

# POLAND

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

*Country report authors*

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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>

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## 1. ECEC governance in Poland

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Poland is split into two stages and sectors. The first stage, covering the provision of children aged 20 weeks to 3 years<sup>1</sup>, falls under the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej*). The municipalities are responsible for the administration, management and supervision of ECEC provision. The second stage, catering for 3 to 6 year-olds<sup>2</sup>, is officially recognised as the first phase in the education system and falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki*). Provisions for this older age group are supervised at the voivodeship level by the Superintendencies of Education (*Kuratorium Oświaty*). These are budgetary units and their tasks include the implementation of state educational policy, i.e. the core curriculum, the allocation of financial resources and the improvement of the quality of education in the voivodeship and the competence of teachers. The 16 voivodships in Poland represent the highest level of administration.

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

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

The professional requirements relating to ECEC staff working with children in the two sectors (for children from 20 weeks up to the age of 3 and between 3 and 6 years of age) differ considerably and are regulated through different sets of legislation.

#### *Childcare sector*

Centre-based facilities for younger children are: nurseries/crèches (*żłobki*), kids' clubs (*kluby dziecięce*) and day care providers (*punkty dziennego opiekuna*); the latter can also be home-based and can care for up to 5 children.

Since 2011, when the 0–3 sector was initiated in its current form, numerous changes have been made annually to the documents regulating the sector's work. Initially, the organisation of the work of crèches, kids' clubs and day care providers differed significantly due to, for example, the number of opening hours, the age of the children and the training of specialists. Over time, these differences began to blur, and now there are virtually no differences between crèches and kids' clubs, and specialists prepared to work in a crèche can also work as a day care provider by completing an additional 40-hour course. Day Care Providers who have worked in the profession for one year have documented experience in working with children and acquire the right to work in a crèche. Nevertheless, these facilities are still recognised as different type of setting in the legal documents.

All these settings are primarily staffed by **Caregivers**. Some childcare networks, especially public ones such as the Warsaw Public Crèche Network (*Warszawski Zespół Żłobków*), have introduced

<sup>1</sup> In particular cases this may be extended until the end of the (school) year in which the child reaches the age of 4.

<sup>2</sup> In particular cases, if the setting has available spaces, it can accept a child as young as 2½ years old.

additional internal regulations for ‘junior’ and ‘senior’ Caregivers, allowing for promotion. Unpaid **Volunteers** may also be employed in such facilities and their scope of responsibility is defined individually. In settings attended by more than 20 children, at least one **Nurse** or **Midwife** must be employed. In addition, occasionally there are providers which employ or establish partnerships with specialists such as Psychologists, Physiotherapists or Speech Therapists, but this is regulated at the municipality level in the case of public facilities or at the provider level in the case of private ones.

### Education sector

**Kindergarten Teachers** are the main professionals responsible for children between 3–6 years who primarily attend kindergartens (*przedszkola*). Other types of settings are: pre-primary sections in primary schools (*oddziały przedszkolne w szkołach podstawowych*) and pre-primary centres (*punkty przedszkolne*). Depending on the profile of the setting (e.g. inclusive, special education), its size and the particular needs of the children enrolled, teachers collaborate with different specialists.

From May 2022, one **Specialist Support** person (Pedagogue, Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Educational Therapist or Special Needs Teacher) must be employed for every 100 children (the post can be split between more specialists according to the needs of the children who attend the setting). From 2024 this number will be increased to 1.5 posts. The number of specialists in inclusive settings (those involving about 25% children with special educational needs) and for special education ones, e.g. for children with sight impairment, is higher and depends on its size. Supporting teachers (*Nauczyciele wspomagający*) are employed when a child diagnosed with special educational needs, e.g. behavioural disorders, attends the setting.

A person is qualified to occupy the position of a **Supporting Teacher** if he/she:

- Has completed a university degree (at least BA) in a field that qualifies for working with children with physical or intellectual disabilities or children with challenging behaviour.
- Is qualified to occupy a position of a Kindergarten Teacher and, in addition, has completed postgraduate studies (at least one year with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits) or a qualifying course in a field that qualifies for working with children with intellectual or physical disabilities.

The employment of a **Teacher's Aide** (*Pomoc nauczyciela*) is a decision of the managing body. In practice, they are employed for groups of 3 year-olds and/or for mixed-age groups in which 3 year-olds make up a certain proportion of the group. They must have at least completed eight years of primary school. Duties of a Teacher's Aide are individually defined by the Kindergarten Director and typically involve cleaning and care activities, accompanying the group outdoors, and preparing materials for organised activities.

*Table 1* outlines the profiles and minimum qualification requirements of staff working directly with children and also categorises the **core practitioners** according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see Box 1 at the end of this chapter).

Table 1

## Poland: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

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
<b>Childcare sector</b>				
<b>Caregiver</b> <i>Opiekun dziecięcy /wychowawca małego dziecka</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Social Care/Health Care Professional	<i>Żłobek</i> <b>Nursery/Crèche</b> 0–2 years <sup>3</sup>  <i>Klub dziecięcy</i> <b>Kids' club</b> 1–2 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0–2 (crèche) 1–2 (kids' club)	12 years schooling <b>plus</b> 280 hours training (at least 80 hours of practice supervised by fully qualified Caregiver), Certificate as Caregiver <b>or</b> 1 year of working experience with children up to the age of 3 at least 6 months immediately before taking up employment  ECTS credits: n/a <sup>4</sup> EQF level: 3 ISCED 2011: 3  <i>Optional requirements</i> A qualified Nurse, Midwife, Nanny, Kindergarten Teacher, Primary School Teacher or Social Pedagogue
	<i>Punkt dziennego opiekuna</i> <b>Day care provider</b> 0–2 years			

<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: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. In Poland the relevant formats are 0–2/3 and 2½/3–5 years and 6–7 years, since primary school may start at age 6 or 7, depending on parental choice.

