



# Staff in early childhood education and care in Europe 2022/2023

## Eurydice – Facts and Figures

Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2023

ECEC staff support children's development, ensure their health and well-being and guide them in their daily routines and activities. The kinds of experiences children have largely depend on the people who are in charge. Highly qualified staff are more likely to use appropriate pedagogical approaches, create stimulating learning environments as well as provide good care and support. High minimum qualification requirements for ECEC staff are also important for raising the status and pay of the professionals who play such a key role.

In many countries, teams of people work together in ECEC rather than a single professional in charge of a whole group of children, as is often the case in primary schools. Some countries have set the same minimum qualification requirement for all staff members; others have varied job profiles and require different qualifications for different positions. In order to account for these different approaches, this report makes a distinction between two broad categories of staff: 'core practitioners' and 'assistants'.

A **core practitioner** is an individual who leads a group of children at the class- or playroom-level and works directly with children and their families. Core practitioners may also be called pre-primary, kindergarten or early childhood teachers, pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, pedagogical staff, etc.

An **assistant** is an individual that supports the core practitioner with a group of children or class on a daily basis. The job title usually explicitly indicates that the role has an assistance function (e.g. *pædagogmedhjælper* in Denmark) or that it is childcare-related (e.g. *Kinderpfleger/-innen* in Germany).

The first section of this chapter examines the initial qualifications required for core practitioners and assistants. It then explores the requirements for core practitioners and assistants to undergo continuing professional development (CPD).

### Qualification requirements for ECEC staff

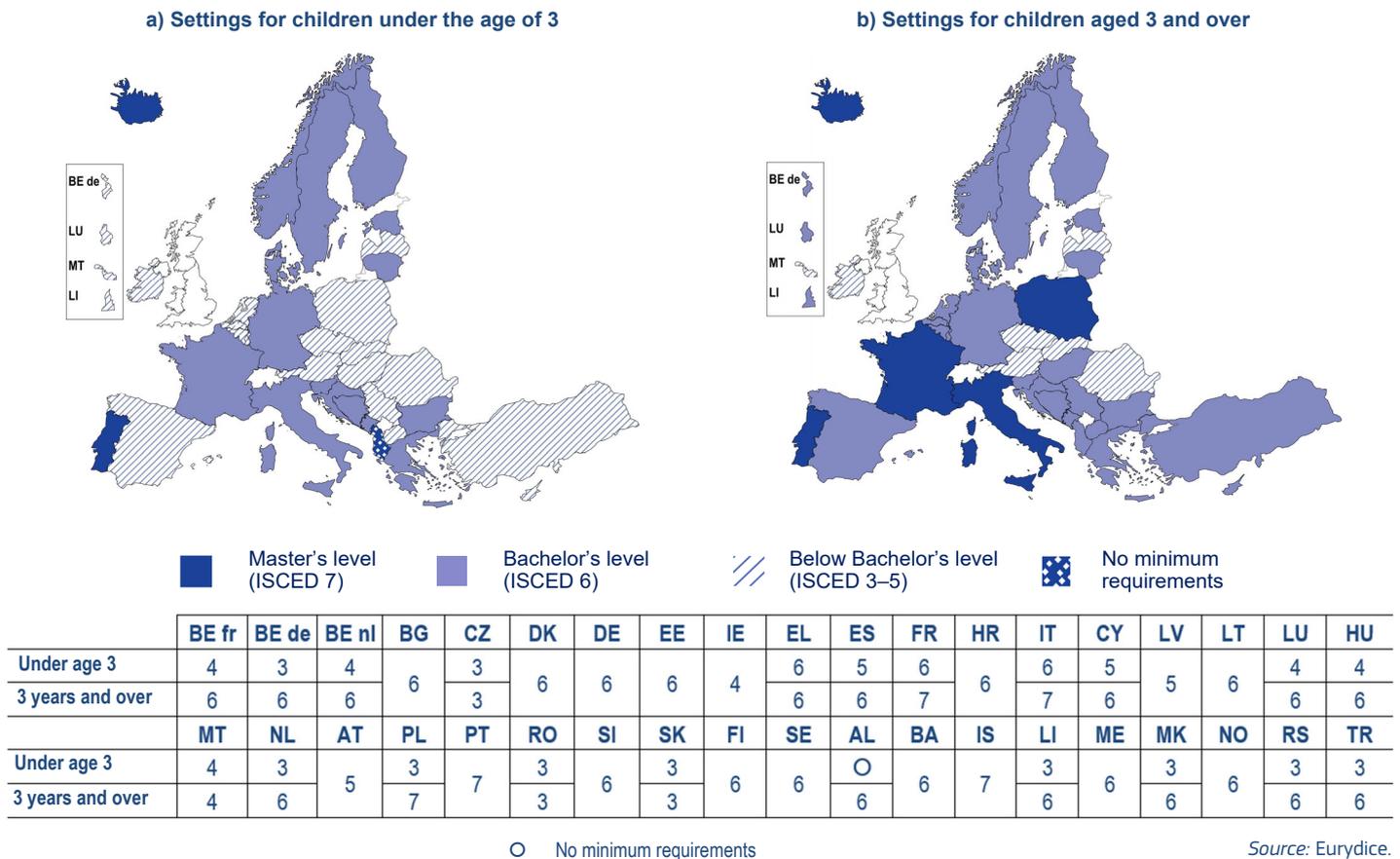
Analysis of the minimum qualification levels for core practitioners reveals large differences between regulations for work with younger and older children (see Figure 1). Less than half of European education systems require that at least one of the team members caring for a group of children, regardless of age, be highly educated. The minimum is set at Bachelor's level (ISCED 6) throughout the entire ECEC phase in Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Norway. It is set at Master's level (ISCED 7) in Portugal and Iceland. In Italy and France, it is set at Bachelor's level (ISCED 6) for children under 3 and at Master's level (ISCED 7) for children aged 3 and over. However, sometimes the situation is more complex than the minimum requirements reveal. For example,

