ensure a standard level of quality. These employees usually do not work in children’s groups but have the same qualification as the core workers.

In the case of family nurseries, legislation (Ministry of Welfare 1998) requires setting up a network with a coordinator for every three or more services having the same owner/provider. The coordinator is responsible for providing support and coordinating work within the network.

There are no coordinators or supervisory staff in kindergartens.

### 2.5 Specialist support staff

Special support staff to work with individual children is not employed by the ECEC sites, but usually come to work with the children at pre-arranged given times. Such staff can be Special Needs Educators, Paediatricians, Nurses working with paediatricians or Speech Therapists (in kindergarten).

<sup>6</sup> *Bölcsődei szakgondozó (OKJ), csecsemő- és kisgyermekgondozó (OKJ), csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő-gondozó (OKJ), csecsemő- és gyermeknevelő-gondozó (OKJ), kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő (OKJ), csecsemő- és kis-gyermeknevelő asszisztens (FOSZK), csecsemő- és gyermekgondozó (OKJ)*



In addition, integrated kindergartens (centres located at several sites) with 500 places have to employ a Kindergarten Psychologist and an Assistant (not a Pedagogue) for every three children's groups.

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

Staffing qualifications are different for core pedagogues in ECEC centres for children under the age of 3 and in those for children between the ages of 3 and 6.

Since 2018, the Statistical Office no longer compiles such detailed data as in previous years concerning staff in nurseries and kindergartens. In 2022, there were altogether 10,251 core pedagogues employed in the different types of nurseries (0–2), 100% of them qualified. There were approximately 84% working as *kisgyermeknevelő*, and 16% working as *szolgáltatásnyújtó* (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2023a). In 2020, about 25% of all *kisgyermeknevelő* worked with a BA qualification as Infant and Early Childhood Educator or another legally accepted higher education degree.

Tertiary level education has been available for **Pre-primary Pedagogues** since 1958/59, and this became obligatory in 1993. Since 2008, this is a BA level course. Only the BA level qualification (and its earlier tertiary equivalent) is accepted for *óvodapedagógus* as the minimum qualification, i.e. 100% of Pre-primary Pedagogues in kindergarten settings have a specialist higher education degree.

In the 2021/2022 academic year, there were 30,750 Pre-primary Pedagogues *óvoda* (3–5) (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2023b).

**Auxiliary Co-workers/Assistants** (*dajka*) work alongside Pre-primary Pedagogues. They basically perform care work and cleaning. No special qualification is required for this job. In 1990, however, a special 400-hour training course was set up for these workers who now can acquire a vocational certificate as support staff in *óvoda* (3–5).

Infant and Early Childhood Educators in *bölcsőde* (0–2) are exclusively female, and there are only a handful of male Pre-primary Pedagogues in *óvoda* (3–5).

There are no systematically compiled data on the ethnic background of workers in *bölcsőde* or *óvoda*.

Table 2 shows the composition of the ECEC workforce in Hungary without the data on the main support staff *dajka*. There are 2,305 *bölcsődei dajka* working in nurseries and mini nurseries but there is no available data about the ratio of them having a vocational certificate for support staff. There is only general data, not separated according to staff categories, on 'educational support personnel' and 'other support personnel' (e.g. *dajka*) in *óvoda*.

Table 2

**Hungary: Structural composition of ECEC workforce, 2021/22**

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce in %
<b><i>Bölcsőde</i> (0–2 settings)</b>	
Staff with legally required qualifications in nursery, mini nursery, workplace nursery and family nursery	<b>100</b>
– <i>kisgyermeknevelő</i>	84
– <i>szolgáltatásnyújtó</i>	16

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce in %
Staff with higher education degree (BA or other legally accepted qualifications)	25
Staff with no formal IPS	No data available
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff	0
Staff with minority ethnic background	No systematically compiled national data
<b>Óvoda (3–5 settings)</b>	
Staff with specialist higher education degree	100
Staff with non-specialist qualification	0
Staff with no formal IPE	0
Specialist support staff (e.g. speech therapists)	Mostly off-site
Male staff	0.5
Core workers with minority ethnic background	No systematically compiled national data

Source: own calculation based on tabular data prepared by the HCSO [Hungarian Central Statistical Office] in 2022 upon individual request

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

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

The qualifying routes for core pedagogues in nurseries and kindergartens are separate. However, there is no entrance exam either for the *kisgyermeknevelő* or the *óvodapedagógus* BA study programmes. The entrance criteria for both consist of the number of points accumulated based on the grades (evaluation) received during the secondary school leaving exam and the singing and physical abilities of prospective *kisgyermeknevelő* and the singing and speech abilities of prospective *óvodapedagógus*.

