



## INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – SWEDEN

### 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><b><i>Legislation and policy at national level</i></b></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>ECE is regulated by the government through the Education Act (2010:800) and the Pre-school Curriculum (<a href="http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2704">http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2704</a>). Pre-primary education is organised by Sweden’s 290 municipalities. They are obliged to provide pre-primary education to all children aged 1 to 5. There are both municipal and independent pre-schools. Independent pre-schools can be run as parent or staff co-operatives, by a foundation or by a company. It is the responsibility of the municipalities to ensure that there are pre-schools available and that children are offered a place. Independent pre-schools are an alternative to municipal pre-schools. It is the municipalities that approve independent pre-schools and who are responsible for checking that pre-schools fulfil the high quality and safety requirements. The same rules apply to independent pre-schools as to municipal pre-schools.</p> <p>The obligation to provide pre-primary education is also applied if the parents are unemployed or on parental leave for a sibling, although for a limited amount of hours (a minimum of 15 hours a week). Pre-primary education is not compulsory, but from the autumn term when children turn 3 they are entitled to free pre-primary education for at least 525 hours per year (known as ‘general pre-school’).</p> <p>Children who for physical, mental or other reasons need special support in their development shall, according to</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>the Education Act, be provided with the support that their special needs require. The amount of resource and support staff is equivalent to approximately 4% of all full-time employees in pre-primary education (Swedish National Agency for Education, Facts and Figures, 2012).</p> <p>The Swedish Education Act stipulates that pre-primary education should promote all children's development and learning. On the national level, the Education Act stipulates that education should be equal irrespective of location, which is specified by national goals which pre-schools should strive to achieve. Account should be taken of the varying conditions and needs of children, meaning that pre-schools cannot be organised in the same way everywhere and that resources do not need to be distributed equally.</p> <p>All pedagogical activities should be related to the needs of all children in the pre-school. If a child needs more support and stimulation than others, either occasionally or on a more permanent basis, the child should receive such support in relation to their needs and circumstances in order that the child is able to develop as well as possible.</p> <p>Transition from home to ECE is always preceded by a period where the child attends pre-school together with one parent. In some pre-schools, staff also make home visits to introduce themselves. The length of the period parents accompany the child varies but it is often three days of full parental presence, followed by two weeks of attending pre-school for shorter hours.</p> <p>When starting school at six, children usually start in a pre-school class. The Education Act defines pre-school class as a voluntary type of school within the public school system. As part of the curriculum for compulsory school, pre-school class and leisure-time education in pre-school class should encourage each child's learning and development at the same time as providing a foundation for continued education. According to the curriculum, the pre-school</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>should strive to establish good working co-operation with the pre-school class. Co-operation should be based on national and local goals. As the time approaches for the child to transfer to the pre-school the pre-school has the special task of facilitating the transition and completing the pre-school period. In the transition, special attention should be given to those children needing special support.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years (if not primary)</li><li>• 6 years (if not primary)?</li></ul> <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 enable children's attendance and</p>	<p>According to the National Agency of Education (<a href="http://www.skolverket.se">http://www.skolverket.se</a>), in 2014 the proportion of 3-year olds in pre-school was 91%, 4-year olds 92% and 5-year olds 93%. As the numbers are so high, no established factors preventing children from accessing mainstream education have been found. There are special ECE settings organised at the municipality level but no national records of how many children attend these settings.</p> <p>There are no figures published on the proportions of children identified as having additional needs, as the Swedish Personal Data Act prohibits this. Children who for physical, mental or other reasons need special support in their development shall, according to the Education Act, be provided with the support that their special needs require. As mentioned previously, the amount of resource and support personnel in Swedish pre-schools is equivalent to approximately 4% of all full-time employees in pre-primary education (Swedish National Agency for Education, Facts and Figures, 2012, <a href="http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3184">http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3184</a>).</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>participation?</p> <p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years</li><li>• 6 years</li></ul>	



## 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 cooperation with parents.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p>	<p>The categories of staff are mainly pre-school teachers and child-carers. The qualification for pre-school teachers is a separate education strand within teacher training. The length of the education is 3.5 years (210 credits) and results in a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Pre-school Education. One of the goals formulated on a national level for this degree is that students shall show capacity to identify and, in co-operation with others, handle special educational needs. Another goal is that the student shall show ability to inform and co-operate with parents/guardians.