



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) PROJECT

EXAMPLE OF IECE PROVISION: CZECH REPUBLIC

1. Abstract

In the Czech Republic, pre-primary education has a long history and the quality of service is traditionally very high. Conforming to the Early Years Framework Programme, respecting the child's needs and creating a stimulating learning environment are the focuses to ensure active learning and development. Individual developmental abilities are supported, including in children with special needs. We rely on early pedagogical diagnosis which triggers the provision of timely specialist care for each child.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, together with the NIDV (The National Institute for Further Education) and the Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague, offers assistance in organising visits for project teams to help with early years inclusion, along with a trip to a pro-inclusive early childhood education (ECE) setting. The Ministry also offers to hold an international conference on inclusion where project team managers would be able to present and share their own national experiences with their colleagues from the Czech Republic.

Different settings are available as examples of good practice, depending on timing and location. The directors and staff are willing to co-operate, to introduce the setting, explain how it is run and spend time on debate and discussion. Depending on the size of the project team it may be possible to visit one or more settings. In the final colloquium the participants will be able to share and discuss their experiences and findings with our experts.

Most ECE settings in the Czech Republic fulfil the majority of the IECE obligations.

The main characteristics are:

- they accept children from the age of 3 until school age;
- they are accessible to children with special needs;
- they invite diversity and support the participation of all children in everyday tasks;
- they employ fully qualified teachers, including specialist teachers and assistants, who are active in choosing further education;
- they support parent and family participation;
- they allow adaptation periods and facilitate the transfer to mainstream school



education;

- they work with expert organisations (school counselling centres, psychologists, special needs and care centres);
- their management teams are pro-inclusive and invite further co-operation.

2. Inclusive features

All the ECE settings in the Czech Republic follow the obligatory Framework for ECE which includes five educational areas:

- Biological: the child and their body, with focus on the overall physical development of the child, fine motor skills, motor development and the building of healthy habits and lifestyle;
- Psychological: the child and their psyche, with focus on the psychological development of the child and their brain, speech, language, cognitive processes, will, emotions, creativity and recognition learning;
- Interpersonal: the child and others, supporting interpersonal relationships between children and with adults, facilitating the acquisition, cultivation and respect of the rules of living together;
- Socio-cultural: the child and society, with focus on learning about the place where they live, catering for the sense of belonging, learning about cultural diversity, the acquisition of cultural values and society norms;
- Environmental: the child and the world, with focus on respect for life, nature, Earth, creating the basis for a child who is open and responsible towards the environment.

All of the above requirements are integrated into educational blocks. This ensures a holistic approach to early years education.

Every ECE setting in the Czech Republic writes its own education programme based on the obligatory framework, allowing space for the specialisation and individualisation of the education provided.



3. Inclusive highlight

For the visits, two settings have been recommended:

Characteristics	Setting 1	Setting 2
Name	Mateřská škola Sulanského, Prague 4	Mateřská škola Libocká, Prague 6
Number of children	100	70
Number of groups	8	4
No. of children with SEN (Children with SEN follow their own individual education plans)	3–5	Max. 5, special group 13
No. of children in group	15–16	10–24
Assistant	In case of need, with the group	In case of need, with the group
Qualified staff	Yes	Yes
Special needs of the children	Impairment of eyesight, hearing, speech Intellectual or physical disability Combined disability	Impairment of eyesight, hearing, speech Intellectual or physical disability Combined disability
Off-site support	Special needs specialists, paediatrician, psychologist, social worker	Special needs specialists, paediatrician, psychologist
On-site support	Regular visits to speech therapy, music therapy	Regular visits to speech therapy, psychologist
Co-operation with primary school	Yes	Yes
Other	Family participation	Family participation



Characteristics	Setting 1	Setting 2
	Overnight excursions Field trips Festivals Workshops Garden party Carnival	Comenius followers Overnight excursions Field trips Festivals Workshops Garden party Carnival
Teacher professional development	Yes	Yes
Public organisation	Yes	Yes

4. Other evidence of quality IECE

The selected ECE settings are unique examples of good practice. They provide complex and quality pre-primary education. The structures represent a well-functioning system of early education and care and are examples of highly professional management. They believe in the following principles:

- staff teamwork
- expert support
- respect for individuals and their needs
- respect for families and their support
- family participation
- on-going education, continuity between early years and primary education

Both settings rank high in terms of Czech School Inspection evaluation (the official Czech body for the evaluation and control of schools and educational organisations).