#### Childcare sector

##### Infant and Early Childhood Educators (*kisgyermeknevelő*)

Since 1991, the entry requirement for all initial professional studies for the Infant and Early Childhood Educators has been the completion of the secondary school leaving exam. Before 2009, several types of qualification were awarded at the upper secondary and post-secondary level for those working in *bölcsőde* (0–2). In 2009, a BA-level qualification was introduced. In 2012, structural changes were made to the National Qualification Register (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ*) in accordance with the government's intention to change the system of vocational training in order to meet the needs surfacing in the economy (see Eurofound 2016). The post-secondary vocational education for workers in nurseries was moved to the new system of vocational training (CEDEFOP 2019) in 2020.

The current system includes two different pathways for attaining *kisgyermeknevelő* qualification:

- Higher education studies (BA level) for the award of *csecsemő- és kisgyermeknevelő* (Infant and Early Childhood Educator)
- At the post-secondary vocational programme level for the *kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő* (Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator).

However, it is also possible to work in a nursery or mini-nursery with one of the earlier upper secondary qualifications mentioned in legislation (see footnote under *Chapter 2.2*).

Table 3

**Hungary: Infant and Early Childhood Educator**

<p><b>Job title in Hungarian:</b> <i>Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (nursery specialist)</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, specific entrance criteria  <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years at university – specialising in early childhood education and care  <b>Award:</b> Bachelor’s degree  <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180  <b>EQF level:</b> 6  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> <i>Bölcsőde, Mini bölcsőde</i> (ECEC centres for children younger than 3 years of age)</p>

Table 4

**Hungary: Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator**

<p><b>Job title in Hungarian:</b> <i>Kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő</i>  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (nursery specialist)</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate  <b>Professional studies:</b> Regular school-based full time education with 1 or 2 year post-secondary vocational programme  <b>Award:</b> Certificate in Childcare and Early Childhood Education  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 5  <b>ISCED-P 2011:</b> 454 (see CEDEFOP 2019)  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> <i>Bölcsőde, Mini bölcsőde, Munkahelyi bölcsőde, Családi bölcsőde</i> (ECEC for children younger than 3 years of age), children’s residential home</p>

**Childcare Worker** (lit. ‘Childcare Service Provider’) (*szolgáltatásnyújtó*)

In the current system, there is only one pathway to attain the *szolgáltatásnyújtó* qualification as a Childcare Worker. Since 2020, a specialised 100-hour training course leads to a vocational certificate for working in family nurseries and workplace nurseries.

Table 5

**Hungary: Childcare Worker** (lit. ‘Childcare Service Provider’)

<p><b>Job title in Hungarian:</b> <i>Szolgáltatásnyújtó</i></p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years schooling, no specific entrance criteria  <b>Professional studies:</b> 100-hour training course – specialising in early childhood education and care  <b>Award:</b> Vocational certificate as ‘Childcare Service Provider’  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> n/a  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> n/a  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> <i>Családi bölcsőde, Munkahelyi bölcsőde</i> (Family nursery, Workplace nursery for children younger than 3 years of age)</p>



### Education sector

For core pedagogues working in kindergartens (*óvoda*, 3–5) there is only one qualifying route – resulting in a BA qualification.

Table 6

#### Hungary: Pre-primary Pedagogue

<b>Job title in Hungarian:</b> <i>Óvodapedagógus</i> <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary Education Professional
<b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, specific entrance criteria (see above)
<b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years at university, specialising in pre-primary education
<b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree
<b>ECTS credits:</b> 180
<b>EQF level:</b> 6
<b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6
<b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> <i>Óvoda</i> (ECEC centre for children between the ages of 3 and 6), children's residential home

The qualifying route for **Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogues** is the same as for Pre-primary Education professionals, with a specialisation in one of the minority languages used in Hungary. By the end of their professional studies, these pedagogues have been prepared to educate children (according to the Hungarian Kindergarten Core Programme) both in Hungarian and in the chosen minority language. They are also expected to demonstrate a good knowledge of the minority language, history and culture.

Table 7

#### Hungary: Minority Ethnic\* Pre-primary Pedagogue

<b>Job title in Hungarian:</b> <i>Nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus</i> <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary Education Professional (minority ethnic)
<b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years schooling with a secondary school leaving certificate, entrance criteria (see above)
<b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years at university, specialising in pre-primary education and a chosen minority language
<b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree
<b>ECTS credits:</b> 180
<b>EQF level:</b> 6
<b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6
<b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> <i>Óvoda</i> (ECEC centre for children between the ages of 3 and 6), children's residential home

\* Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovene, Roma

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

### Childcare sector

#### Infant and Early Childhood Educator (*Csecsemő és kisgyermeknevelő*) – Bachelor's degree programme

A number of universities offer BA courses in Infant and Early Childhood Pedagogy.