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

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
<b>Nurse/Midwife</b> <i>Pielęgniarka/ Położna</i>	<i>Żłobek</i> <b>Nursery/crèche</b> 0–2 years	Qualified co-worker	All ages	Min. 3 years university, Bachelor's degree in health care  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Volunteer</b> <i>Wolontariusz</i>	<i>Żłobek</i> <b>Nursery/crèche</b> 0–2 years  <i>Klub dziecięcy</i> <b>Kids' club</b> 1–2 years  <i>Punkt dziennego opiekuna</i> <b>Day care provider</b> 0–2 years	Co-worker with minimal specialist preparation	n/a	First aid for children course
<b>Education sector</b>				
<b>Kindergarten Teacher</b> <i>Nauczyciel Wychowania przedszkolnego</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional	<i>Przedszkole</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	0–10 years	5 years at university, Master's degree specialising in Early Childhood and Primary Education  ECTS credits: 300 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 7
<b>Supporting Teacher</b> <i>Nauczyciel wspomagający</i>	<i>Przedszkole</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years	Qualified co-worker/ Practitioner with group responsibility	3–15 years	Bachelor's degree (3 years university) <b>or</b> Master's degree (5 years university) <b>or</b> Postgraduate degree (1,5 years) in Special Pedagogy  ECTS credits: 180 (BA), 300 (MA) EQF level: 6 (BA), 7 (MA) ISCED 2011: 6 or 7
<b>Teacher's Aide</b> <i>Pomoc nauczyciela wychowania przedszkolnego</i>	<i>Przedszkole</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years	Non-qualified co-worker	n/a	Primary school leaving certificate (8 years schooling)  ECTS credits: n/a

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
				EQF level: n/a ISCED 2011: 2
<b>Educational specialists</b> – Pedagogue, Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Educational Therapist, Special Needs Teacher <i>Specjalista</i>	<i>Przedszkole</i> <b>Kindergarten</b> 3–5 years	Qualified co-worker	All ages	5 years university, Master’s degree specialisation in the field of Pedagogy, Psychology, Speech Therapy, Educational Therapy or Special Pedagogy  ECTS credits: 300 EQF level: 7 ISCED 2011: 7

In addition to completing the relevant initial education/training, ECEC employees must meet additional criteria: they must not be deprived of parental authority or have suspended or limited parental authority, the need to fulfil maintenance obligations if imposed by an enforcement order issued or approved by a court, and not be convicted of an intentional crime.

*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

Qualification standards of ECEC leaders in centres for younger and older children differ. The minimum educational requirements for leaders of **centres for under 3 year-olds** are lower than those for directors in kindergartens. More specifically, a leader of a crèche or kids’ club is required to have **either** a university degree (Bachelor’s degree as minimum) and at least three years’ experience of working with children **or** a secondary (vocational) education and five years’ experience working with children. In addition, the leader of a kids’ club may be a qualified Caregiver whereas a **Kindergarten Director** must hold a Master’s or Engineering degree, a pedagogical preparation or qualification course in education management and a qualification to hold a teaching position in a particular kindergarten (see *Chapter 2.4* for a description of supervisory tasks). There are no additional requirements such as attending a specified course for leadership.





## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

At the level of national legislation there are no posts of responsibility which the Caregivers or Kindergarten Teachers take on in addition to their regular work for a specifically designated area (e.g. working with migrant parents, mentoring students during their practicum), for which there may be specified time allocation and payment.

At the voivodship or municipal level, it may happen that agreements are made with third parties (e.g. universities) and activities are implemented that provide additional pay, such as mentoring prospective professionals during their internships.

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Tasks concerning the administration of facilities for children **under 3 years of age** are the responsibility of municipalities, which supervise nurseries, kids' clubs and day care providers in terms of the conditions of their operation (confirming compliance with legal requirements). Supervision and coordination of the pedagogical work depends on the organisational arrangements adopted by the municipality.

The pedagogical work of the setting may be regulated internally (the head of the establishment determines the rules of work according to general national guidelines) and/or externally, e.g. the facilities operate in a network that is bound by common operating guidelines.

At the municipal level, territorial units are set up which also coordinate and supervise the work of **kindergartens** and schools. Their tasks include, among others, the establishment, operation, transformation and closing down of centres. Coordination and supervision of the kindergarten's pedagogical work is carried out internally and externally.

The internal process in kindergartens is the responsibility of the Kindergarten Director, who is obliged to develop a pedagogical supervision plan for each school year. The plan of supervision should take into account conclusions from pedagogical supervision exercised in the previous kindergarten year and basic directions of implementation of the national educational policy, including tasks of pedagogical supervision announced annually by the Minister of National Education.

Within the framework of supervision, the Kindergarten Director is obliged to conduct internal evaluation with respect to issues considered crucial in the kindergarten's operation and to use its results for improvement of quality of kindergarten's work; to control teachers' compliance with rules of law concerning education, upbringing and care activities as well as other statutory activities of the kindergarten; to support teachers in the performance of their tasks, taking into consideration a diagnosis of the kindergarten's work, planning developmental actions, including teachers' motivation regarding professional improvement, organisation of trainings and meetings, monitoring of the kindergarten work.

External supervision is conducted by Superintendencies of Education. The forms of pedagogical supervision are control and support and concern: observing, analysing and evaluating the course of education and upbringing processes and the effects of teaching, upbringing and caring activities and other statutory activities of the institutions, assessing the status and conditions of teaching, educational and caring activities and other statutory activities of kindergartens, schools and educational institutions, providing assistance to establishments, as well as to teachers in the performance of their didactic, educational and caring tasks, and inspiring teachers to improve existing or implement new solutions in the education process, using innovative curricular, organisational or methodological activities aimed at developing pupils' competences. The subject of the inspection by the educational superintendent may also include compliance with children's rights and verification of conditions in the kindergarten in terms of safety and hygiene.



## 2.5 Specialist support staff

All kindergartens are required to employ specialist support staff such as a: Pedagogue, Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Educational Therapist, Special Needs Teacher. Their compulsory presence is something new in Polish ECEC settings. These specialists are hired by the Kindergarten Director. The number and type depends on the size of the centre and the needs of the children. All specialists need to have completed a corresponding higher education programme for their specialisation. They usually work with individual children or small groups in pull-out programmes. They also sometimes provide classes for whole groups, support teachers, conduct consultations with parents and organise more specialist support if necessary.

Psychological-Pedagogical Counselling Centres (*Poradnie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne*) cooperate with kindergartens as independent entities. By virtue of employing a larger number of specialists and having a more extensive resource base and more advanced and comprehensive activities in supporting the development of the child (also through providing support to the family), as well as working with children over a number of years regardless of the setting the child attends. Tasks of the counselling centres are: diagnosing (e.g. developmental disorders), giving recommendations, therapeutic activities (e.g. speech therapy), conducting support groups (e.g. for socioeconomically disadvantaged families), mediation, crisis intervention, counselling, consultations, information and training activities, prevention activities (e.g. distributing preventative materials). Many cities also have teacher support centres – such as the Warsaw Centre for Educational and Social Innovation and Training (*Warszawskie Centrum Innowacji Edukacyjno-Społecznych i Szkoleń*), where various types of teacher support courses are organised.