In **France**, the minimum requirement is set at ISCED 6 for core practitioners working with younger children (i.e. early childhood educator – *éducateur de jeunes enfants* and paediatric nurse – *puéricultrice*). Article R2324-42 of the Public Health Code sets out that at least 40 % of the staff must be state-qualified paediatric nurses or nurses, early childhood educators, psychometricians or assistant child nurses. These levels of qualification range from ISCED level 3 to ISCED level 6. Pre-primary teachers (*professeur des écoles*) working with older children need to have full teacher training with ISCED 7 qualification. However, the requirements have been lowered in 2023–2026 for pre-primary schools experiencing recruitment difficulties <sup>(1)</sup>.

In one third of the education systems, a high qualification level is considered essential during the second phase of ECEC (pre-primary education), but not during the first phase (early childhood educational development or childcare) in groups of children under age 3. This is the case in Belgium (all three Communities), Spain, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Albania, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

(1) Call for Applications for Kindergarten Educators issued on 18/11/2022 available online at: [https://recruitmentadmin.gov.mt/attachments/circulars/33f175ce-6734-4f77-b2d7-865f5dc88583\\_p.pdf](https://recruitmentadmin.gov.mt/attachments/circulars/33f175ce-6734-4f77-b2d7-865f5dc88583_p.pdf).

**Figure 1: Minimum qualification levels required to enter the ECEC core practitioner profession, 2022/2023**



**Explanatory note**

For the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), see here.

The rows are merged when the same type of staff with the same minimum qualification work throughout the entire ECEC.

**Country-specific note**

**Poland:** the minimum requirements for employing pre-primary teachers in nursery schools (ISCED 02) are still defined as ISCED 5, although programmes that trained teachers at this level were phased out in 2016 (college programmes). The percentage of pre-primary teachers currently employed with ISCED 5 qualifications is 0.2 %.

In seven European countries (Czechia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Romania and Slovakia), the minimum qualification level required to work as a core practitioner during the entire ECEC phase, with any age group, is below Bachelor's level.

In **Czechia**, there are two types of ECEC with different requirements for core practitioners. Pre-primary teachers that work in nursery schools (with children aged 2 years and over) are required to have completed upper secondary education (ISCED 354) in the study field of pre-primary pedagogy. For childcare workers employed in children's groups (that cater to children from the age of 6 months till primary education), upper secondary education (ISCED 354) in the study field of pedagogy or health services or social services is the minimum qualification required.

The minimum qualification requirement to work in ECEC in **Ireland** is ISCED 4, which typically requires a 1-year training course. As part of the ECCE free preschool programme, which provides free preschool for 3–5-year-olds, there is a contractual requirement that the lead educator (i.e.

teacher) with each group of children should have a relevant ISCED 5 qualification.

In **Latvia**, preschool teachers and sports teachers are required to have completed a short cycle in tertiary education (ISCED 5) in pedagogy and professional teacher's qualification (including in-school placement, final examinations and diploma thesis). For music teachers, ISCED 6 qualification is required.

In **Malta**, an ISCED 4 education diploma and the successful completion of a 1-year probationary period are required to work as kindergarten or childcare educator ().

In **Austria**, a pre-primary teacher (*Elementarpädagogin/-pädagog*) needs to be a graduate of an educational institution for elementary education (ISCED 5).