**Competence specifications** are grouped into four categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Ability, (3) Attitude, (4) Autonomy and responsibility. Some examples:

1. **Knowledge** is expected to cover the development, characteristics, care, education, and feeding of young children; the options and methods of forming good habits; the importance and effects of play, arts and singing; the legal framework of working with young children; administrative tasks; ethics, specifics of caring for children in ECEC services; the effects of family upbringing and the importance of early attachment; electronic information systems.
2. **Abilities** include applying a holistic view towards educating and caring for the children; to apply early childhood pedagogical methods; to recognise the processes of normal development and to interpret family contexts; to form good relationships with the children, their families and other professionals; to create conditions suitable for the education and care of young children; to organise the daily routine; to handle information and document children's development; to communicate well.
3. **Attitudes** include the recognition of professional competencies and their limitations; use reflections; having empathy.
4. In terms of **autonomy and responsibility**: to make decisions, to demonstrate responsibility; to cooperate with other professionals; to observe ethics; to be able to make compromises; to be able to work in teams.

**Curricular areas:** The overall emphases of the study programme are set out in *Table 8* below. The ratio of theory to practice is 83% to 17%.

*Table 8*

#### Hungary: IPE curricular areas – Infant and Early Childhood Educator

Curricular areas	ECTS credits/ credit framework
Social sciences and information technology	10–20
Pedagogy, psychology	40–65
Health sciences	15–35
Methodology of early childhood education and care, supporting development and care	20–40
Practicum: at least 6 weeks (240 hours) in the final year, spent in a nursery or mini-nursery	30
<b>Total min ECTS credit requirement</b>	180
<b>Total max ECTS credits</b>	190

Source: Ministry for Innovation and Technology 2021

## Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator (*Kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő*), post-secondary vocational programme

Regular school-based full-time education in a one or two-year post-secondary vocational programme. This form of vocational education is regulated by legislation (Hungarian Parliament 2019) and is based on specific competence specifications (IKK 2022a, 2022b).

### Competence specifications

1. 18 competence areas cover skills and abilities related to sector specific basic education: communication and cooperation; preparing paper-based and electronic documentation; digital competence; using legislative, health and special knowledge in practice; protection of interests; identifying risks and dilemmas related to changes in life; understanding health-related data.
2. A further 18 competence areas cover skills and abilities related to specialised education (child welfare and child protection): understanding and using relevant legislation and literature; understanding and supporting children's development; applying an individual pedagogical and psychological approach to children; identifying atypical development; understanding different socio-cultural family backgrounds and supporting families; communication and cooperation; setting goals and planning processes based on pedagogical and psychological knowledge.

**Curricular areas:** The overall emphases of the study programme are set out below. ECTS credits are not awarded.

- Employment issues
- Social sector specific basic education related subjects (professional personality development, psychology, health, first aid, social studies)
- Child welfare and child protection, nursery care
- Professional skills development
- Knowledge and practice of child development and care
- Atypical development and special education
- Family pedagogy
- Practicum (200 hours)
- Optional subject
- Thesis.

### Childcare Worker (*Szolgáltatásnyújtó*)

This special 100-hour training course leading to a vocational certificate for working in family nurseries and workplace nurseries is based on legislation (Ministry of Human Resources 20/2017) and a national education programme (Ministry of Human Resources 2017 EKP). Responsibility for the training is put with the non-profit organisation coordinating family nursery care nationally, called MACSKE (Ministry of Human Resources 20/2017), both for the organisation and delivery of the courses.

**Competence requirements:** Knowledge and application of relevant legislation, child development and play, characteristics and licencing of family- and working place nurseries, possible ways to address atypical development, ability to make decisions.

### Curricular areas (modules):

- Licencing and conditions of running family nurseries and workplace nurseries
- Nursery pedagogy and care
- Pedagogy, psychology, development of play
- First aid and caring for children

- Professional skill development
- Operational issues and administrative tasks in nurseries
- Practicum.

The ratio of theory to practice is 75% to 25%.

#### Education sector

##### Pre-primary Pedagogue (*óvodapedagógus*)

##### Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogue (*nemzetiségi óvodapedagógus*)

A number of universities and teacher training colleges offer this study programme.

