



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – LATVIA

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>The Law on General Education states (chapter 5, section 20 (1)) that the preparation of children from five years of age for the acquisition of basic education is mandatory but Section 21 of the law states that local governments shall ensure equal access to pre-primary educational institutions in their administrative territory to children from eighteen months of age.</p> <p>Children are involved in pre-primary preparation from the moment they start attending kindergartens or pre-primary education institutions. Pre-primary education is available from the age of 18 months, but children may enter from 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 years of age. As stated above, pre-primary education programmes are mandatory for five- and six-year-old children who have not attended pre-primary educational institutions before. The objective of the pre-primary education curriculum is to ensure the multi-faceted development of a child’s personality, to promote health and readiness to enter the primary stage of basic education. Pre-primary education is considered a comprehensive first stage of general education and all children have to complete it by the time they are 7 years old. This deadline may be extended for a year (Law on General Education, Section 25 (2)) due to specific health or psychological problems by parental request or doctors’ request or recommendation.</p> <p>Pre-primary education can be delivered at various pre-primary education institutions (kindergartens) or at</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>special pre-primary classes in general education institutions. Children with special needs could attend special pre-primary institutions, classes for children with special needs within mainstream schools or mainstream pre-primary educational institutions depending on their parents' choice. The Law on Education (Section 57) states that parents have the right to choose the educational institution in which their child will acquire education.</p> <p>There are public and private pre-primary education institutions. Public sector institutions require that parents make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals, but access to educational activities is free of charge. The fee in private sector institutions covers the full cost of the programme, except for the salaries of pedagogues teaching pre-primary education to five- and six-year-olds.</p> <p>The Guidelines of Pre-Primary Education state that the objective of pre-primary education is the promotion of a comprehensive and harmonious development of a child, observing their development patterns and needs.</p> <p>For every child with special educational needs (SEN) who is included in mainstream educational settings, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be developed.</p> <p>Children with SEN could attend mainstream or special pre-primary educational institutions. As mentioned above, it depends on the choice of the parents.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></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 	<p>According to the data from the Ministry of Education and Science, in the school year 2014–2015 the total number of children who attended ECE and percentage according to ages were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3 years: 16,301 – 86.6%; – 4 years: 17,412 – 91.6%; – 5 years: 19,877 – 96.1%; – 6 years: 20,739 – 92.6 %. <p>Children who attend special ECE are also included in this</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>primary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 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>data as no specific data is gathered about the age of children in special ECE settings.</p> <p>There are 3,276 children who attend special ECE settings.</p> <p>The percentage of 6-year olds involved in ECE is lower, as some children start primary school at that age.</p> <p>The main reason why children do not attend ECE is the lack of places in pre-primary institutions. According to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, if a child is registered to attend a municipality pre-primary institution but there is no place available then a state guaranteed grant is available to the family for childcare until a place in the institution becomes available.</p> <p>In the school year 2014–2015, there was a total of 8,144 (8.8%) children who were formally identified as having additional needs (SEN). Of them, 4,868 attended special ECE settings and 3,276 attended mainstream ECE settings.</p> <p>The provision of ECE is the responsibility of municipalities as stated in the Law on Municipalities.</p> <p>Inter-service collaboration very much depends on how interested the officials of different services are in each municipality. On a national level, inter-service collaboration is rather weak and should be strengthened, especially between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Health.</p>



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><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>To work in ECE teachers should have a bachelor’s degree in ECE or in primary education and professional development of at least 72 hours in ECE. If they work in special ECE, they need a bachelor’s degree in special education, ECE or primary education and at least 72 hours of professional development in special education. If teachers work in mainstream ECE settings where there are children with SEN, they need at least 32 hours of professional development in the field of special education every 3 years.</p> <p>There are no specific requirements for in-service training for other staff (teacher’s assistants, who are not pedagogical staff), which varies according to the decision of the municipality.</p> <p>There are no specific regulations regarding staff-child ratios in ECE. Every municipality develops their own regulations. The number of children in the groups varies in different municipalities but there are no more than 20 children in groups under 3 years of age and no more than 24 children over 3 years of age.</p> <p>In every group, there is a teacher and a teacher’s assistant (who is not pedagogical staff, but helps to take care of children). If there are children with officially identified special needs then most often speech therapists and specialist teachers are employed. Less frequently, there are psychologists who support children and their families.</p> <p>The initial teacher training for ECE includes a course in special education but it gives only an overview of diverse</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>and additional needs and does not go in depth.</p> <p>Initial teacher training does not include preparation in how to work with children’s parents.</p> <p>The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 662 (28 October 2014) ensure teacher’s professional development. The regulations state that teachers may acquire in-service training in inclusive education.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></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>All teachers who work in ECE must have appropriate education according to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 662. At present, there are no proposals to make changes to teacher qualifications.</p> <p>At present, the leaders of ECE settings are very interested in providing education for all the children that attend their institution. This is especially true in rural regions of the country, as those children who attend local ECE settings usually attend local schools where they acquire basic education.</p> <p>To ensure that all the children are prepared for school the leaders of ECE settings take care that their staff are well prepared for their task of providing quality education to all children.</p> <p>Depending on the number of children with additional needs and the funding available, every municipality has a number of support specialists in mainstream ECE. As mentioned above, speech therapists, specialist teachers and psychologists could be involved in providing support for children with SEN.</p> <p>Every ECE setting works out their own procedure regarding how regular and support staff should collaborate. Very often specialist teachers work as second teachers in the group of children, paying more attention to those children with special needs. Speech therapists and psychologists more often work with children</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
settings? 7. Describe the role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	individually, taking them out of the group for a time. For children with severe special needs, there may be a personal assistant who takes care of the particular child, helping them to develop personal skills such as dressing, eating, etc. The Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 695 (9 October 2012) states that a state-paid personal assistant in ECE can be provided from the age of 5. If an assistant is needed for children younger than 5 then funding is provided from the welfare budget through the municipality.