In **Romania**, both early childhood educators (*puericultor*) working in settings for children under age 3 and pre-primary teachers are required

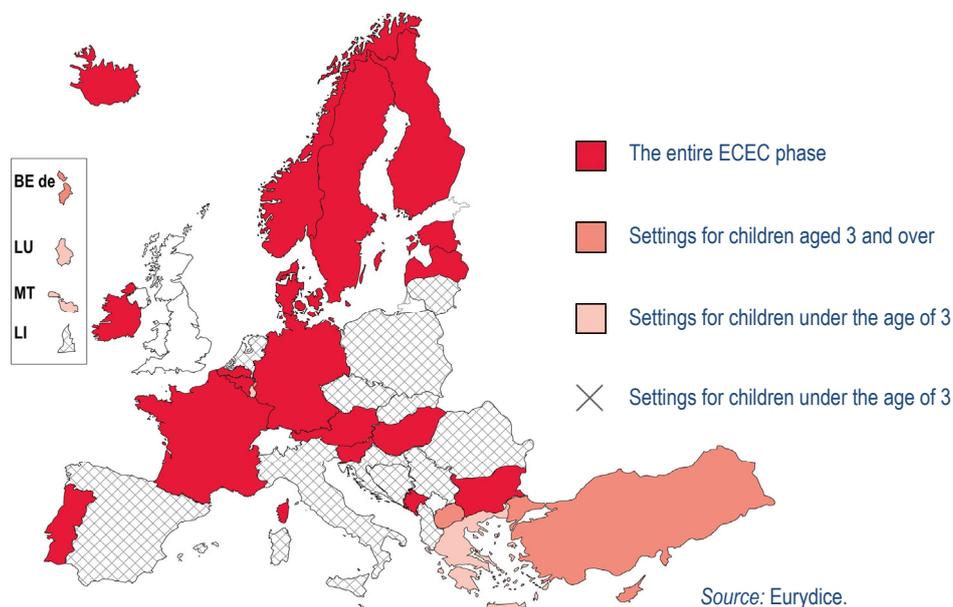
(2) Call for Applications for Kindergarten Educators issued on 18/11/2022 available online at: [https://recruitmentadmin.gov.mt/attachments/circulars/33f175ce-6734-4f77-b2d7-865f5dc88583\\_p.pdf](https://recruitmentadmin.gov.mt/attachments/circulars/33f175ce-6734-4f77-b2d7-865f5dc88583_p.pdf).

to have a secondary education degree (ISCED 3). However, the majority of staff working with children aged 3 and over hold a Bachelor's degree (ISCED 6).

In **Slovakia**, upper-secondary vocational education (ISCED 3) in the study field of pre-primary pedagogy is required for pre-primary

teachers (*učiteľ materskej školy*) that work with children aged 3 years and over. The minimum qualification for core practitioner that works with children under (*opatrovatel' deti*) is upper secondary education (ISCED 3) and further education of at least a 220-hour accredited course in providing care for children of up to 3 years of age.

**Figure 2: Regular assistants in ECEC, 2022/2023**



**Minimum ISCED level required to be employed as assistant in ECEC settings**

Under age 3	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
3 years and over	3	x	3	3	x	○	3	○	4	4	x	3	x	x	x	○	x	○	2
	4	3	3	3	x	○	3	○	4	x	x	3	x	x	3	○	x	x	3
	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	AL	BA	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Under age 3	3	x	3	x	3	x	3	x	3	3	x	x	○	x	4	x	○	x	x
3 years and over	x	x	3	x	3	x	3	x	3	3	x	x	○	x	4	3	○	x	3

○ No minimum requirements      x No assistants

**Explanatory note**

Assistants recruited for specific purposes such as to provide extra support for groups that have children with special needs, or for other local needs, are not taken into account. For the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), see [here](#).

To gain a more complete picture of staff whose duties involve ECEC, it is necessary to look beyond the core practitioners. Different types of staff usually work together with groups of children in ECEC. Assistants support the daily work of core practitioners in more than half of European education systems (see Figure 2). Assistants usually supervise children in the playground or during outdoor activities and attend meals and various activities planned by core practitioners. Often, assistants have lower qualification requirements.

In **Germany**, core pedagogic staff (*pädagogische Fachkräfte*) in ECEC are trained at *Fachschulen* for youth and community work for 3 years or at higher education institutions for 4 years (both ISCED 6). In some *Länder*, supplemental pedagogic staff, especially nursery assistants (*Kinderpflegerinnen* and *Kinderpfleger*), are employed. Usually, these staff are required to have a 2-year training course at *Berufsfachschulen*, full-time vocational schools (ISCED 3).

In **Slovenia**, preschool teachers with a Bachelor's degree in preschool education (ISCED 6) and preschool teacher assistants manage classroom activities together. Assistants are required to have upper secondary degree in the education of preschool children or have completed an upper secondary general school (*gimnazija*) and a vocational course for ECEC (ISCED 3).