**Competence requirements** are grouped into four categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Ability, (3) Attitude, (4) Autonomy and responsibility. Some examples:

1. **Knowledge** is expected to cover the links between societal changes, public education and pre-primary education; the documents, legislations and regulations related to their work; theory and practice of development and education of 3-6 years old children; the specifics of working with special needs and disadvantaged children and their families; the methods of organising activities; theoretical and practical issues of mental and physical health; and the theory and methods of assessment, evaluation and quality improvement.
2. **Abilities** will be to provide the necessary conditions for the personal development of children; to recognise and critically analyse problems and solve conflicts; to work together with families, other professionals and services; to learn new competencies, and to communicate in a foreign language.
3. Some of the professional **attitudes** and behaviours include a child centred approach and ability to play; good communication skills; social responsibility; respect for human values; ability to cooperate in a team; environmentally conscious behaviour.
4. In terms of **autonomy and responsibility**: to carry out pedagogical activities; to assess their professional options and tasks; to make pedagogical decisions.

**Curricular areas:** These are set out in *Table 9* below. The ratio of theory to practice is 80% to 20%.

Table 9

#### Hungary: Curricular areas – (Minority Ethnic) Pre-school Pedagogue

Curricular areas	ECTS credits/ credit framework
Pedagogy, psychology, social sciences and information technology	32–45
Methodology of early childhood education and care in <i>óvoda</i> (related to play, native language, literature, mathematics, surrounding environment, music and singing, visual arts and physical education)	54–72
Additional special subjects (such as inclusion, family pedagogy, multi- and intercultural education and special needs) or ethnic minority subjects (such as ethnic language, ethnic minority culture and bilingualism)	32–40
Practicum: at least 8 weeks (at least 6 weeks of these in an ethnic minority setting for Minority Ethnic Pre-primary Pedagogue students)	26–34
Thesis	10
<b>Total ECTS credits</b>	<b>180</b>

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

There are no alternative forms of qualification accrual for either of the occupations. The BA level qualification is the highest level of initial professional education both for Infant and Early

Childhood Educators and Pre-primary Pedagogues. Core pedagogues with a BA can study further for an MA in educational sciences.

Formal opportunities for moving up qualification frameworks are different for *bölcsőde* (0–2) and *óvoda* (3–5) core pedagogues, and opportunities for moving across qualifications are limited for both. Only the specialised qualifications are accepted for work in each kind of setting. For example, Infant and Early Childhood Educators wishing to work as a Pre-primary Pedagogue have to complete the full study programme for Pre-primary Pedagogy. Some subjects which were part of the initial qualifying route (up to 75% of the curriculum content is similar) may be acknowledged. However, this does not mean that the student can finish the course in a shorter length of time.

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

Guided workplace experience in the IPE of prospective core pedagogues working in both nurseries and kindergartens takes the form of a practicum<sup>7</sup>. The general requirements for higher education programmes are stated in legislation (Hungarian Government 230/2012), as for all nationally recognised vocational education studies and are required to follow the national curriculum framework for each specific vocational occupation. Government Regulation 230/2012 states the requirement to draw up a contract for the cooperation between IPE institutions and ECEC centres for students’ field-based studies, including the rights and obligations of higher education institutions and of the hosting ECEC centre.

The technical descriptions of the higher education study programmes for Infant and Early Childhood Educators and for Pre-primary Pedagogues describe in detail the specific requirements in terms of content, length of time, number of credits, and so on. All include a longer, continuous time period to be spent at an ECEC centre, usually during the last semester of the course of study.

Table 10

**Hungary: Duration of field practice during IPE in higher education institutions**

Qualification	Length of time spent in the training place	ECTS credits
Infant and Early Childhood Educator (Bachelor)	At least 6 weeks (240 hours) in the final year	30
Pre-primary Pedagogue (Bachelor)	8 weeks	26–34

Guided workplace experience in the **post-secondary vocational education** future employees in nurseries (**Early Childhood Caregiver and Educator**) is 200 hours, but theory and practice are not clearly divided. The aim is to provide opportunities to teach theory even during the practicum. Decisions on the minimum number of hours of practice are made separately for each subject by the school.

The practicum for **Childcare Workers** is 25 hours to be spent at a family nursery or workplace nursery, with a duty to prepare written tasks on different topics, based on their observations.

<sup>7</sup> Field practice: practice during which a group of students acquires and practices professional skills in a natural environment or in real working conditions under the supervision of an instructor.





There are no criteria for the selection of ECEC provision sites where the students can spend their practicum. Usually, nearby centres or centres known to the university staff are the ones contracted. During the 1990s, a CPD course was designed for people mentoring/supporting the students in the ECEC centres for children under the age of 3. However, it was not adopted into legislation and has since been discontinued. Despite this, the ECEC sites are expected to nominate staff to help and supervise students while conducting the observations and/or the work assigned to them. Individual student's work is evaluated at the end of the practicum period. Some remuneration for the mentoring staff at the ECEC sites is provided by the higher education institution or MACSKE, respectively.