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

Despite the wide variety of qualifications that enable them to work with the youngest children, this work is mainly undertaken by women with vocational training. The structural composition of staff in this sector is presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2

Poland: Professionals working in centre-based settings for 0–2 year-olds, 2021

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce, in %
Staff with relevant university degree (Bachelor or Master), of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Caregivers</li> <li>– Nurses</li> <li>– Midwives</li> </ul>	<b>19.3</b> approx. 10 7.6 1.7
Caregivers with a relevant vocational qualification (upper secondary, post-secondary)	<b>71.7</b>
Male practitioners	<b>0.08</b>
Staff with a minority ethnic background or a 'background of migration'	No national data available

Source: Central Statistical Office 2022

## Settings for children from 3 up to school entry

In August 2022, there were about 180,000 frontline staff working in kindergartens (teachers: 157,465, specialists: 10,377, supporting teachers: 4,843 and teachers' aides: 5,731), of whom the great majority were women with Polish origins. The structural composition of staff working with children from the age of 3 up to school entry is presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3

### Poland: Professionals working in facilities for 3–5 year-olds, 2022

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce, in %	
Qualification level of Kindergarten Teachers	Master's degree	85.0
	Bachelor's degree	10.0
	Secondary education	0.2
Kindergarten Teachers at different career stages	Trainee teacher	10.0
	Contract teacher	30.5
	Appointed teacher	21.5
	Chartered teacher	33.6
	Missing data	4.3
Educational specialists /specialist support staff	Pedagogues	10.7
	Psychologists	15.0
	Speech Therapists	74.0
	Educational therapist	8.6
Male professionals	3.9	
Staff with a minority ethnic background or a 'background of migration'	Polish	99.5
	Ukrainian	0.10
	Belarusian	0.02
	British	0.01
	Others	0.07

Source: SIO – Educational Information System Ministry of Education and Science 08/2022

Since 2017, in order to obtain the right to work as a teacher in kindergarten and lower primary schools, a 5-year unified Master's degree must be completed. Teachers who have already obtained a Bachelor's degree remain eligible to teach in kindergarten and lower primary school.

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

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

#### *Childcare sector*

The right to work as a **Caregiver** in crèches and kids' clubs is granted to a ...

- Qualified professional: Nurse, Midwife, Kindergarten Teacher, Primary School Teacher, Social Pedagogue, or a graduate from a university or postgraduate study programme in a field related to early childhood education and care
- Person who has a university degree in any subject in which the curriculum includes issues related to the care or development of the young child and who has followed an 80-hour specialised training to update and supplement their knowledge and skills

- Person who has at least an intermediate school-leaving certificate and one year of experience working with children up to the age of three directly before starting work at the ECEC centre (no specialised pre-service training required); if the person’s professional experience took place earlier than six months it is required to undertake an 80-hour supplementary training course within six months of starting as a caregiver in order to update and complement their knowledge and skills.
- Person who has at least an intermediate school-leaving certificate and has accomplished 280 hours specialised training including at least 80 hours of work supervised by a fully qualified Caregiver.

The right to work as a **Caregiver in day care provision** is granted to a ...

- Person who has completed 160 hours of specialised training
- Qualified Nurse, Midwife, Nanny, Kindergarten Teacher, Primary School Teacher
- Social Pedagogue who has completed an additional 40 hours training (with Baby and Child First Aid)
- Person who has worked for at least 12 months with children under 3 years of age directly before starting work at the childcare provision (no specialised pre-service training required).

The right to work as a **nanny in a home-based provision** is granted to a person who is not the parent of the child he/she is to care for, is over 18 years of age and will undergo a sanitary-epidemiological examination and will receive a medical certificate of no impediment to work.

Table 4

**Poland: Caregiver**

<b>Job title in Polish: <i>Opiekun dziecięcy/Wychowawca małego dziecka</i></b> <b>Profile: Social Care/Health Care Professional</b>
<p><i>Route 1</i></p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years of schooling</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 1 year of working experience with children up to the age of 3 at least 6 months immediately before taking up employment</p> <p><b>Award:</b> No specialist certificate awarded</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 workplaces:</b> Nursery/crèche (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–2 years; kids’ club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–2<sup>5</sup> years.</p>
<p><i>Route 2</i></p> <p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years of schooling</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> 280 hours training (at least 80 hours of practice supervised by a fully qualified Caregiver)</p> <p><b>Award:</b> Certificate as Caregiver</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 workplaces:</b> Nursery/crèche (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–2 years; kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–2</p>

<sup>5</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: **0–2** years for settings for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for pre-primary settings in countries with a primary school entry age of 6 years. In Poland the relevant formats are 0–2/3 and 2½/3–5 years and 6–7 years, since primary school may start at age 6 or 7, depending on parental choice.

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Opiekun dziecięcy/Wychowawca małego dziecka</i> <b>Profile:</b> Social Care/Health Care Professional
<p>years</p> <p><i>Route 3</i>  <b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years of schooling  <b>Professional studies:</b> 160 hours training (at least 30 hours of practice supervised by a fully qualified Caregiver)  <b>Award:</b> Certificate as Day Care Provider  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 3  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Day care provision</p> <p><b>or</b>  40 hours supplementary training for candidates qualified to work in a crèche or kids' club</p> <p><b>or</b>  1 year of experience working with children up to the age of 3 immediately prior to taking up employment</p> <p><i>Route 4</i>  <b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance qualification  <b>Professional studies:</b> 3-year university qualification as Nurse or Midwife  <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree  <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180  <b>EQF level:</b> 6  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Nursery/crèche (<i>Żłobek</i>) 20 weeks–2 years; kids' club (<i>Klub dziecięcy</i>) 1–2 years</p>

### Education sector

There are four types of staff mainly responsible for early childhood education and care of 3 to 6 years old children: Kindergarten Teacher, Supporting Teacher, Teacher's Aide and Educational Specialist.

