



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – CZECH REPUBLIC

1. ACCESS, PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPATION

Key principles

1.1 Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.

1.2 Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy at national level</i></p> <p>1. Is there a national policy and legislation that gives the right to all children, without exception, from at least 3 years onwards, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE)?</p> <p>2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?</p> <p>3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?</p> <p>4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?</p> <p>5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision?</p>	<p>Pre-primary education (ECE) is provided to children generally from three years of age to the beginning of compulsory education.</p> <p>Children in the last year before starting compulsory education have priority access to ECE by law.</p> <p>Pre-primary education is not a part of compulsory education.</p> <p>The public institutions which provide pre-primary education are called '<i>Mateřská škola</i>' (kindergartens). Most kindergartens are established by municipalities (others are established by churches, private or non-profit organisations).</p> <p>There is a legislative proposal being processed in Parliament to make the final year of pre-primary education compulsory from the school year 2017–2018. The right to preferential admission would in turn move to younger children as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – from 2017–2018 priority given to children from four years of age; – from 2018–2019 priority given to children from three years of age; – from 2020–2021 priority given to children over two years of age. <p>Along with these changes, there will be newly designated catchment areas for kindergartens, thus restricting the</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. Is there a policy that obliges mainstream publicly funded ECE to make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe</p> <p>Practice at national level</p> <p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years • 4 years • 5 years (if not primary) • 6 years (if not primary)? <p>2. What are the main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE?</p> <p>3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.</p> <p>4. Describe arrangements for inter-service collaboration to</p>	<p>right of parents to choose kindergartens.</p> <p>The final year of pre-primary education is free of charge.</p> <p>The Education Act guarantees equal access to pre-primary education for all children.</p> <p>There is right to a so-called adaptation period given within the <i>Framework Educational Programme for Pre-school Education</i> (the state curricular document), during which children can take advantage of a trial period. If the child shows a lack of maturity, indicated by a psychologist or paediatrician, termination of school attendance may be recommended.</p> <p>Early care is provided by non-profit organisations for children with disabilities from birth. Early care includes expert help for children and their families according to the type of disability, allowing experiences to be shared and care to be provided by a paediatrician, psychologist, or other professionals.</p> <p>The main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE are: lack of capacity (regional or local disparities), a lack of mandatory vaccinations unless the child has a proven contraindication, a family decision for children to attend a private organisation not included in the register of schools or another parent/carer decision, as pre-primary education is not compulsory. More than 90% of children generally attend mainstream education in their last year of pre-primary education.</p> <p>In the 2015–2016 school year there are 367,361 children attending kindergartens, including 7,905 children in special education classes. The number of children with special educational needs included in mainstream classes is not known. The age distribution of children in kindergartens is recorded in Table 1.</p> <p>The measures taken for internal collaboration in kindergartens, which ensures the attendance and participation of children with special educational needs, include adapting the environment, the presence of</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>enable children's attendance and participation?</p> <p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 years • 4 years • 5 years • 6 years 	<p>mobility aids, other children's learning, parents and other people and the employment of an assistant teacher. The conditions and provisions of implementing such measures are given by Law and financed regionally (from the next school year they will be financed by the state).</p>

Table 1. Age distribution of children in kindergartens

Age	Number	%
Under 3 years	42,321	11.5
3 years	90,640	24.7
4 years	103,501	28.2
5 years	109,981	30.0
6 years and older	20,918	5.6



2. WORKFORCE

Key principles

2.1. Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role.