Selection criteria to be a practice site for family nurseries includes the completion of a self-evaluation form and a site visit from the organisation responsible for the specialised training course (MACSKE n.d.).

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

CPD is defined by legislation for Infant and Early Childhood Educators, Childcare Workers and Pre-primary Pedagogues. Non-qualified co-workers are not required to attend CPD.

Qualified core pedagogues both in the social/child welfare and education sector can obtain a specialist professional diploma if they have worked at least five years in a relevant job, by passing a specialist exam related to their specific profession, which can result in a salary increase, depending on the employer's decision. Some universities offer preparatory courses for the specialist pedagogue exam (e.g. Apor Vilmos Catholic College).

Centre Leaders in nurseries are not required to attend CPD courses, but those in kindergartens are.

### Infant and Early Childhood Educator (*kisgyermeknevelő*)

The Social Act of 1993 (Hungarian Parliament 1993) lays down the obligation of core pedagogues in social and child welfare services (including *kisgyermeknevelő*) to attend CPD programmes in order to maintain their job and to stay on the National Register of Care Workers. In case of not fulfilling the obligation, the core pedagogue's employment can be terminated. The 9/2000 Ministerial Decree (Ministry for Social and Family Affairs 9/2000) describes the regulatory framework and details the requirements, including the number of credits (which are not linked to the ECTS system) to be accumulated, the type of formal CPD programmes that can be accepted for accreditation and for prospective CPD providers as well as the process of applying to have different programmes accredited.

One CPD period is six years, during which core pedagogues with a higher education, post-secondary, or upper secondary qualification have to accumulate 80 credits, whereas those with a lower level (older) qualification have to accumulate 60 credits to stay on the National Register. If someone fails to achieve this, she/he can be taken off the register and could lose her/his job as a consequence. There are no specific requirements for heads of ECEC provision in terms of CPD.

All formal CPD programmes are accredited with a different number of credits that are not taken into account when participating in other higher education courses.



- a. *Courses of at least 30 hours* addressing different professional themes and ending with some form of report (30–50 credits)
- b. *Group work of at least 25 hours* related to professional personal development and skills development, including case studies and supervision (25–35 credits)
- c. *Meetings or conferences having at least five presentations* in social policy, child protection, child welfare, or social work (5–10 credits)
- d. *Study trip* lasting at least three days *to learn about a certain topic or to gain experience* (10–20 credits)
- e. *Professional workshops* with at least six meetings in a year addressing different themes each time (10–20 credits).

In order to have all credit points recognised in a six-year CPD period, the *kisgyermeknevelő* has to attend at least one 30-hour course directly related to work with children under the age of 3. Any organisation or legal person can apply for CPD programmes to be accredited. The Slachta Margit National Institute for Social Policy Institute accredits and allocates credits to all CPD programmes for staff working in social, child welfare and child protection services once a year, and maintains the register for CPD programmes. The duty of CPD providers to document the programmes is also detailed in the Ministerial Decree 9/2000 (Ministry for Social and Family Affairs 9/2000).

Core pedagogues in *bölcsőde* (0–2) have 45–46 days of paid leave days a year (20–21 working days regular annual leave and 25 working days additional leave for pedagogues). 10–15 days of these can be used for professional development. The Centre Head has to design a yearly CPD plan that takes into account all staff with still unmet duties in order to make sure that everyone who needs to fulfil their CPD obligation has the opportunity to do so. The plan includes a schedule for attending programmes, the substitution of staff while they are away from work and a financial plan for support. Employers have to ensure remunerated time for the CPD and to pay the participation fee.

The qualification requirements for Centre Heads are listed in the legislation (Ministry of Welfare 15/1998). There are no additional requirements in terms of CPD.

### **Childcare Worker** (*Szolgáltatásnyújtó*)

CPD is also compulsory for Childcare Workers through legislation (Ministry of Welfare 15/1998) – once every three years. The responsibility for accrediting and offering CPD programmes was also placed with the NGO organisation MACSKE and since 2023 is placed with the NGO “*Magyar Bölcsődék Egyesülete*” (Association of Hungarian *Bölcsődés*). The cost of participating in a CPD programme can be covered either by the participant or the employer. Employers have to ensure remunerated time for the CPD.