To work as a **Kindergarten Teacher** a person is required to complete a five-year unified Master's degree. This study programme also provides qualifications to work in the lower grades of primary school (the first three years of eight grades primary school). The main responsibilities of the Kindergarten Teacher relate to the day-to-day organisation of the developmental environment of a group of children, while taking care of the individual needs of each child; collaborating with the staff, families and the local community to provide a coherent developmental environment for the children; monitoring and documenting children's activities and development.

Kindergarten Teachers can also work in the childcare sector.

Table 5

#### Poland: Kindergarten/Pre-primary Teacher

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance qualification  <b>Professional studies:</b> 5 years at university  <b>Award:</b> Master's degree in Early Childhood Education  <b>ECTS points:</b> 300  <b>EQF level:</b> 7  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 7</p>

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego</i> <b>Profile:</b> Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional
<b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Kindergarten ( <i>Przedszkole</i> ) 3–5 years; pre-school class in primary school ( <i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i> ) 5–6 years; pre-primary education centre ( <i>Punkt przedszkolny</i> ) 3–5 years; primary school grades 1–3

Table 6

**Poland: Supporting Teacher**

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Nauczyciel wspomagający</i>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance qualification  <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 or 5 years at university  <b>Award:</b> Bachelor or Master's degree in a relevant field  <b>ECTS points:</b> 180/300  <b>EQF level:</b> 6 or 7  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6 or 7  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Kindergarten (<i>Przedszkole</i>) 3–5 years; pre-school class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–6 years; pre-primary education centre (<i>Punkt przedszkolny</i>) 3–5 years; all types of school</p>

Table 7

**Poland: Teacher's Aide**

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Pomoc nauczyciela wychowania przedszkolnego</i>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 8 years of schooling, with school leaving certificate  <b>Professional studies:</b> n/a  <b>Award:</b> n/a  <b>ECTS points:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> n/a  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 2  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Kindergarten (<i>Przedszkole</i>) 3–5 years; pre-school class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–6 years; pre-primary education centre (<i>Punkt przedszkolny</i>) 3–5 years</p>

Table 8

**Poland: Specialist Support Staff – Educational Specialists**

<b>Job title in Polish:</b> <i>Specjalista</i>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance examination  <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 or 5 years at university  <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's or Master's degree in area of specialisation (e.g. psychology, pedagogy, speech therapy)  <b>ECTS points:</b> 180/300  <b>EQF level:</b> 6 or 7  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6 or 7  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Kindergarten (<i>Przedszkole</i>) 3–5 years; pre-school class in primary school (<i>Oddział przedszkolny w szkole podstawowej</i>) 5–6 years; pre-primary education centre (<i>Punkt przedszkolny</i>) 3–5 years</p>

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

### Childcare sector

Frameworks of the specialised training programmes are defined in a regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy from 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2011. The Ministry is also responsible for the accreditation of individual programmes (private and public).

Table 9

Poland: Caregivers: Framework of specialised training programmes

Duration	Themes of the programme modules, required competences
280-hour programme  (for prospective Caregivers in nurseries/ crèches and kids' clubs)	<p><b>Psycho-pedagogical bases of development (20 hours)</b> Adaptation as an outcome of development, the course of development of the individual in the life cycle, the determinants of the individual's development process, developmental achievements during the individual's life cycle stages.</p> <p><b>Stimulating the comprehensive development of a child (120 hours)</b> Identifying the child's developmental needs, planning and documenting the child's development in everyday situations (greeting, farewell, meals, hygienic routines, resting, etc.), creating a physical and social environment for the child's development, nursing and health care of children with different needs, play as a basic form of activity of the child – exploratory, musical, rhythmic, artistic and technical play, introducing the child to culture, building social relationships with the child, and parents and local services responsible for responsible for the child's development.</p> <p><b>Child development in early childhood (25 hours)</b> Developmental tasks in infancy and toddlerhood, aspects of child development – characteristic changes in cognitive development, psychosocial and motor development at different stages of a child's life, sources of opportunities and threats to the child's development up to the age of 3 years, neurological basis of child development, mechanisms of child development.</p> <p><b>Competences of a caregiver (35 hours)</b> Legal responsibility of the caregiver, basics of emergency medicine (administering child first aid), health and safety regulations, stress management and problem-solving skills, voice emission.</p> <p><b>Practical training (80 hours)</b></p>
80-hour supplementary training  (for Caregivers in crèches and kids' clubs)	<p><b>Stimulation of comprehensive development of a child (60 hours)</b> Recognition of the child's developmental needs, sources of opportunities and threats to the child's development at the age of 3, early support of the child's development, innovative methods of planning, organising, monitoring and documenting the process of child development, building social relationships with the child, parents and local services responsible for child development</p> <p><b>Competences of a caregiver (20 hours)</b> Legal responsibility of the caregiver, coping skills, stress management and problem solving</p>
40-hour supplementary training  (for Caregivers in day-care provision)	<p>Baby and child first aid</p> <p>Methods of coping with stress and solving problems</p> <p>Innovative methods of stimulating child's development</p>
160-hour training  (for prospective	<p><b>Development of a young child (20 hours)</b> Aspects of child development – characteristics of changes in cognitive, psychosocial and motor development at individual psychosocial and motor development at different stages of the child's life, sources of opportunities and threats to the child's</p>



Duration	Themes of the programme modules, required competences
Caregivers in day-care provision)	<p>development up to the age of 3, mechanisms of child development.</p> <p><b>Stimulation of comprehensive development of a child (90 hours)</b> Identifying the child's developmental needs, planning and documenting the child's development in everyday situations such as greeting, farewell, meals, hygiene routines, rest, play, creating a physical and social environment for the child's development, nursing and health care of the children with different developmental needs, play as the primary form of activity of the child, introducing the child to music and culture, building social relationships with the child, parents and local services.</p> <p><b>Competences of a caregiver (20 hours)</b> Legal responsibility of the caregiver, basics of emergency medicine with Baby and Child First Aid), health and safety regulations</p> <p><b>Practical training (30 hours)</b></p>

### Education sector

Table 10 presents the legal framework guidelines regarding university study programmes for Kindergarten Teachers (and lower Primary School Teachers). This is a joint programme, not a specialist qualification route for working in kindergartens only.