</p> <p>For child-carers there is a qualification at upper-secondary level. Special educational needs are also a part of this qualification.</p> <p>There are no regulations for staff-child ratio but the National Agency for Education recently re-introduced guidelines concerning group size. For children aged 1–3, the recommendation is 6–12 children per group and for children aged 4–5 the recommendation is 9–15 children per group.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. What proportion of staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <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>According to statistics from the National Agency for Education, 43% of employees had a pre-school teaching degree and 24% had no relevant education in 2014. At the moment, there are no proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>The basic principle guiding all Swedish education is ‘a school for all,’ meaning there should be access to equivalent education for all. This means that children in need of special support should not be treated or defined as a group that is any different from other children and their rights are not stated separately.</p> <p>According to figures from the National Agency for Education, in 2014 the ratio was 5.3 children per full-time employee and the average group size was 16.9 children (<a href="http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/statistik-i-tabeller/forskola">http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/statistik-i-tabeller/forskola</a>).</p> <p>The range of special support that is available and how it is organised is likely to vary a lot between municipalities. Access to specialist educators, speech therapists and psychologists is organised within the municipality. Child rehabilitation centres, organised by the county council, offer support for children with diagnosed disabilities in co-operation with the pre-school. The child psychiatry and child health centres also offer specialist support. Both are organised by the county councils.</p> <p>Regular and support staff are all part of the same setting and part of the workforce. In most cases, but not always,</p>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
settings? 7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	the support targets the entire group and not a specific child.



### 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><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></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>There is a national curriculum for all children. The goals formulated concern what the pre-school should strive to achieve rather than specific skills and competences to be achieved by the child.</p> <p>The Education Act stipulates that education in the pre-school aims at children acquiring and developing knowledge and values. It should promote all children's development and learning and a lifelong desire to learn. Pedagogical activities should be related to the needs of all children in the pre-school. Children who occasionally or on a more permanent basis need more support and stimulation than others should receive such support in relation to their needs and circumstances so that they are able to develop as well as possible. The pre-school should take account of the fact that children have different living environments and that they try to create context and meaning out of their own experiences.</p> <p>The internationalisation of Swedish society imposes high demands on the ability of people to live with and understand values inherent in cultural diversity. The pre-school is a social and cultural meeting place, which can reinforce this and prepare children for life in an increasingly internationalised community. Awareness of their own cultural heritage and participating in the culture of others should contribute to children's ability to understand and empathise with the circumstances and values of others. The pre-school can help to ensure that children from national minorities and children with a foreign background receive support in developing a</p>





Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>multicultural sense of identity.</p> <p>Children with a foreign background who develop their first language create better opportunities for learning Swedish and developing their knowledge in other areas. The Education Act stipulates that the pre-school should help to ensure that children with a first language other than Swedish receive the opportunity to develop both their Swedish language and their first language.</p> <p>Use of new technologies is not specifically included in the curriculum.</p> <p>The curriculum stipulates that guardians are responsible for their child's upbringing and development. Pre-primary education should supplement the home by creating the best possible conditions to ensure that each child's development is rich and varied. The pre-school should therefore work with children in close and confidential co-operation with the home. Parents should have the opportunity within the framework of the national goals to be involved and influence activities in the pre-school.</p> <p>There is awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation. As previously mentioned, the basic principle guiding all Swedish education is 'a school for all,' meaning there should be access to equivalent education for all. This means that children in need of special support should not be treated or defined as a group that is any different from other children and their rights are not stated separately.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <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</p>	<p>Children's learning development is not systematically assessed at any age within pre-primary education, but child health centres (CHS) provide surveillance, guidance for parents, immunization, regular developmental and medical assessments, parent education, etc. and is free of charge and accessible to all parents and children from birth to the age of five. From six years of age, these kinds of preventive medical and developmental assessments are transferred to the school health system. It is quite common that risks of developmental delay and disabilities</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>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 needs?</p> <p>10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?</p>	<p>are detected by regular assessment at the CHS.