### **Pre-primary Pedagogue** (*óvodapedagógus*)

The Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education (Hungarian Parliament 2011), which has replaced the former Education Act of 1993, lays down the obligation of all pedagogues (including kindergarten core pedagogues) to attend CPD programmes. The Government Decree on Teacher Further Training (Hungarian Government 277/1997) details the conditions related to participation in and funding of CPD programmes, the rights and duties of both staff and centre leaders and the process of accrediting CPD programmes. Participating in CPD programmes is also a legislative right, not just a duty for pedagogues.

Kindergarten core pedagogues have to attend 120 teaching hours (45 minutes/teaching hour) of pedagogue CPD courses within every seven years. Those who finish the courses successfully are mostly given a financial reward by their employer, although this is not binding. Those who



do not meet this obligation or cannot finish the courses successfully can lose their job. Heads of *óvoda* (3–5) have to attend CPD courses that contribute to their knowledge advancement and skills as a manager of the centre.

As is the case with staff in nurseries, core pedagogues in kindergartens have 45–46 days of leave days a year (20–21 working days of regular leave and 25 working days of additional leave for pedagogues). The head of the centre has to design a five-year CPD plan that takes into account all staff with still unmet duties in order to make sure that everyone who needs to fulfil their CPD obligation has the opportunity to do so. The plan includes a schedule for attending programmes, the substitution of staff while they are away from work and a financial plan for support.

Being a public education duty, pedagogue CPD programmes are free of charge. The costs for the participants are covered by contributions from the state (central budget), the provider and the employer. If the CPD programme is not offered within the state educational duty, the contribution by the state cannot be more than 80% unless the course is necessary for obtaining the next level (qualification) within the Promotion System of Teachers (Hungarian Parliament 2011).

Employers have to ensure remunerated time for CPD activities and to pay the participation fee. Pedagogue CPD courses have to be approved by the Minister responsible for education. Applications for running such programmes are to be submitted to the Education Office (*Oktatási Hivatal*). The decisions of the Minister are based on the recommendations of the Pedagogue CPD Accreditation Council.

Prospective providers can submit programmes for accreditation all the year round. The Education Office keeps a register of approved programmes, makes it available on its website and is responsible for inspecting them. The duty of providers to document the programmes is also detailed in the decree.

Any organisations registered as providers of adult education can apply for accreditation with pedagogue CPD programmes within the higher education accreditation system.

### **Main providers of CPD**

Most of the CPD programme providers – both for *kisgyermeknevelő* and *óvodapedagógus* – are public. The roles and responsibilities described by the legislation apply to public and private providers alike. They have to follow the same procedures and have to comply with the same national standards specified in the 9/2000 Ministerial Decree (Ministry for Social and Family Affairs 9/2000) and the 277/1997 Government Decree (Hungarian Government 277/1997). Their choice of teachers/trainers employed and programme content influence their chances of accreditation and the number of credits the programme is awarded.

During past 10 years or so, many EU funded projects offered training courses for free, which have been accepted as part of CPD fulfilment in both sectors.

### **Challenges regarding CPD**

Finding replacements for practitioners attending CPD programmes can be a problem both for *bölcsőde* (0–2) and *óvoda* (3–5). Other practitioners from the same centre usually substitute, but it can be difficult for the Centre Leader to keep the balance between guaranteeing available leave days for staff members and absences due to CPD activities, especially for smaller centres with only a few staff. CPD programmes are usually offered in the evenings or on the weekends, since some of the service providers work alone or with one helper and cannot close the site for the duration of the courses.

The certificates of CPD programmes are only partially and selectively accepted across the two sectors (e.g. pedagogues working in children’s homes or in a childcare centre can fulfil part of their professional development duties in pedagogue CPD programmes).



There are no systematically collated data on the content of CPD programmes. The specific topics are not prioritised, they arise as a result of the accreditation process. Prospective CPD providers aim to submit topics of interest since there is a (market) competition for attracting participants. In addition to compulsory CPD, most core professionals participate in non-formal professional development activities in the centre, such as regular consultations, organised visits to other centres, etc. The content and form of these activities depend on the perceived needs of children, parents and the staff themselves.

Act CXC of 2011 (Hungarian Parliament 2011) on National Public Education introduced the Promotion System of Teachers, which also applies to Pre-primary Pedagogues and Infant and Early Childhood Educators with a BA degree. The system has five levels:

- Trainee
- Pedagogue I
- Pedagogue II
- Master Pedagogue
- Researcher Pedagogue.

The first level is the trainee programme, which lasts for one or two years. Government Decree 326/2013 (Hungarian Government 326/2013) lists the relevant detailed requirements for each level: the contents of the portfolio (documents representing the activities of the pedagogue) to be submitted and evaluated by an independent committee; the requirement for a site visit by the committee to assess and evaluate the practice of the pedagogue; and the need to pass a relevant exam. Achieving the Pedagogue I. level is obligatory as a means of quality assurance. The need for mentoring, the tasks and duties of both the mentor and the trainee are also included. The trainee is to be evaluated regularly every six months and at the end of the trainee period. If the trainee's certification/qualification exam is successful, they can be ranked into the next category, which is Pedagogue I.