In some education systems, assistants are available only in the first or in the second phase of ECEC. In Greece, Luxembourg and Malta, assistants support core practitioners in settings for children under age 3, while in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Cyprus, North Macedonia and Türkiye, they only work in settings for older children.

There are no regular assistants in ECEC sector in 13 countries (Czechia, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein and Serbia). However, there might be some additional staff employed to support children with special

education needs, and there might be several core practitioners working together as a team in one group.

Usually, upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3) is required to be employed as an assistant in ECEC centres. This typically means having an upper secondary educational qualification in ECEC or having completed general upper secondary education and a 1-year vocational course for ECEC. Assistants must have completed post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4) in the French Community of Belgium (when working with children over age 2.5), Ireland, Greece and Montenegro.

There are no minimum qualification requirements for assistants throughout the ECEC phase in Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Iceland and Norway, as well as in Luxembourg (where non-qualified staff are employed only in settings with very young children). Some countries might still employ assistants with qualifications.

In **Denmark**, two types of assistants can be employed: a pedagogic assistant (*pædagogisk assistent*) with a vocational ISCED 3 qualification and an assistant (*pædagogmedhjælper*) with no minimum qualification requirements. In 2021, among the staff in the municipal and self-governing institutions, 6 % had completed ISCED 3 education to become a pedagogical assistant, while 36 % had no pedagogical education. In private institutions, the proportions were respectively 5 % and 42 %. Overall, 55 % of staff in the municipal and self-governing institutions and 50 % of staff in private institutions had received a pedagogical education (ISCED 6) <sup>(3)</sup>.

In **Luxembourg**, in ECEC settings for children under the age of 3, unqualified staff may constitute at most 10 % of the staff and must complete a specific 100-hour training <sup>(4)</sup>.

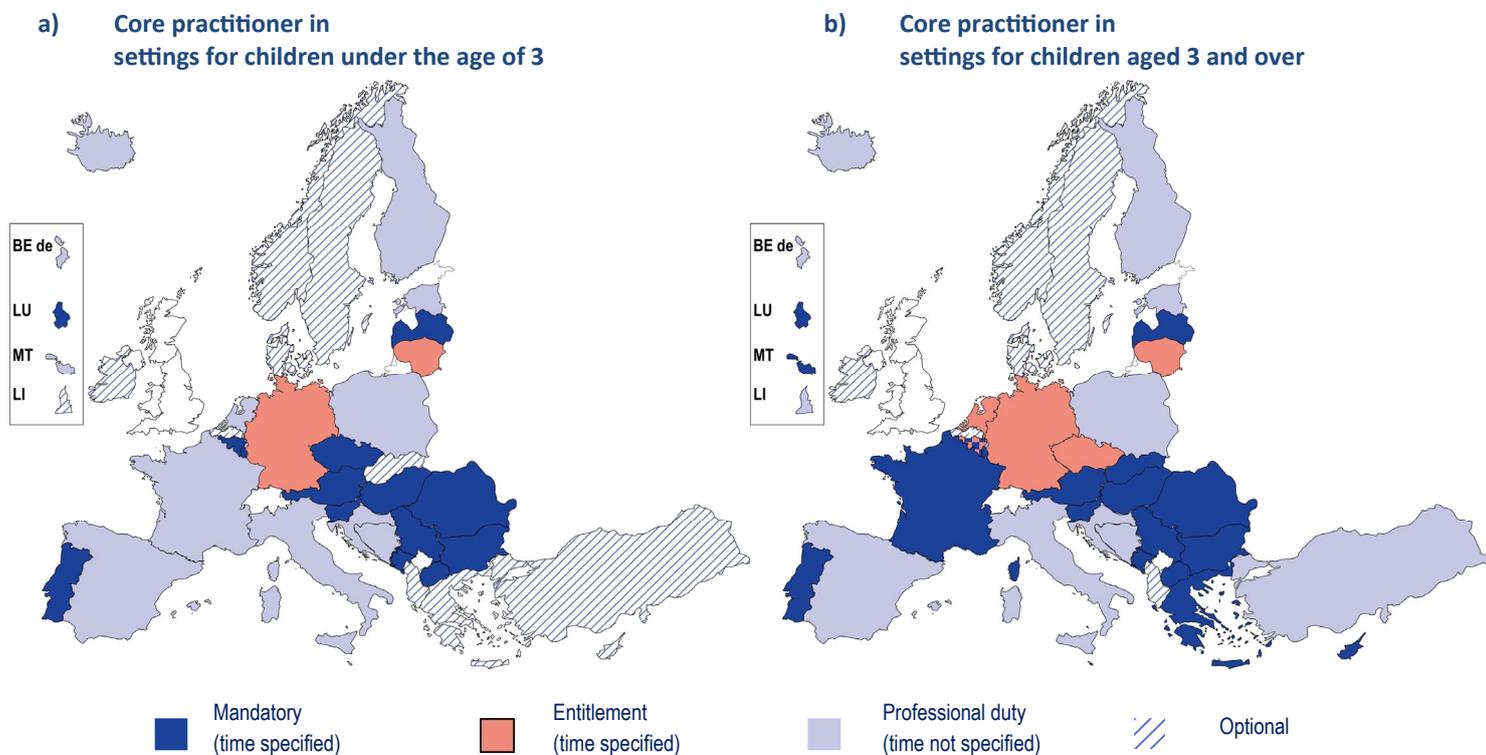
In **Norway**, there are two types of assistants: child and youth workers with an ISCED 3 vocational qualification and other assistants without any minimum qualification requirements. The child and youth workers constitute 23 % of staff in ECEC, while assistants with a different background constitute 31 %. Overall, staff with kindergarten teacher or other pedagogic/higher education comprise 46 % of ECEC staff <sup>(5)</sup>.