Table 10

**Poland: Kindergarten Teacher – Minimum number of hours of structured activities and ECTS in initial professional education study programmes for pre-primary and lower primary school teachers**

Groups of activities in which specific learning outcomes are achieved	Contents	Number of hours	ECTS
A. Psychological and pedagogical background	A.1. Basics of practical Pedagogy	300	80
	A.2. Kindergarten and lower primary school pedagogy	180	
	A.3. Basics of psychology for teachers	180	
	A.4. Psychological and pedagogical foundation of teaching children a foreign language	60	
B. Content preparation for teachers in kindergarten and grades I-III of the primary school	B.1. Polish language	60	57
	B.2. Foreign language	120	
	B.3. Maths	60	
	B.4. Social and environmental education	30	
	B.5. ICT	30	
	B.6. Art	30	
	B.7. Music	30	
	B.8. Handcrafting	30	
	B.9. Physical education	60	
	B.10. Health education	30	



Groups of activities in which specific learning outcomes are achieved	Contents	Number of hours	ECTS
C. Supporting the development of children in kindergarten and grades I-III of the primary school	* See note below the table.	400	45
D. Basics of didactics of integrated teaching in kindergarten and grades I-III of the primary school	* See note below the table.	60	7
E. Methodology of the specific types of education including ways of integrating the knowledge and skills of children or pupils	E.1 Methodology of teaching Polish	60	57
	E.2 Methodology of teaching a foreign language	60	
	E.3 Methodology of teaching Mathematics	60	
	E.4 Methodology of teaching social and environmental education	45	
	E.5 Methodology of teaching and use of information and communication technology	45	
	E.6 Methodology of teaching art	45	
	E.7 Methodology of teaching music	45	
	E.8 Methodology of teaching hand-crafts	30	
	E.9 Methodology of teaching physical education	60	
	E.10. Methodology of teaching health education	30	
F. A child or pupil with specific developmental or educational needs in kindergarten and grades I-III of the primary school	* See note below the table.	120	14
G. Organisation of the work of the kindergarten and school with elements of educational law and children's rights, as well as the culture of the kindergarten and school, including with regard to the education of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities	* See note below the table.	60	7
H. Basics of educational diagnostics for teachers	* See note below the table.	60	7

Groups of activities in which specific learning outcomes are achieved	Contents		Number of hours	ECTS
I. Culture of language	* See note below the table.		60	7
J. Guided workplace experience	J.1. Mid-year practicum	J.1.1. General pedagogical practice	240, of which 30 hours general pedagogical practice	10
	J.2. Internship			
K. Research methodology	* See note below the table.		120	10
<b>Total</b>			<b>2,800</b>	<b>300</b>

Source: Authors' translation of the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, of July 25, 2019 (Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2019)

\*Note: Contents for these learning outcomes are not defined by the regulation, but specified by the qualification institution to ensure substantive and pedagogical preparation (psychological, pedagogical and didactic) for teaching in kindergarten or the first three grades of primary school.

The number of ECTS credits that may be obtained through training using distance learning methods and techniques may not exceed 25% of the number of ECTS credits necessary for graduation.

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

Currently, there are no alternative paths of entry into the ECEC teaching profession. However, due to staff shortages, various options are being considered, none of which are legally regulated to date.

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

### Childcare sector

Caregivers can enter the profession with a variety of qualifications, but the majority of them (more than 70%) complete a specialist 280-hour training programme of which 80 hours have to be dedicated to practical training. There are no regulations that specifically define how practical training should be organised. Typically, trainees will work for a period of two weeks (five days a week, eight hours a day) in an ECEC setting which the training provider cooperates with, under the supervision of experienced Caregivers. During the practical training trainees may be required to keep practice diaries, complete observational charts or take part in meetings with the mentoring Caregiver to discuss specific issues. Sometimes, however, during the practical training the trainee only observes the work of experienced staff. Private and public training providers are required to submit detailed training programmes to the Ministry for accreditation. Some of these training programmes are organised online but the practicum requirement stays the same.



### Education sector

Within the framework of the five-year Master's programme for prospective Kindergarten Teachers, a minimum of 240 hours organised workplace experience is a legal requirement. This is less than 10% of the time available for the degree programme; and the number of ECTS credits a student can earn for this practical training is 10 which is just over 3% of the total number of credits. Students' practicum sessions are carried out in three types of activities.

The first is the mid-year practicum. Its main objective is for the student to learn about the organisation of the kindergarten and school facilities. The specific practicum concept may vary depending on the university and the characteristics of the settings with which the university cooperates. Usually, however, the activities consist of a small group of students visiting the setting, talking with the staff about their roles in the setting, and observing classes. These visits can be accompanied by assignments agreed with the practicum coordinators from the university and the kindergarten (or primary school), e.g. observing and analysing the way in which classes are delivered.

The second type are general pedagogical practices which last up to 30 hours. This is a time when the student can learn about the work of other educational settings, e.g. the local community centre.

The third type of practicum is a full internship, which usually lasts for about two weeks (approx. 60 hours, although the number of hours is not legally specified). It may take place in one block or may be staggered across this time. During these internships, the students may conduct teaching activities independently on the basis of their lesson plans and these may be observed and discussed by a supervisor from the university; sometimes they also participate in meetings with parents. Students learn how to apply acquired knowledge, and to develop both pedagogical and social skills. Importantly, work placements may not be conducted using distance learning methods and techniques.

The quality of the initial professional education of Kindergarten and Primary School Teachers is monitored by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki*).

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

**Legislation/regulation:** The legislation treats the professional development of ECEC professionals working with children up to the age of 3 and children from 3 up to 6 years very differently. Current legislation relating to the **childcare sector** does not refer in any way to the professional development of Caregivers and time for in-service training is not guaranteed as part of Caregivers' contracts. Nevertheless, in some cases they may have the opportunity to participate during working hours with financial support from the service provider. In both the public and private sectors, this issue is the responsibility of the lead authority (municipality or private owner/provider). The decision whether participation in the training is obligatory or optional is taken at the municipality level for the public settings and by the owners of the facilities for the private ones. If training is mandatory, its cost is covered by municipalities in the public sector and owners in the private sector; if it is not obligatory, the cost is usually covered by professionals.

As the priority related to meeting the accessibility of settings is met in a growing number of municipalities (also due to the demographic decline), the issue of monitoring, evaluation and

improving the quality of services is increasingly being raised among professionals and decision-makers.