One of the important elements of the system is the requirement for Pedagogues to reflect on their work before their assessment by an independent committee. Achieving a new level comes with a raise in salary.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

Most *kisgyermeknevelő* and *óvodapedagógus* work in public ECEC provision and they receive salaries according to unified wage scales. The wages of *kisgyermeknevelő* are based on the wage table of public employees regulated jointly in the Act XXXIII of 1992 on public employees (Hungarian Parliament 1992), and the Government Decree 257/2000 (Hungarian Government 257/2000). The table determines the minimum wages based on the qualification and number of years worked. The Government Decree states the additional wage supplements as well.

The wages of *óvodapedagógus* are determined by a so-called pedagogue wage table, which takes into consideration the number of years worked and the level (qualification) within the Promotion System of Teachers (Hungarian Government 326/2013). This table is the basis for all teachers/pedagogues in the entire education system.

Over the past 5–10 years, core staff in nurseries coming under the Act XXXIII of 1992 (Hungarian Parliament 1992) have received several types of wage supplements, with the result that now a *kisgyermeknevelő* with a BA level education (salary set by the pedagogue wage table) earns less than lower educated colleagues.

The wages of core pedagogues in *bölcsőde* (0–2) were traditionally low, partly because they are part of the social sector, where the wages are the lowest in Hungary, and partly because many of them did not have higher level qualifications. Core pedagogues in *óvoda* (3–5), and pedagogues in general had higher wages, partly because they all have BA level qualifications and partly because of the government’s earlier reform of the evaluation of pedagogues and teachers working in public education (Promotion System of Teachers). However, this situation has reversed recently due to the several wage corrections for people working in *bölcsőde*, which resulted in somewhat higher wages than for those in working in *óvoda*.

In both types of ECEC centres there is additional payment for posts of responsibility, which is also regulated in legislation (Hungarian Government 230/2012).

The government introduced a major wage increase for pedagogues employed in *bölcsőde*, *óvoda* and schools and other types of services. The scale of contribution from the central budget is an average 32.2% effective on 1 January 2024 (Hungarian Government 662/2023). Further plans include yearly increases to achieve an average 90% wage increase by the year 2025.

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

Workers in *bölcsőde* (0–2) and *óvoda* (3–5) are almost exclusively employed full time. The official weekly working time amounts to 40 hours. According to the author’s own calculation (based on Hungarian Central Statistical Office data 2021 provided for the author’s request<sup>8</sup>) 99% of *kisgyermeknevelő* work full time. The Ministry of Human Resources (2016) indicated that 99% of the staff in *óvoda* also worked full time and only 1% part time.

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

Newly qualified core pedagogues are legally obliged to spend a certain period of time as a trainee (*gyakornok*) when they begin to work in their job. Act XXXIII of 1992 (Hungarian Parliament 1992) on public employees states the requirement for applying the trainee programme in the case of newly qualified staff and Government Decrees describe the varying details for the different sectors. A *kisgyermeknevelő* and also a *óvodapedagógus* who is new in the job has to work as a trainee for a period of two years. The Government Decree 257/2000 (Hungarian Government 257/2000) lists the requirements for the ECEC centre to develop the guidelines, to appoint a mentor and to set out the tasks and duties of both the mentor and the trainee. At the end of the trainee programme period, the trainee is evaluated. Failure results in job loss. In the absence of a central government contribution for the mentoring, the ECEC centre has to provide the mentoring remuneration from its own budget.

There are no such measures required for new practitioners in family nurseries and workplace nurseries. If a regional network for these workers exists, the coordinator’s duty is to provide the support.

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<sup>8</sup> The data have been created with the use of “Ikmazásban állók létszáma, 2020. december 31.” (Number of employees in *bölcsőde*) Datafile prepared upon individual request by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office ([www.ksh.hu](http://www.ksh.hu)). The calculations and the conclusion are the sole intellectual products of the author of this report, Marta Korintus.

## 7.4 Non-contact time

Legislation states that the contact time for core pedagogues in *bölcsőde* (0–2) is seven hours per day. One hour per day can be used for preparation work, staff meetings, administration, and so on. Contact time for core pedagogues in *óvoda* (3–5) is 32 hours a week (Hungarian Parliament 2011). The remaining eight hours can be used for preparation work, or anything else related to their work.

There is no such time included in the work hours of childcare service providers.