## Continuing professional development regulations for ECEC staff

Establishing the initial qualification requirements for staff working with children is only the starting point in ensuring a well-qualified workforce. Continuing professional development (CPD) is also crucial as it allows employees to upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their career.

Countries regulate the CPD of ECEC staff in different ways (see Figure 3). The most fundamental distinction is whether the CPD is considered a professional duty or an optional activity. For the purposes of this report, CPD is considered a professional duty if participation is explicitly defined as such in top-level regulations. It is considered optional if there is no statutory obligation in top-level policy documents for ECEC staff to participate in CPD or if CPD is not mentioned.

**Figure 3: Continuing professional development status of ECEC core practitioners, 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.enfancejeunesse.lu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/RGD-SEA-version-coordonnee.pdf> (Art. 7. (1) 3).

<sup>(5)</sup> Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2022. See <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/statistikk/statistikk-barnehage/ansattes-utdanning-andel/>.

<sup>(3)</sup> Statistics Denmark BOERN1 and PBOERN1.

**Minimum number of defined CPD hours (h) or days (d) for the given number of years (y).**

Mandatory time is shown in bold blue, while entitlement is in regular dark red.

**Core practitioners**

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
Under age 3	<b>2d</b> /1y	duty	○	<b>36h</b> /4y	<b>8h</b> /1y	○	<b>5d</b> /1y	duty	○	○	duty	duty	duty	duty	○	<b>36h</b> /3y	<b>5d</b> /1y	<b>32h</b> /2y	<b>70h</b> /4y
3 years and over	<b>3d+5d</b> /1y	duty	○	<b>36h</b> /4y	<b>12d</b> /1y	○	<b>5d</b> /1y	duty	○	<b>24h</b> /1y	duty	<b>18h</b> /1y	duty	duty	<b>2d</b> /1y	<b>36h</b> /3y	<b>5d</b> /1y	<b>16h</b> /1y	<b>90h</b> /7y
	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	AL	BA	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Under age 3	duty	duty	<b>2d</b> /1y	duty	<b>50h</b> /4y	<b>270h</b> /5y	<b>15d</b> /3y	○	duty	○	○	duty	duty	○	<b>36h</b> /5y	<b>10h</b> /5y	○	<b>60h</b> /1y	○
3 years and over	<b>28h</b> /1y	<b>83h</b> /1y	<b>1y</b>	duty	<b>50h</b> /4y	<b>270h</b> /5y	<b>15d</b> /3y	<b>20h</b> /1y	duty	○	○	duty	duty	duty	<b>36h</b> /5y	<b>20h</b> /5y	○	<b>60h</b> /1y	duty

**Assistants**

	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
Under age 3	<b>2d</b> /1y	x	○	duty	x	○	○	○	○	○	x	duty	x	x	x	○	x	<b>32h</b> /2y	○
3 years and over	<b>2d</b> /1y	duty	○	○	x	○	○	○	○	x	x	<b>2d</b> /5y	x	x	○	○	x	x	○
	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	AL	BA	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Under age 3	duty	x	○	x	○	x	<b>15d</b> /3y	x	duty	○	x	x	○	x	<b>36h</b> /5y	x	○	x	x
3 years and over	x	x	○	x	○	x	<b>15d</b> /3y	x	duty	○	x	x	○	x	x	<b>10h</b> /5y	○	x	○

Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory notes**

**Mandatory:** CPD is compulsory and the minimum amount of time to be spent on it is specified.

**Entitlement:** there are specific hours, days or credits that staff are entitled to take, and settings are obliged to provide the opportunity to pursue CPD.

**Professional duty:** CPD is described as such in the regulations; alternatively, it is deemed compulsory but the amount of time to be spent on it is not specified.

**Optional:** there is no statutory obligation to participate in CPD.

The rows are merged when the same type of staff with the same minimum qualifications work throughout the entire ECEC.