</p> <p>Children's engagement and participation is documented according to the demands stipulated in the curriculum.</p> <p>According to both the Education Act and the Pre-school Curriculum, pre-primary education should offer children with a first language other than Swedish the opportunity to develop both their Swedish and their first language. Between 2001 and 2011 children with a first language other than Swedish more than doubled, from 40,000 to 92,200, meaning that two out of ten children in pre-primary education have a first language other than Swedish.</p> <p>The curriculum stipulates that the quality of pre-primary education shall be regularly and systematically documented, followed up, evaluated and developed. Evaluating the quality of education and creating good conditions for learning requires that the child's learning and development be monitored, documented and analysed.</p> <p>The staff are obliged to adapt the curriculum and learning activities to make them accessible to all children. How this is performed is likely to vary a lot between pre-schools and municipalities. Staff might have access to supervision from specialist educators in adapting the curriculum for children with special needs. For children with diagnosed disabilities the child rehabilitation centres might also provide support in this task.</p> <p>Pre-schools regularly co-operate with parents both by arranging regular parental meetings and annual individual meetings concerning individual children. For parents with children that have special needs these individual meetings might be more frequent and sometimes also held together with the child rehabilitation centres.</p> <p>To what extent the children are involved in this process is likely to vary.</p> <p>There is no national documentation of the use of ICT but</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>the use of tablets and other technological devices is likely to gradually increase. For children with diagnosed disabilities the child rehabilitation centres may provide such tools.</p> <p>The educational setting should provide the resources needed, such as specialist educators, psychologists, speech therapists and first language support. How this is organised varies between municipalities. Social services can also offer support to families and at a county council level, there are child rehabilitation centres and child psychiatry.</p> <p>The pre-school environment is required to meet special needs in both location and pedagogical activities.</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><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></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>Aspects of documentation are specified in the curriculum. For example, it states that there is a responsibility for documenting each child’s learning and development regularly and systematically, followed up and analysed in a way that makes it possible to evaluate how the pre-school provides opportunities for children to develop and learn in accordance with the goals stipulated in the curriculum. The curriculum also requires the pre-schools’ conditions, organisation, structure, contents, activities and pedagogical processes are documented, followed up and evaluated.</p> <p>The following should also be documented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– how the child participates in and influences documentation and evaluations;</li> <li>– where and how the child can exercise influence and how their perspective, explorations, questions and ideas are used;</li> <li>– the influence of parents in evaluations;</li> <li>– where and how parents can exercise influence and how their perspectives can be used.</li> </ul> <p>The Education Act stipulates that in all education children’s different needs shall be considered. Children shall be given support and stimulus so they can develop as far as possible. Education shall strive to compensate for differences in children’s abilities to benefit from education. Education also aims to promote children’s personal development into active, creative, competent and responsible individuals and citizens. All education</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>shall be based on the best interests of the child. As far as possible, the child's view shall be clarified. Children shall have the opportunity to freely express their opinion in all questions that concern them. Children's opinions shall be taken into consideration in relation to their age and maturity.</p> <p>The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (<a href="http://www.skolinspektionen.se">www.skolinspektionen.se</a>) conducts regular supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from pre-primary to adult education. Activities are scrutinised on a number of points. The Inspectorate states in which areas a school is failing to meet national requirements. The Inspectorate may use penalties and apply pressure so that a principal organiser rectifies its activities. If the principal organiser does not take action or seriously disregards its obligations, the Inspectorate may decide to impose a conditional fine or measures at the principal organiser's expense. In the case of an independent school, its licence to operate may be revoked.</p> <p>The Schools Inspectorate has an on-going project (2015–2017), initiated by the government, to review the quality and goal fulfilment in pre-schools on a national level. The first report was released in March 2016. So far the School Inspectorate has visited 280 pre-schools, interviewed 1,200 people involved in ECE, conducted 1,500 hours of pre-school observations and collected 1,200 questionnaires from head teachers and staff and 23,000 from parents with children in pre-primary education. One of the results in the first report is that two thirds of the municipalities have no socio-economic model for how the pre-primary resources are distributed. Another is that many head teachers find it difficult to define what methods are suitable for measuring the result of the ECE.</p> <p>The Swedish Institute for Educational Research (<a href="http://www.skolfi.se">www.skolfi.se</a>) was established quite recently. It is a government agency that helps to give teachers and other professionals in pre-schools, primary schools, secondary</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	schools and adult education good conditions for planning, conducting and evaluating teaching and learning with the support of scientifically-grounded methods and practices.