## 7.5 Current staffing issues

For a few years after the introduction of the Bachelor level qualification for *kisgyermeknevelő* and the Promotion System of Teachers including *óvodapedagógus* (see also Korintus 2018), better pay and career advancement opportunities were available and therefore there was no severe shortage of staff in either *bölcsőde* (0–2) or *óvoda* (3–5) nationally. However, due to changes in remuneration for *kisgyermeknevelő* with lower level qualifications (i.e. the introduction of wage supplements), staff with a BA education level now earn somewhat less. This situation creates tensions within the workplace, and also results in less people wanting to work in these jobs.

Over the past years, the government introduced higher wages in many sectors of the economy with the result that earnings in the education sector as a whole are left behind. The situation has become so serious that in 2022, fewer prospective students applied for admission to pedagogical oriented universities than the number of places available.

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

There have been some educational reforms introduced by the government since the previous SEEPRO report.

### Reform of vocational education and training (VET)

Major changes were introduced in 2013, modifying the structure of VET schools, the content and the qualification requirements of VET, as well as the organisation and implementation of guided workplace experience. All these changes have aimed at better serving the demands and needs of the labour market/economy and increasing the attractiveness of VET. In 2013, responsibility for VET schools changed from the local government level to central maintenance by the state (Eurofound 2016) The post-secondary vocational education for workers in nurseries (*kisgyermekgondozó, -nevelő*) was moved to the new system of vocational training (CEDEFOP 2019) in 2020.

### Reform of home-based ECEC provision and the structure of the nursery system

In 2017, the system of ECEC for children under the age of 3 was changed, by including and re-defining home-based childcare provision as family nurseries. It meant a major change in the training of childcare workers (extending it to pedagogical and professional issues) and a major change in the minimum requirements in terms of the spatial environment and the pedagogical work with children. Since then, all basic requirements are the same for all types of nurseries.

## Reform related to digital education

Affecting workers in both sectors is The Digital Education Strategy of Hungary, which was adopted by the Government Decree 1536/2016, IX. 13 (Hungarian Government 1536/2016). The main goal of DES is that nobody leaves the public education and training system without adequate digital competencies.

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

Over the past six years in Hungary, no government-funded or third-party funded research has been conducted which specifically focuses on ECEC staff. However, several EU funded projects both in the education sector and in the social welfare sector have aimed to provide a basis for and develop the professional aspects and/or training materials required by reforms in both sectors. One specific example is the following:

### Early Childhood Programme

**Sources:** EFOP-1.9.5-VEKOP-16-2016-00001 "A kora gyermekkori intervenció ágazatközi fejlesztése" [Intersectoral development of early childhood intervention] 2017-2022, National Centre for Public Health 2018 (see *References* for further details)

**Aims:** The aims of the complex programme – built on cooperation among the different sectors (education, health and social) responsible for young children – were to provide/ensure a system of higher quality and better access services that meet the needs of children below school age and their families, especially of those with special needs; and to design a complex screening measure to support professionals and parents in supporting children with atypical development.

**Methods:** The methods involved designing a common "route for children" (*gyermekút*) by modernizing the institutional structure, endorsing coordination; expanding the types and forms of services; developing the competences of professionals; and providing better information for parents.

**Selected findings:** Several documents of guidance have been developed – including a detailed description of children's development below school age, information for parents and guidance for health and education personnel – which can also be used by staff in nurseries and kindergartens<sup>9</sup>. One example is a description of standards for professional work in all types of *bölcsőde*, and another is a developmental questionnaire to be used by staff in both sectors to follow children's development and receive feedback based on national standard values (see also Szombathelyiné et al. 2021).

**Implications:** The use of both are expected to become compulsory in nurseries and kindergartens.

<sup>9</sup> See the [gyermekut.hu](http://gyermekut.hu) website for publications and guidance for professionals and parents

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Several changes in the auspices of nurseries within the government structure and ministerial re-organisation after the 2022 elections have affected the perspectives. Nurseries and kindergartens came under the same ministry (EMMI – Ministry of Human Resources) before 2022. Even though the responsibilities were under different parts of the ministry, there was some hope of achieving a unified approach to ECEC. Now different ministries are responsible for nurseries (Ministry of Culture and Innovation) and kindergartens (Ministry of the Interior), once again diminishing hopes of a society-level acceptance of nurseries as places of early childhood education. The workforce challenges Hungary is facing are still mainly related to the level of wages. Teachers, *óvodapedagógusok* and *kisgyermeknevelők* have always had lower wages compared with other sectors (maybe the only exception being social services). However, since the major wage increase introduced by the Hungarian Government (2023), with effect from January 2024, this is now changing.

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