**Country-specific note**

**Romania:** regulations state 90 credits per 5 years. In the table, 8 ECTS are considered to be equivalent to 24-hour CPD.

CPD may also be defined in terms of the time that is allocated to each teacher for various training activities. A recent Eurydice report entitled *Teachers in Europe: careers, development and well-being* (pp. 91–94) revealed that teachers tend to participate in more types of CPD in the countries where time for CPD is defined for every teacher.

Two types of time allocation are considered: mandatory and/or entitlement. CPD is considered mandatory if there is a specified minimum amount (hours, days, credits, etc.) of CPD required during a certain period (usually during a school year or a few years). When CPD is defined as an entitlement, a certain amount of CPD time is granted for staff during or outside of teaching (working) hours. However, it is not compulsory for staff to use these hours.

One third of the education systems make CPD mandatory for core practitioners working with younger children, specifying its minimum duration over a defined period of time (see Figure 3a). A few more, but still less than half of the education systems, require CPD for core practitioners working with older children (see Figure 3b). Mandatory CPD usually means that support is offered to staff to participate in these activities, for example CPD is provided

during working time or the costs of courses and travel are reimbursed. This is not always the case in education systems where CPD is considered a professional duty or is optional.

Most commonly, teachers are required to carry out 1 to 3 days of CPD per year. Several countries require more.

In **Slovenia**, according to the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Articles 105 and 119), professional education and training is one of a teacher's mandatory tasks. Regulations stipulate that teachers are required to carry out a minimum of 5 days of CPD a year or 15 days over 3 years. The Collective Agreement for Education stipulates that unjustified refusal of participation in CPD is a minor violation of work obligations (Article 65). The Ministry responsible for education opens invitations for in-service training for pedagogical staff and co-finances the programmes that are in line with the priority themes of the Ministry.

In **Serbia**, the Law on the Education System Foundations requires that all ECEC and school staff – licenced and non-licenced alike – participate in CPD. According to the Bylaw on Continuing Professional Development of Teachers and Education Staff, all ECEC and school staff are obligated to complete at least 44 hours of CPD in their own institution each year, participate in at least one CPD programme (minimum 8 hours) and take part in at least one expert meeting (e.g. a conference, round table, summer school), which usually lasts 8 hours (1 day) or more.

In several education systems, CPD is considered an entitlement, with a set amount of time specified in top-level regulations or collective agreements. The most common practice is to grant approximately 5 working days for CPD per year, but several countries recommend more than that.

In **Czechia**, the Act on Education Staff sets an obligation for all education staff, including pre-primary teachers working in settings with older children (*učitel mateřské školy*), to participate in CPD in order to renew, strengthen and supplement their qualifications. In-service training of education staff is organised by a school head in accordance with a plan of in-service training. One of the ways to fulfil the legal obligation to participate in CPD is via self-study. All teachers employed in the public sector are entitled to 12 working days off per school year for self-study unless it is prevented by serious operational reasons <sup>(6)</sup>. According to the amendment to the Act on Providing Childcare in a Children's Group in force since October 2021, all care providers for younger children are obliged to provide the childcare staff (*pečující osoba*) with at least 8 hours of training per year and a first aid course once every 2 years. The childcare staff must provide proof of completion of the CPD <sup>(7)</sup>.

In 14 **German Länder**, legislation allows employees to attend continuing education courses, granting paid educational leave for up to 5 working days per year with no loss in earnings, provided that certain conditions are fulfilled.

In **Lithuania**, all teachers, including pre-primary, have a duty and an entitlement to engage in CPD activities for at least 5 days per year.

For staff in support roles, CPD is usually optional. There are few exceptions. In Slovenia and Montenegro, the same requirements for CPD apply to all staff, including mandatory CPD for assistants. Belgium (French Community) encourages CPD for all staff and sets higher requirements for educational staff.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, all ECEC staff, including those working in private and public settings for children under age 3, must take part in a minimum of 2 days of mandatory CPD. Pre-primary teachers need to complete 6 half days of compulsory CPD spread over the school year. In addition to mandatory training, teachers may also engage in voluntary CPD activities during or outside the working hours. During their working hours, teachers are entitled to take 10 half days per year for training.

Several countries have introduced structural reforms concerning staff qualification or CPD. Ireland, Italy and Finland have raised or are in the process of raising a minimum qualification requirement for all or for a large

proportion of staff working with children. However, the process of staff professionalisation is still ongoing.

In **Bulgaria**, from January 2023, a pre-primary teacher (*detski uchitel*) may work not only in groups with older children, but also in nurseries (*detska yasla*) or in nursery groups within kindergartens (*detska gradina*). However, at least one medical specialist needs to be employed in each nursery. Before the amendment, in groups for children under age 3, a nurse (*meditsinska sestra*) and a babysitter (*detegledachka*) were employed <sup>(8)</sup>.