The national legislation regulating rights and duties of Kindergarten Teachers and school teachers in the public **education sector** concerning continuing professional development is the *Teacher's Charter* (26 January 1982). The document secures financial resources for CPD at different levels of the education system. At the national level, the Minister of Education is obligated to provide funding equal to the salaries of 5,000 average trainees (the lowest level in the teacher's career advancement process) and to distribute this accordingly. The same amount and its allocation rule applies at the voivodeship level. Moreover, at the municipality level funding equal to 1% of planned annual expenditure earmark for teachers' salaries has to be secured for CPD activities and distribution of these means has to be consulted with the Teachers' Unions.

**Main forms:** For *Caregivers*, various different forms of professional development are available, e.g. courses or conferences on the open market, often provided online, on a limited-time basis. In municipalities that manage a large number of nurseries/crèches, they are often organised into a network which supports professional development initiatives based on internally developed strategies. For example, in 2020 in Warsaw, where the network includes around 80 public settings, a professional development strategy has been introduced that makes extensive use of the organisation's staff resources. As part of an annual training cycle, network staff with specific competences share their knowledge and experiences with other professionals in the organisation. Another example is an initiative undertaken by the public crèche network in Łódź, which cooperates with universities in the city. Depending on the needs of the staff, different specialists organise training meetings for practitioners. In addition, these two largest crèche networks organise national (often including international speakers) conferences enabling all stakeholders to learn about the latest trends, policies and research findings in ECEC.

CPD for *Kindergarten Teachers* is usually organised as one- or two-day activities such as courses, workshops or conferences.

**CPD providers:** Despite the lack of legislative solutions to support the professional development of Caregivers in the **childcare sector**, there is a growing number of organisations, mainly private firms, offering various forms of in-service training for this professional group. However, there is no reliable information on the quality of the support they offer. As a result, accreditation of pre-service training programs is the only regulation ensuring quality in the professional preparation of Caregivers.

In the **education sector**, the Centre for the Development of Education (*ORE – Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji MEN*) is a public teacher training establishment with a nationwide reach run by the Minister of National Education and Science. Moreover, there are between a dozen and several dozen accredited, public and non-public centres of teacher's professional development in each Voivodeship offering diverse programmes also specifically designed for Kindergarten Teachers. Many teachers also benefit from in-service training programmes funded by the EU.

**Leave entitlement:** *Caregivers*, due to the lack of time allocated to professional development activities under their contracts, and in the current context of staff shortages, have very limited (in some cases none) opportunities to participate in training sessions during working hours. The situation is slightly better for facility leaders, who, because of the little or no time they spend directly working with children, have more opportunities in this regard.

*Kindergarten Teachers* are granted 15 hours per week for non-teaching tasks, which also include participation in professional development activities. It is up to the Kindergarten Director to decide how much time is allocated specifically for CPD as well as whether participation is obligatory or optional. Occasionally, the need for specific training in a particular area is decided by author-

ities at the voivodeship or national level; in such cases participation is obligatory for all professionals. Such CPD sessions are usually held when new legislation or new regulations are introduced, e.g. regarding the organisation of activities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Costs of all obligatory forms of training are covered through the national subsidy. Professionals in the public sector may also claim partial or complete reimbursement of costs of optional training from this subsidy. Decisions on reimbursement are dependent on the recommendation of the Director (whether the setting benefits from having an employee with such training) and at the municipal level (whether the available subsidy is sufficient to allocate resources for such a purpose). In some private settings owners of facilities also provide such support for employees; however, this is not a common practice. Similar rules for participation in CPD apply to Directors and Specialised Support Staff. Teacher's Aides working under the rules of the Labour Code and not under the Teachers' Charter, have barely any options to take part in any training.

**Contents:** Regarding the content of in-service programmes, the decisions may be taken at all levels of the system. Concerning the Kindergarten Teachers, a specific course may be recommended by the Ministry of National Education – Teacher's Charter (1982) Voivodeship Superintendent, the municipality educational supervisor, or be chosen by the Kindergarten Director. Individual teachers may also apply to attend a particular CPD activity within working hours and for (co-)financing to the director of the setting. Many of the training proposals and offers are related to the current geopolitical and pandemic situation. Training offers on distance learning (both related to the technical operation of computer programmes as well as distance learning methodologies) and dealing with the challenging situation of children forced into isolation due to COVID-19 and the social, emotional, physical and cognitive consequences of this situation are proposed closer to the market. Moreover, in connection with the huge wave of refugees from Ukraine who have come to Poland in the context of the Russian invasion of their country, there have been some proposals in recent months for training on supporting children struggling with trauma in a broad sense.

**Career advancement:** Participation in CPD is not explicitly or formally recognised in terms of the career advancement of Kindergarten Teachers. However, it contributes favourably towards promotion. The promotion of teachers is regulated by the Teacher's Charter specifying three categories in the teaching career: (1) novice teacher, (2) appointed teacher, and (3) certified teacher. All promotions are regulated by law (Ministry of Education and Science 2022). In general, in order to be promoted to a higher grade, a teacher should hold the required qualifications, complete a "probationary period" (the period preceding an application for promotion) and receive a positive assessment of his/her professional achievements during this period (the teacher follows an individual professional development plan during the probation period) and have his/her application for promotion approved by a so-called qualifying board or, in the case of a contract teacher, pass an oral examination before an examination board. This process aims to motivate teachers in their personal and professional development and thus, additionally, to improve the quality of educational institutions.

**Research:** There is no research or monitoring practice investigating the effectiveness of CPD and its impact on the daily work of kindergartens.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

The rules for calculating the salary and its amount for a Caregiver and a Kindergarten Teacher differ considerably. In general, Kindergarten Teachers earn more and their income is similar to that of primary school teachers. With regard to both professions, the sector in which the core practitioners work (whether private or public) also makes a difference (in favour of the private sector).

An additional and very important factor is the location. Those working in large metropolitan areas tend to have higher earnings, especially in kindergartens. However, regardless of all the characteristics mentioned, independent living off earnings, especially for a Caregiver, may be very challenging and in big cities barely possible.

#### Caregivers in crèches and kids' clubs and day care provision

Caregivers in the public sector are considered municipality employees, and therefore their salaries depend on the municipality regulations. Remuneration usually starts at the lowest domestic amount. In 2023, this was PLN 3,490 gross salary (PLN 2,709.48 net salary) (The Council of Ministers 2022), which in euros amounts to approximately €784,75 (gross) and €609,24 (net)<sup>6</sup>. It is also typical that municipality employees receive various types of benefits, e.g. "thirteenth salary", or Christmas bonuses. The salaries of municipal employees are made public.