2.2. Supportive working conditions including professional leadership that creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and co-operation with parents.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p> <p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse and additional needs?</p> <p>4. Does the initial training of staff include understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p>	<p>Fully qualified pre-primary teachers have special qualifications for pre-primary teachers from secondary school (European Qualifications Framework – EQF 4), college (EQF 5) or a university degree in pre-primary pedagogy programmes (EQF 6 or 7). This provision is given by Law. There is currently an open discussion process about the institutionalisation of mandatory university degrees for all pre-primary teachers.</p> <p>Other pedagogical staff within pre-primary education, working mainly with children with special educational needs (e.g. specialist teachers, psychologists, speech therapists), must have a specific university qualification. Assistant teachers may have only completed a secondary school qualification with a specific course for assistant teachers.</p> <p>The qualifications for all pedagogical staff within the pre-primary sector have been compulsory since 2015. Head teachers may only employ unqualified teachers if they cannot find a qualified one. Other pedagogical staff must have respective qualifications by Law.</p> <p>For an overview of the proportion of qualifications in the last four years, see Figure 1. This gives information on whether teachers in pre-primary education have a full upper-secondary qualification (EQF 4) or other relevant one. Whether they have been trained in a field other than pre-primary pedagogy is not known.</p> <p>Undergraduate teacher training includes the promotion of co-operation with parents in the education of children</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>Practice at national level</p> <p>1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for teachers? • for other staff? <p>2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?</p> <p>4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.</p> <p>5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is organised?</p> <p>6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE</p>	<p>with special educational needs. The scope of this training differs for each individual school which prepares future teachers. The largest differences concern mainly the education of children under three years of age. Upper-secondary schools do not include this area in their programmes at all. Pedagogical faculties include it only as an option within their bachelor’s degree programmes. The Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague includes a specialisation in Early Childhood Education (considered for children under three years of age) within its Pre-school Pedagogy master’s study programme. A strengthening of the issues of special education and early childhood education within the curricula of faculties of education is currently planned through a change to grant and accreditation policy.</p> <p>Teaching students are introduced to the kindergarten environment in the framework of continuous teaching practices included within university teaching programmes. Practices take place in both mainstream and special nursery schools. Future teachers have the opportunity to monitor the work of experienced teachers during activities with children and communication with parents. Occasionally they can directly participate in the preparation and conduct of joint activities with parents.</p> <p>There is a chronic lack of in-service training.</p> <p>The main resource for inspiration in implementing inclusive practices is the setting leader’s own experience, in-service education, in-service co-operation, peer learning and external co-operation (with educational counselling, parents, etc.).</p> <p>Educational counselling provides support for kindergartens in the form of direct assistance of psychologists, specialist teachers, speech therapists and other specialists. It supports the family, school, participates in the creation of individual education plans (IEPs), recommends the use of teacher’s assistants, assistive devices or the transfer of children to special</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
settings? 7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	kindergartens, carries out tests of school readiness before the beginning of the school attendance and recommends the postponement of school attendance. The role of assistant teachers particularly includes communication with children with special needs, their teacher and parents. Assistants support the socialisation of children, help the children in self-care activities, hygiene, eating, and generally in education, and support the teachers.