In **Czechia**, staff providing childcare services for under 3-year-olds are required to do 8 hours of CPD per year since October 2021.

In **Ireland**, 'Nurturing skills: the workforce plan for early learning and care and school-age childcare 2022–2028' commits to strengthening the availability of and support for CPD for ECEC staff <sup>(9)</sup>.

In **Spain**, in 2022, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training presented a document on the improvement of the teaching profession. The proposals affect initial training, access to the teaching profession, permanent training and professional development. It is currently being discussed with the Educational Unions and at the General Education Commission of the Autonomous Communities <sup>(10)</sup>.

In **France**, a committee has been set up to prepare proposals to improve the recruitment and training of staff in the early childhood sector working with children under age 3 <sup>(11)</sup>.

**Italy** raised the minimum qualification for early childhood educators (0–3 years) to a 3-years Bachelor degree (ISCED 6) in educational science. This requirement <sup>(12)</sup> is in force since the 2019/2020 school year, and the first students graduated from this 3-year education programme in 2021/2022.

In **Austria**, a new school type called 'school for pedagogical assistant professions' (*Fachschule für pädagogische Assistenzberufe* - ISCED level 3) has been operating since September 2018.

In **Finland**, a long-term reform to raise staff qualifications was adopted in 2018. The reform aims to improve quality in ECEC by raising the competences of personnel. As of 2030, 2/3 of core practitioners (currently 1/3) in centre-based ECEC must have a Bachelor's degree, and at least 50 % of them must have graduated in education <sup>(13)</sup>.

The **Swedish** National Agency for Education has been tasked with developing the content of a national professional programme which will contain a national structure for competence development and a national qualification system. The ambition is for teachers and preschool teachers to be offered a structured competence development and the opportunity to have this competence recognised. The legislation will enter into force on 1 January 2025 <sup>(14)</sup>.

<sup>(8)</sup> Art. 14(5), see <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135608240>.

<sup>(9)</sup> See Pillar 3, pp. 74–75 at [www.gov.ie/NurturingSkills](http://www.gov.ie/NurturingSkills).

<sup>(10)</sup> <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/educacion/Documents/2022/270122-Documento%2024%20propuestas.pdf>.

<sup>(11)</sup> Initial recommendations were made in June 2022, see [https://sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/comite\\_de\\_filiere\\_petite\\_enfance\\_-\\_communiqu\\_e\\_du\\_29.06.2022.pdf](https://sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/comite_de_filiere_petite_enfance_-_communiqu_e_du_29.06.2022.pdf).

<sup>(12)</sup> See Article 4, par. 1 and Article 14, par. 3 at <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/05/16/17G00073/sg>, and see Ministerial Decree no 378/2018, Article 2, p. 3 at <https://www.miur.gov.it/en/-/titoli-di-accesso-alla-professione-di-educatore-dei-servizi-educativi-per-infanzia-dlgs-n-65-2017>.

<sup>(13)</sup> See chapters 6 and 7 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2018/en20180540.pdf>.

<sup>(6)</sup> Act on Education Staff (563/2004) § 24, see <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-563#p24>.

<sup>(7)</sup> Act on Providing Childcare in a Children's Group (247/2014) § 5c, see <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2014-247#p5c>.

## Definitions

In this analysis, **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** refers to provision for children from birth through to compulsory primary education that falls within a national regulatory framework, i.e. which must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures. The definition goes beyond the education programmes classified as International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 0 (early childhood education), as it includes all registered and regulated ECEC services. This fact-sheet, however, covers only centre-based ECEC. Home-based ECEC (childminding service or family daycare) that is usually delivered in a provider's home or other home-like places. Individual care which occurs in the child's own home (e.g. live-in and live-out nannies and babysitters, care of relatives) is also not included.

Many European countries structure ECEC services according to the age of the children. Usually, the transition from the first phase to the second takes place when children are around 3 years old. In order to reflect the different regulations, a distinction is often made between the provision for children under 3 years old and for children of 3 years and over. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2.5 years (e.g. Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) or as late as 4 years of age (e.g. Greece, the Netherlands, Liechtenstein).

A **core practitioner** is an individual who leads a group of children at the class- or playroom-level and works directly with children and their families. Core practitioners may also be called pre-primary, kindergarten or early childhood teachers, pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, pedagogical staff, etc.