<p data-bbox="150 472 464 555"><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p data-bbox="150 580 517 757">1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of all children?</p> <p data-bbox="150 779 443 907">2. How are parents involved in this process?</p> <p data-bbox="150 929 501 1057">3. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p>	<p data-bbox="545 472 1447 1193">There is a great variation in how staff monitor and evaluate the participation and learning of children. The pre-school teacher's documentation and comments are communicated at individual annual meetings with parents. Examples of documentation include drawings and other pieces of work produced by the child in pre-school, or photography and documentation of the child's reasoning in relation to a drawing, for example. These kinds of documentation might be collected into a portfolio covering the child's entire time in pre-primary education. There are also parental meetings on a group level. Documentation such as drawings, photographs and comments from children might be accessible within the classroom, which is open for parents to visit. This form of documentation focuses on the child, it is from the child's perspective and the child is active in creating it.</p>



## 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><b>Legislation and policy</b></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>ECE provisions are regulated under the Ministry of Education and Research (<a href="http://www.regeringen.se/sveriges-regering/utbildningsdepartementet">http://www.regeringen.se/sveriges-regering/utbildningsdepartementet</a>). Under the Ministry, there are three national agencies: the Swedish National Agency for Education (<a href="http://www.skolverket.se">www.skolverket.se</a>), the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (<a href="http://www.skolinspektionen.se">www.skolinspektionen.se</a>) and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (<a href="http://www.spsm.se">www.spsm.se</a>). ECE is funded and organised by the municipalities.</p> <p>For children at risk, social services, schools and health care are obliged to collaborate. It is primarily the social services that have responsibility for ensuring that the collaboration comes about (stipulated in the Social Services Act, the Health and Medical Services Act and the Police Act).</p> <p>From the autumn term when children turn 3 they are entitled to free pre-primary education for at least 525 hours per year (known as 'general pre-school').</p> <p>There is a general fee for pre-primary education but no extra costs for children with additional needs.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p data-bbox="150 320 464 398"><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p data-bbox="150 427 491 600">1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p data-bbox="150 629 501 891">2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p data-bbox="150 920 501 1137">3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p data-bbox="150 1167 437 1339">4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?</p>	<p data-bbox="545 320 1441 582">The Swedish education system is decentralised and managed by overall goals and rules. All decisions concerning the implementation of the Education Act and the curriculum are taken within the local self-government of the municipalities. There is therefore great variety between the municipalities.</p> <p data-bbox="545 611 1401 739">How effective the collaboration between ECE and other agencies is could not easily be assessed on a national level. Here there is also likely to be a large variation.</p> <p data-bbox="545 768 1441 1120">Additional funding is not targeted to specific children, so there are no such figures. In order to promote an inclusive ECE the municipalities are obliged to offer sufficient support, either on an individual or group level. As previously mentioned, the amount of resource and support personnel is equivalent to approximately 4% of all full-time employees in pre-primary education (Swedish National Agency for Education, Facts and Figures, 2012).</p>