*Private sector:* Salaries, bonuses and allowances vary widely. Contract arrangements often depend on the level of pre-service training, qualifications and experience. Earnings are usually an internal arrangement between the employer and the employee and are not published.

#### Nanny

A Nanny's salary depends on the arrangement made between the parents and the Nanny. Typically, it depends on her/his professional background but also on the availability and scope of duties that is expected. Parents can apply for a subsidy of up to 50% of the minimum social security contribution of the nanny they employ.

#### Kindergarten Teachers

*Public sector:* Teachers' salaries consist of several components: basic salary, remuneration for overtime and substitute hours, awards and other benefits resulting from the employment contract, e.g. motivation or position.

The level of the basic salary and some of the bonuses are determined at the national level but some of the components including the motivational bonus which in some settings may be quite high, are determined at the municipal level. Detailed information on the rules for calculating teachers' salaries in the public sector is included in the Teacher's Charter (Ministry of National Education 1982), and some additional executive regulations. Most of all, salaries depend on the level achieved within the teaching career. From September 2022, the former four-stage promotion system has been replaced by a three-stage system. The following basic salaries were allocated for each stage from 2023 (gross salary): (Ministry of Education and Science 2023).

Novice teacher – PLN 3,690 (approximately €830)

Appointed teacher – PLN 3,890 (approximately €875)

Certified teacher – PLN 4,550 (approximately €1,023).

<sup>6</sup> Conversion rate Juni 2023



*Private sector:* Teachers' salaries are paid in accordance with the Labour Code. Usually teachers in the private earn more than in the public sector; however, their contracts typically foresee more contact hours.

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

There are no overall data on full-time or part-time employment in crèches and kindergartens. However, taking into account the specifics of the Polish labour market, it can be hypothesised that the vast majority of Caregivers and Teachers work full-time.

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

There is no regulation regarding support for professionals starting careers in settings for the youngest children. Both public and private facilities use individually elaborated strategies in this respect. In kindergartens, novice teachers are assigned a mentor (Appointed or Certified Teacher chosen by the Director) during the first stage of work. This experienced professional is responsible for monitoring and supporting their work. A teacher who is assigned to this role receives a bonus amounting up to 20% of the minimum rate of the teacher's basic salary, taking into account their level of education and degree of professional advancement.

## **7.4 Non-contact time**

According to the Labour Code, full-time Caregivers work eight hours a day, 40 hours a week. If Caregivers can devote part of their working time to other tasks not related to the direct care of children, these are individual cases resulting from specific arrangements with the employer (public or private).

In the public sector, Kindergarten Teachers working with groups of 3, 4 and 5 year-olds are with the children 25 hours a week, and those working with 6 year-olds (the only compulsory kindergarten year intended as a preparatory year for school) for 22 hours. Given that full-time is 40 hours per week, they have 15 and 18 non-contact hours respectively per week. In the private sector, in most kindergartens teachers work 35-40 hours a week with the children.

## **7.5 Current staffing issues**

The current workforce situation in ECEC is problematic. In private and public settings in both the childcare and the education sector, there is a shortage of qualified staff and staff turnover is high. The situation is slightly better in smaller cities, where the labour market is less flexible and career changes are more difficult. The fact that teachers are ageing is also an issue as the average age of a teacher is 47 years (this figure represents the average age of teachers at all stages of education in the country). There are many reasons for this challenging situation, among which the most frequently mentioned are low salaries, the low prestige of the profession (especially in the case of Caregivers), difficult working conditions and pressure due to parents' demanding attitude. In addition, new regulations requiring prospective teachers to complete a unified five-year degree discourage young people from choosing this career path.



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

In recent years, there have been no significant changes in the legislation regarding the professionalisation of Caregivers or other staff in provisions for children aged 0–2 years – unlike the sector for older children, where regulations concerning minimum level of pre-service training have been changed as well as career progression paths and salary levels at different career stages. Currently, a unified Master's degree programme is the basic requirement for the initial professional education/training of Kindergarten Teachers, a degree programme that also qualifies for working in the first three grades of primary school. This means that Kindergarten Teachers are entitled to work with children from the age of 20 weeks up to 10 years (as mentioned in earlier chapters of the report, preschool and lower primary school teachers are entitled to work in creches and kinds' clubs). Teachers who have a degree at a lower level do not lose their teaching credentials; they are encouraged (but so far not required) to supplement their education by pursuing individual study paths in Master's programmes for which the subjects completed in the Bachelor's degree are automatically credited and the study takes less time to complete. From September 2022, the career progression path for teachers is also changing. The previous four-stage procedure has been replaced by a three-stage procedure (the first two stages have been merged). Salaries for entry-level teachers have also been increased (junior and senior teachers' salaries are now more differentiated). One more change was to increase and clarify the qualifications of professionals entitled to teach English in kindergartens.

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

The professional situation of Caregivers and Kindergarten Teachers is not a frequent topic of research in Poland. However, statistical data on professionals' backgrounds is systematically collected by the Ministry of Education and Science as well as the Central Statistical Office, which gives a general overview of the situation of the workforce in the ECEC sector (e.g. age, education, sector) – see *Chapter 3*.

Below three projects are highlighted which were carried out in recent years involving Polish ECEC professionals, focusing on their work and professional development.

### Professional development tools supporting participation rights in early childhood education – PARTICIPA

**Source:** Correia, N. et al. 2020; Wysłowska, O. et al. 2021; PARTICIPA 2022 (see *References* for further detail).

Countries involved: Portugal (project lead: Polytechnic Institute of Porto); Belgium (Odisee); Greece (Hellenic Open University), Poland (University of Warsaw).

Funded by Erasmus+; Grant Agreement No. 2019-1-PT01-KA202-060950)

**Aims:** To develop four independent but complementary professional development resources: Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), self-assessment tool designed to support teachers, assistants, and coordinators. The tools are intended to strengthen ECEC teachers', assistants', and



coordinators' knowledge on children's right to participate, their positive attitudes regarding the design, implementation, and monitoring of practices that promote children's participation, ability to identify, design, implement, and monitor practices that enhance children's right to participate and ability to work together. The resources are designed to work at multiple levels of the ECEC centre, to identify, use, and sustain the individual and organisational resources needed to increase children's participation.