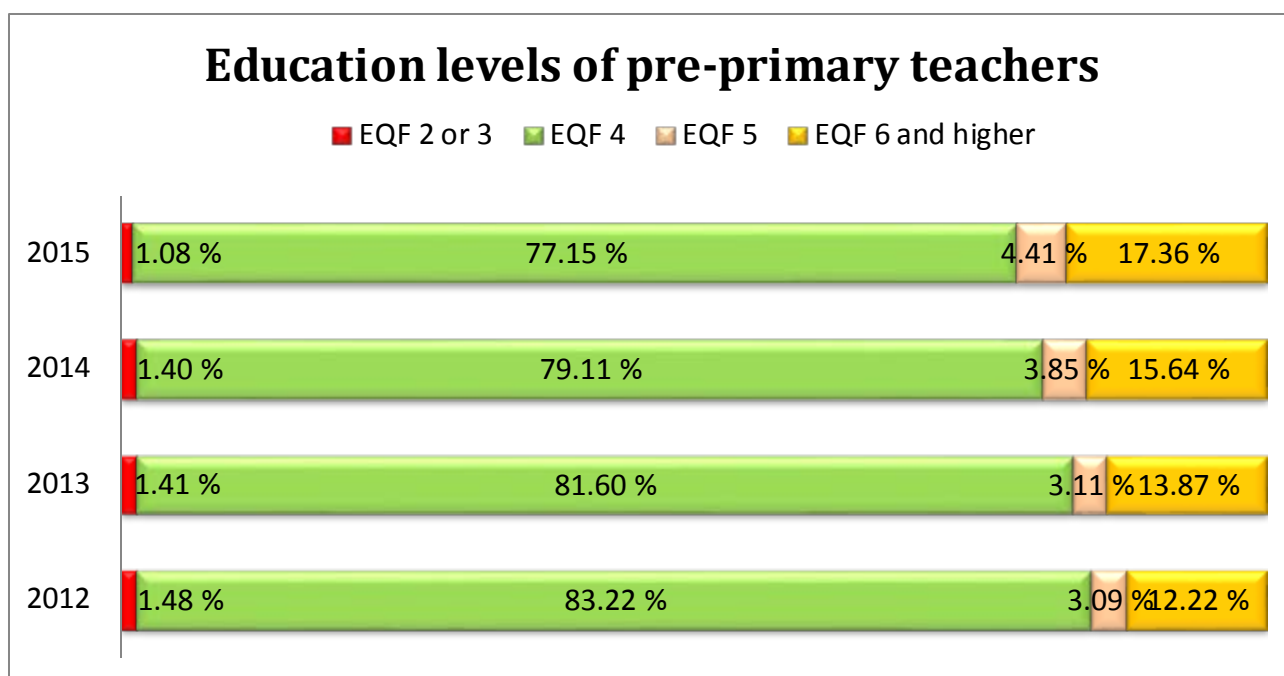


Figure 1. Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic (MŠMT)



3. CURRICULUM

Key principles

3.1. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches that enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way.

3.2. A curriculum that requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i> children?</p> <p>2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?</p> <p>3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?</p> <p>4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?</p> <p>5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?</p> <p>7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation</p> <p><i>Practice at national level</i></p>	<p>The basic curricular document for pre-primary education on a state level is the <i>Framework Educational Programme for Pre-school Education</i>. Educational content is divided into five areas respecting the integrity of the child's personality and their gradual integration into the natural and social environment. Individual areas are intertwined within the activities and are mutually influenced, dependent and complementary. Individual areas have stated learning outcomes, to which the child is guided to an appropriate extent according to their individual needs and abilities, so that at the end of the pre-primary period the child reaches their personal best. Achieving these outcomes is not mandatory for the child. These activity-orientated and practical outcomes help in forming the key competences of the child: for learning, problem solving, communication, social and personal development and civic activity.</p> <p>The <i>Framework Educational Programme for Pre-school Education</i> defines the basic conditions (material, organisational, personnel, psycho-hygienic, pedagogical) that positively influence the quality of pre-primary education. Conditions are adapted to the needs and abilities of all children.</p> <p>The <i>Framework Educational Programme for Pre-school Education</i> is based on personality-orientated pedagogy. Education reflects the individual needs and capabilities of each child, including specific needs. It promotes individualisation and differentiation of education for all children, including children from different socio-cultural</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3 years?</p> <p>2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children's functioning?</p> <p>3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities monitored?</p> <p>4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?</p> <p>5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in this process?</p> <p>7. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p> <p>8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning?</p> <p>9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional</p>	<p>backgrounds and children with a different first language.</p> <p>Openness and transferability in the education system helps to eliminate the premature labelling of children, but it cannot be completely avoided.</p> <p>Each school creates its own educational programme that is adapted to the particular conditions and possibilities of the school. Through this process, schools have received a great deal of autonomy. When developing this programme, the school must fulfil the principles set out by the <i>Framework Educational Programme (FEP)</i>. The creation of a school education programme involves all staff and parents also have the opportunity to participate.</p> <p>Each kindergarten takes into account the needs and possibilities of each individual child. Parents are invited to collaborate, and the children can also express their opinions. Children are mostly involved in elements relating to their own behaviour, responses to specific situations and partly self-evaluation. Teachers use observations, analysis of children's work, conversation and knowledge sharing with other teachers and parents.</p> <p>Parents are always actively involved in the creation of an IEP for a child with special educational needs. Their needs and wishes are fully respected, they participate in the course of learning and the evaluation of learning outcomes, changes to the IEP and other measures. IEP is always formulated in co-operation with teachers, parents and experts from the school counselling facility and is based on the best interests of the child.</p> <p>Kindergarten teachers keep daily records of individual activities. These records and teaching practices are subject to internal evaluation within the school and external evaluation by the Czech School Inspectors. Teachers perform pedagogical diagnostics, which monitor and record the individual progress of each child. Parents have access to these records and are actively encouraged to work together.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
needs? 10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	<p>Use of IT is not explicitly stated in the FEP. In the pre-primary period it is necessary to use IT sources and tools considerately. They should serve to replenish or revive education. Some kindergartens' in-school policies state there should be no use of IT by children. Educators are increasingly using IT to prepare and develop tools, or as a source of inspiration.</p> <p>There are special IT programs for working with children with special educational needs. IT can ease and even allow the education of these children (for example, in cases of autism or physical disability). They can serve as a visual support, motivation, or replace motor impairment. Some programs are used to correct difficulties in speech therapy.</p> <p>The kindergarten environment can be tailored to the needs of children, for example, by adjusting the furniture, using scissor lifts, wheelchairs, adjustable beds or suitable lighting.</p>