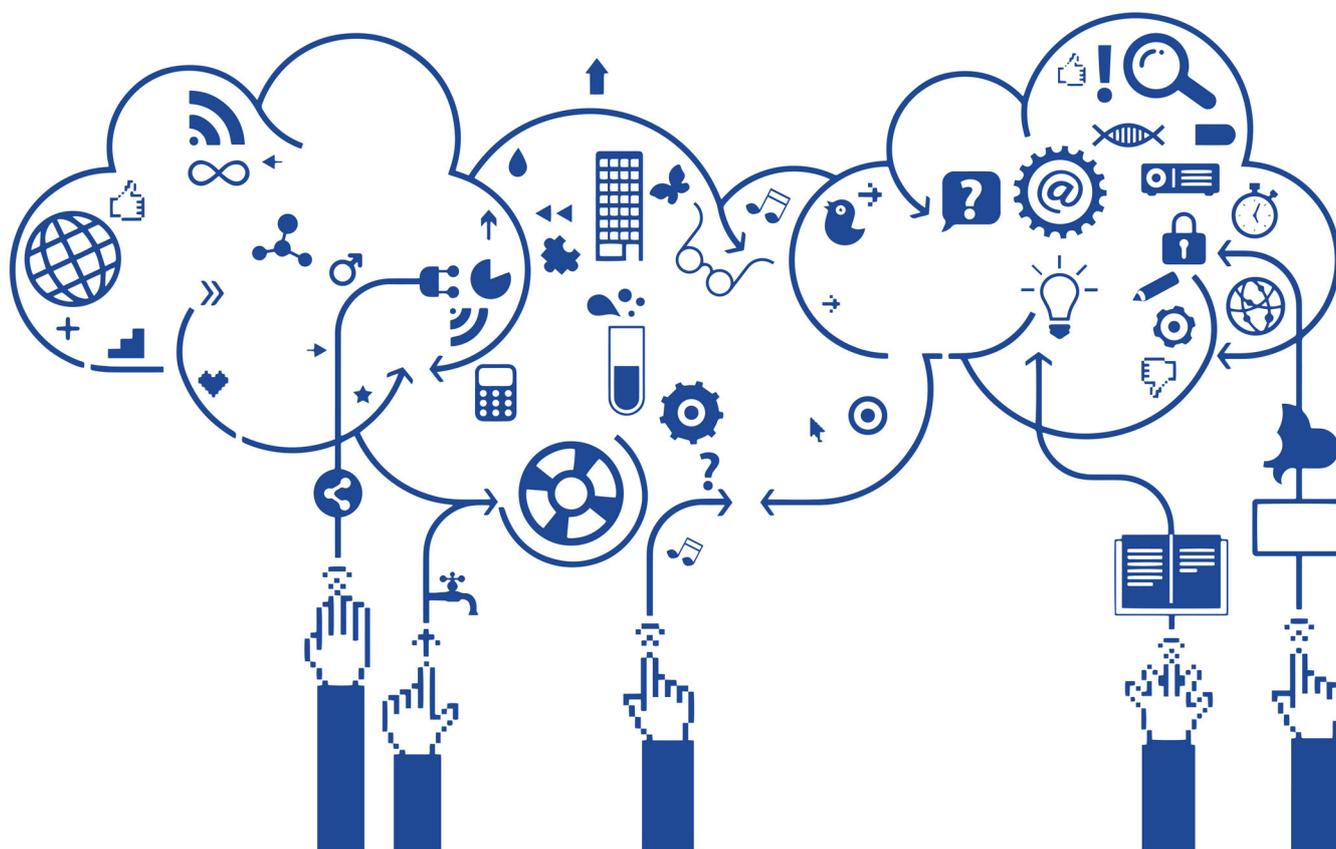
An **assistant** is an individual that supports the core practitioner with a group of children or class on a daily basis. Assistants available only for groups of children including some children with disabilities/difficulties (SEN) are not taken into account in this worksheet.

**Continuing professional development (CPD)** consists of the formal in-service training undertaken throughout a career that allows ECEC staff members to broaden, develop and update their knowledge, skills and attitudes. It includes both subject-based and pedagogical training. Different formats are offered, such as courses, seminars, peer observation and support from practitioners' networks. In certain cases, CPD activities may lead to supplementary qualifications.

CPD is considered a **professional duty** if participation in such activities is explicitly defined as such in top-level regulations. It is considered optional if there is no statutory obligation in top-level policy documents for ECEC staff to participate in CPD.

**CPD is mandatory** when an employee must complete a certain minimum amount of CPD during a certain period to keep their qualification/status.

When CPD is defined as an **entitlement**, a certain amount of CPD time is granted for that staff member during working hours. The staff member has no obligation to use the time, but ECEC settings are obliged to provide the opportunity.



## Early childhood education and care curricula in Europe – 2022/2023

This fact sheet explains the coverage of early childhood education and care (ECEC) curricula in Europe. It lists the top-level documents that contain educational guidelines for all EU Member States, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

More information on ECEC systems in Europe is available in the report: *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2023* [new link to be added]

Please also consult the [national descriptions](#) of each European education system.

---

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

For more information about Eurydice, see: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/>