**Procedure:** Over 100 ECEC professionals (ECEC teachers, assistants, coordinators) from Belgium, Greece, Poland and Portugal participated in focus groups, questionnaires, individual online and telephone interviews to discuss professional development tools. Another 100 ECEC professionals from the four countries explored the feasibility of the tools by taking part in classroom observations (CLASS pre-k; Involvement and Well-being Leuven Scale, Children Participation Scale) and completing questionnaires.

**Selected findings/Implications:**

- Involvement of ECEC professionals in the development of PD tools should be integrated into the tool design process from the initial stage of the work, since professionals have specific opinions on what and how they would prefer particular contents to be delivered.
- PD tools for ECEC staff should take into account the different responsibilities of professionals in different positions and structural conditions, since professionals seem to be very sensitive to the adequacy of PD tools for their scope of responsibilities.
- The structure of the tools should allow professionals to use them in a flexible manner (individually vs team) and take into account the diverse structural contexts in which ECEC professionals work (possibilities resulting from rural/urban location).
- Contextual support is a necessary condition for promoting child participation at the classroom and centre level.

### Teaching for Holistic, Relational, and Inclusive Early Childhood Education – THRIECE

**Source:** Nowak-Łojewska, A. 2020; THRIECE 2022 (see *References* for further details)

Countries involved: Ireland (Marino Institute of Education – leader, Dublin), Portugal (University of Porto) and Poland (University of Gdansk); six ECEC facilities (two per country).

Funded by Erasmus + fund -Agreement 2017-1-IE01-KA201-025698

**Aims:** Elaboration of three online training modules for ECEC and primary school professionals on an alternative view on quality in ECEC that supports inclusion through recognition of the crucial nature of relationships and interactions based on three pillars:

- Holistic education: emphasising the interrelatedness of domains of development, drawing on children's own talents, emotions, cultures, and interests
- Inclusive education: Supporting sociocultural diversity and inclusion, and opposing exclusive, standardised perspectives and methods
- Relational education: Identifying positive interactions and relationships is more important for measuring quality in ECEC than narrow numerical indicators.

**Procedure:** Triangulation of methods and data (interview, observation, document analysis, etc.). The study used statements of the respondent teachers and children in three preschools, three primary school and four HEIs, observations from meetings and classes, photographs, art works made by the children, and videos. Action research – to discern the current situation in the education of ECEC and early school children, to see the shortcomings, to take action (three pillars holism, relationality, inclusion), with concern for the contribution of theory to practice.

**Selected findings:** Elaboration in three languages (Polish, English, Portuguese) of three online free of charge training modules:



- Holistic education (supporting children's development in the cognitive sphere: thinking, speaking, creating strategies; emotional: interests, coping with stress, joy of creation; social: cooperation, group communication, conflict resolution)
- Inclusive education (transcending cultural prejudices; popularising inclusive practices, the "Other" is seen as interesting, worth knowing)
- Relational education (the quality of relationships and interactions for children's learning and development, developing empathy, assertiveness, expression, cooperation).

### **Baby on the net (*brzdąc w sieci*) – the phenomenon of mobile device use among children aged 0–6 years**

**Source:** Rowicka and Bujalski 2021 (see *References* for further details)

Funded by the Polish Ministry of Health (Programme: Scientific, epidemiological research, monitoring, evaluation – supporting scientific research on behavioural addictions as well as tackling the problems associated with them).

**Aims:** The aim of the survey was to identify the phenomenon of mobile device use by children aged 0–6 years and their parents and to diagnose the risks associated with pre-school children's (and their parents') device use.

**Procedure:** The study was carried out in a mixed design, consisting of a qualitative and a quantitative part. The qualitative research involved eight group interviews with parents and eight interviews with children aged 5–6 years. To diversify the sample, the qualitative research was conducted in five locations (Warsaw, Tricity-Gdansk, Sopot, Gdynia and Krakow).

A total of 48 parents and 60 children participated in the qualitative study. The quantitative survey was conducted on a representative sample of 2,000 parents of children aged 0–6 years.

**Selected findings:** The survey found that more than half of children aged 0 to 6 years (54%) use mobile devices such as a smartphone, tablet, smartwatch or laptop. The age of the child is correlated with mobile device use. The older the children, the more of them use mobile devices: this is the case for three out of four children aged between 48 and 72 months. The average age of initiation of mobile device use is 2 years and 2 months. Most children use mobile devices that access the internet (are online) (75%). Children aged 0 to 6 years use mobile devices for more than one hour per day on average. The majority only use content aimed at children (films, cartoons, games, colouring books, etc.) (88%). Almost three out of four children aged 0 to 6 use mobile devices while travelling by car (or other means of transport), one in two during meals and one in nine during the toilet. More than half of parents allow their child to use mobile devices when they spend time with them. Almost two-thirds of parents give their child a mobile device as a reward. Just over 80% of parents give their child a mobile device when children are bored and two-thirds of parents give their child a mobile device when children cry or fuss.

**Implications:** The results of the research indicate the need to raise awareness among parents of children in kindergarten about the risks associated with the use of digital devices by the youngest children. Supporting parents to spend time with their children in a more varied way is conducive to developing their relationships and communication skills without the mediation of electronic devices.

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Currently, the Polish early childhood education and care system faces a number of workforce challenges. Here three will be outlined which particularly demand attention due to their potentially far-reaching consequences.

1. **Staff shortage and staff turnover.** The low level of salaries, the low social prestige of the profession, unstable working conditions, e.g. regarding frequent changes in the organisation of the education system, are the reasons for the increasing staff shortages and staff turnover. It is a significant issue throughout the country (especially in large cities), and in both the private and public sectors.
2. **Lack of social inclusion specialists.** Due to the huge number of refugees from Ukraine who have been in Poland since February 2022 (the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine), professionals have been confronted with numerous new tasks related to the integration of new residents, both children and their families, often after extremely traumatic experiences. Until this time, Poland had a low percentage of children with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds; now, in this completely different situation, there is a lack of professionals to shape integration policy, but above all a lack of effective support for professionals in their daily work.
3. **Intricacy of legislation and recommendations.** The work of professionals in early childhood education and care centres is regulated by a number of institutions (e.g. educational, sanitation, health) operating at different levels (national, provincial, municipal). In combination with increasing bureaucratic requirements, this creates very frustrating working conditions for teachers, is the cause of misunderstandings and, in some situations, prevents professionals from carrying out their tasks. For example, recommendations from psychologists and nutritionists clearly indicate the benefits of children and caregivers eating together, whereas through some municipal regulations this is prohibited in many public settings.

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