4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Key principles

4.1. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

4.2. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><i>Legislation and policy</i></p> <p>1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?</p> <p>2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?</p> <p>3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards for ECE?</p> <p>4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in participation in ECE?</p> <p>5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?</p> <p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and</p>	<p>The Education Act declares all children should have equal access to education.</p> <p>Kindergarten activity is monitored and evaluated mainly through the Czech School Inspectorate, which is the supervisory authority of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry assigns monitoring areas to the Inspectorate for each school year. Kindergartens provide the Ministry with data for statistical analysis and evaluation. The Inspectorate also carries out quick electronic surveys (including surveys in individual schools) outside its regular activities. These surveys focus on specific indicators which determine the current status of kindergartens for the needs of the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Research surveys are currently conducted in kindergartens by universities for scientific or study purposes. Their output is used for further investigation carried out by the National Institute of Education, which analyses and evaluates the collected information and uses it to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and its possible modifications.</p> <p>School self-evaluation is also performed periodically by law. School teams evaluate direct pedagogical activity during the year. Educational sessions for all teaching staff are held around four times a year and the output from these sessions is usually incorporated in an annual mandatory evaluation report for each school. Schools use evaluation questionnaires for school employees, parents and other stakeholders. Based on the evaluation, amendments of the school curriculum are discussed and</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
learning of all children? 2. How are parents involved in this process? 3. How are children themselves involved in this process?	processed. Teachers perform on-going pedagogical diagnostics to observe and evaluate the individual progress of each child. Parents have the right, and are encouraged, to monitor their child's educational outcomes. Children are also involved with evaluation and self-evaluation with respect to their age, personal development, possibilities and needs, mainly through their exhibited behaviour and interests.



5. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Key principles

5.1. Stakeholders in the ECE system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.

5.2. Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECE, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p>Legislation and policy</p> <p>1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?</p> <p>2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?</p> <p>3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?</p> <p>4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?</p> <p>5. How is additional funding allocated?</p>	<p>Kindergartens are encouraged to collaborate, create joint programmes, share practice and co-operate with school counselling facilities. Parents are also involved in leading the schools and decision-making through direct participation in activities and within school councils, which are leading bodies in each school by law. The National Institute of Education (NIE) also co-operates with kindergartens, enabling the creation and methodical correction of educational support (through conferences, publications and the web portal rvp.cz). Within the process of methodical support the NIE also acquires information about the progress of the reform and collects data to edit the <i>Framework Educational Programme</i>.</p> <p>Schools are funded and supported towards inclusion (e.g. mobility aids and teaching assistants). Funding is provided mainly by national and public resources (such as the Ministry of Education, Regions and municipalities), partly by European ones (motivation for further development of capacities for inclusion) and also partly by the parents and carers involved.</p> <p>Since September 2016, a new order defining support measures for children with special educational needs has been put into force, taking into account their current capacities and needs. The provision and financing of these support measures will now be claimable.</p> <p>There is a regular interdepartmental co-operation among the Ministries of Education, Health and Work and Social</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p data-bbox="150 304 464 383"><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <ol data-bbox="150 412 501 1312" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="150 412 501 584">1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?<li data-bbox="150 607 501 875">2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?<li data-bbox="150 898 501 1122">3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?<li data-bbox="150 1144 501 1312">4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?	<p data-bbox="544 304 1445 1525">Affairs concerning pre-primary education. Individual ministries consult the decisions made. However, new documents and regulations do not always take the outcomes of these negotiations into account. Sometimes there is legislative inconsistency. For example, educational policy at present does not fully reflect family policy: parental leave can be two to four years in duration (and even quicker), but education legislation usually counts on the involvement of children in pre-primary education from three years of age (School Act). For children aged two to three years, there is not currently a regular, state-guaranteed service. In spite of this, children under three years of age are admitted to kindergarten without modifying conditions to match their natural needs. Kindergartens do not have enough funding available to modify the conditions as needed. In some regions, the admission of these children means the filling of school capacities, thus maintaining schools but without appropriate conditions for such young children. From 2020, the Ministry will give children over two years of age who live in the respective municipality area the right to attend a kindergarten. It is not yet clear how the conditions and funding will be modified to respect the different needs of these children. It will require a particular increase in the number and competences of teaching staff, support staff and non-teaching staff, reduced numbers of children in the classroom, etc.</p> <p data-bbox="544 1547 1445 1861">The parent/carer contribution to the funding of pre-primary education for their children is set at a maximum of 50% of the other non-investment expenses of running the school (funding of investment in real estate and its renovation is not included). Families with proven low income may be exempt from fees. The last year of pre-primary education is free of charge.</p> <p data-bbox="544 1883 1445 2007">There is an increased per capita payment (normative) for kindergartens educating children with special educational needs to match the needs of these children.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>Government policy provides a unified framework of both education quality and funding. Schools have recently been funded by the regional authorities. Regions (<i>kraj</i>) have their own autonomy in planning and running schools. There have been differences in the allocation of funds for teaching assistants and the adoption of children with special educational needs by across regions. These differences should offset the above-mentioned new order establishing school claims for the range of support matching the educational needs of the children.</p>



FURTHER COMMENTS

Pre-primary education in the Czech Republic has a permanently high level of quality, but it faces some serious problems. Its importance is still publicly undervalued and in the long term it is deeply underfunded. The need for higher qualified staff for the realisation of quality pre-primary education (at least EQF 6) is not sufficiently reflected. The education and care of children with special educational needs have had a high level of quality in both special and mainstream schools, but some public financial support would guarantee the fulfilment of the needs and abilities of every child. Kindergartens working with children with special educational needs have rich experience in mutual co-operation and family involvement in the educational process. An exception to the recent positive quality and self-evaluation is the involvement of children under three years of age in mainstream kindergartens. These children had been included in other 'infant school' (*jesle*) institutions under the Ministry of Health. Ensuring the appropriate conditions and the need for increased funding to maintain the quality of their participation in pre-primary education in kindergartens has not yet been resolved. The National Institute of Education of the Czech Republic has prepared a draft remedy which was submitted to the Ministry of Education for further action. The Ministry is aware of the deficiency and envisages the solution within a long-term plan.