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>The National Guidelines for Pre-Primary Education (Guidelines) are adopted by the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 533 (31 July 2012). The guidelines contain the curriculum which describes the skills and competences the children should acquire.</p> <p>The curriculum states that adaptations should be made according to the needs of the child.</p> <p>ECE teachers are free to choose appropriate materials in learning, including new technologies. There is no data on what and how technologies are used in ECE. The use of new technologies also depends on the funding available in the municipality.</p> <p>If a child has officially identified special needs then an individual education plan should be developed for the child. The involvement of parents in the development process is mandatory.</p> <p>In Latvia, there are 40 special ECE settings (special pre-primary schools) fully financed by earmarked subsidies from the national budget. The majority of them (32) are for children with speech and language impairments. Many parents want their children to attend these special pre-primary schools as they think that being in smaller groups and having more time to work with the support staff will help their children to prepare for school.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p>	<p>Officially, there should be an assessment of learning and development at the age of 6, before school, but individual</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>mainstream ECE settings very often assess each child every year to present parents with the results.</p> <p>Teachers have to assess the development of the child in accordance with the requirements in the Guidelines. If the child has an individual education plan, it has to be reviewed regularly, as stated in the internal normative documents of the pre-primary setting.</p> <p>In Latvia there is a minority curriculum which in content is the same, but is more flexible in the way it can be taught, making the learning activities more accessible to children. The staff's adaptations in preparing and presenting the curriculum are the responsibility of the setting's head teacher and methodological leader.</p> <p>There are a number of Russian language pre-primary schools where teachers and other staff are Russian language speakers. There are no problems in providing learning activities for children.</p> <p>Parents have the right to accompany their child through the day in ECE. They are involved in the development and implementation of individual education plans.</p> <p>Municipalities are responsible for the adaptation of the environment to meet the needs of the children.</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
needs? 10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?	



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>The National Guidelines of Pre-Primary Education (Guidelines) which are adopted by the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 533 (31 July 2012) is the document that every ECE setting has to follow in their work.</p> <p>Local municipalities monitor and evaluate the quality of ECE provision according to their internal regulations.</p> <p>The approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE institutions vary across the country as these are based upon the decisions of municipalities, with the restriction that they abide by national laws and regulations (Eurypedia, 2015). Concerns have been raised, however, about the capacity of some of the smaller municipalities to effectively manage and support their ECEC institutions and schools.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and</p>	<p>Every pre-primary setting develops its own procedure on how teachers should monitor and evaluate the children's participation and how parents should be informed about their children's achievements or challenges, according to the regulations developed in the municipality.</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?	In Latvia, both parents and community members play an important role in the governance of the ECE institution, including through participating in the School Boards. In the school boards, for example, they have role in determining the rules governing daily life in the ECE institution and have a consultative role on issues related to the choosing of educational content, methods and materials (MoES, 2015).



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><i>Legislation and policy</i></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>The Guidelines which describe the skills and competencies that children should achieve are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The content and methodology of ECE are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. The financing of ECE teachers for the compulsory pre-primary school preparation for 5- and 6-year-old children is also the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. The funding of other teachers and staff as well as maintenance costs are the responsibility of local municipalities.</p> <p>Intersectorial collaboration is a big challenge, especially in the municipalities of big cities. It is much easier and better developed in rural regions. Family doctors work in collaboration with social workers if there are any problems concerning children with additional needs in ECE. They can easily follow the child in ECE and work with the parents, but there is no system of interdisciplinary collaboration. This depends on how interested specialists are in the welfare of the child.</p> <p>The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 381 (23 August 2001) regarding the funding of ECE programmes states the minimal funding per child in mainstream and special programmes. Children may be included in mainstream ECE following one of 9 special education programmes. If the child attends ECE in mainstream settings, according to the special educational programme the financing per child should be provided with a quotient</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>2,259.</p> <p>ECE in municipalities is free for every child, although parents have to pay for the meals provided. In private pre-primary settings parents pay for all services provided, except for the salaries of teachers who teach 5- and 6-year-old children.</p> <p>The local municipality provides any additional funding for ECE.</p>
<p><i>Practice at national level</i></p> <p>1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p>2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p>3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p>4. How well does additional funding support inclusive education?</p>	<p>All pre-primary schools follow the Guidelines but have freedom to choose learning materials and methods to provide ECE.</p> <p>The effectiveness of collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies varies from place to place as there is no national system developed for such collaboration. As mentioned above it is much easier in rural regions than in big cities.</p> <p>All children with officially identified special needs (8,144 or 8.8%) benefit from additional funding (for example, for speech therapists, specialist teachers, transportation, additional learning materials, etc.).</p> <p>There are many more children in mainstream ECE who have additional needs which have not been officially identified who receive support, although there is no data available about their number.</p> <p>In ECE, it is difficult to calculate how big the additional funding to support inclusive education is, as local municipalities do not have to report their expenditure on the maintenance of pre-primary education to the authorities. Only the expenditure concerning teaching staff remuneration is available in the Ministry of Education and Science.</p>